

**Perception and Reception: The status of British and French non-combatant men
during the First World War**

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Abstract

At the end of the centenary of the First World War, the invisibility of non-combatant, enlisted men continues to permeate popular understandings of the conflict. Though the academe has moved towards a greater understanding of the importance of non-combatant, militarised roles, only recently has the issue of non-combatant masculinity come to the fore. Were unarmed soldiers considered to be true soldiers? How did they fit into the ideal of martial masculinity that was, and continues to be, heavily based bearing arms?

The first part of this thesis examines popular understandings of martial masculinity during this period, using newspapers and fictional writings to unpack the cultural importance associated with bearing arms in the conflict. The second half turns to the writings of non-combatants themselves, analysing their own perceptions of their role in wartime, and how that did or did not mesh with their understandings of what a soldier should be.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that while perceptions of non-combatants were mixed in both France and Britain, in both armies the non-combatant, enlisted caregivers constructed a martial masculinity specific to themselves. They did so by emulating elements of both prewar and wartime masculinity and by distancing themselves from qualities associated with those who were considered to have ‘shirked’ their wartime duties. In this way, this thesis offers a comparative study of wartime non-combatant masculinity.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	1
List of Figures.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Research Questions.....	8
Literature Review: Non-Combatants in the French and British armed forces.....	9
War, Gender and Masculinity.....	16
Gender in First World War studies.....	21
Pre-war Masculinity.....	32
Britain and France.....	41
Methodology.....	43
Chapter 1: Perceptions on the Home Front.....	51
Newspapers as historical sources.....	53
Understanding the shirker in Britain.....	60
Understanding the shirker in France.....	64
Anti-Shirker laws in France.....	67
Spaces of mobilisation and danger.....	69
The Hunt for Shirkers.....	72
The Body.....	74
Rank and Recognition.....	80
Medals and Insignia.....	95
The Non-Combatant Corps.....	98
French representations of enlisted non-combatants and reactions to the NCC.....	101
Non-Combatant: Soldier or Shirker?.....	109
Chapter 2: Fictional representations of non-combatant men during the First World War.	113
Florian-Parmentier, <i>L'Ouragan</i>	117
Bravery and courage?.....	123
Georges Duhamel, <i>Civilisation</i>	128
Who goes to war and why?.....	129
The body and identity.....	131
Transitions.....	134
John Buchan, Greenmantle and Mr Standfast.....	137

Remembering the non-combatant through fiction	146
Chapter 3: Musical spaces: bandsmen as servicemen.....	149
France: music and mobilisation.....	156
Britain: music and training for war	160
Britain and musical difference at the front.....	162
France: les concerts ‘[passés] dans l’incertitude’	165
French and British uses of music at the front in France.....	166
Behind the lines in France: recuperation away from the front.....	171
British bandsmen behind the lines	173
Music and healing	176
‘Healing’ the rift?	179
Conclusion: A musical war and a dual role.....	189
Chapter 4: Self (re)presentation and perception	194
Self re-presentation as an author:	199
Louis Leleu, <i>Des Flandres aux Vosges</i>	199
Wilfred Cook, <i>The Lengthened Shadow</i>	204
Self-perceptions through the lens of family	211
Joannès and Simone Pestier, <i>Les Lettres de Mon Père</i>	211
Léopold Retailleau, <i>Carnets de Guerre</i>	217
(Re) Perceiving one’s masculinity	222
Conclusion	228
Bibliography	236
Primary Sources	236
British memoirs, letters and private papers.....	236
French memoirs, letters and private papers.....	237
Newspaper Articles	237
British novels.....	244
French novels	245
Secondary Sources	245
Online Repositories:	265
Online Resources:	266

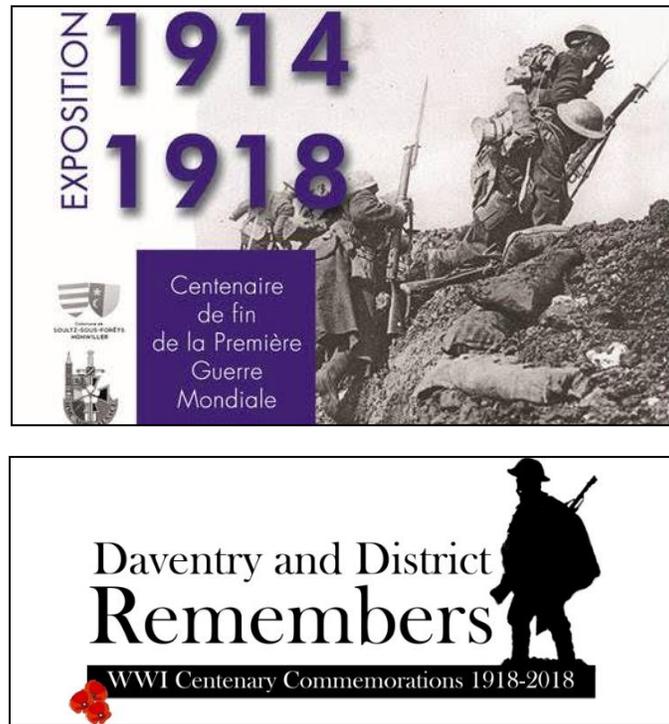
List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Exposition 1914 1918: Centenaire de fin de la Première Guerre Mondiale</i> , L'équipe Coze, 3 October 2018. Source: http://www.coze.fr/2018/10/03/1914-1918-centenaire-de-fin-de-premiere-guerre-mondiale/	6
Figure 2: <i>Daventry and District Remembers: WWI Centenary Commemorations 1918-2018</i> , Daventry District Council, 2018. Source: https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/leisure/first-world-war-centenary/	6
Figure 3: 'Step into your place' recruitment poster, The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1915. Source: https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/first-world-war-recruitment-posters	7
Figure 4: French stamp, Banque de Mulhouse, 1920. Source: http://tdm.vo.qc.ca/affiches/1418/1402.htm	7
Figure 5: 'Combatants and non-combatants in the French armies on the Western Front, 1916-19'	13
Figure 6 : 'Violentes réactions', <i>Le Matin</i> , 3 September 1915	69
Figure 7: 'La Popote en Plein Air', <i>Le Matin</i> , 11 November 1915	71
Figure 8: 'La Chasse Aux Embusqués', <i>L'Humanité</i> , 21 November 1914	72
Figure 9: 'La Politique: I. Les Embusqués et les Embusqueurs', <i>Action Française</i> , 3 May 1915	73
Figure 10 : 'Les Auxiliaires', <i>Le Matin</i> , 4 February 1915	75
Figures 11 and 12: 'L'Utilisation Rationnelle des Hommes', <i>L'Humanité</i> , 9 May 1915	77
Figure 13: 'La Vérité sur les sections d'Infirmiers: Ce qu'elles font, ce qu'elles valent', <i>L'Humanité</i> , 7 April 1915	90
Figure 14: 'Medical Practitioners for the Army', <i>Manchester Guardian</i> , 18 September 1915	92
Figure 15: 'Dans le service de Santé', <i>L'Humanité</i> , 6 June 1916	92
Figure 16: 'Les insignes des officiers', <i>Le Matin</i> , 26 April 1915	95

Figure 17: ‘La Conscription en Angleterre’, <i>L’Humanité</i> , 19 May 1916.....	103
Figure 18: ‘Heroes. Response To The Ideal’, <i>The Times</i> , 18 August 1917.....	106
Figure 19: ‘Generals Act as Stretcher-Bearers’, <i>The Times</i> , 22 June 1918.....	108
Figure 20: ‘ <i>Be Ready, Join Now</i> ’ recruitment poster, The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1915. Source: https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1719009	153
Figure 21: <i>Emprunt de la Libération: On Les A</i> , French stamp, London County and Westminster Bank Paris Ltd., Firmin Bouisset, 1918. Source: https://www.loc.gov/item/99613761/	153

Introduction

When we consider the First World War what are the images that come to mind? In popular discourse, most British and French people will mention the trenches, the mud, death, and of course the weapons.¹ As Dan Todman has noted about the First World War, ‘many [people grew up] with its echoes resounding in their ears.’² Its memory continues to echo in British and French culture, particularly during its centenary. One hundred years after the end of the conflict, the Great War in both Britain and France is often depicted by featuring soldiers carrying rifles or bayonets, reinforcing the idea that all enlisted men bore arms. A quick internet search for ‘First World War Centenary’ (and the French equivalent) will bring up images such as Figures 1 and 2 seen here:



*From top to bottom: Figure 1, Figure 2.*³

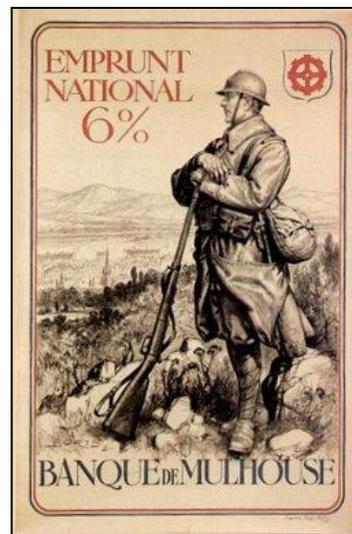
¹ See a study carried out by British Future: <<http://www.britishfuture.org/tag/wwi/>> Accessed 25.9.2019.

² Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. xi.

³ Figure 1: An image representing commemorative events in the region of Alsace, taken from a website that details cultural events in the region. *Exposition 1914 1918: Centenaire de fin de la Première Guerre Mondiale*, L'équipe Coze, 3 October 2018. Figure **Error! Main Document Only.**: Daventry and District Remembers: WWI Centenary Commemorations 1918-2018, Daventry District Council, 2018.

When not drawing on images of death, popular portrayals of men in the First World War almost always reference weaponry in some way. As shown in the images above, in France and Britain, when considering the centenary, regional commemoration projects frequently chose a soldier carrying a bayonet as the symbolic image of the conflict. This typifies and contributes to the invisibility of non-combatant, enlisted men in the memory of the conflict.

Images of soldiers with weaponry were commonplace during the war itself, shown in posters and stamps such as Figures 3 and 4 below. Its ubiquity meant that weaponry no longer represented an object associated only with combat, but appeared as a part of the soldier himself, as a kind of extra limb - one which truly made him a man in the eyes of the public. The prevalence of such images normalised the role of the soldier, depicting him as a wartime ‘everyman’. This continued even after the war, as seen in Figure 4, a poster advertising bank loans that was produced in 1920.



From left to right: Figure 3, Figure 4.⁴

These images implied that the only acceptable wartime job for a man was to be a soldier, or, more specifically, a combatant. It became the dominant model of national identity for men of military age and endowed soldiers with considerable prestige or ‘cultural capital’. This ubiquitous imagery evoked the evolving status quo during this period, in which the expected and most respected

⁴ Figure 3: ‘Step into Your Place’ Recruitment Poster, The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1915. Figure 4: Emprunt National 6%, French stamp, Banque de Mulhouse, 1920.

profession for a young man was a role in the armed forces. Of course, studies of Conscientious Objectors during the Great War have shown that this was not felt across all sections of society, but it was certainly the most widely accepted.⁵ Some historians have shown that for men who were too old to enlist, they endeavoured to move their roles from that of a spectator to one that was more actively involved in the war, suggesting that for some men accepted wartime roles existed outside of the limited parameters of an enlisted soldier.⁶ In this way, wartime duty was for men seen to be enlistment in the armed forces. Wartime duty had inextricable links to citizenship in both Britain and France as the right to citizenship of one's country was understood to be dependent upon one's willingness to do one's duty.⁷ Furthermore, as I will demonstrate, the soldier's gun and bayonet became associated with overtones of sexuality, masculinity and virility.⁸ Consequently, a lack of weaponry highlighted the distinctive and separate identity of non-combatants, and differentiated them from their combatant comrades. Their apparent liminal position, between armed soldier and unarmed civilian, and uncertain masculine status will be investigated throughout the thesis.

Research Questions

This thesis will analyse the representation of bearing arms and other prerequisites of martial masculinity to explore how and why non-combatants have historically been denied the same masculine standing as their arms-bearing comrades. In doing so, I will explore contemporary popular understandings of masculinity in warfare and their depictions, both in media such as wartime fiction and newspaper reports, and in the writings of French and British non-combatants

⁵ Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service during the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) will be instrumental to this thesis' examination of non-combatants and the Non Combatant Corps, which is discussed in chapter 1. See also Nicoletta Gullace, 'White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War', in *Twentieth-Century British Studies*, Volume 36 Issue 2, April 1997, pp-178-206.

⁶ Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front 1914-18* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2013).

⁷ See Helen B. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) for a discussion of citizenship and soldiering in Britain during the conflict. In the French case, see Leonard Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁸ Nicoletta Gullace, in her work, *Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the First World War* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), regarding the suffragette movement during the conflict, argues that women were seen as not having the right to claim full citizenship in Britain due to their not bearing arms. The problem for non-combatant men, therefore, without the right to bear arms under the terms of the Geneva Convention, was such that not only was their masculinity threatened by their lack of weaponry, but their citizenship of the country for which they were going to war was menaced, too.

enlisted during the conflict. This thesis contributes to recent scholarship in the fields of masculinity studies and First World War studies by unveiling the roles played by non-combatant men during the war and examining how they were perceived in relation to the contemporary ideals of masculinity that relied so heavily on combat, and therefore on weaponry. I will analyse the roles of non-combatant, enlisted men including stretcher-bearers and bandsmen in France and Britain both through the lens of popular culture and their own writings.

In this thesis, I will investigate and seek to answer a number of questions relating to perceptions of unarmed, enlisted men and their masculinity during the conflict. Given that popular opinion during the war was important to the peoples and particularly the governments of Britain and France, I will examine the main portrayals of non-combatant, enlisted men, and therefore their standing in relation to contemporary hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, as a comparative study, this thesis will outline and analyse any similarities or differences in attitudes towards these men between the two countries. Of course, the First World War was a conflict of many changes and evolutions. In light of this, I will also interrogate how attitudes towards non-combatant men evolved in Britain and France during the wartime and post-war years. Finally, drawing on contemporary popular discourse surrounding martial masculinity, I will consider how non-combatant, enlisted men understood their own masculinity, and how this is shown in their writings.

Literature Review: Non-Combatants in the French and British armed forces

Historiography concentrating on non-combatant, enlisted men in the French and British armies is a growing field. Most of the historiography concentrating on the armies themselves has until recently focused on those who bore arms. Regarding the French army, non-combatant roles are often mentioned as a sidenote, or are simply discussed in terms of their numbers within the entire army in a more generalised discussion of the organisation as a whole. Historian Philippe Boulanger has discussed the French army and its organisation and the ways in which men were conscripted and mobilised throughout the war.⁹ His accounts include the conscription of men into the *Services de Santé*, among other services such as the Navy and engineers to provide as comprehensive as possible an overview of the French forces. Other scholarship has focused on the hierarchy of the

⁹ Philippe Boulanger, *La France Devant la Conscription : Géographie Historique d'une Institution Républicaine, 1914-1922* (Commission Française d'Histoire Militaire, 2001).

army in terms of discipline and the ways in which armies maintained – or enforced – morale.¹⁰ Alexander Watson's work in particular shows the numbers of men who were mobilised across the European nations during the war with a focus on the phenomenon of volunteering over the course of the war. He has suggested that the numbers of men who were mobilised and conscripted in Britain and France during the conflict had their roots in socially-entrenched ideals of duty to the nation.¹¹ Socio-cultural overviews of popular sentiment in France at the outbreak of the war has been explored by Jean-Jacques Becker in *1914: Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre*.¹² Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker have demonstrated the wide-ranging effects of the war throughout the following years, and how France and her soldiers reacted to the traumas that indelibly affected their nation.¹³ Leonard Smith has added to historiography of the French military with a detailed work on the methods of mobilisation and its links to citizenship and contemporary understandings of masculinity in France, and greatly informs this thesis.¹⁴ While these works are wide-ranging and offer invaluable insights into the ways in which the French population and those enlisted behaved throughout the war, and how viewpoints regarding its necessity changed during the conflict, most do not focus on non-combatant experiences and the differences in their treatment in comparison to those of their combatant comrades. Ridel's work is one of the very few that specifically concentrates on the non-combatant in the French army and their treatment as 'shirkers' by many of those around them.¹⁵ In the British case, Jessica Meyer's work on non-combatant masculinity during the Great War examines perceptions of martial masculinity within the Royal Army Medical Corps, and investigates claims of shirking levelled at

¹⁰ For an examination of military discipline, see Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien, *A Vos Ordres ? : La Relation d'Autorité dans l'Armée Française de la Grande Guerre* (Paris : Editions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2011).

¹¹ Alexander Watson, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the Great War: a European Phenomenon?', in *War Volunteering in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Second World War*, ed. by C. G. Krüger, S. Levsen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 165-167 (180).

¹² Jean-Jacques Becker, *1914 : Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre* (Paris: Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1977). In the French case, further investigations have been undertaken by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, Leonard V. Smith, and Charles Ridel, among others. Whilst scholars such as Catriona Pennell and Adrian Gregory have focused on similar questions in the British case.

¹³ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *14-18 Understanding the Great War* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

¹⁴ Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self*. This work outlines the experiences of French soldiers in the trenches and how they sought to make sense of their experiences.

¹⁵ Charles Ridel, *Les embusqués* (Armand Colin : Paris, 2007). Insulting somebody by calling them a shirker was a charge levelled at people who were seemingly avoiding their duty to their countries during wartime. This was not restricted to those who could not, or would not, take on a combatant role within the army, but was also directed at those who profited from their positions, or were seen to be using their position to avoid the danger of battle.

male, militarised caregivers.¹⁶ Emily Mayhew's work also considers the masculinity of non-combatant men in her examination of the evacuation route from the Western Front during the Great War.¹⁷ Mayhew's work analyses male and female caregivers and medical personnel along the evacuation route and the perceptions of their roles during wartime. As such, previous scholarly investigations have considered representations of male, militarised caregivers, however they do not present a comparison of these experiences; this thesis steps in to fill this gap in the historiography.¹⁸

The nature of assigning men to non-combatant roles differed greatly between the British and French armies, due in large part to the ways in which the armies were mobilised. As Elizabeth Greenhalgh has noted, France's professional army that existed under the Emperor Louis Napoleon was dismantled and was 'replaced by a republican conscript army, whose soldiers accepted compulsory military service as the male citizen's duty.'¹⁹ In France men were assigned to non-combatant roles according to the way in which National Service was organised; men were able to choose which branch of the army in which they wanted to spend their National Service. There were some exceptions to this rule, and it was possible to request placement in the infantry rather than in the army band. This also meant that if they wished to serve in the *Services de Santé* then they were allowed to do so, providing that they fulfilled the requirements of the particular role. For example, a peacetime male nurse would be able to work in the same role within the structure of the armed forces, as they were judged to already have the necessary medical knowledge. As I will show later in the thesis, men who were judged to be competent in a musical instrument could join the army band, and they were then trained as stretcher-bearers alongside their musical training. Therefore, when war broke out in 1914 men who had completed – or were already engaged in – National Service were automatically called up to fight in the roles in which they were trained. Men who had most recently completed their National Service were mobilised first, with later classes being called up as the need for larger numbers of men became more apparent.

¹⁶ Jessica Meyer, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁷ Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: The Long Journey Home from the Great War* (Oxford: The Bodley Head, 2013).

¹⁸ I have presented here a small number of the works whose ideas contribute most to this thesis. For a larger overview of the historiography see: *Writing the Great War: The Historiography of World War I from 1918 to the Present*, ed. by Christoph Cornelissen and Arndt Weinrich (New York: Berghan Books, 2020).

¹⁹ Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *The French Army in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 2.

In Britain, however, National Service in the form of conscription was not introduced until 1916 when the Military Service Act was passed by Parliament. Prior to the introduction of this Act, the British army had relied upon volunteerism to provide the numbers of men needed for the conflict.²⁰ Non-combatants were conscripted into the Non-Combatant Corps, which was created in 1916 following the introduction of the Military Service Act. In the British army, non-combatants such as those in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) were drawn from newly conscripted men whose ‘age and health would previously have been considered less than suitable for any form of military service.’²¹ This was done to replace men who were deemed to meet the physical requirements for combatant service, and who were ‘combed out’ and transferred to active units.²² As well as these men in the RAMC and others who worked behind the lines as male nurses, orderlies, and doctors, others were enlisted as stretcher-bearers and army bandsmen in a similar fashion to that described above in the French army. While men with a musical talent were not able to specifically choose to enlist into the army band in Britain, it did occur on a smaller scale that musicians were ‘combed out’ and were transferred from combatant roles to non-arms bearing roles within the army band.²³

Over the course of the conflict, wounding and fatalities necessitated the movement of effectives between different roles, to ensure that each unit had enough fighting men to go into battle, and enough men who were medically trained to care for their comrades and provide care when needed. The chaos of warfare and constant movement of men, not least due to illnesses that were rampant in the trenches as well as wounding and fatalities, meant that movement between roles was fluid and constantly changing, but not always officially recorded. It has proven difficult for scholars of the First World War to accurately show how many men were engaged in any particular non-combatant role at any one time. However, the table below shows that in the French army engaged on the Western Front, the number of non-combatants as a percentage of the total number of soldiers present steadily increased between 1916 and 1918.²⁴ It is interesting to note that though the number of combatants decreases by 373,000 between January 1916 and January 1918, the number of non-

²⁰ See Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly (eds.), *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 417.

²¹ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 65.

²² Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 64.

²³ This is seen in William Cook’s memoir, as discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

²⁴ John Horne, ‘L’Impôt du Sang: Republican Rhetoric and Industrial Warfare in France, 1914-18’ in *Social History*, 14.2 (1983), pp. 201-223 (203).

combatants increases by 179,000. We can infer from these figures that the movement of men between combatant and non-combatant roles was relatively high, though it must not be forgotten that the increase in non-combatant numbers could also have been due to large numbers of men from the *Service de Santé* being moved to the Western Front from behind the lines or from other theatres. In the latter stages of the war, the numbers of French men who applied to enlist in the infantry declined, while applications sections of the army further away from the trenches increased.²⁵ André Loez has linked this to what he terms ‘exit strategies’ – men who wished to ‘avoid the high casualty rates of infantry combat.’²⁶ This could be another reason that the number of non-combatants increased on the Western Front, though it seems to be contra-indicative given that being transferred from an infantry unit to a non-combatant role would not ultimately decrease their risk of mortality in the front lines, and so would therefore argue that it illustrates the increasing need for medical services and other non-combatant roles.

Table 1. Combatants and non-combatants in the French armies on the Western Front, 1916–18

	<i>Combatants</i>	<i>Non-combatants</i>	<i>Non-combatants as percentage of total</i>
January 1916	2,243,000	551,000	19.7%
July 1916	2,214,000	564,000	20.3%
January 1917	2,080,000	653,000	23.9%
July 1917	2,087,000	641,000	23.5%
January 1918	1,870,000	730,000	28.0%

Source: SHAT 7N 432.

*Figure 5.*²⁷

In *L'Impôt du Sang*, Horne argues:

²⁵ Boulanger, *La France Devant la Conscription*, p. 130.

²⁶ André Loez, ‘Between Acceptance and Refusal: Soldiers’ Attitudes Towards War’, in *1914-1918- online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, (Freie Universität Berlin: Berlin, 2014), p. 8.
DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10461.

²⁷ *Figure 5*, ‘Combatants and Non-Combatants in the French armies on the Western Front, 1916-18, Service Historique de l’Armée de Terre (SHAT), 7N 432 (Château de Vincennes, Paris).

the necessary allocation of *mobilisés* to such a diversity of functions within the army and on the home front comprehensively breached the principle of equal obligation to the military, and especially combatant, service – just as the *impôt du sang* was turning from metaphor into reality. The manpower crisis, in other words, was about equality as much as numbers.²⁸

Here Horne makes the point that as the manpower crisis deepened, fluidity between roles became a necessity. It did not, however, remove any existing resentment combatants felt towards their unarmed comrades; it may even have worsened due to the tensions surrounding those who had untruthfully declared themselves as skilled in order to return to munitions factories, which then had the effect of tarring all those working in unarmed positions with the same brush.²⁹

Historians including Jessica Meyer, Mark Harrison, and Ian Whitehead have contributed to the social and cultural understandings of the body – particularly the male body – during wartime and have shone a light on the interactions between the wounded body and the medical caregiver, showing how masculinity and roles that had previously been thought of as ‘feminised’ such as nursing and caring, came to be re-presented and re-thought. In *An Equal Burden*, Jessica Meyer outlines the historiography and evolving nature of studies focusing on medical men in the British Army during the conflict, showing how studies now challenge the accepted view that medicine triumphed during the conflict due to the technological advances that wrought such terrible damage upon men’s bodies.³⁰ Other works, such as Ian Whitehead’s *Doctors in the Great War* focus on doctors’ experiences of treating wounded bodies, and the unintended consequences of withdrawing so many medical men from their work among the civilian population.³¹ Mark Harrison has examined the impacts of wounds and infections upon improved sanitation throughout the British army and has undertaken many studies of military medicine and the interplay between modernism and warfare in the twentieth century.³² These works however, have a tendency to concentrate on medical change and the ways in which doctors were represented and seen within the hierarchy of the army, whereas this thesis focuses on those lower down the military – and often social – order. It therefore adds to these studies which have impacted understandings of enlisted, unarmed men

²⁸ Horne, *L’Impôt du Sang*, p. 203.

²⁹ I discuss the public sentiment regarding ‘shirkers’ and ‘*embusqués*’, in more detail chapter one of this thesis.

³⁰ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*.

³¹ Ian R. Whitehead, *Doctors in the Great War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1999).

³² Mark Harrison, ‘The Medicalization of War – the Militarization of Medicine’, *Social History of Medicine* 9 (1996), pp. 267-276 (268). DOI: 10.1093/shm/9.2.267.

in the British army, and builds upon Meyer's work which in particular delineates the ways in which men entered into the RAMC, and the problems that this posed, noting that it was a requirement of officers in the Corps to hold a medical degree, and so meant that the RAMC was 'dominated by middle-class professionals'.³³ However, Meyer also notes that the RAMC was peculiar in that the class system could not be mapped onto the hierarchy of the Corps in the same way as it could for other sections of the British Army. This was due to requirements of the Corps that included, but were not limited to, education, age, and the existence of a large variety of such as porters and stretcher-bearers that were included under its banner.³⁴

It has been shown that recruitment into non-combatant service within the RAMC was fraught with tensions, whether it be the recruitment of doctors who were taken away from civilian service, to women who wished to join as doctors or nurses, or the fact that 'RAMC personnel of all ranks were considered by the military authorities to be decidedly less useful than combatants.'³⁵ In a similar way to the French army, bandsmen in the British army were also used as stretcher-bearers, contributing to the ways in which men were enlisted or conscripted into this unarmed role. Meyer goes on to outline that men were drafted into roles as stretcher-bearers largely by the Regimental Medical Officers who oversaw their training, and the RAMC(T) – the Territorial branch of the RAMC.³⁶ Again, the manpower crisis impacted the recruitment methods of the RAMC much like it did the rest of the British army and the French army, but in the British case, the numbers of men joining the RAMC were restricted; 'the closing of direct recruitment mean that the choice to serve in the unit was no longer available to volunteers after 1914.'³⁷ This necessarily meant that the numbers of men working as stretcher-bearers in the British army had to come from a movement of effectives from combatant to non-combatant roles, whether it be through direct re-deployment or those men who had been wounded and following their recuperation were 'recycled', meaning that they no longer were sufficiently fit to be a combatant, but were instead moved into the role of stretcher-bearer.

We can clearly see that the movement of men between combatant and non-combatant roles was common to both the French and British armies during the conflict and was dictated in part by the

³³ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 15.

³⁴ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 16.

³⁵ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 59.

³⁶ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 63.

³⁷ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 63.

technological advances of the conflict. The more bodies were wounded, the more men were taken away from combatant service. These wounded men needed more medical caregivers meaning that the numbers of unarmed soldiers had to be increased. This was done either by redirecting effectives into non-combatant roles, or by encouraging men who were no longer deemed capable of combatant service to carry on their duty to the nation by caring for their comrades. Therefore, as the numbers of non-combatant, enlisted men increased over the course of the war, it is imperative that the historiography of the war addresses their war experiences and their positions within the French and British armed forces. The number of men represented therefore constitutes a group which needs further study and representation within the historiography of the war. This thesis will answer that need by offering a comparative examination of their representations and experiences during the conflict. To do so, I will now situate this investigation of non-combatant masculinity within the broader fields of war and gender studies, before moving to pre-war notions of masculinity.

War, Gender and Masculinity

Gender studies has been at the forefront of scholarly consciousness for decades, in part thanks to Simone de Beauvoir's seminal text *Le Deuxième Sexe*, published in 1949. Since the publication of de Beauvoir's text, there has been an abundance of scholarly writing surrounding the importance of gender and gender theory. Commenting on the development of masculinity studies, John Tosh has shown that following the introduction of gender studies, scholars of masculinity have turned away from focusing solely on masculinity as a unit. He has argued that masculinity studies has more recently begun to concentrate on 'experience and subjectivity, while recognising that experience is always mediated through cultural understandings.'³⁸ Tracing the development of the concept of gender up to the present day has given birth to many different scholarly positions, from a biological determinist approach, to sociological and anthropological approaches, to name but a few. The biological determinist perspective was called into question by prominent thinkers such as de Beauvoir, who stated: 'on ne naît pas femme, on le devient'.³⁹ It is this stance that this thesis will take in investigating the masculinity of unarmed, enlisted men during the Great War, demonstrating how gender is constructed by ideologies present in the period, culture, and society

³⁸ John Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?', in *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, Arnold, J., and S. Brady (eds.), (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 17-134 (31). See also John H. Arnold and Sean Brady's introduction in the same volume, pp. 1-16.

³⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 13.

in which a person lives. On social gender theory, R.W. Connell suggests that there are two main theories at play: the sex-role theory, concentrating on the difference between the sexes and how social norms and expectations play out in the performance and maintenance of gendered norms; and the role of power, which focuses on gender differences and power struggles between men and women.⁴⁰ Thus, a social constructivist framework will be essential to this study in order to trace the ways in which the assigned gender roles of men and women were both shored up and challenged during the years of the conflict. This will inform my understanding of the masculine status of men who were denied the traditional martially masculine standing of the armed soldier, and some of whom took on the conventionally feminised role of caregiver in the French and British armies.

Judith Butler has been one of the most influential gender theorists of recent years. Throughout this study I will be drawing on the Butlerian notion of gender as performance through the bearing of arms. In her book *Gender Trouble*, Butler highlights the inherently malleable nature of gender, and identity itself:

[Acts], gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.⁴¹

The suggestion here is that a coherent identity is thereby linked to the ways in which society understands the nature of the body. However, rather than gender being constructed from the inside of the body, outwards (as is suggested by biological determinism), Butler states that it is the body as a canvas, upon which things are projected that in turn showcase the internal, gendered core, and thus a person's very identity. Butler is firm in declaring that the body is the stage on which the theatre of gender identity is played out, through 'acting the part' of a masculine or feminine being. This concept will aid my understanding of how notions of gender were socially constructed in the early decades of the twentieth century and how they were moulded to fit wartime conditions. I will demonstrate that gender identity was dependent upon men performing certain roles, learning how

⁴⁰ R.W. Connell, 'Theorizing Gender', in *Sociology* Vol. 19, No. 2, (1985), pp. 260-272.

⁴¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 185.

to perform different types of masculinity by employing masculine and feminine traits in various spaces, according to their position in the military hierarchy. Butler goes further to note that:

[Gender] is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.⁴²

The corporeal signifiers Butler refers to are those constructed by social expectations, but they can never be fully achieved. In this thesis I will use the idea of corporeal signifiers of gender identity to argue that the repetitive acts that soldiers performed during the war gave rise to a martial masculinity that did not wholly adhere to previous models of masculine identity. In the context of the conflict, the corporeal signifiers that I will concentrate on are those such as the bearing of arms, more specifically a rifle or bayonet, the wearing of a uniform and displays of strength. I will argue that non-combatant, enlisted men positioned themselves as masculine during wartime by emphasising those aspects of masculinity that they were able to successfully accomplish, and by performing acts that would firmly root them outside the realm of those who were deemed to be shirking their wartime duties.

Like Butler, Stefan Horlacher comments on the innate instability of gender: ‘[G]ender identity could probably be best conceived of as a narration that is constantly characterized by a certain fluidity or instability, by a precarious emplotment and a negotiation of change and mutability, with the postulation of a true gender identity being nothing but a regulatory fiction [...]’⁴³ Horlacher asserts that gender identity is nothing but a ‘fiction’ and supports the idea that it is inherently linked to culture. The construction of one’s gender is therefore a creative process; it is constantly being worked and re-worked, in order to live up to the expectations of a particular audience – in this case, society at large. Horlacher’s insights into how gender is negotiated by individuals will frame my readings of the sources, allowing me to investigate how the narration of wartime from the point of view of the non-combatants may have been unconsciously gendered through their change in situation.

⁴² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 191.

⁴³ Stefan Horlacher, ‘Configuring Masculinity’, in *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Rodopi, 2015), pp. 1-10 (5).

Many men in the First World War were enlisted in non-combatant, militarised-caregiving roles such as stretcher-bearers, medics and bandsmen. This meant that they were in what was considered a ‘feminine’ role, given the long-standing, traditional views of caring and healing as a ‘maternal’ vocation.⁴⁴ Horlacher’s work will aid me in investigating whether this struggle was reflected in their personal writings, and whether this evolved over the course of the conflict. Further, this framework will encourage a consideration of performativity through writing and performance on a daily basis through the conflict. Did the non-combatants’ writings allow them to express a ‘fantasy masculinity’ that was restricted in the day-to-day life of the trenches? Was the continuation of the gendered family binary – the man as the head of the house and protector of the family, the woman as the mother and primary caregiver – through letters an important way in which male non-combatants were able to remember and enforce their masculinity?

Building on Horlacher’s assertions regarding the importance of narration to the construction of gender within the context of the conflict, Graham Dawson explores narration through storytelling and imagination. His work on British memory of the war, including links between narration and identity will provide an important framework for this thesis. Dawson identifies the endemic nature of imagination within the culture of storytelling that is also bound up in ideas of memory, asserting that storytelling is a way in which the individual is enabled to ‘shape’ and organise experience, and subconsciously alter the story in order to provide the audience with the version that most suits the storyteller’s needs.⁴⁵ It is a way in which the individual has the capacity to imagine different scenes and scenarios and – consciously or subconsciously – alter the story in order to project the version of the self that is deemed most appropriate or satisfying. Dawson summarises:

The social recognition offered within any specific public will be intimately related to the cultural values that it holds in common, and exercises a determining influence upon the way a narrative may be told, and, therefore, upon the kind of composure that it makes possible. The narrative resource of a culture – its repertoire of shared and recognized forms – therefore functions as a currency of recognizable social identities.⁴⁶

Dawson’s use of the notion of currency is indicative of the value placed on adhering to recognisable social norms. It suggests that the value of the person, as seen through the eyes of their social surroundings is inextricably linked to the extent to which they are able to conform to

⁴⁴ See Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁴⁵ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 22

⁴⁶ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 23.

accepted versions of gendered identity. Reading the personal writings of British and French non-combatants through this lens will unveil the currencies by which the martial masculinity of unarmed, enlisted men was valued.

Given the potential struggles of identifying as a particular gender, as outlined by scholars such as Butler, Horlacher, and Dawson, it is clear that the struggle to conform is based upon, or at the very least exacerbated by, the characteristics assigned to a particular gender.⁴⁷ Though gender studies explores how gender roles are constructed and used to define the relationships between the sexes, the field of masculinity studies is based upon how social norms affect the ways that masculinity is understood and performed.⁴⁸ This therefore affects the ways in which people who identify as masculine behave and the characteristics they choose to embody. Dawson suggests that:

As *imagined* forms, masculinities are at once ‘made up’ by creative cultural activity and yet materialize in the social world as structured forms with real effects upon both women and men. As *narrative* forms of imagining, they exist in a temporal dimension of flux and dynamic contradictions, within which men make efforts towards a degree of continuity.⁴⁹

It is therefore crucial to identify the characteristics that were combined to make up the masculine ideal during the First World War. As men who were enlisted in the armed forces, both combatants and non-combatants sought to find continuity with the dominant characteristics of martial masculinity during the period. When gender stereotypes were based upon what we would now recognise as sex-role theory, that is, gender and one’s role in society as linked to one’s biological sex, masculinity – in Britain in particular – was based upon the long-standing traditions of patriarchy. In other words, masculinity was rooted in the role of the male head of the household as provider, protector and leader. Historically, masculinity has been associated with power and, in

⁴⁷ The importance of masculinity studies, however, has only relatively recently been introduced into scholarly consciousness, in part a reactionary study due to the important emergence of feminist theory. Masculinity studies and war studies have recently begun to explore masculinity in terms of the military hierarchy, and the field of First World War studies has produced a number of important texts over the last ten years. Studies of the body and identity have long intersected with such work, meaning that our understanding of the impact of the First World War on people’s bodies, their identities and consequently on understandings of martial masculinities has grown and diversified considerably.

⁴⁸ Recent work such as Jessica Meyer’s, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019) and Benoît Boucard’s *Brancardiers!: Des Soldats de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Ysec Éditions, 2015) have analysed the roles of unarmed, men during the conflict in Britain and France respectively, however this thesis will be the first comparative analysis of non-combatant roles in the two countries.

⁴⁹ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 22.

some cases, domination, leaving the position of the submissive counterpart to the ‘feminine’ woman, who has traditionally been seen as caring, healing and in need of protection. Connell and James Messerschmidt have shown, however, that hegemonic masculinity was ‘[...] normative. It embodied the currently most honored [sic] way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it [...]’.⁵⁰ This thesis will show that although masculinity during the First World War was rooted in traditional elements of masculinity, non-combatants also drew on traditionally feminine characteristics such as caregiver and healer in how they positioned themselves, and in how they understood their own wartime identities.

What we have seen then, is that masculinity itself is a difficult concept that is not fixed in time and space. In his book, *Cultures of Masculinity*, Tim Edwards delineates the difficulty of categorising masculinity studies (and therefore masculinity itself), stating that, ‘it is [not] easy to define, often slipping across interdisciplinary lines [...] A common theme, however, is the importance of representation and its connection with wider questions of change and continuity in contemporary, and in some more historical, masculinities and identities.’⁵¹ Tosh also makes the point that, ‘Identity is multiple, porous and contingent. [...] Hence historians do not so much attempt a history of masculinity as explore the relationship between men’s gender and other ways in which their identity is structured.’⁵² This thesis builds upon these assertions by problematising the concept of traditional masculinity within the historical context of the First World War. Working to show how men’s identities were reshaped and re-understood during the conflict will in turn demonstrate how the contemporary accepted understandings of masculinity were also remoulded and redefined.

Gender in First World War studies

Clearly defining what masculinity was during the First World War is complicated. This is partly due to the varied influences on social norms during this period, but it was also due to the very nature of gender and therefore masculinity itself; its constantly changing, intangible forms constitute a distinct problem for scholars to investigate. This is exacerbated when coupled with the importance of violence to the codes of masculinity during warfare, as the nature of what non-combatant masculinity during the conflict was, and thus how it was perceived, becomes even

⁵⁰ R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’, in *Gender and Society*, 6, 19 (2005), pp. 829-859 (832).

⁵¹ Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.2.

⁵² Tosh, ‘The History of Masculinity’, p. 23.

murkier. As Dawson suggests, ‘Since the demands and recognitions of social life are not uniform but many-faceted and contradictory, the achievement of an absolutely unified and coherent social identity, for masculinity as for femininity, is an impossibility.’⁵³ This suggests then that the very concept of masculinity was not uniform, though as I have noted it was based on certain characteristics that I have previously outlined. I will use Joanna Bourke’s assertion that femininity in Britain prior to the Great War was linked to gentleness and caring, and masculinity to stoicism and bravery, as both a touchstone and a starting point.⁵⁴

Before the Great War, dominance in warfare had generally been associated with success in hand-to-hand combat, paying homage to the chivalry of knights and armies with their swords and cavalry charges. Bourke notes:

These martial myths depended upon notions of intimacy, chivalry and skill for their appeal. The ability of combatants to imagine themselves as engaged in honourable combat not totally unlike that experienced by chivalrous knights of the past was crucial to their sense of pride and pleasure. Although modern slaughter was typically anonymous, dirty and banal, by conjuring up myths of chivalry [...] the myth of the duellist, the knight and the expert maintained an indistinguishable appeal throughout the century. Chivalry was evoked to stifle the fears of senseless violence; intimacy was substituted for confusing anonymity; skilfulness was imposed to dispel numbing monotony.⁵⁵

Here Bourke asserts that *intimacy* was a main requisite for chivalry. Intimacy here is used as a byword for ‘hand-to-hand’ combat, however it could be used in my project as a way of non-combatants achieving a certain chivalric, heroic status. Their intimacy with those they were aiding – here meaning wounded or deceased combatants on the battlefield and in the field hospitals – could suggest that they were afforded a level of chivalry that was denied to combatants by the industrialisation of warfare during this period.⁵⁶ Thus it appears that the hegemonic masculinity at work during times of peace was forced to change during warfare, particularly when one notes the absence of women in the trenches. Moreover, it was not simply the men whose roles were changed

⁵³ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁵ Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 67-68, bold mine.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of industrialisation and the Great War, see Trevor Gordon Wilson (2001), "Conflict, Technology, and the Impact of Industrialization: The Great War 1914-18", *Journal of strategic studies* (0140-2390).

during the war. In his seminal work *Soldier Heroes*, Dawson comments on the effect that this had upon the nation as a whole:

Within nationalist discourse, martial masculinity was complemented by a vision of domestic femininity, at home with the children and requiring protection. The nation itself came to be conceived as a gendered entity, analysis of which is necessarily bound up with the theorizing of dominant, hegemonic versions of masculinity, femininity and sexual difference.⁵⁷

Here, Dawson suggests that it is the country for which one is fighting which is feminised. Not only is the notion of protection as a masculine ideal directed towards the family, but it is seen that the land itself was under attack and was an extension of the feminine symbol of the home. Therefore, it is arguable that the ‘fight’ itself was deemed more important than ever and gave rise to how ‘being there’ and being a combatant in particular, was imbued with nationalist importance, in both France and Britain during this period. Of course, this is most clearly representative of a new kind of hegemonic masculinity associated with the trenches, a masculinity that this thesis will scrutinise. Samuel Hynes has argued that, ‘[The] phrase [“the actual killing”] focuses and restricts war not only to the killing but to the places where killing is done, and ignores all the important but noncombatant business of war-making that takes place away from battlefields [...]’.⁵⁸ This shows us that popularly, understandings of war have been focused on ‘the actual killing’ thus limiting studies to combatant roles. Moreover, it suggests that only killing happened in the front lines. Hynes notes the importance of ‘noncombatant business,’ but he also refers to it as taking place away from the battlefield. Perhaps unconsciously, here Hynes links ‘being there’ to ‘the actual killing’, thereby limiting the ability of non-combatant, enlisted men in the front lines whose jobs were not to kill the enemy, to attain the status of the martially masculine soldier.

In the homosocial environment of the front lines during the First World War, the gendered separation between men and women came to be reflected in the separation between soldiers and civilians. David H.J. Morgan has stated that the division between male and female is in fact *brought about* by war and the importance of combat.⁵⁹ Morgan asserts that ‘being a warrior’ is one of the ways in which the separation between man and woman, and soldier and civilian, is

⁵⁷ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), p. xii.

⁵⁹ David H.J. Morgan, ‘Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities’, *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. by Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (eds.) (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 165-182.

demonstrated most clearly. He suggests that both war and the male body have integral roles to play in assigning a gender-role. Additionally, this also implies that war acts as a kind of puberty, in which men fully ‘come into’ their bodies and therefore into their manhood, and by extension masculinity. Similarly, Leonard Smith’s work on rites of passage in France during the First World War uses the concept of violence, and taking part in violence, as a way in which the liminal stage of entering into manhood was enacted. It is violence that ‘separates the men from the boys’. Smith also argues that: ‘citizenship in France made rituals of conscription and mobilization ipso facto rites of male passage [...] Departure, whether to the barracks or the front, articulated the citizen-soldier’s relationship to the political community and his civic equality with his fellow conscripts.’⁶⁰

Joan Landes has commented on the increasing entwining of masculinity with male citizenship and military service in France.⁶¹ This was in part based on the new ideals of the Third Republic, in which all men were granted political rights (which had previously been restricted to the clergy and the nobility). As men were all granted rights, it was expected to be a symbiotic relationship between the citizen and the state, shown by men’s willingness to fight for the country and to perform their citizenship through actions such as political engagement or military service. This was continued in the introduction of the *levée en masse* of 1793 which ‘radically transformed the “masculine condition”.’⁶² This was threatened during the *fin de siècle* in both Britain and France where there was a growing sense of unease regarding the degeneration of society, linked to effeminacy and particularly to homosexuality.⁶³ Marja Härmänmaa, and Christopher Nissen have examined the evolution of fears around degeneracy during the *fin de siècle* and note that, in reaction to Naturalism which exemplified ‘straightforward depictions of nature and reality. Dismay at the fast pace of social and technological innovation led many adherents [to] less realistic movements [began] to reject faith in new beginnings of progress, and instead focus in an almost perverse way on the imagery of degeneration, artificiality and ruin.’⁶⁴ In response to the increasing

⁶⁰ Leonard Smith, *The Embattled Self*.

⁶¹ Joan Landes, ‘Republican Citizenship and Heterosocial Desire: Concepts of Masculinity in Revolutionary France’, in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 96-115 (96).

⁶² Landes, ‘Republican Citizenship and Heterosocial Desire’, p. 96.

⁶³ Barbara Caine and Glenda Sluga, *Gendering European History: 1780-1920* (Continuum: London, 2000). See also Max Simon Nordau, *Degeneration* (D. Appleton & Company: London, 1895) Translation of the original.

⁶⁴ Barbara Caine and Glenda Sluga, *Gendering European History*, p. 1.

outrage against the perceived degeneration of society in France in the late 1800s and early 1900s, French society turned towards earlier ideals of masculinity as explicitly linked to citizenship and warfare. This was propelled to the forefront of popular consciousness by the shock of the defeat of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, as it was popularly understood that the war was lost due to the degeneration of the French people. As such, in the years prior to the outbreak of the Great War in France, there had been a drive to regain the ideal state of martial superiority. This, then, led to a return to understandings of masculinity as intrinsically linked with violence as part of military service.

Nicoletta Gullace has argued that during the first two years of the first world war, ‘enlisting became, at least symbolically, the inceptive moment of citizenship, [and so] it was rhetorically impossible to be a young man of military age, a loyal British subject, and unenlisted.’⁶⁵ This need to enlist and actively participate in warfare as an intrinsic element of citizenship in Britain during this period was mirrored in France, where it was seen as a transition into adulthood. Leonard Smith argues that the act of going to war itself was in fact an ‘eradication’ of the former identities of these young men and that the act in itself, ‘[celebrated and marked] the end of their lives as preadult, “passive” citizens.’⁶⁶ War was a rite of passage through which young males were afforded the opportunity to enter into manhood. War was at once a space in which masculinity was asserted, and a pedestal upon which masculinity was endowed. Smith argues that the rites of passage soldiers experienced during mobilization encouraged, and indeed required, a submersion of their individual identities into the collective identity of the French Nation.⁶⁷

This is something that Meyer has challenged in her work on British Servicemen. Meyer has shown how men expressed the variations in martial masculinities through their memoirs, and their sometimes frank accounts of the ‘unmanly’ situations in which combatants and non-combatants found themselves. Further, Meyer asserts that wartime memoirs were spaces in which men ‘were able to reconstruct their masculine identities as soldier through redefinitions of the masculine ideals that warfare challenged.’⁶⁸ This thesis fills a gap in existing scholarship by building upon Meyer’s work by looking at writings of French non-combatants alongside those of British men,

⁶⁵ Nicoletta Gullace, *“The Blood of Our Sons”*, p. 112.

⁶⁶ Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 23.

⁶⁷ Smith, *The Embattled Self*.

⁶⁸ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Genders and Sexualities in History Series: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 141.

adding a comparative dimension to the existing scholarship around portrayals of wartime experience and masculinity in different types of wartime writing.

This thesis adds to the work of both Smith and Meyer by offering a comparative analysis and will show that the masculine identities of non-combatant men in France and Britain were not subsumed into the collective, nor were they torn in two. Rather, they were renegotiated and redirected into something more akin to a non-combatant masculinity rather than continually striving – and failing – to attain a martial masculinity which relied too heavily on the bearing of arms for it to be possible for the unarmed, enlisted male.

It will also build upon Morgan's work on the impact of national service on masculinity, again by adding a comparative analysis of the British and French armies. Morgan comments that, due to the obligatory nature of national service, it can be seen as affording a certain level of masculinity to all men, regardless of station. However, in developing this argument, Morgan shows how it is not simply combat that separates masculine from feminine, but that this division requires a more detailed analysis of the military experience as a whole. This is due to the fluidity of roles within the military and the fact that each role needs a different characteristic in order for it to be successful, thus engendering different types of masculinity. On this note, Morgan discusses how, in combat, it is not simply the combatant who has engaged with the military, and thus it cannot simply be combatants who are afforded a martial masculinity:

Combat and noncombat. This is a dynamic and fluid distinction, and individuals may move between these military positions according to circumstances. More important, it can be maintained that the distinction becomes harder and harder to draw in the context of modern war just as the distinction between soldier and civilian becomes more blurred. People may be able to inflict considerable destruction without being in any immediate physical danger themselves, or, alternatively, they may be exposed to considerable risk without directly encountering the enemy.⁶⁹

Morgan acknowledges that during war positions are often open to change, and that it is circumstances that control one's position, not the choice of an individual. Total war, such as the First World War, did not allow the previously distinct lines between civilian and combatant, meaning that the question of 'being there' became more troublesome as a consequence. The movement between combatant and non-combatant during war reflects the fluidity of masculinity

⁶⁹ Morgan, 'Theater of War', pp. 176-77. Emphasis mine.

as well as pointing to the effect that war has on gendered roles. It therefore complicated the male/female distinction and the associated wartime roles, particularly as they have been portrayed by Margaret and Patrice Higonnet.⁷⁰ For example, at the Front during the Great War, the all-male army can be seen as suppressing the masculinity of non-combatant men by assigning them duties that would have traditionally been assigned to women. Morgan states that conflict created an opportunity in which displays of what had traditionally been seen as ‘feminine’ characteristics were no longer seen as such, and thus suggests that the ability to show violence within the context of warfare may no longer have been an essential characteristic of masculinity.⁷¹ Thus I will argue that the French and British armies of the First World War emphasised the importance, on the one hand, of violence to combat, but also at times allowed the construction of an alternate masculinity; one in which the integral feature was founded upon what had traditionally been deemed to be ‘feminine’ attributes. However, though Morgan briefly addresses the possible movement between combatant and non-combatant roles, he does not address specific non-combatant roles and the possible repercussions that arose in relationships between both groups of men on either side of this ‘masculine divide’. Moreover, Morgan does not address the possible repercussions for men engaged in a non-combatant role. Though the need for ‘feminine’ characteristics during wartime is clear, what is not clear is how it affected the men who were chosen as their embodiment.

In the case of a renegotiation of gender roles, it becomes important to address the issue of mourning the loss of a previous identity. Though Smith identifies the ‘eradication’ of one identity to make way for a new one, he does not address the stage of mourning. In her book *Precarious Life* Butler suggests that mourning in itself is a transformative experience. Mourning the loss of the familiar, straightforward male/female, masculine role/feminine role binary can be seen as one of the consequences of the absence of women in the trenches, as I have described above. Butler argues that:

Perhaps, rather, one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance. There is losing, as we know, but there is also the

⁷⁰ Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, ‘The Double Helix’, in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* ed. by Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jensen, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weisz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 31-48.

⁷¹ Morgan, ‘Theater of War’, p. 177, emphasis mine.

transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be charted or planned. One can try to choose it, but it may be that this experience deconstitutes choice at some level.⁷²

Interestingly, Butler also uses the language of submission and domination when describing the effect of loss. Here Butler is discussing the effect of losing a person – talking in the aftermath of 9/11 – but it is easy to transpose this argument onto the loss of a particular aspect of one’s identity, if we take identity as something that is has an inherent intersectionality, therefore making it unstable as its fundamental parts either come into existence or fade away. It also suggests that the re-establishment of a ‘copy’ of the traditional binary was done without choice. Does this, within the framework of a non-combatant being positioned as the submissive, suggest that masculinity therefore came down to whether the one possessing masculinity was able to effect choice over their own identity? I will show that by renegotiating a masculinity specific to their role as non-combatants, unarmed, enlisted men were able to regain a sense of power by remoulding their identity outside the hegemonic models presented in their contemporary society.

Moreover, the issue of temporary change is intriguing when one considers the hope that the war would be ‘over by Christmas’. Perhaps this outlines the initial willingness of some men to allow, for a short time, their own masculinity to be viewed as precarious or as subsumed by the collective masculinity of the armed forces that acted as a microcosm of the belligerent nations as a whole. Indeed, mourning is traditionally associated with specific stages, one of which is denial. In conjunction with Horlacher’s assertions regarding performance and narration, could it be that the non-combatants’ denial of the loss of traditional masculinity is reflected in their writings through the attempt to perform their former masculine identity? Bourke comments that, ‘Combat does not terminate social relationships: rather, it restructures them. Inevitably, fantasy permeates all the narratives.’⁷³ Though she is referring to the importance of killing and combat, it is pertinent to the discussion that violence was symbolically directed towards the former masculinity of both combatants and non-combatants when their peacetime identities were sacrificed in favour of their martial identities at mobilisation.

Violence, both symbolic and literal, was ever-present during the First World War. As such, Bourke’s work on the importance of hand-to-hand combat in wartime and her work on masculinity

⁷² Butler, Judith, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso, 2004), p. 21. Emphasis mine.

⁷³ Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, p. 12.

and its evolution during the course of the Great War will be important to the conclusions drawn in this thesis. In *Dismembering the Male*, she looks at the importance of the body to gender identity, and in particular discusses the importance and complicated status of caregivers in relation to the traditional gender binary of the woman as ‘gentle, domesticated and virginal: the manly man [as] athletic, stoical and courageous.’⁷⁴ Bourke argues in her work that, ‘There is no clear distinction between the study of men’s bodies and masculinity.’⁷⁵ This will be pertinent to my own study of wartime masculinity as I will look at how men’s bodies became sites in which masculinity was located at the outbreak of war, and in which masculinity was reconstructed by caregivers after wounding.

Throughout this thesis, to answer the questions outlined at the beginning of this introduction, I will engage with certain theoretical perspectives that underpin gender studies and First World War studies. An examination of French and British men’s personal writings, drawing on Butler’s work on performativity and Horlacher’s notions of gender and narrative, will work towards a complex and nuanced understanding of how these men understood and reflected on their own masculine, wartime identities. These frameworks will be used alongside the arguments of Bourke, Meyer, and Smith to inform my readings of men from both France and Britain, engendering a comparative study.

As Lynne Segal suggests, ‘[it becomes clear that] masculinity is structured through contradiction: the more it asserts itself, the more it calls itself into question. It exists in the various forms of power men ideally possess: the power to assert control over women, over other men, over their own bodies, over machines and technology.’⁷⁶ Indeed, the power struggles between men and women that mutated into internal struggles within a militarised hierarchy are at the centre of this thesis. This was not limited to power struggles between the sexes, as this thesis will show. The militarised hierarchy of masculinity also added to struggles between men themselves. This is shown through the difficulties that unarmed, enlisted men faced in terms of the accepted qualities that constituted martial masculinity during the period. Of course, the main object of war itself is to gain and exhibit dominance over the other, and over the enemy. Therefore, despite gender theory greatly informing

⁷⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), p. 13.

⁷⁵ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 11.

⁷⁶ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, (Third Edition, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 103-104.

my conclusions, it will be necessary to remember the particular ‘space’ of masculinity that the Great War created. To achieve this, theorists who focus on the relationship of masculinity to war and violence, in particular the work of Bourke, Butler, Meyer and Smith, will lie at the heart of assertions made in this thesis.

The attainability of martial masculinity, as I have noted, was predicated on the role of the soldier as armed. Dominance during warfare was and is achieved through success in combat. In what position, then, did this leave unarmed, enlisted men? A useful critical framework for understanding gender discourses during the First World War was formulated by Patrice and Margaret Higonnet in 1987.⁷⁷ They introduce the notion of men and women existing in an intertwined helix, with their roles dependent upon one another, so that any apparent ‘advance’, in women’s rights in terms, for example, of employment opportunities and conditions, is dependent on men’s (temporary) leaving of their peacetime roles upon enlistment. They discuss this in terms of the limits of female emancipation during the First and Second World Wars. Though their work focuses on the effects upon women of gender relationships that are so strongly fused together, they also investigate the impact of such a ‘helix’ during wartime, utilising the concept of territory as the female strand, and the army as the protector, the male strand. However, in a homosocial environment such as that of the trenches, this concept would relegate unarmed non-combatants to a ‘submissive’ role, in constant tension with the role of the ‘dominant’, armed soldier. This thesis will argue that this was not the case, and that a non-combatant’s masculinity was different, but complementary to that of his combatant comrades.⁷⁸

It has been the practice of societies and scholars alike for many years to identify masculinity in terms of an Other. As such, men can only understand their own masculinity, or at the very least their maleness, through distancing themselves from the women around them and identifying differences. Roger Horrocks’ book *Masculinity in Crisis* explores different ways that the intangible concept of masculinity is achieved while arguing, more importantly, that this process is inherently damaging to men.⁷⁹ Horrocks initially sets up the idea of achievement by using the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity,⁸⁰ showing how the concept of ‘Otherness’ provides men with a means

⁷⁷ Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, ‘The Double Helix’.

⁷⁸ Focusing on British non-combatant men, Jessica Meyer makes a similar argument in *An Equal Burden* (2019).

⁷⁹ Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies and Realities*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994)

⁸⁰ Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis*, p. 2

through which they are able to become masculine.⁸¹ Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer argue that the role of violence – or in this thesis the lack thereof – has been so inextricably linked with masculinity that it has shaped the field of masculinity studies. Using the lens of alterity to examine masculine identities, they argue, demonstrates ‘the variety of masculine roles that could be adopted in relation to violence.’⁸² This thesis will delineate the variety of masculine roles adopted by non-combatant, enlisted men during the conflict in this way, showing how non-combatant men positioned themselves in relation to contemporary masculine ideals, and against characteristics that were deemed ‘unmanly’.⁸³

Thus, masculinity is a concept that has been proven to be unstable and constantly changing, even within the same society, and perhaps within the same family. Connell concurs with this proposition in her identification of a hegemonic masculinity: “Hegemonic masculinity” is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable.⁸⁴ Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity will allow me to support my own use of ‘masculinity’ rather than ‘masculinities’ in this work. Although there are varying perceptions and performances of masculinity, which might favour the use of the plural, identifying hegemonic masculinity, as Connell suggests, still allows for a further categorising and therefore plays into a more detailed hierarchy of what masculinity is. I will use the singular in order to discuss all notions and concepts, particularly since the hegemonic masculinity is constantly subject to change, and therefore is easier to identify in terms of the changes in context which then relate to the changes in the hegemonic masculinity itself. Given the nature of masculinity, the ideals of masculinity in France and Britain in the Great War contain subtle differences. Identifying these will allow me to understand the differing attitudes towards the war and towards the concept of masculinity itself as expressed in the men’s personal writings.

Jessica Meyer in her work has used the plural, masculinities, and has shown that two types of masculine identities were created by British Servicemen during the conflict, the ‘first is the heroic,

⁸¹ See Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) for a discussion of Otherness

⁸² Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer, eds., ‘Introduction’, in *Masculinity and the Other: Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 1-19 (12).

⁸³ Here I refer to characteristics that were codified as ‘shirking’. I discuss this in detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁸⁴ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Second edition), (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 76.

associated primarily with the battlefield and the homosocial society of the military sphere, [the second] with the home front that the men sought to defend.’⁸⁵ However, the comparative nature of this thesis will show that this is no longer viable when considering masculinity across two nations, particularly in the French case as they were fighting on their home soil and therefore their concept of masculinity was inherently linked to both the front lines *and* to protection of their homeland. Thus, this thesis will explore the changes in the hegemonic masculinity of the First World War in Britain and France, to demonstrate how non-combatant men challenged the hegemony and redeployed its aspects to reassert their own concepts and understandings of masculinity during the conflict. Martial masculinity was associated with characteristics of masculinity including control, notions of chivalry, proximity to danger including the importance of successful combat facing an enemy, male physicality, and the concept of protection. It is these qualities that will form the basis of my analyses of writings about, and by, non-combatant, enlisted men in this thesis.

Pre-war Masculinity

Masculinity in Britain and France in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was multi-faceted and layered, complicated by issues such as class and race. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the intricacies the classes and races of the non-combatants included here, I will outline here some of the scholarship surrounding these issues to inform my readings of the construction of masculinity during this period. Evolutions of thought surrounding biological sex, masculinity and femininity have been debated by scholars and historians, and it has been shown that ‘[t]he biologically based system of sex difference that emerged at the turn of the century was not unique to [Britain or France] but flourished throughout Western Europe; it emphasized the procreative and domestic features of women and consigned the sexes to separate spheres appropriate to their natures.’⁸⁶ While class and race certainly impacted the extent to which these separate spheres were understood and how they functioned, it is generally accepted that men and women were not expected to perform their genders in the same way.

John Tosh has argued that between 1800 and 1914, ‘Britain was first and foremost an industrializing society; it was also, with growing conviction, an imperialist country; and it was a

⁸⁵ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Robert A. Nye, ‘Honor, Impotence and Male Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century French Medicine’, in *French Historical Studies*, 10.16 (1989), pp. 48-71 (49).

society characterized by increasingly sharp category distinctions of gender and sexuality.’⁸⁷ He has shown that industrialization instigated changes in the way that masculinity and manliness were understood, at least amongst bourgeois and middle-class men. Moving away from masculinity as based on physical prowess, the changes in society and work had the effect of ‘entrenching an entrepreneurial, individualistic masculinity, organized around a punishing work ethic, a compensating validation of the home, and a restraint on physical aggression.’⁸⁸ Tosh draws upon the scholarship of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, who have examined masculinity in the late 1700s and 1800s, and argues that the process they outline of how masculinity of the middle-class was beginning to be associated with one’s occupation and restraint was then observed ‘a generation later’, in the working class. He goes on: ‘this was also the period when a “family wage” for the “bread-winner,” and a wife dedicated to domestic duties, became the goal of the better paid worker.’⁸⁹ Therefore, the image of the man who was the leader of the family, the main source of income for the family, and the protector of the home had become significant ideals within both the middle and working classes of Britain prior to the outbreak of war in 1914. Alongside religious ideals of physical restraint, Tosh also refers to ideas of empire and how these ideas informed concepts of masculinity, arguing that emigrants may have wanted to move to the colonies in order to return to a previous masculine code, based on ‘an attraction to masculine values whose expression at home was curtailed – adventure, male comradeship, and licensed aggression.’⁹⁰ Though both notions of empire and religion and the impacts these notions had on understandings of masculinity are not considered directly in this thesis, there were many factors that influenced how men understood masculinity during this period. This reinforces the argument that notions of masculinity were varied, complex and unstable even before the conflict.

In France, as Robert Nye has asserted, masculinity was in part rooted in a ‘male code of honor that survived the destruction of the Old Regime in 1789 [...] As it had done from the early Middle Ages, this honor code worked to both shape and reflect the male identity and ideals of masculine

⁸⁷ John Tosh, ‘Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800–1914’, in *Journal of British Studies*, 44. 2 (2005), pp. 330–342 (330).

⁸⁸ Tosh, ‘Masculinities in an Industrializing Society’, p. 331.

⁸⁹ Tosh, ‘Masculinities in an Industrializing Society’, p. 332. See *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (eds.) (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987).

⁹⁰Tosh, ‘Masculinities in an Industrializing Society’, p. 342.

behavior.’⁹¹ Nye’s work concentrates on male sexuality as key to his identity, and was ‘revealed in his physical sex and manly manner’.⁹² Moreover, his sexual identity was integral to his honour and standing within his own community which parallels the manliness and masculinity that Tosh has shown was also based on standing within community in Britain, as shown above. This honour was rooted in both the male body, and ‘public rites of honor in male sociability and the duel.’⁹³ Nye also comments how the difficulty of being and remaining honourable in France at the turn of the century and during the First World War reflects the problems men experienced in holding onto their masculinity: ‘Ironically, in a society governed by honor, masculinity is always in the course of construction but always fixed, a *telos* that men experience as a necessary but permanently unattainable goal.’⁹⁴ Though the idea of honour and thus the concept of masculine identity changed over the period between the revolution and the outbreak of the Great War, ‘the old association of honor with the martial virtues of courage and strength [was] still intact.’⁹⁵ This portrays honour and masculinity as predicated on qualities of courage and strength, and defining these qualities as ‘martial’ shows their importance during wartime in France. This thesis will show how this affected non-combatants over the course of the conflict, how their ‘normal’ masculinity was already hard to achieve and to maintain and the martial masculinity expected of them during wartime was even more so.

Colin Creighton’s work on British male breadwinners provides a succinct overview of the scholarly debates around what Tosh describes as the move towards men of middle and working-class families as being the sole earner, with women undertaking domestic roles.⁹⁶ While historians such as Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas have argued that the structure of the capitalist society

⁹¹ Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (University of California Press: London, 1998), p. 8. This work tracks codes of honour from the *Ancien Régime* and shows how it specifically initially impacted the bourgeois class of French society. However, Nye also argues that following the French Revolution of 1789, the bourgeois class married into and became intermingled with the middle-class of French society.

⁹² Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, p. 9.

⁹³ Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, p. 13

⁹⁴ Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, p. 13.

⁹⁵ Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, p. 16.

⁹⁶ Colin Creighton, ‘The Rise of the Male Breadwinner Family: A Reappraisal’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 38. 2 (1996), pp. 310-337. Creighton, however, has argued that the emergence of the male breadwinner must be understood as something that went beyond men wishing to attain or to protect their own masculine identity This notion of the male breadwinner was informed by social ideals of gender identity, but also by capitalist concerns, and working conditions. Ultimately, the rise of the male breadwinner must be conceived of as a reaction to social changes, though not necessarily those limited to understandings of gender roles in the workplace and the home. From political leanings to religion and notions of family, to the need for childcare, all of these reasons played a role.

in Britain was largely responsible for women being seen as the root of the domestic sphere,⁹⁷ other scholars such as Sonya Rose have in turn argued that some men used job segregation and other, exclusionary tactics to make it so that women were unable to earn the same as men during this period.⁹⁸ This, she argues, kept the role of the male as the main breadwinner, which is echoed in Tosh's, Davidoff's, and Hall's descriptions of masculine identity as being increasingly dependent upon one's occupation. This ties into work done by Susan Grayzel who has examined the work of women as having been traditionally shown as that of carer and mother, positioned firmly within the domestic sphere of the home.⁹⁹ This thesis considers how men who undertook non-combatant roles during the conflict were, however temporarily, occupying caregiving roles such as male nurses, stretcher-bearers and orderlies, caring for those around them. The impact upon their own understandings of wartime masculinity and their own standing with the hierarchy of martial masculinity is one of the central questions of this work. Indeed, this is too simplistic a view, as 'men in the workplace and women in the home', operating in two distinct spheres, was not the reality for all families and this again points to the need for a nuanced understanding of both masculinity and femininity during this period.

Masculine virtues changed dramatically from the Georgian into the Victorian period, particularly for middle and working classes. While during the Georgian period, manliness had been constructed as one of the bases for polite society, 'politeness had diminishing leverage. Its place as a marker of social and political virtue was taken by "manliness," defined in terms which emphasised the departure from polite standards.'¹⁰⁰ Manliness became increasingly linked to the importance of one's occupation in life. Despite the apparent difficulties with this, particularly between the classes, Tosh suggests that manliness was 'socially inclusive [and it was] moral qualities which marked a truly manly character.'¹⁰¹ Independence of character also came to be conceived as a truly 'manly' quality, which was an important element in attaining a true masculine standing within one's community.¹⁰² Tosh has also pointed out that Victorian manliness was understood within a

⁹⁷ Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas, 'Rethinking Women's Oppression', in *New Left Review*, 144, pp. 33-71.

⁹⁸ Sonya O. Rose, 'Gender Antagonism and Class Conflict: Exclusionary Strategies of Male Trade Unionists in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Social History*, 13.2, 1988, pp. 191-208.

⁹⁹ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁰ John Tosh, 'Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 455-472 (456).

¹⁰¹ Tosh, 'Gentlemanly Politeness', p. 458.

¹⁰² Tosh, 'Gentlemanly Politeness', p. 458.

binary concept of recognising a feminine ‘other’, meaning that its definition was constructed by ‘each sex being defined by negative stereotypes of the other.’¹⁰³

Similarly in France, as Guillaume Pinson has written, there was a crisis of gender happening in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ While Pinson examines the crisis of the ‘masculinised woman,’ this ‘crisis’ was something that affected understandings of both femininity and masculinity. Pinson points out that the question of masculinized women was being played out in the popular press, but that ‘la presse mondaine se développe aussi à l’intersection de plusieurs mandats : la représentation des élites, du temps des loisirs, de la mode, des sports, des divertissements [...]’¹⁰⁵ Robert Nye has also shown that games were of pivotal importance in France during this period, and was in fact imported into France from Britain as ‘team games were considered a crucial training ground for civilian manliness and physical courage.’¹⁰⁶ This intersection of popular culture is reminiscent of the different ways in which in Britain, the youth were educated about their expected genders and gendered behaviours; it was an assault from many angles, reflecting the importance of these beliefs within contemporary culture in both Britain and France. However, in the French case at the end of the *Belle Époque*, there was significant disquietude regarding the ‘emancipated woman,’ and that this emancipation was detrimental to French society. Pinson notes that, ‘l’inquiétude est liée à la réelles modifications dans les pratiques’ which included changes in women’s behaviours in realms such as sports, as well as fashion as the rise of more ‘masculine’ clothing became popular during this time.¹⁰⁷ The separation between public and private spheres and the construction and maintenance of these as gendered spaces in France was seen in republican writer’s thinking during and after the French Revolution of 1789. As Charles Sowerine has shown that ‘Rousseau and later republican thinkers did not exclude women from the Republic in a wholly negative fashion; rather they assigned them a higher role in the family, a role which they believed compensated for their exclusion from public life’.¹⁰⁸ However, as Martin Francis points out in the British case, ‘the

¹⁰³ Tosh, ‘Gentlemanly Politeness’, p. 464.

¹⁰⁴ Guillaume Pinson, ‘La Femme Masculinisée dans la Presse Mondaine Française de la Belle Époque’, in *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 30, (2009), pp. 211-229.

¹⁰⁵ Guillaume Pinson, ‘La Femme Masculinisée’, p. 212.

¹⁰⁶ Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor*, cited in *Gendering Modern History* by Barbara Caine and Glenda Sluga (Continuum: London, 2000), p. 146.

¹⁰⁷ Guillaume Pinson, ‘La Femme Masculinisée’, p. 213.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Sowerine, ‘Revising the Sexual Contract: Women’s Citizenship and Republicanism in France, 1789-1944’, in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds and Gender*, edited by C. Forth, E. Accampo (Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 19-42 (22).

boundary between the female/private and male/public realms was unstable and frequently transgressed.¹⁰⁹ While among the upper and middle-classes there had been a move towards ideal manliness being shown through physical restraint, by the Edwardian period, this has changed again, with the characteristics of ‘compassion, fairness and altruism [giving way] to secular and more aggressive ideals.’¹¹⁰

In popular imaginings, masculinity was and continues to often be linked to chivalry and images of knights fighting bravely for their country. Allen Frantzen and Marc Girouard both argue that British hegemonic masculinity in the early twentieth century was indelibly linked to heroic ideals of chivalry and its roots in the Middle Ages.¹¹¹ Frantzen describes the fundamental importance of ideas of chivalry to the Great War as a historical precedent founded on the notion of protection. It was at once the innate need to survive coupled with the pervasive notion of protection, specifically through comradeship, that symbolised masculinity at the Front. However, what was equally evident was the uneasy predicament of the need to protect others, whilst needing to be protected oneself. The need to protect echoes the traditional view of the patriarch as the head of the family, and as the leader, the ultimate protector and voice of reason. Yet, as the industrialised nature of warfare began to develop throughout the conflict, fighting became de-personalised due to the lack of hand-to-hand combat, and was therefore potentially more frightening.¹¹² Thus, the centre-point of hegemonic masculinity in relation to chivalry shifted from solely being derived from the image of the protector and combatant, to an image of a good male comrade. We can see here that there seems to be an innate need in the notion of masculinity during this time for a binary, complementary system of protector and protected for masculinity as a notion to retain its viability. But in some contexts, the typical image of the man as protector and woman as protected was shifted onto the all-male society of the trenches. Within this, the singular, all-male environment allowed men to move between the two positions at will. Despite this fluidity of movement between the roles of ‘protector’ and ‘protected’ it appears that there was an overwhelming yet unconscious

¹⁰⁹ Martin Francis, ‘The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity’, in *The Historical Journal*, 45.3 (Sep., 2002), pp. 637-652 (638). Published by: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹⁰ Michael Roper, ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity: The “War Generation” and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914–1950’, in *Journal of British Studies*, 44.2 (2005), pp. 343-362 (347).

¹¹¹ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and The Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Marc Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

¹¹² Meyer, *Men of War*.

need to retain a hierarchical system in order to achieve masculinity. Santanu Das has shown that in some soldiers' testimonies we see the 'fear and bewilderment of soldiers when human geography is suddenly changed.'¹¹³ Some men were required to submit to taking on the feminine role of the protected in order to grant another's masculinity, whilst requiring others to submit to them in turn. What effect then did this have on unarmed, enlisted men? Did they respond with 'bewilderment and fear'? Joanna Bourke has suggested that 'Combat does not terminate social relationships: rather, it restructures them.'¹¹⁴ During the war the juxtaposition of masculinity and the 'Other'¹¹⁵ – more usually femininity, but in this instance a male comrade being protected – that was established in order to understand what masculinity meant.

Girouard postulates that in Britain in the years leading up to the Great War:

the ideals of chivalry work with one accord in favour of war. During the nineteenth century the upper and much of the middle classes had been increasingly encouraged to believe that a fight in a just cause was one of the most desirable and honourable activities open to man, and that there was no more glorious fate than to die fighting for one's country.¹¹⁶

This is reminiscent of war poetry such as that by Wilfred Owen, who challenged this long-held belief in the glory of death for one's country. Indeed, the importance and influence of this stance has led Jane Potter to argue that the 'deliberately provocative' language of some war poets has given rise to the concept that 'poetry which does not communicate such horror, or privilege the combat experience, is not really "war poetry".'¹¹⁷ This thesis examines the language used by non-combatants in both fictionalised accounts and autobiographical war narratives to better comprehend how they understood and wished to portray their own roles and experiences of the conflict.

The reasons for which some men enlisted did not correlate with their actual experiences of war, particularly for those men who enlisted to conquer the enemy, the de-personalised nature of

¹¹³ Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 35.

¹¹⁴ Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 12.

¹¹⁵ See *Masculinity and the Other: Historical Perspectives*, by Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer (eds.) (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

¹¹⁶ Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, p. 276.

¹¹⁷ Jane Potter, "'The Essentially Modern Attitude Toward War': English Poetry of the Great War", in *Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century British and American War Literature*, ed. by Adam Piette and Mark Rawlinson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) pp. 20-30 (24). Tensions surrounding what is to be considered a 'true' war narrative is discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

warfare meant that their lived experiences differed greatly from their expectations at mobilisation. We can, however, say with some confidence that duty and masculinity featured heavily in the decisions some men made when enlisting. George L. Mosse, in his book *The Image of Man* argues that the evolution of hegemonic masculinity through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries actually evolved very little in terms of ideals.¹¹⁸ Ultimately, masculinity, Mosse argues, has always been the driving force of a nation. He states, ‘the manly ideal deserves to hold centre stage... for it not only played a determining role in fashioning ideas of nationhood, respectability, and war, but it was present and influenced almost every aspect of modern history.’¹¹⁹ Mosse investigates positive connotations of the masculine stereotype, the dominant understanding of masculinity. He argues:

[The] stereotype of true manliness was so powerful precisely because unlike abstract ideas or ideals it could be seen, touched, or even talked to, a living reminder of human beauty, of the proper morals, and of a longed-for utopia. This book, then, focuses on a specific stereotype, not a negative stereotype but a stereotype that was regarded as positive, as a motor that drove the nation and society at large.¹²⁰

These ideals were pervasive in British society and part of that was the dissemination of knowledge and concepts from one generation to another. Michael Roper has noted that notions of masculinity and manliness were partially passed on through education. He states, ‘An education in “manly education” was accomplished in the public schools through the playing of games, and by the removal of boys from domestic comforts and their subjection to Spartan surroundings designed to toughen them into men.’¹²¹ Another aspect of education was the literature that children read:

From its development during the early nineteenth century, children’s literature had formed a part of the socialisation process, offering instruction, guidance, and role models for the behaviour, values, and attitudes that society deemed worth promoting among the young. [...] Adventure fictions, generally written for boys and young men aged between 10 and 18 years, were intended to inculcate patriotism, manliness, and a sense of duty to Crown and Empire among readers.¹²²

¹¹⁸ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹¹⁹ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 6.

¹²¹ Michael Roper, ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity’, p. 347. See also Peter Parker, *The Old Lie: The Great War and Public School Ethos* (Bloomsbury Academic: London, 2007).

¹²² Michael Paris, *Over the Top: The Great War and Juvenile Literature in Britain* (Praeger: London, 2004), p. xiii.

Using literature in this way, not only in fiction novels, but in comics imbued the young men and boys of Britain with understandings of manliness linked with specific characteristics including comradeship and physical prowess. Further, organisations such as the Boy Scouts were also using comradeship, friendship, and social activity to encourage those values within young men. John Springhall has argued that, ‘If duty, honour and patriotism were the emotional moulds within which British imperial attitudes set, they also provided the mottoes of the new youth movements.’¹²³ Caine and Sluga have evidenced the links between the movements such as the Boy Scouts in Britain and the League of National Education in France, which was introduced in 1912. They note that, ‘in the decades before the First World War in France, the ideals of heroism, of ‘physical courage’ and its equation with essentialist masculinity, were also spread in religious teachings, school textbooks and public statuary.’¹²⁴

In *The Image of Man*, Mosse’s phrase of ‘longed for utopia’ relating to manliness and masculine ideals, underlines the traditional thought that manliness was the ‘correct’ state for men, yet it also remained somewhat out of reach, as utopias tend to be. Though his suggestion of a utopic ideal is akin to what Butler and Horlacher suggest is damaging to the self, Mosse argues that the drive towards this utopic stereotype acted as a driving force for good. Further, Mosse claims that the ‘realness’ of this stereotype was what made it so powerful. This, however, seems paradoxical when describing such a state as representative of a utopia. Mosse is suggesting that working towards a perfect state of manliness was a positive thing; he does not, however, address the possible consequences of not meeting such high expectations. This thesis will examine the consequences of a traditional martial masculinity that was simultaneously, and paradoxically, tangible and unattainable for non-combatant men. Tosh has noted that manliness and masculinities make ‘uneasy bedfellows.’¹²⁵ He continues:

“Manliness” denoted those attributes which men were happy to own, which they had often acquired by great effort, and which they frequently boasted about [...]. “Masculinity”, on the other hand, is more neutral and matter-of-fact: it can be used in a prescriptive way [...]. Its meaning is mediated not only through class, but through ethnicity and – most important

¹²³ J.O. Springhall, ‘The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements 1908-1930’, in, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1971), pp. 125-158 (127).

¹²⁴ Caine and Sluga, *Gendering European History*, p. 146.

¹²⁵ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

of all – through sexuality. [...] Masculinity is the appropriate label for a culture which is obsessed by gender, but as an individual possession rather than a group characteristic.¹²⁶

This thesis will examine how non-combatants mediated their own martial masculinity and endeavoured to mediate other people's perceptions of their wartime masculine status. In contrast to what Tosh argues, I will show how this mediation of their martially masculine identities was done on their own behalf but also on the behalf of many other non-combatants with whom they served during the conflict.

Britain and France

This thesis is the first comparative study of non-combatant masculinity across Britain and France in the Great War. Jay Winter has argued for the importance of transitional, comparative studies, as 'the main drawback [of national analyses] is that it tends to conflate into aggregates quite different and frequently contradictory experiences.'¹²⁷ Its aim is to identify similarities and differences in the ways in which martial masculinity was understood during this time period, to better understand the place of the non-combatant within military, social and cultural hierarchies. John Horne has argued that in France, 'The images of warfare thus conjured up were in turn linked to the codes of masculine behavior considered appropriate to combat (heroism, action, movement, conquest) [...].'¹²⁸ This is something that has been shown to be true of Britain, too. However, that is not to say that British and French ideals of martial masculinity could be mapped directly onto one another. There were points of similarity, but the shaping of the countries' histories played a large part in the popular discourse surrounding masculinity and warfare. While masculinity was linked to citizenship and duty in both Britain and France, in Britain it was also founded upon notions of chivalry and gentlemanliness. In France, however, citizenship was embedded in the French Revolution of 1789, and the subsequent *impôt du sang*, or blood debt, that sought to equalise the price that families paid across the entire nation. Joan Landes has argued that building upon the revolutionary thinking by men such as Robespierre and Rousseau, citizenship in France following the Revolution of 1789 'meant actively participating in public life, whether by civic oath-taking,

¹²⁶ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Jay Winter, 'Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919: Capital Cities at war', in *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, Volume 1*, ed. by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 3-24 (3).

¹²⁸ John Horne, 'Soldiers, Civilians and the Warfare of Attrition: Representations of Combat in France, 1914-1918', in *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War* ed. by Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), pp. 223-250 (224).

political action, or military service.’¹²⁹ In her exploration of culture during the period of the revolution and the early years following the creation of the Third Republic, Landes shows that, ‘Among the many things that a citizen learned in his practice of citizenship was the value of masculinity, which in turn allowed a man to claim the right to possess the nation and to risk his life on its behalf.’¹³⁰ This concept of citizenship and its links to self-sacrifice and protection of the nation continues to be seen in understandings of both French and British citizenship during the Great War of 1914-18. When Landes claims that ‘universal citizenship and universal military service were [...] the privilege of men, and predicated on the defence of the national body and the home bodies within its borders’ we can apply the use of the word universal to both French and British popular culture during this period.¹³¹ Ultimately, it is duty that unites France and Britain in their understanding of citizenship and therefore of masculinity, though this thesis will further examine ways in which duty and martial masculinity was performed by non-combatant servicemen.

As noted earlier, men who were seen as less physically able than their counterparts were drafted into non-combatant roles such as stretcher-bearing. However, as Meyer has shown, stretcher bearing was an incredibly physically demanding task, carrying the weight of an injured soldier on a stretcher made from wood, bearing them towards the safety of a medical tent over the mud and craters of No Man’s Land. She states, ‘Some labour allowed men to lay claim to a service identity by demanding they use physical strength and resourcefulness or demonstrate physical and emotional control on a par with that of front-line combatants.’¹³² It is a paradox that delineates the reluctance with which the British Army acknowledged the difficulty of the role of the non-combatant stretcher-bearer. *An Equal Burden* tracks the status of non-combatant men in the British army from the end of the Crimean War to the end of the Great War, investigating the roles of men who were enlisted but unarmed, whose purpose was the ‘aim of saving rather than taking life.’¹³³ Like Ridell in the French case, Meyer’s studies of non-combatant men in the British Army investigates their own experiences and understandings of their masculine standing in comparison to that of their combatant comrades. Other scholars have also sought to understand the portrayals

¹²⁹ Joan Landes, ‘Republican Citizenship and Heterosocial Desire’, p. 96.

¹³⁰ Joan Landes, ‘Republican Citizenship and Heterosocial Desire’, p. 111.

¹³¹ Joan Landes, ‘Republican Citizenship and Heterosocial Desire’, p. 112.

¹³² Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 88.

¹³³ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 1.

of men in the British Army, such as Nicoletta Gullace, David French and Ana Carden-Coyne.¹³⁴ Mark Harrison has argued that at the outbreak of the war in 1914, medical men in the army were afforded a higher status than ever before.¹³⁵ As I will show in this thesis, however, this higher status was not afforded to every person enlisted in a non-combatant role.

This discrepancy in status caused and affected the ways in which non-combatant French and British men understood their own non-combatant masculinity in relation to the martial masculinity that was seen to be embodied by the combatant soldier. The central tenets of this martial masculinity in both Britain and France were based upon the link between citizenship and warfare, notions of protection of the homeland and the home, the male body, and bravery and courage in battle. The latter was especially important as it was closely concerned with the soldier's proximity to danger. These ideals were the yardstick by which one's martially masculine status was measured during the First World War, and will therefore be at the centre of the analyses I put forth in this thesis.

Methodology

Tosh in 'The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?'¹³⁶ investigates how scholarly consciousness regarding the concept of masculinity has evolved, including what he deems to be the pitfalls of previous work. His assertion is that masculinity as a quantifiable unit does not exist, and he outlines its fluid nature. Within this argument surfaces the question of methodology. Tosh argues that to examine masculinity in terms of the individual, and in terms of a society, historians must engage with the cultural factors that existed at the time of the text being studied:

Masculinity could not be understood outside a structure of relations with the other sex, of power, nurture and dependence [...] Historians of masculinity had soon come to the

¹³⁴ See: Ana Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army and the British people, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Nicoletta Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹³⁵ Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 10.

¹³⁶ Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity', pp. 17-134.

conclusion that what was most lacking in the traditional historiography was not so much men's behaviour as the gendered logic which explained that behaviour.¹³⁷

Thus, without examining the contemporary factors which aided in the construction of masculinity as a notion, and which inevitably have a bearing on its representation and perception, the hypothesis risks being incomplete without being situated within the wider gaze of cultural history. Of course, Tosh states that cultural knowledge without evidence from an individual would also amount to an incomplete study. It is important to reach a complementary equilibrium: 'Focusing on the quotidian reality of men's lives as revealed in personal correspondence does not, of course, mean renouncing cultural analysis. But it does direct our attention to forms of representation which arose directly from social experience.'¹³⁸ He concludes that scholars in the field need to 'reconnect with that earlier curiosity about experience and subjectivity, while recognising that experience is always mediated through cultural understandings.'¹³⁹

To investigate cultural understandings of masculinity during the Great War, I have chosen to use a variety of different types of source material. This thesis examines newspaper reports, works of fiction, letters, and memoirs. The wide scope of the thesis will analyse the difference between representation and lived experience, demonstrating how cultural ideals of masculinity were created and reinforced in the public consciousness of the British and French people. Tosh argues that 'experience is always mediated through cultural understandings.'¹⁴⁰ This thesis will add to the field of masculinity studies by showing how such cultural understandings pervaded the personal thoughts and writings of unarmed, enlisted men and their own understandings of masculinity during the conflict. This thesis is structured accordingly: four chapters which can be broadly separated into two sections. The first and second chapters of the thesis explore portrayals of French and British non-combatants in popular media, specifically in newspapers and popular fiction. The second half of this thesis concentrates on the construction of the non-combatant identity, and how that identity was understood and expressed by the non-combatants themselves.¹⁴¹ The diaries, letters, and memoirs included in this chapter were chosen specifically

¹³⁷ Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity', p. 22.

¹³⁸ Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity', p. 28.

¹³⁹ Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity', p. 31.

¹⁴⁰ Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity', p. 31.

¹⁴¹ Archives used include (but are not limited to) the following: La Bibliothèque Nationale de France (including Gallica, the online repository), Europeana 1914-18 (online), La Grande Collecte (online), The Imperial War Museum, The National Archives, and The University of Leeds – Liddle Collection.

as their authors served as stretcher-bearers or bandsmen (or both) on the Western Front during the conflict. In archives such as the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), and the Imperial War Museum (IWM), there exist other collections of private papers concerning enlisted non-combatants who served with the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and/or served on other fronts. I have chosen not to include those who served with the RAMC as these papers have been examined in great detail by Jessica Meyer in *An Equal Burden*.¹⁴²

I have consulted archives in Britain and France, including: La Bibliothèque Nationale de France (including Gallica, the online repository), Europeana 1914-18 (online), La Grande Collecte (online), The Imperial War Museum, The National Archives, and The University of Leeds, particularly the Liddle Collection. I have also used newspaper archives including The Times online archive, and The British Newspaper Archive. To identify appropriate sources for this thesis, I used keyword searches including: ‘stretcher-bearer’, ‘stretcher-bearer’, ‘bandsmen’, ‘bandsmen’, ‘nurse’, ‘hero’, ‘heroic’, ‘Non Combatant Corps’, ‘tribunals’, and their French equivalents. I concentrated my searches on sources that pertained to the Western Front only, and were not concerned with writings by members of the RAMC, as the RAMC has been examined by other scholars. As I will go on to show in this thesis, the resulting sample of writings concerning stretcher-bearers and bandsmen was small, as was the number of sources authored by the same group of men.

This thesis is structured in a macro-to-micro format. I will begin with an examination of popular discourse and understandings of non-combatant, enlisted men, and how their martial masculinity (or lack thereof) was considered within the popular press. From this view, I will then consider fictional representations of non-combatants. This will further demonstrate the contemporary understandings of martial masculinity and how unarmed men who served in the front lines were considered and depicted in French and British society between 1914 and 1918. The second half of this thesis uses letters, diaries, and memoirs written by non-combatants themselves. The third chapter will examine the unique, dual role of the stretcher-bearer-bandsmen, and how music and caregiving came together to construct a martial masculinity based on protection, healing, and emotional fortitude. Finally, in chapter 4 I will again delve into writings by non-combatants and

¹⁴² Jessica Meyer, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

analyse the ways in which they relate their own wartime experiences to the reader. This format will allow for a clearer understanding of how social and cultural discourse influenced the ways in which non-combatant masculinity during wartime was understood and how it was perceived amongst the French and British populations, as well as by the non-combatants themselves. It will also enable a reading of how non-combatants positioned themselves in relation to the idolised warrior male of the armed soldier, and the ways in which they achieved this through their writings.

Chapter 1 scrutinizes representations of non-combatant, enlisted men in the popular French and British press between the 1914 and 1919, including an analysis of the treatment of the British Non-Combatant Corps. The Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) was formed in 1916 after the introduction of conscription in Britain. Universal male military conscription after the introduction of the ‘Three year law’ in 1913, which extended the length of National Service, meant that there was no French equivalent although, as this chapter argues, there were similar discussions in the French press around enlisted non-combatant men. On both sides of *La Manche* the terms ‘non-combatant’ and ‘civilian’ were often interchangeable in press reports and journalistic discussions of the conflict. The chapter concludes by arguing that the liminal position of non-combatants as soldiers who did not bear arms resulted in them existing on the fringes of both the armed forces and civilian spheres, suggesting a confusing mixture of portrayals – leading to ambiguous and sometimes contradictory public understandings and categorisations of non-combatant men during the war. However, excepting the analysis of the propagandist use of weaponry as an inherently masculine symbol, and scholarship focusing on the representation of COs, very little research on the representations of unarmed men at the front has been carried out.¹⁴³ Chapter 1 is a critical analysis of the ways in which non-combatant roles, and indeed the enlisted non-combatants themselves, were perceived on the ‘home front’.¹⁴⁴ Understanding the representation of non-combatant enlisted men will be

¹⁴³ Joshua S. Goldstein demonstrates the phallic imagery associated with weaponry in the Armed Forces in *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 349.

¹⁴⁴ See: Tony Bennett, Graham Martin and Bernard Waites (eds.), *Popular Culture: Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2013); Adrian Bingham *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), and Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front 1914-18* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2013), to name but a few.

key to a broader understanding of the ways in which masculinity, military service and citizenship were understood and negotiated in France and Britain during and after the war years. Certainly, newspapers can be said to have both shaped and been shaped by social and cultural constructions of both masculinity and of warfare. Janet Watson has contended that the war was ‘far from a unitary experience [...] Battles were constantly being fought over how to represent active participation in the war, present or past.’¹⁴⁵ It is these ‘battles’ as they were fought in French and British newspapers that this chapter explores.

Chapter 2 tackles fictionalised accounts of the war, written by enlisted, non-combatant men from Britain and France. The absence of the enlisted non-combatant in literature is important to this study as it allows for an investigation into the way they were (not) seen among the masses of combatants on the front lines. Their absence forces us to broaden the search for enlisted non-combatants away from the trenches, to get a more comprehensive overview of perceptions of these men and uses the ‘waves’ of war fiction, both in France and in Britain, showing that the stories of these men only come to light many years, even decades, after the end of the war.¹⁴⁶ Chapter 2 explores some of the few representations of unarmed, enlisted men in fiction to unpack some of the cultural issues and discourses surrounding masculine ideals and these men both during and immediately following the conflict. By using writings by men who had been involved in the front lines, behind the front lines, and in administrative roles during the war, these fictionalised testimonies of war will help us to understand how, and to what extent, non-combatant characters can be categorised. Further, this chapter investigates how cultural expectations and pre-conceived notions regarding gendered expectations of military men play into these representations, or, how these writers contested expectations through their use of fiction as a genre. It will also analyse whether the qualities of the characters are based on the roles that they play during wartime, or whether they are entrenched in the situations in which they find themselves.

Chapter 3 focuses on bandsmen as militarised caregivers and asks how the role of the bandsmen was seen in terms of dominant concepts of martial masculinity during the First World War. As this

¹⁴⁵ Janet S. K. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁶ Alison S. Fell discusses waves of war fiction in Britain and France in *Women as Veterans in Britain and France after the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 133-136.

For a discussion of women’s war fiction, see Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women’s Literary Responses to the Great War 1914-1918* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2005).

role was both militarised and ‘feminised’, in terms of the caring actions these men performed, analysing the role of the bandsmen will allow me to analyse the perceptions of militarised non-combatants more broadly. This chapter analyses letters and memoirs in order to examine the different ways in which music was used by the French and British Armies at the outbreak of the First World War, at the front lines, and behind the front lines. Analysing differences in the performers’ relationships with their audiences in each of these spaces speaks volumes regarding the military uses of music, and how these evolved during the conflict. This allows us to examine the perception of the non-combatant bandsmen in relation to martial masculinity through the medium of music. In particular, I will examine how the rites of passage involved in the ritual of mobilisation were in some ways dependent upon the music involved, and how this enabled men who were enlisted in the army to ‘achieve’ a certain level of martial masculinity. Further, by investigating the use of music in the army band, most of the members of which worked as stretcher-bearers in the First World War, I will explore how their instruments became a sort of pseudo-weaponry given their inability to bear arms as non-combatants. By bringing the scholarly fields of caregiving, masculinity, and music together, this interdisciplinary framework will engender a new understanding of music during the First World War. This chapter considers these men, not only as medical caregivers, but opens up the discussion of what caregiving during warfare entailed, and what it meant to men engaged in such roles. In short, I will investigate the ways in which their performances as musicians allowed bandsmen to position themselves in relation to dominant understandings of martial masculinity. As such, this chapter, and thesis as a whole, will contribute to First World War studies by bridging gaps in knowledge and understanding through a new approach to culture and gender in conflict.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis turns to the words of the non-combatants themselves to investigate how they understood their own masculine identities, and how they positioned themselves with regards to the popular ideals and discourses outlined in previous chapters. Chapter 4 examines the self-perceptions of the men who are the focus of this thesis. Though other chapters provide what we might consider to be contextual or examinations of the culture surrounding these men, a close-reading of their memoirs, letters, and/or diaries will allow a consideration of information ‘from the horse’s mouth’ so to speak. The importance of self-perception in our understandings of who these men were is inherent. One cannot understand these non-combatant men without acknowledging the importance of what and who they themselves thought they were.

Chapter 4 asks how these men engaged with questions of duty, honour and bravery. Did they share the same understanding of weaponry as imperative to the role of the soldier as shown in cultural outputs such as newspapers and fiction during the war? How did such cultural representations of soldiering impact how they understood their own roles and martial masculinity in relation to their combatant comrades? Chapter 4 uses memoirs alongside published collections of letters. Combining different types of sources will allow for a more sophisticated understanding of non-combatants' war writings, as well as combatting the issue of time. We know that letters written in the trenches were often written in brief moments between fighting, and their contents differ drastically from those that are written during periods of rest.

This chapter seeks to examine similarities and differences in the presentation of non-combatant writings, concentrating on how masculinity is portrayed by non-combatants themselves. This adds to scholarship by widening the scope of studies, particularly when examining how writings were altered and edited prior to publication; this then, allows for a more critical reading of these texts in terms of how contemporary understandings of masculinity have changed between the time that the experiences took place and the time in which they were written down, collated and (in some cases) published. By looking at memories of the war written many decades later, this chapter seeks to understand how self-perceptions of masculinity may have changed with hindsight and the inevitable influence of changing time periods and societal expectations of men. By engaging with the ways in which time and intended audience can influence the ways in which one chooses to represent oneself, I will therefore be able to gain an overview of how the time affected non-combatants' perceptions of their roles and masculinity during the conflict.

In sum, this thesis unpacks some of the popular, cultural understandings about martial masculinity during the First World War through an examination of social and cultural outputs of the period. This comparative, cultural analysis of concepts of masculinity during the conflict will enable a greater understanding of martial masculinity and how non-combatant men perceived themselves in relation to public expectations during wartime. Additionally, this thesis uses personal writings of non-combatant, enlisted French and British men to interrogate these cultural understandings, and will demonstrate how unarmed, enlisted men challenged the hegemonic understandings of masculinity that pervaded their societies. I will begin by looking at newspaper articles

concentrating on unarmed men, both enlisted and civilian, to understand how men who did not bear arms were perceived by society at large.

Chapter 1: Perceptions on the Home Front

This chapter will examine representations of non-combatant, enlisted men in the popular French and British press between the 1914 and 1919. It will also consider how the press in Britain and France depicted the British Non-Combatant Corps. The British government introduced the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) in 1916, following the introduction of conscription and difficulties posed to enlistment by Conscientious Objectors. Britain's use of conscription during the First World War was a response to the conflict itself and was used to mobilise the great numbers of previously untrained men needed for a war on such a scale.¹⁴⁷ Its introduction in 1916 was considered to be the answer to the manpower crisis Britain faced as the number of men mobilised during the first two years of the war fell short in the face of massive casualties. In France, however, conscription was a cultural question: 'Elaborate rituals involving parades, bands, costumes, and much else evolved in localities throughout France to celebrate the induction of each class to military service.'¹⁴⁸ Moreover, conscription did not represent the same system in both countries. While in Britain the term conscription was used to refer to men who were drawn into the Armed Forces from outside the organisation (civilians), the French use of the term conscription refers to *keeping* already enlisted men within the system. France had extended the length of National Service in 1913 as a way to increase the size of the standing army. This enlistment of men into the Armed Forces was an expected part of a Frenchman's life, but once the war broke out, rather than allow men who had completed their years of National Service (two years prior to the change in law of 1913) to leave the Army and remain as reservists, they were instead now required to remain on active duty and continue serving. This may lead us to assume that there were no similarities in how the French and British press chose to portray both civilian and enlisted, unarmed men. Throughout this chapter I will show that despite differences in methods of mobilisation, due to the all-encompassing fear that men were 'shirking' their duties that was seen in both countries, there were comparable conversations happening in the press. As I will show, in both countries, journalists did not scrupulously differentiate between civilians and enlisted non-combatants. In fact, the two were often interchangeable in press reports that documented the conflict. In Britain, this was extended

¹⁴⁷ Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly (eds.), *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 113.

¹⁴⁸ Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and The Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 18.

to a blurring of these terms along with ‘Conscientious Objector’ (CO), however, as the chapter will go on to demonstrate, this was somewhat of an untranslatable concept in France given the French system of National Service. Nevertheless, in French press reports outlining the British discussion of COs, the terms the French used were often umbrella terms used to signify non-combatant, rather than the combatant soldier fighting in the front lines. This points to the role of enlisted non-combatants not being fully understood by those in the civilian sphere, but also suggests that the depictions of enlisted, unarmed men presented by newspapers were variable and unstable.

As previously discussed, there has been very little scholarly focus on the representations of enlisted non-combatants in the press.¹⁴⁹ Exploring the ways in which the NCC was represented in popular newspapers in both countries allows for a critical understanding and analysis of the ways in which non-combatant men and their roles in the conflict were understood by those for whom they were fighting. Furthermore, the demobilization of the armed forces continued in the years immediately after the Armistice, in some cases into 1920, and existing scholarship has demonstrated that the war was still common in the public rhetoric surrounding masculinity and citizenship well into the inter-war years.¹⁵⁰ To better understand the relationship between masculinity, military service and citizenship we must therefore analyse the ways in which non-combatant men were described by and to the wider public.

The chapter will begin by briefly outlining the methodological issues implicit in using newspapers as historical sources and will discuss the importance of using such sources when interrogating popular discourse of masculinity during wartime. This will also include a short examination of the newspapers the chapter will consider. Subsequently, the focus will shift to an exploration of the construction of the ‘shirker’ stereotype in Britain and France, to highlight how non-combatant, enlisted men positioned themselves in direct opposition to such stereotypes. Using the information

¹⁴⁹ Lois S. Bibbings in *Telling Tales About Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011) and Sabine Grimshaw in ‘Representations and resistance: The representation of male and female war resisters in the First World War’, PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2017, have studied representations of COs in Britain during the war.

¹⁵⁰ See: Tony Bennett, Graham Martin and Bernard Waites (eds.), *Popular Culture: Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2013); Adrian Bingham *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); and Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).

set out in these sections, I will then move on to an analysis of press reports, focusing on the following themes: spaces, pay rates, uniforms, and bodies. The final section of analysis will be a comparison of the British and French reactions to the creation of the Non-Combatant Corps in Britain in 1916. I will conclude by arguing that despite differences in constructions of martial masculinity (such as the importance of the concept of *élan* in France, for example), the underlying importance of *impôt du sang* pervades discussions in countries on both sides of the channel. Though the ‘blood debt’ may not be discussed overtly in Britain, due its historical importance in France, if the blood debt is understood as concepts aligned with duty and honour to *la patrie*, then we can see that these criteria are the basis for martial masculinity in both countries.

I will argue that, in both Britain and France, public fears around men shirking their duties alongside deeply rooted popular understandings of soldiering as bearing arms, gave rise to misunderstandings of men who were enlisted in non-combatant roles. This was, somewhat paradoxically, both upheld and negated by the press, which was seen as the link between the trenches and the civilian population at home. This chapter will show that during the war, the figure of the enlisted non-combatant was fraught with tension stemming from the importance of civic duty during warfare which in turn added to the liminal position of these men outside both the military and civic spheres. The non-combatant, enlisted men in France were more secure in their military standing due to the absence of conscientious objection. In Britain, however, the introduction of the Non-Combatant Corps in 1916 made it more difficult for men who were already enlisted to prove themselves as martially masculine, and they endeavoured to distinguish themselves from the corps.

Newspapers as historical sources

The use of newspapers as historical sources is invaluable in terms of exploring the range of attitudes and understandings of these men, as well as allowing us to better understand how both France and Britain, which had larger literate populations than ever before, accessed information regarding a war that was not necessarily being fought on their doorstep. During the First World War, more people were able to access a certain amount of (censored) information regarding the

war than had been the case in previous conflicts.¹⁵¹ George Robb notes that: ‘Newspaper sales soared during the war, reflecting the public’s avid desire for information from the battle front. Over six million newspapers were sold each day – during times of great crisis, even more. [...] For many in the working class, the war years represented their introduction to a daily paper.’¹⁵²

The ways in which this information was transmitted in the press, however, inevitably reflected broader social and political discourses. Janet Watson’s argument that the war was ‘far from a unitary experience [...] Battles were constantly being fought over how to represent active participation in the war, present or past’ will frame the analysis of this chapter.¹⁵³ Battles over representations of the conflict continue to this day, however it is the ‘active participation’ aspect of Watson’s argument that is most pertinent here. In a similar way, Adrian Gregory has engaged with the themes of active participation and spectatorship as they relate to wartime press reports, particularly focusing on the outbreak of war and ‘enthusiasm’ for the cause. Gregory states that, ‘[T]he move from spectatorship to participation was the story not only of Britain’s entry into a continental war, but the narrative of the experience of the people.’ Not only this, but as anxieties concerning a lack of volunteers rose in Britain, this was expressed as a ‘[f]ear of mass passivity, and of an unwillingness to get involved.’¹⁵⁴ The unease noted by Gregory, as Laura Ugolini has demonstrated, was felt intensely by middle-class men unable to enlist. Ugolini has shown how, ‘In the course of the first twelve months of the war, middle-class civilians made considerable efforts to bridge the physical and psychological gap between themselves and the battle fronts, seeking a role beyond that of passive spectatorship.’¹⁵⁵ Yet, the interaction between these men and newspapers was fraught with tension, as they felt reports were ‘uninformative and even misleading’.¹⁵⁶ Two distinct ideals are clear in Ugolini and Gregory’s analyses: the need to

¹⁵¹ Jean Jacques Becker, in his seminal work *The Great War and the French People*, translated by Arnold Pomerans (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985) reflects upon the institution of French censorship during the conflict. For a discussion of British press and censorship, see Adrian Gregory, ‘A Clash of Cultures: The British Press and the Opening of the Great War’, in *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War*, ed. by Troy R.E. Paddock (London: Praeger Publishers, c2004), pp. 15-50.

¹⁵² George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 135.

¹⁵³ Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁴ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 71. Bingham uses the term ‘popular’ for newspapers such as *The Times*, in opposition to “minority”, political publications.

¹⁵⁵ Laura Ugolini, *Civvies*, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵⁶ Laura Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 51. For an in-depth discussion of the different ways in which middle-class men in Britain strove to maintain their involvement with the war from the home front, such as collecting souvenirs, see particularly chapter 1 – ‘the first twelve months of the war’.

officially enlist in the army, and, if one could not, the need to reduce the physical space between the home and battle fronts through a sharing of information and principles. What then was considered to be active participation in the conflict, and how was this presented in the popular press? Non-combatant, enlisted men were certainly active participants in the conflict, but how were they represented in the popular press, given the prestige and dominance of the combatant in popular imagery? Did this change over the course of the conflict? In different publications? In order to answer these questions, we must first consider the status of the press as a primary source, and how the French and British populations engaged with their most popular source of wartime information.

Given the sheer number of newspapers in circulation in both Britain and France during the Great War, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to produce a detailed analysis of all newspapers being read with any regularity, whether it be daily or weekly. It is the aim of the chapter, therefore, to use what Adrian Bingham refers to as ‘minority’ – that is, traditional newspapers – from across the political spectrum in order to focus specifically on representations of non-combatants.¹⁵⁷ What Bingham refers to as the ‘popular’ newspapers, ‘did not seek to perform the same functions as the deeply political “minority” newspapers, nor were they written for the same audience; therefore they should not be measured according to the same yardstick.’¹⁵⁸ Bingham’s argument here is that the terms ‘popular’ and ‘minority’ newspapers for publications such as *The Times* are preferable as he sees them as more neutral than other labels such as ‘quality’ or ‘traditional’. It is important to remember here, that as Bingham states, popular newspapers cannot be used as a “magic mirror”, as that would limit our understanding of the readers and therefore the popular opinion of the time. Newspapers were not showing their readers what to believe, but ‘editors and proprietors sought to discover “what the public wanted”,’¹⁵⁹ and as such they were informing, but more importantly engaging with existing popular discourse.

It would be unwise to suggest that this methodology will produce a complete overview of public perceptions of non-combatant men. Indeed, this is one of the reasons that scholars such as Bibbings, Bingham, and Ugolini have written partial studies;¹⁶⁰ by combining their arguments

¹⁵⁷ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*, p. 8. Bingham uses the term ‘minority’ to refer to overtly political publications.

¹⁵⁸ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ See: Bibbings, *Telling Tales*; Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*; Ugolini, *Civvies*.

historians can produce a fuller understanding of wartime press during the Great War. It will, however, be critical in determining whether representations of non-combatants as shirkers were specific to one end of the political spectrum, and how anxieties surrounding war duty and masculinity were understood and related to by a broad public readership.

The British press in the first months and year of the Great War has come under much scholarly scrutiny, particularly in terms of the push for recruitment, and the interrogation of falsified reports of German atrocities.¹⁶¹ In both the British and the French press in 1914 and 1915, the use of the term non-combatant was almost entirely limited to the denunciation of German atrocities, such as the sinking of the *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915, giving rise to articles decrying the behaviour of the German forces toward *non-combatants*, referring to civilians. Ugolini has asserted that, ‘May 1915 saw a spike of anti-German feeling, both because of the sinking of a Cunard liner, [...] the *Lusitania*, with the loss of over one thousand lives [...]’¹⁶² The focus on the *Lusitania* as an act of German barbarism was so potent that it became a rallying call for enlistment in Britain; the sinking of the *Lusitania* ‘with hundreds of women and children’ was denounced as ‘Germany’s Crowning Infamy’.¹⁶³

This chapter will draw examples from five widely circulated newspapers from Britain and France, namely the *Manchester Guardian*, *The Times*, *Le Matin*, *L’Humanité* and *Action Française*. Taken as a group these newspapers would have been accessed by a very broad readership, as they cover the majority of the political spectrums in Britain and France. *L’Humanité* and *Action Française* were what Bingham would refer to as ‘minority’ newspapers due to their overt political leanings, whereas the remaining newspapers are less openly political and therefore were ‘popular’ newspapers. As Ugolini notes, ‘The daily newspapers, which were thought to contain the most up-to-date news, were eagerly read, with attention paid both to reportage and to official despatches.’¹⁶⁴

All newspapers have been sampled using a keyword search for the years between 1913 and 1919. For French language newspapers (*Action Française*, *Le Matin* and *L’Humanité*) the keywords used

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of the manipulation of the British Press, see (among others): Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1970); Troy R. E. Paddock, ed., *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War* (Westport, CT; London: Praeger Publishers, c2004).

¹⁶² Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 95.

¹⁶³ Imperial War Museum, British Propaganda Poster, IWM (Art.IWM PST 11821).

¹⁶⁴ Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 36.

were “noncombatant”, “brancardier/s”, “infirmier/s”, “embusqué/s” and “Non Combatant Corps”. The equivalent terms in English were used for the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times*, however the term “Non Combatant Corps” was used as a search term across both sets of newspapers as this was corps of men specific to the British Armed Forces.

The *Manchester Guardian*, as it was known during this period, was a daily newspaper that has historically been left-wing in its political stance. Initially, the view outlined by the *Manchester Guardian* was one of advocating Britain’s neutrality, in line with its (left-wing) pacifist views. That said, however, once war was declared the newspaper announced that it would not hinder the war effort. Indeed, ‘The Great War itself encouraged all the main popular papers [...] to rally around the banner of nation and Empire.’¹⁶⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* maintained its anti-war stance right up until the official declaration of war was announced. After the outbreak, the tone of the newspaper became one that expressed sorrow for the failure of the government to avoid all-out war, but equally one which would not hinder the war effort.¹⁶⁶ This suggests, that the British public in its entirety was not in favour of entering the war, but it also denotes a sense of duty to the war effort despite differences of opinion. This is one of the reasons why elements of the popular press came to be seen as instrumental in fostering, if not enthusiasm, then a sense of patriotic duty in the British people.¹⁶⁷ *The Times*, founded in 1785 as the *Daily Universal Register* and adopting its current name in 1788, however, certainly trumpeted pro-war ideologies.¹⁶⁸ It was a newspaper whose political stance had never been as concrete as that of the *Manchester Guardian*, and indeed ‘was often pitted against more liberal dailies such as the *Manchester Guardian*’¹⁶⁹ but in 1914-1919, under the ownership of Lord Northcliffe, was centre-right, as was evidenced in the way it ‘took a strong anti-German line from early on in the crisis.’¹⁷⁰ Niall Ferguson has noted that in

¹⁶⁵ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*, p. 183.

¹⁶⁶ Adrian Gregory, ‘A Clash of Cultures: The British Press and the Opening of the Great War’, in *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War* ed. by Troy R. E. Paddock, (Westport, CT; London: Praeger Publishers, c2004), pp. 15-50.

¹⁶⁷ See below for how this sense of what Leonard Smith et al. describe as ‘grim resolution’, in France, *France and the Great War* by Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.11. See also: Jean Jacques Becker, *1914 : Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre : contribution à l'étude de l'opinion publique printemps-été 1914* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, c1977).

¹⁶⁸ John McEwen, ‘The National Press During the First World War: Ownership and Circulation’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17.3 (1982), pp. 459-486, (463).

¹⁶⁹ John McEwen, ‘The National Press’, pp. 464-5.

¹⁷⁰ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 17.

Europe only one ‘major newspaper consistently argued for war between the great powers, and that was *The Times*.’¹⁷¹

Le Matin, founded in 1883 and discontinued in 1944, was in 1914 a centrist, daily newspaper.¹⁷² It had a circulation of more than one million copies in 1914.¹⁷³ *Le Matin* was considered to be one of the five ‘grands’ Parisien newspapers, along with *L’Écho*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Petit Parisien* and *Le Journal*.¹⁷⁴ *L’Action Française*, however, had a smaller and more politicized readership, being clearly considered to be a right-wing newspaper during the Great War. However, it is important to note that it had not yet begun to be identified with fascist ideologies as it would be in the years following the conflict.¹⁷⁵ More broadly, as Michael Nolan has suggested, in France, ‘The press was not immune to the call of the nation, and to begin there was a broad agreement that the chief role of newspapers was to encourage the national war effort,’¹⁷⁶ arguably due to the impact of the *Union Sacrée*. *L’Humanité*, founded in 1904 by the socialist Jean Jaurès, was the publication of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF), and was intended to be the voice of the worker.¹⁷⁷ As Pierre Albert has noted, after Jaurès’ assassination in 1914 and the revolution of 1917, ‘A gauche, surtout après 1917, les divisions du Parti socialiste suscitérent la création de feuilles nouvelles, parfois pacifistes, cependant que *l’Humanité*, sans Jaurès, perdait de son audience.’¹⁷⁸

Central to an understanding of the function of newspapers in wartime France and Britain is the notion of a social contract between reader and writer, as well as how expectations are changed by a country’s move from a state of peace to a state of war. As such, the reader has a certain expectation of what they will read in a newspaper, and equally, the writer has a certain expectation of what the reader will be seeking from the publication.¹⁷⁹ This is particularly true of newspapers with overt political leanings, something which must be taken into account in any analysis such as

¹⁷¹ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1998), p. 217.

¹⁷² In the interwar years, however, it began to have more rightist tendencies. See Pierre Albert, *La Presse Française* (Paris : La Documentation Française, 1990), p. 164.

¹⁷³ Olivier Forcade, *La Censure en France pendant la Grande Guerre* (Fayard, 2016), p. 33.

¹⁷⁴ Albert, *La Presse Française*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁵ Cyprian Blamires and Paul Jackson, *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1* (ABC-CLIO, 2006).

¹⁷⁶ Michael Nolan, ‘“The Eagle Soars over the Nightingale”: Press and Propaganda in France in the Opening Months of the Great War’, in *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War*, ed. by Troy Paddock (London: Praeger Publishers, 2004) pp. 51-90 (52).

¹⁷⁷ ‘Histoire de “L’Humanité”. Bref survol historique’, (*L’Humanité*: 30 December, 2009). [Accessed 16 March 2018.]

¹⁷⁸ Pierre Albert, *La Presse Française* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1990), p. 163.

¹⁷⁹ Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2010).

this. In this case, it would have been expected that left-wing newspapers would have shown more sympathy in relation to pacifist stances towards warfare, suggesting an implicit acceptance of non-combatant roles in the armed forces, as well as an acceptance of COs. On the other hand, newspapers which subscribed to right-wing political ideologies would have been expected to label non-combatants as ‘shirkers’, failing to support their countrymen in the fight against German bellicosity.

Of course, the press did not mirror a society’s views in a simplistic fashion, nor did people take what they read in the press as the final word on the war, on masculinity or on citizenship. As Adrian Bingham notes:

Newspapers had their own agendas, and each made their own selections of what to report, and what they judged to be significant, out of an almost limitless set of social happenings. The final product was the outcome of complex series of decisions which balanced what proprietors, editors, journalists, and outside contributors wanted to produce, what they assumed the target audience wanted to read, and what was (perceived to be) required for commercial and financial success (namely, securing advertising contracts and maximizing circulation). The journalist did not necessarily believe what he or she wrote, just as the reader did not necessarily believe what he or she read. The press did not wield an overwhelming persuasive power over its audience.¹⁸⁰

That said, as Martin Conboy argues: ‘[W]ithin the informational function of the newspaper, there have always been ideological implications in the transmission of information for particular audiences. Newspapers function to create public identities for social groups as well as for individuals within those groups [...]’¹⁸¹ This suggests that articles that castigated both French and British men for not joining the army during the war would have served to reinforce the political views of readers of certain newspapers, as well as to create or reinforce particular stereotypes. Thus, newspapers themselves not only targeted, but ‘created’ public groups in their reporting of events. These ‘public groups’ did not include all readers of a particular newspaper. It can be argued, however, that these groups were representative of different factions among the populace and were often aligned with political leanings. In the context of 1914-19, the press frequently referred to ‘heroic soldiers’, ‘patriotic wives and mothers’, and ‘cowardly shirkers’, thereby both

¹⁸⁰ Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press*, p.11.

¹⁸¹ Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers*, pp. 7-8.

responding to and helping to reinforce the political and gendered understandings of the wartime society of their readers.¹⁸²

In addition to analysing the cultural constructions of non-combatants as shirkers, positioned in opposition to masculine, arms-bearing soldier-citizens in both countries during the conflict, this chapter will discuss how non-combatants were also represented as *non*-arms-bearing soldier-citizens. In other words, this chapter will investigate how, in an effort to counter the perceived taint caused by an association of non-combatants with ‘cowardly’ COs, non-combatants were represented in the British press as ‘non-arms-bearing soldier-citizens’, in an effort to distinguish them from the stereotype of ‘cowardly shirker’. Although France had universal conscription from the start of the war, the range of forms of service carried out by French men meant that the ‘threat’ of the shirker or ‘*embuscomanie*’ (shirker-mania) as Charles Ridel refers to it, was still ever-present in public discourse.¹⁸³ It makes sense, then, given the prevalence of social anxiety surrounding shirkers in both countries during the conflict, to look at how newspapers presented and engaged with a corps made up entirely of non-combatant men – the NCC – and to use it as a lens through which to further analyse contemporary cultural discourse surrounding martial masculinity.

Understanding the shirker in Britain

Some historians have attributed the numbers of volunteers that joined up in the first few months of the war to the success of the press in encouraging recruitment, though they differ in their conclusions as to why and how this happened.¹⁸⁴ Catriona Pennell has shown how, in the first months of the war, newspapers ‘summarized German actions in Belgium and recounted the wave of atrocities against civilians’ and these articles often ended with ‘stark appeal for more men to join up.’¹⁸⁵ Alexander Watson has suggested that: ‘the absence of conscription in Britain before 1916 forced its authorities to promote volunteering far more vigorously and innovatively than in

¹⁸² See Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, particularly Chapter 2: ‘Of cowards, shirkers, and “unmen”’.

¹⁸³ Charles Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, préface de Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau (Paris: Armand Colin, 2007).

¹⁸⁴ Nicoletta Gullace in *Blood of Our Sons* discusses the role of women and music halls to national enlistment, arguing that military service became a ‘sort of national aphrodisiac’ (p. 88).

¹⁸⁵ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 145. See also Adrian Gregory, ‘British “War Enthusiasm” in 1914: A Reassessment’, in *Evidence, History, and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18*, ed. by Gail Braybon (Oxford: Berghan Books, 2003), pp. 67-85.

the case of continental powers that relied principally on the draft.¹⁸⁶ This initial absence of conscription forced the British press to become a governmental tool through instigating and promoting a sense of civic duty inherently linked to volunteerism. Despite being the sole method of building up manpower, ‘voluntarism, “voluntaryism” or “volunteerism”¹⁸⁷ was ubiquitous in daily life. This was in part due to newspapers, along with other media such as postcards, magazines, posters and music halls, which all helped to ensure that men were ceaselessly ‘encouraged’ to volunteer from the outbreak of war until early 1916. Newspapers launched a ‘war of words’ on their own readerships, to some extent creating the myth that all men who fought in the British army during the war were volunteers,¹⁸⁸ which was, and remains to this day, widespread in the public understanding of the Great War.¹⁸⁹

There had been a strong sense of unease at the possibility that the perceived decadence of the *fin de siècle* had produced a generation of British men unfit for armed service. In *A War Imagined*, Samuel Hynes notes that, ‘What the war did was to make the condition of England a social disease for which war was the cure. War, with its male asceticism, its discomforts and deprivations, was the physical opposite of Edwardian luxury.’¹⁹⁰ Building on notions of threats implicit in Edwardian luxury and decadence, British newspapers often relied heavily on a rhetoric of refusal to enlist as an indication of cowardice, effeminacy, and, worst of all, homosexuality.¹⁹¹ George Mosse has shown that ‘decadence as understood by writers and artist [sic] was itself considered degenerate by the defenders of normative society.’¹⁹² In *Soldier Heroes*, Graham Dawson shows the links between social constructions of soldiering and masculinity, and the fascination with which young children have viewed them, and in turn how that shapes contemporary society and reactions to warfare.¹⁹³ Yet, simply denigrating young Britons would not be the only method through which to win over volunteers. The ‘carrot and stick’ approach was also used; newspapers injected their publications with a language denoting a sexual hierarchy that placed volunteers at the top. This

¹⁸⁶ Alexander Watson, ‘Voluntary Enlistment in the Great War: A European Phenomenon?’, in *War Volunteering in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Second World War*, ed. by Christine G. Krüger and Sonja Levsen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 163-188 (167).

¹⁸⁷ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 27.

¹⁸⁸ See Bibbings’ discussion of the volunteer myth in *Telling Tales*, p. 95.

¹⁸⁹ See Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head 1990) for a discussion of the ‘Myth of the War’ and its prevalence in British Culture.

¹⁹⁰ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 13.

¹⁹¹ Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons*.

¹⁹² Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 89.

¹⁹³ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*.

implied that by volunteering, men would, regardless of class and occupation, automatically be sought-after as husbands by the female populous. Thus, to not volunteer would mean *voluntary* exclusion from this opportunity to join the ranks of the most eligible bachelors in the country.

However, portrayals of volunteers in the press were not solely centred on the sexualisation of masculine soldier-citizens (and therefore the de-sexualisation of men who would not enlist voluntarily); it was not only *women* that would admire the volunteer, but the whole of British society – including their other, equally ‘masculine’ comrades. The language used in this instance was one of comradeship, loyalty, duty, and honour. These characteristics were descended from chivalric ideals so often elicited in Victorian and Edwardian children’s stories.¹⁹⁴

Underpinning the varied arguments in the press and propaganda was the concept of citizenship. Nicoletta Gullace asserts that, ‘during World War I the decision not to go to war was no longer regarded by most Britons as a choice compatible with loyal citizenship.’¹⁹⁵ She goes on to show how propaganda was utilised, not only to evoke prewar concerns around decadence and degeneracy, but further to persecute and denounce shirkers.¹⁹⁶ Discussing the myriad ways in which propaganda could be used during the war, George Robb has argued that, ‘only a small part of wartime propaganda originated from official government sources. Most of it was a product of society itself: commercial advertising, newspapers, sermons, musical productions, novels, films, and postcards.’¹⁹⁷ As such, cultural constructions of masculinity were in the daily lives of Britain’s populace, and the provenance thereof did not always come under close scrutiny.

According to this rhetoric, by enlisting in the army, a man was acknowledging his duty as a citizen, not only to protect his family and country, but also the opportunity to fully realise the true extent of his citizenship. This was due to the link between masculinity and citizenship. Indeed, many scholars refer to enlisted men as ‘soldier-citizens’. Helen McCartney has argued that many men

¹⁹⁴ Scholars have explored how chivalric ideals were instilled into young children through a variety of ways, including story books, magazines, and groups such as the Boy Scouts, as Michael Paris has discussed in *Warrior Nation*, pp. 8-10. Lois S. Bibbings also touches upon this in *Telling tales*, pp. 91-93. Others, however, have suggested too much has been made of ‘militarising’ the youth, see: J.M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914-1918* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), p. 179.

¹⁹⁵ Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, p. 37.

¹⁹⁶ Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, pp. 37-41.

¹⁹⁷ Robb, *British Culture and the First World War*, p. 96.

‘had remained civilians in uniform for the duration of the war.’¹⁹⁸ She postulates that civilian soldiers maintained their links to their homes and civilian lives, and relied upon them to make it through the ordeal of the conflict. Citizenship was viewed as a reciprocal concept; a man could be a citizen, but he must give something back. Matthew McCormack has demonstrated that the historical precedent for such arguments goes as far back as the Georgian era. In *Embodying the Militia in Georgian England*, McCormack argues that, ‘by equating citizenship with militia service, and by requiring all fit adult men to serve in this way, they effectively equated citizenship with masculinity.’¹⁹⁹ The clear message was that to not fight in the army was a refusal to ‘give back’ to one’s country, thereby threatening one’s citizen – and therefore one’s masculine – status.

Bibbings has argued that, ‘When constructed as selfish, shirking or cowards, objectors were often portrayed as representing parasitic unmanliness, shirking responsibility and living off the efforts of others.’²⁰⁰ Though her argument is concerned with the treatment of Conscientious Objectors, the portrayals of such men were not specific to COs alone. She goes on to suggest that COs epitomised loss of control, which at the time had connotations of decadence and homosexuality, thus the association of CO with shirking was one that could taint the portrayals of enlisted men in non-combatant duties:

COs were often portrayed as being feminised or unmanned by their situation. Their lives were to a large extent out of their own hands as, whether in the military, in prison, undertaking non-combatant duties or doing work of national importance, they were forced into some degree of passivity rather than adopting the active masculine role epitomised by the image of the heroic military man.²⁰¹

However, the consequences of public opinion layering and entwining masculinity, citizenship and honour would become detrimental to men who were conscripted after 1916. Though the Derby law was passed in 1915, this was the first step in conscription, encouraging men to ‘attest’. Attesting did not necessarily mean enlisting in the army, but was a sign of a willingness to do so, should they be needed and called upon by the government. When this law did not generate the numbers needed by the military to carry out further campaigns, conscription was introduced in

¹⁹⁸ Helen B. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁹⁹ Matthew McCormack, *Embodying the Militia in Georgian England* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015), p. 28. McCormack examines the longer-term implications of this move in his book, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

²⁰⁰ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 101.

²⁰¹ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, pp. 101-102. This is also something Meyer does in *An Equal Burden*.

1916. In her work on conscription and masculinity during the Great War, Ilana Bel-El argues that: ‘[I]t was the rigid correlation between patriotism and voluntarism that excluded the conscripts from the prevailing imagery of both masculinity and soldiering [and] redefined the soldier, a traditional male role common to all societies, as a volunteer.’²⁰² Consequently, given the emphasis placed on the masculinity of volunteer soldiers in the first two years of the war, those conscripted after 1916 faced continued public backlash. They were not viewed as having answered their country’s call, thus implying that they could not claim a right to a masculinity that was so heavily based on principles of honour and duty.

A clear difference, therefore, came into existence between what constituted masculine in the civilian sphere, and what constituted masculine in the army. While civilian masculinity was based on being the head of a family, protecting and providing for one’s spouse and family, Marcia Kavitz has argued that: ‘Military masculinity [had] less to do with men’s essential characteristics and assigned meaning of the different world – the military world – that soldiers [inhabited].’²⁰³ It is this world of violence therefore, that begets the need for a proficiency in violence as a main characteristic of martial masculinity. As previously discussed, men at the front felt that the lack of close combat threatened their right to a martial masculinity, whereas the martial masculinity portrayed at home was, ironically, almost entirely devoid of connections to physical combat.²⁰⁴ How did non-combatants position themselves in opposition to supposed ‘shirkers’ after 1916? Did non-combatants who had volunteered welcome this reliance on self-motivation as the foundation for martial masculinity? These are the central issues surrounding the representation of non-combatants on the British home front that this chapter will go on to interrogate.

Understanding the shirker in France

Just as McCormack argues that in Britain during 1914-1918 citizenship was inextricably linked to military service, so too was it in France, and it had been since the 1789 Revolution and its *levée en masse*. In the France of 1914, however, this was also due to National Service that underwent

²⁰² Ilana R. Bel-El, ‘Men and Soldiers: British Conscripts, Concepts of Masculinity, and the Great War’, in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930* ed. by Billie Melman (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 73-94 (74).

²⁰³ Marcia Kavitz, ‘The Roots of Military Masculinity’, *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, ed. by Paul Higate (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003) pp. 1-14 (9-10).

²⁰⁴ See in particular, Laura Ugolini, *Civvies*.

changes in 1913,²⁰⁵ and to what Roger Cooter and Steve Sturdy term a ‘bureaucratic militarization. New levels of control and compulsion were introduced into everyday life, and local customs and practices were replaced by centralization and uniformity in the pursuit of primarily military goals.’²⁰⁶ As has been discussed in the British context, warfare was also inescapable in everyday life in France during this period, not least due to the occupation of parts of France from the earliest days of the conflict.²⁰⁷

Leonard Smith has argued that mobilisation offered a twofold opportunity for French men to cement the relationship between soldier, citizen, and warrior; this developed through the ‘actual departure’ of the mobilised men, as well as their identities being submerged into that of the collectivity.²⁰⁸ The direction of mobilised and non-mobilised men from services behind the lines towards the front echoes the importance of distance to the *impôt du sang*, thereby delineating a hierarchy of wartime occupations, at the bottom of which were situated those behind the lines.

Annette Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau have explored what they term a ‘*culture de guerre*’; a culture in which the dichotomy of enemy ‘barbarism’ versus home ‘civilisation’ permeates all aspects of life and representations of the war and is reinforced at every possible moment on a day-to-day basis. Becker and Audoin-Rouzeau have noted that the creation of such a ‘fundamental’ dichotomy happened in the very first few months of the conflict. Further, they argue that it is from this moment that the ‘*culture de guerre*’ is born:

On peut dès lors commencer à parler d’une « culture de guerre » de 1914-1918, c’est-à-dire d’un corpus de représentations du conflit cristallisé en un véritable système donnant à la guerre sa signification profonde. Une « culture », disons-le nettement, indissociable d’une spectaculaire prégnance de la haine à l’égard de l’adversaire. Une haine certes différenciée selon les ennemis auxquels on fait face, mais qui n’envahit pas moins tout le champ des représentations.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Stephen Bull, *World War 1 Trench Warfare (1): 1914-1916* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), p. 6.

²⁰⁶ Roger Cooter and Steve Sturdy, ‘Of War, Medicine and Modernity: Introduction’, in *War, Medicine and Modernity*, ed. by Roger Cooter, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), pp. 2-3.

²⁰⁷ Larissa Wegner, ‘Occupation during the War (Belgium and France)’ at *1914-18 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (2014). ed. by Daniel Ute, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014). DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10388. [Accessed 20.8.2019.]

²⁰⁸ Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers’ Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 29.

²⁰⁹ Annette Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *14-18, Retrouver la Guerre* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2000), p. 122.

Unsurprisingly, then, there was not the same amount or type of resistance to service as was experienced in Britain at the outbreak of the conflict. The outbreak of war in France was publicly viewed to some extent as a chance at redemption for the defeat and loss of Alsace-Lorraine during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and after the invasion and occupation of parts of French territory in 1914 there was broad political and social consensus in relation to France's participation in the war. Given the extent to which the military had become integrated into French life and culture before the beginning of the war,²¹⁰ the identity of soldiering as seen in the public image of combat in France between 1914 and 1915 had become a 'distinctly French form of heroism', epitomising 'elegance and gaiety in the face of danger'.²¹¹ This seems distinctly opposed to the portrayals of the masculine soldier-citizen in Britain at this time, whose construction stood in opposition to any and all implications of elegance due to the links associated with decadence and the threatened effeminacy of the fighting forces. Despite the differences in portrayals, the importance of a soldierly masculinity was undeniably highly important in both nations.

At the core of tensions surrounding *embusqués* and *embusquage* in France was the *impôt du sang*. The popular understanding of military mobilisation was represented as a blood debt, which had its roots in the formation of the Third Republic in 1870.²¹² This was integral to France's nationhood, and suggested a debt owed to one's homeland.²¹³ Similarities between the importance of militarised blood debt to the French population, and the emphasis placed on the reciprocal nature of citizenship in Britain are evident. Ignoring it was the equivalent of ignoring duty to France herself and was a slight that would not be tolerated. Ridel has demonstrated that:

[L]'embusquage est en contradiction flagrante avec l'essence du régime républicain qui, depuis sa mise en place en 1870, a appliqué le principe d'égalité à la plupart des champs de la vie sociale ou politique. Ceci vaut en particulier dans le domaine militaire, où quatre

²¹⁰ This resulted from the French Revolution, which cemented the link between national service and civic duty. See Sophie Wahnich, *In Defense of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution*, translated by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2012), p. 42.

²¹¹ John Horne, 'Soldiers, Civilians and the Warfare of Attrition: Representations of Combat in France, 1914-1918', in *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War* ed. by Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetze (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), pp. 223-250 (p. 228).

²¹² John Horne, 'L'Impôt du Sang': Republican Rhetoric and Industrial Warfare in France, 1914-18' in *Social History*, 14.2 (1983), pp. 201-223.

²¹³ Samuel E. Finer, 'The Role of the Military', in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. by Charles Tilly (Princeton; London: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 84-163.

lois de mobilisation (1872, 1889, 1905 et 1913) ont renforcé le caractère obligatoire, universel et égalitaire de la conscription en France.²¹⁴

The unease surrounding men who stayed on the home front has been referred to as '*Le Scandale des embusqués*'.²¹⁵ The French public became preoccupied with how many government officials who were eligible for mobilisation remained in office. Not only this, but regarding the number of *députés* who were mobilised during the conflict, Ridel states that it was believed by many that: 'La plupart mènent une guerre anonyme dans des hôpitaux ou des services de l'intérieur, en bénéficiant des facilités pour leur avancement ou leur solde cumulable avec leurs indemnités.'²¹⁶ Evidently, even men involved in medical care were categorised as shirkers, despite potentially being involved in the treatment of wounded soldiers as they moved further along the line of evacuation back to hospitals in the rear. Perhaps this 'anonymous war' was itself a rejection of the individual allowing their own identity to be submerged into that of the collectivity, a refusal of their civic obligation in wartime. This growing tension and unease was also present in British society, as Laura Ugolini has demonstrated. She notes that on the home front among middle-class civilians, 'certain individuals and groups [were seen as] undermining rather than contributing to the war effort.'²¹⁷ This shows that by refusing one's civic duty, in both Britain and France, shirking was considered as undermining the war effort, fracturing the unity that was so important to both countries during the conflict.

Anti-Shirker laws in France

Though France had a system of universal conscription via compulsory national service, the government did pass two legislative acts regarding enlistment. The first, *la loi Dalbiez*, came in 1915 and its intention was to impose equality in who was paying the blood debt, to ensure that this did not rest largely on the shoulders of the working classes. Moreover, its aim was to 'diriger vers le front tous les hommes valides mobilisés ou non mobilisés occupés dans des services de l'arrière'.²¹⁸ Victor Dalbiez, the Radical Député for Perpignan, considered the proposal to have both, 'Un principe idéologique et politique puisque la « juste répartition » des effectifs mobilisés ou

²¹⁴ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p. 78.

²¹⁵ Charles Ridel, 'Le Scandale des Embusqués. Le Parlement Français dans la Tourmente (1914-1918)', *Parlement[s], Revue d'Histoire Politique*, 10 (2008), pp. 31-45.

²¹⁶ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p.33.

²¹⁷ Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 99.

²¹⁸ Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 42.

mobilisables correspond à l'idéal républicain de la nation en armes et met un terme au courroux justifié de la population contre les *embusqués*.²¹⁹ In particular, as John Horne has pointed out, Dalbiez's focus was men mobilised behind the lines, as well as the *embusqués* who had sought 'wrongful' employment in factories and other protected jobs.

The Dalbiez law did not, however, resolve the anxiety surrounding the supposed large numbers of men rushing to find war work in factories to avoid being deployed in the trenches. Indeed, Horne has noted that despite both the Mourier and Dalbiez laws, the *embusqué* masquerading as a genuine skilled worker was a figure of opprobrium who bedevilled the manpower question throughout the war.²²⁰ In an effort to show that the French government was taking the issue of shirking seriously, the Mourier law – named after the Radical *Député* who proposed it – was introduced in 1917 and became commonly referred to as the 'anti-shirker' law. As with *la loi Dalbiez*, the Mourier law targeted *embusqués* in the factories, but also those in the army. Mourier also commented that, 'whole divisions could be raised from the officers staffing the various military services [and, presiding] over all, floated the banner of 1793 and heroic ancestors.'²²¹

This was followed again a year later by the creation of the C.C.E. (*Commission de Contrôle des Effectifs*). The continued narrowing of the aims of these laws in who they wanted to mobilise, and the creation of a commission to oversee mobilisation, is undeniably linked to the all-pervading question of the *embusqué*. This finally resulted in '*la chasse aux embusqués*' – meaning literally the hunt for shirkers – and resulted in publications entirely focused on investigating men and publishing their details as a form of public punishment; notably, the *Ligue contre les embusqués* which made no qualms about their investigations into men who remained behind the lines. Though such publications were often associated with the right-wing press, newspapers across the political spectrum regularly published pieces that engaged with either the parliamentary debates, or public discourse. Further, the constant perceived problem of shirkers and tribunals undoubtedly contributed to the war-weariness of 1917, alongside, as Horne as pointed out, the publication of soldiers' letters in the French press that lambasted the conditions of trench warfare.²²²

²¹⁹ Ridet, *Les Embusqués*, p. 81.

²²⁰ John Horne, "'L'Impôt du Sang'": Republican Rhetoric and Industrial Warfare in France 1914-1918', *Social History*, 14, 2 (1989) 201-223, (p. 204).

²²¹ Horne, 'L'Impôt du sang', p. 211.

²²² See John Horne, 'Entre Expérience et Mémoire : Les Soldats Français de la Grande Guerre', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 60.5 (2005), pp. 903-919.

Spaces of mobilisation and danger



Figure 6.²²³

In terms of representations of shirkers in the French press, the issue of departure of the mobilised troops is critical, as it is the moment where those men who have joined the fight and have made good on their end of the 'contract', in which, as we have seen, their status as a member of French society is dependent upon their 'doing their bit' during wartime. Mobilisation is the moment where the line between the civilian and mobilised collective is drawn. Seemingly, a man could not be accused of shirking if he had reduced the distance between himself and danger by going to the front lines. However, remaining at home, even working in positions integral to the war effort, such as munitions work, was seen as *embusquage* or shirking.

Yet, Ridel has demonstrated that even on the front lines, the notion of space in relation to martial masculinity was contentious,

Dans les multiples espaces du front, la contribution des combattants n'est pas la même et nombreux sont les embusqués d'avant. Trois critères étroitement corrélés permettent d'établir une échelle dans la valeur de l'engagement combattant : la proximité des premières lignes, le temps de présence au front et la valeur combattive.²²⁴

²²³ Figure 6: 'Violentes réactions', *Le Matin*, 3 September 1915.

²²⁴ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p. 34.

The 1915 article – ‘*violent reactions*’ – above delineates various areas which were being shelled and devastated by the enemy: the trenches, the dugouts and communication trenches. In doing so, the writer of the article effectively draws a picture for the reader of *who* is getting shelled. The trenches are symbolic of combatants (infantrymen); the dugout represents men who are not necessarily infantry, but are based in the trenches. Communication trenches, then contain those who are *not* infantry, but serve other roles in the front lines – non-combatants. By locating each group very clearly in the front lines, there can be no argument that some men are ‘closer to danger’ than others, at least not in the context of this article. Beyond using space as a metaphor for the different groups of men serving at the front, the writer spells it out: ‘Les pertes sont sensibles et atteignent aussi bien les porteurs, les brancardiers, les téléphonistes que les unités combattantes.’ The liminal, invisible men in non-combatant roles are shown to be in as much danger as their combatant comrades, and indeed as much danger as the civilian population. Though this article does not describe the situation on the Western Front, given that France was subjected to total war, we can infer that the need on the part of the writer was to make it absolutely clear that non-combatant, enlisted men were in no way cowering away from the danger that was already affecting the civilian population. Of course, France was invaded in the very first weeks of the war, and part of the country remained occupied for a great duration of the conflict.²²⁵ This meant that the French population felt more keenly the need to not only protect their homeland, but indeed to regain those areas which had been lost and occupied by the enemy forces, allowing the population to regain their territory and pride.

This article indicates that debates around the significance of roles undertaken by non-combatants during the conflict are being played out in the press in both Britain and France, long before the introduction of the Non-Combatant Corps. Ridet has argued that, ‘Le service de santé, et notamment les brancardiers de la division sont concernés aussi par l’opprobre, du moins lors des premiers mois du conflit : on les accuse de faire preuve d’une prudence excessive lors des combats, de ne pas répondre aux appels des blessés et de se cacher pour « échapper au danger de la

²²⁵ Wegner, ‘Occupation during the War (Belgium and France)’.

mitraille ». ²²⁶ This shows that the added severity of fighting for and in a country that was partially occupied meant that shirking was even more of a betrayal to one's country.

Another *raison d'être* for the popular press during wartime was documenting the conflict. This was done both through articles such as those which detailed the minutiae of the evacuation of wounded bodies from the front lines, and through photographs of troops such as '*la popote en plein air*', taken from *Le Matin* and shown in Figure 7 below.



Figure 7. ²²⁷

It is important to note the title of this photograph, *la popote en plein air*, is light-hearted and elicits the image of *poilus* dining 'al fresco' whilst at the front. This could be due to the fact that the photograph was printed just three months after the outbreak of war, therefore the popular press in France would have been looking to promote a confident outlook, suggestive of forthcoming victory rather than focusing on the hardship that these men may have experienced. Whilst the usage of the phrase '*faire la popote*' is relatively informal, it was associated with the military, particularly with communal cooking amongst groups of officers or NCOs. As the picture is uncaptioned, the viewer is not informed specifically what branch of the army these men belong to, however, four out of the

²²⁶ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, pp. 39-40.

²²⁷ Figure 7: 'La Popote en Plein Air', *Le Matin*, 11 November 1914.

five men pictured are clearly wearing brassards, delineating that they belong to the *Services de Santé*. The point then, is that these men *are* depicted as *poilus*, hence are real soldiers and real men, despite their non-combatant roles. The very absence of a combatant/non-combatant distinction in the title suggests the intent of the newspaper in publishing the photograph; the portrayal of a relaxed scene is not specific to one group of men, it is intended to be representative of the French army as a whole. In doing so, it undermines the notion of different branches of the army as fragmentary and competing for recognition, whilst underpinning the concept of unity and loyalty.

The Hunt for Shirkers



Figure 8.²²⁸

Just three months after the outbreak of the war, the issue of hunting down men who were judged to be shirking their duties was already being discussed in the daily press. The extreme left-wing newspaper *L'Humanité* printed the article above: '*La Chasse Aux Embusqués*'. The article is written in direct speech, giving the sense that the Minister for War is speaking directly to the reader of the article. Published on 21 November 1914, the argument is centred upon the physical aptitude of men who outwardly appear to have a 'parfaite vigueur constitutionnelle' yet have been

²²⁸ Figure 8: '*La Chasse Aux Embusqués*', *L'Humanité*, 21 November 1914.

drafted into the auxiliary services. This form creates a bond between the author (the Minister) and the reader, using the medium of print to reach across the distance between those in power and the population at large. Moreover, this fight against shirking was also on the agenda of newspapers at the opposite end of the political spectrum. In the conservative publication, *Action Française*, politicians were also lambasted as shirkers, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 9.²²⁹

This article claims that not only were certain politicians shirking their duties, but they were in fact enabling others to do the same. The article emphasises the ‘affluent’ world in which

²²⁹ Figure 9: ‘La Politique: I. Les Embusqués et les Embusqueurs’, *Action Française*, 3 May 1915.

politicians lived and delineates their uneasy existence as figures that direct the war, ‘le coup de “piston” dont il est le premier coupable’, but who were not literally ‘firing guns’, in battle.²³⁰ The article suggests that politicians were actively undermining the unity that was so important to France during the war. It states that politicians were on the receiving end of both complaints and ‘denunciations’ and requests by those seeking to find a ‘[poste] de tout repos’ – a job well out of the way of danger. This description highlights the ‘cushy’ nature of politicians and, more widely, posts in the civil service that were exempted from war service. It also evidences the tension in France surrounding jobs that held exemption status, as will be evident later in this chapter.

This article also shows us how posts in the civil service walked the line between supporting the war effort, as well as being thought of as not being actively involved in the fighting. This mirrors the role of the non-combatant, who was not recognised as ‘fighting’ in the traditional sense of firing guns, but who were also enlisted in the army and was therefore outside the civilian sphere. This was also true of some British non-combatants, who were equally depicted as being distinct from the civilian population, but as also separated from those who bore arms. The hostility shown in this article towards men who were perceived to be actively avoiding danger in the front lines leads us on to the issue of the body, whether it be the wounded body or the physically lacking in strength or health. It is to issues of the body that I will now turn.

The Body

A difference between France and Britain in terms of the representation of non-combatants is that in France representations were focused upon the body, whereas the actions of Britain are to some extent forced by the CO as an interest group.

²³⁰ This echoes the post-war sentiment in Britain of ‘lions led by donkeys’. See Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London: Aurum Press, 2011) in which he investigates the ways in which Haig’s reputation was destroyed and how this familiar and enduring trope came to be.



Figure 10.²³¹

In France 1915, ‘auxiliaires’ – for which we can substitute enlisted non-combatant – were to be separated into two groups: those whose physical state was not going to improve; and those whose physical state was anticipated to ameliorate, at least enough for them to be reintegrated back into the Army. With such a system in place, the hierarchy of non-combatants within an order designed to cater to men whose bodies were not (or were no longer) deemed to be capable of martial duty.

Historians such as George Mosse have discussed the importance of the body to ideals of masculinity that pervaded both the British and French public consciousness. In *The Image of Man*, Mosse notes that ‘Men with willpower, courage, and capacity to deal with pain, confronted degeneration, [...] were designed to meet this challenge.’²³² Notably, then, the body that was deemed ‘unfit’ for service, both on a temporary and a permanent basis, was a source of great concern in the run up to, and throughout, the Great War. Perhaps, then, in order to confront this seeming disparity between the disconcerting notion of the supposedly ‘unmanly’ body that was unfit to perform a martial masculinity, and the reverence afforded to servicemen during the

²³¹ Figure 10: ‘Les Auxiliaires’, *Le Matin*, 4 February 1915.

²³² Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p. 101.

conflict, the reaction of the French press was to valorise all those enlisted. This would narrow the perceived gap between those in the front lines and those situated further away from ‘immediate’ danger, such as medical orderlies working in field hospitals. It did, however, also serve to highlight the hierarchy of the armed forces, by portraying the occupation of *auxiliaire* as a stepping-stone to re-enlistment into the ‘*service armé*’. This particularly applies to the *auxiliaires* outlined in the second category stated in the article; the men whose physical condition was likely to improve.²³³ This is also seen in the British forces. Meyer has shown that the RAMC operated a system of ‘recycling’ men. She notes however, that this resulted in a degradation of the overall physical state of the corps, as to men who were physically fit and healthy were transferred out of medical services into the infantry and other combatant units. The gaps that were left were filled with men who, ‘upon physical rehabilitation, were deemed unfit for combatant service.’²³⁴ This reinforced ideas of the masculine, combatant soldier as the epitome of physical perfection, as those who were less than perfect were relegated to unarmed roles.

Fighting against this simplistic view of unarmed men as wanting in terms of fitness and therefore of masculinity, *L’Humanité* published an article entitled, ‘L’Utilisation Rationnelle des Hommes: Le Service Auxiliaire’ on 5 May 1915, shown below in Figures 11 and 12.

²³³ In chapter 2 of this thesis, I discuss the recycling of men and transition of men from combatant to non-combatant roles in relation to grief and blood debt.

²³⁴ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 65.

L'Utilisation Rationnelle DES HOMMES

La Question des Auxiliaires

En faisant ici l'exposé de la proposition de loi présentée par MM. Dalbiez et Ponsot j'avais formulé quelques restrictions sur le texte de l'article 5 qui visait le passage des hommes de l'auxiliaire dans le service armé.

J'ai signalé que le ministre de la guerre, entendu par la Commission parlementaire de la Chambre, avait déclaré que la proposition ne lui paraissait avoir aucune utilité. Par contre, dans sa réunion tenue mercredi dernier, la Commission que préside le général Pédoya a maintenu le projet présenté par MM. Dalbiez et Ponsot et a chargé M. Henry Paté de présenter un rapport favorable.

Je me bornerai à constater que, sur cette question, il y a divergence de vues entre le ministre de la guerre et les membres de la Commission de l'armée. C'est la Chambre qui, au cours des débats publics, aura à se prononcer en dernier ressort. En attendant, je voudrais résumer les indications et les remarques qui m'ont été fournies au sujet de la situation des auxiliaires par de nombreux militants ou des correspondants que le sujet intéresse tout spécialement.

Une précision nécessaire

Tout d'abord, il faut constater que la plupart des auteurs de ces communications s'accordent à reconnaître ceci :

Ce n'est pas dans l'ensemble des services auxiliaires qu'il faut, *a priori*, rechercher les « embusqués » et toute proposition de loi qui s'inspirerait uniquement de cette conception risquerait de commettre à la fois une erreur et une injustice. Si l'on veut considérer ce problème de l'utilisation rationnelle des hommes au seul point de vue du chiffre des soldats à récupérer il est certain que le nombre des « inutilisés » est beaucoup plus considérable dans le « service armé ». Il y a dans cette dernière catégorie un contingent très important qui est distrait de l'ensemble des combattants pour remplir des services divers que l'on pourrait — je dis même que l'on devrait — confier uniquement aux auxiliaires.

Il serait donc nécessaire, si l'on veut employer la meilleure méthode, la plus équitable et la plus fructueuse, de retirer aux hommes du service armé ces fonctions ou ces emplois que les auxiliaires occuperaient aussi bien. Et je ne crois pas, qu'en toute sincérité, on trouve un argument à opposer à cette mise en valeur des forces à utiliser. Si je m'en rapporte aux statistiques qui m'ont été fournies ou signalées, je peux affirmer que le total des hommes du service armé que l'on pourrait récupérer en appliquant ce principe serait des plus élevés. Il surprendrait même ceux qui songent à l'emploi des services auxiliaires sous une autre forme que celle où ils doivent être occupés.

Lés diverses situations

La constatation que je viens de faire ne m'empêche pas de reconnaître qu'il peut y avoir dans ces mêmes services auxiliaires des hommes dont les aptitudes physiques trouveraient un meilleur emploi dans le service armé. Je sais notamment, que dans les formations sanitaires figurent une certaine quantité d'auxiliaires dont la présence peut justifier de légitimes critiques. Mais il me faut voir la question dans son ensemble et noter les réflexions de mes correspondants.

Voici ce que m'écrivait un secrétaire de recrutement — qui a déjà 32 mois de pratique — au sujet des auxiliaires des clas-

ses actives ou de réserve appelés au début de la mobilisation :

— Il faut noter, me dit-il, que ces hommes ont été classés et maintenus par trois *Juridictions différentes*, si l'on peut s'exprimer ainsi : 1^o Classement dans le service auxiliaire par le *Conseil de révision* lors de l'appel à l'activité ; 2^o Maintien par la *Commission spéciale de réforme* réunie en vertu du décret du 9 octobre ; 3^o Re-maintien par la *Commission dite des « trois médecins »*, en exécution de la circulaire du 14 novembre 1914.

Après ce triple examen, peut-on considérer ces auxiliaires comme devant repasser une quatrième visite médicale et les faire passer dans le service armé ?

Et mon correspondant ajoute que, *de par les textes législatifs*, les auxiliaires sont considérés comme des *incurables*, donc, en fait, comme des hommes « *inaméliorables* ». C'est pourquoi à la suite de la circulaire du 14 novembre — celle qui institue la visite des trois médecins et qui prévoyait le passage des auxiliaires devant cette commission *tous les deux mois* — le ministre, s'inspirant de ces textes législatifs, décida qu'un *passage unique* serait imposé aux hommes du service auxiliaire.

En ce qui concerne les hommes qui, à la mobilisation, étaient dans le service armé et ont, depuis, été versés dans l'auxiliaire un correspondant m'écrit :

Ne pensez-vous pas qu'il serait injuste aussi que ces hommes passent une nouvelle visite, alors qu'ils en ont déjà passé trois :

1^o La visite du major qui a proposé pour le service auxiliaire ;

2^o La visite de la Commission de réforme qui a classé « service auxiliaire » ;

3^o La visite de la Commission spéciale, celle des trois médecins, qui a maintenu les hommes dans cette position.

Je crois que seuls (et ils sont assez nombreux) ceux qui, ayant été versés au service armé dans le service auxiliaire et renvoyés immédiatement dans leurs foyers sans avoir passé devant la Commission spéciale des trois majors, devraient repasser la visite avec les hommes classés auxiliaires avant la guerre, maintenus dans cette position par les conseils de révision cartonnaires et qui, eux non plus, n'ont pas passé la visite de la Commission spéciale des trois majors.

Un groupe de lecteurs pose les questions suivantes sur des cas particuliers :

1^o Qui deviendront ceux qui, passés devant une commission de trois médecins, reconnus aptes, puis classés dans le service auxiliaire par un conseil de réforme, ont rendu, depuis le 2 août, des services en rapport avec leur état physique ?

2^o Ceux qui, évacués pour une affection quelconque, sont passés devant une commission des trois médecins, puis passés service auxiliaire devant une commission de réforme depuis leur rentrée à leur dépôt ?

Nous nous permettons également de faire observer que tous ces hommes en question ont passé au moins *quatre visites médicales* ordonnées par circulaires ministérielles pendant que nombre d'auxiliaires n'étaient pas encore mobilisés et ne le sont pas encore.

Un de nos camarades de la section de Saint-Ouen émet les remarques suivantes :

1^o Si la nécessité d'une nouvelle visite médicale peut se justifier pour les hommes versés ou maintenus service auxiliaire n'ayant passé qu'une seule fois devant une commission de réforme, il n'en est pas de même pour les hommes qui, ayant passé un conseil de réforme, ont à nouveau passé devant la commission de contrôle instituée par décret ministériel du 9 octobre comme vous le faites remarquer fort justement dans votre article ;

2^o Ou alors une visite générale s'impose et dans ce cas c'est déclarer ouvertement et officiellement que les majors de l'armée, à n'importe quels services ou formations sanitaires qu'ils appartiennent, sont des incapables... et alors, dans ce cas, pourquoi leur confier la santé des hommes ?

J'aurai à donner d'autres extraits de lettres et de communications sur ce même sujet qui présente actuellement une réelle importance.

(A suivre.) Raymond FIGEAL.

P. S. — Je prie les camarades ou les lecteurs qui me demandent des renseignements de lire la *Petite correspondance* insérée dans le journal, car il m'est impossible de répondre personnellement à toutes les lettres.

Lerôle de autorité judiciaire

From left to right: Figure 11, Figure 12.²³⁵

²³⁵ Figures 11 and 12: 'L'Utilisation Rationnelle des Hommes', *L'Humanité*, 9 May 1915.

Following the implementation of *la loi Dalbiez*, *L'Humanité* published this piece, drawing out the difficulties inherent to the *chasse aux embusqués*, in that some men were mistakenly labelled as 'shirkers' were subject to repeated humiliation in the form of military service tribunals. The article uses subheadings to create a short, but powerful message: 'Une précision nécessaire' [...] 'Les diverses situations'. For those only scan-reading the article, the message would be clear; it is, of course, necessary to be 'precise', in order to make the best use of our fighting men, but reasons for being assigned to an auxiliary corps are many and 'diverse', upon which the article then goes on to elaborate. The use of sub-headings is important for many reasons, the first of which is the breaking up of a long article into easily-read 'shorts' ensuring that it is easily navigable for the reader; the second is that signals the flow of the article by creating points at which the (often new) argument changes; the third is, as discussed above, to quickly convey the general message of the article to the reader.

The first part of the article deals with the need for shirkers to be identified and addresses the fact that at the time this was to some extent concentrating on identifying shirkers and possible malingerers in the auxiliary corps. The author writes: 'ce n'est pas dans l'ensemble des services auxiliaires qu'il faut [...] rechercher les « embusqués » et toute proposition de loi qui s'inspirent uniquement de cette conception risquerait de commettre à la fois une erreur et une injustice'. Effectively, the author maintains the stance that the *chasse aux embusqués* is needed, but in being directed so firmly on the auxiliary corps, the law (here the Dalbiez/Mourier law) risks committing both an error and an injustice. This speaks to the nature of the *impôt du sang* in two, contradictory ways. The first being that the blood-debt must be upheld, and so any man seeking to escape it must be (forcibly) allocated to the armed forces. The second, that in carrying out this work with such a narrow focus risks contravening the concept of equality inherent to the blood-debt, and therefore the search for shirkers must be widened and done fairly. The author goes on to concede, however, that: 'La constatation que je viens de faire ne m'empêche pas de reconnaître qu'il peut y avoir dans ces mêmes services auxiliaires des hommes dont les aptitudes physiques trouveraient un meilleur emploi dans le service armé'. The tone and wording of the article is very careful indeed. Whilst criticising the method by which the government seeks to identify shirkers, the author reluctantly admits that, of course, there are *some* men in this group whose physical fitness would better serve the country outside of the auxiliary corps.

In the second section of the article, the author invokes the testimony of a ‘correspondant’, the use of which would add credibility, and therefore persuasive power, to a text which would otherwise be simply opinion-based. He paraphrases the correspondent: ‘mon correspondant ajoute que, *de par les textes législatifs*, les auxiliaires sont considérés comme des *incurables*, donc, en fait, comme des hommes « inaméliorables »’. Here, not only is the author using the testimony of someone in the auxiliary corps, but his correspondent himself points out that it is in legislative texts that men in this group are categorised and thus perceived as incurable and that they (meaning their physical state) cannot be improved.

The direction of the article then moves to criticise the ‘injustice’ of the newly-imposed fourth tribunal which these men must pass if they wished to remain assigned to the auxiliary corps. For men who were assigned to the corps at the outbreak of war, the author details the first three tribunals, comprising of visits by a *Conseil de Révision* which took the first step in assigning someone to service outside of the army, then by a *Commission Spéciale de Reforme* who would need to uphold the decision, and finally passing to the third *Commission Spéciale*, which constituted three military doctors who would ultimately decide whether the decision that had been taken was to be upheld.²³⁶ After changes in the law were implemented, men who had at first been in the *service armé* were required not only to be examined by three similar *commissions*, but were then to pass a fourth, this time again staffed by military medical personnel. The question posed by the author’s detailing of the many visits and tribunals is evident: to what end? Indeed, adding further visits serves to cast doubt on the veracity or reliability of the decisions made by the first two – or three – ‘judges’. In what circumstances could a final visit suddenly contradict the findings of those that preceded it? The ministerial decree that imposed such changes is portrayed as invalid and not at all ‘rationale’.

More generally, however, the tone of the article brings to light a further problem with the medical tribunals, and this time the focus is on the ‘*incurables*’ and ‘*inaméliorables*’ at whom they are directed. The ‘injustice’ that the article denotes is not only that they may be falsely accused of malingering or shirking, but that they are forced to hear, again and again, that they are to remain as a member of the auxiliary corps, for this brought with it the knowledge – and now certainty –

²³⁶ For a discussion of medical tribunals in France, see Jean-Claude Farcy, ‘Droit et Justice Pendant la Première guerre Mondiale. L’exemple de la France.’, *Ler Historia*, 66 (2014), pp. 123-139.

that their bodies were not considered to be fit for armed service. As such, they were repeatedly denied the masculine identity of a soldier.

In France, where the identity of the soldier was deeply rooted in civil duty and blood debt, the possibility of Conscientious Objection to the war did not exist as it did in Britain. Though we have seen that unarmed, enlisted men were not always seen as occupying the same masculine status as those who bore arms, we have also seen that the French people had a more nuanced understanding of war service. Indeed, National Service in France did not mean that men were trained only as infantrymen, but that men were also offered the opportunity to train as stretcher-bearers in the army band.²³⁷ How then were British COs understood in France? How did a country that linked citizenship and military service depict men who resisted or refused their own country's call to arms? To answer these questions, the final section will return to Britain's Non-Combatant Corps, and an analysis of its treatment by the press on both sides of the channel. This will allow us to see more clearly how those who objected to war were seen in both countries. It will also enable us to understand if, how, and why men who had volunteered to serve in a non-combatant role were set apart from those who had resisted compulsion. I will investigate how these portrayals intersected with those we have already seen, and how representing these groups differently in the press was negotiated by journalists of the period.

Rank and Recognition

Despite a semantic association in newspaper reports between 'non-combatant' and 'civilian', units such as the British Royal Army Medical Corps were largely non-combatant with an emphasis placed on their occupations as medical practitioners.²³⁸ Non-combatant roles in groups such as the RAMC would have been understood by the public to be justified in relation to war service, due in part to the Hippocratic Oath and the clear need for healing and people in healing roles during wartime. Rebecca Gill has shown that in the decades prior to the outbreak of war, starting with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1, there was an 'emergence of a nascent field of humanitarian aid,

²³⁷ Chapter 3 of this thesis explores the reasons for which one could be drafted as a stretcher-bearer at the outbreak of the conflict.

²³⁸ This was in line with the Geneva Convention, and officers carried a side arm for self-protection only.

distinguished by an ethos of “rational compassion” and increasingly routine practices.’²³⁹ She also points out that the ‘experience of the ordinary soldier gained unprecedented journalistic attention in the latter part of the nineteenth century.’²⁴⁰ This suggests then that the suffering of soldiers was something that the civilian population was aware of, and that popular understanding of the need for humanitarian relief during wartime was borne of the existence of agencies such as the Red Cross. It also, however, further blurs the line between the fighting or *wounded* soldier and the caregiver, or the *healer*. With civilian groups fulfilling some of the need for medical relief during wartime, the distinction between caregiving inside and outside of the military was unclear.

This is evidenced in *The Times* in the few articles that overtly discuss the roles undertaken by enlisted, unarmed men on the front lines. One such article, written in 1916 by Lord Northcliffe himself, entitled ‘The War Doctors’²⁴¹ raises the medical men of the British Army up, praising them throughout the article, which details the route taken by a wounded man from the Regimental Aid Post to the ships back to England. Northcliffe highlights the danger that the medical men are in, and spells it out to the reader:

The doctor has to-day probably only the shelter of one of our own trenches or any little part that may remain of a captured German trench. There is no other covering for him and his brave stretcher-bearers, who are at once his nurses and his orderlies. Happily not so many of these are fired upon by the enemy as heretofore; for, as the Prussians have realized that our artillery is the most deadly thing in the history of war. [...]

The stretcher-bearers staffer in with their load [...] and the wounded one is borne off and away in the open to the next stage, the Advanced Dressing Station, which is as often as not also pushed right up into the fire zone. The regimental stretcher-bearers therefore begin again another pilgrimage onwards.²⁴²

The (relative) abundance of articles that appear in 1916 related to the care of the wounded is, I argue, related directly to the formation of the Non-Combatant Corps. The titular emphasis on the non-bearing of arms immediately marks this Corps out as different to other, ‘fighting’ units. Moreover, its name places emphasis on the government’s need to create a corps especially for COs

²³⁹ Rebecca Gill, “‘The Rational Administration of Compassion’: The Origins of British Field Relief in War”, *Le Mouvement Social*, 227 (2009), pp. 9-26 (9). See also Rebecca Gill, *Calculating Compassion: Humanity and Relief in War, Britain 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

²⁴⁰ Gill, “‘The Rational Administration of Compassion’”, p. 11.

²⁴¹ *The Times*, 4 October 1916.

²⁴² *The Times*, 4 October 1916.

in order for them to join in the war effort, which served to further differentiate them from their comrades in the armed forces, and other ‘non-combatants’, i.e. civilians. This corps was specifically non-arms-bearing, and so was involved in the care of the wounded alongside the RAMC, as well as undertaking other roles such as those in transport and communications. The appearance of articles describing the care of the wounded, often by stretcher-bearers as well as qualified Doctors, represents the attempts to allay fears of families at home when they considered the treatment of their wounded loved ones across the Channel.²⁴³ Not only this, when we consider the timing of these articles in conjunction with the formation of the NCC, they worked to remind the population of the importance of the work of unarmed, enlisted men such as stretcher-bearers and doctors, whilst skimming over the fact that these men were not necessarily members of the NCC at the time of publication, they could also have been attached to the R.A.M.C. or working as stretcher-bearers attached to combatant regiments. Interestingly, the article specifically targets the fears of those at home, whilst using words like ‘pilgrimage’ to describe the efforts of the stretcher-bearers. While this does not portray the stretcher-bearers in any particularly masculine way, the use of religious terminology links the job of ferrying the wounded with a quest, underscoring the need for the role and its importance in the war effort.

The introduction of the NCC in March 1916 as documented in the *Manchester Guardian*, suggests that the Corps would be formed ‘for the period of the war’ only.²⁴⁴ Further, the Corps is specifically described as being ‘for the Conscientious Objectors.’²⁴⁵ The article goes on to emphasise that: ‘Its officers and non-commissioned officers will be selected from regular infantry regiments, and the privates will neither be armed nor trained with arms of any description.’²⁴⁶ In this way, the article effectively merges the terms CO and non-combatant. Evidently, there were non-combatants employed in many capacities in the armed services from the very beginning of the conflict, but until this point there had been no corps that was labelled as being ‘non-combatant’, in its very name. Members of the NCC were expected to carry out duties such as, ‘labouring duties at home or on lines of communication overseas’.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ See, for example: ‘Care of our Wounded’, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 May 1915; and ‘The Journey of the Wounded: From Base to Home Port’ *Manchester Guardian*, 30 August 1916.

²⁴⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 March 1916.

²⁴⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 3 March 1916.

²⁴⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 3 March 1916.

²⁴⁷ Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British army in the First and Second World Wars* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 193.

It is interesting that it was made clear in the *Manchester Guardian* that the commissioned officers were to be taken from regular infantry regiments. The men leading the NCC would, therefore, be trained in the use of weapons, and this meant that there would be a discrepancy in the levels of pay of non-combatants in the NCC and other enlisted men. The article asserts: ‘The officers and N.C.O.s will be selected from regular infantry personnel not fit for general service but fit for service abroad on lines of communication.’ This suggests that almost the entire Corps would be made up of men not fit for active service, which immediately poses a problem regarding the importance of the body to martial masculinity. It also meant that those serving as the ‘higher-ups’, in the NCC would be inherently aware of the fact that they were commanding a corps made of men who had objected to armed service, though they met the physical parameters set by the army. Jessica Meyer has shown that, at the start of the war, the RAMC was the corps in which men who were deemed to be not physically fit enough for armed service, but could carry wounded and dead servicemen, were allowed to serve as regimental stretcher-bearers.²⁴⁸ Men who were in good physical health were encouraged to join the RAMC. Indeed, physical strength was a pre-requisite for men who were enlisted as stretcher-bearers, as they were needed to carry their fellow servicemen over the battlefields for treatment or for burial. However, men serving as non-combatants not in the NCC were doing so in line with the Geneva conventions rather than having objected to serving in the army. Michael Snape has claimed that lower-grade members of the NCC were: ‘[often] mocked and derided by the regular soldiers they worked alongside, [and] the COs who joined the NCC appeared to both the general public and to the NCF to be taking the easy route: refusing to fight but not sticking entirely to their pacifist principles either.’²⁴⁹

Snape points out that the discrimination the members of the NCC faced was not limited to their pay being capped due to not being trained in the bearing of arms. The *Manchester Guardian* article printed on 3 March 1916 describes their training of Companies of the NCC, who: ‘will be trained in squad drill without arms [...]. The privates will be equipped as infantry, except that they will not be armed or trained with arms of any description.’²⁵⁰

Just over a week later, on 11 March 1916, it is reported that:

²⁴⁸ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 60.

²⁴⁹ Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 66.

²⁵⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 3 March 1916.

[...] the rates of pay of the men of this corps shall be laid down for our infantry of the line in our warrant for the pay, appointment, promotion, and non-effective pay of our army dated December 1, 1914. The proficiency pay which is given for professional skill in arms to soldiers in combatant corps will not be drawn by soldiers of our Non-Combatant Corps.²⁵¹

The ability to bear arms is clearly linked to the rate of pay for which one is eligible. As such, given that pay, and the ability to provide financially for one's family is intrinsically linked to masculinity during this period, this policy both overtly and subtly placed NCC members in an implicit hierarchy of war service.

In addition to the ability to bear arms, there was much discussion in the *Manchester Guardian* as to who had the ability to wear a military uniform. In such articles, they are primarily discussing the right of the Red Cross Orderlies to wear khaki, however it speaks to an argument more broadly of whether non-combatants should wear the same uniform as combatant men.²⁵²

It features a backlash both from a member of the Red Cross, and from others who contest the veracity of the original writer's statements.

Although little sympathy was expressed for the motivations and ethical stance of pacifists and conscientious objectors, they were by no means the only group of people on the home front to be vilified for their supposed lack of commitment to the war effort, as the unity and comradeship that were supposed to underlie wartime alliances soon began to show signs of strain.²⁵³

Here Ugolini discusses the difficulties of having an entirely united home front during the conflict. Though her argument centres around the middle-class reactions to groups such as, 'Socialists, trade unions and the Labour party',²⁵⁴ one of the concepts outlined in her work is that middle-class men sought out a specific type of conformity, which they recognised as unity. The 'Letters to the Editor' section of the *Manchester Guardian* shows how the tension between unity and conformity arose

²⁵¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 March 1916.

²⁵² See Lucy Noakes, "'Playing at Being Soldiers'?: British Women and Military Uniform in the First World War", in *British Popular Culture and the First World War*, ed. by Jessica Meyer (Boston: Brill, 2008) pp. 123-146, for a discussion of how women who wore military-style clothing were perceived during the conflict.

²⁵³ Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 100.

²⁵⁴ Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 99.

from ideas of rank and recognition, and, more explicitly, the right to wear uniform declaring a link to the military.²⁵⁵

In 1915, a letter from George Bigwood of Chorlton-cum-Hardy appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*:

Sir, my first letter to you touching the employment of Red Cross Orderlies contained two suggestions. They were (1) that young men now employed as orderlies, who are fortunate enough to satisfy army requirements as to age and physical fitness and who have no dependents, should, if possible, be made to realise the larger and more important national duty which, no able-bodied young man ought to shirk; and (2) that, in any event, young men should not be allowed to masquerade before the public in a uniform which approximates so nearly to the regulation pattern when they are only carrying out (I here allude to young men of military age) quite subordinate duties [...].²⁵⁶

The basis for Bigwood's unhappiness with the Red Cross Orderlies is that they are male orderlies rather than women. It is the fact that physically fit men are employed in hospitals away from the front lines rather than being employed by the army, and they therefore are not doing their 'national duty' that he equates to being employed away from the front lines in a caregiving capacity to shirking because the orderlies have no medical reason to be exempted. Furthermore, their wearing of a uniform that he claims so closely resembles the army regulation uniform makes their avoidance of military duty all the worse. There is an undertone that by 'masquerading', in such a uniform that these men 'of military age' are mocking the war effort and parading their ability to avoid serving at the front lines.

This was not the first letter Bigwood had written complaining that men of military age not enlisted in the armed forces were avoiding duty by volunteering in Red Cross hospitals. Indeed, on the same day as the above letter was published, a response from Medicus to an earlier letter by Bigwood appeared in the same section stating: 'There are without doubt many orderlies wasting their time in the Red Cross hospitals, who would only give their services one day per week, and would be better appreciated if they gave themselves to the RAMC corps, instead of loafing about

²⁵⁵ Sabine Grimshaw has explored letters to newspapers which outlined different experiences of conscientious objectors during the war. Supporters and objectors themselves wrote about their experiences of the war, particularly imprisonment, in an attempt to change the public perception of them as shirking their duty to Britain. See: Sabine Grimshaw, 'Representations and resistance: The representation of male and female war resisters in the First World War', PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2017.

²⁵⁶ Letters to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1915.

a non-teaching hospital.’²⁵⁷ The author of this letter has named themselves ‘Medicus’, the Latin word for physician, suggesting therefore that they are a doctor, or another member of the health services. We can infer, then, given their scathing assertion that some young men are ‘loafing about’, that they have some direct knowledge of the behaviour of orderlies in ‘non-teaching hospitals’. It follows then, that their suggestion that these men should join the RAMC is rooted not necessarily in their own patriotic beliefs, that they want more men to enlist at least in the medical corps of the armed forces, but it is instead grounded in discontent in the workplace. However, it does not counter Bigwood’s assertions that able-bodied men of military age should not be working as caregivers, or at least not behind the lines. This creates different arenas in which male caregivers are and are not to be approved. Male enlisted caregivers, such as those in the RAMC, are more likely to be with the fighting forces nearer to the front lines of the war, and therefore they are still within the general arena that we might consider as closest to danger. Those, however, who are caregivers who are both not enlisted, and are still on British soil, are not near the battle lines and are therefore seen to be too far away from danger. Here again we see the importance of a non-combatant man’s proximity to danger as one of the more important concepts of martial masculinity. A man’s duty was to enlist and go to war to protect the homeland and therefore evading armed service and remaining on the homeland was a refusal to do one’s duty.

In response to Bigwood, a letter written and submitted by someone identifying themselves as ‘Red Cross Orderly’ was published on 1 February 1915. They write:

The uniforms are [...] approved by the Army Council, and are all of regulation pattern. Khaki is now being used instead of blue in order to save the expense of another outfit when members go to the front. [...] At the same time most of these men are prepared to go to the front, under the British Red Cross Society or Royal Army Medical Corps, in any capacity and whenever required at twenty-four hours’ notice, so that these detachments, far from being a means of shirking, are rather an opening for young men to do their part in the war who, owing to some slight physical defect, are unable to join the fighting units.²⁵⁸

Red Cross Orderly clearly has a personal interest in the debate that Bigwood has brought to the attention of the newspaper’s readership, which is demonstrated by the pseudonym under which the author chose to write and by the detail of the arguments they use to defend the orderlies and their uniforms. They begin by stating the right of the orderlies to wear uniforms which resemble those

²⁵⁷ Letters to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1915.

²⁵⁸ Letters to the editor, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 February 1915.

of the Army, as those uniforms have been approved by the Army council itself. It is, therefore, not within the purview of a civilian such as Bigwood to disagree with the choice made by the Army and its leadership. Further, Red Cross Orderly uses economic arguments to undermine Bigwood's argument, showing that it saves money when members go to the front. Their choice of words suggests that it is the ultimate intention of orderlies to go to the front, rather than stay behind the lines, out of danger as Bigwood suggests. It also symbolises the financial worries that the war induced in the population. In August 1914, directly after the war began, an article appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* which suggested that non-combatants, which in this article referred to the civilian population, had a duty to maintain the financial stability of the nation: 'If there should be a financial panic now we should know that there are many shirkers among us.'²⁵⁹ Red Cross Orderly's letter therefore, shows that the actions of the Red Cross Orderlies on the home front were in fact in line with the government mandate of saving money and avoiding financial crisis in Britain. The letter opposes each of Bigwood's claims with statements showing that the Red Cross Orderlies were those who had tried to enlist, but were unable to do so due to their physical health. In fact, it presents these men as men who are not able to carry out their soldierly duty, but who are intent on serving their country in any way that they can, ultimately arguing that they are anything but shirking their duty. It would suggest that those men who were in good physical health were encouraged to join the RAMC. Indeed, physical strength was a pre-requisite for men who were enlisted as stretcher-bearers, as they were needed to carry their fellow servicemen over the battlefields for treatment or for burial.²⁶⁰

The most worrying image for Bigwood is that of Red Cross Orderlies appearing as uniformed servicemen, something, in his opinion, to which they have no right. There also appears to be a similar worry about the ways in which certain individuals were wearing uniform, or indeed not following army regulations regarding uniforms in France during the war. Charles Ridel has shown that: 'Ces fantaisies vestimentaires inquiètent même les autorités. Dans une circulaire du 14 septembre 1915, Alexandre Millerand, le ministre de la Guerre, souhaite mettre un terme à cette « variété des costumes et [au] mélange de couleurs » qui nuisent gravement à la discipline et au renom de l'armée.'²⁶¹ The reaction of the French War Minister reflects that of the British Army

²⁵⁹ 'What the Non-Combatant Can Do', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 August 1914.

²⁶⁰ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*.

²⁶¹ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p. 31.

Council as reported in the letter written by Red Cross Orderly. Any variety of uniform in the French army was seen as a threat to its discipline and public image. Leonard Smith has argued that mobilisation was ‘the performed submersion of the individuated identity of the soldier into the collectivity’.²⁶² The collectivity here is shown by the uniform that each soldier wears, representing that each soldier is part of a collective whole, striving towards the same goal. Variation in the uniform threatened a departure from the collective goal, which therefore threatened a dissolution of discipline and fealty to the army itself.

Further, in the French army from April 1916 onwards, different ranks of soldiers, lengths of service, and even wounding were shown by the wearing of *chevrons*. Ridel argues that:

[Au] bout d’un an de présence au front, le soldat peut porter un chevron sur le bras gauche et un chevron supplémentaire pour chaque période de six mois. Une blessure de guerre donne droit au port d’un chevron sur le bras droit. Car, en toute logique, la blessure est censée illustrer la combativité et le courage du soldat.²⁶³

The introduction of chevrons shows gave the French army uniform a secondary way of being the outward performance of martial masculinity. This is an example of what Butler has termed ‘*fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs.’²⁶⁴ Indeed, it is, alongside the military uniform itself, a physical, man-made ‘fabrication’, utilised to emphasise those aspects of martial masculinity that were considered to be most crucial – duration of time spent at the front and proximity to danger shown by having suffered a physical wound.²⁶⁵ This, then, added to the hierarchical differentiation between *soldats de première classe* and *soldats de deuxième classe* in the French armed forces.²⁶⁶ Not only were men separated by their military rank, they were designated first or second class according to combatant or non-combatant status, and then further lines were drawn based on the number of chevrons that they sported on their shoulders. I argue

²⁶² Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 29.

²⁶³ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p. 36.

²⁶⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 185.

²⁶⁵ Other forms of wounding, such as mental trauma, does not fall within the purview of this thesis. However, much scholarly attention has been paid to ‘shell shock’ and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder during and after the First World War. See: Peter Barham, *Forgotten Lunatics of the Great War* (London: Yale University Press, 2007); Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and British Soldiers of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Stefanie Linden, *They Called It Shell Shock: Combat Stress in the First World War* (Warwick: Helion Limited, 2016); Tracey Loughran, *Shell Shock and Medical Culture in First World War Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) and Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery In Britain 1914-30* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

²⁶⁶ The distinction between first class and second class soldiers based on combatant or non-combatant status is discussed in more detail in chapter 3 of this thesis.

that rather than draw the army together through its use of uniform, continually drawing lines of demarcation between men – which could happen within the very same unit if some had been wounded and others spared – simply created more hoops for men to jump through in order to be worthy of a martially masculine status in the eyes of their commanders and their country. This was the very opposite of the unity which Millerand espoused and sought to protect in his edict of September 1915.

The introduction of the chevrons speaks to another purpose – to expose shirkers and possible malingerers. Of course, it was a way of proving that someone was *not* a shirker as it was physical evidence of their duty and service in the army, but it could also be used to the opposite effect. It could be used to prove that someone *was* injured during battle, and therefore be used to prevent men from attempting to be exempted from duty by lying about, or exaggerating, their maladies or wounds. As Joanna Bourke has argued:

Malingering was a particular form of shirking. The malingerer's weapon was his body. Although the shirker who withdrew his labour from a particular task by definition withdrew his body from the workplace, the removal of his body was incidental. The demand for the improvement of wages or conditions obviously affected the body, but the demand was not expressed through that body. In contrast the malingerer's protest *centred* on his body: often it was the last remaining thing he could claim as his own.²⁶⁷

In this way, the body of the French soldier was even more of a battlefield than that of his British counterpart. While uniforms in Britain were also used as corporeal signifiers of doing one's duty, in France they not only signified the battle with the enemy forces, but a battle to prove oneself amongst one's own comrades. The body of the soldier in both France and Britain was used as proof of one's duty, or lack thereof.

Even from relatively early-on in the conflict, articles engaging with the shirker debate began to appear in *L'Humanité*. Figure 13 below shows an article printed on 7 April 1915, entitled 'La Vérité sur les Sections d'Infirmiers : ce qu'elles font ; ce qu'elles valent'.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), p. 81.

²⁶⁸ *L'Humanité*, 7 April 1915, emphasis mine.

LA VÉRITÉ
sur les
SECTIONS D'INFIRMIERS

Ce qu'elles font, ce qu'elles valent

Un de nos amis nous adresse la lettre suivante susceptible de renseigner le public sur le rôle des infirmiers et de détruire en même temps la fausse opinion qui peut avoir cours dans certains milieux sur cette catégorie essentielle de la défense nationale.

Nous avons lu avec intérêt, à la première section d'infirmiers, la proposition du groupe socialiste au Parlement concernant l'utilisation des sections avant qu'il soit procédé à l'appel de jeunes classes nouvelles.

Permettez-moi de déclarer, en premier lieu, que les observations qui vont suivre ne sont nullement inspirées par l'intérêt personnel, ni du signataire de la présente, ni des infirmiers du dépôt, qui, tous, faisant partie du « cadre », ne peuvent être distraits de leurs fonctions actuelles.

Nous avons simplement pensé qu'il était utile de faire parvenir ces observations au groupe socialiste, qui, à la Chambre, représente pour nous le Parti du droit et de la justice, afin qu'il soit éclairé sur des points qu'il peut ne pas connaître.

Donc : il semble qu'on ait une tendance — dans certains milieux et dans le public — à considérer les infirmiers comme des « embusqués » sans cependant donner à ce mot tout le sens blessant que certains lui attachent.

Or, ce serait une erreur de croire que les fonctions d'infirmiers peuvent être remplies par des « malingres ».

Bien au contraire. Ce service exige des hommes valides dans toute l'acception du terme :

- 1° Aux services du front où les brancardiers accomplissent une mission particulièrement pénible à tous points de vue ;
- 2° Aux ambulances et hôpitaux de l'avant où le travail est énorme et de tous les instants ;
- 3° Aux hôpitaux de l'arrière où des gardes sont prises une nuit sur deux ;
- 4° Dans les dépôts de contagieux où, plus que partout ailleurs, il faut des hommes sains.

A cela j'ajoute un chiffre qui ne manquera pas de vous intéresser :

Pour un effectif d'environ cinq mille hommes (dont six cents auxiliaires), cent vingt hommes de la première section d'infirmiers ont été hospitalisés du 15 février au 15 mars.

Or, sur ces 120 malades, les auxiliaires — qui ne sont que six cents sur 5,000 — ont fourni soixante-douze entrées.

Figure 13.²⁶⁹

From the very outset, the author sets out to spread the 'truth' about male nurses, going as far as suggesting that their ultimate goal is to 'renseigner la publique' concerning the 'worth' of these men. Clearly then, the author views the French public as either having been fed lies, and/or propagating untruths about male nurses and their wartime duties. The goal of the author is to re-educate the public and inform them of what the male nurses do in wartime, and in doing so, show

²⁶⁹ Figure 13 : 'La Vérité sur les Sections d'Infirmiers: Ce Qu'elles Font, ce Qu'elles Valent', *L'Humanité*, 7 April 1915.

their worth. This begins with the categorisation of *section d'infirmiers*; thus, the reader is informed in no uncertain terms that these are a 'catégorie essentielle de la défense nationale'. Given the inherent links between wartime duty, citizenship and masculinity, this forceful declaration is unsurprising.²⁷⁰

The author continues: 'ce serait une erreur de croire que les fonctionnes d'infirmiers peuvent être remplies par des 'malingres'. This introduces the first of two main concerns regarding groups of male nurses in the French army; they were 'malingerers'. In her study of men's bodies in Britain, Bourke demonstrates that, 'War malingering may be divided into three categories: actions aimed at avoiding the armed forces altogether, those aimed at prolonging incapacity, and those aimed at being sent back from active service.'²⁷¹ Though Bourke's analysis concentrates on Britain, as this chapter has shown, ideas and troubles regarding shirkers had similar focal points on both sides of the channel; the figure of the malingerer pervaded both French and British social sensibilities.

The article emphasises that 'ce service exige des hommes valides *dans toute l'acception du terme*', acknowledging that there were multiple different meanings to the expression '*homme valide*'. This italicisation of the phrase in the article further highlights that these men are not only men that are suitable for enlistment but are indeed *real men*. The author of the article goes on to list figures showing the number of casualties among male nurses and auxiliary forces. It states that out of a group of troops numbering five thousand, around six hundred were male nurses. Out of those six hundred, in one month around one hundred and twenty were admitted to hospitals behind the lines, and out of those one hundred and twenty, seventy-two were auxiliaries. By demonstrating that both non-fighting, enlisted men and auxiliary men are being wounded and admitted to hospitals, the article firmly places these men close to danger. This shows that these men exhibit the prerequisite of proximity to danger that was inherent to popular understandings of attaining a martial masculinity.

²⁷⁰ As Alison S. Fell and Christine E. Hallett have pointed out, the first studies of women's roles in the war appeared to categorise all women's wartime work in hospitals as nursing, which, mirrored 'popular understandings of nursing as women's "natural" and most vital role in wartime, an extension of their role as domestic carers and nurturers. See: 'Introduction' to *First World War Nursing: New Perspectives* ed. by Alison S. Fell and Christine E. Hallett (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp.1-14 (3). This also reinforced the popular generalisation of women as nurses and men as (wounded) soldiers during the conflict, which not only excluded the other, vital roles which women played in the conflict, but meant that the caregiving roles that men played were also excluded from both scholarly scrutiny and popular understanding of the war.

²⁷¹ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 81.

As the war continued, there was ever a need for more men in both the French and British Armies. With some writers declaring openly their support for non-combatant roles and the number of men wounded and killed in the war increasing daily, the emphasis on ‘volunteerism’ that we have previously seen evolved into calls to enlist and to serve in the medical services in both countries.

Manpower shortage versus physical perfection

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS FOR THE ARMY.

ONE OF EVERY THREE MEN UNDER FORTY REQUIRED.

The medical profession has appointed special war emergency committees to arrange to meet the demands of the army and navy for medical officers. The committee for England and Wales meets at the house of the British Medical Association in London.

For England, Wales, and Ireland the “British Medical Journal” says it is estimated that out of every three men under 40, fit or unfit for military service, at least one is required to serve in the army as a whole-time commissioned medical officer. This estimate has been reached after very full consideration of the needs of the army as stated to the committee by the War Office and the needs of the civil population.

With regard to military work at home, the Director General has been asked not to retain or accept for work in military hospitals at home medical practitioners of military age physically fit for military service, but to encourage such practitioners to accept commissions in the R.A.M.C.

The committee has been informed that the War Office is discouraging younger men who are physically fit for active service from engaging for home service only, and that the whole question of men of military age doing military work at home is under serious consideration.

The question raised is, we understand, held to include not only medical officers but also non-commissioned officers and men of the R.A.M.C., the hope being that much of the work done by male orderlies may in future be carried out by women.

DANS LE SERVICE DE SANTÉ

LES MEDECINS ET PHARMACIENS INAPTES

Le sous-secrétaire d'Etat du service de santé militaire a adressé la circulaire suivante aux directeurs du service de santé des régions :

Il existe dans chaque région un certain nombre de médecins considérés comme inaptes à faire campagne et dont l'inaptitude ne semble justifiée ni par leur état physique apparent, ni par l'activité dont ils témoignent visiblement chaque jour.

Cette situation a pu, dans certains cas, ébranler l'opinion publique et leur porter à eux-mêmes un préjudice moral certain.

J'ai décidé de les soumettre à un nouvel examen médical. Cet examen médical, qui devra être particulièrement minutieux, sera pratiqué sous votre direction et en leur présence par deux des médecins militaires de carrière, déjà désignés pour les commissions de réforme. Vous pourrez, en outre, demander l'avis de spécialistes, pour le cas où cet avis vous semblerait nécessaire.

Pour la facilité des opérations, vous convoquerez à votre direction les médecins inaptes de votre région, pour un jour déterminé, de telle sorte que vous puissiez m'adresser la liste nominative des médecins examinés, avec le résultat de l'examen, pour le 20 juin dernier délai.

Il est bien entendu que les médecins reconnus aptes seront inscrits sur la liste de départ, au rang que leur assignera leur nombre de points.

Ces dispositions s'appliquent, de même, aux pharmaciens et aux officiers d'administration du Service de santé, pour lesquels une liste distincte sera établie.

From left to right: Figure 14, Figure 15.²⁷²

In September of 1915, the *Manchester Guardian* published an article outlining the need for medical practitioners to join up for military service (Figure 14). The report quotes the *British Medical Journal* calling for ‘one of every three men under forty required’, stipulating that these men should not accept work on the home front, but should ‘accept commissions in the RAMC’. This was aimed at doctors and officers, and was part of a series of responses to encourage enlistment whilst not adversely affecting health care at home.²⁷³ Clearly, the mandate is that *all*

²⁷² Figure 14: ‘Medical Practitioners for the Army’, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 September 1915; Figure 15: ‘Dans le Service de Santé’, *L'Humanité*, 6 June 1916.

²⁷³ Ian Whitehead, *Doctors in the Great War* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1999).

men under the age of forty should not be engaged on home front duty; those who are physically fit should enlist to be sent to the front lines, and those who are not deemed to be physically able are encouraged to join the RAMC for duties abroad. Towards the end of the article, the author states that ‘much of the work done by male orderlies may in future be carried out by women’. The use of gendered language in this case is a tool through which to shame men who are either currently engaged in duties on the home front, or worse, men who are not engaged in any war work whatsoever; the message implied is one of equating men working on the home front with women, a distinct threat to the martial masculinity of who remain behind. Marcia Kovitz has noted that, ‘the military’s masculinity has less to do with men’s essential characteristics than with what they represent in relation to the military’s mandate.’²⁷⁴ Clearly, even so early on in the war, the need for men in all roles outweighed the need for all recruits to fit the mould of a soldier-hero. Meyer has shown that in the RAMC, ‘the physical fitness and age of recruits [...] changed over the course of the war in response to the need for combatant manpower.’²⁷⁵ As more men were needed in ‘teeth’ units, other men who were less physically fit remained or were newly drafted into non-combatant corps like the RAMC. In calls for more manpower, the representations of martial masculinity were altered in order to fit the qualities that were most needed, and part of what was ‘essential’ were militarised, medical practitioners. The characteristic declared to be most important of all was now simply adequate physical fitness.

In a similar article dated 6 June 1916 (Figure 15), just shy of one year after the implementation of *la loi Dalbiez*, *L’Humanité* also tackled the issue of physically able bodies, this time concentrating on doctors and pharmacists, suggesting that they too should be subject to the rigorous medical examinations that civilians were undergoing at this time. In this case, however, the French government began to use military doctors to examine, and ultimately to judge, their civilian peers and counterparts.

The article uses reported speech, that of the French Under Secretary of State, to present the political speech directly to the reader. The *circulaire* was addressed to the ‘directeurs du service de santé’, and the writer of the article does not address the content of the speech, choosing instead to simply print the speech without any discussion. This suggests either that the newspaper did not want to

²⁷⁴ Kovitz, ‘The Roots of Military Masculinity’, p. 6.

²⁷⁵ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 84.

impose their views on the reader, or perhaps that they knew what their readers' reactions would be.

Seemingly contradictorily, the British army was also rejecting men who wanted to enlist. In June 1916, the *Manchester Guardian* published an article that reported on a 'meeting of "rejects"'.²⁷⁶ The article described how Mr Will Phillips, the former council member, claimed that a large proportion of men who had applied for enlistment had been rejected due to 'slight ailments'. He listed roles such as orderlies, clerks, cooks and storekeepers as jobs for which these men would be suitable. The meeting resulted in a 'resolution embodying these views' being ordered to be sent to the War Office. The article goes on to point out, however, that Mr Phillips' figure of only thirty-six per cent of men successfully enlisting was not validated by any 'official source' but was the result of interviews with men who had been rejected. Further, the article quoted the recruiting authorities in Manchester as saying that the number of rejected was closer to 'one in three or one in four,' and that a large number of those rejected were in fact too young to enlist. The article addressed the unease around men being rejected from service in the armed forces and did not reject the idea that they may be suitable to serve in non-combatant capacities. In her work on malingering, Bourke has shown that, 'Men who refused to, or were incapable of, fighting were not deemed to be worthy of active membership in the wider body-politic.'²⁷⁷ This is the root of the public unease regarding the supposed large numbers of men being denied the right to serve addressed in the article. By being rejected due to their 'incapability' of serving, these men risked being categorised as and denigrated alongside malingerers. However, by including reported speech from the recruiting authorities, it acknowledged the public discourse around rejection from armed service but showed that the fear of rejection was larger than the reality. In doing so, the article attempted to lessen the fear of rejection and supported the rejection of men who were too young to serve. By including this support of some decisions taken by the recruiting office, it gave credence to the decisions taken by army officials as, clearly, underage men could not and should not be allowed to enlist. It also successfully separated men who had tried to enlist, but had been rejected due to true physical ailments from those who had used their bodies specifically to avoid service.

²⁷⁶ 'Disputed Figures', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 June 1915.

²⁷⁷ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 77.

As we have seen, there were several categories of physically ‘unfit’ bodies. In France, war wounds were concrete evidence of service and represented heroism and sacrifice in duty. However, in a country that experienced occupation and total war, the risk and reality of civilian wounds and deaths further eroded the distinction between civilian and non-combatant.²⁷⁸

Medals and Insignia

The perceived similarity of unarmed, enlisted roles to civilian roles during wartime in France resulted in the decision not to award the same medals to non-combatant men as their combatant comrades, despite medals being the official way in which service heroism were recognised and rewarded. Figure 16 below shows how *Le Matin* directly engaged with the increasingly blurred division between men enlisted as combatants and non-combatants as early as April 1915.



Figure 16.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ See Susan R. Grayzel, “‘The Souls of Soldiers’: Civilians Under Fire in First World War France’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 78.3 (September 2006), pp. 588-622.

²⁷⁹ Figure 16: ‘Les Insignes des Officiers’, *Le Matin*, 26 April 1915.

Though the title of the article is deliberately unprovocative, the central issue certainly is. The article delineates the debate over differentiating between combatant officers and non-combatant officers, specifically whether it was warranted to award an officer in a combatant unit a gold medal and an officer in a non-combatant unit a silver medal. Ridel notes:

Nul doute qu'elles [les affectations] aient apaisé bien des tensions dans le corps social et inauguré la mise en place d'une sorte « d'équité » de l'impôt du sang. La création ou la manipulation de symboles y contribue également. En effet, si le conflit a augmenté considérablement la liste des décorations militaires (Croix de Guerre en avril 1915 ; brisques et fourragère en avril 1916), il est remarquable de constater que le pouvoir s'emploie à définir également des insignes pour les non-combattants.²⁸⁰

However, the tone of the article suggests it did not happen quite as smoothly as Ridel suggests. The article begins with a critical edge, declaring that the 'récente circulaire' needs to be rescinded. The reasoning behind such a stance is given in the emphasis placed on the heroism of 'le corps médical [... qui] n'a cessé de donner les plus admirables preuves d'héroïsme militaire et de dévouement professionnel.' Further, despite not citing official reports, the author of the article invokes statistical 'evidence' to persuade readers of the veracity of the report: 'avec l'infanterie, le corps médical est celui que a compté et qui compte le plus grand pourcentage de morts et de blessés depuis le début de la guerre.' The persuasive device works in a multi-faceted manner, not only in suggesting that the information comes from a reputable (and therefore reliable) source, but also in re-forming the shape of the article, as it would otherwise have been based on naught but opinion.

Conversely, there is a shift in tone halfway through the short article, as the author reports how the 'ministre de la guerre' had been forced to explain the reasoning behind such an edict. It is suggested that the 'circulaire' was not intended to insinuate that non-combatants were in any way not proving their military heroism and personal devotion to their country. It was, however, simply to distinguish between 'armed' and 'service' personnel. The article ends with what is essentially a 'blame game', in which the edict is attributed to the 'général en chef' of the army, who has also specified that its purpose was not to degrade the standing of medical personnel, but to distinguish between 'les officiers des "armes" et les officiers des "services".' However, by virtue of the fact that there is no conclusion to the article, this idea is left to hang, acting as an unfinished clause,

²⁸⁰ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p. 171.

leaving the reader to fill in the blank. This could be in response to the article in *L'Humanité* that criticises the ways in which male nurses have been portrayed and seeks to re-educate the public.

A similar sentiment is shown in *The Times* the same year, on 18 May 1916, in the publishing of a section of a letter from a 'senior officer at the front'.²⁸¹ The writer suggests that men who have spent 'a hundred nights in the trenches or [have] been wounded' should be awarded with 'a special ribbon, which might be in the shape of a button so as to be easily distinguishable'. At first glance it appears that the aim of the article is to promote equality in terms of how all enlisted men were viewed. Yet, the author goes on to specify that it is, in his view 'improbable that a man who would have done 100 nights in the trenches until he had been well over 200 nights at the front'. The aim of the officer is to encourage service in the infantry specifically, and this is especially clear when he goes on to say that 'It would also be necessary to consider what would be the equivalent of a night in the trenches in the case of artillery, regimental transport.' It is abundantly clear that this distinction is intended for infantrymen and should be more difficult for non-combatant, enlisted men to receive. This touches upon several of the points of this chapter, firstly that non-combatants in the front lines were not *actually* in the front lines and were further from danger than their armed peers. It is spelled out to the reader when the officer notes that:

If certain branches of the Service have all the casualties, it is only fair that they should be easily distinguishable from those who do not partake in the honour and the danger of the firing line [...] these proposals I have made, if put into execution, would immensely popularize service in the fighting branches of the Army.

The sense of unease that soldiers of the infantry and those of regimental support could have been being treated – and viewed – equally by the people on whose behalf they were fighting pervades the entire piece. It speaks to a condescension towards non-combatant service and is a not-so-veiled reference to the battles being waged in Britain over conscription and conscientious objection, as he notes that combatant service '[is the service that] recruits, semi-compulsorily enlisted, are endeavouring to avoid'. It is a contradictory piece, in which all service is praised, but is clearly portrayed as hierarchical. Those in non-combatant roles are showed to be further from danger, and therefore less deserving of praise than those in the 'danger of the firing line'. The author is silent on whether the unarmed, enlisted men in the trenches would be honoured in the same way as those with whom they shared that space. This plays into the impression that there were no men in the

²⁸¹ *The Times*, 18 May 1916.

trenches who were unarmed. As an officer, the writer of the piece would surely have been aware that stretcher-bearers were present in the trenches, and so their silence on this point is indicative of their own views regarding the service of unarmed soldiers; while necessary, service in a non-combatant role was not equal to that of an infantryman. While it is possible that this argument is put forth simply due to the need to encourage men to join the infantry to bolster numbers, that does not detract from the fact that, to achieve that goal the piece needed to-and does-speak to an idea that was already present in the mind of the reader. Clearly the drive for new recruits needed to be focused on those who were planning on serving in non-combatant roles in order to change their minds. Showing them that they would be seen to be more heroic serving in the infantry was one way in which this was hoped it could be achieved. The author of the piece does not go so far as to openly denigrate the position of non-combatants such as stretcher-bearers, as this would potentially detract from any enthusiasm to enlist that would otherwise be fostered by the article.

The tension found in this piece is symptomatic of the fine line writers trod when attempting to do their own duty to the war effort, in drumming up support but only within certain, accepted parameters delineated by the contemporary, popular understandings of masculinity during wartime. The underlying strain in this article regarding recruiting and the new recruits themselves, the dialogue between the arguments put forth in this article, and others we have seen in different publications, represent the wider, popular discourse and uncertainty surrounding the status of non-combatant men during the conflict. It brings us, in a circular fashion, back to concepts of the body and their importance to the nature of martial masculinity during between 1914 and 1918.

The Non-Combatant Corps

Known popularly as an ‘Army without Arms,’ the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) was formed in March 1916, to be used in tandem with the Military Service Act.²⁸² It was created in order to force Conscientious Objectors (COs) to participate in the war effort in a capacity that was not antithetical to their pacifism.²⁸³ What the NCC wanted to be seen to be offering, then, was a chance for men who objected to the war on grounds of conscientious to enter into the realm of martial masculinity

²⁸² Karyn Burnham, *The Courage of Cowards: The Untold Stories of the First World War Conscientious Objectors* (Pen & Sword History, 2014), p.66.

²⁸³ See Charles Messenger, *Call to Arms: The British Army 1914-1918* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2005), in particular chapter 16, ‘The Verdict’. The Corps was officially disbanded in 1920, but was reformed during the Second World War.

by positioning non-combatants as *non-arms-bearing* soldier-citizens. It was also an opportunity for the government to recruit men who were politically opposed to war without stoking the fire of what Tracey Loughran refers to as the ‘agonized ethical and political soul-searching’ reaction towards conscription; it had never been a popular option, but had been ‘tolerated as a measure “for the duration”’.²⁸⁴

By creating the NCC, the British government hoped to free up thousands of potential combatants who were currently occupied in non-combatant roles within the armed forces. Consequently, as Lois Bibbings has shown, ‘The most limited form of exemption allowed for recognised objectors to be enlisted into the military but provided that they were only required to undertake non-combatant work in the Non-Combatant Corps (partial exemption).’²⁸⁵ This meant that men who were partially exempted from war service on grounds of conscience were now drafted immediately into the NCC. Though the corps never numbered more than around 3,000 men, they were, however, made to realise that this was war service, and were required to wear khaki and to follow military orders.²⁸⁶ This shows the absolutist views of the British government, that during warfare one’s personal convictions should be overridden by the views and needs of the country, and ultimately that the ideals should be that of the collective and not of the individual.

The formation of the NCC, however, was not met without resistance. Some COs refused to join as they would not participate in the war effort in any way. It constituted a partial exemption only, and, as Bibbings has pointed out, ‘objector members were required to perform a range of duties both at home and overseas. Tasks included stretcher-bearing, hospital portering and a range of manual jobs.’²⁸⁷ Scholars including Michael Snape and Karyn Burnham have explored the problems experienced both by the British Army and by the members of the NCC themselves, who could sometimes find themselves imprisoned for refusing to obey orders that they felt went against their pacifist views.²⁸⁸ The spectrum of objections and resistance to the war in the UK – varying from absolutists to the Friends’ Ambulance Corps – is not my focus here, but it does inform my readings of the perception of the NCC as represented in the British press. Indeed, historians have also investigated the treatment of COs in Britain more generally, by examining social phenomena

²⁸⁴ Loughran, *Shell Shock and Medical Culture*, p. 180.

²⁸⁵ Bibbings, p. 29.

²⁸⁶ Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 193.

²⁸⁷ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 29.

²⁸⁸ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 31; Snape, *God and the British Soldier*; Burnham, *The Courage of Cowards*.

such as the infamous giving of white feathers.²⁸⁹ Equally important for my analysis are broader social attitudes towards COs as explored by historians such as Cyril Pearce, Lois Bibbings and Nicoletta Gullace.²⁹⁰

In addition to the problems experienced by COs once they had joined the NCC, the official blending of the terms ‘non-combatant’ and ‘conscientious objector’ is central to understandings of perceptions of the corps. As well as being an ‘Army without Arms’, the NCC also came to be popularly referred to – and denigrated as – ‘the No Courage Corps.’²⁹¹ Unfortunately, this had the effect of conflating attitudes towards men in non-combatant positions and COs that were members of the NCC. This accidental mixing of (non)military identities caused issues on both the home and war fronts. Lois Bibbings has commented that: ‘confusion as to the meaning of “non-combatant” caused some difficulties with some men refusing to undertake certain tasks. For example, objectors were occasionally asked to handle munitions or other military supplies. In addition, confusion resulted from the fact that unfit men were also placed within the Corps.’²⁹²

The *Manchester Guardian* addresses the creation of the NCC on 3 March 1916 in the article ‘Non-Combatant Corps: For the Conscientious Objectors’.²⁹³ This article suggests that not only were men in the NCC those who had refused to volunteer, but they were also men who were not fit for general service, suggesting inaptitude on two counts. It is, however, important to differentiate between the two, in some ways opposing, concepts of ‘lacking’ that were melded together into one corps.

On one hand there were men perceived to be lacking in the correct standards of citizenship and manliness to volunteer to serve their country. Not only this, but they are seen to be actively fighting to remain on the home front and outside the remit of the armed forces. On the other hand were: ‘The officers and N.C.O.’s [who were] selected from regular infantry *personnel* not fit for general service but fit for service abroad on lines of communication.’, in this way, the officers were men who had previously served in the infantry, meaning that those in command were seen as willing,

²⁸⁹ See Nicoletta F. Gullace, ‘White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War’, *Journal of British Studies*, 36.2 (1997), pp. 178-206.

²⁹⁰ Cyril Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community’s Opposition to the Great War* (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2001); Bibbings, *Telling Tales*; Gullace, ‘White Feathers’.

²⁹¹ Gullace ‘White Feathers and Wounded Men’.

²⁹² Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 29.

²⁹³ *Manchester Guardian*, 3 March 1916.

‘real’ soldiers – and therefore ‘real’ men – whereas the unwilling ‘unmen,’ as Bibbings refers to them, were placed in subordinate roles, both symbolically and literally.²⁹⁴

French representations of enlisted non-combatants and reactions to the NCC

Given the absence of Conscientious Objection in France, the French did not have a specific corps for Conscientious Objectors. They were, however, interested in the treatment of COs in Britain, given their own public outcries against shirking war duty. It is important to point out here that refusing to be drafted in France, due to the link between *impôt du sang* and citizenship, was unforgivable, as we have already seen in the discussion involving politicians and those seeking jobs in protected roles. It is important, then, that we analyse the reception of the NCC in the French press, to better understand how they understood the roles of men who were specifically and forcibly enlisted as non-combatants. This will provide a comparative element to representations of French and British men who were either drafted through National Service into non-combatant roles, or who volunteered as such at the outbreak of the conflict.

Given the different reasons for which France went to war, the public sentiment at the outbreak of the conflict differed to that manifested in Britain. Moreover, conscription in the British sense did not exist in France as they had a system of National Service.²⁹⁵ Thus, men who had originally opted to carry out their National Service in non-combatant positions, were automatically called up according to their peacetime wishes. Some men, whose roles and beliefs would not allow them to carry out duties that caused harm to others, such as priests and rabbis, enlisted as Army Chaplains and religious officials for particular battalions or divisions. Edward Madigan has pointed out that for the Anglican Church, the war was seen as an opportunity to spread their religious convictions, though he does point out that ‘they often discovered that there was no magic formula for arousing piety in men who had never been pious’.²⁹⁶ However, Simon Harold Walker has shown that their roles as non-combatant military, spiritual leaders were ‘complex and multifaceted [and] blended

²⁹⁴ See Bibbings, *Telling tales*, particularly chapter 2: Of cowards, shirkers and ‘unmen’.

²⁹⁵ This is discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

²⁹⁶ Edward Madigan, *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 8. Historians have noted that this mandate to bring men into the church was not limited to the Anglican Church. See Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 2006).

their religious duties with a wide array of supportive and caring activities.’²⁹⁷ He goes on to point out that ‘spiritual engagement with their fellow man often manifested as the holding of services and providing comfort for the dying.’²⁹⁸ They were often involved in burials of dead soldiers, affording them the last rites according to the soldier’s beliefs in life. The different responses of those who objected to fighting on grounds of conscience framed the ways in which the French press responded to both French non-combatant roles and the creation of the NCC. This affords insight into French reactions to the issue of *embusqués*, such as the creation of the Mourier and Dalbiez laws. How was this reported the French press? In a country in which national service was equated to citizenship, objecting to serve one’s country was not considered to be an option. How then did they understand and represent the British government’s actions? Ridel states that :

Depuis le début 1916, les journaux scrutent avec beaucoup d’attention la difficile genèse du service obligatoire outre-Manche, encourageant les efforts de leurs promoteurs, Lord Derby et M. Asquith. [...] À la grande satisfaction de tous les chroniqueurs hexagonaux le bill qui institue le service militaire obligatoire et universel en Angleterre est voté le 4 mai 1916.’²⁹⁹

Le Matin published ‘Le Cas de Conscience’ on 16 March 1916. The article was published in the middle of the compulsion debate, after the bill was first introduced in January 1916, making service compulsory for unmarried men of military age, but before the decision was taken to extend it to include married men.

²⁹⁷ Simon Harold Walker, ‘Saving Souls and Bodies: Army Chaplains and Medical Care in the First World War’, *Postgraduate Journal of Medical Humanities*, 3 (2016), pp 24-38 (24).

²⁹⁸ Walker, ‘Saving Souls and Bodies’, p. 24.

²⁹⁹ Ridel, *Les Embusqués*, p. 142.

LA CONSCRIPTION EN ANGLETERRE

Le Rapport de lord Derby sur sa Méthode de Rscrutement

Londres, 4 janvier. — Le rapport de lord Derby, relatif à sa méthode de recrutement, mentionne les résultats suivants :

Volontaires célibataires : 1.150.000.

Volontaires mariés : 1.679.263.

Réfractaires célibataires : 1.029.231.

Réfractaires mariés : 1.152.947.

Le total des hommes remplissant toutes les conditions militaires et dont il était permis, au début de la campagne en faveur du recrutement, d'escompter l'enrôlement volontaire, se décompose ainsi :

Célibataires : 2.179.234.

Hommes mariés : 2.832.210.

Le total des hommes « étoilés » (hommes non disponibles et à laisser dans les postes où leur présence est reconnue indispensable) dépasse 760.000.

Le nombre des hommes des réserves et de ceux déclarés incapables par les services de santé est évalué à 343.386 pour les célibataires, et à 487.076 pour les hommes mariés.

Parmi les hommes qui se sont volontairement présentés, 428.853 ont été refusés après examen médical.

Le fait saillant à mettre en relief est que 651.160 célibataires dont le concours n'était exigé nulle part ne se sont pas présentés : ceux-là ne doivent pas échapper au service obligatoire que comportera le projet de loi, car ce nombre est loin de représenter une quantité négligeable.

Le rapport de lord Derby se termine par un légitime hommage au patriotisme de tous les hommes de la Grande-Bretagne et à celui des hommes mariés qui ont spontanément répondu à son appel.

La démission de sir John Simon

Londres, 4 janvier. — M. Asquith a annoncé aujourd'hui, à la Chambre des Communes, que sir John Simon, ministre de l'intérieur et adversaire de la conscription, a présenté sa démission.

Le prince de Galles sera président de la commission statutaire des pensions de guerre, navales et militaires.

La nouvelle loi ne s'appliquera pas à l'Irlande

Londres, 4 janvier. — Le correspondant parlementaire du *Daily Telegraph* dit que le projet de loi sur le service obligatoire ne s'appliquera naturellement pas à l'Irlande, qui n'était pas comprise dans le plan de recrutement de lord Derby.

L'attitude de MM. Mac Kenna et Runciman

Londres, 4 janvier. — Le Parlement se réunira aujourd'hui. Le cabinet tiendra, dans la matinée, une réunion importante.

Le *Times* dit que MM. Mac Kenna et Runciman ne prendront une décision définitive au sujet de leur démission du cabinet qu'après cette réunion ; leurs partisans sont d'avis qu'ils resteront dans le cabinet.

L'opinion dans les empires centraux

Londres, 4 janvier. — De Berne au *Morning Post* :

L'unique sujet de conversation en Autriche et en Allemagne est l'introduction du service obligatoire en Angleterre.

Cet événement consterne les empires du centre, mais aucune expression publique de ce sentiment n'est tolérée.

Figure 17.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ Figure 17: 'La Conscription en Angleterre', *L'Humanité*, 19 May 1916.

The report includes the numbers listed by Lord Derby following the introduction of the conscription bill. The article also notes that the real fact to ‘mettre en relief’ is that there were still ‘651,160 célibataires’ who were targeted by the compulsion bill, but who had not yet enlisted in the army. The author writes, ‘ceux-là ne doivent pas échapper au service obligatoire’ given that the number of men ‘est loin d’une quantité négligeable.’ The use of the word ‘échapper’ highlights that by not enlisting even under the compulsion bill, these men were actively seeking to avoid their military and therefore their civic duty. It also presents the men trying to ‘escape’ their duty as being hunted, something that we have already seen in the *chasse aux embusqués* that pervaded both the left and right-wing press in France during the conflict. This therefore shows that left-wing press like *L’Humanité* ultimately supported the compulsion bill in Britain.

Centrist publications like *Le Matin* also reported on the debate in the House of Commons:

M Tennant dit aussi que les hommes ayant des objections de conscience contre le service armé seraient placés dans un corps de non-combattants, mais pourraient cependant avoir l’occasion de se montrer des héros.

- Faites-leur creuser des tranchées, interrompt M Watt.

- Je ne pense pas que l’idée soit mauvaise, dit M Tennant.³⁰¹

Le Matin specifically includes that the British government endeavoured to show the ability of non-combatant men placed in the NCC to show themselves as heroes. Tennant, the Under Secretary of State for War at the time spoke to introduce the NCC and was interrupted by Mr Watt who suggested that COs should be made to dig the trenches, something with which Tennant did not disagree. This exchange was between two members of the majority Liberal party in power at the time – therefore it is not surprising that what Tennant was saying was supported by other members of his own party. It does, however, shine a light on the ways in which non-combatant men who were already enlisted in the army, carrying out roles such as digging trenches, were not seen in the same light as combatant soldiers. Their role is put forward as something fit for men who are actively seeking to avoid duty, is it therefore a form of punishment, to dig the trenches in which the ‘real’ soldiers will fight? This would suggest then that those soldiers already doing this job were not seen as true soldiers, which again casts doubt on the validity of their status as soldiers, and as martially masculine during the conflict. The lack of obvious disagreement with the bill

³⁰¹ *Le Matin*, 16 March 1916.

suggests that publications in France agreed with the tone of the reported conversation from the House of Commons. This shows, then, that France and Britain had similar attitudes towards the introduction of the NCC, and more broadly towards Conscientious Objectors themselves.

Moving towards heroic equality

Strikingly, in August of 1917, *The Times* published an article entitled, ‘Heroes. Response To The Ideal’, in which there is an overt discussion of changes in what was coming to be understood as ‘new opportunities of heroism’.³⁰² As may have been expected, the beginning of the article talks about how ‘Every true Briton in the full strength of his manhood is a soldier, and the business of fighting has become his duty’, however this is quickly opened out into one of the rare instances in which a newspaper praises the acts of a stretcher-bearer. (This is outside of the printed lists of medals awarded for acts of bravery in which stretcher-bearers are named.) ‘A stretcher-bearer in the fiercest hours of the first battle of Ypres went out again and again to seek the wounded till he was killed by a shell.’ The article reads similarly to articles that were written praising armed fighters in the trenches, but here the writer doubles down on their opinion that such acts are found not only in the front lines and acknowledges that such acts are ‘unknown and unrewarded.’ This shows us that there were conversations taking place around who was being seen as the heroic ‘ideal’ and who was being forgotten or disregarded.

³⁰² *The Times*, 18 August 1917.

Heroism is not less heroic because it is unknown and unrewarded.

But what is heroism? It is not courage alone. Courage is not infrequently a matter of temperament. It is easy for some men to face danger. Good physical condition and lack of imagination frequently enable them to meet peril with an easy indifference which leaves them undismayed. But heroism is something more than this. It is courage inspired by an ideal. Hence heroism has the quality of adventure. This is not always the case with courage. That may be allied to foolhardiness, and express itself in recklessness. Heroism, on the other hand, dares greatly, but it is never heedless. It may even know what fear is, and yet have its own special quality in its response to the ideal. "Are you not afraid?"

Figure 18.³⁰³

While the article moves on to discuss the importance of faith in heroism, it is the beginning of the article that is most pertinent to the discussion of the perception and portrayal of non-combatants during the conflict. The writer unflinchingly points out that courage is found in 'many men and women far from the fighting line who find themselves challenged'. Not only does this cross the line between armed and unarmed, but also the line between man and woman. It notes that the 'challenges' of war can be found far from the front lines, seemingly referring to the struggles of civilians during wartime. The fact that the struggle is depicted as being shared by men and women contributes to the erosion of specific, concrete gender roles during wartime. The struggles are shared and the duty during wartime is shared, too. It is a call to the reader to support each person who is contributing to the war effort, and to accept that heroism is not, in the writer's words 'found only when the guns thunder and men go forward to meet the enemy.' It stands out because it is such an infrequent occurrence in journalistic writings during this period, where most of the discussions around non-combatants were, as I have shown, entrenched in fear of the shirker. As such it does not, unfortunately, show that the British public, or at least the readership of *The Times*, had evolved in its understanding of heroism as being something that belonged only to the armed soldier. We cannot say based on this article that this view was wholly changed in the later years of

³⁰³ Figure 18: 'Heroes. Response To The Ideal', *The Times*, 18 August 1917.

the war. It does, however, show that the undercurrent of debate was filtering into public consciousness, enough that it made it into publication in one of the newspapers that was most widely read during this time.

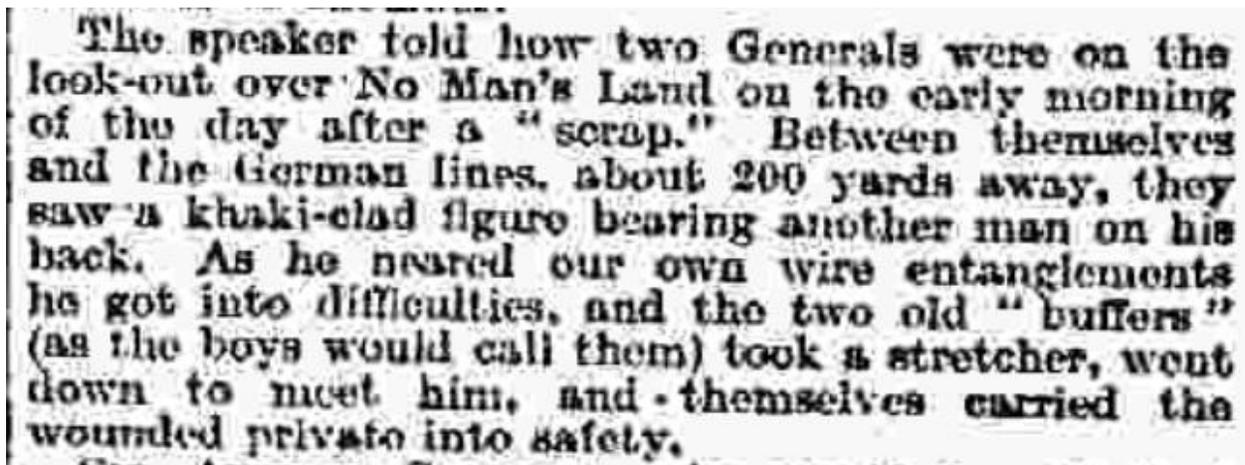
The rarity of discussions of stretcher-bearers in the press during the conflict is important to note. The silence of the press about heroism amongst stretcher-bearers (and unarmed, enlisted men more generally) is indicative of the unease surrounding the reality that men were employed in caregiving roles, and the uncertainty the press faced in how to speak about them. As we have seen, the national press in both Britain and France were used to shore up support for the war effort among the national populace, and these diverse needs were reflected in the publications. When necessary, articles were published showing the heroic acts of infantrymen to encourage other, un-enlisted men, the kinds of accolades and praise they themselves could receive if they were to join the army in such a role. On the contrary, the lack of open praise for stretcher-bearers, and the apparent silence on their roles in newspapers during the conflict is suggestive of a lack of eagerness to promote the roles of caregivers within the Armed Forces to their readership.

This absence of specific articles regarding the heroism of non-combatants in the press, excepting the lists of medals awarded to them, was common throughout the duration of the war. Apart from articles including those we have seen specifically tackling the creation of the Non-Combatant Corps, or the rare articles that speak openly to praising the work of non-combatants in the front lines, most articles that do reference stretcher-bearers or enlisted non-combatants do so in a passing way. One such example, an article entitled ‘Generals as stretcher-bearers: A story of No Man’s Land’, appeared in *The Times* in June 1918.³⁰⁴ At first glance it may appear that this article is a discussion of Generals in the army who were employed as stretcher-bearers. This, however, is not the case. The primary focus of the article is instead a discussion of the VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) and how the ‘Army and the Red Cross were working together shoulder to shoulder’. The writer speaks about a speech made by Sir Arthur Lawley (head of the Red Cross) and Lawley’s own inability ‘to find words to express his admiration’ of the women volunteers. The article notes that, ‘These women behaved magnificently. They brought in the dead and wounded regardless of danger, and 16 of them received the military medal.’ The stretcher-bearers in this article are, then, the women of the VAD. Their actions are praised, however the same actions carried out by enlisted

³⁰⁴ *The Times*, 22 June 1918.

men rarely saw such glowing reports. This clear discrepancy between how the same actions undertaken by two different genders shows how such actions were perceived. It was an act of bravery and courage on the part of women, who, according to the pervasive gender expectations of the period, were not expected to put themselves in danger and were to be protected. As this act resulted in saving lives, stepping outside the rigid boundaries of gender roles in this way was not a subversive act, but was acknowledged as exceptional. Putting oneself in danger was, as has been discussed, an integral part of martial masculinity, and so was not something that deserved to be praised as it was simply acting in accordance with societal expectations.

The act to which the title of the article refers, ‘Generals [acting] as stretcher-bearers’, comes towards the end of the piece:



The speaker told how two Generals were on the look-out over No Man's Land on the early morning of the day after a "scrap." Between themselves and the German lines, about 200 yards away, they saw a khaki-clad figure bearing another man on his back. As he neared our own wire entanglements he got into difficulties, and the two old "buffers" (as the boys would call them) took a stretcher, went down to meet him, and themselves carried the wounded private into safety.

*Figure 19.*³⁰⁵

In this short section, the titular event of the article, the Generals aid a comrade carrying a wounded man back from No Man's Land. Though this is a brave act, this is made ostensibly spectacular due to the fact that the two 'buffers' who did this were Generals. The intent is to show that the older men were as valiant, if not more so, than the 'khaki-clad figure' who began the rescue. This implies that despite their age they were also capable of rising up to the martial masculinity which dictated that men be in peak physical form (as discussed earlier in this chapter). Yet, in doing so, the writer of the article dismisses the bravery of the act of the initial rescuer; there is no sense of his bravery. Instead, he is shown as 'struggling' rather than being held up as a masculine, heroic figure. Despite the fact that the act of stretcher-bearing is unusually shown to be an act of courage, the only surprise

³⁰⁵ Figure 19: 'Generals Act as Stretcher-Bearers', *The Times*, 22 June 1918.

shown here is that it was two men of high rank within the Army who undertook the role. This forcefully highlights the silence surrounding discussions of non-combatant men and their roles during this time given that it was so rarely present in publications during the war. When it is present, it is seen as an act of bravery on the part of a woman, or an older, higher-ranking man than would typically have been the case. This implies that the role of the stretcher-bearer was not, then, especially brave or heroic for those who were enlisted in such roles, but was only seen as such when undertaken by those who would not normally have been so employed. Therefore, stretcher-bearers unquestionably performed heroic and masculine acts, but when they were performed by those whose job it was within the army, they were not seen as being worthy of note. Evidently, stretcher-bearers were not considered to be worthy of special admiration, again connoting that their job as caregivers in the armed forces was one that was not to be overtly discussed.

Non-Combatant: Soldier or Shirker?

This chapter has investigated discussions around non-combatant roles in the French and British press during the First World War. It has been evidenced that discussions of enlisted non-combatants such as stretcher-bearers were decidedly scarce in the popular press in both Britain and France during the First World War. Equally rare were portrayals of non-combatant, enlisted men as martially masculine and on equal footing with enlisted combatants. This demonstrates the tension regarding *how* to represent the role of the non-combatant when the emphasis was so often on encouraging enlistment into arms-bearing roles. There was no clear change over the course of the conflict in the ways in which stretcher-bearers were portrayed in the press. When articles appeared to show an overt enthusiasm for non-combatant, enlisted men it was in order to promote and encourage support for the war, for example enlistment into the *Services de Santé* due to a lack of manpower. In the few articles that were published concerning their role in the conflict, we have seen that underlying all of the arguments for enlistment – even in a non-combatant role – was the theme of citizenship. In France, this was rooted in the ideals of the revolution, and concept of *impôt du sang* that was meant to equalise the sacrifice paid by all families in France. National Service carried out during a man's life meant that when war broke out, he was immediately drafted into the role in which he had trained, be that combatant or non-combatant. We might assume that this would mean that the perceptions of non-combatants in France would not be too different from

those of combatant soldiers. This chapter has demonstrated, however, that due to the variety of non-combatant roles to be undertaken during war, perceptions and portrayals of non-combatants in France were decidedly mixed. This was in part due to the *embuscomanie* that swept through France, resulting in men who were not enlisted in the army being lambasted as shirking. This did not take into account men who were in protected, exempted roles as there was a tangible fear that these roles were being used to avoid duty, rather than to support the war effort. This anxiety was not limited to the French public, as Ugolini has shown in the British case that, ‘Even conscription did not entirely silence complaints about youthful ‘shirkers’, particularly those who were exempted because in reserved occupations or – worse still – in government employ.’³⁰⁶

This spread to a distrust of enlisted men who worked as militarised caregivers. To combat this, the French press reacted forcefully, portraying non-combatant enlisted roles, such as male nurses, as integral to the war effort. This shows us that the hostility of the French public towards non-combatant roles was seen to be detracting from the unity that the French government sought to foster within the military and civilian populations. To achieve this, the French press emphasised the characteristics that non-combatants were able to embody, such as their proximity to danger and their military identity as seen in their right to army uniform. Some newspapers even went as far as to question the French army’s regulations regarding the limit on what awards non-combatant enlisted men were able to receive. This shows us that, despite the fear of shirkers, there was a sense that there should not be a difference in the ways that men at the front were treated, regardless of military categorisation.

In Britain, however, though the positive portrayals of some enlisted non-combatants mirrored those in France, this largely depended on the manner of the soldier’s enlistment. Though service in both countries was a duty and linked inherently to citizenship, in Britain volunteerism was the ‘apex of [the] hierarchical lexicon of manliness.’³⁰⁷ The voluntary sacrifice of one’s life for one’s country was the most important aspect of proving one’s loyalty, selflessness and true commitment to the war effort. Britain’s own brand of shirker-mania was prompted by the unease surrounding conscientious objection. This was compounded by fear that men of military age and fitness were

³⁰⁶ Ugolini, *Civvies*, pp. 110-111.

³⁰⁷ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 95.

shirking their duty to the country by volunteering for medical services on the home front in civilian hospitals, rather than volunteering – even as non-combatants – in the armed forces.

In both countries, unity was symbolised through the donning of the military uniform. However, as we have seen, the prospect of un-enlisted men wearing a uniform that resembled that of a serviceman made some members of the British public anxious; access to the uniform of the military, like martial masculinity, was a right to be earned through service alone. Therefore, martial masculinity was the only viable form of masculinity during wartime, and by rejecting service, COs were presented as shirkers. Bibbings has argued that, '[w]hen constructed as selfish, shirking or cowards, objectors were often portrayed as representing parasitic unmanliness, shirking responsibility and living off the efforts of others.'³⁰⁸ I would argue, therefore, that by volunteering, enlisted non-combatants were not to be considered as shirkers as they represented the masculine ideal of sacrifice and bravery. Further, after the introduction of the NCC in 1916, representations of non-combatants became more fractured as it was imperative to distinguish between non-combatants who served willingly and those who had been forced. The difference of the corps to others in the army was clearly delineated in newspaper reports, to ensure that those men who upheld the ideals of sacrifice and bravery as shown through volunteerism were not tarred with the same brush as those who actively fought against doing their civic duty.

Ultimately, despite the difference in methods of mobilisation, representations of enlisted non-combatants in the French and British press were not all that different. Both countries highlighted the importance of serving willingly, tying military duty to civic duty and citizenship. In doing so, citizenship became indelibly linked to martial masculinity. Shirkers on the other hand, were presented as 'pretending' to serve, either in roles such as the civil service, or in 'seemingly' essential roles such as medical caregivers away from the front lines, or even as refusing service altogether. Non-combatants deemed to be worthy of the public's respect, and therefore of martial masculinity, were depicted in contrast to the qualities that defined shirkers. In this way, martial masculinity was used to create two distinct groups of non-combatants, those who performed appropriate martial masculinity through military service, and those who did not.

Of course, as we have seen, though militarised non-combatants did symbolise certain aspects of martial masculinity, there was still a scale of martial masculinity in both Britain and France, of

³⁰⁸ Bibbings, *Telling Tales*, p. 101.

which arms-bearing soldiers were the pinnacle. In addition to representations in the popular press, the popular discourse discussed in this chapter was played out in fictionalised depictions also sought to understand martial masculinity, and to prove that non-combatants could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their armed comrades. It is to these portrayals that we turn in chapter two.

Chapter 2:
Fictional representations of non-combatant men during the First World War.

Even a cursory glance at the most well-known novels of the First World war will show a marked shortage of enlisted, non-combatant, male protagonists in both French and British fictional writing from the conflict. From Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* (1916) produced during the conflict and Richard Aldington's post-war *Death of a Hero* (1929), to more recent depictions including the popular *Birdsong* by Sebastian Faulks (1993) the plots focus on combatant, arms-bearing men. Many of the non-combatants (most often stretcher-bearers) that do appear are often not fully-developed characters, and are afforded only a few lines of speech, if any at all. They are at times portrayed as dishonest and 'thieving camp followers', showing a clear disdain for both their persons and for their work.³⁰⁹ Even in Rose Macaulay's novel, *Non-Combatants and Others*, the titular non-combatants are those who are either physically unable to join the army or are women. The lack of non-combatant, male protagonists has meant that this study will analyse non-combatant, enlisted characters further away from the front lines.

Given this conspicuous lack of male, enlisted non-combatants as protagonists in both French and British war fiction, this chapter will seek to explore the representations that we find in the 'waves' of war fiction during the war years and immediately following the end of the conflict.³¹⁰ This addition to existing scholarship is unique in that it examines texts which have not previously been considered through the lens of non-combatant wartime masculinity, and does so in a comparative way across France and Britain. This chapter will consider authors, and the characters they created, who served in administrative roles, as surgeons, and in other service roles over the course of the war. In doing so, I will explore how varied non-combatant roles were understood and reinterpreted for public consumption. This will permit an investigation of these testimonies of war and a greater understanding of how some of the different roles were perceived and reimagined by the writers of the time. As published authors who were aware of public discourses around shirking and non-

³⁰⁹ Fiona Reid argues that this picture of dishonesty dated from the Boer War and continued into the First World War in *Medicine in First World War Europe: Soldiers, Medics, Pacifists* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 14.

³¹⁰ In *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (Bloomsbury Academic: London; New York, 2013), Dan Todman discusses surges of publications of war writings in Britain in the 1930s and 1960s, referred to as 'waves' of war writing. See also Alison Fell, *Women as Veterans in Britain and France after the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) and Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women's Literary Responses to the Great War 1914-1918* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2005).

combatant roles, I will examine how the cultural representations and expectations that we saw in the previous chapter influenced the representations that the writers created.

I will first look at works that are set in the trenches, moving to works set behind the lines, and finally the chapter will end by looking at work set (at least partially) in the civilian sphere. To begin, I will explore Ernest Florian-Parmentier's novel, *L'Ouragan* (1930). This novel is a series of short anecdotes set in the trenches along the Western Front. The second section will concentrate on three short-stories by Georges Duhamel that were published in his 1920 collection, *Civilisation*. Finally, I will move onto looking at the British case, by focusing on *Greenmantle* (1916) and *Mr Standfast* (1919) by John Buchan. Both Buchan and Duhamel are renowned literary names in both Britain and France, though Florian-Parmentier is somewhat of a lesser-known author. I have chosen these stories as each of these authors themselves served in a non-combatant, militarised role during the conflict. Despite the existence of many studies of Buchan's and Duhamel's works, including studies through the lens of masculinity, there are none that examine them through the lens of non-combatant masculinity. This thesis therefore adds to existing scholarship, adding an important dimension to literary and First World War studies. Further, though all of these texts have been the subject of scholarly scrutiny – some more than others – the relationships between the texts and their depictions of non-combatant masculinities have not been analysed in a Franco-British comparison. In the case of Florian-Parmentier, there have been much fewer scholarly studies of his work, and again they do not focus on an investigation into his portrayals of non-combatant masculinity. While other authors, such as Jean Cocteau³¹¹ may be more well-known, I have chosen Florian-Parmentier particularly because his writings are based on the experiences of non-combatants, and therefore examining them more closely adds to current scholarship regarding gender and the Great War. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, there was an absence of writings (including in the popular press) highlighting the work of *brancardiers* and other non-arms-bearing soldiers during the conflict. The fact that *L'Ouragan*, which does exactly that, is referred to so rarely in discussions of fiction during the Great War meant that its inclusion in this

³¹¹ See particularly Jean Cocteau, short-story *Thomas L'Imposteur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), originally published in 1923, which centres around a boy of sixteen who joins an unofficial ambulance convoy. This work was not included here as the non-combatant role of *ambulancier* the protagonist takes on was not one officially attached to the French Army and therefore lies outside the remit of this thesis.

thesis was imperative. In this case therefore, I have chosen Florian-Parmentier in an effort to bring the few writings concerning non-combatants to light.

It is important to reiterate that the phrase non-combatant here refers to men who were either enlisted in the armed forces, or who were actively working for either the French or British governments. It is imperative to make this distinction as it allows for a clearer discussion around the ideas of martial masculinity and how it relates to a wider spectrum of men that were technically enlisted in the armed forces, but who did not bear arms on the battlefield. Additionally, it must be pointed out that in the context of espionage and spying, as will arise in the last section of this chapter, some men such as spies did occasionally bear arms. It may be more prudent then in the context of this chapter, to consider combatants as men who bore arms *in the front lines*.

As all the authors that I will consider served during the conflict, I will be using the concept of *témoignage*, or witnessing the war, throughout this chapter as a lens through which to analyse their works.³¹² Literary scholar Jean Norton Cru, in his work *Témoins* (1929) and follow-up text *Du Témoignage* (1930), sets out parameters according to which writing of the Great War can be measured and valued, with the aim of categorising such writings as either ‘true’ testimonies of war, or as invalid. In doing so, Norton Cru hoped to dispel some of the myths of the Great War that had proliferated in part, he thought, due to writings that supported some of the legends surrounding the conflict. These parameters are based on the writer having ‘been there’, specifically in the sectors about which they write. Interestingly, Norton Cru redefines the military hierarchy when discussing which testimonies are to be considered:

J’ai voulu considérer tous les récits de combattants en donnant au mot *combattant* une signification différente de celle des lexicographes mais conforme à la pratique de la guerre de 1914-1918 : tout homme qui fait partie des troupes combattantes ou qui vit avec elles sous le feu, aux tranchées et au cantonnement, à l’ambulance du front, aux petits états-majors : l’aumônier, le médecin, le conducteur d’auto sanitaire, sont des combattants ; le soldat prisonnier n’est pas un combattant, le général commandant le corps d’armée non plus, ni tout le personnel du GQC. La guerre elle-même a imposé cette définition fondée sur l’exposition au danger et non plus sur le port des armes qui ne signifie plus rien.³¹³

³¹² See, for example, Hynes, *The Soldier’s Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

³¹³ Jean Norton Cru, *Du Témoignage* (Paris : Librairie Gallimard, 1930), p. 24.

Unusually, Norton Cru rejects outright that the bearing of arms was a deciding factor in being considered a combatant or a non-combatant. What he does signify as important, however, is proximity to danger. This, he contests, is a direct outcome of trench warfare, and therefore argues that due to all men in the trenches being in close proximity to danger, it is non-negotiable that they all be regarded as *combattants*. While it is useful to consider contemporary criticisms of the war literature, it is necessary to critique the criticisms offered by Norton Cru. It is unreasonable to dictate that literature written about the war should adhere to such strict guidelines such as using specific styles, and that only those who were in specific places should be able to write about them. Norton Cru's intention to restrict the writing produced with the war at its core does not necessarily mean that the writing would have been more 'truthful'. Using *écriture plate* and writing only about places which one has visited and battles in which one has fought does not necessarily mean that what the author writes can be seen as the 'truth' of the war. It is simply that writer's experience (if they are using the medium of memoir) or it is their understandings of their own experience. Many people can experience the same phenomenon but have differing understandings of the same, as each individual remembers an event from their own perspective.³¹⁴

Moreover, Norton Cru's parameters are too rigid in terms of what he considers to be the 'battlefield'. Norton Cru's criticisms of wartime literature point to the battlefield being literally the field upon which fighting by armies occurred, so on the Western Front we would then think of the Somme in the British case and Verdun in the French case. Yet, it is contestable that civilians in France were also on the field of battle, in that they were living in occupied territory and were experiencing a total war. How then can we dismiss the writings of civilians who experienced the traumas of war through occupation and fighting where they lived? It does not logically follow that the only truths of the war can be found in the writing that adheres to Norton Cru's strictures. This underscores the tension between what can be thought of as 'fighting' during wartime. I argue that fighting comes in all shapes and sizes and includes those (men and women) who fought on the battlefield and those who took on difficult jobs behind the lines, such as roles in logistics, munitions, and medicine, as each of these jobs contributed to the war effort.

³¹⁴ See, for example, Julia Shaw, *The Memory Illusion: Remembering, Forgetting, and the Science of False Memory* (Manhattan: Random House Books, 2016).

In the British case, Cyril Falls authored *War Books: A Critical Guide* in 1930 as an attempt to catalogue and categorise the writing that had come in the wake of the conflict.³¹⁵ Falls notes that there were many types of histories of the Great War, from military histories to the notes of the everyday soldier, but it is his argument that much of the writing of the Great War, was ‘false’ by way of exaggeration: ‘Every sector becomes a bad one, every working party is shot to pieces; if a man is killed or wounded his brains or entrails always protrude from his body; no one ever seems to have a rest.’³¹⁶ He does not argue that horrors did not occur during the conflict, but that many writers made it so that every event they recount was extreme and horrific. He argues that this is done to generate a reaction and was the aim of the authors to create propaganda rather than portray the truth of the war to the reader. Whilst this may have some truth to it, in a similar way to Norton Cru, it severely limits what Falls deems ‘good’ war writing. Falls is not so rigid as Norton Cru (in fact, he gently criticises the latter for an inaccuracy in his writing), however he does show the same discomfort with those who have not experienced particular theatres of war writing about it. Falls was writing in 1930, twelve years following the end of the war, which impacts his critiques of war writings in comparison to Norton Cru’s. More writings had been published regarding the war by 1930, and this may be the cause for Falls’ more forgiving tone. There is a sense that to Falls, fiction should be fiction solely, but equally should not be too far from the truth so as to not sensationalise the war. He does not, however, discuss the many reasons authors may choose to mix real events with imagined, or to alter events to make them stand out to the reader (specifically as a literary tool), and assumes that the reader of such novels as *Le Feu* is unable to distinguish fiction from fact. His critique of Mary Lee’s *It’s a Great War* (1930) argues that ‘it is not the place of women to talk of mud; they may leave that to the men, who knew more about it and have not hesitated to tell us of it.’³¹⁷ Falls’ work as a celebrated military historian showcases his preference in his own work of what might be termed the ‘factual’ history of the war, and thus accounts for his mistrust of accounts of the war that appear to be ostensibly fictionalised.

Florian-Parmentier, *L’Ouragan*

Like *Le Feu*, *L’Ouragan* was criticised for its portrayal of the war. In this case, returning to Norton Cru’s work, the role of ‘proximity to danger’, in his assessment of the validity of war-writing was

³¹⁵ Cyril Falls, *War Books, A Critical Guide* (London: Peter Davies Limited, 1930).

³¹⁶ Falls, *War Books*, p. xi.

³¹⁷ Falls, *War Books*, p. 282.

contentious. Ernest Florian-Parmentier, 1879-1951, was a scholar who also wrote and published under the pseudonym Serge Gastein. During the Great War he spent 49 months at the front in a logistical role and was evacuated two months before the end of the war due to a gas attack. However, in *L'Ouragan* he writes about sectors of which he did not have direct experience – Vauquois for example.³¹⁸ This led to severe criticism of the book.

L'Ouragan: Toute la Guerre du Côté Français (1919) is an anti-war novel.³¹⁹ It is the first novel in a two-part series, the second entitled *La Mort Casquée*, released in 1931. The third-person narration follows two main characters, Gabriel Peissenier and Raymond Chevagnes through their experiences of the conflict. Similar to *Le Feu* in its portrayal of the war, the novel presents a strikingly unadulterated version of events. Both protagonists struggle to come to terms with the war and its effect on humanity, depicting a clear pacifist and revolutionary tone from the very beginning.

If we follow Norton Cru's criticism of French writers, then the first assumption to be made about the differentiation between combatants and non-combatants is their proximity to the front line, or, more specifically, to danger. Cru asserts that only men who had direct experience of the trenches were qualified to talk about it in their writing, and he even extended this assertion to fictional works. Norton Cru points out in *Témoins* that Ernest Florian-Parmentier was in fact not an infantryman but was part of the *train des équipages* (the military supply chain). The *trains des équipages* travelled all the way to the front lines and were often the targets of enemy bombardments. Thus, the tension between proximity to the front lines and the proximity to danger arises; being far from the front lines does not necessarily mean being away from danger. It also means that given Florian-Parmentier's own war experience as a non-combatant situated away from the front lines, the author's work may be kinder than most in its portrayal of men enlisted as non-combatants, actively seeking to shore-up their masculine image in post-war France. As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, representations of non-combatant, enlisted men in France were decidedly mixed, and so Florian-Parmentier's depiction of non-combatants offer a space in which his own 'truth' regarding his role in the war can be told.

³¹⁸ Maurice Ruineau, *Guerre et Révolution dans le Roman Français de 1919 à 1939* (Klincksieck: 1974), pp. 181-2.

³¹⁹ Ernest Florian-Parmentier, *L'Ouragan : Toute la Guerre du Côté Français* (Paris: Fasquelle Éditeurs, 1930).

In the early stages of the novel, the narration focuses on Chevagnes, a stretcher-bearer. Although throughout the course of the novel, there is not a great deal of analysis concerning the different jobs of men at the front, there is a concerted effort in this passage to show the danger of the front lines from the very outset. This proves that stretcher-bearers, though in an unarmed role, were in danger during the war, and were therefore not in what might have been considered a ‘cushy’ role for *embusqués*.³²⁰ What is made explicit however, is the fact that Chevagnes is armed: ‘Bien qu’il fût brancardier, Chevagnes, outre le sac, portait le fusil, parce que personne, au départ, n’avait pu décider si les brancardiers devaient ou non être armés.’³²¹

At the beginning of the war little was known about how the toll of wounded and dead would rise over the course of the industrialised conflict, and so even stretcher-bearers were armed – in the French army, at least. At this point then, stretcher-bearers could not have been regarded as ‘less masculine’ than their combatant comrades, or at least not due to being unarmed. Perhaps Florian-Parmentier impresses this on the reader to demonstrate that Chevagnes was not ‘against’ bearing arms, though we are not told the reasons for which he is made a stretcher-bearer when he enlists. There are at least two reasons that he could have been drafted as a stretcher-bearer, though the reader is left none the wiser.³²² Rather than purposefully obscuring the origins of his enlistment as a stretcher-bearer, it is simply not addressed. This suggests that Florian-Parmentier does not see the reasons for which someone is in a non-combatant role to be important to their war service, as the truly important thing is the fact that they served. Further, though the narrator hints at the fact that this would not always be the case, there is no discussion of when Chevagnes would be relieved of his rifle, or how that would affect his military standing. The narration continues, describing how the regiment comes under attack from the German army and it soon becomes clear that the Germans have tricked the French army into ordering a ceasefire, following which they launch an attack on the medical personnel:

Le médecin-major, ballotté par la houle, s’agitait désespérément derrière les vagues d’assaut, tachant de rallier ses brancardier [sic], pour installer le poste de secours. Dans le désordre, les blessés de plus en plus nombreux, se traînaient au hasard, ne sachant où se

³²⁰ What constituted an *embusqué*, or a shirker, in France is discussed in more detail in chapter 1 of this thesis.

³²¹ Florian-Parmentier, *L’Ouragan*, p. 22.

³²² This could have been due to competence in a musical instrument, as men who completed their National Service in the Army Band were automatically made stretcher-bearers at the outbreak of war. It could also have been for religious reasons, as some stretcher-bearers also occupied the position of Army Chaplain. The reasons for, and ways in which men in the French Army became stretcher-bearers are discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

diriger. Le service sanitaire avait mieux à faire que le coup de feu. [...] En cet instant, une section de mitrailleuses allemandes entre en action, criblant à la fois le groupe des brancardiers et qui ont tiré dessous.³²³

The targeting of medical personnel along with infantrymen is the primary message of this extract. There is, and can be, no differentiation made regarding their proximity to danger, though, arguably, this could be because at this point in the novel the medical personnel are armed. Rather than focusing on the men firing their guns in defence, the focus of this section is the medical personnel. However, there is a marked difference noted by the narrator in terms of the jobs of the different groups of men. The narrator asserts that the Medical Officer (M.O.) had ‘better things to do than join in the gunfire’ (in this instance, set up a first aid post) suggesting a subversion of the military hierarchy. Here the most important job is that of the medical personnel, and not the job of the infantryman, creating an inverted structure of importance – and masculinity – that is no longer dependent upon the bearing of arms. Further, by placing a caregiving role above that of an armed infantryman, the subversion of the military hierarchy shows that the shared masculine traits of both the combatant and non-combatants are applied to different effects within the same situation. As martial masculinity was strongly linked to weaponry, the concept of the protector and the warrior-hero were interwoven and embodied the masculine ideal during wartime. However, this moment, in the midst of a battle in which soldiers have the opportunity to prove themselves to be the ideal masculine hero, the M.O. rejects the idea of prowess in battle as the ‘[best] thing to do’. Instead, through the actions of the M.O., Florian-Parmentier here presents the reader with an alternative application of the accepted model of masculinity in which these ideals are redeployed according to practicality. This results in caregiving through healing being presented as a different, but complementary course of action to the bearing of arms.

Florian-Parmentier creates a layering of order and disorder, even at this early stage of the novel; by setting up a first-aid post, the medical personnel – *le service sanitaire* – are required to re-establish order in the ‘disorder’ created by the attack. Just as the infantrymen endeavour to reassert order in more general terms (reassert peace through victory in warfare) in the newly chaotic Europe of 1914, at the level of the battlefield, the medical personnel are the ones that reinstate order in the chaos of gunfire. This is then, not an oppositional, pacific masculinity set up in contrast to the

³²³ Florian-Parmentier, *L’Ouragan*, p. 24.

martial masculinity of the combatants, but is rather an extension of a military masculinity, functioning at all levels of the military hierarchy.

At the beginning of the novel then, there is little to no explicit differentiation made between combatants and non-combatants. Throughout the course of the text, both main characters, Chevagnes and Peissenier, transition from one role to another, yet the narrator does not, for the most part, afford these transitions much discussion. The first transition we see is Chevagnes' move from non-combatant to combatant. The narrator notes: 'C'était les éclaireurs. Chevagnes, qui, en changeant de corps, était devenu combattant, se trouvait parmi eux.'³²⁴ This sentence functions as more of an aside than as part of the official narrative, and reads as almost an afterthought on the part of the narrator. Chevagnes' official transition from non-combatant to combatant within the rigid military structure is summed up in one sentence. This lack of discussion surrounding the transition from one role to another suggests that it was not given much thought by the soldiers on the ground – it was simply a bureaucratic label, and of no real importance in the trenches.³²⁵ Again, this points to Florian-Parmentier seeking to downplay the difference between non-combatant and combatant roles underlining that the service itself – regardless of role – was the most important part of a soldier's experience.

The only transition that is discussed in more than one sentence is that of Peissenier's move to the head of a supply company, where he receives a frosty welcome:

Nous sommes en 1917. Peissenier vient d'arriver dans une compagnie de ravitailleurs pour y remplir les fonctions de « chef ». Les camarades lui ont fait un accueil plutôt froid. L'un d'eux attendait sa nomination, et, à présent, il voit en Gabriel un rival. Les autres, se solidarisant avec l'ancien, lui font sentir qu'il ne sera jamais pour eux qu'un « embusqué ». Peut-être imaginent-ils de sa part on ne sait quelles menées sourdes, on ne sait quelles compromissions dégradantes. Et cette hostilité lui fait mal.³²⁶

The popular view of comradeship being the driving force of the trenches is conspicuously absent, and the sense of otherness between companies that is dismantled in earlier chapters of the novel returns full-force. Instead, the reader is presented with is an animalistic presentation of the social

³²⁴ Florian-Parmentier, *L'Ouragan*, p. 49.

³²⁵ A discussion of how non-combatant men were seen after the war can be found in chapter 1 of this thesis. Categories of soldiers in the French Army are discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

³²⁶ Florian-Parmentier, *L'Ouragan*, p. 144.

boundaries of the front lines, along with a troubling portrayal of what it means to be a ‘shirker’.³²⁷ The all-important comradeship of soldiers on the front lines is shown to be dangerous to outsiders, a weapon used to enforce distinctions and exclusions. Conveyed by Florian-Parmentier in a way that is reminiscent of the struggle for superiority as an alpha-male in the animal kingdom, the ‘pack’, or here the company, rejects Peissenier as a newcomer. Further, he is labelled an ‘*embusqué*’. Yet, how can he be labelled a shirker when he is physically in the trenches with the other men? The other men in the company are in the same category as him, thus there can be no hierarchical difference that warrants this label. As such, it must come from the way in which he becomes the head of the company – he has done so by coming in from the outside. Here then, Florian-Parmentier engages with popular discourse regarding *embusqués* to show how such discourse had permeated the French Army over the course of the war. While *embusqué* was an insult that was used in abundance in the trenches, Florian-Parmentier has specifically created a situation in which there can be no doubt that Peissenier does not deserve the label. In doing so, the author dismantles the notion of non-combatants in the *train des équipages* neglecting their duty to their country. Clearly, the fact that the author was himself enlisted in exactly this role during the war demonstrates a clear motivation for writing in this way. By creating a scenario which may to some extent mirror his own war experience, Florian-Parmentier not only asserts the martial masculinity of all non-combatant men, but indeed rebuilds his own.

Normally, when considering how to distinguish shirkers from ‘real men’, bravery, courage, and willingness to do one’s duty were the defining qualities of ‘manliness’. This was shown by one’s proximity to danger as this evidenced their willingness to sacrifice themselves for their homeland. However, historians have shown that bravery and courage were no longer viable as qualities inherent to masculinity. David Morgan has pointed out that warfare enabled men to exhibit characteristics that had traditionally been deemed ‘unmasculine’, noting: ‘These include open and physical displays of mutual concern and care, a willingness to show fear and pain [...]’.³²⁸ As such, fear could no longer be used to define a shirker or an *embusqué*. It is to the exploration of bravery and courage that I will now turn.

³²⁷ Popular, contemporary discourse surrounding the characteristics and importance of shirkers during the 1914-18 war is discussed in more detail in chapter 1 of this thesis.

³²⁸ David Morgan, ‘Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities’, *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. by Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 177.

Bravery and courage?

Bravery, or the lack thereof, is articulated repeatedly throughout the novel. In chapter 10, 'Les Volcans', the narrator describes how bravery is moulded through soldiers lying to themselves in the trenches. The sappers here are laying 'contre-mines [...] au moyen d'un « camouflet »':

Parfois, au contraire, le mensonge, dès qu'il est articulé, commence à réaliser le « songe de l'esprit », - le secret espoir. Et c'est leur espoir qu'ils donnaient pour leur certitude, ces hommes frissonnants.

- Non, sans blague ! c' qu'on va ravager leurs plates-bandes, à ces betteraves qui voulaient nous faire sauter !

- Ah ! dis donc, ils pourront envoyer leur barbaque à l'atelier de réparations.

- Ils se gouraient, les mecs. Mais ça n'a rien à faire. Ils vont tomber su' l' manche !³²⁹

From the very title of the chapter, *Volcans*, Florian-Parmentier indulges in wordplay. Meaning both 'volcano' and 'volatile', the term is used to draw similarities between the miners and their weaponry. The use of mines, which the author terms 'la barbarie humaine',³³⁰ renders the men who are involved in laying them uncivilised, further removing them from the society for which they fight. Moreover, Florian-Parmentier then turns to the methods in which the men try to maintain a vestige of their humanity, or at least some form of hope, whilst employed in this incredibly dangerous job. The narrator discusses the use of 'lies'. These are not lies that are, in one sense, particularly harmful, but are in fact white lies used to bolster their courage. The *mensonges* that they verbalise allow them to feel hope and certainty in their success, shown then in the playful tone of the conversation that follows. The wordplay continues in the use of the term 'camouflet', meaning both a hole in the ground and an affront or a humiliation. It is the job of the sappers, not to go 'over the top', but to go secretly underneath the enemy trenches to deliver the blow. There is an evident tension in this type of warfare, given its literal *underhanded* nature, which deviates completely from the idealised martial masculinity based on hand-to-hand combat. This is a parallel with *Greenmantle* in the British case, as I will go on to discuss. As is seen in many *romans de*

³²⁹ Florian-Parmentier, *L'Ouragan*, pp. 94-95.

³³⁰ Florian-Parmentier, *L'Ouragan*, p. 93.

guerre, the message here seems to be that danger breeds necessity, but given the overarching anti-war overtone of the novel, it is delivered with a sarcastic edge.

Further to the concept outlined earlier by David Morgan, Florian-Parmentier suggests several times throughout the course of the novel that the concept of men exhibiting bravery through fearlessness and victory in hand-to-hand combat becomes unrecognisable as the conflict continues.³³¹ In two chapters specifically, ‘Le Pari de Petitjean’ and ‘Héros’, the tone of narration becomes sarcastic and satirical conveying how, to Florian-Parmentier, bravery had not necessarily taken on a new meaning, but had become extinct altogether, having no place in a war of attrition such as that of the First World War. Florian-Parmentier utilises the sustained dismantling of traditional concepts of heroism to critique the war itself and therefore to underscore the pacifist tone of the novel. This is extended to the nature of heroism itself, as in ‘Héros’ various characters narrate their own stories of heroism to one another. Many of the stories and characters that recount them seem to the reader at the very least ambiguous in their heroism. One character in particular, Vitu, tells of how he was captured by the enemy and due to be executed, but by sweet-talking his guards he manages to convince them that their belief that the French Army massacre their German prisoners is nothing but false propaganda on the part of the Germans. The chapter then ends abruptly with: « Bref, c’est ainsi que Vitu mérita une citation à l’ordre du jour pour avoir ramené quatre prisonniers. »³³² Vitu’s trickery as a prisoner has ended with him being celebrated as a hero, an unnerving concept as will become evident in the discussion of John Buchan’s *Greenmantle*. There is a symbolic outlining of individuality as problematic in this chapter of the novel, as the narrator describes Peissenier’s uneasy reactions to his comrades’ stories, encapsulating how the individual story does not always adhere to the progression of what Samuel Hynes terms the ‘Myth of the War’.³³³ This highlights the struggle on the part of the author to present individual stories in the trenches, whilst appealing to the then-popular notion of the war; something it seems Florian-Parmentier actively fights against doing.

Maurice Ruineau, however, suggests that Florian-Parmentier puts the soldier-hero on a pedestal. Ruineau heavily criticises the novel, asserting that: ‘Les exploits individuels, exaltant l’héroïsme

³³¹ The idea of bravery and chivalry becoming unviable in the trench warfare of the First World War is discussed in more depth in the introduction to this thesis.

³³² Florian-Parmentier, *L’Ouragan*, p. 77.

³³³ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (The Bodley Head: London, 1990), p. ix.

du soldat français, ne manques pas dans ce roman, non plus que le clichés cocardiers ou chauvins. L'expression « hordes teutones » surprend dans un livre qui, ailleurs, célèbre la solidarité des victimes.³³⁴ Yet, Ruineau seems to be to some extent misunderstanding the author's use of varied heroic exploits. Though there is no doubt that there is a patriotic tone to the novel, calling for revolution following the end of the conflict, the use of heroism or non-heroism in the novel is at the very least tongue-in-cheek, if not entirely ironic. I would suggest that by re-evaluating heroism in warfare, Florian-Parmentier reinforces what Ruineau refers to as the 'solidarity between victims'.

In *A War Imagined*, Samuel Hynes discusses the concept of victimisation and heroism, commenting that: 'Once the soldier was seen as a victim, the idea of a hero became unimaginable.'³³⁵ Though this is in reference to English and American writers, this concept is evident in the chapter involving Petitjean in *L'Ouragan*. This chapter concentrates on Petitjean, a young man who tries to encourage his comrades in the trenches to place a bet on whether he can go over the top and walk towards the enemy without ever ducking away from the shell and gunfire. The narrator explains:

Il aurait voulu le pari pour dix litres de vin. « Ça vaut ça, disait-il, je ne peux pas le faire à moins. » Mais il n'a pas trouvé dix hommes qui fussent disposés à se prêter à ce jeu. Alors il s'est contenté de cinq litres, à partager entre cinq gageurs et lui, ce qui ne lui donnera même pas son litre à boire. Mais il est convenu que, s'il n'y a pas qu'un ou deux survivants, ceux-ci devront endosser la dépense. De cette façon, Petitjean aura tout de même gagné cinq litres, s'il tient son pari.³³⁶

We know that gambling in the trenches was not uncommon. It was, however, generally limited to board games such as Crown and Anchor and other bets that did not take place on the battlefield.³³⁷ In this chapter, rather than focusing, as in earlier chapters, on the similarities between non-combatants and their combatant comrades, Florian-Parmentier writes in such a way as to present an honest, if uncomfortable, picture of the reality of 'heroism' in the trenches. Traditionally, walking steadily towards the enemy, without ducking or trying to cover oneself, would have been

³³⁴ Ruineau, *Guerre et Révolution*, p. 183.

³³⁵ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 215.

³³⁶ Florian-Parmentier, *L'Ouragan*, p. 131.

³³⁷ Stephen Bull, *Trench: A History of Trench Warfare on the Western Front* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2014), p. 86.

seen as bravery in the extreme.³³⁸ The confidence this would have taken would have elevated Petitjean's exploits into the realm of heroism. But Petitjean is not a hero. Nor is he an anti-hero. He is simply a non-hero; a normal soldier, coming up with such bets, perhaps through the folly of being young, or perhaps in order to cope with the trauma and fear associated with going over the top into what had become almost certain death or injury. Petitjean will only commit to an act of bravery or heroism if he is certain to win enough wine to warrant it. The reason for fighting is clearly not his love of France, or his hatred of the enemy forces, but is a way to get more alcohol.³³⁹ Though the anecdote seems comic at first glance, the truly pitiful nature of Petitjean's wager becomes clear as he goes through with it. His comrades who have taken on the bet die around him, while he continually tries to make sure they are paying him attention and acknowledging that he is doing as he said he would. The chapter ends with Petitjean becoming enraged at their deaths, calling them 'pigs' for, in his eyes, renegeing on their agreement. It is a total inversion of the accepted myth of the trenches, with heroic infantrymen doing their duty for their country. The sense that the reader is left with at the end of Petitjean's story is not one of wonder and awe at his bravery, but one of pity and sadness at the turn his wager took. Clearly, contrasting non-combatants with combatants like Petitjean does not work. Florian-Parmentier's subversion of expectations surrounding combatants and their supposed inherent heroism, delineates how the Great War was a conflict in which it was no longer possible. If combatants are not successfully emulating soldiering ideals, then the yardstick by which to measure the masculinity of those around them is no longer viable.

'Le Pari de Petitjean' highlights many of the themes that run through the novel. It shows the different ways in which *all* men tried to get through the war. The premise of the wager is ridiculous and childlike in nature; however, the end of the story evokes a sadness in the reader as everything, from the bet to the war itself, is shown to be senseless. Further, Florian-Parmentier's consistent use of wordplay, more than simply acting as a literary device to portray subtle messages, works as a symbolic way to convey how the world changed after the First World War. The first meaning of the word that Florian-Parmentier plays upon, or the surface-meaning, represents the pre-war era, including its values and traditions, whereas the second, more hidden meaning, functions as a

³³⁸ See Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and The Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) for a discussion of battlefield bravery.

³³⁹ This story calls into question the memory of soldiers in the trenches as brave for the public in 1919 (when the novel was published).

reflection of the changed world of the trenches. This can be extrapolated out to suggest that Florian-Parmentier is not only concerned with the changing world, but the changing status of military men at various stages of the military hierarchy.

Florian-Parmentier's use of sarcasm, his willingness to unravel concepts of bravery and to showcase the less heroic sides of the conflict conveys a rawness that might otherwise be overlooked due to his elevated style of writing. Interestingly, Florian-Parmentier's frequent use of wordplay may in fact be one of the reasons for which his work was rejected by Norton Cru. John Cruickshank in his work, *Variations on Catastrophe*, points out that due to the progression of the war into 'trench fighting and industrialized, mechanized slaughter, fine words and resounding phrases were increasingly called into question.'³⁴⁰ To Norton Cru, Florian-Parmentier's decision not to use *écriture-plate* to write about experiences of the trenches suggests that his position in the military supply chain made him too far removed from the front lines.³⁴¹ Ordinary men in the trenches could not relate to his style of writing.³⁴² Ironically, this extract from *L'Ouragan*, in which the author tries to unpack the job of some combatant men 'fragmenting' the enemy opposition, and to undermine their ability to fight back, is symptomatic of the gap between how Norton Cru thought the war *should* be written about, and how Florian-Parmentier chose to express his own opinions. As Samuel Hynes notes:

The sense of a gap in history that the war engendered became a commonplace in imaginative literature of the post-war years. Poets and novelists rendered it in images of radical emptiness – as a chasm, or an abyss, or an edge – or in images of fragmentation and ruin, all expressing a fracture in time and space that separated the present from the past.³⁴³

The fragmentation and ruin discussed by Hynes and reflected in *L'Ouragan* symbolises the ruin of traditional understandings of warfare and the (in)ability of soldiers to live up to the constantly changing ideals of martial masculinity during wartime. Ultimately, *L'Ouragan* functions in opposition to what Norton Cru claimed to be the true testimonies of war. The novel explores many different wartime occupations and highlights the constant movement of army personnel between

³⁴⁰ John Cruickshank, *Variations on Catastrophe: Some French Responses to the Great War* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1982), p. 28.

³⁴¹ Maurice Ruineau, in *Guerre et Révolution*, also argues that Florian-Parmentier's perceived exaggeration, or 'hyperbole' is one of the reasons for which his writing cannot be seen as a true testimony of the war.

³⁴² It is interesting to note here that Florian-Parmentier does use *écriture-plate* in dialogue, but in his descriptive passages he reverts back to a more poetic style.

³⁴³ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. xi.

roles and regiments. This demonstrates that the social and military hierarchies of peacetime are not simply more fluid during war, but are dismantled altogether. It also shows that this fluidity or dismantling highlights how combatants and non-combatants were in the same position in the trenches. Thus, in some ways Florian-Parmentier's novel does live up to Norton Cru's parameters of testimony, in that *being in the trenches* is what truly matters.

Georges Duhamel, *Civilisation*

In a similar fashion to *L'Ouragan*, Georges Duhamel's *Civilisation*, as is clear from the title, alludes to the fear that the Great War was disintegrating contemporary society; as Hynes puts it, 'Civilization is threatened, is toppling, is mutilated or destroyed; the clock of civilization has been put back.'³⁴⁴

The writing of Georges Duhamel, like that of Florian-Parmentier, can also be considered as semi-autobiographical. Duhamel worked as a surgeon during peacetime and became a military surgeon during the First World War owing to the fact that he was unable to enlist as a combatant.³⁴⁵ Duhamel wrote *Civilisation* from diaries and memoirs that he kept during the war, shown in the settings of the short stories which take place mainly behind the front lines, in hospitals or along the evacuation route for the wounded. Thus, when addressing different roles in his stories, his observations are based both upon his own experiences and on his encounters with other medical personnel. They are, however, vignettes, meaning that they concentrate on character rather than plot. The texts I shall be using are short stories taken from the collection entitled *Civilisation*, written during the war and published in 1920.³⁴⁶ It should be noted that Duhamel never explicitly stated that his stories were autobiographical, but the consistent first-person narration, and connections and similarities to his own war experience indicate that they are at least semi-autobiographical. I have chosen three vignettes to analyse here, each highlighting a different theme, who goes to war and why, the body and identity, and the transition between combatant and non-combatant. All of these themes were in some way linked to popular discourse surrounding ideas of masculinity in a time of war during the period, and through my analysis of these vignettes, I will unpack some of the tensions inherent in the constantly changing ideals of contemporary martial masculinity.

³⁴⁴ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 4.

³⁴⁵ Louis Chaigne, *Vies et Œuvres d'Écrivains, Volume 1* (Paris: Fernand Lanore, 1990), p. 100.

³⁴⁶ Georges Duhamel, *Civilisation : 1914-1917* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1922).

Who goes to war and why?

The vignette ‘Maquignons’ (meaning tricksters or hustlers) follows a group of civilian men being medically assessed and judged to determine whether they are fit enough to go to war, set after many of the fit men have already been called up to fight. The narrator describes the men that go before the panel: ‘Ce n’est pas la fleur de la race : il y a déjà longtemps que les plus beaux hommes du pays vivent là-bas, dans la boue jusqu’au ventre, attentifs au péril comme des chats.’³⁴⁷ The narrator makes it clear that the atmosphere in the room is ‘hostile’ and even goes as far as describing it to be reminiscent of a ‘tribunal’.³⁴⁸ It is evident from this hostile tone that the men before the panel are seen to be avoiding going to the front lines, and are therefore trying to shirk their responsibilities as French citizens.³⁴⁹ Duhamel here uses the notion of shirkers to highlight the morally ambiguous nature of these tribunals. One visibly sick man is on the verge of being denied the possibility of enlisting:

- Si donc vous ne voulez pas de moi, c’est que je vas [sic] crever... Mais je vous dis que j’ai des raisons pour aller au front, plutôt que de rester à me faire engueuler tous les jours...

Un court silence immobilise tout le monde ; l’écho d’un drame s’y prolonge. L’homme est visiblement très malade. Sa poitrine est horrible à voir et traversée par une respiration orangeuse. Il se tient à peine sur des jambes bouffies, veinées de mauve.

- Maintenu ! crie le juge.³⁵⁰

This may appear to be a kind thing for the judge to do – to allow this man to join up despite him being physically unfit to do so. It is impossible to say whether the judge was moved by his ‘reasons for going to the front’, or by the honesty with which he says he would rather be there than stay here and ‘be told off every day’, or whether the judge sees it as granting a final wish to a man who realises that if they turn him away, it is because he is already at death’s door. The reader remains unsure whether being shouted at every day is a comment on his familial relationships, or whether it points to a sense of shame on the man’s part that he is not already enlisted and refers to his treatment in public. The tension shown in this passage is created through Duhamel’s narration that focuses on the lack of sound in the room, and the detailed description of the man’s infirm body.

³⁴⁷ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 136.

³⁴⁸ Duhamel, *Civilisation*.

³⁴⁹ Leonard Smith discusses citizenship and mobilisation in *The Embattled Self*, pp. 23-29. This notion is also discussed in more detail in the first chapter of this thesis.

³⁵⁰ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 140.

As such, when the judge cries ‘Maintenu!’ the reader is left with a sense of unease and trepidation regarding the decision and the fate of this man.

What is clear, however, from the ending of the story is that once the judgement is passed and the day is over, the panel give no further thought to the consequences of their actions: ‘Le tribunal se lave les mains, ainsi que Ponce Pilate ; il signe cérémonieusement des papiers et il se disperse.’³⁵¹ The religiously symbolic comparison damns the judges, and makes Christian martyrs of the men they have sent to the front. Martyrdom is particularly important to Catholicism, and as a largely Catholic country, Duhamel here suggests to the French readers that these men are not only martyrs in the Christian sense of giving their lives for their countrymen, but are fulfilling the martially masculine role of protector in doing their duty to the Motherland. Duhamel’s acerbic tone regarding the panel, that they deem themselves to be cleared of all responsibility for the lives of the men that they send to the front lines, outlines the irony of their position; they create martyrs, but feel no responsibility or compassion for the fates of the men upon whom they place judgement, and indeed the members of the panel are themselves not in the front lines.³⁵²

In contrast, the doctors who are physically carrying out the medicals are depicted as being heavily weighed down by their consciences: ‘Les médecins donnent des signes d’épuisement. Le plus vieux, qui est un peu sourd, fonce dans la besogne comme un sanglier dans les taillis. Le plus jeune souffre et s’agace visiblement. Il a le regard trouble et inquiet de quelqu’un qui fait un travail odieux et qui ne s’en console pas.’³⁵³ It may be that Duhamel’s own profession as a doctor is the reason behind the narrator’s lack of judgement towards the medical professionals, yet it serves a greater purpose. It gives the narrator a space in which to pass judgement on the situation in its entirety, which is described as ‘odious’ and which instigates an internal battle in the young doctor; he ‘cannot console himself/reconcile himself to it’. Though the non-combatant doctors here are doing a duty to France insofar as they are delivering more men to the front lines, it is clear that there is tension surrounding the ultimate outcome of this duty. It is implied that the doctors’ duty of care to these men should in some way impede their ability to send their fellow countrymen to

³⁵¹ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 144.

³⁵² Pontius Pilate was a Roman governor of Judea who lobbied against the execution of Jesus. However, on seeing the determination of the crowd that Christ should die, Pontius Pilate washed his hands, signifying that he would not be held responsible for Jesus’ death.

³⁵³ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 143.

almost certain wounding and death.³⁵⁴ How can they care for the bodies of these men whilst knowing what awaits them? Leo van Bergen points out that for medical personnel during the conflict '[loyalty] to the patient and loyalty to the army and to the cause could move in different directions.'³⁵⁵ Throughout this short-story, the notion of the body is integral to the anxieties at which Duhamel's narrator hints. The stresses of categorising men as 'fit' or 'unfit', and therefore to some extent willing or unwilling to fight, problematizes their status as true French citizens, whilst at the same time the job of the non-combatant medical professionals compounds the issue by revealing a tension surrounding *how* one carries out their civic and military duties during wartime.

The body and identity

Duhamel explores the tension around the usefulness of the body in wartime in 'Régulatrice', which follows a non-combatant who is carrying out a type of apprenticeship at a *gare régulatrice* (a military train station close to the front lines). The focus is on the immediate aftermath of the death of a *convoyeur* (transporter) who is involved in a train accident. His body is then carried by unnamed stretcher-bearers, a *lampiste* (lamplighter) and the narrator, who try to find an appropriate place for the body, but who in the end are unable to do so. The portrayals of non-combatant men in this particular story are many and varied. Duhamel, in a similar fashion to Florian-Parmentier, plays on double-meanings; *lampiste* can mean a lamplighter, or a scapegoat. This use of literary tools begs the question of why Duhamel's writing was not rejected by Norton Cru for being 'too literary', or not using *écriture-plate*. Perhaps given Duhamel's restriction to writing about scenes in which he would most likely have taken part, such as hospitals behind the lines, he does not violate the most important parameters around true testimony.

The vignette centres around the transformation of the status of the dead man: 'Y a un des convoyeurs du ravitaillement qui vient de se faire zigouiller par le sanitaire semi-permanent 17... Parait que c'est une pitié...'³⁵⁶ Not only is the irony of being killed by a train carrying medical supplies evident, but his death, and indeed the man himself, are referred to as being '*une pitié*'. He

³⁵⁴ Jay Winter discusses medical tribunals in Britain in *The Cambridge History of the First World War: Volume 3, Civil Society*, ed. by Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³⁵⁵ Leo Van Bergen, 'Military Medicine', in *The Cambridge History of the First World War: Volume 3, Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 287-309.

³⁵⁶ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 122-123.

is not referred to by name at this point in the story, instead being referred to using a word that can both mean that his death is a shame, or that it is pathetic. His death is problematic in a multitude of ways: his body is strewn all over the train tracks, and therefore restricts how well the station can function; his death represents an unexpected casualty of the war, and his burial poses a logistical problem for the *lampiste* and the *brancardiers* who are transporting him.

Duhamel utilises the setting of a railway station as a tool through which to expose the discordance between civilian and military life during wartime. The narrator comments that the station is: ‘un mélange tumultueux de vie militaire et de routine civile.’³⁵⁷ This is clearly illustrated in the narration: ‘Parfois, les brancardiers exténués s’arrêtaient et posaient la civière sur le ballast pour cracher soigneusement dans leurs mains. Alors passaient auprès de nous de grands trains de voyageurs et nous apercevions, dans leur intérieur clair, des femmes qui lisaient et tenant contre elles de beaux enfants endormis.’³⁵⁸

There is a roughness inherent in the way the stretcher-bearers spit on their hands to gain some respite from carrying the stretcher, demonstrating a masculine physicality of men working with their hands. Moreover, this focus on the living bodies of the stretcher-bearers emphasises the ‘otherness’ of the lifeless form they are carrying. Yet the real difference is the contrast between the three soldiers carrying a mutilated corpse while women cuddle and read to sleeping children on the train. This is reminiscent of what John Cruickshank refers to as: ‘[a] sudden dislocation of what was widely experienced as an apparently calm, ordered, and relatively peaceful rhythm of life.’³⁵⁹ The unexpected and violent end of the life of the *convoyeur* symbolises a cultural as well as physical violence done to both combatant and non-combatant men in the armed forces. They are ‘dislocated’ from their families and home environments, whilst at the same time, for French men, fighting on home soil. This simultaneous dislocating and cementing of identity in the earth can be seen in the representation of the unease with which the body is dealt and the logistical problems that it causes. Further, this dislocation is symptomatic of the strain that comes to the fore

³⁵⁷ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 125.

³⁵⁸ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, pp. 127-128.

³⁵⁹ Cruickshank, *Variations on Catastrophe*, p. 4.

in many memoirs of the Great War which claim that civilians could not and did not understand the trauma of the trenches.³⁶⁰

Duhamel unpacks the roughness of warfare (even warfare away from the trenches) further:

Je m'étais assis sur une pierre. Les brancardiers, fatigués, s'épongeaient le front et prononçaient le mot de « pinard » ; je distinguais la masse informe de Lameilleux qui semblait bien indifférent à son ultime calvaire et attendait le gîte suprême avec la souveraine patience de la mort.³⁶¹

As previously seen in *L'Ouragan*, the importance of alcohol to enlisted men is never far away, with the stretcher-bearers' only speech in the story being the word *pinard*, or plonk. The peace that the dead man (Lameilleux) embodies is presented as being in direct opposition with the impatience of the narrator and the stretcher-bearers to find a place for his body. The difficulty of finding a place for the dead is not a problem that one would necessarily associate with war, as clearly one of the consequences of war is death of both soldiers and civilians. However, it seems that as non-combatants in war often represent the liminal position of being neither civilians nor officially 'soldiers' in the combatant sense, their difficulty in carrying out this job is representative of the disintegration of civilisation that Duhamel ultimately wants to convey. Indeed, this story of an atypical death during warfare underlines the perceived glorification of death on the battlefield, as this body is afforded little to no importance.

Further, this story investigates the usefulness of the body, and the meaning of the body once life is extinct. The story concludes with the narrator saying:

Je restai seul avec Lemailleux et m'étendis sur ma couverture. La guerre m'avait déjà enseigné à vivre et à dormir dans la compagnie des morts et je m'étonnai de n'avoir pas songé dès l'abord à une solution si naturelle. [...] Du brancard, tombait, de seconde en seconde avec un bruit menu, une goutte de quelque chose qui devait être du sang. [...] j'avais déjà compté quelques centaines de gouttes, quand je m'enfonçai dans un sommeil qui, comme celui du camarade, fut sans rêve.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ In the British case, see Jay Winter, 'Popular Culture in Wartime Britain', in *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment and Propaganda 1914-1918*, ed. by Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 330-348 (332). André Loez discusses tensions and resentment that French soldiers felt towards their civilian countrymen based in part on the way that life in the trenches was depicted in the press. See André Loez, *La Grande Guerre* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2014).

³⁶¹ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 129.

³⁶² Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 132.

Eric J. Leed, in *No Man's Land: Identity and Combat in World War I*, discusses the changing attitudes towards death in the trenches. Leed suggests that the literature of the period reflects the shifting attitudes towards death in the trenches: 'Death became a symbol of the discontinuity and distance that defined relationships between the front and home. But equally, death was an experience of foreclosure, of sensory deprivation, a sense of being fixed and immobilized in a minimal space.'³⁶³ Leed discusses the distance between the front and the home in relation to the trenches and the homes from which the soldiers came. Here, death is the ultimate discontinuity in identity (as we shall also see in Buchan). The importance of Lemailloux's body is renewed, as it reinvigorates a sense of loyalty and comradeship between non-combatants. Lemailloux's blood allows the narrator to dream a dreamless sleep, suggesting a sense of peace and further a complicity on the part of Lemailloux, giving rise to the idea of death as a constant companion during war. This tale of the dilemmas with which these non-combatant men are confronted shows not only the unwillingness of the civilian population surrounding the station to take responsibility for a fellow citizen that has perished during the war, but also reinforces the importance of stretcher-bearers to the rituals of death and burial.³⁶⁴

Transitions

Finally, Duhamel's story 'Sur la Somme' concentrates on a young combatant soldier who is taken away from the front lines following the death of his third brother. His transition from combatant to non-combatant is caused by the transitions his brothers have made from life to death. He is made a stretcher-bearer and a carpenter, and he recounts his time as a stretcher-bearer, including his time with some of the men he treats:

- Vous avez eu trois frères tués à l'ennemi. Dans un sens, vous voilà tiré d'affaire. Vous ne serez pas mal comme brancardier. Dans un sens, c'est malheureux, mais c'est bon pour vous. Le brancardage c'est dur, mais ça vaut mieux que la ligne, pas vrai ?³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 22.

³⁶⁴ This is discussed in chapters 1 of this thesis, particularly in the section concerning burial of the dead.

³⁶⁵ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 29.

The transition from combatant to non-combatant is presented here as a sort of respite. It is problematic, not only in the sense that stretcher-bearers were also in the front lines, but also given that the job of the stretcher-bearer was certainly not free from trauma. This passage demonstrates the fluidity of roles within the French army during the First World War, with this soldier having been removed from combatant service to non-combatant service due to the deaths of his brothers. Their family, then, is portrayed as having paid their ‘blood debt’. In this way, through familial ties, this soldier’s duty to *la patrie* has been proven by his willingness to die alongside his siblings. As such, we can see here the clear link between sacrifice and citizenship that was integral to martial masculinity in France during this period.

The trauma of the situation is highlighted by Duhamel in the description of the stretcher-bearers’ camp: ‘Il y avait une route, celle d’Albert, usée, creusée, surmenée de besogne. Elle charriait le flot incessant des blessés. Au bord de la route se dressait la ville des tentes, avec des rues, des faubourgs, des places publiques. En arrière des tentes, un cimetière. C’était tout.’³⁶⁶ They inhabit a type of city, but it is a city dedicated to the wounded, with a cemetery taking the place of the suburbs. It is a place that is wholly surrounded by, and dedicated to, trauma. This once again typifies how Duhamel seeks to emphasise the uneasy truce between civilisation, or society, and warfare. The consistency of death in their surroundings is reminiscent of the trenches, where bodies often became part of the trench itself, effectively highlighting the parallels between the lives of the combatants and non-combatants in the front lines.

The protagonist is then transferred to work as a carpenter making coffins. Just as stretcher-bearers are surrounded by death, the narrator notes that: ‘il y avait un grand nombre de cercueils tout prêts. Ils remplissaient une tente où l’on exposait sommairement les cadavres.’³⁶⁷ He goes on to describe how the carpenters sing as they work, just as factory workers would during peacetime. The deference shown to the dead in peacetime ‘normality’ is conspicuously absent here, as we have also seen in ‘Régulatrice’. Duhamel’s work to convey the normalising of the dead body suggests that war is indeed death’s domain. Duhamel takes this further by later linking the job of the stretcher-bearer to that of a custom’s officer: ‘Une comptabilité minutieuse règle tous les actes du drame. Au fur et à mesure que ces hommes défilaient, on les comptait, on les

³⁶⁶ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 32.

³⁶⁷ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 33.

couvrait d'étiquettes, des scribes vérifiaient leur identité avec la froide exactitude d'employés de la douane.³⁶⁸ Seemingly, compassion and sympathy no longer have a place in wartime. The identity of the wounded combatant is that of an object, and the identity of the non-combatant is one of a governmental bureaucrat, showing how Duhamel engages and aligns with popular discourse around shirkers.³⁶⁹

Duhamel's narrator comes to a self-realisation regarding his own transition between roles during the conflict, and the resulting impact this had on the way he came to perceive the war. He says: 'Je connus, une fois de plus, que chaque homme juge les plus majestueux événements du seul point de vue que lui proposent sa profession et ses aptitudes.'³⁷⁰ This realisation reflects the underlying message of the story that war is subjective, and that one's understanding of war is indelibly linked to one's role, character and abilities. As such, I would suggest that Duhamel is making the point that men such as nurses, whose character would likely be caring, and whose aptitudes would have lent themselves to the medical and caregiving spaces of the war, had their own experience of the war, and ultimately that their non-combatant experience was no less valid than the war experience of a combatant man for being away from the front lines.

Identity in war, as shown in *Civilisation*, is fluid. In *L'Ouragan*, we have seen the instability that fluidity of roles could cause. In the next section, I will turn to the role of the spy, and its liminal, fluid position in terms of front lines and indeed in terms of wartime identity and masculinity, to compare with these French texts how fluid and unstable wartime masculinities were understood in Britain. This will build a fuller picture of military roles and battlefields as often the battlefield in which the spy operated could not be defined in the same way as 'the front lines' of the trenches. In the context of espionage and spying, men did occasionally bear arms, which then begs the question of whether the carrying of a gun relies upon a situational, or contextual, understanding of its importance. This is further complicated by ideas around the 'battlefield'. The First World War gave rise to the idea of a 'Total War', particularly for the French, whose homeland was invaded within the first few weeks of the conflict.³⁷¹ The entire country was a battlefield and this then

³⁶⁸ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, pp. 35-36.

³⁶⁹ The first chapter of this thesis analysis the *embuscomanie* prevalent in France, and how this was expressed in the fear that shirkers were seeking out employment in protected services to avoid service at the front.

³⁷⁰ Duhamel, *Civilisation*, p. 33.

³⁷¹ See *France and the Great War 1914-1918* ed. by Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) for a discussion of the Great War in France, including the

makes the idea of bearing guns on the battlefield itself much more complicated, as I will go on to show.

John Buchan, *Greenmantle* and *Mr Standfast*

John Buchan (later Lord Tweedsmuir) was born in 1875 in eastern Scotland and died in Canada in 1940.³⁷² He was a prolific writer throughout his life, and although he was not enlisted as an infantryman during the First World War, in 1915 he became a lieutenant in the Intelligence Corps and was promoted to major the following year.³⁷³ He was primarily engaged in a propagandist and administrative role during the conflict, and some of his best-known work was written during that time, including the Hannay novels and a history of the Great War.³⁷⁴

The two John Buchan novels that I shall discuss in this chapter, *Greenmantle* and *Mr Standfast*, both concentrate on Richard Hannay, a South-African who joins Kitchener's New Army towards the end of the preceding novel *The Thirty Nine Steps*, and who takes on a role as a spy. Spies occupied a zone in which they were often enlisted in the fight against enemy forces, but during their time working as spies they were – should anything go wrong – in no way recognised as being affiliated with Britain herself. This strange role on the fringes of the Allied forces was often seen as ‘ungentlemanly’, thus causing some discussion around whether men involved in espionage could properly fit into the archetypal role of the warrior male that the British Army was eager to portray. This is similar to the representations of miners that I discussed in *L'Ouragan*. Though the spy fit the mould of a man willing to do his duty, his conduct necessarily shied away from the hand-to-hand, openly declared combat of the battlefield that was considered as chivalric and heroic. The role of the spy was to go unnoticed as not to be seen as connected to, or in the service of, the British armed forces, this meant that they could not wear the uniform of the British Army. This uniform was, as we have seen in chapter 1, emblematic of the unity of the army, as David H.J. Morgan has shown: ‘The uniform absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless

impact of the total war during and after the conflict. See also John Horne, ‘Remobilizing for “total war”: France and Britain, 1917-1918’, in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. by John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 195-211.

³⁷² Maria Noelle Ng, ‘Warriors in Flight: John Buchan's War Novels’, *Canadian Literature*, 179 (2003), p. 188-192.

³⁷³ Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words*, p. 93.

³⁷⁴ There are five novels in the series: *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), *Greenmantle* (1916), *Mr Standfast* (1919), *The Three Hostages* (1924), and *The Island of Sheep* (1936). See J. William Galbraith, *John Buchan: Model Governor General* (Dundurn Press: Toronto, Canada, 2013) for a biography and detailed account of Buchan's works.

masculinity'.³⁷⁵ Therefore, being unable to wear the uniform, and unable to show themselves openly as British soldiers meant that spies were necessarily on the fringes of the armed forces and therefore precariously placed in their relationship to martial masculinity.

Published in 1916, *Greenmantle*³⁷⁶ is the second in the series of Richard Hannay novels. The series received favourable reviews from its first publication.³⁷⁷ *Greenmantle* follows the protagonist, Hannay, as he is re-introduced into the world of information and subterfuge that is espionage. The British Government is concerned that the German government is planning an offensive, using Middle-Eastern forces. The German government is trying to incite a Jihad against the Allied Forces, and Hannay's job, along with his conspirators, is to uncover and to dismantle the plot before it comes to fruition. It is in the preceding novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), Hannay first finds himself accidentally embroiled in the world of spies. However, he is not enlisted as an agent at that time as it takes place in 1914, just before the outbreak of war in August.

Mr Standfast (1919) is the third novel in the series, though in some ways is a sequel to *The Thirty-Nine Steps* as it involves Hannay with the same supervillain, von Schwabing, also known as Ivery. Buchan uses John Bunyan's 1678 work *The Pilgrim's Progress* to structure the novel, and it is this text that Hannay and his co-conspirators use to communicate with each other. Hannay is asked to go undercover as a pacifist in order to uncover a network of German agents and spies at work in Britain who are leaking vital information to the enemy. In this novel, however, there is an interlude in which Hannay goes back to the front to resume his role as Brigadier-General. This is not to last, however, and in 1918 he is called away from the front to help with the operation. At the end of the novel, von Schwabing is captured and is forced to serve at the front, during which time he runs into No Man's Land and is killed by his own countrymen.

In both *Greenmantle* and *Mr Standfast*, Buchan works with two opposing concepts of male spies. The first is not markedly different to the prevailing image of other enlisted, non-combatant men in Britain; spies were shirkers, sneaks, and therefore ungentlemanly. Indeed, the image of sabotage and trickery in the intelligence services prevailed until well into and after the Second World

³⁷⁵ Morgan, 'Theater of War', p. 166.

³⁷⁶ John Buchan, *Greenmantle* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).

³⁷⁷ Christopher Harvie's introduction to *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1993).

War.³⁷⁸ The other view of male spies is, interestingly, in direct opposition to the sneak. Tammy M. Proctor, in her work on female spies during the conflict, notes that:

In creating a professional and permanent intelligence industry between 1909 and 1919, the British government emphasized that the professional agent was male, cool under pressure, and a loyal soldier for the state. Many of the early secret service chiefs were former military officers, and these men hired like-minded men as their subordinates.³⁷⁹

This idea, however, as Proctor notes elsewhere in her work, had not yet become the widely accepted view of espionage by the outbreak of the war in 1914. Of course, Buchan was writing during the conflict, and had experience of the intelligence service. As such, it is important to note that it is unlikely that he would have subscribed to the idea that men working in intelligence were ‘sneaks’ and ‘ungentlemanly’. Yet, throughout Buchan’s novels, ‘[Hannay] is not a professional agent, nor does he belong even temporarily to any formal secret service. Even during the height of the war, he does his spying while on brief leave from his main occupation, the traditional gentlemanly one of a military officer.’³⁸⁰

Despite this, we can map almost directly the portrayal of Hannay in *Greenmantle* onto the above description of male spies. Having been a soldier in the Army, and having served in the trenches, Hannay is informally taken up by his friends who work in the intelligence services. Clearly Hannay is the epitome of the ‘like-minded men’ that were sought out, himself being a military officer. Hannay himself, on the other hand, is entirely sceptical of his own suitability for the role:

I had always thought that I was about as brave as the average man, but there’s courage and courage, and mine was certainly not of the impassive kind. Stick me down in a trench, and I could stand being shot at as well as most people, and my blood could get hot if it were given a chance. [...]

In about a fortnight, I calculated, I would be dead. Shot as a spy – a rotten sort of ending!³⁸¹

There are two issues to note in this extract that lend themselves to reading the Hannay series as a whole. Firstly, Hannay himself notes the different types of courage; the courage of the trenches, and the courage – presumably of spies – that he deems ‘impassive’. Secondly, Buchan draws our

³⁷⁸ See Terry Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler: Double-Cross and Deception in World War II* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008).

³⁷⁹ Tammy M. Proctor, *Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p. 2.

³⁸⁰ John G. Calweli and Bruce A. Rosenberg, *The Spy Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 90.

³⁸¹ Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 11.

attention to the danger of spying in Hannay's presumption that he would be dead within a fortnight. But it is the sentence that follows that speaks to Hannay's real worry: 'Shot as a spy – *a rotten sort of ending!*' He is not voicing his worries about death per se, but rather his worries concerning how he dies, or more accurately, what role he is playing at the time of his death. No longer will he be in the trenches, where his death would be spoken of as one synonymous with the glorious death of the infantryman. No, the death of a spy is, in his words, 'rotten'. Thus, his claim to be unsuitable for the role is based on the premise that his courage is one suited to direct combat, and that he himself is unsuited to (or, more likely, undesiring of) a spy's death. This uneasiness surrounding death and what happens to the body is reminiscent of Duhamel's 'Régulatrice'.

Buchan's portrayal of Hannay is used to facilitate a discussion surrounding male spies. Firstly, as mentioned, the discussion involves the *type* of man involved in espionage. Secondly, the discussion involves Hannay's own disguise as a spy. He is not formally recruited into the Intelligence Services, and therefore taking part in espionage, even without performing a specific role, is in some ways a disguise, as Hannay performs a non-combatant role away from the trenches. Buchan utilises this to convey an unease with being untruthful and indeed untrue to the gentlemanly ideals Hannay espouses. Finally, Buchan explores the issue of disguise in relation to death, revealing his concern with how one is remembered, and further, one's legacy after death.

Let us begin, then, with the issue of the type of man we see performed by Buchan's protagonist. In their work, *The Spy Story*, John G. Cawelti and Bruce A. Rosenberg comment on Richard Usborne's description of the 'clubland heroes', in regards to the spy stories of the period. They note that:

Hannay is a clubman, which means that he is, above all, a gentleman and an amateur, a member of the upper classes with an independent income, and one who lives by a very strong moral and social code in which the ideals of honor, duty, and country play a primary role. [...] In these respects, Hannay symbolizes the continuity of British social tradition, the vision of an ordered and hierarchical social world that has lasted from time immemorial.³⁸²

By examining the different aspects of the clubman image, Hannay's uneasiness concerning his role as a spy becomes clear. Espionage in 1915 is not, for most ordinary British people, conducive to a gentlemanly status. Yet the ideals of honour and duty to the Empire are entrenched in Buchan's

³⁸² Cawelti and Rosenberg, *The Spy Story*, p. 90.

characterisation of Hannay. This is shown through the importance that Hannay attributes to comradeship throughout the course of the novels. He is accustomed to life with the Army, in the trenches, fighting the enemy alongside other men who share his values concerning the ‘British social tradition’. Towards the end of the *Greenmantle*, upon hearing an enemy bombardment, Hannay reflects upon his time in the trenches:

Then it had been the new thing in my life that held me breathless with anticipation; now it was the old thing, the thing I had shared with so many good fellows, and the only task for a man. At the sound of the guns I felt that I was moving in natural air once more. I felt that I was coming home.³⁸³

The trenches are Hannay’s natural, ‘home’ environment. More than this, warfare in the trenches is ‘the only task for a man,’ indicating that despite his time as a spy, he does not regard that part of his life as contributing to his status as a man, nor as a gentleman. There is a disparity between the status of a man working as a spy, and a man in the trenches, surrounded by his own. It is important here to note that not all men in the trenches were classed as gentlemen, neither by the social distinctions of the time, nor by the description provided above by Cawelti and Rosenberg. Many of the men surrounding Hannay in the trenches were ordinary men.³⁸⁴ Tracey Loughran has shown that towards the end of the war ‘39 per cent of officers were from lower middle-class and working-class backgrounds’, and while she contends that ‘social class cannot easily be correlated with behavioural norms,’ this figure confirms that the majority of officers throughout the conflict were from the middle-class. Adrian Gregory has shown how even through mobilisation the British army was classist: ‘It might seem strange to a modern reader, but the joining fee was continued up to 1916. This was a payment for social exclusivity.’³⁸⁵ Only those who could afford to enlist in certain ‘public school’ and ‘stockbroker’ battalions as officers were able to do so, ensuring that only certain social classes – at least in the first years of the war – were given the opportunity to serve in ‘acknowledged elite pre-war formations’.³⁸⁶ Gregory has also noted that in some cases, middle-class men joined certain regiments to avoid serving with those of lower social classes.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Hannay associates the experience of being in the trenches with being a ‘man’, and

³⁸³ Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 198.

³⁸⁴ Tracey Loughran, *Shell-Shock and Medical Culture in First World War Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 130.

³⁸⁵ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p. 78.

³⁸⁶ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p. 78.

³⁸⁷ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p. 78.

one must assume that it is in the trenches that he feels he can be most true to his gentlemanly values of honour and duty. The trenches symbolise a cleanliness of spirit and status for Hannay; his disguise is not necessary here, and he is safe in the traditional British social values of ‘time immemorial.’

Why does the issue of disguise cause Hannay so much trouble? Is it because when he works away from the trenches he becomes a non-combatant, or is it because of the nature of disguise itself? Disguise is synonymous with trickery. The notion of trickery lends itself well to the pre-conceived notion of spies being sneaks and therefore ungentlemanly. In his preoccupation with gentlemanliness, Hannay portrays a masculine identity associated with a particular social class. In the trenches Hannay has the opportunity to perform the martial masculinity associated with open warfare, and his occupation as a professional soldier would have placed him in a position of command, showcasing the more middle-class ideal of authority. As a spy his role operates outside of both a formal command structure and outside of the normal field of battle, inciting uncertainty in Hannay’s perception of his own masculinity which reflects the chaos of the conflict itself. Yet Buchan places great emphasis in the novels on the reason for espionage. This can in some ways be considered as a Machiavellian outlook; the ends justify the means. The continuation of the British Empire is imperative, and therefore Hannay must do whatever he can to ensure the success of the operation. There is, however, a certain double-standard in Buchan’s work regarding the treatment of British and German spies. Cawelti and Rosenberg assert that:

[Buchan’s] supervillains are, above all, men of many faces, and their skill at disguises is implicitly condemned by contrast with the openness, and integrity of the British character. Though Hannay’s missions frequently force him to hide his identity, he usually feels extremely uncomfortable when he must pretend to act in a way contrary to his nature.³⁸⁸

It is not only the supervillains who are condemned in the novels; ordinary German spies are afforded the same assessment by Buchan. In *Greenmantle*, while Peter Pienaar, Hannay’s associate, is imprisoned by the Germans, he notices that some of the prisoners were undercover German spies. Their aim was to encourage other prisoners to try to escape. The spies would then inform the prison guards, giving the guards an excuse to further question prisoners to try to obtain information. Pienaar is cutting in his assessment of this practice, and says to Hannay: ‘That is the

³⁸⁸ Cawelti and Rosenberg, *The Spy Story*, p. 95

German notion of good business. I am not a British soldier to think that all men are gentlemen. I know that amongst men there are desperate *skellums*, so I soon picked up this game.’³⁸⁹ He goes on to refer to those prisoners as, ‘The bogus prisoners, my friends the spies.’³⁹⁰

Here, it is clear that in the German case, the ends most certainly do not justify the means. However, given that Buchan was involved in creating propaganda during the First World War, it is not surprising that he would characterise German spies in an unfavourable way.³⁹¹ It seems here that the irony of this statement is not lost on Pienaar, given that he is also undercover. His sharp statement and heavily sarcastic tone when he says that he is ‘not a British soldier to think that all men are gentlemen,’ is telling of the difficulties of negotiating social and cultural traditions alongside the realities of life and of warfare. This sense of irony is strikingly similar to that we have already seen in *L’Ouragan*. However, though Florian-Parmentier uses sarcasm and irony to undermine the accepted, conventional ideals of martial masculinity, Buchan here uses it to outline the difference between the British and their enemies.

Furthermore, in the early stages of *Mr Standfast*, Hannay’s reaction to going undercover as a pacifist is alluded to by his co-conspirator, Mary. She tells him that:

“It won’t be easy. It would madden me, and it will be a far heavier burden for a man like you. You have got to sink down deep into the life of the half-baked, the people whom this war hasn’t touched or has touched in the wrong way, the people who split hairs all day and are engrossed in what you and I would call selfish little fads.”³⁹²

Those who object to the war are described as ‘half-baked’. Not only does she describe them as such in terms of their ideas, but in terms of the people themselves. They are incomplete, unfinished. Thus, in becoming one of them, Hannay must himself change from a whole person into a man that is incomplete, inferring that an incomplete man is no man at all.

One could argue that in contrast to the espionage in *Greenmantle*, where he poses as a German ally, in *Mr Standfast*, the main undercover activity for Hannay as a pacifist is one where he bears an allegiance to no-one. However, how Hannay comes to learn the different reasons among

³⁸⁹ Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 106.

³⁹⁰ Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 106.

³⁹¹ See Hew Strachan’s, ‘John Buchan and the First World War: Fact into Fiction’, in *Reassessing John Buchan: Beyond The Thirty-Nine Steps*, ed. by Kate Macdonald (Pickering and Chatto Publishers Ltd.: London, 2009), pp. 77-90.

³⁹² Buchan, *Mr Standfast*, p. 35.

Conscientious Objectors (COs) for being opposed to war, is one of the ways in which Buchan delineates the difficulties with condemning all those who choose not to bear arms. This is particularly apparent in the case of Wake, a CO, who, towards the end of the novel joins the army in the capacity of a non-combatant in the trenches. Wake eventually becomes Hannay's runner. Hannay comments that: 'He never fired a shot; he carried no arms; the only weapons he used were his brains. And they were the best conceivable.'³⁹³ Wake is used as a tool by Buchan to try to bridge the gap between Hannay's life as a combatant in the trenches, and his life as an ally-less spy behind the lines. It is symbolic also of Buchan's attitude towards non-combatants enlisted in the British Army. Despite Wake's objection to warfare, to which he repeatedly attests, as a runner in the army he is much sought-after by Hannay's colleagues. Not only this, but his death is one of the glorious infantryman; he is shot whilst carrying a message for Hannay, but he stoically refuses to accept medical help until his message is passed on. Despite his convictions and status as a CO, he fulfils his duty to Hannay, and by extension to his country. It is this, and his courage in carrying out his orders, that contribute to affording him an honourable death in the eyes of the reader, and indeed a death that affirms his martial masculinity.³⁹⁴

When reflecting upon the possibility of his own death in *Greenmantle*, at a dinner in which he and his associate Blenkiron are in attendance, disguised as American Engineers on the side of the Germans, it becomes clear that Hannay is being hunted. He muses: 'That talk did a lot to cheer my spirits, for I realised that it was the biggest of big game we were hunting this time. I'm an economical soul, and if I'm going to be hanged I want a good stake for my neck.'³⁹⁵ This supports the reading that Hannay is not afraid of the danger of spying, and in this extract he positively basks in the knowledge that he is hunted. What it does show, however, in contrast to the trenches where millions of men were killed to gain sometimes very little, in espionage the gains from one death must be deemed significant for the death to be considered equal in honour. It speaks volumes for the importance of masculinity in death, and how it is negotiated in terms of the perceptions of others, not necessarily how one perceives oneself.

³⁹³ Buchan, *Mr Standfast*, p. 383.

³⁹⁴ Unfortunately for Wake, though he regarded himself as a Conscientious Objector, his proximity to danger means that Norton Cru would almost certainly have regarded him as a combatant.

³⁹⁵ Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 150.

Ostensibly, it is not only disguising himself with which Hannay feels uncomfortable. It is not his unease in portraying a character with opposing values to his own (as he does in his portrayal of a pacifist in *Mr Standfast*); nor is it the idea of the fluidity of his identity in moving outside of the rigid parameters of a British gentleman. As was seen in Mary's description of pacifists as 'half-baked', Hannay is afraid of losing his identity in the process of spying, something also shown through Buchan's characterisation of Sandy in *Greenmantle*. Sandy is a friend of Hannay and is an excellent agent whose disguises fool the enemy and allow him to infiltrate the innermost circle of the German conspirators. Sandy is one of the 'characters who reflect a fascination with the idea of the British identity swallowed up in some alien way of life.'³⁹⁶

In contrast, Hannay is not seemingly concerned with losing his identity in living his disguise, rather his anxiety stems from the possibility of dying whilst in disguise; dying as another. This is apparent in the extract discussed earlier: 'Shot as a spy – a rotten sort of ending!'³⁹⁷ In Hannay's mind, rather than the fluidity of identity he experiences whilst spying allowing him to revert back to his 'true' character in death, death here imposes a kind of stasis on his identity. This loss of certain parts of one's identity echoes the description of pacifists as 'half-baked', in *Mr Standfast*. This is compounded by the fact that Hannay is at no time recruited officially into the intelligence services, and so during this time the link between himself and the British Army becomes more and more fragile. In terms of identity, disguise redefines Hannay's 'self,' in the rapidly changing front of espionage, in contrast to his stable 'self,' in the trenches, which he recognises as his 'home.' Yet the power to fundamentally redefine Hannay's character lies in death, and thus is inherently linked to the 'self' Hannay is performing at that moment.³⁹⁸

In *Mr Standfast*, whilst on the run, Hannay considers his opponents. He states: '[...] my objection to my past weeks had been that I was out of my proper job, and this was more my line of country.'³⁹⁹ Time and time again, Hannay's narration comes back to the fact that espionage is not his 'proper' vocation, underlining more forcefully each time how he feels ill at ease. He continues and comments that: 'Ivery [the supervillain] was like a poison gas that hung in the air and got into

³⁹⁶ Cawelti and Rosenberg, *The Spy Story*, p. 95.

³⁹⁷ Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p. 11.

³⁹⁸ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge: London, 1990) for a discussion of gender and performativity.

³⁹⁹ Buchan, *Mr Standfast*, p. 121.

unexpected crannies that you couldn't fight in an upstanding way.'⁴⁰⁰ This suggests that though Hannay speaks of Ivery with some reverence and awe regarding the nature of 'the game,' there is a tone of resentment running through this passage that comes to a head in his acknowledgement that he himself has been forced to fight in a way that cannot be considered 'upstanding,' and can therefore not be considered as gentlemanly.

Moreover, as Leed notes, death brings about 'a sense of being fixed and immobilized in a minimal space.' For Hannay, this minimal space would be his disguise (or not) at time of death. Clearly, after death a person is not in a position to be able to change their own identity. Hannay's anxieties are borne out of this fixed, but untrue identity. Thus, it is the uncertainty of Hannay's legacy that he fears in his role away from the front. Would he be remembered as a combatant, fighting in the trenches with his comrades? Or would his legacy be one of a shirker and a sneak – the 'rotten ending' he truly fears? This ending, the fear of which pervades Hannay's narrative in both novels, is an ending that would be made all the worse for being forced upon him by the enemy.

Remembering the non-combatant through fiction

Death, as can be expected of war fiction, pervades all of these texts. The tension in Hannay that he might die as a non-combatant shows the transformative power that death holds over the serviceman; the role in which he dies is the role in which he will be remembered. Remembrance of non-combatants during the First World War is the link which binds the authors together. Their concern with portraying the different roles of non-combatant, enlisted men, whether through the use of sarcasm, realism, or heroism, is the intention behind the creation of each of the stories.

Florian-Parmentier, Duhamel and Buchan present non-combatants characters which engage with the popular discourse around shirkers and the *embuscomanie* that penetrated British and French society during the conflict. However, though they all engage with the shirker debate, they approach it in different ways. For Florian-Parmentier the 'type' of non-combatant he wishes to portray is the ordinary serviceman. By creating two protagonists that shift between different non-combatant roles, and even move from combatant to non-combatant roles, the author shows that all roles in the front lines add to the war effort and are therefore all equally important. By showing the roles

⁴⁰⁰ Buchan, *Mr Standfast*, pp. 121-122.

as no different, and complementary to each other, the non-combatants in *L'Ouragan* stand alongside their comrades that bear arms, rather than beneath them. If there is no difference between armed and unarmed, enlisted men, then there can be no difference in the perceptions of each group's martial masculinity. In Duhamel's writing, the non-combatants portrayed are, like Florian-Parmentier, largely those who are otherwise ignored in war fiction of the period. His use of vignettes allows for a more varied exploration and portrayal of different kinds of roles and reasons for non-combatant service. In a similar way to the variety of roles shown in *L'Ouragan*, Duhamel's stories convey the fluidity of identity during conflict. In both 'Regulatrice' and 'Macquignons' we see discontinuation of identities in the change from combatant to non-combatant, and of course from life to death. Duhamel openly evokes the concept of the *impôt du sang* by explaining the transition of the narrator in those terms; his family's debt has already been paid and so he is given the opportunity to relinquish his armed role for one that is seen as being further away from danger. Yet, in the very same vignette, Duhamel shows that even those stationed away from the front lines – like Lemailleux – become fatalities in war, changing the perception of risk to life being linked to front-line combatants. This underscores the idea that even unarmed, non-combatant roles play a part in sharing the blood sacrifice required of all families in wartime. Thus, Duhamel cautions the reader not to make assumptions about the perceived 'safety' of unarmed roles, or about those who serve unarmed. In doing so, like Florian-Parmentier, Duhamel points to it being the action of serving itself that is most important. In 'Macquignons' Duhamel takes this further to encompass perceived 'shirkers' on the home front, by using the desperation of those unable to serve as a counterpoint to the apparent willingness of those to allow others to serve in their place. Here, Duhamel emphasises the willingness to serve as imperative to wartime service. Though the bureaucrats and physicians are also supporting the war effort, only the doctors are described as experiencing emotional difficulty with aiding the enlistment of physically unfit men.

Unlike the two previous authors, Buchan is the only writer who presents his protagonist as heroic. However, his writing is more obviously fictionalised than that of Florian-Parmentier or of Duhamel. While Duhamel's vignettes function as snippets into the First World War in France, Florian-Parmentier's novel does not seek to sensationalise the war, but rather shows the reader the – sometimes banal – goings on of life for servicemen during the conflict. It does not function in the same way as Buchan's novels, which belong to the genre of populist adventure stories and have clear beginnings, middles and ends. This reflects the direct experiences of the authors, as Florian-

Parmentier describes his own war experience which centred around the supply trains, while having worked as a propagandist, Buchan's novels show the war in a way that is perhaps more heavily filtered and reimagined, as the experience of a spy would not resemble that of the typical serviceman.

Hannay is atypical for a non-combatant given that he is armed. He does not fit into Norton Cru's notions of battlefield as his battles take place too far away from the front lines of the trenches. Clearly, the understanding of battlefield that Norton Cru uses is too narrow, something that is illustrated in all three authors' works. The trenches represent only one part of the battlefield, and our authors show that deaths also occur behind the lines. Proximity to danger must therefore be extended to encompass more than only the fronts established by the armed forces. This would necessarily include more types of servicemen under the umbrella of having 'been there', which was such a key element of martial masculinity during and after the First World War. Norton Cru also asserts that the writings produced about the war are inevitably influenced by the perceptions of people in particular spaces, as has been shown throughout the course of this chapter. Ultimately, though Norton Cru dismissed many writers' works, the writers I have analysed here all show that serving the war effort took on many guises. Unarmed service, even behind the lines, was still service and was still therefore involved in supporting the country. This means then, that all authors challenged the conventional understanding of masculinity as inextricably tied to being on the front lines and bearing arms. Their works show that non-combatant, enlisted men in spaces away from the trenches could perform martial masculinity like their armed counterparts, as many of the same masculine traits were drawn on in different arenas of war.

This chapter has discussed different non-combatant roles and how they were renegotiated in fictionalised war writings. In the next chapter I will turn more specifically to the role of the stretcher-bearer and bandsman. I will examine how the non-combatant in the front lines was understood, and how the duality of the role of the bandsman as a soldier and a caregiver evidenced the need for conventionally 'feminine' characteristics to be added to those that were already established as martially masculine. An analysis of this particular role that embodied both conventionally 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics will allow for a broader understanding of how non-combatant, militarized caregivers were perceived within the hierarchy of the armed forces in both Britain and France.

Chapter 3: Musical spaces: bandmen as servicemen

In this chapter, I will look at the different ways in which music was used by the French and British Armies at the outbreak of the First World War, in the training ground, and at, and behind, the front lines. The difference in the performers' relationships with their audiences in each of these spaces will inform our understanding of how the bandmen were perceived by those around them. Further, by investigating 'official' uses of music in the military and how this changed over the course of the conflict, I will gain a clearer understanding of the status of bandmen within the overarching military hierarchy. In turn, this will lead to an examination of the perception of the non-combatant bandmen in relation to martial masculinity. It is important to reiterate here that the definition of martial masculinity I will be using is based on the accepted gender binary of the period. Masculinity, and specifically martial masculinity during this period focused on qualities of strength, courage, proximity to danger, and, as Meyer has shown in her work, comradeship.⁴⁰¹ This was a juxtaposition between 'martial masculinity' and 'domestic femininity'; the role of the male as the protector of the domestic space, a space which was expanded to include the entirety of the Motherland during wartime.⁴⁰² I will also argue that specific music was chosen in specific contexts; from mobilisation, to training and even battle itself, these rituals all contributed to the understandings of the masculinity of enlisted men – armed or not. Further, by investigating the use of music in the army band, most of whom worked as stretcher-bearers in the First World War, I will argue that their instruments can be accepted as a form of weaponry. The source base of this chapter is drawn from the personal writings of British and French bandmen. Uncovering the ways that the bandmen interacted with their music and their audiences in particular spaces will show us how the two countries' militaries viewed the army band and their function during the conflict.

This chapter will consider the following questions: How did the uses of music evolve and change depending upon the physical space the bandmen occupied? Further, did the French and British armies have different ways in which they used music, or was music a uniform tool used by the military? How did the different spaces in which music was performed by the bandmen affect the relationship between the performers and the audience? And, finally, how was the role of the

⁴⁰¹ See Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁴⁰² For a discussion of the myths of the warrior myth in relation to martial masculinity, see Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta Books, 1999).

bandsmen seen in terms of dominant conceptualisations of martial masculinity during the First World War? Though some work has been done on music itself during the conflict, there has been little published scholarship on the interaction between those enlisted in the army band and their combatant comrades, which will be the focus of this chapter.⁴⁰³ This chapter will examine their role as bandsmen and explore how their music was a form of ‘military caregiving’ or *caretaking* in regards to the morale and image of the army. It will also consider these men as physical caregivers in their roles as stretcher-bearers. The discussion of the dual role of the stretcher-bearer bandsman will show how their masculinity was entrenched in ideas of caregiving, which had previously been recognised as a ‘feminine’ role.

Caregiving had conventionally been considered to be a feminine role as part of the role of the mother. Susan Grayzel has shown that motherhood ‘became the primary way to talk about women during the war’.⁴⁰⁴ While historians such as Alison S. Fell and Christine E. Hallett have worked to show the importance of the roles that women undertook during the First World War, rightly shining a light on the integral roles that female nurses played during the conflict, nursing and caregiving was also undertaken by non-combatant, enlisted men.⁴⁰⁵ This chapter will examine the ways in which bandsmen and stretcher-bearers (who were often one and the same) took on the role of militarised caregiver during the conflict. I will also show how music was used as a form of caregiving, that it was considered a tool through which morale could be boosted and how it could ease the trauma and fear that war engendered amongst those who participated in it. The liminal position between soldier and civilian that I have identified in the preceding chapters will be discussed in this chapter through the role of the bandsmen and their use of music during the war. Further, I will investigate the physical caregiving that stretcher bearing involved, and how this was no longer a solely feminine act in the homosocial environments of the trenches and the battlefield. As such, this chapter, and thesis as a whole, will contribute to First World War studies by bridging gaps in knowledge and understanding through a new approach to culture and gender in conflict. This comparative study is the first to consider the roles stretcher-bearers and bandsmen across both

⁴⁰³ See Emma Hanna, *Sounds of War: Music in the British Armed Forces during the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁴⁰⁴ Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press), p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ See *First World War Nursing: New Perspectives* ed. by Alison S. Fell and Christine E. Hallett (Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

the French and British armies during the Great War. It will uncover fundamental similarities in the ways that conventional ideals concerning caring as a uniquely feminine role were no longer viable within the space of warfare.

There is a plethora of existing scholarship surrounding the music of the First World War, by historians and musicologists such as Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Jane F. Fulcher and Don Tyler.⁴⁰⁶ Their work looks at the importance of composers, the changing attitudes to, and different types of, music played in the public sphere during the war. From explorations of the evolution of music in *cafés-concerts*, and its commercialisation following the introduction of printed sheet music, to the music of the concert parties that toured the front lines, the breadth of existing research clearly demonstrates the importance of music during the conflict. This work also looks at the kinds of music performed in different spaces, but the importance of space in terms of the performers' interaction with the audience and the outcomes of these particular interactions and relationships are not examined. Many of the men whose memoirs I will examine throughout the course of this chapter were professional musicians and came to enlist in the army band as a direct cause of their peacetime profession. However, the focus of my chapter will not be the importance of particular composers or musical styles, but the interaction between the non-professional, and often impromptu performances that took place in different wartime spaces, and the impact of these performances on the perceptions and self-perceptions of the gendered identities of bandmen during the conflict. In short, I will investigate the ways in which their performances as musicians allowed bandmen to position themselves in relation to dominant understandings of martial masculinity.

The critical framework for this chapter includes Leonard Smith's study of masculinity during the First World War, *The Embattled Self*,⁴⁰⁷ in tandem with Regina M. Sweeney's *Singing Our War to Victory*,⁴⁰⁸ Glenn Watkins' *Proof Through the Night*,⁴⁰⁹ as well as Didier Francfort's work on

⁴⁰⁶ *La Grande Guerre des Musiciens*, ed. by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Esteban Buch, Myriam Chimènes, and Georgie Durosoir (Lyon: Symétrie, 2009); *The Oxford Handbook of the New Cultural History of Music* ed. by Jane F. Fulcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Don Tyler, *Music of the First World War* (Santa-Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2016).

⁴⁰⁷ Smith, *The Embattled Self*.

⁴⁰⁸ Regina M. Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory: French Cultural Politics and Music during the Great War* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

⁴⁰⁹ Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (California: University of California Press, 2002).

military music and marches during the Great War, which I will gloss here. Sweeney argues that singing throughout the First World War encouraged ‘individual and group participation at all levels.’⁴¹⁰ She also notes for example that at the outbreak of war, songs such as *La Marseillaise*, enabled both civilians and soldiers to go to war ‘armed with their musical practices.’⁴¹¹ Clearly, Sweeney represents music as a weapon that was as essential to warfare as guns and shells. Glenn Watkins, in his book *Proof Through the Night*, offers a varied examination of music, from the performance of national anthems to instances of music in the trenches. He particularly examines the reactions of musicians at the time, as well as exploring attitudes towards music in France, Great Britain and the USA. For the purposes of this chapter, Watkins’ assertion that ‘music was not considered a frill, but a virtual necessity for survival’⁴¹² regarding the importance of aural variation in the ‘Symphony of the Front’⁴¹³ is most pertinent. Understanding music as aural variation in wartime, alongside Sweeney’s arguments that music was central to patriotic mobilisation, will be central to my examination of the role of the army band as caregiver and morale-booster, enabling mobilised men to fight and continue fighting.

Didier Francfort, in his article ‘La Meilleure Façon de Marcher’,⁴¹⁴ analyses how military music during the First World War was a way in which nations were able to present a united front, and to come together in times of national crisis. In other work, he equates this to the construction of a national identity, in which music is a vital tool.

He states:

La marche militaire est alors une sorte de métaphore de la mobilisation populaire. La musique doit gagner en simplicité pour clairement apporter à la nation les signes d’identification dont elle a besoin. L’adoption d’une référence militaire est une simplification qui facilite le processus d’identification et de construction de la nation.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁰ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 43.

⁴¹¹ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 43.

⁴¹² Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, p. 62.

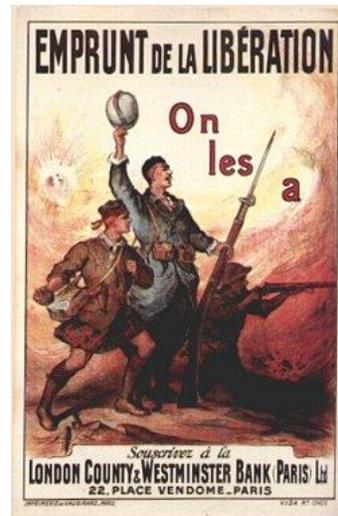
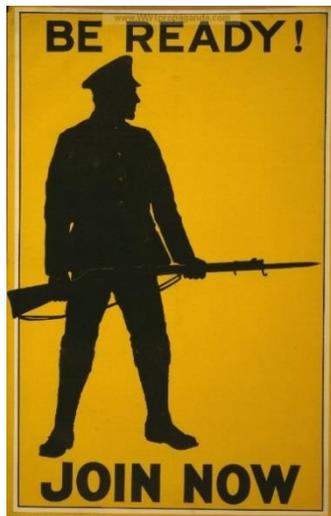
⁴¹³ Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, p. 61. Watkins’ “Symphony of the Front” refers to the noise of the trenches, particularly the shell barrages and gunfire.

⁴¹⁴ Didier Francfort, ‘La Meilleure Façon de Marcher : Musiques militaires, Violence et Mobilisation dans la Première Guerre Mondiale’, in *La Grande Guerre des Musiciens*, ed. by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Esteban Buch, Myriam Chimènes, and Georgie Durosoir (Lyon: Symétrie, 2009).

⁴¹⁵ Didier Francfort, ‘Pour une Approche Historique Comparée des Musiques Militaires’, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 85 (2005), pp. 85-101 (95).

Thus, building on Francfort's insights, I will consider the ways in which music was a tool through which national identity was constructed and maintained.

Finally, my examination of the writings of the bandsmen will enable a critical analysis of the masculinity of the non-combatant bandsmen during the First World War.⁴¹⁶ In terms of martial masculinity, non-combatant men occupied a liminal space. It is Leonard Smith's work on rites of passage and initiation during the First World War, alongside his assertion that medical personnel (bandsmen were employed as stretcher-bearers in both the French and British armies⁴¹⁷) were 'noncombatant combatants'⁴¹⁸ that will critically inform my reading of the perceived martial masculinity of these men. Though they did not bear arms, they were enlisted soldiers 'fighting' for their country. Therefore, given the importance of bearing arms to the idealised image of martial masculinity that prevailed in Europe during this time that we have seen in previous chapters, these men were somewhat on the periphery. This is clear when we examine examples of propaganda from France and Britain that circulated during the Great War, such as those shown below.



From left to right: Figure 20, Figure 21.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ This builds upon existing scholarship by historians such as Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer (eds.), *Masculinity and the Other: Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014); Frances Cleaver's, *Masculinities Matter!: Men, Gender and Development* (Zed Books, 2002); and Adam Jones', *Gender Inclusive: Essays on Violence, Men and Feminist International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁴¹⁷ Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: The Long Journey Home from the Great War* (London: Vintage Books, 2014), p. 18. Jessica Meyer, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 60.

⁴¹⁸ Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 42.

⁴¹⁹ Figure 20. *Be Ready, Join Now*' recruitment poster, The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1915. [Accessed 15/06/2019.] Figure 21: *Emprunt de la Libération: On Les A*, French stamp, London County and Westminster Bank Paris Ltd., Firmin Bouisset, 1918.

Rarely was the *poilu* pictured without his weaponry. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, weaponry was so often associated with the image of the soldier that it became a symbolic part of his body and a representation of his virility, as seen in Figure 20 above. Figure 21 shows us that even when allies are depicted together, they are all shown to be armed, strengthening the bonds between the countries fighting together and the bond between weaponry and masculinity. What then, of the men who did not bear arms? As we have seen in the first chapter of this thesis, the combatant man became the dominant model of national identity for men of military age and put the soldier on a pedestal. This message, as shown in Figures 3 and 4, evoked the evolving status quo during this period, in which the expected and respected profession was now a role in the military. Furthermore, during wartime, the soldier's gun and bayonet became associated with overtones of sexuality, masculinity and virility.⁴²⁰ As we have also seen in chapter 2, some bandsmen and stretcher-bearers were originally armed, though this was not uniform, even across the army of a single country. When weapons were removed from non-combatants, owing to the need for weapons for armed soldiers, some non-combatants suddenly found themselves unarmed in warfare. For non-combatants, the removal of their weaponry was a forceful emasculation. This underlined their distinctive identity as non-combatants, highlighting the difference between them and their combatant comrades. In *Manful Assertions*, Michael Roper and John Tosh argue that '[masculinity] entails an interweaving of men's social power with a range of cultural representations, both dominant and subordinate. This is further complicated by the fact that it is the product both of lived experience and fantasy.'⁴²¹ Rather than examining this flux between dominant and subordinate through cultural representations of this men in this chapter, I will be using the spaces in which they used their music to investigate how this flux between 'feminised' non-combatant and 'masculine' soldier was negotiated.⁴²² Moreover, the importance of distance

⁴²⁰ Nicoletta Gullace, in her work, *Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), regarding the suffragette movement during the conflict, argues that women were seen as not having the right to claim full citizenship in Britain due to their not bearing arms. The problem for non-combatant men, therefore, without the right to bear arms under the terms of the Geneva Convention, was such that not only was their masculinity threatened by their lack of weaponry, but their citizenship of the country for which they were going to war was menaced, too.

⁴²¹ *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 14.

⁴²² Susan R. Grayzel, in her book, *Women and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2013) discusses how women working for charitable groups during the conflict saw working in a caregiving capacity allowed them to carry out their feminine responsibilities. As stretcher-bearers – many of whom were also in the army band – were classed as caregivers, their role was often therefore seen as a being a feminine role. In her work, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina

from the trenches, and the subsequent expectations of masculinity in terms of ‘being there’, means that an analysis of the spaces of music will be imperative to my study of the function of bandmen and music during the conflict. I will also use their own descriptions of their experiences as military caregivers, taken from their letters, diaries, and memoirs, as a lens through which to consider the importance they placed upon their role in caring for the wounded and dead throughout the conflict. However, drawing on Connell’s theories of multiple masculinities, I will show how the role of stretcher-bearer was constructed in these writings not as dominant or subordinate, but rather as complementary to that of the combatant.⁴²³

By means of structuring this chapter, I will look at three locations where music was used, both in the run up to the First World War, and during the conflict. I will explore the importance of music at home at the outbreak of war, music at the front and music away from the front lines. This will enable me to investigate how music was used as both a morale-boosting and a curative force, for both civilian and non-civilian listeners, as well as for the players themselves. This will allow a comparison of attitudes expressed through music, including differences such as enlistment versus recruitment, and national versus overseas service. I will then examine their depictions and understandings of the role of the stretcher-bearer as an unarmed fighter, a role comprised of actions that would popularly have been understood as the role of the woman according to pre-war, contemporary understandings of gender roles. I will primarily be using the memoirs of four men. The first, Louis Leleu, was enlisted in the French Army as a *musicien-brancardier*. His memoirs, published posthumously, were written many years after the war. At the outbreak of the conflict in 1914, Leleu was already enlisted in the army band, profiting from a change in law in 1913 that allowed men to perform their National Service in their chosen branch of the army.⁴²⁴ Similarly, the second French bandsman whose personal writings I analyse, Léopold Retailleau, was also already enlisted in the army band before the outbreak of the First World War, as he had chosen the band given his enthusiasm and competence in playing the saxophone. His diaries from the conflict

Press, 1999), argues that, ‘[b]y linking women with mothers and men with soldiers, wartime rhetoric stressed the “naturalness” of these normative categories, thus conveniently eclipsing other kinds of masculinity and femininity.’ (p. 2).

⁴²³ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (2nd edition) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

⁴²⁴ See Stephen Bull, *World War I Trench Warfare (1): 1914-1916*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002).

are typically short and to-the-point. They were transcribed by his grandson Claude Retailleau and published in 2003.⁴²⁵

The third, Private George Dale, enlisted in the British Army in 1916, at which time he started his diaries. His unpublished memoirs written in around 1950 are based upon diary entries he made during the conflict. Dale was enlisted as a bandsman in the Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry (DCLI). The fourth, Private William Cook, enlisted in March 1915, shortly before his eighteenth birthday. In December 1915 he became a stretcher-bearer and was accepted into the band after playing ‘a few scales’⁴²⁶ on the trombone. His memoirs, entitled *The Lengthened Shadow*, were written after the war, using letters he had written during the conflict. Using both British and French bandsmen’s accounts from the First World War will enable me to compare and contrast the uses of music in the conflict by the French and British armies, as well as the ways in which these individual men understood their roles and their masculinity.

France: music and mobilisation

Despite Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau’s assertion that the First World War was met in France by ‘grim resolution’ rather than a celebratory mood, Louis Leleu and Léopold Retailleau who were enlisted in the army band at the outbreak of war provide us with a starkly different picture. In his memoirs, Leleu remembers the spontaneous musical reaction, and notes:

Lorsque nous apprîmes, dans la matinée du dimanche 2 août, que la mobilisation était décrétée, d’un seul et même élan nous nous précipitâmes sur nos instruments et jouâmes *La Marseillaise* dans nos chambres [...] Les gens de la rue, les soldats dans la cour se pressaient en masse pour nous applaudir à tout rompre.⁴²⁷

The army band was imperative in drumming up support for the war. Playing the National Anthem was a patriotic act that centred around their instruments. Stephen Bull has argued that, ‘The French were even more aggressively disposed, having come to the conclusion that their defeat in 1870 was at least in part attributable to lack of offensive spirit.’⁴²⁸ The band’s music therefore was an

⁴²⁵ *Musicien-Brancardier... Carnets de Léopold Retailleau, Du 77e R.I., 1914-1918*, Retranscrits par Claude Retailleau, Texte annoté et commenté par Eric Labayle, (Paris: Editions Anovi, 2003).

⁴²⁶ Private Papers of W Cook, *First World War Memoirs of Private Wilfred Cook; the Lengthened Shadow*, Imperial War Museum (IWM), Catalogue Number: Documents.12149, p. 95.

⁴²⁷ Louis Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges : Un Musicien-Brancardier dans la Grande Guerre*, Transcrit par Danièle Percic (Témoignages et Récits, Saint-Cyr-Sur-Loire: Editions Alan Sutton, 2003), p. 29.

⁴²⁸ Bull, *World War I Trench Warfare*, p. 8.

extension of this ‘offensive spirit’, and while bandsmen were unable to demonstrate aggression with rifles and bayonets, they were able to do so using their instruments. This chapter will go on to argue that their musical instruments were a type of weapon in themselves; weapons that did not do direct physical harm, but that supported their combatant comrades and that encouraged the people of France to ‘get behind the cause’. As Regina Sweeney suggests, *La Marseillaise* had a long-standing history within the French culture. Sweeney plays on the song being a *hymne national* and suggests that in August 1914 had become somewhat of a ‘hymn’ for the French people; it was a ‘truly national anthem, cutting across regional, generational, and class barriers.’⁴²⁹ In her discussion of *La Marseillaise* and other revanchist songs, Sweeney comments on the importance of a shared scenario in the lyrics, further promoting the need for each individual to do one’s duty: ‘lyrics helped transmit a national cosmology, which included a tradition of *levées en masse* as the proper national reaction to invasion.’⁴³⁰

As such, the masses of people rushing to sing along and applaud the army band’s celebration at the outbreak of war shifted the audience focus. Rather than these men simply playing for themselves (though this is how they began) both soldiers and civilians joining in with this musical portrayal of national sentiment exhibited what Sweeney terms the ‘proper national reaction’ to the outbreak of the conflict. In his study of First World War French soldiers, Leonard Smith demonstrates how involvement in the war effort during this time, particularly for the male population, was equated with citizenship. Referencing Richard Challener, Smith argues that ‘To be a soldier [...] was to carry “both the badge and the moral consequence of citizenship.” [...] citizenship in France made rituals of conscription and mobilization ipso facto rites of male passage.’⁴³¹ Thus, music and its presence at mobilisation enabled both civilian and soldier alike to meet social expectations embedded within French culture. Further, as Smith links masculinity to citizenship, for the participating soldiers the performance of *La Marseillaise* was not only symptomatic of their ‘Frenchness’, but also of their masculinity, and therefore their right to a martial masculinity.⁴³² By demonstrating the socially sanctioned attitude to the outbreak of war, the army musicians are exemplifying the link between military service, citizenship and masculinity. As they celebrate the chance to fight for their country, they engage with the rite of

⁴²⁹ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 46.

⁴³⁰ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 46.

⁴³¹ Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 23.

⁴³² Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 23.

passage for them to pass from a pre-war masculinity to a wartime masculinity. Therefore, for the soldiers in the courtyard, not only did the army band represent a means by which they could express their agreement with the national sentiment towards the war, but it also signified a starting point for them to achieve their martial masculinity, and by extension their own manliness. John Horne has shown that, ‘An elite ideal of *panache* or *crânerie* – of elegance and gaiety in the face of danger – was seen well before the war as a distinctive feature of the French code of male conduct [...]’.⁴³³ This goes some way to explaining the importance of military music to the French people. The outbreak of the war being openly celebrated with a party-like atmosphere reflects the ‘gaiety in the face of danger’ imperative to masculine conduct.

As mentioned previously, revanchist songs were often thematically based upon the French soldier’s duty, and this revolved around ‘hand-to-hand combat using his bayonet as the perfect weapon’,⁴³⁴ which had arisen after the French Revolution. Thus, for these men entering into a new war was an opportunity to do one’s duty and to live up to the armies that had gone before them – armies and offensives that had been memorialised through song, and arguably glorified – and now came the chance of this generation. As we can see, the audience for this spontaneous musical celebration is threefold; the players themselves, the public audience, and their comrades in the barracks.

Retailleau, in his memoirs, is more detailed regarding which songs were sung, and that it was not only the *Marseillaise* that the French people turned to at the outbreak of the conflict. He notes that people cried out in celebration and support for the main three allied nations, and this was reflected in both the French and Russian national anthems being played.

L’enthousiasme est général, des cris de “*Vive la France*”, “*Vive la Russie*”, “*Vive l’Angleterre*” s’élèvent, la musique joue “*le Chant du départ*”, “*la Marseillaise*”, l’hymne russe. Derrière, une foule en délire suit, brandissant cannes et chapeaux. Vraiment c’est féerique ! Ces lueurs de torches, ces notes éclatantes et ces mugissements de foule font sauter le cœur. Il me semble qu’une main frémissante

⁴³³ Horne, John, ‘Soldiers, Civilians and the Warfare of Attrition: Representations of Combat in France, 1914-1918’, in *Authority, identity and the social history of the Great War* ed. by Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetze (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), pp. 223-250 (228).

⁴³⁴ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 64.

m'étraint à la gorge. Je voudrais crier mais la voix se fêle dans mon gosier et c'est presque un sanglot qui sort de moi.⁴³⁵

Here, not only is the music symbolic of the might and aggression of the French state, it also symbolises the alliance between France, Britain and Russia. Civilians and soldiers participated in the celebration, inviting and representing the participation of their British and Russian allies through music. Retailleau's use of emotive language portrays the visceral reaction that the outbreak of war promoted. He describes feeling as though a trembling hand gripped his throat, and the sound he made was closer to a sob than to a cry. This description, coupled with what he terms the 'magical' atmosphere which was no doubt reinforced by the music, quite literally leaves him speechless. Retailleau uses violent language that appears to contradict the emotions that he describes, as strangulation is not usually associated with joy. However, what Retailleau wanted to describe is that his joy was so overwhelming that he struggled to breathe. It is important to note here, that the choice of using the verb *étréindre* conjures images of 'choking', in hand-to-hand combat as well as 'being choked for joy'. Retailleau therefore links passion and violence – or bravery and gaiety – in his own writing. He emulates the aspects of masculinity that Horne suggests were intrinsic to French masculinity during this period. The moment of mobilisation in France is celebrated in both memoirs through the use of music, and it is the music that is seen to have helped to create such an atmosphere, and indeed to have drawn out the desired characteristics that were relied upon in wartime.

Sweeney also points out that mobilisation came with: 'impromptu performances of patriotic tunes [which] unified the crowds and celebrated the French soldier. Ritual requires public attention.'⁴³⁶ Clearly, a celebration such as the ones described by Leleu and Retailleau, and the enthusiasm manifested by both civilian-listeners and soldier-listeners to be involved was not only for the celebration itself. There was an issue of being *seen* to be celebrating that is integral to the concept of audience and participation, both participation in the spectacle and participation in the war effort itself. I argue that in this way, the function of the bandsmen was to support the war effort through their music.

⁴³⁵ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 30.

⁴³⁶ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 45.

Britain: music and training for war

‘Being seen’ to participate in patriotic mobilisation through, for example, participation in the singing of national anthems, was not only important at the very outbreak of the war, nor only in France. It was equally important in the next stage of what Sweeney terms the ‘ritual’ of mobilisation – the training ground. In William Cook’s unpublished memoirs of the war, he describes the training ground, and the importance of music in terms of interaction with the surrounding civilian population. He notes how their company was known for their singing whilst marching, led by a man named O’Hara, and how certain songs were reserved for certain situations. He recounts:

We would swing along to his leadership of ‘Tipperary’ ‘Sons of the Sea’ – ‘Hold your hand out naughty boy’ and a host of popular songs including some of [O’Hara’s] own composition based on hymn tunes, but words never intended for a Sunday School, but we all enjoyed it as did the people of Whitley Bay who stood and watched us with many a smile.

[...]

“A little child shall lead them” must have been very embarrassing to a newly commissioned second-lieutenant, as was ‘Oh you beautiful doll’ to some smart young lady taking her morning stroll as we passed. ‘The Farmers Boy’ was always reserved for some country road and many a ‘ploughman plodding his weary way’ acknowledged our reference as we sung to him.⁴³⁷

One of the noteworthy aspects of this passage is the choice of songs that the men sang whilst marching. Cook states that they were composed of ‘words never intended for Sunday School’. However this, as he says, in no way detracted from the enjoyment the men felt at singing these songs, and the civilian listeners were also seemingly immune to the possible disconcerting effects of certain themes or words. There was also a clear set of tactics regarding when each song would be sung. The ‘Farmers Boy’ was reserved for when the troops passed by a farmer, yet the civilians being ‘sung to’ appear to have taken it in their stride and acknowledged the humour of the situation. Their singing whilst marching was a clear way in which music allowed them to ‘be seen’. They were participating in the ritual of mobilisation and were moving, as Smith puts it, from a ‘preadult, passive’⁴³⁸ boyhood to an active, martial manhood. Music was the force that enabled this

⁴³⁷ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, pp. 12-13.

⁴³⁸ Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 23.

movement, at least in terms of ensuring that they were seen by the public, or at the very least by the people that they encountered. The humour of the songs that they sang was perhaps more difficult to interpret. In some ways it detracted from the seriousness of the situation in which they found themselves – training for warfare. The light-hearted nature of the songs may have been used to allay their fears and uncertainties regarding their futures. In other ways, their behaviour was almost childlike, by signalling their presence and forcing civilians around them to participate, it echoed the bond of parents and children, with the children constantly yearning for attention, and the parents watching on “with many a smile”. Though these men are taking part in mobilisation, there is a sense in the passage of them ‘playing’ at being soldiers.⁴³⁹ It is clear that for them to successfully transcend their pre-war, ‘passive’ masculinity, their efforts must be publically acknowledged, reinforcing the notion that their masculinity during wartime is not solely predicated on their own private actions and ideals, but on them as non-combatants being seen to conform to popular understandings of what the masculine soldier should be. It was very much a public ritual, and for the bandsmen, their music was a deciding factor in showcasing not just the expected, belligerent actions of the bandsmen themselves (by playing national anthems and loudly proclaiming their enthusiasm and support for the war) but also the willingness of the recruits for whom they played.

Watkins notes that many tunes ‘were outfitted with textual variants during the course of the war, and, equally predictably, censorship of inappropriate lyrics was regularly applied in the interest of maintaining moral behaviour.’⁴⁴⁰ Yet, it was the nature of these songs that suggest the importance of becoming an adult or entering ‘manhood’, in preparation for warfare. If we consider them alongside Leonard Smith’s work on rites of passage, then the choice of song hints at something less humorous, but more considered on the part of those choosing the songs. By singing these songs that were based on hymns, but not considered by Cook to be church-worthy, it suggests that in fact these songs were a way in which the recruits were expected to convey their ‘manliness’, particularly when we consider the American song ‘Oh you beautiful doll’, written in 1911. This

⁴³⁹ For a discussion of identity and combat, see Eric Leed, *No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Denis Winter discusses the mobilisation of British men, commenting on the initial easy-going attitude to warfare in his book, *Death’s Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin UK, 2014).

⁴⁴⁰ Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, p. 86.

song was being re-appropriated by these men for use in wartime, and had layered meanings.⁴⁴¹ By singing about women the men were actively contrasting their own status as men and soldiers to that of the feminine ‘doll’ that they ‘fear [they] might break’.⁴⁴² This seeming fragility of women served to portray the men singing as strong, and as the protectors of the doll, though it was very much tongue-in-cheek. In doing so, they were reinforcing their biological and sociological difference, thus building up and supporting their own status as men. However, I would argue that this was not a conscious thought to many of the men present, but was rather an unconscious performance of the traditional gender binary – active soldier-protector/ passive woman-victim – during this period.⁴⁴³ It is also true that the humorous and playful tone of the song does not necessarily seek to portray the woman as weak, but as sexually desirable and this speaks to the sexualisation of soldiers that we have seen in previous chapters and in the posters at the beginning of this chapter, in particular the portrayal of the virile soldier as sexually desirable. The nature of the woman in the song was also a neat analogy for Britain herself – she was need of protection, and the song abounded with ideas of love that can easily be transposed onto thoughts of the land the bandsmen wished to serve. As such, here the bandsmen aligned themselves with the image of the masculine protector of the homeland and of civilians, showing themselves to be martially masculine in the same way as their combatant comrades.

Britain and musical difference at the front

Turning now to the uses of music beyond the training ground, Private Cook recalls a moment when they were playing whilst marching between posts along the front lines. Cook notes that when playing for the troops whilst the battalion marched from one post to another, they repeatedly played

⁴⁴¹ For a discussion of the importance of music during warfare see Emma Hanna, ‘Musical Entertainment and the British Empire, 1914-1918,’ in *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society* ed. by Michael J.K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 63-80; John Mullen, *The Show Must Go On! Popular Song in Britain during the First World War* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2015).

⁴⁴² *Oh, you beautiful doll*. [Accessed 20.05.2016.]

⁴⁴³ Janet S.K. Watson, in *Fighting Different Wars (Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain)* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004) discusses recruitment in Britain as being related to the idea of one’s service to the country. She also argues that: ‘Parade drill in distinctive regimental uniforms was the main substance of training procedures’, reinforcing a conviction that the ability to march was equated with proper conduct on the battlefield (p. 21). Nicoletta Gullace, in *Blood of Our Sons* (2002), discusses the use of recruitment songs and their relationship to gender roles.

certain songs, and so often did they play ‘El Abanico’ that it became a regular request. However, it seems that depending on the singer’s region of origin, the titles of these songs changed:

On one occasion a simple private came up during a halt and spoke to Tim Kelly.

‘Hey’ he says ‘Ye’ve not played that one that gans “There’s a cow in the field over there?” The lads like that tyun best can we hev it next’. We move off, Tim looking puzzled, then suddenly a little later he told us as he laughed,

‘It’s just dawned on me what that fellow wanted with his “cow in the field” it goes to the trio in “El Abanico” but it’s the first time we’ve had a cow in the wording or a field - - come on let’s give them it again’ – and we hoped this time our friend heard the true words [...] If the first world war did nothing else it stamped for ever a phrase perhaps not parliamentary but emphatic, as it gave the nation songs that will never die.⁴⁴⁴

This comical anecdote shows the diversity, not only of the songs that the men sang during the First World War, but so that of the men who sang together. By mimicking his fellow soldier’s dialect, the accent comes to the forefront and allows the reader to recognise the regional difference between the soldier requesting the song and Cook. The songs were at once known to almost all of the men, but often under different guises. Here, music brought men from different regions and backgrounds together through a shared enjoyment of particular songs. Sweeney comments in this context that: ‘Possible interpretations depended upon an audience’s knowledge of slang, jokes, comical signs, and a performer’s interaction with the audience. This allowed both individual and collective renditions to be shaped in performance and overshadowed any sharply oppositional relationship between the performer and the patrons.’⁴⁴⁵ Though the soldiers marching behind the band were not ‘patrons’ in the sense of being customers, Cook’s comments are reminiscent of music halls where the audience could request songs of the performers. Interestingly, in some senses the British bandsmen were both performers *and* patrons, in that they were not only performing, but in doing so they were offering support to their comrades and to the cause of war. Both the performers and their comrades were patrons to the war, supporting the cause of their country by rallying their spirits and by joining with men from across the length and breadth of their country. Not only did this bridge the gap in the ‘sharply oppositional relationship’ between the band and their comrades, but it also allowed the combatants and non-combatants to occupy the same space in their relation

⁴⁴⁴ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 114.

⁴⁴⁵ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 7.

to the war, thereby establishing a relationship of equality between those holding a gun and those holding a musical instrument.

Further, interestingly, Cook is particular as to what he calls the ‘true words’ of the songs. Doubtlessly, the young man who requested the song would have had a different opinion on what the ‘true words’ were. Perhaps the words the young recruit knew were told to him whilst on parade at the training ground. Perhaps the case was that the words to the songs were not important to the men. Regardless of the words being sung, the ‘tyun’ remained the same, bringing these men together in a collective that celebrated its diversity. The bandsmen were happy to respond to requests and were happy to fulfil the wishes of those marching behind them. This reflects what Smith describes as the individual being subsumed into the collectivity, no longer following his individual path, but adhering to the wishes and will of the army and therefore the country. He notes that the soldier at the moment of mobilisation ‘existed primarily through the collectivity, the vanguard of the nation in arms.’⁴⁴⁶ Marching and singing together symbolised the unity of the army in both Britain and France, dispelling notions of the individual and replacing them with the collective, singular need of the country. Moreover, as the individual singer or player is subsumed into the collective performance, this signifies the masculinity of each of the individuals here is subsumed into the collective masculinity of the army. Therefore, whether armed or unarmed, the act of playing or singing as part of the group gives each individual as much right to a martial masculinity as any one of the other performers.

The final sentence in this passage points out that the Great War may have not given men a phrase ‘parliamentary or emphatic’,⁴⁴⁷ suggesting that although these songs were not akin to the great speeches by politicians that go along with warfare, perhaps in their simplicity and honesty they were better suited to the needs of the population at large. Rather than being wooed with hyperbolic language, the raw nature of these songs paralleled the rawness of the First World War as experienced by the men at the front. The conflict gave the British people ‘songs that will never die’⁴⁴⁸ speaking to the memorialisation of the songs themselves, and the men who sang them.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁶ Smith, *The Embattled Self*, p. 29.

⁴⁴⁷ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 114.

⁴⁴⁸ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 114.

⁴⁴⁹ Hanna, *Sounds of War*, p. 93.

France: les concerts ‘[passés] dans l’incertitude’

The use of familiar songs is something that was seen throughout Europe, not only by the British forces, but also by the French. Certain songs such as *Sambre et Meuse* and *La Marseillaise* were so iconic that they were often played in Britain. For the French, fighting on their own soil, hearing such songs would have been a reminder of their pre-war normality which the conflict threatened. Retailleau comments in 1914 that: ‘Nous faisons concert à la décoration du capitaine Villers. *La Marseillaise* au son du canon. Un concert passé dans l’incertitude.’⁴⁵⁰ Coupling the familiar tune with the unfamiliar (at least in 1914) sound of the canon neatly conveys the juxtaposition of war and peace. The fact that the army band were required to give concerts in such a situation illustrates the importance of familiarity in the uncertain environment in which they found themselves. Hence, the job of the musician here was to maintain a certain order in what many felt was the chaos of warfare.

Leleu, in his memoirs, describes a moment where the men of his regiment were readying themselves for an attack. They had been ordered to attack using their bayonets: ‘L’ennemi était à proximité, un kilomètre au plus, et voilà nos braves du 130^e partis à l’assaut à la baïonnette, aux accents de *La Marseillaise*.’⁴⁵¹ The enemy were extremely close, and there is a tension in his phrasing that reflects the gravity of the situation. Leleu’s frequent use of commas lends a breathless quality to the narrative, conveying the tension and the ‘fight or flight’ reaction of the body to danger. Playing *La Marseillaise* while attacking with bayonets was a way of boosting morale and focusing the men’s spirits on success rather than defeat. It once again served as a reminder that they were part of a military tradition of ‘glorious’ advances, dating back to the 1789 revolution. Directing the men’s thoughts towards the glory of their homeland diverted their attention from the fear of advancing towards enemy lines armed with a weapon designed for hand-to-hand combat. Moreover, given the theme of the lyrics of *La Marseillaise* regarding the French soldier’s duty in hand-to-hand combat, this represented an opportunity for these men to live up to that expectation. Further, it reminded the men of the patriotic sentiment when the war first broke out – as we have previously seen in Leleu’s description of the outbreak of the conflict – and subconsciously urged them to hold on to their sense of pride and conviction in their actions. Thus, music here was a

⁴⁵⁰ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 129.

⁴⁵¹ Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 33.

morale-boosting force, serving to allay fears and remind the men of the home for which they were fighting.

Leleu recalls another moment where the band was used by the leader of their section as a way in which to boost morale. He states, ‘Voyant que la situation devenait critique pour nos armes, Monsieur Michel nous ordonna de nous tenir prêts à jouer quelque marche patriotique à la première demande.’⁴⁵² Here the men knew their audience consisted of their comrades and they were fulfilling their duty to their country by coming to their aid through music. A distraction technique, to take the men’s minds away from what Leleu terms a ‘critical situation’, the men had to be ready at any moment to play a ‘patriotic march’. Thus, the army turns to the weapon of music and the bonds music forged between the men, acting as a supplement to the material weaponry of warfare.

French and British uses of music at the front in France

Being ordered to play music to their combatant comrades at a moment’s notice was not specific to the French army. In his private papers, bandsman George Dale tells of a similar situation, wherein the British troops suffered a German attack. Following this, they were sent to counterattack, and the band was instructed to accompany them with the regimental march. However, in this situation, the intended audience for their performance was more problematic:

About 5pm we saw the regiment of D.C.L.I. coming along the road and going up to counter-attack. Our captain told us to run across the fields to the road and play the regimental march as they passed. The Bosch [sic] must have heard us, and I expect he thought we were a lot of madmen, for at any moment he could surely have wiped us out. Strange, I never thought of it till afterwards.⁴⁵³

In this extract Dale outlines the band’s function as a military support system and uses this situation to reinforce the ‘Otherness’ of the enemy forces. As has already been pointed out in Leleu’s memoirs, the regimental band was expected to be ready at any moment to support their comrades using their music. Clearly, in both the French and the British Armies, the use of music was seen to be valuable during attacks. Particularly important in Dale’s anecdote is the fact that the men they were going to play for were on their way to ‘counter-attack’. By playing the regimental march, they were using a song that was intrinsic to their military lives and training. Rather than playing

⁴⁵² Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 39.

⁴⁵³ Private Papers of G. Dale, IWM. Catalogue Number: Documents.17428), p. 11.

what Leleu describes as ‘some patriotic march’, they were evoking the collective identity of the regiment, and thereby invoking the importance of comradeship among these men. This is reminiscent of what Smith describes at mobilization – the individual being absorbed into the collective of the armed forces. The music reinforces the link between these men and recalls their duty to their country. Further, taking into account the fact that many men described their regiment as being their ‘wartime family’ there was therefore a stronger sense of solidarity between them. Thus, the regimental march helped – or at least tried – to banish the fear of going into battle and replace it with the sense of strength in the collective.⁴⁵⁴

Moreover, what is striking about this particular passage is the assumption on Dale’s part that the enemy do not use music in the same way. While it can be argued for the Allies that patriotic marches and songs were used in times such as those described by Dale above, it is assumed on his part that the enemy would have thought them ‘madmen’. The Germans also had a tradition of military marching bands, so why is Dale so quick to make the assumption that they would have found the actions on the part of a British band alien? I argue that this is symptomatic of his construction of the ‘Otherness’ of the enemy. Despite the obvious danger of the situation, the band’s use was to uphold the morale and fighting spirit of their forces. It was the choice of the regimental march that was important. The regimental march was unique to that particular regiment, and so would indeed be ‘foreign’ to an invading army. But equally Dale is keen to construct the collective identity and esprit de corps of his regiment in opposition to an undifferentiated ‘Boche’.

When examining the importance of ‘Otherness’, in terms of musical difference and aural variation during the First World War, as discussed by scholars such as Glenn Watkins, it is important to note that it is often represented by the barrage of enemy fire and the impervious and impending sound of danger. The ‘Otherness’, as Dale portrays it, of the British regimental march to the attacking Germans is representative of another type of enemy aural barrage. It would have been as threatening as the sounds of the British weaponised barrage. As such, when considering the situation from the point of view of the attacking enemy forces, the use of a regimental march by the Allies becomes insidiously threatening. Not only were the German troops experiencing, or at the very least expecting, a counterattack, but they were warned of it by the sounds of the enemy

⁴⁵⁴ Jay Winter discusses what he terms ‘fictive kinship’ relating to veterans and remembrance of the conflict in, ‘Forms of kinship and remembrance in the aftermath of the Great War’ in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 40-60.

band. Thus, the use of music in this situation was not only to boost the Allied troops that were about to counter-attack, but it was to strike fear into the enemy troops through the deliberate variation in noise. In this sense, the playing of the regimental march was conceptually similar to the use of a Haka,⁴⁵⁵ a war cry intending to frighten one's enemy and to make them fear what is to come. The use of music as a battle cry dates back many centuries. William Laird Manson, in his work *The Highland Bagpipe*, published in 1901, recounts for instance that: 'The pipes, from their first introduction, had no rival as an instrument of war. [...] Among the Highlanders the bagpipe is supposed to have superseded the war-song of the bards about the beginning of the fifteenth century.'⁴⁵⁶ The music the bandsmen played then was a weapon in the arsenal of the army, with which they boosted the fighting spirit of the soldiers.⁴⁵⁷ As such, by seeing music as a weapon in this way, it evokes the image of non-combatant bandsmen being armed with their instruments. In turn, this portrays the non-combatants as being on equal footing in terms of martial masculinity with their weapons-bearing comrades.

Alongside Sweeney's argument regarding the importance of tradition to the Great War, it is not surprising that in the early days of the war, military leaders utilised military music, such as bugle calls to indicate the launch of an attack, a form of battle cry in order to intimidate the enemy. Watkins describes one such moment as a 'ritualistic execution': 'The Tyneside Scotsmen marched to the sound of bagpipes [...] as though the attack were some sort of apocalyptic soccer game with musicians cheering the players on.'⁴⁵⁸ Though this practice was suspended later in the war due to the high death rate among pipers, the use of the military band and its aural force continued throughout the war.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁵ Hakas were traditionally used by Maori tribes in New Zealand as war cries before battles. See Peter Tovey, 'The Māori Haka as a Contemporary Expression of Political Protest,' in *Language, Linguistics, and Leadership: Essays in Honour of Carol M. K. Eastman*, ed. by Joseph H. O'Mealy and Laura E. Lyons (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1998), pp. 48-58 (48).

⁴⁵⁶ William Laird Manson, *The Highland Bagpipe: Its History, Literature, and Music, with Some Account of the Traditions, Superstitions, and Anecdotes Relating to the Instrument* (United States of America: The Classics. US, 2013), p. 116.

⁴⁵⁷ For discussions of music and morale during the Great War see: Timothy Bowman, *The Irish regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Emma Hanna, 'Musical Entertainment and the British Empire, 1914-1918', in *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society*, ed. by Michael J.K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 63-80; J.G Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

⁴⁵⁸ Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, p. 63.

⁴⁵⁹ See Nicolae Sfetcu, *The Music Sound* (Nicolae Sfetcu, 2014) for a discussion of pipers and the Great War.

In this context, Sweeney points out that the importance of music on the battlefield was twofold. The first was the use of the rhythm and musical narrative as a method through which to raise the battle-readiness of the troops. The second, more pragmatic use, was the way in which all regiments had their own ‘clarion calls, refrains and songs.’ On the battlefield, a bugler was often used to signal the position of the regiment and to signal an attack or retreat. Sweeney notes that: ‘A soldier’s life could depend on his ear’s ability to pick out his regiment’s tune.’⁴⁶⁰ This emphasises the inherent link between music and survival. From the very beginning of the war, before many of the technological advancements that came to dominate trench warfare had taken place, the importance of hearing to a soldier could mean the difference between life and death. The destructive ability of warfare was disrupted by the ability of music to signal safety. Aural variation was thus imperative to the survival of troops, not only on the battlefield itself, but also in times of rest and recuperation. This evolution of the uses of music in the French and British armies during the war correlated to the changing nature of warfare.

The Great War was a conflict which became increasingly industrialised over the four years.⁴⁶¹ From canons to machine guns, the noise of previous conflicts differed greatly to the mechanical and aural barrage the soldiers suffered in the trenches. Given the unremitting noise of warfare, the stark contrast of the army band’s music to the noise of shell and gunfire became symptomatic of brief respite and hope for troops.⁴⁶² Further, as the use of weaponry such as shells became commonplace in trench warfare, greatly increasing the noise of the battlefield, the possibility of troops developing hearing impairments increased. This new danger of warfare appeared to be in direct opposition to the healing power of music and threatened the wellbeing and the lives of the men at the front. Not only did the men need to hear the calls of their regiment for their own safety, as previously discussed, but the regimental call itself was symbolic of the bonds between men in the military. The call of the buglers was comforting to the men, as it provided them with a link to

⁴⁶⁰ Sweeney, *Singing Our Way to Victory*, p. 64.

⁴⁶¹ Key works on the technological advancement of the First World War include: Charles Singer et al., *A History of Technology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); Martin Van Creveld, *Technology and War* (New York: Free Press, 1989); Guy Hartcup, *The War of Invention* (London: Brassey’s Defence Publishers, 1988); and Trudi Tate’s *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) in which she discusses the effects of new technologies on the bodies of the men fighting.

⁴⁶² David Hendy discusses noise throughout history, dating back to prehistoric times in his book, *Noise: a Human History of Sound and Listening* (London: Profile Books, 2013).

their own company.⁴⁶³ Yet hearing the call of the bugler could also instil fear of the enemy, as was shown in the papers of George Dale. Therefore, the changing nature of warfare necessitated the need for music to evolve alongside and to become able to counteract the increasingly aural effects of the conflict.

Further, aural variation was not only important for troops on the battlefield. As many scholars have established, the effects of total war brought warfare to the civilian population in a way that had never been experienced before.⁴⁶⁴ In the private papers of Wilfred Cook, for example, he recounts the reaction of French civilians to the marches of the British troops through their villages:

The band led the way on these marches playing those we called ‘dark marches’ at night which we had memorised. All very interesting particularly as we passed through towns or villages, waking the sleepers with our ‘March Lorraine’ – ‘Euterpe’ – ‘Colonel Bogey’ or one we had specially held back until we reached the centre when someone would say ‘Come on lads let’s lift the roofs’. ‘Darkie’ would put all his strength into the opening beats of his big drum and with a treble forte we caused the heads to appear at open windows and with cries of ‘Vive l’Angleterre’ they forgot for the moment the sterner sides of war.⁴⁶⁵

Despite the marching troops waking the sleeping civilians in the villages, Cook insists that upon breaking the silence, they were met with enthusiasm. Music here was bringing the Allied forces together, shown by the exclamations of ‘Vive l’Angleterre’ by the French audience. Though the audience here was not necessarily aware that they were an audience, this does not seem to have diminished the effect of the music. It was being used to reinforce the Allies’ collective bond and bellicose sentiment directed at enemy forces and was of course a variation from what Cook terms the ‘hymn of hate’⁴⁶⁶ – the sounds of warfare that echoed a matter of miles away from the village itself. Music here simultaneously represented the common sentiments of the allied forces, whilst also marking the difference between warfare and peacetime.

⁴⁶³ In a similar way, the sight of stretcher-bearers was a signal of safety for men who were wounded and dying upon the battlefield. This is discussed later in this chapter.

⁴⁶⁴ See in particular, *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* ed. by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶⁵ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁶⁶ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 44.

Moreover, when considering music at the front, it is imperative to remember one of the key differences between the French and the British armies during this war; the French were fighting on their own soil, whereas the British were fighting in a foreign land. Given the importance of *la patrie* to the French, and the importance of fighting to regain the lost territories of Alsace and Lorraine,⁴⁶⁷ this suggests that the approach of the French army to music – and the war itself – may well have been one of fervour and insistence, as well as the morale-boosting approach already discussed. When reading the passage in which Leleu describes playing music when the enemy were close, and Cook’s story of waking the French with their music during the night through this light, the music at the front in France takes on a new meaning, one borne out of the coalition of the two armies. Leleu describes the enemy being ‘à proximité’; the French motherland was quite literally under attack, suggesting that the use of music in that situation was to remind the men of where they were, and the possible consequences of failure. Working with this reading of Leleu, when looking at Cook’s extract under the same microscope, the happiness and enthusiasm of the French people, despite being woken by the British army in the middle of the night is more understandable. It portrays the British Army in a way that reflected the need for France to be supported by her allies. Understanding the widespread sense of camaraderie between the countries, as well as between the combatant and civilian populations, engenders a deeper understanding of the Army’s use of music. Music was not only a way of bringing civilian and combatant populations together but was a way of cementing the ties between the Allied Forces themselves.

Behind the lines in France: recuperation away from the front

Music was not only a vital part of life at the front line, it was also at the centre of many activities that took place behind the lines. Music was used when troops were rotated away from the front lines, and whilst troops were recuperating in convalescent spaces. As such, music was used to aid in the treatment of those men that had been wounded, and to signal the respite – however brief – that came from being moved further away from the fighting.

Much work has been done by scholars researching the use of touring concert parties, such as those of Lena Ashwell, and the concert parties that were formed by the men themselves. I will not therefore be focusing on the concert parties themselves, but will be concentrating this section of the chapter on the army band and its uses in order to examine how the relationship between the

⁴⁶⁷ The importance of the French fighting for and on their homeland is discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis.

players and the audience changed in accordance with the nature of the audience themselves, and with the different spaces in which they were playing.

As Jeffrey Reznick puts it, the work of the hospitals as a whole was the ‘work of preparing and repairing men for battle.’⁴⁶⁸ Reznick’s evaluation of the huts is based on the women who worked as nurses in these convalescent spaces, but I would argue that both men and women who performed for the patients were integral to this work of preparation and reparation. In order to continue the work of repairing these men, not simply by addressing their physical wounds so that they could be sent back to the front, but in order for these men to be successful in warfare, enthusiasm and belief in the cause also needed to be restored. This was equally the case in the camps behind the front lines that were used for soldiers to rest between tours of the front. Men in previous wars have needed periods of respite, and once men had seen the horrors wrought by this new, industrialised form of warfare, the willingness to be sent back into the fray would certainly have been somewhat diminished. Here we see the importance of the army band in boosting morale and maintaining enthusiasm for war.

Louis Leleu recounts in detail how the army band was used during times of recuperation. He describes the band giving concerts, both to the men of the battalions that were also behind the lines, but to the civilians in Dampierre (a town near Dijon in eastern France) who also came to watch: ‘Durant notre séjour à Dampierre, notre Musique donna des concerts, un chaque jour. Ils étaient suivis avec beaucoup d’intérêt tant par nos Poilus que par les civils, d’autant plus car les distractions étaient rares.’⁴⁶⁹ Interestingly, though the men were away from the front, while their combatant comrades profited from the respite from their combatant roles, the army band was afforded no such luxury. They were not allowed to ‘rest’ in the same way that the other men were. They were required to give at least ‘one concert per day’ to the men at the camp. They were therefore still fixed in their role of providing the means by which their comrades could relax and recuperate, by providing them with amusement and a ‘distraction’ from the reality of warfare. This harks back to the importance of aural variation to the troops that I discussed earlier. In contrast, the audience in Dampierre was made up of both soldiers and civilians, and thus the function of the

⁴⁶⁸ Jeffrey Reznick, *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain during the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.2.

⁴⁶⁹ Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 72.

music being played was not only to cater to the needs of the combatants, but also to the needs of the French population at large.

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, music was inherent to the cultural mobilisation of both the civilian population and the military at the outbreak of war.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, as Didier Francfort suggests, ‘Plus un peuple marche au pas, mieux il marche au pas, plus il est prêt à combattre.’⁴⁷¹ It was imperative that both the military and civilians marched to the same beat; Francfort does not distinguish between civilians and soldiers, but refers to the ‘people’ as a whole. The use of the word ‘marching’ here is both literal and figurative. The army had to march in unison to embody order and discipline, but its figurative meaning was that the people of the country had to act and react to the war in a uniform manner. This united and strengthened the bond between the state and its population, ensuring continuing support for the war effort. Therefore, in this particular passage from Leleu’s memoirs, we can see that the music was not only providing a respite for civilian and combatant alike, but was also reinforcing the bond between the military and civilian populations, thus ensuring that the mood of the people was maintained, as a sentiment of unwavering bellicosity and patriotism was needed during the war. Moreover, it presented a united front between both combatant and non-combatant through marching. More than this, as the bandsmen were at the front of marches and parades, they set the pace of the march, both literally and symbolically leading their combatant comrades. Their presence was vital to the army, providing a sort of protection of the fighting spirit, allowing the support for the war to continue and the soldiers to continue to perform their own martial duties.

British bandsmen behind the lines

George Dale conveys a similar situation in the British billets behind the front lines. However, given that before the war he was a professional musician, his writing suggests more of a return to his specific pre-war life. He tells the reader that while away from the front lines, the army band was

⁴⁷⁰ For a discussion of how total war eroded the distinct lines between military and civilian spheres during the First World War, see *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* ed. by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴⁷¹ Didier Francfort, ‘La Meilleure Façon de Marcher’, p. 18. This sentiment was transnational, as is shown by Janet Watson’s discussion the importance of parade drill and its equation to proper conduct on the battlefield in the British context. See Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p. 21.

extremely busy performing in different parts of the camp, and this only increased as the days wore on:

Two nights ago we four musicians played for 1 ½ hours with a very good pianist belonging to the ‘Hants’, in C.A. hut. The soldiers were delighted so we promised to come tomorrow night. After that we were asked to play at a concert at a sergeant’s mess in another part of the camp. I played two solos and arranged a medley of songs for us to start the concert and gave it to the pianist, who was very clever.⁴⁷²

In this short passage, Dale nods to the importance of arranging the ‘medley of songs’ for each concert. By including the fact that he arranged the songs and gave them to the pianist that was not part of their band, it becomes clear that the arrangement was vital to the success of the performance. This links to the importance of song choice that was discussed in the first section of the chapter. More than this, though, by arranging different medleys depending on the setting, it can be argued that the variation in the concerts themselves created a different relationship with each audience. It seems reasonable that as the concert had been arranged uniquely for the soldiers in the ‘Hants’ hut, for example, this gave the audience a sense of ‘uniqueness’. In turn, this combatted any sense of losing one’s identity in warfare, becoming one part of a vast collective⁴⁷³ – a sentiment that is expressed in many soldiers’ memoirs. By recognising and therefore celebrating the individual camps, the army band is instrumental in celebrating the differentiated groups of individuals. In addition, constantly working hard to change and vary the performance adds to the importance of the ‘distraction’ from the warfare that was but a few miles away. This was a function also carried out by the concert parties that toured the camps, and the parties that were founded in the camps themselves. The variety of shows that were put on for the troops meant that, although there were favourites amongst the audience members, there was something ‘new’ to look forward to; a sense of time passing as it would in the peacetime world, rather than being ‘stuck’ in the stalemate of trench warfare. Alexander Watson, in ‘Mutinies and Military Morale’

⁴⁷² Dale, *Private Papers*, p.4.

⁴⁷³ The loss of identity during the Great War can be seen from the sheer scale of wartime fatalities. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris, built after the First World War shows the impact of warfare both on body and identity. Jessica Meyer discusses masculine identities in her work, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and argues that often in times of mourning, the deceased was remembered through the lens of their masculine identity during combat, as well as their masculine identity in peacetime, showing tension between the domestic and the martial identities of these men.

states that divisional concert parties were essential to keep the men from ‘boredom and brooding.’⁴⁷⁴

Dale goes on to note that:

We were thought a great deal of, and our Colonel was very proud of his band. He several times sent me as far as 20 miles in a lorry to play at a concert given by another regiment. When the lads came down the line for a rest (rest! not much they didn’t get), we gave two concerts every day and after it was over we used to go to the front with Heathcote (euphonium), the two Levi’s and Chapman who all accompanied my songs very well indeed.⁴⁷⁵

This extract shows the importance of the army band, something that Dale was seemingly aware of and relished. His pleasure is obvious. His tone shows how he believes that his musical prowess makes him important, not only to his Colonel and the troops he served with, but so important that he was regularly sent over twenty miles to other regiments. He notes that the combatants were his audience during their rest periods, though rest is not something common to all men in the armed forces, as shown in his comically sarcastic ‘rest! not much they didn’t get.’⁴⁷⁶ However, never in his memoirs do we get a sense that he begrudged the extra duties he performed – quite the opposite, he relishes the opportunity to show off, and often comments on how his abilities surprised other people. Though Dale clearly has a sense of his own importance, he takes pains throughout his writing to show that this was not something that he alone felt, that it was a perception shared by those around him including army leadership. Due to a clerical error, Dale was sent to the communication trenches and was no longer a part of the army band. He continued, however, to play impromptu concerts for his comrades and played his cornet in a barn just behind the lines. They were soon joined by a Colonel and a Major:

When I had finished the song I was playing, I forget what it was, he called me to him, and to my utter surprise started to choke me off for not telling him when he sent me up the line that night we arrived, that I was a professional musician in private life.

‘Damn it man, you might have been killed’.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁴ Alexander Watson, ‘Mutinies and Military Morale’, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War: New Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 191-203 (196).

⁴⁷⁵ Dale, *Private Papers*, p. 10.

⁴⁷⁶ Dale, *Private Papers*, p. 10.

⁴⁷⁷ Dale, *Private Papers*, p. 10.

Dale was promptly transferred back to the band in the position of solo cornet. In his memoirs, Dale shows his status as a musician in his private life as being something the Major deemed so important that it exempted him from being ‘sent up the line’. This suggests that, as no doubt Dale wanted to convey, his musical talent makes him stand out from the other soldiers, seemingly elevating his standing within the ranks. It also, however, appears that if it were known he was a musician then he would not have been sent to the front for fear that he ‘might have been killed’. In doing so, Dale presents himself, and the role of a musician more generally, as integral to the army during the conflict. Support for the war effort was crucial to martial masculinity, and so by positioning himself as vital to the army and its functioning, Dale presents himself as martially masculine. However, it would appear from this extract that bandsmen were not sent to the front and were actively kept away from danger. We have previously seen, however, that this was not the case. Bandsmen who were enlisted as stretcher-bearers in both the French and British armies were sent to the front lines along with their armed comrades to search for the wounded on the battlefield. Far from being out of danger, this placed them directly in the line of fire (as I will go on to discuss later in this chapter). Dale is therefore simultaneously boosting his standing, based on musical talent, and – perhaps unconsciously – playing into the idea that being a bandsman was a ‘cushy’ role, far from danger.⁴⁷⁸ This encourages us to think that Dale was then unaware of the discourse around non-combatant roles and shirking in Britain during the war. I contend, however, that Dale, due to the press coverage around shirking, depicts his own position as more vital than it was in reality in order to bolster his status, both to the reader and to himself.

Music and healing

As well as its presence behind the front lines, music was used in hospitals as a distraction, and was often used as part of a programme of treatment for wounded soldiers. Leslie Bunt and Brynjulf Stige, in their work which traces the history of musical therapy, state that: ‘In the early years of the twentieth century, music was used in hospitals mainly to boost morale, as a general aid to convalescence and as an entertaining diversion.’⁴⁷⁹ Further, in Glenn Watkin’s discussion of music in hospitals, he notes that, ‘the YMCA’s claim regarding the power of music and its healing role for the human psyche during times of stress’ was one of the primary reasons for which Lena

⁴⁷⁸ The idea of stretcher-bearers being far from danger was discussed in more detail in the first chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁷⁹ Leslie Bunt and Brynjulf Stige, *Music Therapy: An Art Beyond Words* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 5.

Ashwell's touring parties were finally allowed to come into existence.⁴⁸⁰ Historians such as Margaret Leask have outlined what were seen as the duties of Lena Ashwell and her concert parties during the Great War.⁴⁸¹ Ashwell described the way that the soldiers reacted to her concert parties and the surprising effects that the shows had on patients. The distraction from their pain and suffering is contrasted against the 'relief and laughter'⁴⁸² induced by the touring company. Ana Carden-Coyne in her work, *The Politics of Wounds* also stresses the benefits of what she terms the 'entertainment culture': '[which] encouraged social interaction between men and women, patients, and medical staff, and thus a community bond was made through laughter, which offset the daily encounter with men's bodies laid bare in pain.'⁴⁸³ Carden-Coyne claims that, as well as the bonds between troops that were forged in the trenches, the laughter of the convalescent space was another way in which bonds were forged, this time between soldiers and civilians. Here we can surmise that the wounded that are referred to under the blanket term of 'soldiers' refers to both combatant and non-combatant, enlisted men. This suggests then, that in hospitals the clearer division was that between soldiers and civilians, erasing the division between arms-bearing soldiers and their unarmed comrades. This reflects the importance of a soldier 'being there', which in hospitals was proven by the wounded or sick body.⁴⁸⁴ Wounding then cemented a man's claim to martial masculinity as the damage caused to his body was inflicted by the war itself and was incontrovertible evidence of having been in close proximity to danger.

In the hospitals, however, as well as touring companies, both medical staff and patients were involved in performances. Carden-Coyne argues that the 'hospital music created congenial bonds, such as Durham war hospital's Blue Boys Band, which included nurses and patients'.⁴⁸⁵ She goes on to suggest that: '[...] in the hospital community, patients were not separate from the actors as "audience". Everyone was to some extent "in costume": the staging occurred in a communal space, and the actors included both patients and medical staff.'⁴⁸⁶ Interestingly, both patients and medical

⁴⁸⁰ Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁸¹ Margaret Leask, *Lena Ashwell: Actress, Patriot, Pioneer* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2012).

⁴⁸² 'Concerts at the Front' by Miss Lena Ashwell, *Told in the Huts: The YMCA Gift Book* (London: YMCA, 2014), p. 134.

⁴⁸³ Ana Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 218.

⁴⁸⁴ See Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, pp.1-30.

⁴⁸⁵ Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, p. 218.

⁴⁸⁶ Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, p. 254.

personnel are involved in the performance, suggesting that the therapeutic use of music and performance was not limited to the audience itself. Further, in touring parties and in general hospitals and other convalescent spaces, women were also involved in the performances. Arguably, this relieved the need for an escape from the all-male environment of the trenches, harking back to pre-war life for the men at the front. In a similar way to the bonds we have encountered that were forged at the outbreak of war, and behind the lines in spaces such as Dampierre, civilians and soldiers (civilians who were in the militarised space of a hospital in wartime) were brought together by music and other forms of entertainment, simply through the fact that both the civilian world and the military world shared the same space. Music during warfare was therefore transcendent, it crossed spatial boundaries and was used in military and civilian spaces alike. Indeed, it was the liminality of the music in these spaces that aided the transcendence of such strict social boundaries.

The healers and the healed were working together to prepare and repair those affected by the new wounds and illnesses of the First World War, and music could play a role in this caring work. Dr Agnes Savill, a surgeon who helped set up hospitals along the front line, was a pioneer in the use of music in hospitals. In her article, 'Physical Effects of Music', she comments that 'a peaceful state of mind is accompanied by a healthy functioning of the organs'.⁴⁸⁷ In another article, *Music and Medicine*, Savill concludes by asserting that given the emotional effects of music on the body, 'the conscientious physician can prescribe music for the patient just as confidently as he prescribes other natural health-giving agencies.'⁴⁸⁸ Given that music is described as a prescription here, then the musicians of the hospitals (both patients and medical personnel alike) take on the position of carer, providing the sick and wounded with the therapy they need to recover. As such, music was key in restoring the health of the wounded men, which was reflected in the prevalence of divisional concert parties, as well as ability of concert parties such as those of Lena Ashwell to tour the front lines.

⁴⁸⁷ Agnes Savill, 'Physical Effects of Music', *Music & Letters*, 39.1 (1958), pp. 16-28 (23).

⁴⁸⁸ Agnes Savill, 'Music and Medicine', *Music & Letters*, 4.3 (1923), pp. 282-289 (28)9.

‘Healing’ the rift?

Up to this point, this chapter has shown how music was used in both the British and French armies to create support for the war, for the troops, and for healing. As we saw earlier, military bandmen were celebrated by their comrades, but they did not always celebrate each other. Though it is true that in France men were accepted into the band following a display of their proficiency at a chosen instrument, during the conflict transfers between positions were not uncommon, including into and out of the band, as we have seen in the case of Private Dale. Evidently, though the army band may have begun as proficient at the outbreak of war, due to casualties and transfers, the quality of the members may have started to decline as the war continued. For those who were professional musicians in peacetime, this must have been frustrating. We see this in Dale’s memoirs when he writes: ‘Everyone in the band (the Cornishmen) is very kind to us and look on with wonder when we prelude a bit. There is a chap called Trudgeon, and another, Michael, who think we are the goods, especially as we can play such a lot without any music.’⁴⁸⁹ Dale’s tone here is a little condescending, though it does not appear intentionally unkind. When bandmen emphasised the importance of their music to such a degree, having the overall quality of the music lessened by non-professionals diminished the quality and perhaps the image of the band, and in turn then affected the masculine standing of the bandmen.

Similarly, a French bandsman, Lucien Durosoir, wrote home to his mother about his frustration at the talent – or lack thereof – of his fellow bandmen. Surprisingly, Durosoir was not immediately drafted into the army band, but was instead initially in a combatant role. After around one year of service, ‘en juillet 1915, il passe dans le service infirmier, comme brancardier, puis en octobre il est versé dans la musique du 129e.’⁴⁹⁰ In November 1915 Durosoir writes:

Je travaille énormément en ce moment, les répétitions de la musique, mon travail personnel et l’exécution le soir. [...] Je dirai franchement que si je n’avais pas la consolation de faire de la musique intéressante, je préférerais retourner aux brancardiers ; notre milieu était excellent, à la musique il est vulgaire. De plus, la musique que nous faisons est ignoble, les gens jouent faux comme des cochons. Enfin, ce ne serait pas drôle si je n’avais pas la fréquentation de bons musiciens et l’espoir de faire bientôt de la musique.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Dale, *Private Papers*, p. 7.

⁴⁹⁰ *Deux Musiciens dans la Grande Guerre*, Présentation de Luc Durosoir, Préface de Jean-Pierre Guéno (Paris: Éditions Tallendier, 2005), p. 22.

⁴⁹¹ *Deux Musiciens dans la Grande Guerre*, p. 144.

Durosoir's tone is overtly hostile and he says that he remains in the army band for the music alone and the occasional good musician that he gets to meet, even saying that the stretcher-bearers who were not in the army band were not on the same level as those who were. The need to be surrounded by good musicians, apart from his love for music, suggests that he is looking for a new, recognised hierarchy where he is at the top. Having been a celebrated, professional musician during peacetime, Durosoir is now no longer at the top of a hierarchy – military or musical – and he continues to seek it out. Despite music affording him some return to peacetime normality, similar to that which we have already seen throughout the course of this chapter, the absence of talented musicians surrounding him and acknowledging his status forces him to confront the stark contrast between his standing pre-war and during the conflict. Nevertheless, given the precarious masculine status of bandsmen and their low placement in the hierarchies of both wartime masculinity and wartime occupation, music and the army band allowed some bandsmen to reassert themselves. Professional musicians could reassert their sense of self and return to their place towards the top of a hierarchy by, if not creating, then by at least acknowledging the boundary between themselves and the amateur musicians around them.

Bandsmen and stretcher-bearers: Healing on two fronts

As I have described above, music was used throughout the war particularly in convalescent spaces as a tool of healing.⁴⁹² Music was one part of the role of the army bandsman, to provide music to boost morale, to distract from the horrors of war, and to comfort men in times of distress. However, the other aspect of the role was that of a stretcher-bearer as a militarised caregiver. The unease that Durosoir's memoirs reveal regarding his own standing in the army band, and in the army itself, is reflected in the writings of other men when they discuss their duties as stretcher-bearers. This is in part due to the unfamiliar nature of their role as caregivers, which was popularly understood to be 'a woman's role'. However, historians have shown that understandings of the gender binary were disrupted and reshaped during the conflict. Susan Grayzel has pointed out that: 'Rather than completely undermining specific assumptions about gender in each nation, the war, from its outset, paradoxically both expanded the range of possibilities for women and curtailed them by, among other things, heightening the emphasis on motherhood as women's primary patriotic role and the

⁴⁹² See pp. 174-175 of this thesis.

core of their national identity.⁴⁹³ In a similar way, I suggest that the war ‘paradoxically both expanded the range of possibilities’ for men, by idolising a martially masculine, warrior-ideal, but also by providing a space in which caregiving was performed by men and was no longer an occupation reserved only for women. Rather than a martial masculinity being dependent upon the bearing of arms, warfare meant that men whose wartime occupation was outside the normative expectations of a soldier during wartime were integral to the functioning and success of the British and French Armies.

As we have seen, the gender binary dominant in British and French public discourse during the Great War identified caregivers as mainly women due to traits traditionally associated with femininity; caring, maternal and gentle. Grayzel has shown that: ‘By linking women with mothers and men with soldiers, wartime rhetoric stressed the “naturalness” of these normative categories, thus conveniently eclipsing other kinds of masculinity and femininity.’⁴⁹⁴ How then might we consider the male, militarised caregiver? Men in non-combatant roles, such as stretcher-bearers and bandsmen, were in a liminal position in two ways: firstly, they did not carry weapons meaning that they were ostensibly excluded from aligning themselves with a martial masculinity that was rooted in the bearing of arms; secondly, their job as bandsmen-turned-stretcher-bearers was primarily one of caregiving. They went into No Man’s Land armed only with their stretcher to find and medically tend to the wounds of their comrades, and in many circumstances, carry the bodies of combatants from the battlefield for burial.⁴⁹⁵ However, as I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, music was a symbolic weapon of war, with its myriad uses including signalling attack, boosting morale and instilling a fighting spirit in those who heard it. As such, while bandsmen-turned-stretcher-bearers did not carry traditional weapons for the majority of the war (as I will now discuss) they were the keepers of the morale of their combatant comrades. In turn, their function was to ensure that those who did bear weapons such as bayonets and rifles were able to carry out their combatant duties properly.

⁴⁹³ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War*, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁵ In *Wounded: The Long Journey Home from the Great War* (London: Vintage Books, 2014) Emily Mayhew notes how the stretcher-bearers of the British army faced many dangers on the battlefield.

As I have already discussed, at the outbreak of the conflict, some mobilised stretcher-bearers in the French army did in fact carry a gun. However, after the first few months of the war had elapsed, these men were informed that as they occupied a ‘pacifist’ role, their weaponry would be taken from them, to give to men in combatant roles. Joannès Pestier makes light of this situation in one of his letters to his wife: ‘On nous a définitivement enlevé nos fusils; on a fini par voir qu’ils nous ne servaient pas à grande-chose; notre rôle est plutôt pacifique. Nous avons juste un sabre pour achever les Boches!’⁴⁹⁶

While the tone here is light-hearted, even comic, the undertone is one of anxiety. In a conflict that was becoming increasingly technologically advanced, the chances of a soldier using a rifle to kill the enemy were slim. Historians such as Alexander Watson have noted that the First World War meant that a martial masculinity based on proficiency in hand-to-hand combat no longer made sense. Watson argues that weapons such as ‘machineguns and artillery fire were extremely effective against men in the open, providing attackers with little chance of closing for hand-to-hand combat’.⁴⁹⁷ That being said, having one’s weapon taken away was figuratively emasculating. Weaponry had been employed as a propagandist tool suggesting virility and masculinity, as evidenced by the abundance of propagandist posters that pictured men holding rifles and/or bayonets.⁴⁹⁸ As discussed earlier, this emphasised the link between martial masculinity and the bearing of arms culminating in the notion that during the conflict, a gun was inherent to the idolised, heroic, martially masculine soldier.⁴⁹⁹ As such, when a man was separated from his weapon, this was not only figuratively emasculating, but it amplified the difference between non-combatants and their combatant comrades.

Despite their lack of weaponry, stretcher-bearers could still perform their masculinity in other ways; the concept of protection that was inherent to masculinity was the basis of their occupation in the army. Laura King has noted that, ‘both world wars brought [the] conception of masculine

⁴⁹⁶ Pestier, *Les Lettres de Mon Père*, p. 69.

⁴⁹⁷ Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 14.

⁴⁹⁸ Joshua S. Goldstein demonstrates the phallic imagery associated with weaponry in the Armed Forces in *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 349. See also: Michael Nolan, “‘The Eagle Soars over the Nightingale’: Press and Propaganda in France in the Opening Months of the Great War’, in *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion, and Newspapers in the Great War*, ed. by Troy Paddock (London: Praeger Publishers, 2004) pp. 51-90.

⁴⁹⁹ See p. 151 of this thesis.

identity to the fore, and protection of families and the country at large' which strengthened the popular, contemporary notion that men should be protecting their families, and to do this, men should be fighting for their country.⁵⁰⁰ Not only were they required to go out into No Man's Land to carry their comrades back to the first-aid post, but the action of doing first-aid on the battlefield whilst under fire was in itself a protective action. These men had to protect their comrades from further harm, in order that they be cared for to return to the trenches to then go on to protect their homeland. As such, the stretcher-bearers formed one part of the many layers of protection in the Army, of which the overall goal was the protection of the country. We can argue, then, that without stretcher-bearers the ultimate goal of the Army would not have been possible. And so, the job of the stretcher-bearers, through caring for their comrades on the battlefield became a performance of masculinity through the performance of a traditionally 'feminine' action. Enlisted men performing a caregiving role thus challenged the normative gender binary of the period in which such acts were popularly understood as being feminine and maternal.

In this way, male, militarised caregivers occupied liminal positions in terms of the dominant gender binary of the First World War. Their positions as unarmed men performing the traditionally feminised role of caregiver led to them being largely absent from the historiography of the Great War until recent years.⁵⁰¹ However, this seeming invisibility of stretcher-bearers was apparent to these men even during the conflict, as shown in the poem below:

We carry no rifle, bayonet nor bomb,
But follow behind in rear [...]
We make for the spots – Khaki-clad helpless blots –
That mark where our front rank fell,
We are the men who carry them back,
The wounded, the dying and dead. [...]
The “stretcher-bearers” doing their bit,
Of V.C.’s not many they score,
Yet are earned every day in a quiet sort of way
By the “Royal Army Medical Corps.”⁵⁰²

⁵⁰⁰ Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015), p. 164.

⁵⁰¹ In the British case, see Jessica Meyer's *An Equal Burden* (2019) and *Men Of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (2008). In the French case, see Benoît Broucard's *Brancardier! Des Soldats de la Grande Guerre* (2015).

⁵⁰² W.H. Atkins, 'The R.A.M.C.', *The "Southern" Cross* 3 (1917), pp. 148-149.

Though this poem talks specifically about the stretcher-bearers of the RAMC, it is easy to extrapolate this concept to stretcher-bearers in both the British and French armies alike; even as early as 1917, some stretcher-bearers felt that they were ‘quietly’ earning, but not *receiving* recognition for their heroism in wartime. The heroism they displayed, as shown in the writings of the authors discussed in this thesis, and echoed in the poem here, is evident in the fact that they *are unarmed*, but go onto the battlefield under fire, to care for wounded men whom they fight alongside.

The precarity of their situation, going out into the midst of gun and shellfire is found in both French and British writings from the conflict. In December of 1914, Pestier notes, ‘Hier nous avons été obligés de nous replier à 500 mètres abandonnant des morts et des blessés. Quand cela se terminera-t-il et quand verrons-nous la fin de telles horreurs ! La mort frappe à tort et à travers, on ne donnerait pas deux sous de sa peau!’⁵⁰³ Here, Pestier’s writing shows that the danger of the battle forced the battalion with which Pestier served to retreat and abandon their own wounded and dead. Though at first glance this would appear to contradict the assertion that stretcher-bearers were protectors of their own wounded, instead shows that they were in as much danger as some of the infantry, and they all retreated as one unit. Pestier points to the ubiquitous and random nature of death in industrialised warfare, and he outlines the threat to his body and those of his comrades.

Similarly, Léopold Retailleau recounts an instant in which he and other stretcher-bearers ventured into No Man’s Land: ‘Le colonel nous donne l’ordre de rechercher les corps de plusieurs officiers et sous-officiers. Alors au milieu du champ de bataille et à a lueur d’une lanterne, nous recueillons les corps du commandant de Beaufort, une capitaine et trois adjudants des sergents et des soldats.’⁵⁰⁴ Going out into the middle of the battlefield with nothing but a lantern, they recovered the bodies of five men who had been killed. Stretcher-bearers put themselves in danger in order to recover the bodies of those they had served alongside. In *An Equal Burden*, Meyer has shown how in the RAMC, ‘sharing physical danger meant that RAMC Rankers were also able to draw equivalences between themselves and their combatant comrades’.⁵⁰⁵ As previously discussed in this thesis, proximity to danger was integral to wartime understandings and perceptions of martial masculinity. Pestier and Retailleau’s accounts portray to the reader how close they were to the

⁵⁰³ Pestier, *Les Lettres de Mon Père*, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁰⁴ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 66.

⁵⁰⁵ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 175.

deadly threat of the war, thereby reinforcing their own claims to a martial masculinity as non-combatant soldiers.

However, under the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1864, non-combatants such as stretcher-bearers should have been protected from deliberate enemy fire.⁵⁰⁶ In battles dominated by shellfire, which was not as easily directed as machinegun fire, simply being classified as a non-combatant did not necessarily mean that they were safe from enemy fire. Moreover, in *The Lengthened Shadow*, Cook asserts that stretcher-bearers were specifically targeted by the enemy:

Stretcher bearers carry no rifle or ammunition nor do we as Regimental S.B.'s wear the red cross but only a simple S.B.brassard [sic] on our left sleeves, trusting that the enemy seeing us about our work will at least give us a chance to get wounded [sic] out but this apparently was not going to apply here today for Tim's death and Dixon's wound were deliberate, we had to crawl and take our luck in that village and if we were not combatants we could see those who were and they were splendid.⁵⁰⁷

While he praises the 'splendid' combatants, by clarifying that the death and wounding of two of his comrades was deliberate, Cook emphasises the danger that they were in despite their non-combatant status. He uses this to portray and evidence his own exposure to the deadly perils of the conflict that raged around him. In doing so, he specifically conveys his own worthiness of a martially masculine status to the reader. Interestingly, this section comes directly after a passage in which he writes:

I remember someone said to me, "Note your chance Cook, you've always said you would like to meet Frits [sic] in the open or around the houses in a town after being so long in the trenches, he is in the houses and the lads are going to shift him".⁵⁰⁸

In this passage, Cook displays his own belligerent instinct by recounting how his willingness and eagerness to fight 'Fritz' was well-known among the men whom he served alongside, so much so that they told him that he would have his chance to meet the enemy. Cook's writing reflects the ways in which male caregiving attempted to distinguish itself from female caregiving by highlighting the dangers that male caregivers faced. This again is a blatant attempt on the author's part to demonstrate to the reader that he was anything but a coward and was even impatient to take

⁵⁰⁶ Cedric Cotter, 'Humanity at a Time of Inhumanity: The International Movement of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent', in *The First World War and Health: Rethinking Resilience* (Brill NV: Leiden, 2020), pp. 378-399 (388).

⁵⁰⁷ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁰⁸ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 117.

on the enemy to get his chance to showcase his own martial prowess. This willingness to fight was a key component of martial masculinity as it cemented the link between soldiering and citizenship during this period. By making it clear to the reader that even as a non-fighting, enlisted soldier, he still embraced this element of his soldierly role, Cook is asserting to the reader that his role as a stretcher-bearer was worthy of being perceived as equal to that of combatant, fighting men. Consequently, the link between the role of the stretcher-bearer and that of the soldier-citizen is forged in the mind of the reader, depicting the stretcher-bearer – and Cook himself – as martially masculine. This is reminiscent of the way in which bandsmen played national anthems at the outbreak of the war, explicitly delineating their own claim to citizenship through their enlistment in the armed forces.

Caregiving and comradeship

The conversations that Cook describes in his memoirs evidence the comradeship that he experienced with those around him. Comradeship has been widely explored by scholars, and features in much of the scholarship surrounding life in the trenches during the Great War.⁵⁰⁹ This is in part due to the emphasis placed by war veterans on the relationships and bonds they formed in that particular homosocial environment. Sarah Cole has shown that comradeship and friendship are ‘not allied forms, but antagonists,’ going on to suggest that friendship is intimate and resides in the relationship between two individuals whereas comradeship ‘subsumes the individual’ and is symbolic of belonging to a collective.⁵¹⁰ Clearly, in a homosocial environment such as that of the trenches, the traditional gender binary was no longer viable within such a collective. In *Men of War*, Meyer argues that this gender binary had never been viable, asserting that despite being ‘constructed within a framework of cultural ideals and social expectations concerning what made the appropriate martial and domestic male, within that framework men’s subjective [masculine] identities were fluid and potentially contradictory.’⁵¹¹ It is the fluidity and contradictory nature of

⁵⁰⁹ See, for example, Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Anthony Fletcher, ‘Patriotism, The Great War, and the Decline of Victorian Manliness’, in *History* 99.1 (2014), pp. 40–72; George I. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵¹⁰ Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003), p. 151.

⁵¹¹ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 162.

masculine identity among both combatants and non-combatants that enabled the latter to align themselves with the masculine qualities of protector and soldier hero that were praised so highly in relation to the former.

As the normative gender binary of the period was no longer in place in these spaces, to what extent did caring and caregiving in the trenches really resemble the feminine qualities with which it was associated? Friendship and care took many forms – from sharing food and drink (most often wine), to helping one another get rid of vermin and fleas, to caring for the memory of a comrade in honouring his last wishes by entrusting each other with letters to send home to their families in case the worst should happen.⁵¹² These are less tangible methods of caregiving, but they are nevertheless important. These forms of caregiving subvert gendered expectations, simply by looking at their context – that of the homosocial environment. Wilfred Cook highlights the comradeship among the bandsmen in his memoirs:

The writer is tempted to go into the character and description of the twelve men or so he joined that day, each one was a character in himself, apart from three of us all we time-serving men or reservists back with the colours. Bandsmen in peacetime, stretcher bearers in war and obviously all good friends together, apart from being the ‘young soldier’ amongst them I could not help but soon feel at home.⁵¹³

Cook here points out that even in the front lines the men recreated the familial atmosphere of peacetime. Evidently, in a homosocial environment such as the trenches, recreating a traditionally familial environment recognisable to these men would have meant unconsciously recognising that the traditionally feminine, supportive roles were being carried out by their male comrades. However, in the absence of women, caregiving then was an activity consciously or unconsciously undertaken by all men in the trenches, and so was no longer seen to be a performance of a feminine gendered identity. Rather than a specifically medical form of caregiving, this was a form of social caregiving; recreating a familiar space in which comfort could be found through bonds of protection and caring. While the physical body was central to medical caregiving, seen in the ways in which stretcher-bearers protected and healed their comrades’ wounded bodies, social caregiving was performed and felt through the bonds of friendship and community that were forged within

⁵¹² On the importance of (sharing) wine in the trenches, see Stephen Snelders, ‘Intoxicants and Intoxication on the Western Front’, in *The First World War and Health*, ed. by Leo van Bergen and Eric Vermetten (Leiden: Brill, 2020) pp.71-94.

⁵¹³ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 96.

the armed forces. In this way, Cook here reinforces the notion he builds throughout his memoir that non-combatant service was essential to the emotional and physical safety of the men around them. Paradoxically, by occupying a traditionally feminised position, non-combatant male caregivers in the First World War were able to subvert and reconfigure understandings of martial masculinity and caregiving by performing acts, primarily protection and comradeship, that were the hallmarks of masculinity during the conflict.

Another aspect of caregiving which Cook recounts in his writings is carried out by the ‘old soldiers’; a group to which Cook aspires to belong. These men tended to be those who had served in campaigns in the Boer War, and they commanded respect amongst those they were alongside:

The Sanitary squad was made up of old soldiers, mostly sporting the Boer War ribbons, they did their work well and were proud of it. No cleaner looking men could be found than they and to see them in the evening together in an Estaminet was something. They had bright clean mess-tins to drink out of, and beer was bought in bulk inside a new canvas bucket, what could be better than that? They had one big advantage over us as they did not go to the trenches apart from accompanying the transport, they ranked as H.Q. men and by their service they deserved privileges, we were well served, had it not been for them what might we not have suffered by epidemic alone.⁵¹⁴

Cook’s respect for these men is apparent throughout his memoirs, and he turns down promotions due to wanting only to be viewed as akin to these ‘old soldiers’ who had served well in other wars and who he felt continued to do so. The caregiving they carried out was entrenched in normative feminine ideals of caring for the ‘home’, which space was now represented in the spaces the armed forces occupied. He admires their ability to remain clean despite the conditions around them, representing how Cook views them as untainted and wishes to portray them thus. He posits that without these men, many more would have been lost to ‘epidemic’, which harks back to the ideals of protectors as well as a cleanliness of image. In spite of the men who formed this group being ‘old’ and presumably not in peak physical form, Cook presents them to the reader as heroic; they sported ribbons from the Boer War, and were well-deserving of any privileges they received. Evidently, cleanliness was of the utmost importance in areas behind the lines, particularly along the evacuation route and hospitals.⁵¹⁵ Ana Carden-Coyne has shown how cleanliness was a

⁵¹⁴ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 65.

⁵¹⁵ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*.

growing concern dating back to the Boer War,⁵¹⁶ and it is this focus on medicine that Mark Harrison has shown was increasingly considered to be ‘essential to the prosecution of [the war]’ and ‘widely recognized [sic] as an important factor in morale’.⁵¹⁷ Anthony Fletcher, in *Life, Death, and Growing Up on the Western Front* addresses the need for cleanliness, arguing that the ‘management of housekeeping duties was not an optional extra on the Western Front.’⁵¹⁸ The conditions in the trenches were often nightmarish, with ‘mud [that] enveloped men in the front line [with lice and] surplus food and corpses all over the place.’⁵¹⁹ Given the extreme conditions at the front, the return to conditions that were more akin to those of peacetime at home, it is perhaps no surprise that the men responsible for this return to comfort are described with great affection in Cook’s writing. The cleanliness that Cook focuses on in the passage above is a masculine form of caregiving in that these men provided clean spaces for their comrades around them, and, mirroring the use of music during the war, this allowed the soldiers alongside whom they served to continue to perform their own duties by being spared infections and ‘epidemics’. In fact, it is an alternate form of protecting the land for which they fought, though in the British case it was not their ‘homeland’ it was a preservation of the ideals of the home – being clean, ordered, and comfortable. In this way, the role being performed by non-combatants in the Sanitation Squad was paradoxically one of maintaining the ideals of the homeland by subverting gendered expectations.

Conclusion: A musical war and a dual role

Throughout the course of this chapter, it has become clear that music was a force integral to both the French and the British Armies during the First World War. The similarities shown between the armies in different situations suggest that the bolstering force of music was well-known to both countries and is reflected in the memoirs produced by bandsmen from both nations. Not only does this suggest similarities between the forces, but also points to a commonality sought during the war among Allies in order to position themselves in direct opposition to the ‘Other’; the enemy ‘Boches’ or ‘Hun’.

⁵¹⁶ Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 71.

⁵¹⁷ Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ Fletcher, *Life, Death, and Growing Up on the Western Front*, p. 143.

⁵¹⁹ Fletcher, *Life, Death, and Growing Up on the Western Front*, p. 143.

At the outbreak of the war, as was seen in the extracts from Leleu and Retailleau, music was a way in which the outbreak of the conflict was both responded to and culturally expressed. Not only this, the performance of music and the playing of songs such as *La Marseillaise* and *Sambre et Meuse* in France was a way through which the nation became unified, and presented a united front. By taking part in such performances, both the civilian and military populations were afforded an opportunity to ‘be seen’ to be supporting the war effort. Further, the enthusiasm portrayed in the memoirs of Retailleau, and his detailed point about the music of other allied nations being celebrated and played throughout France, shows a search for commonality among the allies, not only in their bellicosity, but in their cultural values when juxtaposed with the enemy forces. In a similar manner, the issue of ‘being seen’ was presented by the performative nature of music whilst training. The training ground here was presented as not simply a space in which men were trained in battle but as a space in which men were introduced to music as integral to their training. The choice of songs in the British case was more focused on the popular songs of the time, suggesting that while nationalist and revanchist songs were important at the outbreak of war, when the men in Britain went to the training camps this was transformed into music that was more suitable for an all-male audience. This enhanced the male bonding imperative to camaraderie and positioned the military population in contrast to the civilian population. In order to separate the two populations, the songs that were chosen convey a need to highlight traditionally masculine traits, and the expected masculinity of soldiers. Watkins comments that, ‘songs of departure soon reinforced a façade of bravura’,⁵²⁰ suggesting that those playing the music are therefore allowing their comrades to perform a martial masculinity by portraying a bravery that they may not have necessarily felt. Their journey through manhood was accelerated in the training ground; a fast-track to the martial masculinity expected of men during warfare during this time. By comparing the different uses of music in Britain and France before these men reached the front lines, it conveyed a sense of preparation and need to perform their citizenship, and by extension their masculinity.

In contrast, music at the front was purposefully positioned in direct contrast to the all-pervading sound of the battlefield. Retailleau describes the noise of the front as follows: ‘De tous les côtés les obus sifflent, ronflent, pètent, c’est une musique à faire rugir d’aise tous les diables d’enfer.’⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, p. 86.

⁵²¹ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 33.

Retailleau clearly links the sounds of the battle to hell, suggesting that even those residing in hell would redden at its sound. In this space, music was a force by which the army bandsmen could combat the hellish nature of warfare by providing their comrades with a symphony of pleasure. Further, the use of music in these situations as a morale-boosting force was abundantly clear. Both the French and British men recount moments of extreme danger, where they were called upon to play music to boost the morale of their compatriots, and to distract them from impending danger.

The use of music, such as clarion calls and buglers in warfare was multifaceted. It was used both to signal to one's comrades, and to signal or frighten the enemy. Using music to frighten one's enemy is seen throughout history, but not only did this function as a way of inciting fear, it also functioned as a way to establish one's enemy as the 'Other' through sound. In doing so, the bandsmen, through their music, enforced a line between 'them and us', and conveyed a united front of both themselves as non-combatants and their combatant comrades. The ability to hear the music played by their non-combatant comrades was one of the ways in which the effects of warfare were measured. Behind the lines, music was used in juxtaposition to what Watkins terms the 'unremitting roar'⁵²² of the battlefield, with the calm and peace of the billets in both the French and the British camps. What is striking, however, is the way in which the role of the bandsmen, although being highly praised, was in a way a submissive role. This is conveyed through the constant expectation that the bandsmen would continue their duties whilst away from the front. Interestingly, this can also be seen as a method through which music was portrayed as a protective force, conveying the musicians as the protectors of their comrades, due to the consistent use of the army band during their time in the billets away from the front lines.

Moreover, it has been documented in soldiers' memoirs that band members would begin to play in convalescent spaces once their own convalescence was over, contributing to the treatment of their comrades. More than this, the community behind the lines, particularly convalescent spaces, involved women as nurses, and often involved medical personnel and patients working together. This echoed the public space at the outbreak of war, when civilian and soldier came together through music and performance, suggesting a cyclical journey from mobilisation to wounding and eventual reintegration into society at large. Music was essential for grounding each stage of this cycle; it provided a transition between each space, as well as being integral to the spaces

⁵²² Watkins, *Proof Through the Night*, p. 73.

themselves. From the comparison of the French and British texts, music can be seen as a force which was used to unify and to break down barriers between civilian and soldier, as well as between combatant and non-combatant. Tosh and Roper argue that: ‘Despite the myths of omnipotent manhood which surround us, masculinity is never fully possessed, but must perpetually be achieved, asserted and renegotiated.’⁵²³ This is evident in the negotiation of different spaces of warfare, and is highlighted by the ways in which music was used in different spaces. The relationship between the combatant and non-combatant was seen and represented as being in constant flux and needing continuous negotiation. In this chapter, the flux between dominant and subordinate positions of the bandsmen reflects the changing nature of gender binaries during the war, further portraying the liminal position of these men and their music. The view of caregiver as a ‘feminised role’ was challenged by the role of the bandsmen, and their ability to move between caregiver, morale-booster, and protector.

Overwhelmingly, music during the Great War was used to establish identity. At the outbreak this was a national identity, and an allied identity. In the training grounds and at the front, the identity the bandsmen sought to create through their music was one of a cohesive military unit, highlighting similarities between allied forces, and thus creating a distance between themselves and the enemy. In doing so, the ‘Otherness’ shaped by the bandsmen further sought to strengthen the bond between both the combatant men and the non-combatants, thus eroding any difference borne out of the bearing of arms. In this way, music during the First World War became a tool through which the liminal position occupied by non-combatant men was reshaped, music itself crossing and removing boundaries that categorised these men as being unable to embody the typical ideals of martial masculinity. Music was a pacific weapon in the non-combatant arsenal. Thus music was a way of protecting and preserving the masculinity of the bandsmen, emphasising the importance of this non-aggressive gender role and its impact during warfare. However, we have also seen that music was used to re-create pre-war identity and standing, as seen in the writing of Lucien Durosoir. For those men who had the opportunity to use music to construct a wartime existence that partially reflected their peacetime existence, music became a lifeline linking them to their normality and sense of professional pride. This was the most contentious role that music played in the conflict,

⁵²³ *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* ed. by Roper, Michael and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 18.

as professional musicians like Durosoir found it difficult to maintain the quality of music they were accustomed to playing. Life as a bandsman for these men menaced the sense of normality that music represented and, I would argue, reinforced the disorienting nature of the conflict to both their sense of the world and to their sense of their own masculinity.

The role of the stretcher-bearer as a caregiver was similarly constructed in the memoirs I have examined as a role that typified certain qualities of the martial masculinity they felt was denied to them due to their unarmed status. The role of protector of the physical body through their work finding and caring for the wounded, as well as the duties they performed such as providing a clean and comforting space was integral to maintaining the morale of the French and British armies. This in turn, again meant that stretcher-bearers exemplified a martial masculinity that did not match that of their combatant comrades but was complementary to it. Without the duties they carried out, the French and British armies would not have been able to function effectively, and this was evident to the men who wrote the letters and memoirs discussed in this chapter. Their identity is delineated throughout their writings as fundamental to the success of the armies in which they served, and this was a concerted effort on the part of the author to show that, despite their identity as non-combatants they were a part of the fighting force and therefore deserved to be seen as equally martially masculine.

In sum, despite their position as non-combatants in a war in which the propaganda that dominated was still centred around the traditional importance of hand-to-hand combat, through their music, bandsmen themselves become a form of weaponry with which to fight against the savagery of the enemy, and the new dangers that industrialised warfare wrought on the minds and bodies of enemies and allies alike. They embodied qualities that were considered integral to martial masculinity in both Britain and France, most notably the protection of their comrades, and the warrior-spirit that embodied the importance of martial duty to citizenship that pervaded in both countries. They also used music to rebuild a normality that the conflict had destroyed and therefore rebuild their own masculine standing. Thus far I have largely considered how these men and their masculinity was perceived by those around them, and so in the final chapter I will consider how the pre-requisites of martial masculinity during the First World War influenced their perceptions of themselves.

Chapter 4: **Self (re)presentation and perception**

This chapter seeks to examine the self-perceptions of the men who are the focus of this thesis. Though other chapters provide what we might consider to be contextual examinations of the culture surrounding these men, a close-reading of their memoirs, letters, and diaries will allow a consideration of their own narratives of their war experiences. The importance of self-perception in our understandings of who these men were cannot be overstated. One cannot understand these non-combatant men without acknowledging the importance of what and who they themselves thought they were. As Dan Zahavi puts it:

There is no such thing as who (in contrast to what) I am independently of how I understand and interpret myself. To put it differently, no account of who one is can afford to ignore the issue of one's self-interpretation, since the former is (at least partially) constituted by the latter.⁵²⁴

This chapter will explore the (different) ways in which these men engaged with questions of duty, honour and bravery in their personal writings. Did they ascribe the same meaning to weaponry as is seen in fiction, newspapers and other propaganda of the period? To what extent were their own thoughts and feelings about their status as soldiers affected or led by the perceptions of those around them? What were the differences (if there were any) in the ways that these issues were addressed by British men versus their French counterparts? And finally, how does our understanding of their self-perceptions contribute to our understanding of them as historical actors?

There are, however, intricacies regarding the texts themselves that must be considered. The historical moments in which these writings were produced and published, and who published them and for what audience are important questions to acknowledge. More specifically, if these writings were published posthumously, why and how heavily were they edited? If a family member, for example, edited the publication, a family may wish to conceal certain things from 'outside' readers or may simply want to portray their loved one in the best light possible.

⁵²⁴ Dan Zahavi, 'Self and Other: The Limits of Narrative Understanding', in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 60 (2007), pp. 179-202 (179).

This chapter will consist of two main sections: first I will focus on texts that are written and/or edited by the author alone; I will then move on to examine writings edited and/or published by family members, comparing the different ways in which they were written and weighing the differences in how the masculine status of these men is portrayed in these texts. Drawing inspiration from Samuel Hynes' work, this chapter will concentrate on the individual voices of the authors in these texts, as Hynes puts it, to see what they tell us about 'what it was like for *this* man, in *his* war.'⁵²⁵ Therefore, this chapter will not try to suggest that the voices of these individual men tell the war narrative of *all* non-combatant French and British men during the conflict. Rather, through the telling of the author's individual war narrative, I suggest that they engage, and in some ways reflect popular, contemporary understandings of masculinities. This allows me to further examine the evolution of how different concepts of masculinity changed, not only during the war itself, but indeed in the years that followed.

Jan Assmann has shown how memoirs are a tool to transform communicative memory-i.e. oral histories-into something which transcends the passage of time and ultimately forms part of cultural memory. He notes: 'Just as the communicative memory is characterized by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday. Distance from the everyday (transcendence) marks its temporal horizon. Cultural memory has a fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time.'⁵²⁶ As such, by writing memoirs that would add to the cultural memory of the conflict, veterans, in this case those who had served in non-combatant roles, sought to add to the way in which not just the war, but their own parts in it, would be remembered. They wished to include their own stories to add to the memory of what soldiers were and how they were remembered. By doing so, memoirists of the non-combatant, veteran community took the opportunity to disseminate their own war stories and add to the popular understandings of war by displaying how they, as unarmed, enlisted men were able to display qualities which they understood to be associated with martial masculinity.

In some cases, veterans wrote and/or published their war writings decades after the Armistice. Using memoirs published seventy years after the fact poses further problems. How far can we trust

⁵²⁵ Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (Penguin Books: New York, 1997), p. xv.

⁵²⁶ Jan Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', in *New German Critique* 65 (1995), pp. 125,133,129. Translated by John Czaplicka.

the memories of these men regarding events that took place a lifetime ago? Memories dull with age, sharp edges becoming more and more blurred as more time passes, not to mention the possibility of the ‘false memories’ phenomenon. In sum, how can we trust that the events being recounted actually took place? If we cannot then why use these ‘untrustworthy’ writings as sources? Jay Winter notes that ‘what the French call ‘le devoir de mémoire’, the duty to remember, is both more prevalent today and more likely to include within politically or socially necessary acts of collective remembrance hidden silences which marginalise or eliminate unformattable readings of the subject being commemorated.’⁵²⁷ This chapter will consider the importance of this duty and the decision made by memoirists to present their own wars many years after it ended. I will demonstrate the ways in which these authors challenge the silences which they believed had hitherto prevented their own wartime experience being remembered or as obviously revered alongside that of those armed men alongside whom they served. The writers of the memoirs, diaries, and letters to be examined in this chapter show clearly how they felt that they properly fulfilled their own wartime duty through their service. The notion of contested fulfilment of wartime duty, which this thesis considers, is evidenced by the choice of these memoirists to publish many years after the end of the Great War. This chapter will demonstrate how these writers sought to add to the public understanding of the First World War and by so doing to illustrate how different types of war service deserved to be remembered and commemorated, not only that of the armed combatant. The overall aim was to construct in the minds of the populace the martially masculine, wartime identity that they understood themselves to embody.

In this vein, Robyn Fivush and Janine P. Buckler argue that:

Through examining autobiographical narratives, we gain access to individuals’ construction of their own identity. What individuals choose to tell, what information they select to report, provides converging evidence of how individuals conceptualize their selves. [...] Those aspects of identity that are highlighted in specific retellings of the past reflect those aspects of identity that are deemed important in specific situations, which specific others, for specific goals.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷ Jay Winter, ‘Thinking About Silence’, in *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Efrat Ben-Ze’ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-31 (28).

⁵²⁸ Robyn Fivush and Janine P. Buckner, ‘Creating Gender and Identity through Autobiographical Narratives’, in *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of A Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives* ed. by Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., 2003), pp. 149-168 (149).

By constructing a memoir, it is necessary to construct the identity of the author to give the narrative form and sense. Clearly, a memoir can never tell every single event that happened, as it would read more like a diary or journal. It follows then, that the events described in a memoir must be those that the author has retained above others; whether due to the trauma of the incident at hand, or because of the emotions or sensations felt by the author which has rendered the incident indelible in their own mind. The relayed incidents, where they concern other people, would not necessarily be remembered in the same way by others involved, and even memories of trauma have been shown to change over time.⁵²⁹ The theory of how humans remember events and why the same event is remembered differently among individuals is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, and I will focus on what we can discern from the memories we are given. Why the reader is presented with this memory in particular (or this statement in a letter), and what can be gleaned concerning why the author deemed such instances important enough to warrant inclusion in a memoir, and what this says about their sense of self at the time of writing.

To this end, this chapter will consider different types of memories, those written down at the time of the event (relayed in diaries and letters) and those that have been reconstructed after the fact (memoirs). Combining different types of sources is done purposefully, to allow for a more nuanced understanding of non-combatants' war writings, as well as to include a range of accounts produced in different time periods. Rather than being a – sometimes poetic – reflection on past experiences, letters from the front lines were often written quickly and without embellishment. Here we might consider the templates designed by the British Army on which soldiers could simply tick the box they felt best described their current state. However, this chapter also builds upon the work done by Jessica Meyer regarding the use of memoirs to deepen scholarly understanding of non-combatants' experiences during the Great War by adding a transitional layer to the analysis and comparison of non-combatant wartime writings. Analysing both memoirs and letters, then, despite the inevitable problems posed by the complexities of the relationship of the autobiographical 'I'

⁵²⁹ Richard J. McNally, *Remembering Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003) shows how among people suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, they remembered their trauma differently even eighteen months after the event (p. 82).

to the past self and past experiences being depicted, offers a more rounded and richer understanding of the self-representation and perceptions of non-combatants.⁵³⁰

Finally, looking at French and British memoirs, letters and diaries side by side makes a comparative exploration of non-combatant experience possible. This chapter seeks to examine similarities and differences in the presentation of non-combatant writings, concentrating on how masculinity is portrayed by non-combatants themselves. This adds to existing scholarship by widening the scope of previous studies, particularly when examining how writings were altered and edited prior to publication.⁵³¹ Considering the circumstances of production of these personal writings in this way allows for a more critical reading of these texts in terms of how understandings of masculinity changed between the time that the experiences took place and the time in which they were written down, collated and (in some cases) published and disseminated. By looking at memories of the war written many decades later, this chapter seeks to understand how the representation of masculinity in non-combatant narratives may have changed with hindsight and with the inevitable influence of changing time periods and societal expectations in relation to men's roles. Moreover, changing social and familial understandings and expectations will be analysed by using more recently published edited editions of servicemen's letters or diaries. This bridges the gap between what scholars have shown regarding masculinity during the Great War and understandings of soldierly experience that emerged following the end of the conflict. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the narrative self was, as Zahavi notes, that it 'rests upon narrative configurations. Unlike the abstract identity of the same, the narrative identity can include changes and mutations within the cohesion of a lifetime.'⁵³² Ricoeur's insight is helpful when analysing non-combatants' understandings of their own masculinity, as the similarity between the fluidity of narrative identity and masculine identity means that we can plot the mutations and changes in the understandings of masculine identities by tracking and unpicking narrative identity as it is constructed in the memoirs, letters, and diaries of these men.

⁵³⁰ For a discussion of the instability and importance of autobiography as a genre, see Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte Autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975) and « *Cher cahier* ». *Témoignages Sur Le journal Personnel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) by the same author.

⁵³¹ See for example, Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale* for a discussion of British memoirs, and Leonard Smith's *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007) in the French case.

⁵³² Zahavi, 'Self and the Other', p. 2.

This chapter intentionally uses more French servicemen's writings as case studies than British examples. This is due to the existence of a larger number of scholarly writings that focus on the British case, such as the work of Meyer and Roper, which are drawn upon as a theoretical framework throughout the chapter.⁵³³ French non-combatant writings, however, have not hitherto been the subject of as much historical analysis.⁵³⁴ Therefore, the close reading and analysis in this chapter is weighted more heavily in the favour of the French to redress the scholarly imbalance.

Self re-presentation as an author:

Louis Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*

Louis Leleu, a bandsman and stretcher-bearer, was already enlisted in the military at the outbreak of war in 1914. Having begun his military service in 1913 at the age of 21, when war broke out he was, unlike many of the other combatant and non-combatant men who took part in the First World War, a trained soldier. His memoirs, *Des Flandres aux Vosges: Un Musicicien-Brancardier dans la Grande Guerre*,⁵³⁵ published posthumously in 2003 by a publisher that specialises in popular French local history books, were completed nearly fifty years after the war. On the back cover copy, it is noted, 'Ce récit, Louis Leleu l'a longement mûri de la fin de la guerre jusqu'en 1958. Il en achève la rédaction en 1962, peu avant sa mort.'⁵³⁶

In his memoirs there is sense of a duality of intended audience; at first glance it appears that his writings were something of a therapeutic exercise, written solely for himself. However, at other times Leleu addresses the reader directly, telling us exactly who the intended audience is and indeed why he chose to recount his memories seventy years later. He writes: 'je n'avais certes pas la prétention d'écrire une œuvre littéraire. Je voulais seulement laisser à ceux qui sont chers le récit des heures heureuses, gaies et tragiques'.⁵³⁷ Here Leleu is clear that the book is not intended to be

⁵³³ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2009); Michael Roper, 'Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', in *History Workshop Journal*, 50 (2000), pp. 181-204.

⁵³⁴ While scholars such as Leonard Smith and John Horne (*The Embattled Self* and 'Representations of Combat in France' respectively) have analysed the writings of mostly combatant men, there are far fewer examinations of personal writings by non-combatant men alone. One of such few studies is Benoît Boucard's *Brancardiers! : Des soldats de la Grande Guerre* (Louviers: Ysec Éditions, 2015) which focuses solely on French stretcher-bearers.

⁵³⁵ Louis Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges : Un Musicicien-Brancardier dans la Grande Guerre*, Texte de Louis Leleu Transcrit par Danièle Percic (Saint-Cyr-Sur-Loire : Editions Alan Sutton, 2003).

⁵³⁶ Louis Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, back cover copy.

⁵³⁷ Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 5.

a literary work, but a gift or legacy to those he loves. Rather than using the medium of oral history through storytelling, he chooses to write down his ‘happy, gay and tragic’ stories. Is this to prevent the dilution of the memories as they are passed down over the years? Instead of allowing his family members tell his stories as they remember them having been told, they are able to read his words and see exactly how Leleu chose to tell the story, removing the opportunity for family members to change the tone of a tale by adding their own understandings or thoughts. It equally presents the memoirs as a family narrative to be passed from one generation to another, ensuring the survival of this war story. Jay Winter has suggested that:

the huge wave of war literature produced after the First World War encompassed many different kinds of autobiography, moving repeatedly between history and memory. But some of these works, in poetry and prose, were affirmations that the author was in control of his own story. [...] The writing of soldiers’ memoirs enabled some men to assert authority over their own story, and thereby get closer to saying “goodbye to all that”, in the words of the title of Robert Graves’ war book.⁵³⁸

Added to the importance of reasserting control over one’s story is the idea that that one of the motivations for writing memoirs that intersect with experiences of human cruelty, trauma, and suffering such as war is the desire by memoirists to act as a ‘moral witness’. Winter notes that moral witnesses exhibit an ownership of the story: ‘The story is their story; they are wary of others who come to it, and who hijack it for unspecified purposes. Instead, many witnesses opt for family narratives, tales told for the edification of their children or their children’s children.’⁵³⁹ If we consider Leleu to be a moral witness, he necessarily has to detach his family from the telling of his narrative in order that it be passed down unadulterated. Further, Leleu’s notion of passing down his happy and tragic stories speaks to what Meyer refers to as ‘the almost exclusive focus on martial identities that were the source of so many of the memories reconstructed in postwar memoirs.’⁵⁴⁰ In keeping with acting against the grain, which Winter notes is a crucial aspect of ‘moral witnesses,’ Leleu does not expressly present his narrative as conforming to the more

⁵³⁸ Jay Winter, ‘The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity’, in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, J. M. Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), pp. 11-34 (19).

⁵³⁹ Jay Winter, ‘The “Moral Witness” and the Two World Wars’, in *Ethnologie Française* 37 (2003), pp. 467-474 (473).

⁵⁴⁰ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 161.

romanticised stories of the war, or the harrowing tales that fought against that tide.⁵⁴¹ Equally, Leleu does not focus explicitly on his own martial identity; rather, his memoir presents itself more simply and modestly as one man's story of his wartime experiences. However, in the end, his tale draws on all three of these threads, weaving them together to produce a narrative that embodies the non-conformist nature of the autobiographical writing that Winter identifies as that of a moral witness.

Leleu's initial claim is that he passes down his stories to those who are dear to him, suggesting that the book was intended to remain within the family and was not written for publication. This is, however, somewhat contradicted by what he says later:

Mais, après tout, si la Grande Guerre a engendré une littérature abondante, il n'existe guère, que je sache, de livres semblables à celui-ci, où un simple soldat de deuxième classe, musicien-brancardier, raconte ce qu'il a vu dans son petit coin, toujours assez large pour y être bousillé mille fois et plus.⁵⁴²

Here, Leleu chooses to address the abundance of other publications about the Great War and suggests that the reason for this book is that it tells a previously unseen story; 'il n'existe guère, que je sache, de livres semblables à celui-ci'. Therefore, in some ways his own private narrative is adding to the tapestry of popular 'public' understanding of the First World War, something of which he is acutely aware. Dan Todman has noted, in the British case, that one of what he terms the 'myths' of the Great War – that is, the horror and 'futility' of the conflict – arose partially out of the war books boom in the 1920s and 1930s. It is pertinent here to draw a comparison between France and Britain, in that both countries experienced a 'boom' in war literature following the Great War, though the timing of the respective booms were not quite simultaneous. Todman notes that many famous memoirs that were produced in the decades following the conflict, 'can be seen as personal attempts to create coherent stories out of their author's wartime and post-war experiences. [...] The reception afforded these books was not always that intended by their authors.'⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ See Alison S. Fell, *Women as Veterans after the First World War in Britain and France after the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁵⁴² Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 5.

⁵⁴³ Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 155.

This context is evident when we read Leleu's introduction to his memoir. He is aware of the war literature that abounded following the conflict and is telling the reader how he would like his memoir to be received, to avoid a potential misunderstanding on the part of the reader. Further, Aleida Assmann has shown that, 'human beings do not only live in the first person singular, but also in various formats of the first person [sic] plural. They become part of different groups whose 'we' they adopt together with the respective 'social frames' that imply an implicit structure of shared concerns, values, experiences, and narratives.'⁵⁴⁴ Together with acting as a 'moral witness', Leleu's writings represent his attempt to further the stories of others like him by telling his own. He does this by moving against the contemporary, popular 'social frames' of masculinity that did not allow Leleu as a non-combatant to be considered as martially masculine and uses his position as an author to present a new, but complementary, set of 'social frames' shared between himself and those who shared his position during the conflict. This is not to say that Leleu's memoirs are an overt attack on the memory of combatant soldiers, and he does not suggest that they are not worthy of the ways in which they are remembered, rather he presents another group of men to the reader who are equally worthy of being remembered as having fought on equal footing with those around them who bore arms. In this way, as he sees himself to be on a par with his armed comrades, he thus sees his own service as having contributed to the same wartime duty that was expected of all men during the conflict. Therefore, by completing his wartime service Leleu perceives and describes his martial masculinity as complementary and of equal value.

More than this, Leleu suggests that what he wants to convey is the 'truth'. He reflects that, upon beginning to write, 'Avant tout, je me suis promis d'être sincère et vrai, et je le fus.'⁵⁴⁵ He also states, 'Je dois à la vérité [...]'⁵⁴⁶ which leads the reader to understand that, for Leleu, recounting the truth – or at least *his* version of the truth – is an important motivation behind his writing. Leleu invokes here the idea of a debt; he owes it to the truth to tell his story. This shows an interesting aspect of his motivation to write: a sentiment of owing a debt. Other scholars have noted that reasons for veterans to write memoirs include feeling a debt: to their families, and more often to

⁵⁴⁴ Aleida Assmann, 'Re-framing Memory. Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past', in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, J. M. Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010) pp. 35-51 (37).

⁵⁴⁵ Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁶ Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 12.

comrades, especially those who were lost during the conflict.⁵⁴⁷ Here we can again refer to Winter's argument about the 'moral witness'. Winter suggests that such writers 'become a kind of fictive kinship group. They can talk to others who had been there, but perhaps not to the rest of us.'⁵⁴⁸ I would argue that Leleu is indeed writing on behalf of a kinship group, that of his comrades who were either alive or dead at the time of writing. His purpose was not only to tell his/their 'truth' so that it remains, in Winter's words, un-'hijacked', but also to build a bridge of knowledge and understanding between those who were there and those who were not. His memoir acts as a bridge to the 'audience, perhaps of uncertain size and scepticism, but made up of people who may come listen and understand some day.'⁵⁴⁹

The sense of memoirs as a bridge between two communities is often shown in his use of humour and irony. Leleu is a veteran of the conflict. However, as a non-combatant who survived, perhaps there is a further underlying tension in the knowledge of his own survival. As a war veteran, particularly a veteran of a war in which death by industrialised weaponry made the nature of death increasingly arbitrary, survival may have seemed more a question of luck or chance than as a result of bravery or heroics. As we have seen, physical appearance was intimately linked to understandings of soldierly heroism,⁵⁵⁰ yet Leleu intentionally informs the reader that he did not live up to this traditionally masculine ideal:

Je dois à la vérité de dire que je n'étais pas le meilleur de la section car, *primo*, je pensais plus à la musique qu'à l'exercice et *secundo*, j'étais aussi agile qu'un bœuf et aussi souple qu'un barreau de prison [...] j'étais très déficient au physique [...]⁵⁵¹

Leleu therefore utilises humour to describe his own physical 'deficiency'. On the surface, this comedic self-deprecation outlines one of the reasons for which he joined the army band; not only that he '[pensait] plus à la musique', but also that he was not physically fit enough to be a combatant soldier. The self-deprecating humour in the sentence at first detracts from the underlying tone of unworthiness. However, when we consider that Leleu's reason for writing his

⁵⁴⁷ Emma Hanna has noted that 'personal remembrances show that some ex-soldiers remained haunted by the emotional weight of the dead upon the living.' See Emma Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 72.

⁵⁴⁸ Winter, 'Moral Witness', p. 473.

⁵⁴⁹ Winter, 'Moral Witness', p. 468.

⁵⁵⁰ See chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁵⁵¹ Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, pp. 12-13.

memoirs may have been a sense of duty to soldiers that were killed, it becomes evident that his physical ineptitude may not be quite as comical as it first appears. This suggests then, that Leleu is aware of not necessarily having fulfilled the criteria to be martially masculine during the period, and humour is a way of addressing this. He is acknowledging, both to the community of veterans and to the audience of the future, that his survival was not based on his own physical ability. In some ways, this reads as an apology to those who did not survive, perhaps who he deemed to be more typically masculine. However, it also points to a desire to widen his audience's awareness of the range of different men who served in the conflict; his memoirs are filling a specific niche in the historical narrative. This reflects Leleu's engagement with what Winter calls the 'unformattable readings' of commemoration, in this case martial masculinity, and demonstrates a sense of unease that Leleu feels considering his own masculine status during the conflict. Men whose physiques were not that of an Adonis, and men who served unarmed, are both represented in Leleu's memoirs, and Leleu sets himself up as a microcosmic case-study that is broadly representative of the war experience of other men like him who did not fit a stereotypical ideal. Interestingly, then, Leleu is representing other non-combatant men through his own introspection, turning the analytical lens upon himself. In this way, a form of apology for his own – perhaps unexpected – survival becomes a cause for writing the war story of a group of men whose stories did not necessarily fit the mould of the strong and brave front-line soldier. In so doing, he gently obliges his readers to acknowledge that the conflict was no longer the sole realm of the martially masculine warrior-hero, but of ordinary men like him and those he served alongside. He thereby opens a space for himself and other non-combatants in which a complementary masculine figure was able to exist; an ideal which did not epitomise the physical ideal, nor bore arms.

Wilfred Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*

Prior to the outbreak of war, Wilfred Cook was an apprentice printer, who was enlisted as a volunteer as soon as he was able in March 1915. Initially drafted into the infantry of the Prince of Wales Own West Yorkshire Regiment, his ambition in the military was to emulate what he refers to as the 'old soldier'.⁵⁵² That same year he is transferred against his wishes to the stretcher-bearers, following the recommendation that he 'had been a bandsman once in civvy street.'⁵⁵³ Despite the

⁵⁵² Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 46.

⁵⁵³ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 95.

official categorisation of bandsmen as non-combatants, Private Cook details several moments when he is armed with a rifle after having transferred to the Regimental Band. He quickly settles into his new role, in which he remains until the end of the war, though he is sent back to Britain after being wounded in 1917. His unpublished memoirs, entitled *The Lengthened Shadow*, are in general optimistic in tone, despite the sombre nature of the title. They are detailed, particularly concerning people that he comes across and serves alongside and are drawn in part from memory and in part from diaries he kept throughout the course of the war. Despite the aid of his diaries, however, they are somewhat lacking in concrete details such as specific dates and at times the tone does emulate a stream of consciousness rather than the more structured prose that we might associate with a memoir.

Unlike Leleu, who presents himself as a microcosm for non-combatants in general, Cook uses descriptions of other servicemen in his memoirs to shape the reader's opinions about himself. Specifically, he uses other non-combatant men to reflect upon his own status as a non-combatant:

It is one thing to us so used to shell fire to take cover on the ground, it is an instinct to judge the fall of a shell and lie prone or drop into some depression, but how does a man on a horse with all of the noise of hooves and harness and the rattle of the gun carriage behind him even hear the shell that is likely to decapitate him as he sits up there fully exposed. It takes "guts" to be a driver we all agree [...] Wonderful men!!⁵⁵⁴

Seemingly Cook records his own opinion about comrades on horseback, but here what he is really doing is by talking about the 'guts' of other non-combatants. In so doing, he creates a space in which, despite their exclusion from the traditionally heroic role of combatant soldier, non-combatants can be seen to be brave and therefore masculine.

Cook clearly sets up oppositions in his writings between an 'Us' and an 'Other'.⁵⁵⁵ Here, the two groups could be several sets of different groups. Cook differentiates between the 'Us' soldiers and the 'Other' civilian, as well as the 'Us' which refers to his readers who engage with his memoirs and with whom he feels a kinship or comradeship based on their own memories of the conflict. He also differentiates between the 'Us' of the brave men and the 'Other' men who are deemed to be wanting in their behaviour during battle. His memoirs communicate between the two groups in an effort to comprehend his own position as his situation changed over the course of the war. Again,

⁵⁵⁴ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 115.

⁵⁵⁵ Jan Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', p. 127.

we see individual memories ‘in communication with others’, as Assmann has said, though in his case his memoirs are in communication with his present, and with each other. In such times and places as Cook saw in his war as he reconstitutes them in the form of memoir, they are being renegotiated and re-understood to allow them to be communicated to his audience.

In his memoirs the ‘Us’ and ‘Other’ often change and are melded together throughout the course of his writings. In the section above he does not necessarily set himself up as one of the ‘wonderful men’, leading the reader to question who exactly is included in that group. The ‘others’ then are the brave drivers who are not given the opportunity to ‘lie prone or drop into’ shell craters on the battlefield, suggesting that the ‘Us’ are the men who are able and do take cover on the ground. In this case, both combatant and non-combatant men are grouped together – both stretcher-bearers and infantrymen who went over the top. This shows Cook’s desire to cement a link between unarmed men and their combatant comrades, even going as far as to claim non-combatant men to be the bravest of all on the battlefield. Interestingly, the outcome of this is not to suggest that the ‘Us’ group is not brave, it is simply to elevate a group of non-combatants to a level of bravery above that of the typical – armed – soldier. Cook re-orders the traditional, military hierarchy of masculinity relating to the bearing of arms, choosing instead to focus on the importance of facing danger and the ability to protect oneself, or, more specifically, the ability to hide. Perhaps, given that he served in both combatant and non-combatant roles, he sees himself as ideally placed to do so.

We see the differences between ‘Us’ and the ‘other’ played out time and again in Cook’s memoirs. It is particularly striking when he discusses the introduction of conscripts into the army:

New drafts of men from England made up our deficiencies, many being back to France for the second or even third time after wounds and others “conscripts” under the Lord Derby scheme.

“A volunteer is worth ten pressed men” was often said, we had to see what these pressed men could do and at first sight we were not impressed, so far we had men about us who we could rely on in any situation however grim, could they match up [...] it was soon apparent the shellshocked [sic] were men of our latest drafts, their first time under fire and they just “broke”, there was no other word for it, so much for Lord Derby’s men we thought.⁵⁵⁶

This damning opinion, which Cook suggests was shared by other men in his regiment, is a more

⁵⁵⁶ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 133.

tangible, purposeful separation by the author of men who volunteered to fight, and those who were conscripted under the Derby Scheme.⁵⁵⁷ This speaks to the idea inherent to martial masculinity of knowing one's duty to one's country, and being willing to perform it; being forced to protect one's homeland represented the antithesis of how martial masculinity was performed when going to war. What's more, another facet of the mistrust shown above is the element of the unknown. Cook knew and trusted those he already had around him, a feeling he presents as being shared by his comrades. As such, when new men who had not volunteered to fight were to be introduced to their group, the unknown men presented a sort of threat to the balance that had been created before their arrival. Moreover, a hierarchy and set of relationships was already established and new arrivals were seen as a destabilising influence. As Meyer asserts, comradeship 'was the new definition of heroic masculinity. To prove oneself in the eyes of memoirists one had to prove oneself not as an adventurer but as a good comrade.'⁵⁵⁸ In Cook's memoirs we see the transition to which Meyer points taking place. The emphasis Cook places on knowing his 'own men' and the obvious sense of comradeship that radiates from his memoirs, reflects his own understanding that the way he measured men during his own wartime experience was indeed by the yardstick of being a good comrade rather than by their martial ability, as would have been expected at the outbreak of the conflict.⁵⁵⁹ Further, this intersects with his desire to present non-combatants not only as brave and courageous, but as being good comrades, and therefore as heroically masculine.

Cook's sense of pride in his strident defence of his 'own men,' while not unusual in wartime memoirs, is used to undermine those outside of this group and in turn to elevate his own standing (or the standing of the collective) within the military hierarchy:

It was a long time before we had a concert party and when we did it was by our own men mainly not paid professionals "dodging the column" [sic] There were few dodgers and certainly not in the Stretcher bearers, had one felt like slinking out of a dangerous or unpleasant task it would take a lot of courage to attempt it.⁵⁶⁰

Cook's true targets are shirkers. In fact, it is his hatred of shirkers that underlines his other disparaging comments towards other men, including conscripts. Here Cook engages with popular

⁵⁵⁷ For a discussion of the integration of conscripts into the army, see Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁵⁵⁸ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 148.

⁵⁵⁹ The importance of hand-to-hand combat to masculinity is discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

⁵⁶⁰ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 173.

discourse around shirking, such as the representations that have previously been discussed.⁵⁶¹ Cook claims that shirkers were nowhere to be found among stretcher-bearers, and in fact suggests that it was fear that kept men from attempting it. Rather than the fear of the war breeding shirkers, as it was feared by the British government and public at large, fear of the wrath and hatred of other men is the deciding element in keeping men true to the cause. The result of Cook's portrayals of the men around him here is that rather than debasing the standing of others around him, he bolsters his own masculine standing by bolstering that of other non-combatants. Again, we see that Cook's own sense of self is intimately linked to his sense of community: to an 'Us'.

The need to disparage shirkers and prove that he was not one of them is a probable explanation for the disdain with which he speaks about 'Lord Derby's men'. His determination to distinguish himself from men who had been forced to fight is symbolic of the wider social pressures rooted in the traditional understanding of masculinity as inherently linked to protection. This also explains why his 'Us' groups vary so much, as the extent to which the men in the group are different (combatant or non-combatant, for example) pales in comparison to the difference between a shirker and a true soldier. Indeed, Cook's mistrust towards the new men that joined them fades and he returns to describing his regiment with fondness:

One could write of all these fellows individually, we hardly had a misfit even to the newest ones who joined us later. If their language was rather lurid to me still adhering to my resolve not to engage in it in other ways they had a very good moral code. I never heard real filth from any of them as one is led to believe was the habit of men by writers who themselves have depraved minds or no experience first hand [sic] of the men of the first world war.⁵⁶²

Given that there was 'hardly a misfit' among them, Cook indicates that the 'newest ones' ultimately conformed to his own expectations of the group. His own analysis of their 'lurid' language points to the social differences between these men and suggests that in peacetime it would have been unlikely for them to have rubbed shoulders, and even more unlikely that they would have considered themselves to be a unit. The undertone is that, despite their differences in language, it was their moral code that became their bonding link; a moral code that understood the importance of friendship and comradeship in wartime.

⁵⁶¹ See chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁵⁶² Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 173.

Later in the memoirs, Cook even goes as far as to defend the newcomers, adamantly denying ever hearing ‘real filth’ from their mouths. In doing so, he strengthens the fact that they are at this point truly a part of the ‘Us’ and no longer the ‘Other’. However, the Other that he chooses to acknowledge becomes those who have never had a first-hand account of the war, that is, those who had never ‘been there’.⁵⁶³ This adds weight to Hynes’ arguments in *The Soldiers’ Tale*, in which the importance of first-hand narratives is stressed in giving the soldiers’ narratives a sense of authority and authenticity. Here, Cook is asserting his authority in making the distinction, in this instance, between two or more groups of men. However, when we consider his own authorship of the text, Cook’s memoirs themselves serve, as Hynes suggests, to afford him an authoritative status in their very creation: ‘About war, men who were there make absolute claims for their authority [...]: war cannot be comprehended at second-hand, they say; it is not accessible to analogy or logic.’⁵⁶⁴

Perhaps this is why Cook’s flitting between acceptance and denigration of varying groups around him is never fully explained; the apparent lack of logic in his writing is borne of conflict, and this is reflected in his conflicting emotions and thoughts towards the people he served alongside, and further, towards his own sense of status and therefore his own sense of masculine standing. Cook’s oscillating portrayals of other men could also be a product of the narrative being created so many years after the war. Fivush and Buckler have shown that, ‘gender may be differentially highlighted in different contexts even for the same individual at the same point. That is, who one is telling one’s life to, and why, may influence which aspects of gender will be salient.’⁵⁶⁵ This accounts for the complexities of the narratives that we see throughout the letters and memoirs discussed here, as the audience is an unknown. Although Cook here is writing, perhaps for others, perhaps for himself, he communicates a need to address all possible audiences and therefore to account for different interpretations. Michael Roper suggests that a war narrative created some time after the fact ‘is motivated as much by the need to address feelings which date from the event itself as from the imagined expectations of [the] audience at the moment of telling.’⁵⁶⁶ Here then we see not only

⁵⁶³ In chapter 2 I discussed the importance attributed to ‘being there’, in chapter 2 regarding the narrative of fictionalised accounts of war, and Jean Norton Cru’s belief that only those who had been there had the right to write about the conflict.

⁵⁶⁴ Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale*, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁵ Fivush and Buckner, ‘Creating Gender and Identity through Autobiographical Narratives’, pp. 154-55.

⁵⁶⁶ Roper, ‘Re-remembering the Soldier Hero’, p. 184.

Cook's individual anxieties regarding his masculine status, but his (perhaps unconscious) difficulty in reconciling his own understanding of events with what he conceives the contemporary popular understanding of the war to be, resulting in a tumultuous narrative shaped by both the author's past and by his present.

Like Leleu, Cook wants to relay to the reader that his narrative is his own 'truth'. In his work on memoirs from the Finnish Civil War of 1918, Andreas McKeough suggests that when discussing traumatic experience authors use the mode of bearing witness as it is so firmly 'related to the constitution of historical agency and authority thus created'.⁵⁶⁷ While this particular moment in Cook's narrative is not especially traumatic, his narrative is couched in the context of direct experience of conflict. The conflict itself is, of course, traumatic, but it is also the root of the shifting gendered expectations of masculinity which threatens the perception of Cook's own identity, both as a soldier and as a man. Therefore, in a similar way to Leleu, we might understand that in denouncing those who have proffered what Cook considers to be 'untrue' accounts of the nature of the language of the common soldier, Cook is both acknowledging his own historical agency in his telling of his own 'truth' of the conflict and establishing authority over his own narrative. Indeed, this echoes what we have already seen in Leleu's memoirs and his stance as a moral witness. While the reader's attention is specifically drawn to Leleu's engagement with the broader literature of the war, Cook does not draw attention to the fact that his memoir works to re-balance the popular historical narrative in favour of the non-combatant soldier. He does, however, insert phrases such as, 'A reader of the histories of the first world war will know that following the Somme battle the Germans were in danger from the salient our advance had made across the River Anere and Aras.'⁵⁶⁸ As Roper points out in *Re-Remembering The Soldier Hero*, authors of memoirs often inserted things such as direct speech (which we see time and again in Cook's writings) and times and dates in order that the reader is assured of their veracity. In both memoirs the authors use the vantage point of establishing their own historical narrative within the broader, public narrative of the conflict and of masculine identity. In doing so, they allow themselves the

⁵⁶⁷ Andreas McKeough, 'Constructing Personal Historical Agency, Making Sense of the Past?', in *Therapeutic Uses of Storytelling: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Narration as Therapy* ed. by Camilla Asplund Ingemark (Lund, Sweden: Nordick Academic Press, 2013), pp. 101-114 (109).

⁵⁶⁸ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 144.

space to explore and present to the world their own understandings of their wartime identity and therefore offer an account of their own, ‘non-combatant’ version of martial masculinity.

Self-perceptions through the lens of family

While the authors in the previous section took great pains to ensure that the narrative portrayed in their memoirs was in their own voice, I will now move on to examine war narratives that have been edited by family members. In doing so, I will further draw out the comparison between self-perceptions of masculine identity and the popular understandings of non-combatant masculinity during the conflict. First, I will examine a collection of letters published by the daughter of a French serviceman during his lifetime, then I will move on to consider a collection of *cahiers* belonging to a stretcher-bearer who died in combat, which were later edited and published by a family member.

Joannès and Simone Pestier, *Les Lettres de Mon Père*

Joannès Pestier was a stretcher-bearer during the First World War. At the outbreak of the war he was drafted into the medical branch of the French Army. Pestier’s collection of letters home show, however, the evolution of his role from a *brancardier* into other roles – including that of a Colonel’s secretary – as he moved further away from the front line. The collection of letters, compiled, edited and later published by Pestier’s daughter, Simone, was published nine decades after the war in 2007. The title of the collection, *Lettres de mon Père*,⁵⁶⁹ makes it clear that the authorship is shared by Pestier and his daughter. Not only this, the *préambule* to the collection is written Jacques Pilloy who identifies himself as Pestier’s grandson (though he is not the son of Simone Pestier). The tone of the *préambule* is one of admiration and trust, going as far as to say that Pestier presents the ‘truth’ regarding the decisions taken by the French Army during the conflict. As my discussion of Leleu and Cook has shown, this is a loaded term when we consider historical ‘truth’ and the fact that truth differs depending on whose truth is being told. Samuel Hynes has argued that the accepted narrative of the war was borne of the memoirs, poems and stories published in the 1920s and 1930s, and that this version of the war – one which in Britain

⁵⁶⁹ *Les Lettres de mon Père pendant la Guerre de 1914 à 1918 et 1919. Lettres du front du brancardier Joannès PESTIER à sa femme Jeanne ; Par sa fille, Simone* (Paris: Editions Mémoires et Cultures, 2007).

has often been encapsulated in the phrase ‘lions led by donkeys’ - was left unquestioned for many years.⁵⁷⁰ There is no sense in Pilloy’s section of the text that suggests he is referring to what we might consider as those that Hynes and Todman refer to as the ‘myths’ of the Great War.⁵⁷¹

Pilloy states that, in his opinion, Pestier would never have expected that his letters would be turned into a book:

Monsieur Joannès Pestier ne pensait sûrement pas, entre 1914 et 1919 qu’une partie de son courrier relu et choisi par sa fille Simone allait être compilé en 2004, (dans sa quatre-vingt-onzième année) pour en faire un beau recueil de témoignages pour ses descendants et autres lecteurs...⁵⁷²

This is, then, a statement that it was never Pestier’s intention that his letters would be collected and read by people outside of those to whom they were addressed. Rather, the collection is a product of his daughter’s desire to see her father’s letters compiled and published in such a way. Moreover, it is Simone’s intent that shapes the nature and indeed the content of the publication, despite the fact that Pestier was alive when the collection was published. Pestier’s voice is seen only through his letters – he does not write a conclusion to the text or annotate his letters. It is Simone who chose which letters would make it into the collection and which would be excluded. We can only speculate as to what those missing letters may have included: could they have included what his family might consider to be socially ‘embarrassing’ moments that Pestier would not care to recall? Might the emotions contained therein have contradicted the image of the brave, masculine soldier that his family wished to portray? These questions may go unanswered, but it is clear that by excluding certain aspects of his war experience, the edited letters that we are given may not provide the full picture. Roper has shown that ‘The historian of trench experience often faces a legacy of silence or pain obliquely expressed, wartime and subsequent social scripts concealing or curtailing the very impulses we now seek to understand.’⁵⁷³ It is ironic that by adding to the literature of the Great War, volumes such as this that are edited by families can sometimes compound issues such as those caused by gaps, silences, and censorship in relation to scholarly understanding of wartime masculinities.

⁵⁷⁰ Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head 1990), p. x.

⁵⁷¹ Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, p. 138.

⁵⁷² Pestier, *Les Lettres de Mon Père*, p. 8.

⁵⁷³ Roper, ‘Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero’, p. 200.

Consequently, the image of Pestier that the reader is encouraged to form in the edited collection is one of a man having truly done his duty to his country, based on the time that Pestier served over the course of the conflict, and beyond. In the *préambule* we are told:

Joannès Pestier, quant à lui, a fait bien plus [than the 4 years of war], puisque avant la déclaration de guerre, il a fait son service militaire de août 1911 à août 1914 et que, après l'armistice il a dû rester dans les services sanitaires de l'armée pour sa convalescence jusqu'en février 1919, soit une durée totale de 90 mois !⁵⁷⁴

This feeds directly into notions of martial masculinity that prevailed between 1914-18, that 'being there' (as demonstrated by having been engaged in military service for ninety months) was a key part of a soldier's identity, and therefore a key part of showing one's masculinity during wartime. Evidently, the family are keen to emphasise the length of his service, revealing the persistence of the notion of length of service is fundamental to the idealised 'brave' soldier in popular understandings of the First World War.

This notion of duration of service and status is also echoed by Pestier in a letter to his wife: 'Je vais te faire rire... [le colonel] m'a nommé "soldat de première classe". C'est joli au bout de 68 mois de service, à ce train là je ne suis pas encore général ! [...] il a fait ça sérieusement...'⁵⁷⁵ As noted in the introduction to this thesis, unarmed military men such as stretcher-bearers were generally categorised as *soldats de deuxième classe*.⁵⁷⁶ Pestier's hollow humour and sarcasm as he tells his wife that he has finally been re-classified as a first-class soldier is unhidden – after all, it has only taken sixty-eight months! His exasperated tone suggests that he gives no credence to the official military hierarchy, as his own sixty-eight months of service have proven him to be a first-class soldier whether or not he has officially been recognised as such. This shows that duration of service was more important amongst serving men themselves than official classifications, and gives credence to the concept that perceptions of martial masculinity itself were no longer based on titles. Therefore, the idea that being classed as a non-combatant was less masculine than a combatant was no longer valid. We must note here that 'first class' and 'second class' soldiers did not exist in same way in the British Army, meaning that this hierarchy and subsequent ill-feeling shown in Pestier's letters is distinct to the French experience. In some ways, the echelons of military masculinity that we have seen Cook try to dissemble were even more deeply embedded

⁵⁷⁴ Pestier, *Les Lettres de Mon Père*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁵ Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, p. 196.

⁵⁷⁶ See the introduction to this thesis.

within French understandings of martial masculinity. It is no surprise then, that such sentiments feature so strongly in Pestier's letters, and further are wholly supported and reinforced by his family's additions to his own narrative; both placed importance on the duration of service in relation to a soldier's right to claim the status of 'brave *poilu*'.

Not only do the extracts from Pestier's letters point to a sense of division between combatants and non-combatants, there is also a clear sense of division between civilian and soldier that intersects with Pestier's emotions regarding the former. He writes to his wife:

Tu ne te rends pas compte de ce que je fais. Le rôle du brancardier est de ramasser les blessés sur le champ de bataille, de faire les premiers pansements et de les conduire à l'ambulance, sur un brancard s'ils ne peuvent pas marcher. [...] Dans une bataille, tous les brancardiers se réunissent et marchent avec le Major. Il nous arrive moins souvent qu'aux autres de coucher dehors.⁵⁷⁷

The harsh tone of this extract jumps out at the reader as Pestier claims that his wife does not realise or understand what it is that he does in the war, and then goes on to describe the job of the stretcher-bearer. This perceived lack of understanding of his role touches on the two themes above: first, his wife cannot understand his role in the war as the war is incomprehensible to those who have not taken part in it; and second, a more general lack of understanding of the importance of the non-combatant role of a stretcher-bearer. As such, Pestier's letter draws one's attention to his perception of the public's opinions of his role as an unarmed man during a time of war.

Here we may also consider D.C. Gill's assertion regarding the reasons for which soldiers create a war letter or a diary:

Communion stands as the most important motive for creating a war letter or diary. A letter or diary ties people to their prewar sense of self and to their prewar reality. It particularly allows soldiers a tenuous purchase on a world with which they no longer have a sensory connection. [...] Such communion not only enlarges one's identity during wartime, but it allows a writer to revisit a place felt to be physically and existentially safe[...]⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁷ Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, p. 24.

⁵⁷⁸ D.C. Gill, *How We Are Changed by War: A Study of Letters and Diaries from Colonial Conflicts to Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Routledge: New York, 2010), p. 13.

While there are religious implications to Gill's argument, in his memoirs Pestier is tongue-in-cheek about the ways in which religion was used during the conflict. He notes in the first year of the war that he saw large numbers of new soldiers coming to Mass, 'Ils sont nombreux ceux qui changent d'idée après avoir vu la mort en face!'⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, he writes in a light-hearted tone about Catholics and Protestants preaching together during the *fête de Jeanne d'Arc*, 'À 7h30, messe militaire [...] prêchée par un prêtre brancardier [...] Le Colon qui est protestant assistait à la cérémonie. En ce moment il balance entre les 2 religions!'⁵⁸⁰ This coming together of two Christian denominations during a national day celebrating Joan of Arc reinforces Gill's assertion that letters and diaries functioned as a type of communion in which soldiers forged a link to a space in which they felt safe.

The frustration with which Pestier writes that his wife does not understand his wartime occupation is thus not only in relation to his wife's perceived lack of understanding but is also a reaction to what the lack of understanding signifies – his own distance from his home and his pre-war reality. While he writes letters to his family to maintain his connection to his own pre-war normality. It is to Pestier, at least in part, unsuccessful. He cannot maintain his own connection to his pre-war sense of self because the gap between himself and his tether (his family) cannot be bridged, and rather than the connection being maintained and reinforced through writing, the distance and lack of connection is instead emphasized. The very act of writing, which is Pestier's attempt to continue to hold onto his connections to his pre-war world, contributes to his own sense of separation from the same. This then causes him to express his unhappiness at the situation by asserting that his own role in the war is misunderstood. We cannot say with certainty whether his wife did not understand his role, but it is a moot point, as Pestier himself felt that she did not. He, as Gill asserts, attempts to revisit his place of safety, but cannot, as his identity there does not seemingly correspond with how he views himself. This therefore forcefully highlights a break between his pre and post-war self. As his sense of identity encompasses his sense of his own masculinity, it therefore follows that it also represents to him – perhaps unconsciously – a fracture in his own sense of self, as his connection to his pre-war masculinity is broken.

⁵⁷⁹ Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, p. 57.

⁵⁸⁰ Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, p. 63.

This sense of indignation and frustration is shown time and again, particularly when Pestier hears of people who, in his opinion, are shirking their wartime duty: ‘Tu me dis que Monsieur G... a reçu sa feuille ; il rouspette, ça lui fera du bien. Il ne devrait pas chercher à éviter l’occasion de rendre service !’ And then again two months later he writes: ‘Tu me dis que Louis Broca retourne chez lui, c’est incompréhensible, ce n’est pas son gros dos qui doit l’exempter! Il doit y avoir autre chose cachée qu’ils ne disent pas, mystère ?’⁵⁸¹ Throughout his letters, Pestier conveys much of the popular, public discourse around shirkers and shirking in this way, often comparing these men to him, to reassure the recipient – and I would argue himself – that the label of shirker would not and could not apply to him. In February and March 1915, the subject is discussed on numerous occasions. Indeed, in one letter Pestier even points to the fact that he himself could have been exempted from war service:

Il ne faut pas avoir d’arrières pensées au sujet de mes yeux. Ce qui est fait est fait, il ne faut pas en parler. Certains auraient demandé à être réformé pour myopie. Si tout le monde tirait au flanc nous serions tous boches à l’heure actuelle... C’est vrai qu’il y a 6 mois que je suis sur le front et toujours en première ligne. 6 mois, peu d’hommes peuvent dire autant ! C’est une épreuve, même une grande épreuve qu’il faut accepter sans récriminer, nous n’en aurons que plus de mérite. Je crois même deviner que tu ne serais pas fière d’un mari qui ne soit pas bon à servir son pays...⁵⁸²

In this letter he is both agreeing with what we must assume that his wife has written to him, that perhaps he might be exempted from serving, and insisting that his effort is essential to the success of the French Army by claiming the French people ‘would be German by now’ if everyone who could be exempted sought to be. This solidifies his standing as a hero in the eyes of his wife, but also goes further to suggest that by accepting and submitting himself to such an ‘épreuve,’ he will in the end be rewarded, or at least seen as being deserving of merit. Pestier writes on 28 February 1915, ‘Le temps me dure de plus en plus que ça pète à outrance afin que l’on voit vite la fin de ce long martyr...’⁵⁸³ The religious connotations that Pestier evokes in his letters links his martial duty to his Christian duty. This is reminiscent of the arguments made in Britain when combatting the Conscientious Objectors’ arguments against involvement in warfare⁵⁸⁴; Pestier’s non-combatant

⁵⁸¹ Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, pp. 26, 44.

⁵⁸² Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, p. 44.

⁵⁸³ Pestier, *Les Lettres de mon Père*, p. 50.

⁵⁸⁴ See chapter 3 in which I discuss home perceptions of the non-combatant.

status does not, to him, compromise his morality, but instead bolsters his sense of duty, and therefore his status both as a ‘masculine’ soldier and as a patriotic French Catholic.

Léopold Retailleau, *Carnets de Guerre*

Léopold Charles Adolphe Retailleau, another stretcher-bearer and bandsman during the Great War, was born in Cholet in 1892, the son of a cooper and a dressmaker. His *carnets de guerre*⁵⁸⁵ span ten notebooks, beginning with his mobilisation at the outbreak of the conflict, and ending the day before his death in July 1918. The majority of his notes show the monotony of his existence, though he wrote at least one sentence each of the 1477 days that he was at war. The sole gap in the text occurs between 12 September and 19 November 1914, during which time he was evacuated due to illness. Interestingly, one of his comrades, Durieux, took up the writing in the notebook on Retailleau’s behalf during this time. This is not the only part of the text in which others have edited his writings, however. The editors note that they have re-ordered some sections as Retailleau ‘avait ajouté plusieurs textes concernant le premier mois de la guerre et rédigés par des camarades du 77e R.I., musiciens-brancardiers ou non,’ and as such these additions to the original entries are shown together in a section entitled ‘Avant et début de la guerre’.⁵⁸⁶ Of the writings analysed in this thesis, this is the only one in which the writings from the time were added to by others who were at the front alongside the author. There is, however, no reason given by either the author or the editors as to why this happened. We might surmise that given that this was the first month of the war, Retailleau was interested in the reactions of those around him and sought to understand his own reactions to the war by looking at those of his comrades. Asking them to contribute to his own notebook would have been one way of doing so.

Further, the preface to the text is written by Army General Jean-Pierre Kelche (Chef d’état-major des armées at the time of publication in 2003), who notes that Retailleau evokes ‘l’archetype de ce “poilu” français qui sut combattre sans souci des blessures et sans chercher le repos, pour défendre la liberté de son pays.’⁵⁸⁷ Given his non-combatant status, it appears extraordinary to describe him as a typically heroic infantryman, and clearly shows the change in position of the French army from the time of the conflict to the time of publication. Kelche does not point out that

⁵⁸⁵ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*.

⁵⁸⁶ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁸⁷ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 8.

Retailleau was a non-combatant and therefore unarmed, he instead puts him on a pedestal as an archetypal soldier who ‘knew how to fight’. This suggests an understanding on the part of the current French military authorities that the concept of ‘fighting’ takes many forms, not all of them centred around weaponry. Further, the twenty-first century myth of the ‘brave poilu’, in France that mirrors the British ‘brave Tommy’ of the First World War makes it impossible to suggest a hierarchy of service. Remembering and commemorating all men who served rather than a certain percentage maintains a sense of unity that would otherwise be fractured and would give rise to competing popular understandings of the conflict in its aftermath.⁵⁸⁸

Léopold Retailleau’s great-nephew, Claude Retailleau, suggests in the introduction to the collection of Léopold’s *cahiers* that it was his artistic temperament and his love of playing the saxophone that responded to the call of the ‘fanfare régimentaire.’⁵⁸⁹ Claude Retailleau notes that while with the 77th R.I., enlisted as a stretcher-bearer, Léopold participated in the battle of the Marne, Flanders, and the Somme (among others) continuing ‘son obscur, pénible et dangereux va-et-vient’⁵⁹⁰ of ferrying the wounded to the *postes de secours* from the battlefield. He was killed in action on 26 July 1918, and was posthumously awarded the *Médaille Militaire* on 13 August 1918 for having ‘s’est dépensé sans compter au mépris du danger dans le transport des blessés. Excellent soldat.’⁵⁹¹

Léopold Retailleau’s military career is summarised by Claude Retailleau as follows:

Léopold Retailleau partage donc désormais son existence entre le P.C. du colonel, où il sert comme planton, les premières lignes, où il relève les blessés, l’arrière, où il est employé à diverses tâches plus ou moins pénibles (creusement de tombes, corvées diverses), et la fanfare avec son lot de répétitions et de concerts.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ On commemorating the First World War, see: Mark Connelly, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London 1916-1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2001); *Commemorative Spaces of the First World War: Historical Geographies at the Centenary* ed. by James Wallis and David C. Harvey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

⁵⁸⁹ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 13.

⁵⁹⁰ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 14.

⁵⁹¹ He was buried first at Saint-Agnan in the parish cemetery, three years later his body was exhumed and re-interred in Cholet (p. 15.).

⁵⁹² Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 14.

Retailleau's writings begin with flowery, and in places hyperbolic, language. This is symptomatic of the romanticised view of the outbreak of war in France; the country was going to defeat the Germans and win back Alsace and Lorraine. Given that the outbreak of the conflict was already being draped in historic overtones before and as it occurred, there is little doubt that Retailleau was aware that he was an historical actor, and therefore understood that his writings would record his thoughts for posterity. His ornamental style of writing is used most when discussing his mobilisation and how he felt about being part of the war in the early days. However, his writings change dramatically as he goes through the war, becoming detached and, in some senses, cold. The contrast between his writing before his arrival at the front and after is stark; his sentences shorten, and he seems to note down simple sentences recounting what happened only and offers no further emotional response or reflection on what he does. In October 1916, Retailleau sees his brother, whom he has not seen since his was mobilised: 'Avant Combles, nous faisons la pose et je vais voir mon frère avec Foyer et Lily. La joie de nous revoir. Il me donne du tabac ce qui me fait bien plaisir. Après avoir parlé pendant un quart d'heure, nous repartons.'⁵⁹³ This short section epitomises the way Retailleau writes the majority of his entries in his diaries. His lack of reflection or emotional reaction suggests that his writings were not intended to be read by anyone other than himself. The difference between Retailleau's *carnets* and the other memoirs and collections of letters discussed here indicates that they were used by the author as a way of recording the war, not as a means for others to understand it, but perhaps to create one daily action in which to ground his sense of normality and his sense of self. The purpose of this war diary then, was not to give Retailleau a space to think more about the ever-evolving war and its consequences, but a space to escape into something that would remain unchanged each day – the habit of writing and recording. This reflects Gill's identification of correspondence during wartime as a way in which for the letter-writer to have a space in which to reconnect with the safe space of their prewar self.⁵⁹⁴ Creating a routine amidst the chaos of conflict would allow him to ground his sense of identity. This would also explain the lack of reflection upon his identity in the text as his diaries were not to be used for that purpose; they were a different kind of therapeutic writing, one which was done during the war, and is therefore not a space for reflection within which the changing popular attitudes towards the war are considered as we have seen previously.

⁵⁹³ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 188.

⁵⁹⁴ Gill, *How We Are Changed by War*, p. 13.

However, there are moments in which the lack of reflection characteristic of his later writing is distinctly unsettling. In May 1916, Retailleau visits a military hospital and visits the wounded. In his diary he states: ‘Je vois un soldat qui a été blessé par des liquides enflammés. On y voit que les yeux et la bouche dans la figure. Je m’amuse à dessiner. Je vois la cascade. Je fais le tour du château. Retour au cantonnement.’⁵⁹⁵ Here we see that Retailleau resists writing about his emotional reactions to both pleasurable moments and indeed to what must have been a disturbing and harrowing sight. It is jarring as he notes in the following sentence that he ‘entertained himself by drawing’. As such, we might also suggest that his writings at the beginning of the text are more elaborate and stylistically more pleasing to read because his *carnets* were, if he had survived, to be used as the basis of a war memoir. Further, it seems likely that his longer sections of writing were added to during the war and, more specifically, during periods of leave from the front. In this way his writing takes on some of the tone of Cook’s, in that some of the text is (re)written with the aid of writings the author had written originally. For example, Cook says, ‘Memory has served me well in this narrative, now I am greatly helped by my diary where I recorded our next move to Arras and our routine is changed.’⁵⁹⁶ This is what the reader sees in Retailleau’s writing, too. It therefore suggests that the purpose of the *carnets* was indeed to be a repository for notes in order for him to maintain a semblance of the same sense of self that he had had at the outbreak of the conflict. If his *carnets* act such a repository then they allow him to come back to some of the more troubling episodes of his war experience further down the line, perhaps when he anticipates he will be more receptive, or even simply able, to reconsider his experiences in a more detailed light. It is a way of acknowledging the fact that certain things have happened, in order to temporarily overcome them, before later facing them in a less hostile environment. Meyer has noted that martial masculinities were expressed in different ways by writers using different narrative forms, as well as their intended audience.⁵⁹⁷ We can see this clearly when comparing Retailleau’s *carnets* to Pestier’s letters, as Pestier interacts with his wife’s understanding of the conflict (or lack thereof) whereas Retailleau does not. Retailleau was, in the first instance, writing for himself; writings which would then be edited perhaps for publication or dissemination. As such, a brief note on their activities, the weather, or what they ate, would presumably have been enough to jolt more detailed memories that he could fill in later when he had the opportunity. In turn, filling in the gaps in his

⁵⁹⁵ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, p. 173.

⁵⁹⁶ Cook, *The Lengthened Shadow*, p. 148.

⁵⁹⁷ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 161.

carnets, as we see in the section above, enabled him to engage with ideas that would lend more shape to his narrative, in particular the concept of being a war hero.

One such moment is shown in a longer section of writing, which the reader is informed has been added to by Retailleau's comrades, is dated 9 September 1914, and so is one of the first times that Retailleau experiences the front lines. He writes:

À côté de tous ces récits héroïques qu'ai-je à raconter, tout ce reste que j'ai fait est resté obscur et personne, si la mort m'avait frappé dans cette journée, ne serait peut-être venu pour me donner une sépulture que j'avais pourtant bien méritée. [...]

Devant nous nous apercevons une tranchée où sont cachés des hommes du 77^e. Nous nous dirigeons sur la tranchée croyant que c'était là qu'étaient les blessés.

Le sergent Hérissé nous voyant arriver nous cria : "Ah ! Les voilà bien les *fainéants*, les *froussards*, les *lâches*, ils arrivent lorsque la *besogne est finie* ! Il y a des blessés qui vous attendent dans la ferme en face ! Au lieu de vous cacher vous feriez mieux d'aller les chercher !" Je crois que s'il n'y avait eu personne nous l'aurions étranglé mais il ne perdra rien pour attendre s'il revient un jour à Cholet.⁵⁹⁸

This section describes several moments in which Retailleau is in danger and is witness to the horrors of warfare. By returning to this day and giving a more detailed account of what happened, as well as giving his comrades the chance to add their own perceptions, his memoirs are permitting him to properly process the events and to make sense of them, perhaps removing them of some of their negative emotions. As Roper notes, some memoirists 'sought to forget the events [...] by re-remembering them.'⁵⁹⁹ The overall tone of the longer sections of writing reads more like a memoir than a *carnet*. Retailleau's edited sections thus become a sort of *carnet-memoir*, a work in progress that elaborates more fully on his own experiences and his own perceptions thereof.

Moreover, this detailed narrative takes up several pages. It starts with him informing the reader that what follows is an 'heroic tale' and the author does not shy away from suggesting that he entirely 'deserves' to be labelled as a hero. This is quite shocking, and it stands out given the sparsity of detail in his later writings. Perhaps the level of detail is due to the incident with Sergeant Hérissé and his labelling of the stretcher-bearers as *fainéants*. Telling the reader exactly what happened during that day serves to combat the suggestion that non-combatant men are lazy and cowardly, and he goes to great lengths to prove to the reader that this is not the case. This is an attempt to prove to the reader that Retailleau is deserving of the title of *poilu* as much as the non-

⁵⁹⁸ Retailleau, *Musicien-Brancardier*, pp. 38-40.

⁵⁹⁹ Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero', p. 192.

combatants are; he is trying to write himself as a hero by making the assertion and then going to great, detailed, lengths to prove the truth of his narrative.

Meyer has argued that memoirs ‘provided spaces in which men could comment on the challenges that war experience posed to their identities as soldiers.’⁶⁰⁰ The editors of Retailleau’s writings specify that some of their editing took the form of rearranging the writing, resulting in the continued prose of which we associate with his later reflection on events being situated before the sparser writings of his unedited *carnets*. Rather than editing in the form of re-writing Retailleau’s prose, the restructuring done by the other, later editors lends a readability and chronological continuity to the narrative. In contrast, the edits that Retailleau made were done to expand on the brief notes that he had previously taken. This allowed him to explore his own reactions, both at the time and after the events of the war. Thus Retailleau, as we have already seen and as Meyer suggests, uses the evolution of the *carnet* to memoirs to bolster his own soldierly, and more importantly, masculine image.

In Pestier’s and Retailleau’s writings, though they have been edited by their family members, we clearly get a sense of the author as a soldier, and of his war experience. We must accept that through the use of censorship—specifically the omission of letters or other parts of their writings—and the inclusion of sections written by the family members about the author that there is an attempt by the editors to create a particular, favourable, image of the author. I would argue, however, that the sections written by the authors themselves speak most loudly. The additions to the texts allow us to examine how the self-perceptions written by the authors were seen by their families and by society at large. They show that the hegemonic masculinity based on the bearing of arms during the First World War was challenged by the authors, and those who edited their texts took up the challenge on their behalf. This could be due to familial loyalty, or in the case of Kelcher, to a loyalty to the memory of the French army itself during the conflict.

(Re) Perceiving one’s masculinity

This chapter has considered the self-perceptions of men who served as non-combatants during the Great War. The aim at the outset was to examine their war narratives to better understand how they saw themselves and their part in the conflict. What I have shown is that a combination of

⁶⁰⁰ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 136.

letters, diaries and memoirs has provided a layered and nuanced reading of the myriad ways in which they wished to write and re-write their own wartime roles.

Ashplant et al. have suggested that the resurgence of interest in war remembrance and commemoration that has been particularly evident during the centenary of the conflict, is partly due to the fact that ‘social groups suffering injustice, injury or trauma that originates in war have become increasingly prepared to demand public recognition of their experience, testimony and current status as “victims” or “survivors”.’⁶⁰¹ These resurgences have been noted when ‘anniversaries’ of the war – twenty-five years, fifty years, seventy-five years after the conflict. Leleu’s work was put into the public domain by his niece in 2003, ninety years after the beginning of the conflict, reflecting that his family wanted the account of his war experience to be in the public domain in good time for the next ‘big’ focus that the French public (and government) would put on the First World War just ten years later. Despite it being ten years prior to the centenary, I argue that this was a choice on their part to publish whilst survivors of the war were still alive. Similarly, Joannès Pestier’s family published the collection of his letters in 2007, just four years after Leleu’s memoirs, again highlighting the family’s capitalization on the commemoration of the war that was taking place in France, using this moment to allow the ideas put forth in the work time to percolate in the minds of the populace. Time and again in these writings we see the need to be part of a group manifested by the author, and the secondary need to show the reader the importance of the group to which the author belongs. It is this recognition that was so intrinsically linked to the wartime identity of the writers that speaks to the need to show that their own wartime exploits are also worthy of remembrance. Given how most wartime remembrance is focused on the armed soldier, it follows that the recognition that non-combatant letter-writers, memoirists and diarists sought (and seek in the case of those publishing many years later) is the perception and appreciation of a non-combatant, martial masculinity.

All of the men whose writings I have analysed have in some way contested the contemporary popular understandings of martial masculinity as inextricably linked to the bearing of arms. Leleu, through humour, portrayed his role as one to which he was physically suited, as he was, in his words, physically unable to perform as an infantryman. However, he does not adhere to the

⁶⁰¹ T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michel Roper, ‘The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics’, in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, Michael Roper (Routledge: London, 2000), pp. 3-15 (3).

contemporary logic that therefore he was not a soldier. He makes it clear that his own experience, though not that of the idolised warrior, was one in which he was ‘bousillé mille fois et plus.’⁶⁰²

The notion of being wrecked or ruined is a commonality of all of the authors in this chapter. They recount their wartime experiences, often in great detail, to prove and evidence their own type of heroic masculinity in warfare. This resonates with what we have seen in previous chapters regarding the importance of being in danger, often referred to as being at the front, or simply as ‘being there’. As such, these men have used certain aspects of the traditional, contemporary understanding of martial masculinity to argue that other aspects, specifically the bearing of arms, were no longer central to its achievement. In this way, we might consider all of these authors as moral witnesses, given Winter’s argument that ‘moral witnesses have a story to tell, but it is frequently one that is constructed as against the grain of conventional wisdom.’⁶⁰³

Yet, we might also consider Hynes’ arguments here. Leleu and Cook made the conscious decision to write their memoirs many years after the end of the conflict, and indeed Retailleau’s *carnets* include a foreword in which he is depicted as being the typical *poilu*. This highlights the sense of unity that the French Army wished to portray during the conflict and shows that even one hundred years after the end of the war, the concept of unity remains of utmost importance.⁶⁰⁴ Hynes notes that: ‘[a] sense of radical discontinuity of present from past is an essential element in what eventually took form as the Myth of the War. [...] The Myth is not the War entire: it is a tale that confirms a set of attitudes, an idea of what the war was and what it meant.’⁶⁰⁵ Perhaps then, writing so many years after the war permitted Cook and Leleu to access a time in which their writings would not be tainted by the ‘conventional wisdom’ that only men with firearms could be considered as true soldiers, when understandings of wartime roles no longer separated so distinctly those who bore arms from those who did not.

Pestier and Retailleau, on the other hand, though their writings were edited in recent years, did not themselves rewrite their war experience with the benefit of changed popular discourse. We do, however, see many of the same sentiments present in their writings, which therefore suggests that

⁶⁰² Leleu, *Des Flandres aux Vosges*, p. 5.

⁶⁰³ Winter, ‘Moral Witness’, p. 467.

⁶⁰⁴ It was important to the French army during the war to be seen as united, as I have shown in the first chapter of this thesis.

⁶⁰⁵ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. ix.

there was a sense among non-combatants that their masculine status was threatened by their unarmed role in the military. The French Army of 1914-18 made the distinction clear, categorising unarmed men as *soldats de deuxième classe*, whilst their combatant comrades were subjected to no such indignity. Yet, as Pestier's letters have shown, this was subject to change. He was promoted to *soldat de première classe* following his time in the front lines. Pestier treats this with derision, suggesting that a military hierarchy such as this was worth little consideration. The argument that permeates his letters most strongly is that his service is of vital importance, regardless of his official classification. This is reiterated by the preface that his family include, in which they purposefully restate the importance of the length of his service; each statement imposes the idea more clearly in the reader's mind that this was the true yardstick by which to measure a soldier. We also see this in Retailleau's joint-edited *carnets-memoirs*, in which he takes great pains to convey the horror of his experiences to the reader, writing himself as a heroic soldier in such a way that the reader does not question his lack of weapon and therefore does not question his masculinity. Building upon the work of Hans Mol, Jan Assmann suggests that a need for identity controls additions to cultural memory. Access to cultural memory, and the ability to add to it and thereby mould it, are in turn typified by distinctions between people who 'belong and those who do not'.⁶⁰⁶ This chapter has shown how, by using some of the same 'sharp distinctions' that had previously excluded non-combatant men from claiming a martial masculinity, these authors sought to satisfy their own need for an identity shared with their armed comrades. This potentially hypocritical, at the very least ironic, way of adding to the cultural memory of the war reinforces the importance of the popular understandings of what constituted masculinity during wartime. It also demonstrates that those seeking to react to such a discourse were unable to disentangle their own identities from such frameworks; instead, they needed to prove how their own wartime experiences fit into the framework to then re-shape it from the inside. They did this to show how the martial masculinity they embodied as unarmed, enlisted men, was complementary to that of the arms-bearing soldier. Showing the subtle differences enabled a different view, and showed that the martial masculinity of unarmed men did not detract from that of the soldiers with whom they fought. As Leleu's memoirs show, breaking the silence surrounding non-combatant memoirs was

⁶⁰⁶ Jan Assmann, 'Collective Memory', p. 130.

at times an uncomfortable and daunting prospect and humour was used as a tool by which the task was accomplished.

Cook's writings are those that most clearly engage with popular discourse, from his own displeasure at being transferred to an unarmed role, to 'Lord Derby's men,' and men who did not adhere to his own moral codes of behaviour. However, at each turn Cook eventually accepts the men surrounding him and portrays their merit to the reader whereby he also shows the reader his own role to be worthy of such praise as he bestows on others. These writings there suggest that, as we have seen in the foreword to Retailleau's writings, the Army – be it French or British – should be seen as a singular unit rather than a fractured set of men, some deserving less admiration than others. Unity then, is the strongest tie that binds all of these writings together, both French and British. Hynes has shown that 'Change – *inner* change – is [one] motive for war stories: not only what happens, but what happened to *me*.'⁶⁰⁷ Thus, by showing what happened to *them* these writers all endeavor to paint more clearly what happened to those around them. Joannès Pestier writes to his wife, 'Je crois même deviner que tu ne serais pas fière d'un mari qui ne soit pas bon à servir son pays...'⁶⁰⁸ In doing so, like Leleu, Cook and Retailleau, he underscores the fact that he *is* serving his country, and as such has a much right to the same masculine standing as any other man around him.

In sum, Meyer's argument that '[men's] identities are never set in stone and nowhere is this more evident than in the microcosm of war with its power to disrupt the gender order'⁶⁰⁹ is a truth reflected across both France and Britain as well as across genre in war narratives. Moreover, each writer is attuned to the fact that their role in the war makes them a historical actor. Whether their writings were intended for publication or not, they all write as though their audience is aware of the discourse surrounding the conflict, whether during the war or at the time of writing. Though their understandings of their war experiences may have changed over time, the difference in their self-perception does not. What does change is how they choose to convey their own perceptions to their audience. In letters this comes across in confirmations of importance from a husband to wife in the guise of disparaging others who are not enlisted. In memoirs, more often this is shown through comradeship and the bonds between combatant and non-combatant alike. However it is

⁶⁰⁷ Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale*, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Pestier, *Les Lettres de Mon Père*, p. 44.

⁶⁰⁹ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 161.

portrayed, the war narratives examined here clearly show that having experienced the war is the crux of the issue. Comradeship in war, regardless of rank or nationality, is the guiding force of these writings, and indeed it is what shapes the self-perceptions of the masculinity of the authors themselves.

Conclusion

The First World War was unprecedented in terms of the numbers of men mobilised by belligerent nations. The vast numbers of men involved in the war, from front-line combatants to those in service roles, necessarily meant that millions of men were enlisted in combatant and non-combatant roles alike. The field of First World War studies has investigated the lives of soldiers in the trenches, but despite the breadth of the conflict and the large numbers of non-combatant men involved, there has been relatively few studies of unarmed, enlisted men and their experiences of the conflict. In Benoît Boucard's discussion of French combatants' war writings, he argues that the constant presence of stretcher-bearers in the trenches made it so that they were almost invisible. He notes:

Qu'ils soient détestés ou enviés, rabaissés ou honorés, que ce soit en quelques pages, quelques lignes, quelques mots, leur présence plus ou moins discrète reste régulier. Les tragédies journalières du conflit rendant leurs tâches indispensables, ils font partie de la vie quotidienne du front et leur fréquentation devient presque banale pour les hommes des tranchées.⁶¹⁰

The few lines afforded to stretcher-bearers in French combatants' writings mirrors the more general invisibility of unarmed, enlisted men in scholarship of the war. In recent years the fields of masculinity studies and First World War studies have both produced important studies of non-combatants, though not through an Anglo-Franco comparison. The comparative nature of this thesis is one of the main contributions that my work makes to these fields. By analysing some of the different roles in which non-combatants in Britain and France were enlisted during the conflict, I have shown how unarmed, enlisted men challenged the hegemonic masculinity of the period in both countries.

While historians including Jessica Meyer and Benoît Boucard have both examined the importance of enlisted non-combatants in France and Britain during the Great War, this is the first study of a comparative nature between the two nations. In her discussion of men enlisted in the RAMC, Meyer has argued that, 'The gendered understandings of care for soldiers [...] gained impetus during the war years.'⁶¹¹ The ambiguity of the masculine status of militarised caregivers, specifically stretcher-bearers, is the central question of this thesis, and I have shown that these

⁶¹⁰ Boucard, *Brancardiers!*, p. 4.

⁶¹¹ Meyer, *An Equal Burden*, p. 188.

ambiguities were felt within the British and French forces alike. I have shown how societal expectations in both countries revered the masculine status of the armed soldier. Further, I have examined how the image of a martial masculinity as a healthy, physically fit, uniformed man holding a gun threatened the wartime masculinity of men who considered themselves to be soldiers but were engaged in warfare in pacific roles. To do so, I structured this investigation in a macro-to-micro form. I began with an examination of widely-circulated newspapers to analyse the popular, public discourse regarding wartime duty and masculinity and non-combatants. Chapter 2 focused on fictional representations of non-combatants, using novels and short stories that were penned between 1914 and 1918. These portrayals drew heavily on social and cultural discourse and were influenced by the authors' own wartime experience. Chapters 3 and 4 utilised personal writings, written by non-combatants both during the conflict, and after. These chapters delved into the self-perceptions of non-combatants and how they understood and experienced their own sense of masculinity in relation to their armed, combatant comrades. I also used their writings to gain an understanding of how they reacted to how their martial masculinity was perceived by those around them. This structure facilitated an examination that mirrored the understandings and thought processes of these men, by engaging with contemporary popular discourse and drawing upon how this influenced gender roles of the period and the evolution of martial masculinity over the course of the conflict.

This thesis has used an examination of a combination of cultural outputs from the Great War alongside personal writings of non-combatants written during and following the end of the conflict. In so doing, I have shown that the popular discourse regarding accepted masculine roles during wartime influenced the ways in which unarmed, enlisted men were perceived both at home at in the front lines. The initial investigation of representations of non-combatant masculinity began with the popular press, in which I demonstrated the importance of citizenship and duty to notions of masculinity through an analysis of newspaper reports. Despite differences in contemporary popular understandings of masculinity between the two countries, there were characteristics common to both societies. Qualities such as the willingness to volunteer and sacrifice oneself for one's country were imperative to claiming a masculine status. Further, being in close proximity to danger was considered to be the most important aspect of wartime service, meaning that there were conflicting representations and understandings of these wartime roles that took men away from the front lines. The phenomenon of *embuscomanie*, or shirker mania, swept through both countries,

resulting in French parliamentary acts and the introduction of the Non-Combatant Corps in Britain. I have shown that public mistrust of men in non-combatant roles during the conflict ranged from those working in exempted roles even to men who were enlisted in unarmed roles in the front lines. Public fear of shirking and malingering led to widespread suspicion, even of men who had previously tried to enlist, but had been denied on medical grounds. This was symbolic of the way that martial masculinity was focused on the body, both in terms of the excellent physical fitness that was idolised, and the suspicion unfit bodies invoked. Newspapers both supported and negated these ideas, lambasting supposed shirkers and exclaiming the importance of male, militarised non-combatant roles. Underpinning both negative and positive representations was the importance of proximity to danger and willingness to sacrifice oneself for one's country.

I have also shown how this was reflected in silences regarding enlisted non-combatants in the popular press during the Great War. When we consider the prevalence of discussions regarding combatant men, the rare mentions of stretcher-bearers revealed a tension in both countries concerning portrayals of these men. They were not offered the same space to be lauded as martially masculine and therefore as deserving of the same idolisation as armed combatants. A key part of notions of martial masculinity was willingness to serve, and it was this trait that newspapers used to distinguish between non-combatants who had volunteered their service and those who had been forced into service, such as men in the Non-Combatant Corps. Even this, however, was not enough to stem the tide of anti-shirker reports directed at enlisted, unarmed men. Though the apparent target was Conscientious Objectors, the blurring of terminology in the reports shows that often representations of Conscientious Objectors and unarmed servicemen who voluntarily enlisted shared the same negative connotations. As a result, voluntarily enlisted non-combatant men strove to differentiate themselves from Objectors and others who were perceived as shirkers by emphasising that they had volunteered their lives in service.

This same willingness to serve (in any capacity) was used by authors of fiction during the conflict in their (very few) portrayals of non-combatant, male protagonists. While Buchan, as a British author, concentrated on the qualities of Edwardian gentlemanliness to underline the honour in the actions of his main character, French authors Duhamel and Florian-Parmentier instead focused on the everyday goings-on of the conflict. Buchan used a more obviously imagined story, demonstrating that the qualities determining martial masculinity are inherent to the person, and

not necessarily to the role or situation in which they find themselves. As I have shown, scholars have assessed themes of wartime masculinity in Buchan's work,⁶¹² however this thesis is the first to specifically examine portrayals of non-combatant masculinity. Further, this thesis compares how Buchan's writing of martial masculinity compares to French writings of masculinity by other well-known writers of the time such as Georges Duhamel. Strikingly, the concentration on the everyday parts of war in French writing worked in much the same way, and I have demonstrated that Duhamel and Florian-Parmentier both took pains to highlight the danger in which non-combatants found themselves. They also endeavoured to show to their readers that popular understandings of what it meant to be a shirker were far removed from what the reality of shirking was. I contend that seeing attempts by popular writers and novelists of the time to clearly delineate the difference between ideas of shirking and the actuality created an opportunity for enlisted non-combatants to add their voices to this debate. The power and prevalence of such discourse encouraged writers of fiction to tell their own stories of the conflict, to prove the validity, necessity and masculinity of non-combatant wartime male roles. This was a space in which writers of fiction and non-fiction demonstrated that non-combatant service was not synonymous with avoidance of wartime duty. Some writers chose to portray the 'ordinary' serviceman and the brutality of their daily lives, including how many men were transferred between combatant and non-combatant roles. The fluidity of roles was utilised by writers to convey the importance of all militarised occupations. The writers I have analysed here all fiction as a medium through which to engage with public discourse, challenging and renegotiating what traits were considered to be martially masculine, showing that fluidity of roles necessarily led to the fluid application of masculine traits in varied situations during the conflict.

In the second half of this thesis, I used non-combatant letters, memoirs and diaries to analyse how non-combatant, militarised men engaged with prevalent notions of martial masculinity as based on the bearing of arms. Stretcher-bearers who played in the army band showed music and musical prowess to be important to non-combatant understandings of masculinity. Using unconventional traits such as music talent as integral to the support and functioning of the army enabled unarmed, enlisted men to present themselves as martially masculine. They were also shown to be a unifying

⁶¹² See, for example: *Reassessing John Buchan: Beyond the Thirty Nine Steps*, ed by Kate Macdonald (Pickering & Chatto Limited: Oxon, 2016); Joseph A. Kestner, 'Masculinities in the Richard Hannay 'War Trilogy' of John Buchan', in *John Buchan and the Idea of Modernity* (Routledge: Oxon, 2013), pp. 81-96.

force, bringing civilians and soldiers together through planned and impromptu performances. However, even while endeavouring to prove their own right to a martially masculine status, some bandsmen saw the army band as having its own hierarchy, and positioned themselves at the top of this hierarchy based on their peacetime profession.

The image of unarmed, enlisted men in ‘official’ cultural representations that supported and reinforced the importance of roles such as medical, militarised caregivers emphasised the danger of their jobs as well as the supposedly ‘feminine’ characteristics that they required. In chapter 3 we saw how the role of the army bandsman complicated the caregiving role further, and I argued that music was a symbolic form of weaponry during the conflict. The armed forces of both countries capitalised on the image of the professional army band and their uniform to drum up support for the war effort. The high echelons of the military hierarchies understood the importance of music during wartime, and this is shown and celebrated throughout the writings of bandsmen that were analysed. In turn, the non-combatant authors used this official recognition to demonstrate the importance of their occupations, engaging with popular discourses from the war years and also the years in which their writings were written and/or published. I have demonstrated the overwhelming need to convey unity in the British and French armed forces, and the ways in which non-combatants articulated their own role in maintaining and showing that unity to the world. In so doing, they articulated their own claim to a specific, non-combatant martial masculinity during the war. Examinations of the importance of music during the Great War have existed since the end of the conflict, however this thesis’ contribution to both studies of music during the Great War and the position of army bandsmen brings the fields of musical studies and gender studies together. Scholars such as Emma Hanna have shown the importance of music to morale within the British British Armed Forces,⁶¹³ and this thesis adds to such scholarship by presenting the non-combatant bandsman role as a force that was used to maintain the morale within the British and French Armies, and particularly how this in turn invoked the martially masculine role of protector which was heavily embedded in British and French understandings of masculinity during this period. This is an important addition to existing scholarship as I have shown not only the multiple uses of music within both the French and British armies during the Great War, and the importance of the role of the musician within the hierarchy of the armed forces, but also how this was true of both

⁶¹³ Emma Hanna, *Sounds of War: Music in the British Armed Forces During the Great War* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2020).

the French and British armies of the Great War. Further, this thesis has evidenced how the non-combatant role of the stretcher-bearer-bandsman was uniquely positioned to fulfill a militarised caregiving role which impacted the emotional and physical wellbeing of the combatants they served alongside. I have argued that the role of the stretcher-bearer and bandsman was a symbolic weapon within the arsenal of the French and British armies. It was a tool of the war, albeit one which was not involved in the bearing of arms. This thesis reinforces the importance of studies of non-combatants and non-combatant masculinity within the historiography of the Great War and provides a crucial addition to existing studies by investigating masculinity through the lens of musician as a wartime, masculine role.

Finally, this thesis ended with a discussion of non-combatant memoirs of which some had been edited by family members. I have shown that both the authors of the memoirs and members of their extended families engaged with discourse around masculinity, even decades after the end of the war. Proving the danger that non-combatants faced during their war service, alongside their bravery and, most importantly, their comradeship ties all of these different types of war writings together – from newspapers to fiction and finally to letters, memoirs, and diaries. Challenging the hegemonic masculinity of the Great War is shown to be a concern – whether conscious or subconscious – of non-combatant men who wrote both during and after the war. This was also shown to be on the agenda of the editors of the texts in chapter 4 of this thesis. The testimonies of the war analysed in the final chapter showed the war to be the realm of ordinary men, not only the warrior-heroes idolised by British and French societies alike. They also assumed – or claimed to have assumed – the qualities associated with the conventional notion of martial masculinity, but in different contexts. Like the authors of fiction, they re-appropriated qualities like comradeship, proximity to danger, and most important of all, the notion of *being there* to support their own claim to a martial masculinity. This thesis has shown that the non-combatant, martial masculinity of French and British unarmed, enlisted men was demonstrated by showing itself to be in direct opposition to the unmanly position of the shirker. Additionally, male, militarised caregivers openly adopted what had traditionally been understood to be ‘feminine’ characteristics. Their writings show that ‘feminine’ traits like caregiving had their own, essential place in the military. This thesis has shown how across both countries, enlisted non-combatants in their writing strove to differentiate themselves from the shirkers that were so despised, and to align themselves more closely to their combatant comrades. They did so by outlining similarities between the qualities

they as non-combatants exhibited in their wartime roles (such as bravery and courage) that were praised in discussions of combatants. Rather than detracting from the masculine arena of war, they supported and indeed added to it. Ultimately, the martial masculinity specific to non-combatants was made up of many of the same characteristics of that of the idolised warrior-male, but it was applied differently.

This thesis has shown that there was a distinct absence of writings regarding non-combatant, enlisted men in France and Britain during the First World War. While there were certain moments of change, this often came at a time when there was a particular political change (such as the introduction of the NCC or the Dalbiez/Mourier laws). This clearly reflects the tension between encouraging support for the war in all its necessary forms, and the public discourse surrounding a martial masculinity that was heavily based on the bearing of arms. While the silence regarding non-combatants was fraught with tension, non-combatants themselves took to their own writings during the conflict and in the years that followed to explain their own wartime experiences and to show how they contributed to the war effort. I have demonstrated that in their writings they appeared conscious of the absence of stories akin to their own in the public arena, and they strove to add their own testimonies to the growing war writings that were published after the end of the conflict. This again underscored the wartime masculine ideal of comradeship and this thesis adds to the growing scholarship that engages with their writings, revealing the importance of non-combatant roles during the Great War.

This thesis does not claim to be an exhaustive study of non-combatant writings during and after the war, as no study can. There are some limitations to this work: issues of time, space, and indeed a sparsity of sources. The limitations, however, are opportunities for further research. However, just as I have built upon other scholars' work, I would suggest that future work could expand upon the research and conclusions that I have reached in this thesis. The relationships between non-combatant men and the roles of their wives during the conflict warrants further study, though it lay outside of the remit of this thesis. Studies of non-combatant masculinity across races and ethnicities, including studies of colonial non-combatant masculinity would be useful in developing our knowledge and understanding of perceptions of unarmed masculinity during the Great War. This study is comparative in nature, though I have shown that certain characteristics of martial masculinity did cross the borders. My work contributes to studies of masculinity and First World

War studies and is the first to specifically examine the threats to, and perceptions of, non-combatant masculinity in both countries to investigate this phenomenon and its impacts on how gender roles evolved between 1914 and 1918, in two armies that often occupied the same spaces in the conflict. I have limited my study to France and Britain, but I would advocate for transnational studies to track the challenges to hegemonic masculinity across the globe, in what was then dubbed the Great War, but what we now know as the First *World War*.

This thesis has shown that the persistence of concepts of masculinity being linked to the bearing of arms has resulted in the challenging of hegemonic masculinity during the conflict, something that continues to this day. Throughout the course of this study, I have shown that non-combatant, militarised men were well-aware of the threat that the idolisation of arms-bearing soldiers posed to their own masculine standing. The comparative nature of this thesis adds a new perspective to current scholarship, outlining the commonality of concerns surrounding shirking in both French and British societies and how these concerns affected the perception of non-combatant masculinity in both countries' armed forces. Using a variety of different media, non-combatants strived to position themselves in opposition to non-combatant men who were perceived as shirkers. In doing so, they upheld some of the popular ideas about the conduct of men who were seeking to shirk to better be able to position themselves in direct opposition to men who induced such scorn and disgust. This enabled them to claim their own type of martial masculinity, constructed of typical masculine traits such as proximity to danger, courage, and comradeship, as well as conventionally 'feminine' traits associated with caregiving. In sum, non-combatant, enlisted men had their own specific martially masculine ideal, which they sought to validate by challenging negative, and adding to positive, portrayals of unarmed, enlisted men both during and after the end of the First World War.

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