

Inherent Contradictions

English Women's Literatures' Depictions of First World War Service

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HIST480 2015

'This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours in History at the University of Canterbury. This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 9,995 words in length.'

Abstract

This dissertation examines the idealisation of middle-class men's and women's service during the First World War through the study of five novels written by English women between 1916 and 1918. Historiography on women in the war tends to focus on whether the war represented a "watershed" moment for women's rights. This dissertation argues that although the war was not a watershed moment, it did create an environment which enabled the contestation of women's traditional domestic role. Chapter One shows how the novels idealised enlistment as men's greatest service to the war, reflecting prevalent attitudes within society and reinforcing men's traditional masculine role. In contrast, Chapter Two shows how women's service threatened traditional notions of domesticity. Concerns for working-class women's moral and sexual transgressions influencing middle-class women, underlies the novels promotion of war service's potential moral benefits. Simultaneously, they emphasise the temporary nature of war service, and women's eventual return to traditional domesticity. The concurrent idealisation of women's service and their return to the public sphere shows the war not as a "watershed", but as an environment which reasserted masculinity and challenged traditional ideas of middle-class women's domesticity.

Contents

Abstract	1
List of Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
Chapter One: Men's Service	13
Chapter Two: Women's Service	25
Conclusion	38
Bibliography	40

List of Abbreviations

Conscientious Objectors (COs)

Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs)

Introduction

In 1914, Britain declared war on Germany, signalling their entry into the First World War, and a spurt of patriotism idealising middle-class service of the war effort. With propaganda encouraging enlistment for men and a myriad of roles for women, notions of masculinity and domesticity took on great importance in public perception. Literature at this time contributed to such ideas. Investigating its idealisation of men's and women's service shows the straightforward concept of service for men in contrast to women's contested contributions to war. The examination of five novels written during the war reflects society's beliefs about middle-class men's and women's appropriate displays of service, and the paradox this developed regarding women's contribution.

This dissertation examines the idealisation of both men's and women's service during the war. In examining this, it draws on five key primary sources: novels written between 1916 and 1918; significantly, after the introduction of conscription. This immediacy means the novels reflect views and ideas significant to middle-class attitudes during the war, as opposed to those written later.¹ The novels include E. M. Delafield's *The War-Workers* (1918), Beatrice Harraden's *Where My Treasure Is* (1918), Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Missing* (1917), Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916), and May Sinclair's *The Tree of Heaven* (1917). Women and men experienced the war differently. With a strong focus on the idealisation of women on the home front and perceptions of men, the use of female authors enables a stronger analysis. The authors predominantly come from middle- to upper-class backgrounds. This reflects in their depiction of service, as they promote ideals of their class. These centre on traditional gender roles and fears of their transgression, with specific regard to women. Although the notion of separate spheres is critiqued for inaccurate

¹ J. Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women's Literary Responses to the Great War 1914-1918*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 3.

depictions of women's lived experience,² in this dissertation it is useful as a construct as the ideals of women and men are investigated. These ideas centre around women's sexual passivity and ideal role within the home, contrasted with men's assertion of masculinity in the public sphere.

Novels pose two key methodological problems as historical sources. Julia Reid identifies these as the 'association with realism and... connection with emergent class structures and reading practices.'³ Class structures and reading practices expanded around this time, despite the war's rationing of paper. A combination of the 1870 Education Act, advancements in literature production and distribution, and its inexpensive and adaptable format meant reading increased in popularity throughout the war.⁴ This speaks to a broader reading public; however the popularity of novels written during the war assures the reliability of the ideas they express historically. As war progressed, realistic war stories' popularity decreased. Readers sought novels as a means of escapism.⁵ However, Potter highlights that although escapist, romance novels that featured war as a backdrop, still served as 'vehicles for the dissemination of patriotic ideals and models of appropriate wartime behaviour.'⁶ Further, she states that although we cannot assume all readers relate to the ideas of the novels, 'these novels were popular precisely because they *did* bear a relation to "actual experience".'⁷ They therefore provide insight into society's idealised view of middle-class men's and women's service throughout the war. These representations speak to the authors' experience, especially when they occur throughout multiple novels. As discussed, they also speak to

² A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1993, p. 385.

³ J. Reid, 'Novels', in M. Dobson and B. Ziemann (ed.), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century*, Oxon, Routledge, 2009, p. 159.

⁴ J. McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914-1950*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 12, 43.

⁵ McAleer, p. 72.

⁶ J. Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 91.

⁷ Potter, pp. 148-149.

ideals of society as a whole. Similar to Claire M. Tylee, this dissertation does not seek to provide a factual account of war, but instead to identify the ideals and myths of society concerning men's and women's contributions.⁸

This dissertation straddles a wide range of historiography: the experiences of men in war, the experiences of women, and women's literary representation of the war. Literature on men in the war often centres on the myth of the lost generation. This specific myth developed post-1918; however, the notion of myth still pertains to the dissertation. Samuel Hynes emphasises that this myth is not 'a falsification of reality, but an imaginative version of it... accepted to be true.'⁹ In this dissertation, this refers to the middle-classes acceptance of ideals. With regard to the lost generation, however, Hynes identifies the myth as describing them as 'a generation of innocent young men... slaughtered in stupid battles,' and lied to by 'the old men at home.'¹⁰ Historians emphasise that 'if the war generation is "lost", it is lost...because its history is overlaid with myth.'¹¹ These texts countered the argument of scholars, such as Paul Fussell, whose investigations of the war further propagated the myth of the lost generation.¹² This dissertation counters this notion as well, focusing on the idealisation of enlistment from the home front. It draws on Ilana R. Bet-El's discussion of conscription, using this to show the importance placed on men's enlistment as volunteerism and self-sacrifice.¹³ Jessica Meyer's work specifically addresses how the war altered perceptions of masculinity in Britain, identifying the concept of the soldier hero and soldier

⁸ Disregards distinguishing fictional and non-fictional instead seeking to identify the myth of significant events, see: C. M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness: Images of Militarism and Womanhood In Women's Writings, 1914-64*, London, The Macmillan Press, 1990, p. 17.

⁹ S. Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, London, The Bodley Head, 1990, p. ix.

¹⁰ Hynes, p. x.

¹¹ R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, London, Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1980, p. 2. See also: Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. x-xii. For further discussion of how this myth emerged and has altered since the war, see: D. Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, London, Hambledon and London, 2005.

¹² P. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 3-35.

¹³ I. R. Bet-El, *Conscripts: Lost Legions of the Great War*, Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing, 1999, pp. 190-193.

domesticity, particularly in correspondence.¹⁴ Nicoletta F. Gullace also addresses ideas of masculinity, investigating war contributions' links to citizenship.¹⁵ Gullace identifies societal pressure for men to enlist and how this defined their masculinity and claims to citizenship.¹⁶ Gullace also identifies how women's war participation led to their legal entitlement to the vote, viewing women's suffrage as 'forged in the crucible of war.'¹⁷ Discussion of women's experience is another key element of historiography.

With the rise of women's and gender history after the 1960s, women's roles during the First World War have come under closer scrutiny. Initial investigations came to show women benefitting greatly from the war, with Arthur Marwick's *The Deluge* becoming a commonly cited reference.¹⁸ Along this line, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the war 'permanently [granted] women access to both the votes and the professions that they had never before possessed.'¹⁹ Gail Braybon identifies this form of 'watershed' argument as linking war with social change, while failing to critique its potential to overlook 'wartime anxieties about promiscuity and sexuality.'²⁰ Braybon, writing on the working class, furthers this critique, emphasising that attitudes towards women and work remained somewhat

¹⁴ J. Meyer, *Men at War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 45-46. For further discussion of soldiers' correspondence, see: M. Roper, *The Secret Battleground: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009, pp. 47-84.

¹⁵ N. F. Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 8.

¹⁶ Gullace, p. 37. For further discussions of enlisting determining masculinity, see: in a greater European context G. L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 107-119.

¹⁷ Gullace, p. 4.

¹⁸ A. Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967.

¹⁹ S. M. Gilbert and S Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, p. 263. For working-class experience as positive social change, see: A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.

²⁰ G. Braybon, 'Winners or Losers: Women's Symbolic Role in the War Story', in G. Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2003, p. 95. For further critique of 'watershed' concept, see: J. W. Scott, 'Rewriting History', in M. R. Higonnet et al. (ed.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 21-30. For discussion on backlash against women's sexuality, see: S. Grayzel, 'Liberating Women? Examining Gender, Morality and Sexuality in First World War Britain and France', in G. Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, history and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2003, pp. 113-134.

consistent throughout the war.²¹ Suzan Grayzel reinforces this, highlighting that despite the war's appearance of questioning traditional gender ideas, it in fact 'ultimately reinforced fundamental aspects of women's gender identity, by continually maintaining the power of categories such as "mother."²² This dissertation aligns more closely with the works which challenge the conventional view of the 'watershed'; however, it does not seek to prove this concept as true or false. Rather, drawing on Janet S. K. Watson's discussion of the tensions between Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) and nurses,²³ this dissertation examines the idealisation of middle-class women's service. This reveals not a watershed, but tension over women's ideal war contribution.

The historiography of women's literary representations is a key element of this dissertation. Claire M. Tylee identifies that most studies of war literature concern descriptions of battles, failing to account for women's literary responses exploring the social context.²⁴ In addressing this, Tylee examines the existence of 'an imaginative memory of the First World War which is distinctively women's,' and how this influenced British understanding of the war.²⁵ Tylee examines both fictional and non-fictional texts through to the 1960s to examine this myth.²⁶ This dissertation's approach coincides with Potter's, which uses texts during the war itself. Potter argues that popular romance and non-fiction works 'reflected, reinforced, and reiterated the values of the majority of the population of Britain.'²⁷ She emphasises that these values stemmed from eugenic anxieties and fears of the degeneration of society,

²¹ G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, 2nd edn, London, Routledge, 1989, p. 12.

²² S. R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999, p. 6.

²³ J. S. K. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 59-104.

²⁴ Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness*, p. 13.

²⁵ Tylee, p. 15.

²⁶ For further examination of women's literature post-1918, see: R. M. Bracco, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1919-1939*, Providence, Berg Publishers Limited, 1993.

²⁷ Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 8. For further discussion on romantic literature's effects within society, see: C. Acton, 'Best Boys and Aching Hearts: The Rhetoric of Romance as Social Control in Wartime Magazines for Young Women', in J. Meyer (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War*, Leiden, Koninklijke Brill, 2008, pp. 173-193.

especially within the middle class.²⁸ Other texts emphasise the need to differentiate between varying women's experiences, arguing that it is wrong to argue their same-ness. They instead seek to understand the variations of women's experience throughout the war.²⁹ While this dissertation is mindful of these differences, it seeks to understand the ways in which middle-class service was idealised within literature and the conflict this created. While understanding working-class experience is important, this dissertation focuses more fully on how the middle class viewed the working class and how this influenced their idealisation of service.

The novels' plots and authors' backgrounds aid understanding of the ideas expressed throughout this dissertation. The popularity of the novels also helps to affirm their reflection of society, as Potter states: 'these novels were popular precisely because they *did* bear a relation to "actual experience."' ³⁰ E.M Delafield's *The War-Workers* details the experiences of the volunteers at the Midland Supply Depôt, specifically the director Char Vivian and new volunteer Grace Jones. Char martyrs herself at the Depôt to garner attention. Although she contributes to the war, she does so for selfish reasons. In doing so, she fails to support her family after her father's stroke, much to the disapproval of her mother Lady Vivian and cousin Captain John Trevellyan. Grace and Trevellyan form the centre love story of the novel. E.M. Delafield worked as a VAD during the war, a service which provided basic nursing services in hospitals during the war. Her comedic depiction of the home front in *The War Workers* received favourable reviews.³¹

Beatrice Harraden's *Where Your Treasure Is* details Tamar Scott's transformation throughout the war. Tamar is uninterested in the war, and sees it as an opportunity to profit

²⁸ Potter, p. 93.

²⁹ See: S. Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War*, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 2-3; S. Raitt and T. Tate, *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 2-3.

³⁰ Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 149.

³¹ M. L. McCullen, *E. M. Delafield*, Boston, G. K. Hall & Company, 1985, p. 20.

through others' misfortune. She works as an antique dealer, specialising in precious stones. However, after travelling to Holland and seeing the horrors of war first hand, Tamar becomes less greedy, contributing to the war more actively. The novel also shows the growing relationship between Tamar and Christopher Bramfield, a diamond merchant with a son in the war, and the Thornton family and their experiences after the death of their father. The Thornton children participate actively in the war, with the sons enlisting and the daughters working as nurses. Harraden supported the suffragist movement, helping found the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. *Where Your Treasure Is* received favourable reviews on release.³²

Mrs Humphry Ward's *Missing* details the experience of protagonist Nelly throughout the war. Humphry Ward was anti-suffragist, organising the Women's Anti-Suffrage League in 1908. She was pro-war and actively wrote propaganda during the war, writing three works to promote America's war participation.³³ Her conservative values appear throughout her works. In *Missing*, which sold 20,000 copies in the first two months,³⁴ Nelly and her sister Bridget are middle class, and while Nelly is pretty, gentle and kind, Bridget is portrayed as greedy, selfish and antagonistic. Adding to Bridget's negative character is her lack of interest in war. In the novel, Nelly has recently married George Sarrat, a soldier about to return to the front. Bridget resents this, believing Nelly to have wasted 'the one family asset of which a great deal might have been made... Nelly's prettiness.'³⁵ George is wounded at the front and goes missing, with the remainder of the novel depicting Nelly's attempts to deal with her loss. During this, Nelly befriends upper-class Cicely Farrell and her brother Sir William

³² K. Sutherland, 'Beatrice Harraden', in G. M. Johnson (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 153: Late-Victorian and Edwardian British Novelists*, Detroit, Gale Research Inc, 1995, p. 104.

³³ 'Ward, Mary Augusta', in J. Shattock (ed.), *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 446.

³⁴ J. Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-eminent Edwardian*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 361.

³⁵ Mrs Humphry Ward, *Missing*, London, Collin's Clear-Type Press, 1917, p. 3.

Farrell, who seeks to court Nelly despite her confusion over her missing husband. An important side plot includes the relationship between Cicely and a wounded soldier, Captain Marsworth, who struggles to deal with Cicely's extravagance during war. They eventually marry due to her change of ways.

Rose Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and Others* differs from the other novels, exploring and challenging predominant war themes. The novel follows Alix and her experiences throughout the war. She is an artist whose brother Paul died in the war. She is in love with Basil Doye, a recently enlisted soldier. However, since the war Basil's outlook on life has changed and he falls in love with Alix's roommate Evie. Alix initially seeks to distance herself from the war, but eventually comes to realise her need to participate in some way. Macaulay challenges predominant attitudes, such as those concerning conscientious objectors (COs) as well as the psychological effects of war. This is influenced by her experience as a nurse in the war, and her work in the War Office with exemptions from service and COs.³⁶ In theme, *Non-Combatants and Others* was ahead of its time in portrayal of war, and provides an important counter-point to the other novels.

Published in 1917, May Sinclair's *The Tree of Heaven* was a best-seller in 1918.³⁷ The novel details the lives of the Harrison family, with Part III (Victory) outlining their experiences during war. It primarily deals with Nicky and his relationship with Veronica, his eventual enlistment, and his death; and Michael's transformation from a CO to soldier. The spiritual renewal of war is a major theme of the book, portraying war as a maturing and positive experience, while still acknowledging its negative elements. Sinclair condemns militant suffragism and the modern art movement as vortexes which remove individual will.³⁸

³⁶ '(Emile) Rose Macaulay', *An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers Revised and Expanded Edition*, in P. Schlueter and J. Schlueter (ed.), New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1998, pp. 411.

³⁷ Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness*, p. 131.

³⁸ S. Raitt, *May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 169-175.

Sinclair herself was a suffragist; however, she judged ‘that international war over-rode all other... considerations, reducing them to their true relative insignificance compared with... “the Great War of Redemption.”’³⁹ She participated in war, drawing on her experience as an ambulance driver for the novel.

Drawing on these novels and historiography, this dissertation examines the idealisation of middle-class service. Chapter One examines the ways in which enlistment and attitude on the front determined men’s masculinity. In doing so this shows the idealised male role of soldier in the eyes of women in the text, the women authors, and women within society more broadly. This simultaneously emasculates those who fail to adhere to this example. In idealising enlistment it also develops the straightforward notion of men’s service. This service is centred on men’s self-sacrifice and heroism, both in their enlistment and conduct during the war. This idealised service reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and men’s place in the public sphere. Chapter Two then discusses the inherent paradox of idealising middle-class women’s service. The depiction of service in the novels reflects the conflicting need for women’s participation in the war effort, and middle-class fears of the degenerative influence this could have on women’s domestic role. Drawing on the influence of Potter’s examination of literature’s conservative ideals and Watson’s examination of the tension between war service and war work, this dissertation argues that war literature reflected contemporary concerns and ideals of society. It shows that while men’s war service was defined by traditional masculine ideals; middle-class women’s service presented a conflict. It sought to both encourage women’s participation in the public sphere, while reinforcing their return to traditional domesticity. As such, although not a watershed moment, the conflict of women’s service shows the growing contestation of women’s domestic role.

³⁹ Tylee, p. 133.

Chapter One: Men's Service

Throughout the war, men's service was tied with their patriotic enlistment to the war effort. This also associated men's service with traditional notions of masculinity, linked with heroism and self-sacrifice. The novels show men's enlistment as their ideal service during the war. Men's behaviour and attitude on the front must continue to reflect their patriotic and masculine reasons for enlisting. Masculinity and service are idealised through the eyes and opinions of women in the novels, reflecting women's perceptions of men's service and enlistment within society. These perceptions stemmed from propaganda efforts after the outbreak of war, which emphasised the need for men to fight for King and country in protection of Belgium against the spread of German aggression.⁴⁰ Propaganda reinforced the threat of Germany, while simultaneously emphasising women's approval of men in uniform and disdain for those shirking their duty.⁴¹ This was part of middle-class society's view of the patriotic and chivalric soldier as the new symbol of masculinity.⁴² The novels adhere to this, emphasising the spirit of the volunteer while omitting discussion of conscription. This reflects society's negative attitude towards conscripts and their transgression of prevailing English notions of heroism, defined by sacrifice and a sense of duty to the nation.⁴³ In this regard, conscription transgressed notions of service. These ideals of masculinity and service are reinforced in discussion of those unable to enlist, and those who chose not to. However, although Bet-El aptly states that through enlistment 'the volunteer [becomes] equated with an ideal of masculine warrior,' she incorrectly assumes this to be the singular act which defines his masculinity.⁴⁴ Soldiers must conform to this masculine image of service in all engagement

⁴⁰ C. Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 60.

⁴¹ P. Ward, "'Women of Britain Say Go': Women's Patriotism in the First World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 33.

⁴² Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons"* p. 38.

⁴³ Bet-El, *Conscripts*, p.181.

⁴⁴ Bet-El, p. 182.

with women, with letters home and courage in the face of death all contributing to notions of masculinity and men's role throughout the war. To show this the novels reinforced women's preference for soldiers, the cowardice of COs, the importance of attitude on the front, and the need for heroism in death. While these showed the idealisation of service, Macaulay does present a counter point which explores the reality of these ideas. This shows the idealisation of middle-class men's enlistment as service, and the ways in which it reinforced traditional notions of masculinity.

The novels reinforce ideals of men's enlistment as service, presenting soldier characters as more masculine and appealing to female counterparts in comparison to men unable to fight due to injury or age. Throughout the war, propaganda manipulated women's sexuality as a means to encourage men's enlistment. The premise of recruiting posters asking "'The Young Women of London'... 'Is your 'Best Boy' wearing Khaki?',"⁴⁵ hinged not only on promoting women's encouragement for men's enlistment (discussed in Chapter Two), but on idealising the soldier in women's eyes. This reinforced enlistment as a form of war service that would gain female approval. The ideal of soldiering existed prior to the war, with the nineteenth-century image of soldiering contributing to society's privileging of the heroic soldier infused with sacrifice and bravery.⁴⁶ Bet-El emphasises post-1914 society's image of enlistment transforming men into heroes.⁴⁷ This is apparent in *Missing*, in protagonist Nelly's comparison of soldier husband George Sarrat and non-combatant Sir William Farrell. Farrell, due to an injury before the war, is unable to participate. George, in contrast, is due to return to the front in less than a week.⁴⁸ Although Farrell contributes to war service in other ways, such as recruiting and giving up his home for a hospital, Nelly still compares him negatively to the lower-class and younger George. After listening to George and Farrell's conversation

⁴⁵ Gullace, *Blood of our sons*, p. 82.

⁴⁶ Bet-El, *Conscripts*, p. 184.

⁴⁷ Bet-El, p. 182.

⁴⁸ Humphry Ward, *Missing*, p. 40.

concerning Farrell's inability to volunteer, Nelly states that 'it was curious how in a few minutes the young officer had come to seem the older and more responsible of the two men... She liked to feel how easily he could hold his own with great people.'⁴⁹ Nelly's preference for George, despite his lower class and status, reflects views in society more broadly which encourage soldiering as the ideal masculine service. Although Nelly's preference is natural considering George is her husband, Nelly refers to him as 'young soldier,' emphasising this as the factor of her decision. Farrell could provide for Nelly in traditional ways with money and domestic comfort (something Nelly's sister Bridget hoped for), but in light of the war and changing circumstances, Nelly chooses a soldier. Humphry Ward persuades the reader to approve of Nelly's decision. She does this through negatively characterising Bridget in the outset of the book, with a maid-servant referring to her 'tone as sharp and off-hand,' while she '[fusses] over things that [don't] concern her – just for the sake of ordering people about.'⁵⁰ This reinforces men's ideal service as soldier. Women's perception in the novel overtly emphasises soldiers' position as desirable and morally superior in relation to those unable to fight, reflecting middle-class women's attitudes. Unable to enlist, Farrell fails to fulfil ideal male service in wartime, and as such is denied 'the public definitions of masculinity and heroism.'⁵¹ While men unable to participate still lacked masculinity and appeal in comparison to soldiers, scorn at those considered to be shirking their duty was even more potent.

Negative characterisations and attitudes towards COs, from women and society more broadly, show the idealisation of soldiers' service, although some novels challenge this view. In the first two years of war, the Liberals and Conservatives debated over the introduction of conscription. As Nicolette Gullace notes, according to contemporary theorists, a volunteer

⁴⁹ Humphry Ward, p. 41.

⁵⁰ Humphry Ward, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Bet-El, *Conscripts*, p. 182.

‘had gone through an inner transformation, one that enlightened him to the duties of citizenship.’⁵² Volunteering and service equated to moral quality and masculinity, and despite the introduction of conscription this mind set remained.⁵³ Although conscientious objection remained a legal option after conscription in 1916, these men were emasculated in the eyes of society for failing to fulfil their patriotic service. Adam Hochschild examines the rising hysteria against pacifists occurring throughout the war.⁵⁴ Identifying this hysteria and the societal pressure against those who objected to the war, he outlines pamphlets and articles disparaging the CO as a ‘fungus growth’.⁵⁵ Although Macaulay probes the reasons behind this idea, most novels, such as *The Tree of Heaven*, reflect and reinforce society’s view. *The Tree of Heaven* reveals conscientious objection as cowardice and fear. Michael, a male protagonist in the story, refuses to volunteer to fight, as he refuses ‘to [think] that Germany was in the wrong because other people thought that Germany was in the wrong.’⁵⁶ He emphasises that ‘I can’t feel about it like other people... I’ve lived there [Germany]. I don’t want to make dear old Frau Henschel a widow, and stick a bayonet into Ludwig and Carl.’⁵⁷ However, Sinclair clearly shows his family and society’s disagreement with him. She writes that ‘Anthony’s [Michael’s father’s] heart was hard against Michael. “”He must know that public feeling’s pretty strong against him. To say nothing of my feeling.”’⁵⁸ Sinclair establishes that Michael’s reasoning is not valid, revealing Michael’s objection is born of fear. After the death of Michael’s brother Nicky in the war, Michael realises that ‘funk, pure funk, had been at the bottom of all he had said and thought and done since August, nineteen-fourteen; his attitude to the War... all his wretched criticisms and disparagements... the very

⁵² Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, p. 102.

⁵³ Bet-El, *Conscripts*, p. 193.

⁵⁴ A. Hochschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*, New York, Mariner Books, 2012, p. 188.

⁵⁵ Hochschild, pp. 188-189.

⁵⁶ M. Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven*, London, Cassell and Company, 1917, p. 287.

⁵⁷ Sinclair, p. 284.

⁵⁸ Sinclair, p. 286.

subterfuge of funk.⁵⁹ This reflects a widely held conception within society concerning COs. As opposed to having valid reasoning for wishing not to fight, they are merely morally inadequate and afraid to fulfil their wartime service. Although Michael realises this and eventually does die for his country, the realisation that cowardice is his real reason for not enlisting shows those who willingly choose not to fight as unmasculine. While Michael's honour is redeemed, it casts disgrace on those who still refuse to fight, emasculating them for not fulfilling their patriotic service. This targets men who fail in their duty, but also women who associate with COs. In portraying their objection as cowardice, it encourages women to pursue men fulfilling their service as soldier; and men to uphold this duty. However, Rose Macaulay challenges the view of COs as cowardly and unmasculine.

While in the other novels COs are condemned, *Non-Combatants and Others* explores men's reasons behind not enlisting and fulfilling idealised service. Although Macaulay neither condemns nor praises these men, she presents the variety of reasons for their objection and the work they take on instead. A key example of this is during protagonist Alix's lunch with her brother and his roommate. Alix's brother, Nicholas, refuses to enlist as he disagrees with the view that the war is cleansing and purifying society from the degenerative trends taking hold. The notion of war as saving society from degeneration was a prominent contemporary theme, with the middle-class perceiving it as a 'eugenic good.'⁶⁰ Fears of degeneration stemmed from concepts of social Darwinism, causing concern during the Boer War as well.⁶¹ Macaulay's novel counters these concerns. Nicholas' character suggests the potentially emasculating effect of war on soldiers. Discussing a novelist, he states that 'it's the work of a shaken, broken man. It's weak, irrational, drifting... His whole

⁵⁹ Sinclair, p. 337.

⁶⁰ Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 94.

⁶¹ Potter, p. 36.

world's run off its rails and upset and broken to bits... he's lost his constructive power.'⁶² This negative aspect of war, showing its potential effects on soldiers' minds, occurs little in the other novels. It also contradicts the idea of war as a purifier of society and foreshadows the prevalent post-1918 war myth of the "lost generation".⁶³ In doing this, it contrasts with *The Tree of Heaven* and *Missing*. Humphry Ward characterises soldier's masculinity and bravery against the laziness and weakness of COs. Mrs. Grayson, a minor character, describes two COs who worked on her farm and left due to illness. She states that "'And there was he, groaning – nobbut a bit of *colic*, Mrs. Sarrat, that anybody might have! – and there I set – thinking of our lads in the trenches... that never grumbled at anything – and would ha' been just ashamed to make such a fuss for such a little.'"⁶⁴ This reinforces the negative view of COs, while reinforcing the courage and sacrifice of the soldier (and the masculine ideal). However, Macaulay challenges this through her exploration of COs' reasoning and the courage they show in the face of society's condemnation. Nicholas' roommate, Reverend West, objects to the war for religious reasons. He hopes to fight the war through religion, admitting 'it's been largely a failure so far, and... not yet fulfilled its original intention... [of] preventing... war.'⁶⁵ West references the hate mail addressed to religious magazines because of this stance, stating that "'I get written to myself...'"⁶⁶ West and Nicholas' decision to withstand societal pressure and not enlist in war, shows a bravery similar to what Susan Grayzel identifies in Rose Allatini's novel *Despised and Rejected*. Grayzel points to their 'bravery in being willing to lay down their lives or their freedom for their principles, implying that this takes as much courage as blindly going off to kill others.'⁶⁷ While Humphry Ward reflects society's general disdain for COs, Macaulay is ahead of her

⁶² R. Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1916, p. 73.

⁶³ Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. x.

⁶⁴ Humphry Ward, *Missing*, pp. 114-115.

⁶⁵ Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others*, p. 77.

⁶⁶ Macaulay, pp. 76-77.

⁶⁷ Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 37.

time in exploring their reasons and motivations for objecting. Macaulay challenges ideas that war purifies society of degeneration, instead pointing to the psychological repercussion of war. At the same time she challenges society's views of COs as weak and cowardly, instead highlighting their bravery. Macaulay challenges the singularity of enlistment as idealised service and masculinity, questioning the assertion that only enlistment equates to bravery. However, the other novels still assert this notion, reflecting its dominance within society. Men's attitudes to home during war also reflect the idealisation of service's patriotism and masculinity.

Although enlistment defined man's service, their attitudes during war were still to reflect patriotic and masculine motives. This concerned how men portrayed the war in letters home to families and girlfriends. Jessica Meyer writes that 'in their letters home... men were able to expose their fear to those who knew and cared for them as something other than soldiers.'⁶⁸ She emphasises that this enabled them to maintain their masculinity on the front.⁶⁹ This is not apparent in the novels. Instead, they reinforce soldiers' masculinity centring round their experience of the war as an adventure. This could speak to novels' primary function as a means of escapism and "light reading", however, Potter highlights, such novels still served as 'vehicles for dissemination of patriotic ideals and models of appropriate behaviour wartime behaviour.'⁷⁰ Therefore, the novels' depiction of soldiers' letters home reflects expected behaviour on the front. Meyer states that 'in keeping with the narrative of war as sphere of masculine maturation, many men constructed their ability to endure discomfort as praiseworthy stoicism.'⁷¹ Michael Roper affirms this in his study of Second Lieutenant Lyndall Urwick, though constructing it as protection of those at home. He states: 'an only son's desire not to cause his mother added anxiety... militated against the open expression of

⁶⁸ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 21.

⁶⁹ Meyer, p. 21.

⁷⁰ Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 91

⁷¹ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 25.

feelings.⁷² The reality may have differed, as Meyer hints, but the idealisation of man's 'masculine maturation' through service remained. In both *The War-Workers* and *The Tree of Heaven*, the soldier characters write letters home reinforcing their masculinity, despite potentially dangerous conditions. In *The War-Workers*, Trevelyan writes to his love interest Grace from "'somewhere in France"... 'of hope and good courage, and peace dawning on a far horizon.'⁷³ However, Delafield makes clear that, in reality, Trevelyan is 'moved between the mud and noise and blood in the trenches, and the eternal dreary billets.'⁷⁴ This shows that the ideal man stays positive in letters home, and does not share the more fearful details. This disputes Meyer's claim that they showed fear in letters home, reinforcing the idealisation of the masculine soldier both in the novel and middle-class society. *The Tree of Heaven* reinforces this, with Michael referring to his experiences as 'adventures.'⁷⁵ Michael, in a letter to his dead brother's wife Veronica, writes that one adventure 'was ages ago in a German trench... I bumped up against a fat German officer and his revolver.'⁷⁶ He describes it as 'an exquisite moment,' while similar dangerous occurrences are 'pleasurable excitement.'⁷⁷ Although these moments caused shock and fear, they validated wartime service, becoming moments of pride.⁷⁸ These novels reflect this, with letters home showing this sense of adventure and satisfaction. Meyer identifies that letters home 'were also spaces in which men could expose their physical and emotional frailty, and potential inability to live up to the social standards of the heroic male.' However, the novels discount this element of soldiers' experiences.⁷⁹ Instead they idealise men retaining masculinity and presenting it as such back home, validating their service and reinforcing their traditional masculine role. This

⁷² M. Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 50, 2000, p. 193.

⁷³ E. M. Delafield, *The War-Workers*, London, William Heinemann, 1918, pp. 271-272.

⁷⁴ Delafield, p. 271.

⁷⁵ Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven*, p. 345.

⁷⁶ Sinclair, p. 345.

⁷⁷ Sinclair, p. 345.

⁷⁸ Todman, *The Great War*, p. 47.

⁷⁹ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 46.

could also reflect, as Roper suggests, a desire to protect family from unnecessary anxiety. Trevellyan's descriptions protecting Grace in *The War-Workers* discussed above would support this. *The Tree of Heaven* also reinforces this idea, with letters from both Nicky and Michael to Veronica expressing concern over 'the misery they're [Mother and Father] probably going through.'⁸⁰ In this regard, stoically bearing grief to protect loved ones is a key aspect of masculinity. Simultaneously, demonstrating bravery and enthusiasm for war should be reflected in letters as well. However, not only is it important for soldiers to show this in correspondence, but also in the manner of their deaths.

The novels show death in the war as man's most masculine and heroic achievement, embodying the patriotic spirit of his service. Despite Bet-El's claim that soldiers were 'elevated to the status of hero – regardless of any subsequent performance in the army,'⁸¹ their manner of death still shaped this. Meyer highlights that although men proved masculinity through enlistment, death proved them to be 'superior to all other men.'⁸² Due to uncertainty in war, specific knowledge was used to confirm the likely death of a soldier for the family.⁸³ Jay Winter identifies that this involved receiving a letter from an officer in the man's unit, containing 'three stock messages: the man in question was loved by his comrades; he was a good soldier; and he died painlessly.'⁸⁴ A key element of this information is that they died in battle for heroic purposes, validating their service. *The Tree of Heaven* conforms to this, with Nicholas' Colonel's letter outlining how he died. The Colonel writes that 'he rallied his men and led them in as gallant attack as was ever made... By a quarter to five the trench was stormed and taken, owing to his personal daring... and to the affection

⁸⁰ Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven*, p. 324. For similar instances, see: Sinclair, pp. 344, 349.

⁸¹ Bet-El, *Conscripts*, p. 182.

⁸² Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 83.

⁸³ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 85.

⁸⁴ J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 35.

and confidence he inspired.’⁸⁵ Although this death, and subsequently Michael’s, is hard on the family, their mother still takes pride knowing that her sons died fighting for their country.⁸⁶ The manner of death and how those at home perceive it ties closely to a soldier’s masculinity in the novels, reflecting middle-class society’s views. While their passing may be painful, those at home can take pride in their heroic deaths in service of their country. This reinforces the importance of upholding masculinity even in death to retain the heroic perception from the home front. It also shows a degree of propaganda within the letters themselves. Presenting deaths in such terms overshadows the more complicated emotional aspects of soldiers’ experience. This idealises the need for men to uphold heroic masculinity in the face of danger. Macaulay directly addresses this idealisation of soldiers’ deaths. She shows it as a means to maintain public approval of men’s war service and women’s positive encouragement and view of the masculine soldier.

In *Non-Combatants and Others*, Alix discovers the reality of her brother Paul’s death in the war. Although the War Office told her he had been shot, they failed to accurately describe how. After receiving the telegram, those around Alix discuss how Paul ‘died a noble death... serving his country in her need.’⁸⁷ This implies the telegram referenced Paul’s death as heroic and noble, as he died defending his country; however, Alix discovers this as a lie. As Alix walks with Ingram, a soldier, he describes a fellow soldier who ‘was a nervous, sensitive sort of chap... He went all to bits and lost his pluck... one night he let off his revolver into his own shoulder... he died of it.’⁸⁸ Ingram describes this experience sympathetically, but the story relates more to his own emotional trauma, with Macaulay highlighting that ‘really he was telling it because... he had to talk and tell.’⁸⁹ The man

⁸⁵ Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven*, 332.

⁸⁶ Sinclair, p. 354.

⁸⁷ Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others*, p. 110.

⁸⁸ Macaulay, p. 157.

⁸⁹ Macaulay, p. 157.

described turns out to be Paul. In showing this discovery, Macaulay explicitly questions the validity of such telegrams from the War Office, as well as the heroism of dying during the war more broadly. Winter points to this, emphasising that bereaved families, despite gaining degrees of comfort from such telegrams (as Alix initially did), were aware that the documents were not entirely truthful.⁹⁰ Failing to truthfully explain the circumstances of Paul's death implies that there was a degree of reluctance to accurately describe soldier's reactions to the front lines, especially when they deviated from heroic masculinity. Although this questions the validity of such telegrams and ideas, Macaulay's account challenges society's conformity to such idealised notions of masculinity and men's service. However, this still identifies society's broader adherence to ideals of men's service and masculinity.

Throughout the war, enlistment was idealised as men's key service to the war effort. This reinforced traditional masculinity, as simultaneously enlistment and soldiers actions during war were idealised within the eyes of women, in comparison to those who remained at home. This was expressed in many ways, both reinforcing the importance of enlistment by comparing soldiers with those unable to enlist and COs; but also by exploring their attitudes within the war and the manner of their deaths. This idealisation is viewed through the eyes of women in the novels, reflecting the views of women in society. In examining these ideals, the Macaulay challenges this ideal, revealing the potential bravery of COs and the realities of soldiers' deaths. However, in doing so, Macaulay further reinforces the existence of this ideal, as her challenge acknowledges its presence within society. Although challenges existed to this idealised masculine role, they were not a commonly voiced opinion. The virtue of soldier's enlistment as service throughout the war reinforced traditional masculine values. Women's role in comparison was more convoluted. Promoting women's service encouraged the transgression of their domestic sphere; however the shaping of this service still sought to

⁹⁰ Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p. 35.

reinforce these traditional values. The following chapter will discuss the conflicting nature of women's service.

Chapter Two: Women's Service

During the war, opinion on women's contribution to the war effort was conflicted; however despite varying ideas, the concept of women's service overshadowed ideas of women's work. This idealisation of service was prominent within the middle class in an attempt to counter fears of growing moral degeneration. Increasing concern over women's drinking and assertive sexuality, in part stemmed from women's increased incomes due to war work. Such activities threatened women's moral influence within the family and concurrently the future generation of soldiers.⁹¹ In this regard, notions of service were idealised to counter those whose work could be deemed as profiteering from the war.⁹² While war service still presented opportunities for women to engage in the public sphere, it served a traditional function in combatting potential threats presented by increased wages and professionalisation. The novels contribute to the idealisation of service and volunteering, while also attempting to reinforce middle-class women's domesticity. Women encouraging men's enlistment was a key element of women's service to war. However, encouraging the family to fight and potentially die in war contradicted women's traditional protective role. This shows the initial conflict of promoting women's service, which only increases when looking at middle-class concerns of degeneration. Unlike the other novelists, Macaulay depicts scenes reflecting these middle-class concerns, identifying their existence within society and their potential to influence the middle class. It is within this context that the novels reinforce motherhood as women's greatest war service, in an attempt to reassert domesticity. However, with the necessity for female workers increasing, the novels concurrently promoted women's engagement in war service and the public sphere,

⁹¹ Grayzel, 'Liberating Women?', pp. 118-119.

⁹² Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p. 98.

emphasising its temporary nature and moral benefits. This attempts to counter fears of women's moral transgressions, while reinforcing domesticity.

A key element constituting women's service was their encouragement of brothers, husbands and sons to enlist. The same propaganda which appealed to men's enlistment based on women's approval also encouraged women to promote soldiering. Jean Bethke Elshatin identifies that while men must go against their nature and kill other men; women must make a similar sacrifice during war, where 'to preserve the larger civic body... bodies must be sacrificed.'⁹³ 'The mother is called to forfeit those [bodies] of her sons; the wife, that of her husband,' putting the needs of the nation above personal desires.⁹⁴ Although published post-conscription, the novels still focus on women's power to encourage enlistment and the spirit of the volunteer. *Missing* and *The Tree of Heaven* both encourage this, emphasising women's ability to ease men's concerns during enlistment, and reprimanding those who do not. In *Missing*, Nelly's husband George's 'soul and sense contended' in his need to go back to the front, because of his love for Nelly.⁹⁵ Nelly recognises this struggle and, despite her pain, does all in her power to make his decision easier, refraining from seeing him off at the station.⁹⁶ Adrian Gregory discusses the significance of train stations, emphasising their new role in the war as a place where private emotion was displayed publically.⁹⁷ He identifies the unease of the middle class for the new public displays of emotion, which in part could have influenced Humphry Ward's writing of this scene. However, it is more likely that in encouraging woman to remain at home for soldiers' departure, Humphry Ward was identifying the increased emotional difficulties of leaving each other at the station. Gregory highlights that, commonly, such departures were "turn arounds"; where other soldiers

⁹³ J. B. Elshtain, *Women and War*, New York, Basic Books, 1987, p. 93.

⁹⁴ Elshatin, p. 93.

⁹⁵ Humphry Ward, *Missing*, p. 68.

⁹⁶ Humphry Ward, pp. 68-69.

⁹⁷ A. Gregory, 'Railway Stations: Gateways and Termini', in J. Winter and J. L. Robert (ed.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, vol. 2: *A Cultural History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 45.

returned from the front and reunited with their families, while those on leave departed.⁹⁸ Nelly seeks to save George the difficulty of witnessing others joy at reuniting, as well as her own. Although the reader sees the difficulty in this decision, Humphry Ward shows it as honourable. Nelly helps George continue his duty as the idealised masculine soldier. This reinforces the importance for women to dismiss their own personal desires and protective needs, and encourage men to enlist.

This also occurs explicitly in *The Tree of Heaven*. Vera, a secondary character, is reprimanded by Veronica, Nicky's wife, for 'not making it easy' for Lawrence, Vera's partner, to enlist, and for coming 'between him and what he wants most... his honour.'⁹⁹ Vera attempts to defend herself, claiming that 'all women are lying... it's this rotten pose of patriotism.'¹⁰⁰ Veronica emphasises: 'We're not lying. [The war is] the most real thing that ever happened to us. I'm glad Nicky's going.'¹⁰¹ Sinclair emphasises Veronica's position as ideal, as Vera realises with 'lucid eyes' that although younger, Veronica 'was a woman, astonishingly and dangerously mature.'¹⁰² The comparison of Veronica and Vera emphasises that although Vera is older, Veronica better understands the needs of the war. Vera's revival of passion for Lawrence after he enlists further reinforces this.¹⁰³ This shows the ways in which women's encouragement for men to enlist is idealised as a key service for women with male family members. In discussing Vera's attempts to keep Lawrence from the front, he exclaims: 'Traitor? It's women like you that are the traitors.'¹⁰⁴ Unlike Nelly from *Missing* and Veronica, Vera fails to forfeit the body of her partner and with that, fulfil her service to her country. This shows encouraging enlistment and forsaking personal matters as a key

⁹⁸ Gregory, 'Railway Stations: Gateways and Termini', p. 46.

⁹⁹ Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven*, pp. 297-298.

¹⁰⁰ Sinclair, pp. 297-298.

¹⁰¹ Sinclair, p. 299.

¹⁰² Sinclair, p. 299.

¹⁰³ Sinclair, p. 303.

¹⁰⁴ Sinclair, p. 300.

element of women's service. However, it also presents a paradox. In idealising women's promotion of enlistment, women are encouraged to act against traditional domestic sphere ideals of protection and nurturing. The promotion of women's service as opposed to work throughout the war was shaped in a manner designed to counter this threat to domesticity.

The emphasis on domesticity and war service for middle-class women stemmed from fears of the war's transgressive influence on women's morality. Although most of the novels omit contemporary fears concerning working-class women's moral transgressions, their plot lines respond to and counter these concerns, idealising women's war service instead. However, *Non-Combatants and Others* explores these concerns directly. This identifies their existence, and validates the idealisation of women's service as an attempt to counter them. Angela Woollacott identifies that the onset of the First World War triggered a shift in concerns over women's sexuality.¹⁰⁵ Prior to the war, attempts to control working-class sexuality portrayed women as victims to be saved by middle-class intervention.¹⁰⁶ The beginning of the war signalled a shift, introducing concerns of "khaki fever", the 'sufferers of [which] were consistently described as blatant, aggressive and overt in their harassment of soldiers.'¹⁰⁷ Although "khaki fever" was considered a concern only in the initial period of the war, the fears it engendered over women's sexual morality and transgressions of traditional femininity continued throughout.¹⁰⁸ These concerns existed alongside fears of women's increased drinking, enabled due to the introduction of separation allowances and women's increased wages within the workforce.¹⁰⁹ Although considered problems of the working class, Woollacott highlights 'the... blurred gradations between the working class and the middle

¹⁰⁵ A. Woollacott, "'Khaki Fever' and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1994, p. 326. Available from: JSTOR, (accessed 25 March 2015).

¹⁰⁶ Woollacott, p. 326.

¹⁰⁷ Woollacott, p. 326.

¹⁰⁸ Woollacott, p. 331.

¹⁰⁹ S. Moss, "'Wartime Hysterics'?: Alcohol, Women and the Politics of Wartime Social Purity in England', in J. Meyer (ed.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War*, Leiden, Koninklijke Brill, 2008, p.151-153.

class.’¹¹⁰ This increased fears of middle-class women exhibiting similar behaviour. As discussed later, this furthered concerns over the affect on women’s moral influence within the family and ability to produce future soldiers.¹¹¹ While the other novels omit this discussion, Macaulay explores these ideas, reflecting their occurrence within society. In the novel, female characters transgress women’s traditional sexuality. Protagonist Alix ‘plunged into a flirtation’ with minor character Tommy Ashe.¹¹² The narrator highlights that ‘Alix and Tommy Ashe went off together... and lay on the grass, and became rather more intimate than they had ever been before.’¹¹³ This contrasts to the other novels, which seldom discuss physical intimacy, let alone in a public place. Macaulay explores the actions of women which, Grayzel identifies as: ‘[serving] as [a precursor] to more anxious concern about women’s sexuality,’¹¹⁴ such as the spread of venereal disease, which threatened soldiers’ military strength. Macaulay does not discuss this directly, but secondary character and middle-class Evie alludes to concerns about “khaki fever”. After expressing her family’s concern over the amount of time Evie spends alone with soldier Basil Doye, Evie exclaims that Basil was ‘getting so warm... He’ll be wanting to tie me up if I’m not careful, and I’m not ready for that... There are plenty of others.’¹¹⁵ Following this, Evie begins dating a different soldier on leave from France.¹¹⁶ This assertive sexuality on the part of Evie, and her switching from one soldier to another, reflects society’s fears of working-class women’s sexual transgressions and their potential infiltration into middle-class society. Woollacott states: ‘promiscuity was feared as yet a further way in which the gender order was being destabilised.’¹¹⁷ These working-class transgressions, and fears of their influence on the

¹¹⁰ Woollacott, “‘Khaki Fever’”, p. 329.

¹¹¹ Grayzel, ‘Liberating Women?’, p. 118.

¹¹² Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others*, p. 62.

¹¹³ Macaulay, p. 62.

¹¹⁴ Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War*, p. 122.

¹¹⁵ Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others*, p. 193.

¹¹⁶ Macaulay, pp. 193-194.

¹¹⁷ Woollacott, “‘Khaki Fever’ and Its Control”, p. 342.

middle class, show the ways in which women were transgressing their traditional domestic sphere. While sexual transgressions affected notions of traditional motherhood most strongly, it represents more broadly women's growing independence within society. The idealisation of war service for middle-class woman served to counter this independence (further discussion later) in an attempt to reassert domestic ideals. While there are potential issues with promotion of service, the importance placed on motherhood reinforced domesticity.

Literature encouraged women's traditional domestic role of mother within society, showing pregnancy as one of the most valuable services women could take on during the war. Grayzel emphasises that 'the idea of motherhood as a natural, national industry emphasised the preeminent position of women as mothers who produced the state's most valuable commodity.'¹¹⁸ With the declining birth rate and death of soldiers overseas, fears of population decline led to an emphasis on women's position as mother and this as a specific contribution to the war. It is important to note that discussions of pregnancy within the novels only occur after the women have married.¹¹⁹ This stems from discussions of women transgressing sexual norms, which contributed to concern over "war babies". The term "war babies" described the illegitimate children of soldiers, both those conceived between long-standing partners where the father joined the armed forces, and those between a woman and soldier during a brief relationship before he left overseas.¹²⁰ Although such instances were low, concerns over a rise in illegitimate children called the morality of women and the government into question.¹²¹ With the introduction of separations allowances in August 1914, the Committee of the National Relief Fund extended these allowances to the unmarried wives

¹¹⁸ Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 112.

¹¹⁹ Although a child is not conceived, for discussion of the possibility of children between Veronica and Nicky, and George and Nelly, see respectively: Sinclair, *The Tree of Heaven*, p. 312; Humphry Ward, *Missing*, pp. 21, 71.

¹²⁰ Grayzel, p. 91.

¹²¹ Grayzel, p. 91.

and dependents involved in long-term partnership with a soldier.¹²² There was concern that such laws would encourage illegitimacy and further sexual transgressions.¹²³ The novels implicitly counter these notions, promoting domestic ideals of motherhood as middle-class women's most valuable war contribution, although one to be performed within the bounds of marriage. While the idea of motherhood as women's most valuable role is partially criticised in *The War Workers*, its presence within the novel shows it as a prevalent idea within contemporary society. Addressing concerns of "war babies", pregnancy only occurs after marriage. Doctor Prince is a minor character, who represents what he refers to as 'early Victorians', or the existing group within society who still adhere to traditional ideals of domesticity.¹²⁴ He does not disapprove of women's war work, but feels their first place is within the home, caring for their husbands and children. This character, reflecting traditional society, expresses the importance of motherhood as service. When main protagonist, Char Vivian, questions why her recently-married stenographer, Mrs. Baker-Bridges, is absent from work, Prince replies that '[Vivian] will have her back to-morrow – for a time, anyway.'¹²⁵ The implication is that Baker-Bridges is pregnant. When Vivian responds 'if my stenographer can't attend to her work regularly, she is of very little use to me,' Prince replies that 'she's probably going to be of more use to the nation... than all the rest of you put together.'¹²⁶ This reinforces the idea of motherhood as women's most valuable war service. Delafield critiques such traditional ideas with Prince acknowledging that 'his generation... didn't look upon these things [women's war work] in the same light,' referring to women's expansion into the public sphere. However, the presence of this within the novel still shows the belief of a section of society that motherhood was women's most apt service to the war effort. By emphasising motherhood within marriage, it counteracts fears of growing immorality and

¹²² Grayzel, pp. 93-94.

¹²³ Grayzel, pp. 95-96, 99.

¹²⁴ Delafield, *The War Workers*, p. 185.

¹²⁵ Delafield, p. 256.

¹²⁶ Delafield, pp. 256-257.

reinforces women's place within the domestic sphere. However, notions of service which brought women into the public sphere had to idealise the temporary nature of such positions in attempts to reinforce domesticity.

The novels emphasise middle-class women's war service as temporary to counter the contention of promoting women's involvement in the public sphere. Framing this contribution as service to the nation implied a temporary commitment to the public sphere which still centred on women's eventual marriage. While motherhood was considered women's national responsibility, the number of men enlisting meant that women were needed to fill their vacated jobs.¹²⁷ While this work was considered by working-class women as a means to display their patriotism,¹²⁸ others viewed their wages and increasing independence as a form of profiteering, both financially and socially. Brayson notes that 'even if their work was physically harmless it could be seen as dangerous to family life.'¹²⁹ Although discussing the working class, the fears of such trends influencing middle-class women led to the idealisation of women's service, as it implied only a temporary duration. This is most clearly identified in the tensions between nursing and Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) and their representations in the novels. These groups both belonged to the middle class, however nursing the lower-middle, and VAD the upper. Nursing was still deemed appropriate middle-class women's work due to its similarities to domesticity in women's nurturing of men.¹³⁰ However, nurses primarily saw war as an opportunity for work, while VADs framed their contribution as service to the national war effort.¹³¹ Comparing Nelly in *Missing* with minor character Dorothy in *Where My Treasure Is* shows the difference of these two contributions. Dorothy's service clearly identifies her temporary contribution, while Nelly's nursing shows

¹²⁷ Kent, *Making Peace*, p. 35.

¹²⁸ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 194.

¹²⁹ Brayson, *Women Workers in the First World War*, p. 120.

¹³⁰ K. Pickles, *Transnational Outrage: The Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 66.

¹³¹ Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, pp. 77, 86.

the potential threat of war work to traditional domesticity. In the wake of her husband George's death, Nelly initially takes on work as a VAD, however is offered training as a nurse in a hospital for 'nervous cases which were the product of the war.'¹³² At the close of the novel, Hester, a minor character and friend of Nelly's, considers the possible paths Nelly's nursing could lead down. She hopes that Nelly will settle down and marry William Farrell, reverting to her original 'girlish nature.'¹³³ However, she presents the possibility that Nelly's nursing and independence will 'blunt in [her] the natural instinct of the woman towards the man,' as it has with other women, drawing her 'into that world of the new woman,' who 'in the excitement of meeting new demands, and reaching out to new powers, forget the old needs and sweetnesses.'¹³⁴ Although reflecting Humphry Ward's anti-suffrage bias, this shows the threat of war work to domesticity. Hester believes Nelly will revert to her traditional role, but still reflects on the societal elements that engendered fears of women's growing independence and transgression of domesticity.

Where Your Treasure Is provides a contrast to this, showing the ways in which service as a VAD was idealised. Working as a VAD did not impose on domesticity in the same vein as nursing, instead encouraging patriotism and the domestic sphere simultaneously. Minor character Dorothy is pressured by her partner to give up working for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Corps (a similar institution to VADs). Dorothy resists, stating that 'I can't face domestic life and settling down to being your wife first and foremost... just at a time when one's outside life is so thrilling... and one's being useful too.'¹³⁵ Dorothy's desire to continue her war service implies a threat to the domestic sphere. However, the text implies that Dorothy is free to continue being useful until the end of the war when war service is no longer needed. Although involved in the public sphere, the

¹³² Humphry Ward, *Missing*, p. 334.

¹³³ Humphry Ward, p. 341.

¹³⁴ Humphry Ward, pp. 341-342.

¹³⁵ B. Harraden, *Where Your Treasure Is*, London, Hutchinson & Co., 1918, p. 136.

emphasis on her eventual marriage and return to domesticity is designed to combat fears of female transgressions. This notion is reinforced when Dorothy later announces that ‘We have just been married.’¹³⁶ Although service was designed to fulfil the need for more workers during the war while simultaneously reinforcing the return to the domestic sphere, it still contributed to an uneasy conflict of ideas. Although idealising service, this still recognised the existence of elements in society which were not temporary war contributions, but that in fact encouraged women’s growing independence, such as nursing and munition work. Simultaneously, despite attempts to promote domesticity with women’s marriage, women were still involved in the public sphere. This increased unease within middle-class society concerning these issues, and their potential lasting effects after the war. However, the need for workers meant that war service was still encouraged, with further attempts to counter the moral transgressions associated with women’s work.

Fears of women using the war for material gain led to the further idealisation of war service. Women’s increased participation in the public sphere through war contributions threatened women’s place within the domestic sphere, with increased incomes leading to greater independence. Economic independence was tied with fears of women’s moral and sexual transgression of chaste femininity. This links with fears over their maternal position, and the sexual health of future soldiers. Countering this, women’s war service was idealised over working roles that encouraged profiteering from the war.¹³⁷ Service encouraged pure patriotic motives, counteracting potentially selfish economic motives that could lead to transgressions of domesticity. This idealisation focused on the moral benefits of war service, while similarly to above, reaffirming the domestic sphere by rewarding their service with

¹³⁶ Harraden, p. 252.

¹³⁷ Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p. 98.

marriage. *Where Your Treasure Is* provides an example of this.¹³⁸ Harraden addresses and propagates the importance of supporting the war for patriotic reasons. She attempts to counteract selfish motives of monetary gain, as she believed that ‘war would revitalise a society in danger of decadence, replacing materialist values with spiritual.’¹³⁹ Fears of decadence and selfishness were concerns pre-1914, and although the war was expected to counter these, women’s increasing public presence and fears of their unpatriotic motives further fuelled such claims. As Potter highlights, the upheaval of war ‘meant that “national life” and the “needs of others” [were] becoming priorities.’¹⁴⁰ This reflects the continued emphasis on men’s enlistment and women’s encouragement of this. Women’s service to the war was to uphold these ideas as well, with women taking on service for patriotic reasons and not for their own gain. The manner of protagonist Tamar’s character progression reflects this desire, without explicitly referencing the concerns of society. In the beginning of the novel Tamar is portrayed as a greedy and selfish woman obsessed with monetary gain. The war had little meaning to her aside from the fact that ‘it enabled her to drive a good bargain with those who came in their impoverished circumstances to dispose of their valuables.’¹⁴¹ These personality traits reflect fears of those felt to be profiteering from war. However, throughout the novel Tamar is exposed to the war and encouraged to undertake war service. First donating money, Tamar realises that sending cheques is not enough, and that ‘they could not exonerate the senders from failing to give... personal service of some kind, at some period.’¹⁴² After hearing of Tamar’s service to the war (she houses refugees and visits hospitals), Bramfield, the love interest in the novel, forgives Tamar. Although initially

¹³⁸ For further examples see character progression of Cicely Farrell in Humphrey Ward’s *Missing*. Like Tamar in *Where Your Treasure Is*, Cicely begins flawed due to her extravagance during war. However, throughout the novel, due to the influence of war, overcomes her flaws and is rewarded with engagement to Captain Marsworth at the end of the book.

¹³⁹ Tylee, *The Great War and Women’s Consciousness*, p. 105.

¹⁴⁰ Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 98.

¹⁴¹ Harraden, *Where Your Treasure Is*, p. 32.

¹⁴² Harraden, p. 164.

repulsed by her greed, he begins to pursue her again.¹⁴³ Harraden supports women's service during the war and its moral influence, counteracting those who would seek to profit from others' misfortune. Simultaneously, Harraden counteracts war service's potential to encourage indefinite transgression of the domestic sphere, as Tamar's reward for her service is Bramfield, a potential husband. This further shows the conflicting nature of women's idealised role throughout war. Pre-1914, traditional society thought middle-class women working, and the suffrage movement more broadly, indicated society's moral decline.¹⁴⁴ The war was supposed to cleanse such degeneration. However, the need for women's service encouraged their increased participation in the public sphere. In an attempt to counter the potential effects of this participation, the novels emphasised service and its patriotic motives. However, this still identifies the existence of fears within society concerning women's lapse of traditional ideas of female morality and etiquette. This transgression would even concern some forms of suffragism, endorsed by Harraden, as maternal feminism promoted the notion of separate spheres. They believed women's maternal qualities would counter the 'more rational but colder voting practices of men.'¹⁴⁵ Although attempts were made to limit the potential transgressive influence of women's participation in the public sphere, it still signals the existence of such transgressions within society. Similarly, although services temporary nature promotes women's domesticity, it still encourages women's engagement in the public sphere. This shows the conflicting role of the war, as it simultaneously promotes women's independence while reinforcing traditional notions of domesticity.

While men's war service encouraged and promoted traditional notions of masculinity, the encouragement of women's service threatened middle-class women's traditional domesticity. In emphasising women's service as encouraging men to enlist as well as

¹⁴³ Harraden, p. 128.

¹⁴⁴ Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print*, p. 97.

¹⁴⁵ Sutherland, 'Beatrice Harraden', p. 101.

motherhood, it reveals the contention of women's role in the war. While trying to encourage motherhood as women's most valuable service, they simultaneously propagate the need for women to go against this "natural" instinct and forfeit the bodies of their sons and husbands.¹⁴⁶ Underlying these ideas was the threat war posed to middle-class women's traditional domestic role. The new-found economic independence of the working class and the corresponding fears of their moral and sexual transgressions produced concern over this independence influencing middle-class women. To counteract this, while simultaneously fulfilling the need for war workers, the notion of war service attempted to validate middle-class women's involvement in the public sphere. They did this through the idealisation of service and its temporary, patriotic fulfilment of war needs, while omitting discussion of transgressive topics from their texts. Macaulay's description of middle-class women transgressing sexually and morally indicates that, despite the idealisation of women's service maintaining domestic ideals, women were deviating from domesticity in light of new found independence. Attempts to reconcile the need for service with the morals of domesticity shows the growing contestation of women's domestic role.

¹⁴⁶ Elshatin, *Women and War*, p. 93.

Conclusion

As this dissertation shows, the idealisation of middle-class men's and women's war service served to concurrently reinforce and challenge traditional notions of gender roles during the First World War. While men's service was transparent in its promotion of enlistment through the idealisation of masculinity, women's service concurrently challenged and reinforced traditional ideas of domesticity. Idealising the masculinity of enlistment promoted it as the only viable form of service for men during the war. Although the novels were published after conscription, they still idealise enlistment, reflecting the value society placed on patriotic self-sacrifice in service of Britain. The enlisted soldier represented heroic masculinity and, as such, those unable to adhere to this idealised service were emasculated in the eyes of women in the novels. This reflected wider attitudes within society which condemned COs and lauded the soldier. However, in all correspondence with family and in the manner of their deaths, men must uphold this masculinity, so as to validate their service to the nation. Macaulay challenges these ideas, exploring the motives of COs and the realities of soldiers' experiences. However, these opinions were not commonly voiced and Macaulay's exploration of such issues nonetheless confirms the dominant perception of men's ideal war service.

This contrasts with the idealisation of middle-class women's war service. While appropriate men's service was straightforward and promoted traditional masculinity, the promotion of women's service encouraged transgressions of their domestic role. This occurred at a time when working-class women's war work was enabling increased economic independence, which heightened fears of society's degeneration, as this new-found independence encouraged moral and sexual transgression. Concern that working-class indiscretions would influence middle-class women led to the novelists omitting such

behaviour, while simultaneously encouraging the moral qualities of service and women's eventual return to domesticity. Macaulay, however, explores such behaviour within the middle-classes, validating the other novelists' promotion of service and domesticity. While motherhood was considered women's greatest service to the war, and reinforced women's traditional role, the idealisation of their encouragement for soldiers to enlist contradicts this, promoting them to forfeit their protective nature. Further, the promotion of war service encouraged women's participation in the public sphere. Although the novels shape service as a temporary measure, followed by women's return to domesticity after the war, they still reflect the tension inherent in women's service. The novels attempt to encourage the moral benefits of service over work, in an attempt to counter middle-class transgressions. However, this attempt still acknowledges that these fears are present within society. Similarly, encouraging women's service within the public sphere, although shaped to affirm their return to domesticity, still presents some challenge to the traditional role of women. Macaulay's depiction of middle-class women's transgression implies that despite attempts to counter such influence, it existed within middle-class society. This dissertation complements Potter's discussion of literature's reflection of conservative fears of degeneration, Watson's investigation of difference between work and service, and Grayzel's examination of society's continued emphasis on motherhood. Combining these ideas, it specifically shows how women's war literature idealised notions of service for middle-class men and women. In doing so, it reflected middle-class society's conflicting promotion of women's role in the public sphere and their return to domesticity. Although this does not symbolise a watershed moment for women's rights, it does indicate the war as an environment in which women's traditional role was contested.

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