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## Temporary Gentlemen: The Masculinity of Lower-Middle-Class Temporary British Officers in the First World War

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in History

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## Abstract

During the First World War, the high mortality rate of officers led to an officer shortage. This, in turn, resulted in the Army promoting officers from the ranks rather than drawing on the traditional supply of upper-middle-class, public-school-educated officers, giving lower-middle-class men the opportunity to obtain temporary commissions. In an effort to standardize the process of granting commissions to rankers, the Army created Officer Cadet Battalions, which offered a four-month crash course in the art of being an officer to candidates recommended by their commanding officer in the field. Drawing on letters, memoirs (published and unpublished), oral interviews as well as troop journals published by Officer Cadet Battalion units, this dissertation explores the masculinity and identity of lower-middle-class ‘temporary gentlemen.’ It finds that, in contrast to negative portrayals of lower-middle-class men in the popular press at the time, which painted them as emasculated upstarts, the lower-middle-class ‘temporary gentlemen’ studied here were confident in their own worth, keen to contribute to the war effort and certain that their contribution would be of value. They fully bought into the upper-middle-class ‘officer and gentleman’ hegemonic masculinity of the public-school educated officer, which was promoted during the Officer Cadet Battalion course they took, and did not attempt to construct an alternative model of masculinity. Nevertheless, they were convinced that they could live up to the hegemonic standard and excel.

## Keywords

Lower middle class, masculinity, temporary gentlemen, First World War, Officer Cadet Battalion, hegemonic masculinity

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## Introduction

This PhD dissertation explores the masculinity of ‘temporary gentlemen,’ or lower-middle-class British officers who received temporary commissions for the duration of the First World War. Historiographical debate about the lower middle class has sometimes painted them as an unheroic group whose role in society was insignificant. They are depicted as marginal individuals who admired middle-class values of respectability but were never fully accepted by the middle class to which they aspired since their social position was always precarious.<sup>1</sup> Mirroring contemporary fears of a struggling middle class, lower-middle-class British officers who received temporary commissions for the duration of the First World War faced economic and social hardships when they were demobilized.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the challenges of finding work, they faced the disorientation associated with giving up the class privileges to which they had become accustomed as officers in the British Army – an institution whose traditions conflated being an officer with being a gentleman. This dissertation combines the approaches of social and cultural historians to look at lower-middle-class British officers from without and from within. I examine how they were perceived and how they saw themselves through letters, military publications, memoirs, and journals produced by the Officer Cadet Battalions (OCB). Since the lower middle class has generally been studied from without, through snobbish depictions in the middle-class press, this is an illuminating perspective because it sheds light on the junior officers’ own experience. In looking at lower-middle-class sources, I examine a literate section of the population that was represented only pejoratively in popular culture. Scholarship on lower-middle-class masculinity has identified the late Victorian and Edwardian period as a time when lower-middle-class masculine identity was mocked and satirized in the popular press, represented by figures such as Mr. Charles Pooter. Satire took the lower-middle-class lack of independence and authority as evidence of its powerlessness and drew on its attachment to domesticity as further evidence of lower-middle-class weakness and lack of manliness. The men I examine in this dissertation contradict these negative perceptions of their class. They

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Joel Crossick, ed. *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Petter, “‘Temporary Gentlemen’ in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,” *The Historical Journal*, 37:1 (March 1994): 127-152.

were comfortable with who they were and were not consumed with self-loathing at their perceived lack of independence. They had a solid sense of their own self-worth, as individuals and as members of a class, and were convinced of their ability to contribute to the war effort, and keen to do their share. Far from being hampered by their love of domesticity, they found strength in a strong attachment to their families of origin and their relationship with their fiancées or wives. Moreover, rather than shamefacedly trying to camouflage their background, many of them proudly put their civilian professional skills – markers of their membership in a clerical workforce – to good use to fight the enemy, advance through the ranks or obtain better conditions at the front. Although they fully embraced the ‘officer and gentleman’ model of hegemonic masculinity presented to them and did their utmost to live by its precepts, they did not feel insecure about their ability to make good officers. In fact, some of them were proud that their background as ‘rankers’ gave them extra insight into the concerns of the men under their command.

Although it has been argued the First World War was a turning point for British masculinity<sup>3</sup> and historians have been urged to be “attentive to the contribution of class to male identities,”<sup>4</sup> to date there has been no in-depth historical examination of the intersection of British lower-middle-class masculinity and class during the Great War. My work examines both the experiences and the representations of British officers of lower-middle-class origin from 1914 - 1920. My study of temporary gentlemen is a valuable addition to masculinity studies because it is an inside view of one of the greatest historical events of the past 150 years, examined from the unique perspective of a class that has been historically and historiographically marginalized, but that was at the centre of profound changes in British society.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Roper, “Between Manliness and Masculinity: The ‘War Generation’ and Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914–1950,” *Journal of British Studies* 44:2 (2005): 343–62.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, “What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500-1950,” *Journal of British Studies* 44 (April 2005): 277.

## Historical background: who were the ‘temporary gentlemen’?

The profile of the temporary gentleman during the First World War differed significantly from that of a typical regular army officer. In the early twentieth century, the majority of regular officers were drawn from public schools. They had undergone a process of socialization among young men of a similar class background and indoctrination in the values of team spirit and self-discipline, along with learning the rudiments of leadership, all of which prepared them for regimental service. Many of them pursued their military training at either Sandhurst or Woolwich, where their education continued among other ‘gentlemen cadets’ of a similar social background. The types of families that sent their sons to the public schools – generally well-off middle- or upper-middle-class – were widely considered to constitute an officer class. The exclusiveness of the officer caste was reinforced by the custom of many regiments of not paying their officers enough to survive on their pay alone, thus making it necessary for an officer to have a private income. This financial model was deliberately designed to keep a career as an officer out of the reach of the lower middle and working classes, thus making the officer caste exclusive.

Historically speaking, this early twentieth-century elite caste of public-school-educated officers was itself a relatively new creation. Prior to reforms to the army’s commissioning system in the wake of the Crimean War, culminating in the Cardwell reforms between 1868 and 1874, men of birth and means were able to achieve commissions in two ways: by nomination and by purchase. Since nomination depended on influence and purchasing a commission at inflated over-regulation prices required great wealth, access to the officer class was effectively very limited. At the same time, the corruption resulting from such a system meant that there was a shortage of officers with the proper education or accountability required to do their jobs adequately since many of them viewed their commissions as property. In response to pressures from the increasingly influential middle class, the second half of the nineteenth century saw reforms to the British army: the purchase of commissions was abolished in 1871, entrance examinations for direct commission were introduced in

1849, and open competition (rather than nomination) as a mode of entry to military academies was implemented between 1855 and 1858.<sup>5</sup>

Hand in hand with reforms to the army went reforms to the system of secondary education, which were themselves spurred on by the demands of the ambitious middle class which wanted its sons to receive the kind of preparation necessary to pass civil service and military academy entrance examinations. In 1861, the Clarendon Commission conducted an enquiry into the seven major public schools<sup>6</sup> and two ancient day schools, Merchant Taylor's and St. Paul's – widely recognized as catering to the sons of the gentry and aristocracy – and found that their curriculum was out of date as it focused mostly on classics and ignored subjects such as science and modern languages. In 1864, the Schools Inquiry Commission (aka the Taunton Commission) conducted a similar enquiry into secondary schools not covered by the Clarendon Commission – mostly proprietary boarding schools which had been created to cater to the educational needs of the sons of the well-to-do middle class. As a result of these commissions, the old public schools were modernized while the proprietary schools were brought up to standard. There was also an expansion in the number of public schools, with some proprietary schools' headmasters becoming members of the Headmasters' Conference.<sup>7</sup> While some old, public schools still catered to the sons of the upper class, many lesser public schools now served the upper middle and professional classes, providing them with a suitable and gentlemanly education by combining “the strengths of the aristocratic tradition – patriotism, corporate spirit, gentlemanly honour and obligation – with those of the bourgeois

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<sup>5</sup> Albert V. Tucker, “Army and Society in England 1870-1900: A Reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms,” *Journal of British Studies*, 2:2 (May 1963): 110-141; C.B. Otley, “Public School and Army,” *New Society*, 8:216: 754-757; Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Westminster, Eton, Winchester, Charterhouse, Harrow, Rugby and Shrewsbury.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Gunn and Rachel Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London: Cassell & Co., 1996); Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960); H.C. Barnard, *A History of English Education from 1760* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1961); John William Adamson, *English Education 1789-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930); T.W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1967).

tradition – moral earnestness, energy and self-discipline.”<sup>8</sup> As a result of the improved academic standards and more relevant curriculum, these schools were well suited to prepare young men for entry to the professions, including the army. Seeing an opportunity, many of them created special systems, or academic streams, designed specifically to prepare their students for competitive entry exams to Sandhurst or Woolwich. This, combined with the practical experience students developed by participating in the school Officer Training Corps (OTC) along with harsh living conditions, discipline, the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of relations between boys in different school forms, and the focus the schools placed on teaching leadership and command, gave the public schools at the turn of the century a well deserved reputation of producing ideal candidates for the officer class. Accordingly, the majority of regular officers at the outbreak of the First World War were members of this exclusive officer caste.<sup>9</sup>

However, within a few weeks of war breaking out in 1914, there were not enough junior officers to replace front-line casualties. As the war continued, these shortages persisted and the army was forced to change how it recruited junior officers. In addition to taking steps to increase the numbers of regular commissions being granted, the army also instituted the practice of granting temporary commissions for the duration of the war. The first group of young men targeted for such commissions were ‘suitable’ – read upper-middle-class – candidates from university and public school OTCs, or Officer Training Corps, but their numbers were limited. Over time, the army found itself with more and more temporary officers being promoted from the ranks. In contrast to the traditional officer and gentleman public-school type, these men were often from a working-class or lower-middle-class background.<sup>10</sup> Because they were not from the traditional officer caste, such temporary

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<sup>8</sup> Otley, “Public School and Army,” 755.

<sup>9</sup> Otley, “Public School and Army”; Ian Worthington, “Antecedent Education and Officer Recruitment: the Origins and Early Development of the Public School-Army Relationship,” *Military Affairs* 41:4 (December 1977): 183-189.

<sup>10</sup> David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Edward M. Spiers, “The Regular Army in 1914,” in *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, ed. Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson, 63-98 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); Keith Simpson, “The Officers,” in *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, ed. Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson, 63-98

officers faced unique challenges in adapting to their new role. Military authorities took certain steps to assist them in both looking and acting the part. Temporary officers received the pay of a subaltern, which was quickly increased to ensure that young men without private means could maintain the lifestyle of an officer on their pay alone. In addition to a lodging allowance, field allowance, ration allowance, and travel allowance, subalterns received a £50 kit allowance to purchase their officer's uniform.<sup>11</sup>

Starting in February 1916, the War Office took steps to standardize its system of selecting and training temporary junior officers. It established the Officer Cadet Battalions, where suitable candidates who had been recommended by their commanding officer in the field were sent for a four-month crash course in the art of being an officer. Under this system, only those who had passed through the ranks could be granted a temporary commission, and the OCBs ensured that all such candidates received the same essential training to prepare them for the task. While military training was provided, the emphasis of the course was on “developing leadership and the cultivation of initiative and self-confidence”<sup>12</sup> – the qualities that typical officer cadets would have learned at their public schools and then continued to develop at Sandhurst or Woolwich. And indeed, “[i]n the words of one contemporary writer the tone was ‘intended to be that of Sandhurst or Woolwich or of the best public schools.’”<sup>13</sup> By 1917 there were twenty-three Officer Cadet Battalions housed in a mixture of university colleges, stately homes and former barracks. From the time of their creation until December 1918, some 107,929 men were granted temporary commissions after successfully completing an OCB course.<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to determine the number of lower-middle-class officer

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(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); Charles Messenger, *For Love of Regiment: A History of the British Infantry, Volume Two 1915-1994* (Leo Cooper: London, 1996); John Mason Sneddon, “The Company Commander,” in *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914*, ed. Spencer Jones, 314-331 (Solihull, West Midlands: Helion and Company Ltd., 2013); C.B. Otley, “The Social Origins of British Army Officers,” *The Sociological Review* 18:2 (July 1970): 213-239; C.B. Otley, “The Educational Background of British Army Officers,” *Sociology*, 7 (1973): 191-209.

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Simpson, 80.

<sup>13</sup> Simpson, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Simpson, 80.

cadets among that group since such statistics do not exist. Similarly, it is difficult to determine with exact accuracy the number, or percentage, of lower-middle-class men who made up the officer corps during the First World War. According to Ministry of Labour figures, “the total number of temporary officers at the conclusion of hostilities in 1918 was approximately 205,000,”<sup>15</sup> and it is fair to speculate that a sizeable percentage of those were of lower-middle-class origin. In his article on temporary gentlemen and the ‘ex-officer problem’, Martin Petter uses tables published by the War Office in 1922 that set out demobilization by ‘Industrial Groups’ to gauge the percentage of demobilized officers falling into the lower-middle-class category. According to Petter, the forty-three groups are so broad and unspecific that it is possible to obtain “only an impression of social or ... occupational background.” Nevertheless, the figures show that “professionals, teachers, students and those in ‘commercial and clerical’ occupations comprised just over sixty percent of the total analyzed.” Petter used these figures, which roughly include the upper four categories of F.G. D’Aeth’s seven-class hierarchy,<sup>16</sup> in conjunction with information about officer recruitment and those who had applied for civil liabilities assistance by early 1918. He estimated the percentage of officers who “would ... be found in various middle-class and borderline non-manual occupations as minor officials and professionals, small businessmen and manufacturers, clerks, commercial travellers, tradesmen, shopkeepers and shop assistants – the groups roughly analogous to D’Aeth’s classes D and E.”<sup>17</sup> Petter says “with some certainty” that “a majority of First World War officers came from outside the traditional officer class, and that the largest single element came from what Masterman calls ‘the

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<sup>15</sup> P.R.O. LAB 2/1517/DRA179/1918

<sup>16</sup> D’Aeth’s hierarchy went as follows: A, B and C were manual workers; D were lower-middle-class shopkeepers and clerks; E and F were the middle and upper-middle classes; and G were “the Rich.” F.G. D’Aeth, “Present tendencies of class differentiation,” *The Sociological Review*, III (Oct. 1910): 270-1; and Mark Abrams, “Some measurements of social stratification in Britain,” in *Social Stratification*, ed. J.A. Jackson (Cambridge, 1968), 133-4, cited in Petter, 137-139.

<sup>17</sup> Petter, 138.

suburbans.”<sup>18</sup> We can therefore speculate that a large proportion of that group fell into what we would call the lower middle class.

The meaning of temporary gentleman changed over the course of the war. In 1914, when it was devised, it referred to civilians who received their commissions for the duration of the war, regardless of their social background. Indeed, in the early days of the war, the social background of those who received temporary commissions would have been similar to that of regular officers. Initially, the prejudice “shown by regular officers against temporary officers was the professional action of the regular against the amateur.”<sup>19</sup> As the war progressed, the offensive term began to be reclaimed by those holding temporary commissions, who referred to themselves as temporary gentlemen as a way of “asserting, with appropriate irony, that they had met the test and disproved all earlier doubts.”<sup>20</sup> At the same time, it began to be directed specifically against temporary officers who came from a working- or lower-middle-class background, as a way of pointing out their shortcomings with regard to manners and accent. When used in this context, the term temporary gentlemen was used not by regular officers – whose numbers had by then been decimated – but by other amateurs with temporary commissions whose class background presumably exempted them from such criticisms. One public-school-educated temporary officer referred to officers who served alongside him: “Many of them came from the lower middle class and had no manners, including table manners, of any kind. ... when my room mate, a captain, said, ‘I always wash me before I shave me,’ I felt the bottom of the barrel had been scraped for officer material.”<sup>21</sup> Martin Petter, whose work has examined lower-middle-class men as they dealt with demobilization and loss of officer status at the end of the First World War, has pointed out that the term was sometimes also used by civilians belonging to the upper and upper-middle

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<sup>18</sup> Petter, 137-139; War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1922), 707, 713.

<sup>19</sup> Simpson, 75.

<sup>20</sup> Petter, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart Cloete, *A Victorian Son: An Autobiography* (London, 1972), 266-7, cited in Petter, 141. See also: Simpson, 67.

classes who took offense at the inferior accents of men in officer's uniform.<sup>22</sup> The men studying the art of being officers and gentlemen at the Officer Cadet Battalions were referred to simply as 'cadets' or 'officer cadets.' This was in contrast to the nomenclature used at Sandhurst, as pointed out by R.W. Campbell in his book *John Brown: Confessions of a New Army Cadet*: "In Sandhurst they are officially styled gentlemen cadets; but apparently we are not supposed to be gentlemen – we're just cadets. Funny, isn't it?"<sup>23</sup> After the war ended, the so-called temporary gentlemen had a difficult time. Many of those who did not have jobs to return to found themselves out of work and without means – sometimes even destitute. The hope that the temporary gains in status for temporary gentlemen during the war would translate into increased opportunities after the armistice did not come to fruition. In fact, temporary officers of limited means who had not accumulated savings throughout the war found themselves in an especially difficult position when the war ended, as their officer status made them ineligible for the unemployment donation – given to all rankers – or access to the unemployment exchanges – again open to all rank-and-file soldiers – on the assumption that the war gratuity they received upon demobilization would be enough when coupled with their private means, and that unemployment exchanges were no place for men of the officer class. Extensive correspondence within the Ministry of Labour concerning the issue of demobilized officers in dire financial straits commented on this injustice: "...when it is borne in mind that in a large number of cases this class of officer did not ask for a commission but was nominated by his Commanding Officer to take one... the fact that he should be worse treated on discharge than if he had remained in the ranks seems almost impossible to defend."<sup>24</sup> In the end, the assumption that only men of a certain class could be officers, which had initially kept lower-middle-class men out of the running for commissions, hampered their efforts at finding work after the armistice, when they were technically part of the exclusive 'officer and gentleman' club.

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<sup>22</sup> Petter, 140.

<sup>23</sup> R.W. Campbell, *John Brown: Confessions of a New Army Cadet* (London: W&R Chambers, Limited, 1919), 1.

<sup>24</sup> LAB 2/1517/DRA179/1918; for a discussion of the Training Grants Scheme and the difficulties of using rank to determine who was and was not eligible, see Petter.

## Historiography and Theoretical Framework

This dissertation engages with the historiography of the British lower middle class, the First World War, British masculinity, and gentlemanliness. It examines the experience of temporary gentlemen through the lens of masculinity studies, using the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework.

### Historiography – The Lower Middle Class

At the turn of the century, the lower middle class in Great Britain did not have a loud public voice, and was therefore perceived as inscrutable and possibly subversive by the dominant middle class, who felt threatened by their growing numbers and spreading influence.<sup>25</sup> The creeping spread of suburbia, where members of the lower middle class lived in their semi-detached houses and where they conducted their private lives behind closed doors, was also perceived as a threat to the well-being of the nation – and reported on as such in the press by mouthpieces of the middle class, which attempted to work out its own insecurities by satirizing the lower middle class and portraying its members as weak and petty social climbers. The perceived threat of the suburbanites was framed in various ways: from anxieties about the use of birth control among lower-middle-class couples that would lead to a lower birth rate and the degeneration of British stock, to the dangers of the dominant role played by lower-middle-class women in their homes, which supposedly led to the emasculation and ‘Pooterisation’ of their husbands.<sup>26</sup> The insecurities of the middle class were not entirely unfounded, as the kind of life led by the lower middle class would, by the middle of the twentieth century, become the norm for the majority of British people: companionate marriage, a small house in the suburbs, shared domestic responsibilities, and no live-in servants. The late decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the

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<sup>25</sup> A. James Hammerton, "The English Weakness? Gender, Satire and 'Moral Manliness' in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920," in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, 164-182 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> C.F.G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London: Methuen and Co., 1960); Thomas Crosland, *The Suburbans* (London: John Long, 1905); George Grossmith and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* (Buffalo, NY: Broadview Editions, 2009); James A. Hammerton, "Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920," *Journal of British Studies* 38:3 (July 1999): 291-321.

twentieth century saw journalists who wrote for middle-class publications ridiculing the lower middle class. As James Hammerton has argued, this was a way for the middle class to defuse its own anxieties about the lower middle class as a subversive threat.<sup>27</sup> Publications such as *The Diary of a Nobody* (first serialized in *Punch* in 1888-89) and *The Eliza Stories* (published between 1900 and 1913) embodied a growing critique of what was perceived as suburban drabness, shallowness, weakness, and pretension. They also reflected a concern over the growing control of women over their suburban surroundings and the attendant anxieties about racial and cultural degeneration.<sup>28</sup>

Some of the middle-class anxieties about the lower middle class had their roots in the growing fluidity of class gradations at the turn of the century. The lower middle class began to resemble the middle class in their dress and demeanor. As they increasingly used their new-found money to purchase consumer goods and mimic the appearance of the respectable middle class, they more readily blended in with their social superiors – an ability that was perceived as dangerously subversive.<sup>29</sup> James Hammerton argues that the late nineteenth-century phenomenon of ‘Pooterism,’ or the ridiculing in the press of lower-middle-class habits and lifestyle for their supposed shallowness and pretention, involved shifting the lower-middle-class marker of snobbish respectability from women to men.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Charles Pooter, the stereotypical lower-middle-class husband, was ridiculed as being not only shallow and pretentious, but primarily under his wife’s thumb. The suburban context is portrayed as feminizing, and Mr. Pooter’s weakness and emasculation act as metaphors for general anxieties about the racial and cultural degeneration of late-nineteenth-century

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<sup>27</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism.”

<sup>28</sup> Grossmith and Grossmith.

<sup>29</sup> Julie English Early, “Keeping Ourselves to Ourselves: Violence in the Edwardian Suburb,” in *Everyday Violence in Britain, 1850-1950*, ed. Shani D’Cruze, 170-184 (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Christopher P Hosgood, “Mrs. Pooter’s Purchase: Lower-Middle-Class Consumerism and the Sales, 1870-1914,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, 146-163 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism,”

Britain.<sup>31</sup> Middle-class anxieties about the lower middle class crystallized in 1910 with the heavily publicized trial and execution of Hawley Harvey Crippen, a lower-middle-class homeopathic doctor who was convicted of murdering his wife, dismembering her body and burying it in the cellar of his suburban home. Crippen's press coverage as the 'mild murderer,' a principled, honourable, and persecuted man whom people were sorry to see hanged, seems almost inconceivable in light of the gruesome crime he committed. Julie English Early characterizes Crippen as the 'Mr. Pooter of crime.' She attempts to explain the 'mild murderer' phenomenon by setting it in relation to the way the women in Crippen's life were portrayed, stating that Crippen's crime was seen as "a strike at the unnatural enfeeblement of men cowed by women's demands."<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, I have argued that the portrayal of Hawley Harvey Crippen in the middle-class press was characterized not as much by affection as by condescension, and it was dismissive and demeaning, often painting him as a typical lower-middle-class emasculated man. Crippen's execution was met with regret because, as an emasculated man, he was not a threat to the respectable middle class.<sup>33</sup>

The lower middle class is central to key debates in the historiography of class in Great Britain at the turn of the century. Geoffrey Crossick's pioneering collection on the lower middle class, *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (1977), concludes that the lower middle class was not influential, its mentality was unheroic and that, as a class, it did not play an important social role.<sup>34</sup> Many of the conclusions reached by Crossick and his collaborators have since been criticized or debunked. Christopher Hosgood claims that the unheroic nature of lower-middle-class shop assistants' lives was a by-product of specific

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<sup>31</sup> Grossmith and Grossmith.

<sup>32</sup> Julie English Early, "A New Man for a New Century: Dr. Crippen and the Principles of Masculinity," in *Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century*, eds. George Robb and Nancy Erber (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999): 213-227.

<sup>33</sup> Magdalena Hentel, "An 'Insignificant-Looking Little Man': Press Representations of Lower-Middle-Class Masculinity in the Crippen Case" (presentation, Law and Governance in Britain Conference, Western University, October 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Crossick.

historical circumstance rather than a defining characteristic of the class as a whole.<sup>35</sup> James Hammerton argues that the lower middle class's suburban servantless existence away from extensive kinship networks such as those enjoyed by the working class forced them to prioritize co-operation between husband and wife and pioneered the modern companionate marriage.<sup>36</sup> Geoffrey Spurr points to the YMCA as a source of agency for young male clerks.<sup>37</sup> Peter Bailey claims that, far from being a marginal group, the lower middle class was culturally central in Britain, intimately involved in its own 'making' as a class. He concludes that the lower middle class has a heroic dimension since it has been at the forefront of modern societal developments and argues that it may be the closest we ever get to 'ordinary' people.<sup>38</sup> My analysis of lower-middle-class temporary officers focuses on the crucial contribution they made during the pivotal years of World War I. By examining their personal writings, I shed light on their agency and demonstrate that their wartime experiences as a class had a heroic dimension.

This dissertation uses sources that reflect the experiences of lower-middle-class temporary officers from without and from within. It shows how they were perceived by the military hierarchy and how they saw themselves, making it possible to examine the contrasting perceptions and to reveal the perspective of a group whose voice has often not been heard. Much of the scholarly work done on the lower middle class in Great Britain around the turn of the century positions them within the context of the debate on the evils of suburbanization and, as such, looks at the way they were portrayed in the press by their social 'superiors,' which reveals nothing about how members of the lower middle class actually experienced the world. Scholars who examine the lives of the lower middle class from within, using sources such as men's autobiographical writings, do so to shed light on these men's domestic lives or

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<sup>35</sup> Christopher P. Hosgood, "'Mercantile Monasteries': Shops, Shop Assistants, and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 38:3 (July 1999): 322-352.

<sup>36</sup> Hammerton, "Pooterism," 291-321.

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey D. Spurr, "The London YMCA: A Haven of Masculine Self-Improvement and Socialization for the Late-Victorian and Edwardian Clerk," *Canadian Journal of History* 37 (August 2002): 275-301.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Bailey, "White Collars, Gray Lives? The Lower Middle Class Revisited," *Journal of British Studies* 38:3 (July 1999).

participation in voluntary associations. Hammerton looks at lower-middle-class marriages, Hosgood examines the role of lower-middle-class Britons in the consumption and production of popular culture, while Spurr studies the role that the YMCA played in young lower-middle-class clerks' lives.<sup>39</sup> To date, Martin Petter is the only historian to have examined lower-middle-class men in the context of the First World War. In his article about the experience of temporary gentlemen upon demobilization, Petter looks at the so-called 'ex-officer problem' as portrayed in literature and the press and as dealt with by government policies. He argues that, in the wake of the First World War, any expectations of lasting higher class status on the part of so-called temporary gentlemen faded. He uses newspapers, parliamentary papers, and military records that allow him to focus on a broad sample of temporary officers. However, Petter does not delve into the personal experience of these men by using sources such as personal papers, diaries, and memoirs, nor does he focus on the initial transition to gentleman status they experienced during officer training and when they took up their commissions.<sup>40</sup>

My dissertation looks at the personal experiences of lower-middle-class men as expressed through their own words, giving scope for their agency to come to the fore. I look closely at the wartime process of training and indoctrination these men faced while attending officer training courses, examining the ways in which lower-middle-class men were moulded into gentlemen and taught to imitate traditional public-school-type officers. In doing so, I focus on their careful negotiation of their own class identity and the officer and gentleman persona they did their best to adopt for the duration of the war.

## Definition of Class

Almost all scholars who study class agree that it is a difficult concept to define. Over time, it has been defined in many ways and approached from many vantage points. Based on the historiography, I define 'lower-middle-class' as relational, cultural, gendered, and aspirational. In the British historiographical tradition, the Marxist approach to class has

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<sup>39</sup> Hammerton, "Pooterism;" Bailey; Spurr.

<sup>40</sup> Petter.

loomed large and has influenced the way generations of historians since the nineteenth century have approached the subject. The framework laid down by Marx, who insisted that exploitation was the fundamental principle governing social relations, placed the locus of class analysis in the working class. As a result, scholars focused on social class as defined by employment and occupation. Since getting away from an occupation-based definition of class altogether is impossible, I begin my interrogation of the sources by locating the men I study in terms of their own, or their father's, occupation before moving on to consider other factors. According to Mike Savage, one of the problems with the Marxist approach was that the labour theory of value made it difficult to analyze the position of non-manual workers.<sup>41</sup> For that, and other reasons, Marxism fell out of favour in the later twentieth century as scholars attempted to view class through the prism of paradigms other than capitalism and class struggle. In his groundbreaking work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, E.P. Thompson defines class as a relational construct. Rather than a 'structure' or a 'category' rigidly defined by sociologists and adhering to clear economic parameters, Thompson sees class as an active relationship between two or more groups whose members "articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from ... theirs."<sup>42</sup> Thompson further argues that class is a historical phenomenon that depends largely on the context of the experiences of people living in a particular time. Like Thompson, I take a relational approach to class. Because the lower middle class is an aspirational group, the men I study do not explicitly identify as being in the lower, precarious grouping of the middle class. In fact, most of the time, they do not explicitly discuss class at all. Accordingly, I have had to gather clues as to their relative positioning from their relations with the classes above and below them: the working-class soldiers they were being trained to lead and the upper-middle-class officers they were being trained to imitate. Like E.P. Thompson, I pay attention to the nature of the temporary officers' relations with those around them, alert to those relations' dimensions of power and exclusion.

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<sup>41</sup> Savage, Mike. *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 11.

<sup>42</sup> E.P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Classics, 2013), 8-9.

While his work was enormously influential, later scholars have criticized Thompson's lack of attention to gender. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's book *Family Fortunes* follows Thompson's lead in taking a relational approach to the concept of class, exploring ways in which classes "define[...] themselves in antagonism to other classes,"<sup>43</sup> and focusing specifically on ways in which the middle class defined itself in opposition to the aristocracy and the working class. But, unlike Thompson, Davidoff and Hall argue that gender and class operate together, and that middle-class women and the domestic sphere were the loci of middle-class creation. The authors also investigate gender, assuming that "gender and class always operate together" and that "consciousness of class always takes a gendered form."<sup>44</sup> Like Davidoff and Hall, I focus on particular individuals as representative of their class. Also like Davidoff and Hall, my conception of 'lower-middle-class' is gendered owing to the all-male military setting of the First World War and the intersection of my inquiry with masculinity studies. Because, as Hammerton has argued, the late nineteenth-century phenomenon of 'Pooterism' shifted the lower-middle-class marker of snobbish respectability from women to men,<sup>45</sup> it is especially important to study these men if we wish to get at the heart of the lower-middle class experience. Moreover, the fact that lower-middle-class men were perceived as emasculated by public opinion spurs the inquiry of how they themselves experienced the hypermasculine setting of the military in a time of war and how they perceived their identity in the context of the Officer Cadet Battalions, which had as their mission the shaping and shifting of identity and class allegiance. What is more, since relations between masculinities often mirror relations between classes – with working-class men's physicality being in marked opposition to upper-middle-class men's managerial authority, and with lower-middle-class men falling somewhere in between – it makes sense to study one in conjunction with the other. In fact, in a homosocial setting such as the army in wartime, it would be difficult and counterproductive to try to separate the two. In her book *Material Relations: Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910*, Jane

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<sup>43</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), xviii.

<sup>44</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Hammerton, "Pooterism."

Hamlett claims that the problem with using income and occupation as markers of middle-class status is that income varies and wealth does not always determine social position. She chooses to employ what she terms a flexible and practical definition of the Victorian middle class – one based on servant keeping, occupational identity, and self-definition.<sup>46</sup> My subjects’ self-definition of class is never explicit but always implied, which makes pinpointing their class affiliation akin to detective work. However, I too utilize occupational identity and servant keeping as two of the factors in determining the class allegiance of the men I examine. In his book *Language and Class in Victorian England*, K.C. Phillipps focuses on speech as a marker of class, examining distinctions between ‘U’ and ‘non-U’ usage, and remarking that an upper-class accent and speech habits could only be acquired by members of the middle class with a public school education.<sup>47</sup> Like Phillipps, I pay attention to my subjects’ use of language as a class marker, alert for clues of their level of literacy. Because the vast majority of the sources I use here are written, I focus on the way my subjects use the written language as a way of obtaining clues about their class affiliation, paying attention to details such as grammar, spelling, syntax, choice of vocabulary, affectionate forms of address, literary references, and willingness to play with language. Since the accent with which these men spoke is not something that can be conveyed in written letters and memoirs, I cannot focus on that, although accent would have played an important role in these men’s attempts to blend into the officer class.<sup>48</sup>

In their book, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl*, Simon Gunn and Rachel Bell use what they term a ‘historical’ approach to defining what it means to be middle class. Moving away from definitions of class that are centred on economic and social criteria such as occupation, income, and education, Gunn and Bell argue that being middle-class is an idea rather than

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<sup>46</sup> Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 15.

<sup>47</sup> K.C. Phillipps. *Language and Class in Victorian England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited, 1984), 78.

<sup>48</sup> The handful of oral interviews used here involve men who were in their late 80s and 90s when they participated in the recordings. Although it is obvious that they sound neither working-class nor upper class, but rather middle-of-the-road, the intricacies of their accent have been obscured by their advanced years; they sound, above all, old and frail.

simply an income bracket – an idea which has evolved over time.<sup>49</sup> They are unapologetic about taking a wholly cultural approach to the concept of class. While agreeing that one of the crucial distinctions between the middle classes and the working classes was that the former did not engage in manual labour and were therefore identified with ‘management’ as opposed to being identified with workers, Gunn and Bell insist that middle-class identity was more reliant on power than on type of occupation. In his book *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*, sociologist Mike Savage draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu to suggest avenues for re-energizing approaches to class analysis. Savage pronounces himself sympathetic to Bourdieu’s “emphasis on class as a ‘relational’ process, in which social groups differentiate themselves from others in various ‘fields’”<sup>50</sup> as well as to his claim “for the role of cultural capital as a different axis for class formation compared to economic capital.”<sup>51</sup> Bourdieu emphasizes the role of culture in class formation, claiming that cultural elites maintain their position by denigrating ‘low-culture’ tastes and behaviours, “thus committing practices of symbolic violence against them.”<sup>52</sup> Finally, in his book *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, Ross McKibbin argues that income-based definitions of middle-class are too restrictive: “there were many who did not earn £250 a year who thought of themselves, and were thought by others, to be middle-class.”<sup>53</sup> He uses criteria such as education, “style of life, salary, dress and deportment” as well as social aspirations and fertility patterns to determine middle-class status. Moreover, he points out that another important factor was how these marginal members of the middle class were seen by the manual working class; lower-middle-class clerks who were associated with ‘management’ did not belong to the working class even though their income may have been lacking by the standards of the surveys of the period. McKibbin argues that, although it might be more accurate to speak of the middle classes as opposed to the middle class, since differences in

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<sup>49</sup> Gunn and Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl*.

<sup>50</sup> Savage, 102.

<sup>51</sup> Savage, 106; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (London: Routledge, 1984).

<sup>52</sup> Savage, 106.

<sup>53</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 45.

lifestyle between the upper and lower reaches of this group were wide, there was a set of core cultural and social values that all members of the group shared and which distinguished them from the classes below and above them. Arguing that clerical workers should be regarded as middle-class, McKibbin states that “[w]hat mattered was occupation and the social aspirations and manners which occupation demanded.”<sup>54</sup> In keeping with the cultural approach to class, I move beyond the measurable sociological criteria of income and education to consider the idea of the lower middle class as a cultural allegiance – a set of values that influenced lifestyle, manners, and behaviour – and an identity or implicit self-identification that often went hand-in-hand with an insistence on not being working-class and a strong emphasis on maintaining respectability. The latter frequently had a significant aspirational dimension, which meant that members of the lower middle class would ally themselves with and self-identify as middle-class rather than lower-middle-class even if others did not perceive them that way. This aspirational habit is a powerful marker of affiliation with the lower middle class, whose members constantly strove to better themselves in terms of education, occupation, general knowledge, and social status. Paradoxically, it was often the insistence on belonging to the middle class – and, by the same token, not belonging to the class immediately below it – that marked individuals as members of the lower middle class, provided their membership in the middle class proper could objectively be considered tenuous.

## Methodology – Selection Process

In the course of this PhD project, I used the following methodology to select my sample of lower-middle-class subjects. First, searching through the Imperial War Museum’s catalogue of personal papers from the First World War, I found all those written by men whose temporary commissions had been granted after a successful course at an Officer Cadet Battalion (and a handful written by men who had obtained temporary commissions through other means). I repeated the process with the oral interviews with First World War veterans in the IWM’s Sound Archive. I also searched through the bibliographies of some of the key secondary sources I used, which dealt with various aspects of being an officer in the First

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<sup>54</sup> McKibbin, 45.

World War, and mined them for memoirs written by former officers, many of them temporary. Then, I set out to identify which of these temporary officers had belonged to the lower middle class. Starting off with the basic criteria of occupational status and educational background, I used the 1911 UK Census to gather information about the occupations of either the men themselves or those of their fathers – since some of the men examined here were still schoolboys at the time of the census. Paying close attention both to the distinction between mental and manual labour and to the fact that the lower middle class tended to lack power in the workplace, I sifted out men whose occupations either gave them too much authority over subordinates or whose occupations marked them as obviously working-class, and selected those men who came from families where occupations such as bank clerk, insurance clerk or small-scale shopkeeper were the norm. As a way of ensuring that these lower-middle-class occupational markers accurately reflected a lower-middle-class home life, I also used the 1911 UK Census to gather information about whether or not their families kept live-in servants. Reading through the men's letters and memoirs, I then ascertained their level of education, looking for men who had gone to grammar schools but not to preparatory or public schools, which were considered preserves of the aristocracy and upper middle class. Since the medium of letters home from the front offers a privileged glimpse into the intimacies of the letter writers' family life, and the medium of memoirs opens a window onto the writers' inner life, both types of sources can reveal diverse clues about the 'family culture' of the subject's family of origin. Accordingly, in reading these sources, I paid close attention to the values that obviously guided the behaviour, lifestyle and attitudes of family members, looking for markers of lower-middle-class culture. How literate were these men? What level of language did they use? How did they react to the ubiquitous use of curse words among some of their fellow soldiers? How important was education and advancement to them and their parents, and how motivated were they to succeed and aspire to greater things? Did they view the war as an opportunity to be seized, a duty to be done or simply a succession of tedious or terrifying days to be struck off the calendar until the conflict ended? What kind of culture – whether music, literature or art – did they and their families consume and/or participate in making? Did they perceive the men along whom they served, whether in the ranks, at the OCBs, or when they had been gazetted as their equals, as models to be imitated, as pitiable creatures with little education or capacity to learn, or as snobs who unfairly labelled temporary officers 'temporary gentlemen'? What was their attitude toward

money – to having or not having it, to spending it, and to saving it? How large – or small – were their families and how close were the relationships between family members? Could the marriage between their parents be classified as close and companionate, and – in the case of the few men who were engaged during the war and later married – could the same be said of their relationship with their fiancée or wife? What were their plans, both professional and personal, for the time after the armistice? The answers to these questions helped to situate the men examined in this PhD dissertation as lower-middle-class, and to sift out all those men with temporary commissions who had different class affiliations. Working from a total of 45 sets of personal papers and 12 oral interviews associated with men who had held temporary commissions, I found the majority to have been written or recorded by men with an upper-middle-class background. This was not surprising, as upper-middle-class men have left the most extensive written record of their First World War experiences. The same was true of the 70 officers' memoirs I examined: most had been written by members of the upper middle class, with only a few having been written by lower-middle-class men. It is important to emphasize that the experiences of *all* the temporary officers I identified as lower middle class in the course of this selection process are examined in this dissertation: 4 in the second chapter, 3 in the third chapter, 5 in the fourth chapter and 6 in the fifth chapter. No primary source identified as originating from a lower-middle-class temporary officer has been left out; accordingly, I can confidently state that, if there are lower-middle-class men whose experiences as temporary officers would contradict my conclusions, I have not found them. While, ideally, I would be working from a sample larger than the 17 men<sup>55</sup> examined here, the fact that lower-middle-class veterans left fewer written records than their upper-middle-class counterparts does not make them any less deserving of a history. Working with a small sample of subjects has enabled me to focus on the details of their personal lives in great detail, delving into their thoughts, hopes, fears and motivations in an in-depth way that would not have been possible with a larger sample.

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<sup>55</sup> One of my subjects wrote letters and a memoir; accordingly, he is examined twice.

## Theoretical Framework – Through the Lens of Masculinity Studies

The study of masculinity was launched in the 1970s as an answer to women's studies. It was an attempt to tease out the experience of men as male persons and to examine their relationships to other men, to women, and to societal structures and institutions. In recent years it has moved beyond the idea of the sex role to an understanding of gender as a relational way in which social practice is ordered. I use the concept of hegemonic masculinity, first developed by R.W. Connell in 1983.<sup>56</sup> This concept builds on the theory of hegemony, initially conceived by Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci in the 1930s, which describes a system of domination so embedded in culture that people view it as the way things should be, without the need to enforce it. In the context of gender relations, hegemony describes a model of gender relations that elevates some groups of men while subordinating others and which is internalized to the point that all men believe that some ways of being a man are more masculine than others. While, at any given time, few men truly embody the ideal masculine hegemonic type, most men collude in upholding the system by policing deviant men – men considered effeminate, unmanly or in some way other, such as homosexual men or pacifists and conscientious objectors during times of war.<sup>57</sup> Since hegemonic masculinity benefits from the upholding of patriarchy, men as a group tend to benefit from the subordination of women even though relations between individual men and individual women may be congenial, equal, and supportive. Thus, various subordinate masculinities tend to be disparaged with imagery that equates those men with women. Building on her original hegemonic masculinity concept, in her most recent edition of the seminal work *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell insists that it is important to study relations among masculinities, or among different projects of masculinity – whether hegemonic, subordinate, or complicit – and to pay attention to the fact that multiple masculinities are not a matter of alternative lifestyles or consumer choice.<sup>58</sup> I pay close attention to the relations

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<sup>56</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> John Tosh, "Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender," in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, eds. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> Connell; Mike Donaldson, "What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?" *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993): 643-57.

between different masculinities: the hegemonic masculinity of the senior officers who taught at the OCBs and of the traditional public-school-type officers held up as exemplars to the rankers undergoing officer training and to the masculinity of lower-middle-class men attempting the difficult transformation into gentlemen for the duration of the war. Elsewhere, I have studied the projects of masculinity portrayed in trench journals and have found that a ‘trench’ masculinity was constructed in these grassroots publications in opposition to the dominant image of manliness enjoyed by senior staff officers. This ‘trench’ masculinity – typified by relative youth, physical courage, and active participation in the fighting – was in turn composed of two distinct strands, one for the front-line officer and one for the rank-and-file ‘Tommy’.<sup>59</sup> Although depictions of both upper-middle-class *managerial* masculinity and working-class *physical* masculinity were abundant in the trench journals, depictions of lower-middle-class ‘clerical’ masculinity were almost non-existent. It seems as though lower-middle-class men were expected to sublimate their civilian identity into the role they were playing during the war: either that of working-class ranker or upper-middle-class gentleman officer. I specifically seek out the lower-middle-class point of view. While the transition from ranker to officer involved a good deal of sublimation on the part of the lower-middle-class men I study who accepted the officer and gentleman model of hegemonic masculinity as the ideal to strive for, there was nonetheless a certain amount of room for these men to be themselves and not disavow their lower-middle-class background. The Officer Cadet Battalion journals demonstrate a binary tendency, viewing their incoming candidates as working-class ‘Tommys’ and attempting to mould them into dapper gentleman clones. For example, one such journal begins its pages with a sketch entitled “The Beginning,” depicting a heavy-laden ‘Tommy’ in lumpy boots and shapeless puttees, trudging through mud; it ends its edition with another, aspirational sketch entitled “The End,” showing a smart-looking officer in tailored uniform, riding breeches and shiny boots with a heel, nonchalantly holding a riding crop in one hand and a cigarette in the other.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, the personal papers I

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<sup>59</sup> Magdalena Hentel, “Dapper Gentlemen and Hard-working Tommies: Constructions of Masculinity in British Trench Journals, 1915-1919” (presentation, Bruce McCaffrey Memorial Graduate Seminar, Western University, October 2012).

<sup>60</sup> *Memento* [electronic resource], No. 2 Company of the Twenty-Third Officer Cadet Battalion, ‘D’ Lines, Hipswell Camp, Catterick, June-December 1918 (Catterick: Hipswell Camp, XXIII OCB, 1919)

looked at – memoirs, letters, and post-war interviews – shine a different light on the experience of these men, allowing them to express a more nuanced perception of their own masculinity. Overall, the lower-middle-class men, as a subordinate group, try to make themselves over in the image of the officer and gentleman, rather than attempt to create and maintain their own code of masculinity, to co-opt the hegemonic masculinity of the public-school-type officer for their own purposes.

The hegemonic masculinity they were trying to emulate was, by the late nineteenth century, that of the public-school-educated officer and gentleman who had been educated in a male-only environment and taught to adopt an attitude of stoicism and ‘stiff upper lip.’ Hegemonic masculinity had undergone a number of developments over the previous century. In the eighteenth century, polite and refined gentlemanliness was considered to be the ideal form of masculinity, although such an ideal went hand-in-hand with the reality of a society where physical aggression was a part of life. By the mid-eighteenth century, the ideal of politeness had begun to be seen as insincere owing to the development of the culture of sensibility. By the end of the eighteenth century, politeness was no longer associated with ideal masculinity; rather, it had taken on feminized and domesticated connotations.<sup>61</sup> The early nineteenth century saw a change in what was considered ideal masculinity, which shifted from an upper-class to an upper-middle-class bourgeois model. According to John Tosh, hegemonic masculinity at the beginning of the nineteenth century became “entrepreneurial, individualistic ... organized around a punishing work ethic, a compensating validation of the home, and a restraint on physical aggression.”<sup>62</sup> The emphasis on domesticity and the importance of playing the role of *paterfamilias* in a home organized along strict gender lines and according to a separate spheres ideology peaked in the mid-nineteenth century. The latter half of the century saw a reaction against the domination of women in the home, with the so-called ‘flight from domesticity’ beginning in the 1870s – men marrying later or choosing not to marry at all, and instead spending their time in

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<sup>61</sup> Michèle Cohen, “‘Manners Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830,” *Journal of British Studies* 44:2 (April 2005): 312-329.

<sup>62</sup> John Tosh, “Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800-1914,” *Journal of British Studies* 44:2 (April 2005): 331.

all-male institutions such as the public school, the army, or the gentlemen's club.<sup>63</sup> Around the same time, the expression "to keep a stiff upper lip" became popularized in Britain as society turned "away from sentimentalism and towards stoicism and emotional restraint."<sup>64</sup> The 'flight from domesticity' also saw a concurrent rise in the popularity of imperialism and jingoism, as men rejecting what they perceived as the stifling nature of domesticity turned to the wide open spaces of the imperial frontier, either in reality or in their imagination.<sup>65</sup> The resulting hegemonic masculinity dovetailed nicely with the kind of character traits being inculcated by the public schools and, as a result, the 'officers and gentlemen' who received commissions via the public school route were the perfect exemplars of ideal masculinity at the outbreak of the First World War. The education these boys received at public schools was specifically designed not to make them 'soft,' and accordingly doled out physical hardships – including corporal punishment – while privileging athletic achievements.<sup>66</sup> This made it the ideal preparation for the kind of training that the military routinely doles out to its recruits (and volunteers) in an effort to make them into men, which involves "the disciplining, controlling, and occasional mortification of the body."<sup>67</sup> Since the warrior is seen as a key symbol of masculinity, and the military and manliness are often viewed in association, it is easy to see how this particular ideal of masculinity was seen as compelling in wartime.

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<sup>63</sup> John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999); John Tosh, "Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, eds. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 44-73.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 202.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Francis, "The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity," *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002): 637-52.

<sup>66</sup> J.A. Mangan, "Social Darwinism and Upper-Class Education in Late Victorian and Edwardian England," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, eds. J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, 135-159 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987);

<sup>67</sup> David H.J. Morgan, "Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, eds. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, 167 (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994).

## Historiography – Masculinity and the First World War

Sources such as official manuals and Officer Cadet Battalion journals provide a view of hegemonic masculinity as propounded by the military hierarchy and as taught to the candidates undergoing officer training, and they shed light on lower-middle-class masculinity among temporary gentlemen during the Great War. The Officer Cadet Battalions taught subjects such as military law, strategy, and leadership and indoctrinated ranker-officers in the art of social etiquette, the proper way of dressing, and table manners. Manuals such as *Straight Tips for 'Subs'* served a similar purpose.<sup>68</sup> As lower-middle-class men transitioned from the ranks to officer status, they were expected to adopt the masculinity of their social 'superiors' wholesale. Sources such as personal papers, diaries, letters, and memoirs show a more intimate view of this forced transition and demonstrate that, while the lower-middle-class men under study were keen to adopt the upper-middle-class hegemonic masculinity project, their desire to do so came out of a place of self-confidence and security in their own worth. Historians of masculinity have been reluctant to write about the First World War, with the notable exception of Joanna Bourke, whose book, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, focuses on the unprecedented assault of industrial warfare on the male body. Bourke examines how men were subject to state intervention during the First World War that was intended to mould their bodies "into more appropriate shapes."<sup>69</sup> She argues that "although the war was crucial in disrupting former expectations and expressions of masculinity, men drew on their understanding of the past to reassemble their lives after the war,"<sup>70</sup> and men at the front felt connected to their female partners back home. Bourke also argues that male bonding at the front had its limits, and many servicemen were alienated from each other. My dissertation deals with an institutional attempt on the part of the British Army to mould the personalities of lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen into shapes viewed as more appropriate for the military hierarchy. By examining sources

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<sup>68</sup> A.H. Trappman, *Straight Tips for "Subs"* (London: Forster Groom & Co. Ltd., 1915).

<sup>69</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 13.

<sup>70</sup> Joanne Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 19.

such as personal papers and letters, Bourke found that men at the front continued to maintain a loyalty to their loved ones at home, over and above their loyalty to their fellow combatants. Similarly, in looking at the personal papers of lower-middle-class men I found that, although they adopted the temporary gentleman persona they were taught at the OCBs for the purposes of their wartime officer role, their letters home reflect an ongoing ‘performance’ of the kind of lower-middle-class masculinity they had learned at home.

Themes of masculinity in the historiography of the First World War usually focus on subordinate masculinities, or groups of men who were seen as failing in some way because they did not live up to the hegemonic ideal. Joanna Bourke examines the plight of shell-shocked men in Great Britain and Ireland, arguing that the prevailing view was that men who broke down under battle stress and shrank from violence were abnormal in some way and had to be cured by being helped to “rediscover their ‘natural’ bellicosity.”<sup>71</sup> Lois Bibbings explores the ways that conscientious objectors (COs) were portrayed and treated in England, positing that COs were often portrayed as feminized men, especially in the context of wartime, when views of what it meant to be a man acquired a heightened emotional intensity.<sup>72</sup> Jessica Meyer examines various types of narratives to shed light on how “men negotiated the social discourses of the soldier hero and the independent householder to construct personal masculine identity.”<sup>73</sup> Meyer shows that men typically constructed their masculine identities in two ways: focusing on the heroic when dealing with the military sphere and on the domestic when thinking about their connection to home and to women. Thus, letters home from the front tended to have more of a domestic feel, while personal diaries were more concerned with martial values. Lower-middle-class men can be seen as constituting a subordinate masculinity, as they have often been portrayed as falling ‘between two stools’ – lacking the sort of managerial authority thought to be required for middle-class

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<sup>71</sup> Joanna Bourke, “Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-Shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-1939,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35:1 (2000): 59.

<sup>72</sup> Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13.

masculinity, while at the same time not displaying the kind of physical prowess required for typical working-class masculinity. For that reason, lower-middle-class clerks were often portrayed as soft and feminized in civilian life. I examine their portrayal in the context of the First World War, through the eyes of their social ‘superiors,’ as well as through their own self-depictions by analyzing their personal papers, which deal with both the martial and the domestic spheres. My dissertation sheds light on a group of men who, in civilian life, are viewed as performing a subaltern masculinity, and it examines their deliberate ‘trying on’ of a hegemonic masculinity, sanctioned by the dominant group who originated that masculinity – but only for the duration of the war.

## Historiography – Gentlemanliness

When it came to defining gentlemanliness, Hazlitt said, “We all know it when we see it; but we do not know how to account for it.”<sup>74</sup> In her book, *The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth Century Literature*, Christine Berberich recognizes the dual nature of the term ‘gentleman,’ which has both a moral meaning, applicable across class boundaries, and a social meaning, with a continuing upper-class connection. Over time, she claims, the term ‘gentleman’ “has come to be appropriated as a symbol for quintessential Englishness.”<sup>75</sup> R.W. Connell has described the modern English gentleman as the first type of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>76</sup> According to a definition from the 14th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in 1929, one could tell a gentleman by his “capacity to mingle on equal terms in good society.”<sup>77</sup> Such a capacity was instilled in men of the upper middle class by public schools, which Berberich suggests “might .... be interpreted as an institutionalized

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<sup>74</sup> William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, Vol. 12: The Plain Speaker: Opinion on Books, Men and Things*, ed. P.P. Howe (London, 1912), 209, cited in Christine Berberich, *The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Berberich, 12.

<sup>76</sup> R.W. Connell, “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History,” *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993): 608.

<sup>77</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1929), 123, cited in Berberich, 9.

interpretation of Foucaultian repression...”<sup>78</sup> She argues that the stiff upper lip they learned through “their Spartan public school upbringing” helped many subaltern officers in the trenches, and was reflected in their language, which was characterized by understatement.<sup>79</sup> Berberich also points to fashion as an observable marker of social class. Looking like a proper gentleman required not only a knowledge of what attire was appropriate, but also the required affluence to be able to afford clothes for every occasion.<sup>80</sup> Painting a picture of a proper gentleman whose persona is to all appearances effortless, Berberich references Castiglione and his notion of *sprezzatura*, or “the importance of being able to impress without appearing to be trying too hard.”<sup>81</sup> In his book, *The English Gentleman: the Rise and Fall of an Ideal*, Philip Mason takes an aspirational view of the gentlemanly ideal, arguing that “one reason why the ideal of the gentleman was so widely accepted was that no one was sure who was a gentleman and who was not” since “a great many people used the term in such a way that it did not exclude themselves – or at least what they hoped their sons might become.”<sup>82</sup> In tandem with other scholars, Mason makes the distinction between the social meaning of the word ‘gentleman’ and the moral meaning, pointing out that the two meanings were in some sense interchangeable since it was expected that people of a certain social background would also exhibit the moral qualities proper to the term ‘gentleman.’ According to Mason, by the early twentieth century the term ‘gentleman’ had become “extraordinarily elastic,”<sup>83</sup> meaning different things for different people. To some it meant ownership of land, to others a standard of conduct. As Mason argues, Victorians’ composite of the idea of the gentleman, whom they needed to produce in large numbers to rule their empire, consisted of Chaucer’s concept of *gentillesse*, “a constellation of moral qualities which ought to go with

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<sup>78</sup> Berberich, 39-40.

<sup>79</sup> Berberich, 54.

<sup>80</sup> Berberich, 42.

<sup>81</sup> Berberich, 57.

<sup>82</sup> Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1982), 9.

<sup>83</sup> Mason, 12.

gentle birth” such as “courtesy to women..., generosity, openheartedness, magnanimity.”<sup>84</sup> To this was added the acceptance of responsibility, the ability to exercise leadership, and – by the middle of the nineteenth century – an element of stoicism or the capacity “not only to bear physical pain... but also to repress all signs of emotion.”<sup>85</sup>

Gwen Hyman introduces the notion of ‘transactional gentlemanliness,’ the idea that the gentleman is revealed when one looks at his actions – or, in the context of her book, the consumption of food. She concludes that “the definition is not only impossible but also beside the point: it is the endless project of trying to define gentlemanliness” that drives the gentleman to act in various ways and to make and remake himself.<sup>86</sup> In her book, *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities after Empire*, Praseeda Gopinath argues that gentlemanliness was always defined in relation to an Other. In the English context, this function was served by the working-class man, who represented “an undiluted, almost primitive form of masculinity against which gentlemanliness was the acme of discipline” and self-restraint.<sup>87</sup> In the imperial context, “... the disciplined manliness of the English gentleman was set against, and defined by, the effeminate or inadequate masculinity of the imperial Other.”<sup>88</sup> Gopinath talks about the way in which gentlemen were mass produced in British public schools, which imbued students with the leadership qualities of the governing elite. According to her, in the nineteenth century, the idea of gentlemanliness combined the ideal of aristocracy with the newer bourgeois ideals of pragmatism and the work ethic, resulting in a curious combination of exclusivity and meritocracy. In her book, *Middlebrow Feminism in Classic British Detective Fiction: the Female Gentleman*, Melissa Schaub argues that the concept of the English gentleman did not wither away in the wake of the First

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<sup>84</sup> Mason, 12-13.

<sup>85</sup> Mason, 147.

<sup>86</sup> Gwen Hyman, *Making a Man: Gentlemanly Appetites in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 242.

<sup>87</sup> Praseeda Gopinath, *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities after Empire* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 27.

<sup>88</sup> Gopinath, 28.

World War, but rather was appropriated by other classes, specifically the middle class, which annexed the term ‘gentleman’ and altered it “to express virtues of behaviour and manner rather than those of family or rank.”<sup>89</sup> Schaub separates the idea of gentlemanliness from its gender associations, arguing that the behaviours exhibited by female protagonists in post-war detective novels closely mirrored those prescribed to English gentlemen in the nineteenth century. The ideal ‘female gentleman’ was a woman who was “competent, courageous, and self-reliant in practical situations, capable of subordinating her emotions to reason and the personal good to the social good, and possessed of ‘honor’ in the oldest sense of the term.”<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, most female gentlemen also fulfilled the “more traditional aspect: gentlemanliness through birth or breeding.”<sup>91</sup>

The definition of gentleman I employ myself combines these elements. The lower-middle-class men who underwent officer training at the Officer Cadet Battalions were in a sense subjected to an indoctrination in the various ways of behaving like gentlemen. The connotations of that loaded term were both social and moral, and were understood as such by both the military establishment, which directed the OCBs and published the various officer manuals, and by the cadets themselves, who aspired to become officers and gentlemen for the duration of their war service. Accordingly, the officer cadets aspired to emulate behaviour such as responsibility, stoicism and paternalism, but also social polish, proper etiquette, and how to dress like an officer. They were helped in their efforts by the War Office, which gave them a £50 uniform allowance to ensure that even those with limited financial means could look the part. In the context of the OCBs, the definition of the term ‘gentleman’ was a paradox: the term was aspirational enough to make officer cadets from lowly backgrounds believe it was possible to become gentlemen, and yet rigid enough that such efforts were forever thwarted by a conviction on the part of the establishment, and probably the men themselves, that they had not managed to attain gentleman status. The resulting limbo left

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<sup>89</sup> Melissa Schaub, *Middlebrow Feminism in Classic British Detective Fiction: The Female Gentleman* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3.

<sup>90</sup> Schaub, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Schaub, 8.

them striving to prove by their behaviour that they were in fact gentlemen – a perfect demonstration of ‘transactional gentlemanliness.’ It also left them in the unenviable position of having to strive to embody the gentlemanly ideal while appearing to not to be trying at all in an effort at demonstrating *sprezzatura*. Because privileged background was out of reach for these men, the officer cadets naturally focused on the moral aspect of gentlemanliness, doing their utmost to prove to the world that their moral qualities, work ethic, and behaviour amply qualified them for officer and gentleman status. Since the moral and social aspects of gentlemanliness were connected, such focus on morals could also be seen, albeit in a convoluted way, as an attempt at making a claim on the social aspect, in the same way that Protestants who believe in predestination nonetheless make an effort at doing good works to demonstrate that they are among the elect. Those who attempted to transform these men into gentlemen, as well as those actively trying to attain temporary gentleman status, were engaged in the same sleight of hand as described in Melissa Schaub’s book, but instead of trying to separate the idea of gentlemanliness from its gender associations, they were trying to separate it from class. The establishment went along with this approach for reasons that were likely largely motivated by demographics and the reality of the high casualty rate among officers on the front lines. Still, the social meaning of the term gentlemanliness was never entirely out of the picture, and tended to resonate repeatedly in the attitudes of snobbery, both behind the lines and at home, which could never entirely be silenced.

## Sources

This study uses both contemporary and retrospective sources to explore the experience of temporary gentlemen during the First World War. Contemporary sources include military instruction manuals and statistics, troop journals, and government papers. The study also examines private papers such as letters to family and friends, produced both during and shortly after the war. Writing for the benefit of close friends and relatives prompted the letter writers to perceive their situation through a more domestic framework. The study also includes sources that were generated at a later date, such as memoirs, which were published in two successive waves of renewed interest in the Great War in the 1920s and 1930s, and then the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. I use oral interviews conducted by the Imperial War Museum in the late 1980s and early 1990s, during the second notable wave of renewed interest in the 1914-1918 conflict. These sources provide a retrospective look at the

ranker-officers' wartime experience. While the retrospective sources present challenges because the written and oral recollections may have been coloured by the veterans' subsequent life experiences, they are useful because the former temporary gentlemen were prompted by contemporary social debates to consider their wartime experience explicitly from the point of view of class.

## Contemporary Sources – Wartime

Contemporary sources published or generated during the war include private papers such as letters and ephemera, army officer manuals, and a comprehensive collection of troop journals produced by the Officer Cadet Battalions. I study 32 Officer Cadet Battalion journals, held in the collections of Weldon Library at Western University, the British Library, the Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, and the Imperial War Museum in Great Britain – the latter having been compiled into a ProQuest database. I also conduct a detailed study of the letters of seven lower-middle-class men who were granted temporary commissions during the war, held at the Imperial War Museum, as well as a selection of officer manuals that were published during the First World War on the initiative of the War Office to instruct temporary gentlemen in the proper way of behaving as officers. I examine Officer Cadet Battalion journals for evidence of the top-down, prescriptive view of the kind of masculinity temporary gentlemen were expected to perform, but also for traces of the lower-middle-class masculinity they had known in their pre-war lives. While the former is more in evidence and the latter barely visible – likely because these sources were collective expressions of a transformation that took place in the public eye – the journals contain sufficient condemnation of upper-middle-class snobbery and proud assertions of lower-middle-class suitability for scholars to draw conclusions. Letters and diaries enable me to gain insight into the personal experiences of temporary gentlemen during the First World War, and specifically into the way these men viewed their masculinity. Since the nature of such sources is more intimate than official publications or trench journals, they reveal a personal side of the men I study, showing them as comfortable with who they are and proudly displaying qualities that outside observers would label as 'lower-middle-class.' Jessica Meyer, Michael Roper and Joanna Bourke made extensive use of letters and diaries of servicemen and civilians to analyze the personal experiences of men during the war, because such sources can, in Bourke's phrase, provide us with "a much broader range of men than

those studies that have used published material only.”<sup>92</sup> In his psychoanalytic study, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*, Roper found that servicemen letter-writers were often unaware of their emotions and unsure of how to express them. As a result, Roper counsels historians to read between the lines when using sources such as letters and to be aware of the intended recipient of the letter. In addition, Roper cautions historians against assuming a class bias by concluding that officers had a “richer, more developed emotional life” than rankers owing to the more voluble and more articulate records they left behind.<sup>93</sup> In examining the letters of lower-middle-class temporary officers, I have kept in mind how the intended recipient might have influenced the information the temporary officers communicated, paying attention to the subtle differences in content and tone such as those between letters written to mothers, those written to fathers, and those written to fiancées or wives. Jennifer Meyer, in *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain*, uses personal narratives such as letters to explore how the war changed understandings of masculinity for the men who participated in it. Meyer claims that men generally do not “comment directly on masculinity as a specific aspect of identity; combat was so firmly gendered as a male activity that soldiers’ narratives of warfare inevitably reflect on how they understood themselves to be men,” whether through “descriptions of the physical” or “the use of cultural references and discussions of abstract emotions and ideas.” Similarly, the men in this project do not explicitly discuss their masculinity; rather, the nuances in their writing speak to the way they see themselves as men while the gendered nature of combat – and the homosocial nature of army life in general – automatically endows their observations and experiences with meaning that has a bearing on their gendered identity. Meyer admits that using personal narratives as sources presents difficulties, such as the issue of representativeness: although historians like to assume that soldiers’ narratives convey a “message of universal wartime masculinity, not all men experienced the same war in the same way.” Thus, historians must take into account the context within which a given narrative was constructed. All letters were written with a particular audience in mind, and

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<sup>92</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009): 10-27.

should not be separated from the public narratives and cultural scripts within which the letter-writers operated. As Meyer states, “the telling of the tale itself shaped the tale told,” and therefore questions of audience and context are of primary importance.<sup>94</sup> I incorporate the elements of audience and context by using the biographical material provided by the Imperial War Museum for every set of personal papers held in their collection. This tells me to whom the letters were addressed, how they dovetailed with the author’s wartime experiences, and other biographical circumstances relevant to the production of the narrative.

Troop journals were grassroots magazines written, illustrated, and published by military units in the First World War; they were sold and distributed to members of the units.<sup>95</sup> As a source, these journals offer a privileged glimpse into the collective culture of military units that has been underutilized by historians. The first and only use of the journals was in J.G. Fuller’s 1990 book *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918*. Fuller, who uses the journals to gauge the morale of the troops on the ground, praises their usefulness to the historian by saying that they “represent a collective rather than an individual commentary, validated to a large extent by their soldier audience” and are “uncoloured by subsequent experience or by selective memory.”<sup>96</sup> Journals produced by the OCBs are a subset of ‘trench’ journals. The OCBs were formed in 1916 by the War Office, in an attempt to systematize the process of training officers commissioned from the ranks. The OCBs offered a four-month training course for former rankers recommended for commissions by their commanding officers, based on a shortened Sandhurst/Woolwich curriculum. Because ‘upper class’ officers believed that working-class soldiers responded best to a paternalistic style of leadership, the OCBs trained ex-rankers not only in military matters, but also in etiquette and leadership. The courses, which were often based in ‘gentlemanly’ settings such as Oxbridge colleges or manor houses, tried to transform the temporary officers into temporary gentlemen by teaching working-class and lower-middle-

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<sup>94</sup> Meyer, 7-12.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918* (Hammersmith: Harper Perennial, 2004): 605-7.

<sup>96</sup> J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 3-20.

class ex-rankers how to convincingly act the part.<sup>97</sup> It was common for the OCBs to produce journals that commemorated the experience, commenting on the conditions of the course and including humorous sketches, poems, and group photographs. The journals were often a collaborative effort between the officer cadets taking the OCB course and the establishment, or the instructional staff. Although it seems likely that the role of the instructional staff on the OCB journals' editorial boards was mostly ceremonial, the fact remains that the officer cadets felt it necessary to take the interests of the staff into consideration. The OCB journals thus present a curious combination of a top-down and bottom-up viewpoint.

Martin Petter uses the OCB journals in his work on the demobilization of temporary officers and the 'ex-officer problem.' Petter, who studied only a handful of these journals, uses them to demonstrate how Officer Cadet Battalions "played a critical role as socializing agents," functioning sometimes as "a school for manners."<sup>98</sup> The journals he examines are "full of hearty team spirit, breezy clubbiness and a dedication to the outlook appropriate for an 'officer and a gentleman'."<sup>99</sup> Because of their origin in battalions dedicated to the training of officers, as opposed to battalions already deployed and composed of both officers and other ranks, the OCB journals differ slightly in both purpose and tone from their 'trench' cousins: They are a hybrid, demonstrating both a top-down, didactic approach and showcasing the views of the average OCB cadet. As such, the OCB journals offer valuable insight into what was expected of aspiring temporary gentlemen and what they were taught as part of their training, in addition to shedding some light on how they saw themselves. They serve as sources of information into representations of temporary gentlemen both from without and from within.

## Memoirs and Oral Interviews

The project draws on five memoirs written during the first war books boom in the 1920s and 1930s, four memoirs written during a wave of renewed interest in the Great War

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<sup>97</sup> Simpson.

<sup>98</sup> Petter, 142.

<sup>99</sup> Petter, 142.

accompanying its fiftieth anniversary in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as well as two oral interviews that were conducted by the Imperial War Museum in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Because these sources were written after the war, they require careful handling and sensitivity to issues of narrativity, memory, and subjectivity. Although a handful of these memoirs were eventually published – decades after they were written, and with the intervention of subsequent generations of family members – the majority remain in manuscript form. I address the issue of the difficulties lower-middle-class men would have had with publishing their recollections – in contrast to their middle- and upper-middle-class counterparts – and discuss the resulting scarcity of extant lower-middle-class memoirs for historians to examine.

The bulk of First World War memoirs were written and published during two successive waves of renewed interest in the war, one sparked by the tenth anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles, and the other by the fiftieth anniversary of the war between 1964 and 1968. The late 1920s and 1930s sparked the war books boom, an “outpouring of war literature ... which sought to tell ‘the truth about the war’ more frankly than had been possible in the post-war decade.”<sup>100</sup> Spurred by the contemporary context of a mounting global economic crisis and high unemployment, most veterans looked back on their wartime experience through the prism of their present situations and focused on mud, blood, and disillusionment. Many of these veterans, who had access to publishing opportunities, came from a privileged section of society that had been disproportionately traumatized by the war experience; thus, they recalled the war in profoundly negative terms.<sup>101</sup> Despite an attempt on the part of some former officers to counter the disillusioned view, the myth of the First World War as a pointless bloodbath was born.<sup>102</sup> The myth was consolidated in the 1960s, during a revival of interest in the Great War. The wave of war memoirs published during the 1960s partially restated the anti-war opinions of the books published thirty years earlier, and also reflected

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<sup>100</sup> Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 28.

<sup>101</sup> Mark David Sheftall, *Altered Memories of the Great War: Divergent Narratives of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada* (Farnham, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005); Bond.

the contemporary concerns of the time: the menacing atmosphere of the Cold War, fears of a nuclear attack, and a widespread questioning of authority by popular youth movements.<sup>103</sup> The contrast between the First World War and the Second World War, which was viewed as a ‘good war,’ also contributed to the former’s being remembered as a bloodbath.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, the myth was reinforced by portrayals of the First World War in the media in the 1960s when popular plays and television programs propagated the view of the war as futile slaughter.<sup>105</sup> Even today, “the same basic understanding of the war as tragedy and disaster still pervades British culture” because beliefs about the war “have achieved the status of a modern mythology and as such are knitted into the social fabric.”<sup>106</sup>

My consultation of these sources is part of what historians have called the ‘biographical turn,’ or “a new preoccupation with individual lives and stories as a way of understanding ... the whole process of social and historical change.” According to Barbara Caine, ‘life writing’ – a term which emerged in the 1970s to describe looking at sources such as letters and diaries – has focused scholars’ attention on “ways in which members of marginal and subordinate groups have used autobiographies to make claims for social recognition.”<sup>107</sup> Since lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen are members of a subordinate social group, examining their wartime experiences falls within this scholarly trend. Using sources such as memoirs and oral interviews requires an awareness of the issues associated with relying on memory as a source: the unreliability and subjectivity of memory, the way in which it is influenced by subsequent events and prevalent cultural scripts, and the way the intended audience inadvertently shapes the narrative. Dan Todman cautions us about the need to be aware of how the dominant mythology of war might affect what individual veterans recalled or how

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<sup>103</sup> Todman; Bond.

<sup>104</sup> Emma Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

<sup>105</sup> Todman; Hanna.

<sup>106</sup> Todman, xii.

<sup>107</sup> Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-3, 66-67.

they talked about their experiences in public. Because memories “grow stronger with repetition and weaker without it,” versions of the war might be influenced by the things people heard in popular media. Accordingly, Todman states that just “because a man was there at the time” we cannot assume that “he is giving us a version of the war which is reliable, accurate or useful.”<sup>108</sup> Alistair Thomson’s work on Australian men’s memories of the First World War similarly demonstrates how these men’s memories were shaped by public discourses about the war at the time they sat down to recall their experience. Building on Graham Dawson’s work, Thomson suggests that people ‘compose’ their memories both to make them fit in with modern public discourse and to make sense of their lives.<sup>109</sup>

Accordingly, in looking at memoirs published after the war, I take into account the dominant mythology of the war perpetuated by the media and the way the mythology likely shaped the narrative. In her book *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source*, Joan Tumblety links the recent ‘memory boom’ to the development of ‘new social history’ in the 1960s and the ‘cultural turn’ of the 1970s, when “historians recognized that their primary sources were rhetorical constructs rather than transparent windows onto past worlds.” Sources such as memoirs should not be treated as transparent windows onto the past, especially given the fact that individual memory is “constructed anew at each moment of recall,” and is thus subject to various influences. According to Tumblety, “[w]e do not have memory as much as remembrances, or even performances of remembering.” What is more, historians should keep in mind the relationship between individual memory and shared memory, and be aware that the recollection of personal experiences can be “shaped by broader commemorative trends.”<sup>110</sup> To ground the source material in the time at which it was produced instead of maintaining the fiction that it belongs squarely in the time about which it tells, I keep in mind the time period and context in which the memoirs were written and the intended audience.

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<sup>108</sup> Todman, 187.

<sup>109</sup> Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 22-3.

<sup>110</sup> Joan Tumblety, ed., *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3-9.

Although oral interviews present similar issues, they can be useful. Oral history can give voice to marginalized groups and shed light on the experiences of those who did not leave written records. As Michal Bosworth states, oral history can bring “a human dimension” to historical inquiry. It can tell us “how individuals, at a specific moment, felt about things that mattered to them.”<sup>111</sup> However, the ‘specific moment’ at which an individual’s views and feelings are captured is at the time of recollection, and many factors can influence the process of recollection and storytelling. Lindsey Dodd points out the importance of cultural scripts that are called upon by interview subjects when they tell their stories. Referring to Alistair Thomson’s work on *Anzac Memories*, she says that “remembering nationally recognized events often involves the use of ‘shared cultural scripts’ – recognizable, standardized reworkings of the past.” According to this paradigm, public versions of events, often retold and mythologized in the media, act “like a jelly mould, shaping personal memories to its contours.” Interview participants unconsciously drew on cultural scripts made widely available by successive waves of mythologization of the First World War to make sense of the events that happened to them.<sup>112</sup> The two successive waves of interest in First World War memoirs, which reinforced the myth of the First World War as a pointless bloodbath and made it resonate in the popular consciousness, could be seen as just such a jelly mould. Thus, I take into account that published memoirs and oral interviews conducted in the context of these successive memory booms are in all likelihood following well-established cultural scripts. When treated judiciously, with an awareness and acknowledgement of the factors influencing their production, such sources can reveal information about their authors’ views and experience. Sounding a warning about another potential pitfall, Hilary Young advises scholars to be aware of the tendency of oral history subjects to be subconsciously influenced by their interviewer in their process of composing their identity in the course of an

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<sup>111</sup> Michal Bosworth, “‘Let me tell you...’: memory and the practice of oral history,” in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source*, ed. Joan Tumblety (New York: Routledge, 2013), 31.

<sup>112</sup> Lindsey Dodd, “Small fish, big pond: using a single oral history narrative to reveal broader social change,” in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source*, ed. Joan Tumblety (New York: Routledge, 2013), 37; Thomson.

interview.<sup>113</sup> Jessica Meyer sounds a similar cautionary note regarding soldiers' recollections, stating that "[s]uch narratives may be shaped by variables including the time, context and form" in which they are told.<sup>114</sup> In *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain*, Meyer demonstrates that the way war veterans present their stories varies not just on the time of writing but also on the recipient to whom these stories are addressed: the narrative is shaped both by its context and its intended audience. Accordingly, when analyzing oral interviews and memoirs published at a time when there was a popular market for such books, I consider whom the veterans were addressing, either deliberately or unconsciously, when they told their stories.

The 'linguistic turn' of the 1970s drew attention to the contingent nature of meaning ascribed to historical records, reminding historians that it is impossible to 'open a window onto the past.' The legacy of the linguistic turn endures: "the textuality of the historical document and the textuality of the history created over an armature of documentary research are now permanent aspects of the modern discipline."<sup>115</sup> The conflation of history and fiction, and the postmodernist tendency to liken the work of the historian to that of the novelist, was explored by Hayden White for his theory that historians' narratives are based on pre-existing rhetorical tropes.<sup>116</sup> According to White, when people make sense of the past, they rely on certain modes of emplotment that refer to the four archetypal genres of romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire. White says, "when it comes to apprehending the historical record there are no grounds to be found in the historical record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another."<sup>117</sup> Yet historians insist on discovering the 'true story' buried in

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<sup>113</sup> Hilary Young, "Hard Man, New Man: Re/composing Masculinities in Glasgow, C.1950-2000," *Oral History*, 35:1, War and Masculinities (Spring 2007): 71-81.

<sup>114</sup> Meyer, 11.

<sup>115</sup> Nancy Partner, "Narrative Power, Narrative Coercion" (20th International Congress of Historical Sciences Sydney, 5 July 2005).

<sup>116</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

<sup>117</sup> Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 75.

historical records like ruins under layers of ash, driven by a compulsion to attain the satisfying resolution of narrativity – in other words, to have the world make sense. Real-life events do not naturally occur in narrative form; they unfurl, rather, in a never-ending series of occurrences, paratactic and meaningless until we arrange them in some sort of order and, in so doing, invest them with meaning. That people do so automatically, without being aware of the process, is testament to the extent to which narrativity is second-nature. Ross J. Wilson explores a similar phenomenon in his book, *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain*. He refers to the theory of ‘frame analysis,’ according to which, “the understanding of the world is never without a preconfigured interpretation; we organise the world perceived “as” something already comprehended.<sup>118</sup> According to Wilson, such ‘frames’ are used by individuals, communities, or whole societies to perceive the past in a way that meets their needs in the present. And so it is possible for two individuals, groups or nations to have a divergent interpretation of an event even when their lived experience was similar.<sup>119</sup> Everyone exhibits the tendency to narrativity. Every letter and memoir has been invested with narrative meaning by its creator, emplotted in such a way as to bring out certain aspects of the story and hide others in shadow. Historians who study such sources need to always be aware of this, keeping in mind that uncovering the past ‘as it really was’ is an impossible task. Accordingly, when analyzing diaries, memoirs, and letters I take into account the context of their production and the cultural scripts that their authors might have taken as a model and a template. Despite the potential pitfalls that such sources present, they also have benefits: they shed light on the personal, not collective, experience of a subaltern group that has so far been neglected in historical analysis. Moreover, taken together, the sample of sources analyzed here, generated by a subset of members of a group who were literate and who cared to leave behind a record, can be considered representative of the group as a whole.

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<sup>118</sup> Ross J. Wilson, *Cultural Heritage of the Great War in Britain* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 17, after Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 191.

<sup>119</sup> Sheftall explores this phenomenon in *Altered Memories of the Great War* where he compares the disillusioned view of the First World War as it was remembered in Great Britain with the “rite of passage” view of the war that tended to be adopted by the imperial Dominions.

## Conclusion

The sources used here illuminate the experience of lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen as they made the transition from the ranks to the officer class and attempted to emulate the officers and gentlemen whose shoes they were being trained to fill. The overall conclusion of this PhD dissertation is that the men studied here wanted to emulate the type of hegemonic masculinity taught at the OCBs and did not attempt to construct an alternative project of masculinity. They believed in the upper-middle-class gentlemanly ideals based on the public school model, and did their best to live up to them. However, rather than approaching the goal of embodying the officer and gentleman ideal from a position of weakness – as popular perception at the time would have it – they did so from a position of strength. While impressed with the tradition of their ‘betters,’ they were not overawed by it, and were confident in their own self-worth and ability to be good officers. Moreover, far from disavowing the qualities that made them lower-middle-class, they embraced them and at times turned them to their advantage. They did not see themselves as emasculated Pooters; rather, they were comfortable with their lower-middle-class backgrounds and were convinced that they had a great deal to offer. Chapter One considers officer manuals that were published during the First World War as well as Officer Cadet Battalion journals. Taking an upper-middle-class point of view, the officer manuals speak to a working- and lower-middle-class audience in an attempt to teach them how to emulate the public school officer ideal. Their message is clear: if temporary officers wish to fit in with the officer class, they must adopt a prescribed set of attitudes and behaviours. Occasional references to specific habits to be avoided, easily identifiable as stereotypical lower-middle-class traits, highlight the dim view the military establishment took of the lower middle class. The Officer Cadet Battalion journals often presented a dual view. The first was of the military establishment displaying the public school officer and gentleman ideal for the cadets to strive for. The second viewpoint was of the cadets themselves, which was in and of itself complex: in some ways they embraced the officer and gentleman ideal, while in others they poked fun at it and exuded a confidence in being able to live up to it on their own terms. Chapter Two examines the wartime letters of *lower* lower-middle class men, or men whose professional and financial situations were somewhat precarious and whose families had a mix of working- and lower-middle-class influences. These men’s experience was typified by a close connection with their families, a keen grasp of the financial realities of life, a sense of responsibility for

themselves and others, and a measure of snobbery against classes other than their own. Although advancement was one of the key motivations for their actions and they saw the opportunities presented to them by the First World War as a stroke of luck, their attitude was far from servile: they enjoyed the process of officer training and did not view it as a means to an end. Moreover, they were comfortable making fun of themselves. Chapter Three deals with the wartime letters of *upper* lower-middle-class men, or men who had secure lower-middle-class jobs that were held for them for the duration of the war, and whose family ties to the working-class community are not as strong as those in Chapter Two. These men often had a professional identity that was tied to their job, or a real professional allegiance that they carried with them while in uniform. Their experience was similar to their *lower* lower-middle-class counterparts, with one key difference: they were not as aspirational, seeing their commission as a temporary perk and a serious responsibility, but not as a chance to improve their civilian lives. Chapter Four deals with memoirs that were written by lower-middle-class temporary officers during the first wave of war memoir publication, from the late 1920s to the early 1950s. Like the men in the previous chapters, they do their best to emulate the officer and gentleman ideal while demonstrating a confidence in the qualities they bring to the table. However, in contrast to the letters examined in Chapters Two and Three, these memoirs show evidence of a martial, as opposed to domestic, identity, likely because they were not written with a family audience in mind. Moreover, the memoirs contain a measure of disillusionment with the conditions of the war, coupled with pride in the experience they had gained through their hardships. This disillusionment is limited to day-to-day matters, and does not include larger issues such as a failure of the top leadership or the underlying causes of the First World War. The authors of these memoirs also demonstrate a willingness to discuss some of the less savoury aspects of their wartime experience, including mistakes they themselves made. This is generally done in a humorous tone. Chapter Five examines memoirs that were written by lower-middle-class temporary officers during the second wave of war memoir publication, from the 1960s to the 1980s, as well as oral interviews with lower-middle-class veterans conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The content of the memoirs is similar to that of the memoirs studied in Chapter Four, but the trends that were visible in the first-wave memoirs appear more pronounced: the disillusionment expressed by the authors is deeper and extends to include big-picture matters, while the unsavoury incidents detailed are darker in tone. Furthermore, the memoirs in this chapter deal explicitly

with issues of class, which were front-and-centre in public discourse at the time the memoirs were written, and the authors' confidence leads them to express the belief that, as lower-middle-class men, they were not just 'as good as' their public-school-educated officer peers but even better. The class agenda is clear in the oral interviews: the interviewers do their best to bring up the issue at every opportunity, prodding their subjects to recall the ways in which class played a part in their war experience. The veterans being interviewed are clearly aware of their interviewers' agenda, but do their best to play things down. It is clear that, while they do not feel in any way inferior, they did not – and still do not – wish to rock the proverbial boat. The overall sense is that, during the First World War, they were happy enough to play by the existing rules while retaining an inner conviction of their own worth. The lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen studied in this PhD dissertation did not carve out a distinct identity or pursue a distinct project of masculinity that reflected their identity as a class – either in the ranks or when they were granted commissions. Rather, they were so used to “straddl[ing] multiple class identities”<sup>120</sup> in civilian life that they continued to use the same adaptive strategy when in uniform, blending in with the ‘Tommyes’ when in the ranks and doing their utmost to achieve the same aim when granted their temporary commissions. This finding gives historians insight into the nature of the British lower middle class and can help guide them in approaching this social group in future scholarly enquiries. If one of the key features of the lower middle class is their chameleon-like propensity to adapt to their surroundings, then this can not only shed light on why the middle class was so fearful about the incursion of impostors in its midst, but can also sensitize scholars to the possibility of a lower-middle-class presence where none appears obvious.

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<sup>120</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism,” 316.

## Chapter 1

### The making of “officers and gentlemen” as seen through the lens of officer manuals and Officer Cadet Battalion journals

This chapter examines representations of masculinity and identity in two sets of sources: officer manuals published during the First World War for a temporary gentleman audience in an effort to teach them what every officer needed to know, and Officer Cadet Battalion journals published internally by various companies of officer cadets during their wartime officer training. Both sets of sources tend to present more of a top-down view than the sources used in later chapters, but with some variation. The officer manuals served explicitly as mouthpieces of the British Army in its effort to make the men being given temporary commissions during the war fit into the expected upper-middle-class officer and gentleman mould. As such, they were both prescriptive and proscriptive, and didactic in tone, even though some attempted to sound friendly and approachable. They represented the view of the establishment, not of the men themselves. In contrast, the OCB journals were more varied in their approach. They often presented a dual view: that of the establishment who set out an ideal for the cadets to emulate and who bolstered that ideal with the traditions of the institution hosting the cadet school, and that of the cadets themselves. The views of cadets were also complex; they accepted the officer and gentleman ideal even while they mocked it.

The officer manuals are a good illustration of the fears harboured by the military establishment with regard to the hordes of temporary gentlemen perceived, both by the military establishment and the upper- and middle-class civilian population back home, to be invading the officer class. Taking an upper-middle-class point of view, the manuals dispense advice on such matters as money, leadership, etiquette, and behaviour in the mess, teaching their working-class and lower-middle-class audience how to emulate the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity. In focusing on these areas, these manuals demonstrate the ways in which the military establishment believed their intended audience to be lacking. In contrast, the OCB journals contain both examples of officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity for the cadets to emulate and a strong current of

opinion, expressed by the cadets themselves, that ranker-officers are worthy and constitute “good gentleman material.” Together, these two sets of sources provide context for the officer milieu in which the lower-middle-class men found themselves during the war, which helps set the stage for the way these men saw themselves, their role in the war, and their future potential, as discussed in later chapters.

Although other scholars have dealt briefly with officer manuals and OCB journals, none of them have examined either source in detail. Keith Simpson mentions officer manuals as part of his examination of the way the army dealt with the influx of temporary officers into the ranks of the officer class during the First World War, pointing out how their publication reflected concerns on the part of the officer class about the suitability of ranker officers and their ability to fit in socially.<sup>121</sup> However, his examination of officer manuals is brief and forms only a small part of his argument. Martin Petter also mentions officer manuals in his treatment of the Officer Cadet Battalions, presenting their messages as an example of the weakening of class differences in war. However, his treatment of the manuals is even more cursory than Simpson’s. In this dissertation, officer manuals are examined individually and in detail. Moreover, unlike Simpson and Petter, I look specifically at how the messages in the officer manuals were targeted directly at the lower middle class. Petter also briefly mentions OCB journals in his description of OCBs as “socializing agents” and a “school for manners.”<sup>122</sup> However, he gives only one example from a single OCB journal, quoting a handful of others in a footnote, and does not use them as a source in any depth or detail. Sheffield makes some use of OCB journals, but in the context of how they reflect morale and leadership among

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<sup>121</sup> Keith Simpson, “The Officers,” in *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, eds. Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 77.

<sup>122</sup> Martin Petter, “‘Temporary Gentlemen’ in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,” *The Historical Journal* 37:1 (March 1994), 142.

officers and rank-and-file soldiers.<sup>123</sup> In this dissertation, OCB journals are examined extensively, with a particular focus on how the lower middle class is reflected in their pages.

## Officer manuals and the “temporary gentleman” problem

Army manuals published before the First World War were intended to guide new and prospective officers in the ways of the British army and to shed light on a mysterious profession to a curious audience of laypeople. They were published privately and available widely enough to be printed in multiple editions and to be the subject of discussion in the popular press.<sup>124</sup> Taking as a given the fact that an officer must also be a gentleman, they made no secret of the officer class’s snobbishness and exclusivity. *Social Life in the British Army*, written by Captain W.E. Cairnes under the pseudonym “A British Officer,” was published in its third edition in 1901. In the preface to the 1901 edition, the author explains that being an officer had always been such an expensive undertaking that private means were necessary. This meant that “[t]he army as a profession is one to which only the sons of well-to-do parents can possibly aspire.” In the author’s opinion, this was a good approach that should be maintained. Sensing reform in the air, the author warns that “free competition for commissions, combined with a sufficient income when the object of ambition is attained, will at once lower the social status of the officer,” and that this will, in turn, have a negative effect on morale, since “men will follow a ‘gentleman’” in a way that they would not do for a man of lesser social position. Sounding the alarm, he asks: “are we prepared to throw wide the gates to the son of the struggling tradesman”? Clearly, the answer should be “no.”<sup>125</sup> And yet,

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<sup>123</sup> G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000).

<sup>124</sup> “Letter to the Editor,” *The Spectator*, 16 June 1900, 14.

<sup>125</sup> Captain W.E. Cairnes, (‘A British Officer’) *Social Life in the British Army*, Third Edition (London: John Long, 1901). Originally published 1899. Interestingly, the army was not alone in being concerned about men of the wrong class invading its ranks. The legal profession had similar concerns, which were expressed as early as the eighteenth century, and continued to be expressed into the mid-nineteenth century.

within less than two decades, the establishment was publishing army guides for an audience made up, in part, of the sons of struggling tradesmen about which the author of *Social Life in the British Army* had warned his readers. With increasing numbers of junior officers being promoted from the ranks, and thus not having the “right” social background for the role, the War Office issued a number of publications intended to instruct temporary officers in the art of being officers and gentlemen, encouraging both serving and retired officers to write such tracts. The pamphlets were published widely and to a broader audience than the pre-war manuals. They reflected the concern of the officer class about the leadership abilities and social habits of temporary gentlemen, and displayed class prejudice about the working and lower middle class.

Some of the army manuals published during the war were concerned with the practical matters of fighting in the trenches, while others went beyond the War Office syllabus of officer training to focus on what it meant to be an officer and a gentleman. The manual *Knowledge for War: Every Officer's Handbook for the Front*, written by Captain B.C. Lake and published in 1916, fell into the first category. It was intended as a practical handbook for officers in the New Armies, “covering subjects they need before being passed out and considered for active service.” It contains subjects such as drill, musketry, trench warfare, topography, military law, and billeting – a standard array of topics that would have been covered in an officer course. Moreover, its miniature size made it ideal to carry in a pocket as a quick reference. Yet, despite its markedly practical bent, it makes an attempt to shape its readers’ worldview, beginning with Kipling’s “If” and ending with Rupert Brooke’s “The Soldier” – poems that were traditional, not modern, in style, and patriotic, not disillusioned, in sentiment. It also includes a list of the kit a newly minted officer would require for the front, dispensing advice on what was absolutely necessary and what was not. This detail identifies it as catering to an audience of temporary

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According to David Lemmings, the culture of the eighteenth-century bar was deliberately exclusive, while the changes to the way prospective barristers received their legal education in the eighteenth century were motivated not in small part by a desire to ensure that such men were “bred in a gentlemanly environment.” David Lemmings, *Professors of the Law: Barristers and English Legal Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 301-303, 309. See also Allyson N. May, *The Bar and the Old Bailey, 1750-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

officers, who would need to be told what equipment to purchase and where to obtain it, and whose first instinct may not have been to go to a military tailor.<sup>126</sup>

Other army manuals for subalterns published during the First World War took a broader approach to indoctrinating their readers in what it meant to be an officer and a gentleman. These were published in multiple editions – five or six editions were not uncommon – and sold tens of thousands of copies. These manuals explicitly address an audience they presumed to be clueless about the business of being a proper officer. The preface to *A General's Letters to His Son on Obtaining His Commission* mentions the “[e]normous numbers of young officers” who had joined up in wartime, and the necessity to advise and guide them properly if they were to conduct themselves “up to the high standard of officers of our pre-war armies.”<sup>127</sup> *The Way They Have in the Army*, published in 1916, was written by Thomas O’Toole and attempts to explain the mysteries of military life and etiquette to people with little knowledge of the subject. As he explains, the book was prompted by a large influx of civilians into the army during wartime. O’Toole’s attitude towards “the ‘new’ soldiers” was benevolent; he praises them for their “wonderful adaptability” in conforming to army ways and in learning a great deal in a short amount of time.<sup>128</sup> Captain A.H. Trapmann’s *Straight Tips for Subs* also credits new subalterns with good intentions, but openly expresses the opinion that they needed a great deal of help with fitting in. The preface to the first edition states that the book was “intended for the benefit of newly joined Subalterns, and for those who hope to obtain a commission. It will ... save them much worry and some snubs.” Trapmann was happy to “continue this humanitarian work” in subsequent editions, citing the gratitude of thousands of newly

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<sup>126</sup> Captain B.C. Lake, *Knowledge for War: Every Officer's Handbook for the Front* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1916).

<sup>127</sup> [T.D. Pilcher] ‘A General Officer,’ *A General's Letters to His Son on Obtaining His Commission* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1917).

<sup>128</sup> Thomas O’Toole, *The Way They Have in the Army* (London: The London and Norwich Press Ltd., 1916), 89.

joined subalterns as the spur for continuing publication.<sup>129</sup> Each of these army manuals attempted to instill in its readers the conviction that being an officer was tantamount to being a gentleman, and required individuals to behave in certain way. *Straight Tips for Subs* reminded its readers that “when in officer’s uniform you must travel 1st class”<sup>130</sup> and “never address a Captain by his military rank alone – it is only tradesmen who do that.”<sup>131</sup> Drawing his readers’ attention to the importance of the King’s commission, Trapmann states that an officer “should never whilst in uniform behave in a way likely to bring his uniform into contempt,” such as drinking to excess, walking around unshaven, or behaving in a rowdy manner in public. Such was the importance of respecting the King’s commission that Trapmann reassures his readers that, as junior officers, they were indeed justified in arresting a Captain if they found him “behaving in a manner unbecoming an ‘officer and gentleman.’”<sup>132</sup> *The Way They Have in the Army* also insists that, “an officer’s every action, in every society, must reflect the fact that he is an officer and – a gentleman.”<sup>133</sup> Similarly, *A General’s Letters to His Son on Obtaining His Commission* states that possessing the King’s commission was “the admission to the knightly caste” and gave subalterns “the right to demand to be treated as an officer and a gentleman.”<sup>134</sup> These quotes reveal that the upper-middle-class public-school officer type was considered by British society at the outbreak of the First World War to be an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity, and that wartime conditions had made temporary

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<sup>129</sup> Captain A.H. Trapmann, *Straight Tips for “Subs”*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Forster Groom & Co. Ltd.), 4.

<sup>130</sup> Trapmann 14.

<sup>131</sup> Trapmann, 26.

<sup>132</sup> Trapmann, 37.

<sup>133</sup> O’Toole, 97.

<sup>134</sup> [Pilcher], 3.

membership in this elite group possible for a small group of men, but only if they strove to emulate the ideal model as closely as possible.<sup>135</sup>

Although, in large part, they were written to help temporary officers who did not have a traditional public school background, many of these army manuals presented their information in a way that assumed a privileged background on the part of their readers. This may have been a deliberate strategy of describing the officer class in a certain light by not allowing their working- and lower-middle-class readers to believe that being an officer was no longer as exclusive as it once was. The authors of these manuals may have presented the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity in its undiluted form under the assumption it would only make it more appealing to those aspiring to emulate it. Alternatively, they may have been so steeped in tradition as to be unable to conceive of men of a different background becoming officers, despite the obviously different wartime conditions. *Straight Tips for Subs* advises its readers to behave like gentlemen when being billeted by hosts of a certain standing, adding that “if you are a Golfing man, you may have been accustomed to change your boots in the Outer Hall to save your parents’ carpet; offer to do so...”<sup>136</sup> The assumption of upper-middle-class privilege is obvious here. The author also attempts to explain relationships in the army in terms of their public school equivalents, saying: “[t]he Senior Subaltern will be to you what the Senior Prefect is to the new boy at school.”<sup>137</sup> Similarly, *A General’s Letters to His Son on Obtaining His Commission* speaks to his readers directly, saying: “to you, who have been at a Public School, the ordeal ought not to be so trying as to another who has not had this advantage”<sup>138</sup> and adding that, “[i]t is only right that you, who have had the many advantages which you have had, should demand a much higher standard from yourself

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<sup>135</sup> R.W. Connell “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History,” *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993): 597-623; Mike Donaldson, “What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?” *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993): 643-57.

<sup>136</sup> Trapmann, 62.

<sup>137</sup> Trapmann, 22.

<sup>138</sup> [Pilcher], 9.

than you do from others...”<sup>139</sup> The only manual that took a different approach was *The Way They Have in the Army*, which acknowledges that a long-term military career in the regular army was only available to those who followed the traditional route, but adds that the possibility existed that, owing to the large numbers of promotions from the ranks, “there will be openings for the ambitious right up to the top of the tree, irrespective of Sandhurst, Woolwich, or other qualifications.” The author concludes by saying: “I do not know – nor does anybody else. Personally, I hope there will be!”<sup>140</sup> This was an egalitarian sentiment that other manuals did not share. The author, Thomas O’Toole, held the rank of private, which may explain this outlook. His booklet also includes a chapter on the Tommy’s private language, trying to demystify rank-and-file slang and make it approachable. The fact that such a view was published as part of a wave of booklets trying to teach large numbers of uninitiated young men about the military is significant because it demonstrates, if not a generalized trend toward egalitarianism, at least the public acknowledgement that such discussions were taking place.

Nevertheless, even the egalitarian outlook of the author of *The Way They Have in the Army* did not preclude him from advising his readers to adopt an attitude of traditional army paternalism as officers, avoiding familiarity with the men at all costs. Thomas O’Toole advises his readers that, “[o]fficers with friends in the ranks should not, for the sake of discipline, acknowledge such friendship in public...”<sup>141</sup> In a similar vein, *Straight Tips for Subs* advises its readers to treat “soldiers under you” as human beings, getting to know them and being “absolutely fair, just and impartial” in their treatment.<sup>142</sup> It proposes that officers should use the golden rule, placing themselves in the men’s position and doing “as you would be done by.” The author further reassures his readers that, “‘Tommie’ is a reasonable creature” who would reward competent and fair officers

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<sup>139</sup> [Pilcher], 49.

<sup>140</sup> O’Toole, 165.

<sup>141</sup> O’Toole, 97.

<sup>142</sup> Trapmann, 46-49.

with respect.<sup>143</sup> The author of *Straight Tips for Subs* did not take into account that many of his readers had likely started out as “Tommys” themselves. The attitude that he strove to pass on to new subalterns was traditional paternalism, which British officers in the First World War could expect to see rewarded with deference on the part of the soldiers they led.<sup>144</sup> *A General’s Letters to His Son* advises its readers to “[p]ut yourself in the position of your men, and never ask them to do what you would not yourself be ready to do in like circumstances.” It goes on to insist that officers always consider their “men’s comforts before you think of your own” – again echoing the attitude of benign paternalism that was prevalent in the British Army.<sup>145</sup> As in the other army manuals, new subalterns are cautioned against the temptation to become friends with the men they led, being advised to “maintain camaraderie without degenerating into familiarity.”<sup>146</sup> *A General’s Letters to His Son* went as far as to name the attitude that officers should strive to adopt in dealing with their men: “noblesse oblige.”<sup>147</sup> Again, this was in line with the way officers tended to relate to their men, and vice versa: emulating the paternalistic relationship between classes that prevailed in civilian life.<sup>148</sup>

In addition to giving new subalterns a traditional officer and gentleman model to emulate, these army manuals gave them specific tips on avoiding working- and lower-middle-class habits that could get in the way of their blending in with their fellow officers. This approach could come across as extremely patronizing, and revealed a great deal about the way the pre-war officer caste saw the temporary gentlemen in their ranks – as clueless, cheap, and pretentious upstarts. The author of *A General’s Letters to His Son* initially

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<sup>143</sup> Trapmann, 50.

<sup>144</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*.

<sup>145</sup> [Pilcher], 24.

<sup>146</sup> [Pilcher], 29.

<sup>147</sup> [Pilcher], 74.

<sup>148</sup> Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*.

reassured his readers that “I have never known an officer, promoted from the ranks, to have had anything but a good reception,” but soon issued a warning meant to ensure that they not get too uppity, saying that, “youngsters with swollen heads were always put in their proper places.”<sup>149</sup> He also warned them against the temptation to be stingy with their money, especially when it came to their financial obligations with regard to other people such as fellow officers, saying that “[t]here is no petty vice which is so much disliked among men of the profession of arms as is meanness.”<sup>150</sup> The author of *Straight Tips for Subs* gave similar advice, telling new subalterns to “avoid showing off”<sup>151</sup> and to walk the fine line between being “courteous but not servile” and “natural” but not “bumptious.”<sup>152</sup> Advice about financial matters seemed to be geared especially to a lower-middle-class audience. The author counselled new subalterns to “go to a real military tailor” and “a recognized firm of military outfitters” rather than trying to skimp on such expenses because this would “save you money in the long run.”<sup>153</sup> He also states: “[y]ou can, as a subaltern, not only live on your pay and allowances, but save money on it, but if that is your idea don’t apply for a commission. As an officer, you will be expected by your brother officers to live like a gentleman.”<sup>154</sup> He adds that, “you must live as your other brother officers live and do as they do ... unless you wish to ostracise yourself from the others...”<sup>155</sup> As a representative of the old order, he would have been right to be concerned. As later chapters of this dissertation show, many lower-middle-class men who received temporary commissions did indeed try to save money from their officer’s pay, and did so successfully. To them, building up a nest egg that would help

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<sup>149</sup> [Pilcher], 11.

<sup>150</sup> [Pilcher], 15.

<sup>151</sup> Trapmann, 14.

<sup>152</sup> Trapmann, 28.

<sup>153</sup> Trapmann, 15.

<sup>154</sup> Trapmann, 64.

<sup>155</sup> Trapmann, 65.

start their post-war lives on a surer footing was more important than keeping up a traditional officer and gentleman standard at all costs while the war lasted. This is important because it shows that, although these men did their utmost to fit in among their brother officers, their lower-middle-class civilian identity took precedence over their temporary officer and gentleman identity.

The army manuals published during the First World War attempted to deal with the challenge the author of *Social Life in the British Army* had warned about at the turn of the century: that of an influx into the ranks of the officer class of men whose class standing, financial means, and social habits fell short of the expected upper-middle-class standard. Manuals such as *A General's Letters to His Son on Obtaining His Commission*, *The Way They Have in the Army*, and *Straight Tips for Subs* did their best to instill in their working- and lower-middle-class readers the conviction that being an officer was tantamount to being a gentleman, and the understanding that they would have to closely adhere to a prescribed set of attitudes and behaviours to fit in with their brother officers. In explicitly giving working- and lower-middle-class men information that traditional officers would not need to have explained to them, these manuals offered valuable information while at the same time betraying the military establishment's patronizing attitude toward the temporary gentlemen.

## Officer Cadet Battalion journals and how they differed from "trench" journals

In February 1916, the War Office created the Officer Cadet Battalions in an attempt to streamline the process of training junior officers promoted from the ranks. Under the new system, promising candidates in the ranks were recommended by their commanding officers and sent on a four-month course in England to learn the basics of the Sandhurst/Woolwich curriculum as it applied to trench warfare and to cultivate their leadership skills. If they successfully passed their final examinations, candidates – referred to during the training period as officer cadets – were commissioned and later

gazetted to a specific regiment.<sup>156</sup> In addition to undergoing military training, officer cadets at the OCBs underwent a process of socialization into the upper-middle-class officer and gentleman tradition. In that sense, each OCB served not just as an officer school, but also as a “school for manners” for the officer cadets, most of whom came from less than exalted backgrounds.<sup>157</sup> The fact that one-third of the OCBs were located at Oxbridge colleges or in stately homes all over Great Britain meant their setting reinforced the message of privilege and exclusivity.<sup>158</sup> By July 1917, some 23 Officer Cadet Battalions were in operation, most of them turning out infantry officers.<sup>159</sup> Many of these OCBs produced journals commemorating the officer cadets’ time at the school, similar to the trench journals published by units at the front. These tended to be produced in a more formal manner than trench journals, which were sometimes printed right at the front; the OCB journals typically hired a local printer to typeset and produce the publication, and solicited advertising from local merchants to offset publication costs. Some of them charged a cover price, while others did not.<sup>160</sup> It is possible that a collection was taken up among the cadets for the purpose of publishing a commemorative journal, as it sometimes was for other reasons, such as a recreational or social fund. I have not found any evidence that families purchased copies, as they sometimes did with trench journals, but it is possible they did. As Martin Petter has said, OCB journals were “full of hearty team spirit, breezy clubbiness and a dedication to the outlook appropriate

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<sup>156</sup> Simpson, 79-80.

<sup>157</sup> Petter, 142.

<sup>158</sup> Eight of the OCBs whose journals were examined here were located in such places; some of them produced multiple journals under different names. The OCBs located at Oxbridge colleges and stately homes are well represented among the OCB journals examined for this PhD project, as compared with OCBs located at military barracks. This may be because people (or institutions) took care to archive the journals produced there, or it may be because publication was easier to achieve in a university town, as opposed to an army barracks.

<sup>159</sup> For a table of the OCBs and their locations, see Simpson, 81.

<sup>160</sup> *The Garrison Officer Cadet Battalion Chronicle* charged 6d; *The White Band* charged 3d; *The Gunner Cadet* charged 6d; *The White Band* charged 6d; and *Four Whistles* charged 2 shillings and 6d.

for an ‘officer and a gentleman’.”<sup>161</sup> While the description is accurate in part, it does not give the full picture of what the OCB journals contained or the messages they transmitted. They were both jocular in commiserating over the hardships that officer cadets had to endure and serious about the real possibility that newly minted officers would be killed while serving in their new role at the front. Through both top-down and bottom-up messages, they celebrated the process through which rankers became officers.

OCB journals differed from their “trench” counterparts in three ways: the impetus for their production, the location they were written (and sometimes published), and the social background of their editors and contributors. Trench journals were grassroots publications; the impetus for their publication came from the men in a particular army unit. As such, they represented the voices of the men who produced them, not the agenda of any particular institution. Moreover, they were produced wherever the given unit was stationed, and were sometimes even printed at the front – as in the case of the famous *Wipers Times*. Finally, although their editors and contributors were a mixture of junior officers and other ranks, David Englander claims they all shared an upper-middle-class background, and that these men often came from “the quadrangles of Oxbridge.”<sup>162</sup> Thus, the editorial boards and soldier journalists of trench journals were composed of traditional officers and gentlemen as well as some gentlemen-rankers, or men from a privileged background who had enlisted in the ranks rather than trying to obtain a commission.

The OCB journals are slightly different in all these respects. Alongside sketches, poems, or articles that capture slice-of-life moments at an OCB, these journals contain a premeditated attempt to memorialize what was seen as an important and fleeting

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<sup>161</sup> Petter, 142.

<sup>162</sup> David Englander, “Soldiering and Identity: Reflections on the Great War,” *War in History* 1:3 (1994): 303-304. For more on the trench journal phenomenon, see: J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3-20; Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918* (Hammersmith: Harper Perennial, 2004), 605-610.

experience. Nearly all of them contain souvenir photographs of officer cadets and their instructors. A majority also refer to memory in their editorials, and speak of a distant time in the future when cadets could look back over their lives and remember their OCB days fondly. Since officer cadets' days at an OCB were counted from the outset, OCB journals served less as newspapers and more like yearbooks – a fact that coloured their outlook and contents. Moreover, it was not the location of their production that changed – since the OCBs themselves remained stationary – but the composition of each company, or graduating class. The men producing these journals took one of two approaches: either they continued with a magazine of the same name, acknowledging in the front-page editorial that a new class had taken over while the old guard were gone, or they published a magazine under a new name. Accordingly, there are some OCB journals that run into multiple issues and were published over the course of several years, while others were short and contained only a handful of issues. This is also the reason certain OCBs produced multiple journals; they were published by different graduating classes. Publication was a collaborative effort between the officer cadets taking the OCB course and the instructional staff running the OCB. As such, OCB journals were a curious combination of grassroots and top-down content, produced side by side and – to all appearances – in harmony. Some of the OCB journals were edited solely by officer cadets, while others' editorial boards contained a mixture of officer cadets and instructors.<sup>163</sup> Most often, the latter combination meant the editor-in-chief was an OCB instructor – and thus a member of the old officer caste – while the remaining editors and business managers were officer cadets. We can only speculate how much real input such an editor-in-chief had into the publication of the magazine, its contents, or its tone. It seems likely he served a mostly ceremonial role, and the bulk of the work was done by the cadets. It is clear that the officer cadets felt bound to, at the least, take the interests of the establishment into consideration, whether by having one of its representatives on their editorial board or by soliciting journal submissions from the OCB's commanding officer,

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<sup>163</sup> Of the OCB journals studied here, 4 were edited by officers (with cadets on the editorial board), 13 were edited by cadets, and 2 were edited jointly by officers and cadets. I was unable to establish the identity or rank of the editorial board members for 14 journals.

its instructors, or the heads of the Oxbridge colleges where a given OCB was located. It is reasonable to speculate that the social composition of the OCB journals' editors or contributors, unlike that of the trench journals, was not predominantly upper-middle-class by virtue of the fact that the OCB cadets did not, for the most part, come from that section of society.<sup>164</sup> The men contributing to such magazines would have been literate, educated, and comfortable with writing and publication, which is why it is again reasonable to speculate that a good section of them would likely have been lower-middle-class. Some of the OCB journals list names of their editorial board members and, in a handful of cases where full names – instead of initials – were given and where other biographical information – such as addresses – were provided, it is possible to investigate the family background of these individuals. It is a fair estimation that at least half of the OCB journals studied here had editors or sub-editors who came from lower-middle-class families.<sup>165</sup>

## Messages in the Officer Cadet Battalion journals

The combination of grassroots and top-down messages contained in the OCB journals can at first seem like a confusing jumble. But on second look, it is in line with the overall attitude of the lower-middle-class men examined in this dissertation, who were keen to emulate the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity taught at the OCBs and did not feel insecure about their ability to do so. These men were impressed with the tradition being presented to them, but not overawed by it. In contrast to the negative view of lower-middle-class men put forward in the middle-class press in Britain, they did not see themselves as emasculated and pretentious upstarts who struggled to ape their betters but

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<sup>164</sup> Petter, 137-139; War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922): 707, 713.

<sup>165</sup> Tracing the identity of the OCB journals' editors is challenging as the information provided is commonly limited to first name initials and last name. Combined with a common last name like "Smith," first name initials are not enough to reliably identify the individual. Of the 9 OCB journals whose editorial boards I was able to identify at least in part, 8 had an editor or sub-editor who was a member of the lower middle class. Two of those journals had more than one lower-middle-class member of the editorial board.

failed because they focused on appearances rather than substance.<sup>166</sup> Rather, they considered themselves worthy of becoming officers and gentlemen and were confident in the qualities they had to offer. Their goal was not to create their own project of masculinity; they did their best to emulate the accepted hegemonic masculinity of the officer and gentleman, and did so from a position of strength, not weakness.

## A closer look at the OCB journals

A more detailed look at the contents of the OCB journals reveals their top-down attempts to inculcate a certain kind of masculinity in their readers and the lower-middle-class self-assertion that bubbles up from their pages. Because OCB journals relied in part on advertising revenue to cover the costs of printing, they contained advertisements from local businesses that might appeal to officer cadets such as hotels, restaurants, and cinemas. A large proportion of such ads were from tailors and military outfitters trying to get officer cadets to spend their allotted £50 officer's kit allowance. These types of ads tended to follow the same model: they included a sketch presenting an idealized version of officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity – a handsome, well dressed, confident officer on active service, wearing the boots, shirt, or trench coat being advertised – and then described the suitability of the clothing items for trench warfare. They sometimes included a title that explicitly targeted aspirational officer cadets, such as “When he takes his commission...”<sup>167</sup> Almost every one of the 32 OCB journals I examined contain a significant amount of advertising, all with a similar tone. **Figure 1** is an ad for Burberry Weatherproof Garments from Copland & Lye, Ltd. that depicts a well-dressed, handsome officer with a moustache and cane looking commanding and purposeful. His slightly open trench coat hints that he is on active service but he nonetheless looks stylish. Although these ads tried to get young officer cadets to open their wallets by purchasing

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<sup>166</sup> James A. Hammerton, “The English Weakness? Gender, Satire and ‘Moral Manliness’ in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 164-182.

<sup>167</sup> *Four More Whistles* [electronic resource], 9<sup>th</sup> Officer Cadet Battalion, [ed. R.A. Mackay] (Gales: [Ayrshire, Scotland], D Company, 9<sup>th</sup> Scottish Officer Cadet Battalion, 1918).

goods rather than deliberately trying to mould them into a certain type of officer, they nonetheless presented an idealized image of the officer and gentleman as something for cadets to strive for and emulate. As a result, advertising helped cement the idea that being an officer meant being a gentleman in the minds of the cadets who saw them, thus achieving the same result as the army manuals published by the War Office. Christopher Breward has argued that lower-middle-class men in Victorian Britain embraced aspirational stereotypes to distance themselves in their sartorial choices from working-class men. This phenomenon may have played a role with lower-middle-class officer cadets who, in enthusiastically donning a smart officer's uniform, hoped to distance themselves from the image of the "Tommy" they had been associated with as rank-and-file soldiers.<sup>168</sup> Advertising is never entirely a top-down phenomenon, since successful ads present only the images and ideas that already appeal to their target audience, and it is reasonable to speculate that officer cadets wished to emulate the officer and gentleman model before they ever laid eyes on a military outfitters ad. Nevertheless, such ads reinforced the message among their officer cadet clientele. Some went even further, using the same tactics as those employed in the army manuals to target and shame their clients' lower-middle-class habits of frugality. A Pope & Bradley ad in *The Blimp* talked about the "vital necessity" that officer cadets purchase their field service uniforms "only from Military Tailors of acknowledged repute." It specified that, "The Government grant of £50 is made with this object, and is sufficient for the purpose. To endeavour to save a few pounds by purchasing cheap kit ... is fatal economy."<sup>169</sup> The firm was worried that class-driven attempts to save money on the part of the officer cadets would cost it potential business and attempted to forestall such behaviour by pointing out that it simply was not done in the circles in which the cadets wished to travel. Other firms took a different approach towards securing the business of money-conscious cadets, reassuring

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<sup>168</sup> For consumption habits and identity, see: Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Erika Rappaport, Sandra Trudgen Dawson and Mark J. Crowley, eds., *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

<sup>169</sup> *The Blimp: Being the Souvenir of 'F' Coy. No. 2 OCB*, Christ's College-Ridley Hall, July-October 1917 (Cambridge: W. Heffler & Sons, [1917]).



practically every OCB journal studied here contains detailed references to Battalion sports, whether through pictures of various sports teams – such as rugby, boxing, cross-country running, cricket, association football, rowing, or tennis – with team members proudly posed in their sports uniforms, or through heroic reports of games won or lost and tournaments played with the right kind of spirit. “*Ultimus*” Magazine brags in an editorial that the company could lay claim to many achievements, such as “a first-class Rugby Team, an excellent ‘Soccer’ Team, a Cricket Team, Cross-country runners, Golfers and Hockey Players; in fact almost every kind of sport has been indulged in at one time or another, always resulting in a fair amount of success.”<sup>173</sup> This was typical of the attitude displayed in the OCB journals. An article in *The Four Months’ Effort*, entitled “Sport and the Army,” argues that “a sportsman has an advantage over one who takes no interest in games whatsoever” because “[w]hen one studies ... what is required of one in the Army, one realizes that it has practically the same essentials as sport.” Moreover, a good leader – whether of a sports team or an infantry platoon – will manage his men in such a way that they learn to love him “and know him as a thorough sport and gentleman.” The implication is that sport makes one a gentleman in addition to teaching proper leadership. This belief was reinforced by OCB commanders who were vocal in their support for Company sports: a note from the captain of the OCB based at Gales, Scotland, expresses his “appreciation for the manner in which this company has ‘played the game’ in work and in sport during the course.”<sup>174</sup> The reference to Sir Henry Newbolt’s poem, *Vitai Lampada*, with its exhortation, “Play up! Play up! And play the game!” makes a further connection between sport and war, repeating the widely accepted assumption that sport prepared men for war.

Turning this equation on its head, one OCB journal praises the positive influence the war had had on the “steady democratization of sport,” arguing that the creation of Officer Cadet Battalions under wartime conditions had made it possible for men from less

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<sup>173</sup> “*Ultimus*” Magazine, No. 23 Officer Cadet Battalion (Catterick: D Company, 1918-1919).

<sup>174</sup> *The Jab*, ‘D’ Company, Scottish Officer Cadet Battalion (Gales Ayrshire, 1918

privileged backgrounds to “play games under the best of conditions.”<sup>175</sup> This was in line with the OCBs’ belief in the importance of tradition – in the public school and Oxbridge vein – and its improving and civilizing properties. The journals representing OCBs that were located in various Oxbridge colleges or at manor houses across Great Britain contain articles written by local dignitaries documenting the institution’s history and making various references to the benefits that officer cadets derived from being in proximity to such a rich tradition even for a short period of time. Clearly, the establishment believed that, even though the Officer Cadet Battalions were born of necessity, one of their most important unexpected benefits was that they offered a taste of upper-middle-class life to their working- and lower-middle-class cadets that would stay with the disadvantaged officer cadets for the rest of their lives and inoculate them against the ordinariness of their subsequent existence. In the shorter term, the prevailing belief was that a crash course in upper-middle-class masculinity would make the cadets better officers.

Whatever the chosen point of view – that sport was beneficial for waging war or that war was beneficial to the popularization of sport – sport at the Officer Cadet Battalions was seen as a critical component of training. Jokes about its ubiquitous nature appear in the pages of the OCB journals, such as in the mention that “cadets who disliked football were set to digging as an alternate form of exercise”<sup>176</sup> or in the reference to trench-digging as “a successor to cricket, as a British sport ... far more popular than cricket has ever been.”<sup>177</sup> We can speculate that officer cadets could become resentful of the constant emphasis on team sports, especially given the fact that their academic workload during the OCB course was already heavy and free time was in short supply. **Figure 2** shows an illustration that neatly encapsulates that kind of resentment. Entitled “Fed up cadet, on

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<sup>175</sup> *Buz: The Organ of the Bizzie Bees: being the record of 'B' Company, No. 2 Officer Cadet Battalion* (W. Heffer, 1917-1919).

<sup>176</sup> *Lines of Fire*. No 1. R.G.A. Officer Cadet School (Trowbridge, April 1918-February 1919).

<sup>177</sup> *Wind-Up, C VIII: a souvenir of the winding-up of the First F Company, No. 8 Officer Cadet Battalion* (Lichfield, October 1916).

fatigue,” it shows an officer cadet sweating under the weight of all manner of sports equipment. He says, “Anyone who sings, ‘Britons never shall be slaves,’ after this, is a liar.”<sup>178</sup>



**Figure 2: “Fed up cadet, on fatigue” (*The Hobocob*)**

The OCB journals also reflect the importance of tradition, making space in their pages for tributes to the various host institutions and for articles summarizing their long histories – all supposedly for the benefit of the cadets studying there, who may have been ignorant of just how ancient and important were the halls where they attended lectures. This was done with an ebullient spirit of loyalty to school that had a real public-school flavour to it. *The Thunderflash* states that, “we shall always have that pride of School, which will make us think of Membland Hall as our School, second to none.”<sup>179</sup> This is a sentiment that would not have seemed out of place at any of the public schools that traditional officers and gentlemen had attended. Here it was being enthusiastically applied to men who had not had the public school experience and who would spend no more than four months at their Officer Cadet Battalion. A similar approach was taken at the various Oxbridge colleges. The Master of St. John’s College, Cambridge, which hosted officer

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<sup>178</sup> *The Hobocob*, Household Brigade Officer Cadet Battalion (The Hall, Bushey, Herfordshire).

<sup>179</sup> *The Thunderflash: a gassy record of a peripatetic peradventure at Prior Park*, ‘D’ Company (December 1917-June 1918).

cadets during the war, says that, for older members of the College, “it has been of the greatest ... gratification to learn how soon our new members (if they will allow us to count them as such) have picked up College feeling and tradition.”<sup>180</sup> Similarly, the Rev. D.H.S. Cranage, writing on the history of Cambridge, “medieval and modern,” comments on the “thousands of young officers, who, while studying their profession for a few months, have caught something of the old spirit, and have left with a real love for *alma mater*.”<sup>181</sup> An editorial in *The Pip* speaks about tradition at Christ’s College and says that, “though we graduate in arms and not in arts ... something of her spirit has entered into us.” It adds that cadets were “for a little while ... in a very special sense ‘war’ undergraduates of the colleges.”<sup>182</sup> For many of the men undergoing the officer cadet course, this was the only way they would ever play at being Oxbridge undergraduates, since their social background and limited financial means would never otherwise allow it. As the OCB journals saw it, officer cadets were thrilled and impressed with the chance to attend some of the world’s top universities, if only briefly. *The Souvenir* claims that cadets appreciated Balliol College’s “delightful atmosphere of antiquity.”<sup>183</sup> And most cadets probably did – as shown in later chapters of this dissertation, letters home written by lower-middle-class men attending OCB courses at Oxbridge colleges reveal a true appreciation for college history and a gratitude for being able to participate in college tradition for a time. The OCB journals encouraged such feeling by presenting the cadets with an idealized view of these ancient institutions and by making the most of their history, age, and charm. College beauty was exploited to the fullest in numerous sketches and photographs of picturesque chapels and quadrangles that graced journal pages. Ivy-covered stately homes surrounded by extensive – and, again, beautiful – estates received

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<sup>180</sup> *EcoEcho: a souvenir of the 1<sup>st</sup> ‘E’ Company*, No. 5 Officer Cadet Battalion.

<sup>181</sup> *The Blimp*.

<sup>182</sup> *The Pip: being the souvenir of No. 5 Company* (G.OCB: Christ’s College, Cambridge, October, November, December 1917).

<sup>183</sup> *The Souvenir ‘A’ Company* (No. 6 Officer Cadet Battalion: Balliol College, Oxford, 10 November 1917-26 February 1918).

similar treatment. Sites such as public schools and Oxbridge colleges were traditionally implicated in indoctrinating upper-middle-class boys and young men in the performance of hegemonic masculinity, raising the next generation of gentlemen and leaders.<sup>184</sup>

Accordingly, the use of such sites for training officer cadets was likely motivated by more than just practical concerns. Their symbolic value as the institutions where English gentlemen were made meant they lent an air of legitimacy to the process of manufacturing temporary gentlemen.

In addition to the importance of tradition, most of the OCB journals studied here talk about the spirit of camaraderie that developed among cadets taking the four-month officer course. Many editorials referred to the importance of friendships forged during the course, the cadets' growing allegiance to their school, and the memories they would take with them. Officer cadets were portrayed as joining a brotherhood whose bonds would endure and whose members would help each other face the challenges of being a good officer in a difficult time. A foreword in one journal, written by the Company Captain, states that, "if we have gained nothing else, we have at least made many friendships which will outlast the war."<sup>185</sup> A similar official article talks about "a body of men who, coming from all parts of the world, knit together and formed a very happy family." In the same journal, the editorial praises "splendid friendships" and the "spirit of good fellowship" in the OCB.<sup>186</sup> Identical words are used in the editorial of *The Thunderflash*, almost as if one set of editors had cribbed the others' work – or perhaps simply because such was the jargon commonly used at the time.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, more than one OCB journal uses the term "band of brothers" when speaking of the spirit of brotherhood that prevailed during the officer course. Some overtly refer to Agincourt and quoted the words from

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<sup>184</sup> Adams; Mangan.

<sup>185</sup> *Memento*, No. 2 Company of the Twenty-Third Officer Cadet Battalion, 'D' Lines, Hipswell Camp (Hipswell Camp: Catterick, XXIII OCB, 1919).

<sup>186</sup> *Wind-Up*.

<sup>187</sup> *The Thunderflash*.

Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day speech: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."<sup>188</sup> One other feature of the OCB journals that testifies to the importance of camaraderie are the "names and addresses" pages that feature at the back of many of these magazines and that were designed to encourage men to keep in touch after the OCB course was over.<sup>189</sup> While some are blank, others contain the signatures of OCB cadets from a hundred years ago, carefully printed or illegibly scrawled in an effort to maintain the bonds of "brotherhood" that had been forged through four months' hard work in a unique oasis away from the danger of the trenches. This suggests that OCB journals did indeed serve a dual purpose: as an instrument of indoctrination on the part of military officials, who tried to mould the officer cadets into proper exemplars of upper-middle-class hegemonic masculinity, and as a grassroots expression of the cadets' concerns and a tool to facilitate genuine friendships between them.

Alongside serious depictions of camaraderie that would not have been out of place in an army manual for new officers, the journals feature humorous articles and sketches of cadets behaving badly: chasing women, drinking to excess, and slacking in their duties. Although these were not officially sanctioned by the military authorities they were clearly present and winked at in the pages of the OCB journals. One gets the impression that such behaviour, and the humorous admission to engaging in it, did more to cement bonds of friendship among officer cadets than all the didactic pronouncements about the importance of camaraderie combined. One journal compares cadets to bacteria in a mock scientific article, reporting that the strain *Whitebandocci* "thrive wonderfully well on a culture medium of beer and whisky."<sup>190</sup> Another presents a Platoon Commander's Ten

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<sup>188</sup> *The Blunderbuss: being the book of the 5th Officer Cadet Battalion* (newspapers and journals). Made by: 5th Officer Cadet Battalion, Trinity College [and St. John's College] (publisher), 1916-1918., Copy number: E. 72718; *Buzz*.

<sup>189</sup> For example, see *Pass, Friend!* First 'A' Company, No. 1 Officers Cadet Battalion (Memberland Hall, November 1916-March 1917); *The Star-less K-Night* [4<sup>th</sup> 'B' Company, No. 1 Officer Cadet Battalion]; and *Ye gas shelle: the magazine of the Third "C" Company, No. 1. OCB*, Membland Hall, Newton Ferrers, Plymouth, ed. F.S. Boshell (Devonport: Swiss & Co., [1918?]) among others.

<sup>190</sup> *Four More Whistles*.

Commandments, one of which proclaims that, “Thou shalt hold thine liquor like a gentleman.”<sup>191</sup> Clearly, drinking was a popular pastime for officer cadets. *The White Band* contains a mock diary entry from Samuel Pepys which respectfully states that “[w]e have made many friends . . . and shall leave Moore Park with kindly memories of a great four months” only a few pages before presenting an illustration of a cadet writing a letter home to his “Aunty,” bragging about his success in his studies and mentioning subjects such as: “Map Reading, Field Work! Pay!! Absence!!! And Drunkenness!!!!”<sup>192</sup> *The “Barncroft” Magazine* features an article about cadets sneaking back into their huts late at night after an “evening prowl.”<sup>193</sup> Hard studying had to be balanced with a little bit of fun – a conjecture that is confirmed by evidence from some post-war memoirs written by former officer cadets. The subject of cadets misbehaving with women also comes up frequently. One sketch portrays two young women talking about their cadet friends. One says, “My dear, your Cadet friend must be very rich. Is he a Quartermaster?” And the other one replies, “No! But his wife makes munitions.”<sup>194</sup> In another journal, a poem talks about a cadet meeting “a maiden fair, with darkened eyes and peroxide hair . . .”<sup>195</sup> These were not the type of women young officers and gentlemen were likely to bring home to mother. In addition, the frequency of these types of references indicates that such behaviour likely did occur at the various OCBs despite official sanctions, curfews, and rules. One journal even speculates that the origins of the word “cadet” were related to the word “cad.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Buzz*.

<sup>192</sup> *The White Band*, 'D' Company. No. 7 O.C.B. Cork, 1917.

<sup>193</sup> *The “Barncroft” Magazine*, [electronic resource] ‘D’ Company, No. 14 Officer Cadet Battalion (Marlborough, England: Adam Matthew Digital, c. 2012).

<sup>194</sup> *EcoEcho*.

<sup>195</sup> *The Connecting File: the magazine of ‘A’ Company*, 14<sup>th</sup> Officer Cadet Battalion.

<sup>196</sup> *The Blunderbuss*.

Hegemonic masculinity is usually constructed against a demonized Other – a group that is endowed with all the characteristics perceived as negative, shameful, and un-manly by the men involved in constructing a particular project of masculinity. In the context of war, that “other” is most often the enemy – and we see examples of this in the pages of the OCB journals, which contain numerous sketches of “Fritz” portrayed in a negative light. In addition to “othering” the enemy, the journals also mete out similar treatment to those groups that the cadets felt were not contributing to the war effort, such as conscientious objectors or the Irish. Alongside overtly negative references to such groups appeared slightly derisory commentary about brass hats, or high-ranking officers, who were seen as unable to relate to the struggles of front-line junior officers and hampering efforts at winning the war with useless red tape. In contrast to the brass hats, the officer cadets portrayed themselves as making the most of the bureaucratic muddles that were thrown in their path and persevering in doing their job nonetheless – a quality that not only made them good officers but also real men.

The most frequent negative portrayals of the “other” in OCB journals concerned the enemy. Often they were depictions of German generals looking feeble, tired, and disheveled, such as the illustration entitled “Malevolent Moritz and Lugubrious Ludwig,” which shows General Moritz von Bissing looking slightly ape-like, with patches on his knees, and General Paul Ludwig Von Hindenburg looking despondent, with knees knocking together.<sup>197</sup> According to George Mosse’s argument, the male body is used to define a conception of manliness – or, in this case, un-manliness – by associating physical attributes with inner qualities.<sup>198</sup> Since the German generals are pictured as unkempt and afraid, it follows that they were undisciplined and lacking in manliness. The depiction of them with animal qualities further distances them from ideal British

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<sup>197</sup> *The Garrison Officer Cadet Battalion Chronicle* (Cambridge, 1917-1919); see also “*Ultimus*” *Magazine*.

<sup>198</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 24-50.

masculinity.<sup>199</sup> The OCB journals also contain allegorical depictions of Germany, which was sometimes represented in the form of a fat Hindenburg whose masculinity was questioned in various ways. In one illustration, he is pictured wearing an ample women's gown and is instructed to squeeze into a small dress labelled "Allies' Terms" – modelled by an attractive and slim young woman. The caption states: "It wasn't designed to suit you, madame, but you'll get into it alright – in time!"<sup>200</sup> In addition to its political message, the illustration is designed to humiliate the imagined Hindenburg: not only is he portrayed as a woman, he is also shown as a woman who is fat and unattractive. Thus, he fails on two counts: he is an unmitigated fiasco. Sometimes the illustrations in the journal do not specifically refer to Germany, but rather to a generalized evil or menace, as in the sketch that appears in *The Blunderbuss*, depicting a tiny British officer with a bayonet facing an enormous Satan-like monster atop a mountain as the year 1917 dawns.<sup>201</sup> Although the connection is not explicit, it is implied. The OCB journals also contain illustrations of ordinary German soldiers demonstrating various degrees of cowardice and incompetence. One sketch, entitled "Fritz at P.T.," shows a nameless German doing various physical exercises, such as raising his arms in surrender, bending backwards when poked with a British sword, or running away from a British advance.<sup>202</sup> Another one, entitled "Heimweh!" (which translates as "homesickness") shows two Germans cowering in a trench under an allied bombardment (see **Figure 3**). One is looking at the shells flying overhead with a hungry expression and with saliva dripping from his protruding tongue. The caption reads: "FRITZ: 'Why do the shellen your mouth so wet make, Franzi? FRANZ: 'Ach! Mein Fritz, do they not, the lovely so-long-since-not-

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<sup>199</sup> For more depictions of Germans as having animal qualities, see *The White Band*, Officer Cadet Battalion, No. 20 and 21 OCBs (Crookham, Aldershot, 1917).

<sup>200</sup> *The Pip*.

<sup>201</sup> *The Blunderbuss*.

<sup>202</sup> *The White Band*, edited by the officers and cadets of 'D' Company, No. 7 OCB (Cork, 1917).

tasted-great sausagen, resemble?”<sup>203</sup> The message conveyed here is that the only trait stronger than cowardice in a German soldier was gluttony. The implication is that British soldiers would never behave that way.



**Figure 3: “Heimweh!” (*The White Band*, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> OCB)**

Different types of Others are also lampooned in the pages of the OCB journals. *Buzz!* shows an illustration of a weak and incompetent man with glasses who failed to stick his bayonet in a sandbag despite the shouts of his instructor. It is entitled: “The spirit of the bayonet fails: or the conscientious objector.”<sup>204</sup> *Lines of Fire* published a drawing entitled “The War Profiteer,” which depicts death dressed as a merchant, charging Hindenburg – yet again shown wearing women’s clothing – five million men’s lives for “a Peace [of world dominion] for my Summer Dress.”<sup>205</sup> Although the main message of the sketch is that Germany was bleeding its armies dry and was destined for defeat, the association of war profiteering with death can be considered in a broader context. We can speculate that many cadets believed the comparison applied just as well to war profiteers

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<sup>203</sup> *The White Band* (No. 20 and 21 OCB). Although the journal of the No. 20 and 21 OCB bears the same name as that of the No. 7 OCB, they were in fact different publications. Their shared name was coincidence. The journal of the No. 7 OCB later changed its name to *The Whitest Band* in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>204</sup> *Buzz*.

<sup>205</sup> *Lines of Fire*.

back in Blighty, and that the act of war profiteering ultimately cost soldiers' lives. Officer cadets whose OCB was located in Ireland found yet another target for "othering": the Irish who were opposed to the British war effort and, in some cases, made their hostility to the British army clear. *The White Band* mentions "a disease prevalent in a few localities in Ireland known as cold feet..."<sup>206</sup> The implication is that many Irish are cowards. An illustration in the same magazine depicts a bearded Irish farmer struggling with a pig. The rope to which the pig is attached has become tangled around a road sign. The caption reads: "Paddy (after many turnings round the finger post): 'Ye ungrateful, tiresome baste. Ye have muddled me so, I have quite forgot whether I was a-takin' ye to Ballydown Market, or bringin' ye back.'"<sup>207</sup> Aside from striking a note of quaintness with its bucolic and slightly backward scene, the illustration shows "Paddy" as not overly bright and liable to be dominated by a mere animal.

Like most front-line soldiers and officers, officer cadets were not overly fond of high-ranking officers, called "brass hats," who were perceived to lead cushy lives behind the lines and needlessly involve men in ill-advised offensives. Accordingly, the OCB journals "other" these figures, painting a contrast between old and useless brass hats and young officer cadets who risked their lives in a heartfelt desire to do their duty to King and Empire. One journal features a "Diary of one day of crowded joyous life in the trenches" which makes reference to the pointless work exhausted front-line soldiers were expected to do to please army officials. It reads: "11.15 am. – Arrival of Brigade Staff. Orders given for everything that has been dug out in the night to be filled in, and everything that has been filled in to be dug out."<sup>208</sup> The contrast between the hard-working soldiers and officials whose only contribution is to make work for those soldiers is clear. In a similar vein, an article entitled "The Crisis" brutally sends up the fictional Col. Sir A. B. Fyre, a typical official who had a cushy job in the War Office as "the head

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<sup>206</sup> *The White Band* (No. 7 OCB).

<sup>207</sup> *The White Band* (No. 7 OCB).

<sup>208</sup> *The White Band* (No. 7 OCB).

of the special department for the rescue of cigarette ends in the interests of war economy.” He is pictured labouring long into the night to solve a huge crisis in the Empire and finally managing to do so triumphantly by issuing the following Army Order: “It is notified for information that Jam, Plum and Apple, Mark I is hereby withdrawn and Jam, Apple and Plum, Mark VI will be issued instead.”<sup>209</sup> Here, the cadets satirize the mind-boggling bureaucracy that was a frustrating part of their daily lives in the army and for which they blamed the officials, and the self-importance of the senior army brass which, in the cadets’ view, was wholly undeserved. Cadets undergoing their officer training at a remote location in cold and rainy Scotland blamed the brass hats for deliberately choosing that particular site for the OCB, stating that it was “as far from a town as is Venus from Mars” and adding that “on viewing its bleakness the stoutest heart quails.”<sup>210</sup> The implication here is that the brass hats had set out to cause misery for officer cadets. Such reasoning, when taken to its logical conclusion, could result in disillusioned pronouncements such as this one, attributed to a fictional platoon commander: “I am here for no purpose whatsoever, but simply because some silly ass started this war and forgot to stop it before he died...”<sup>211</sup> This OCB journal suggests that brass hats treated the war as little more than a chessboard, without considering the soldiers and officers on the ground who risked their lives. The above quote contains not only a pointed criticism of officials and a note of disillusionment about the war, but also the words “I am here,” which are a reminder that the officer cadets, like all junior officers in the trenches, were the backbone of the army and were determined to do their duty even if they were not confident in their leadership. The contrast between the brass hats’ distant meddling and the junior officers’ active participation in the fighting was the main point of the various criticisms targeted at upper level officers. The illustration (**Figure 4**) entitled “Sketch of ‘Somme’ warrior, now in OCB,” encapsulates this contrast. It shows a rugged soldier with a cigarette between his lips and with a grim yet determined expression on his

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<sup>209</sup> *The Garrison Officer Cadet Battalion Chronicle*.

<sup>210</sup> *The Jab*.

<sup>211</sup> *The White Band* (No. 7 OCB).

face. Most of all, the caption makes the connection between fighting on the Somme and attending an OCB, thus underscoring that officer cadets had earned their stripes and proven their manhood in this war in a way that brass hats never would.<sup>212</sup>

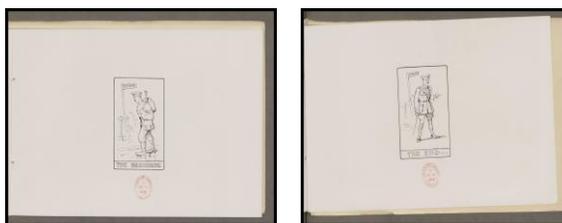


**Figure 4: “Sketch of ‘Somme’ Warrior, now in OCB” (*The White Band*, 20 and 21 OCB)**

Most of the OCB journals make references to the transformation officer cadets underwent: starting out as rough privates or inexperienced cadets and becoming refined officers and gentlemen. This was a view that was expressed both by the establishment and by the cadets themselves. Some references made to this transformation were humorous and could be read as somewhat subversive, but overall even the humorous jabs were gentle, and the impression one gets is that the officer cadets were earnest about wanting to transform themselves into members of the officer class. Although the appeal of this transformation was partly status-based, the cadets exhibited a serious desire to become good officers and competent leaders. Images referring to the transformation officer cadets made during their OCB course abound in the journals. Most often, they take the form of a before-and-after comparison; the before picture shows either a clueless cadet loaded down with luggage or a tired foot soldier still covered in mud from the trenches, and the after picture shows a stylishly dressed, handsome and confident

<sup>212</sup> *The White Band* (No. 20 and 21 OCB).

officer.<sup>213</sup> (See **Figure 5**) In one case, the transformation is of a different kind: a journal representing an OCB coping with the difficult situation of training officers for a war that had just ended, and facing the prospect of mass demobilization, published a sketch entitled “The Magic Door,” which showed a man going in as a cadet and coming out the other side as a civilian.<sup>214</sup> Transformations were also described in words, as in the article entitled “The Evolution of a Cadet,” which describes the excitement of a new officer cadet who took pains to make his Sam Browne belt appear older “by application of saddle soap and stain” and who enjoyed the “hero worship of adoring relatives.” By the time he was sent to the trenches, the cadet had adjusted his sense of proportion and had become “a rather modest subaltern.”<sup>215</sup> Finally, sometimes the transformations referred to in the pages of the OCB journals concern not just individual officer cadets, but the officer class as a whole. *Four More Whistles* describes a general change in the junior officer during the course of the war, commenting that “no longer is he the swaggering, semi-moustached ignoramus of old.” Rather, he is “a thoroughly trained, efficient young war machine.”<sup>216</sup> Although the overall tone of the article is humorous, its message is a sign of the times: the old public-school junior officer who had held sway before the war, and whom the article panned as an “ignoramus,” was no longer the norm.



**Figure 5: “The Beginning” and “The End” (*Memento, No. 2 Company*)**

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<sup>213</sup> For examples see: *Memento*; *EcoEcho*; *The Blimp*; and *The Hobocob*.

<sup>214</sup> *Lines of Fire*.

<sup>215</sup> *The Blimp*.

<sup>216</sup> *Four More Whistles*.

The cadet-to-officer transformation was described in imaginative and creative ways, such as the comparison of cadets to bacteria, which appeared in *Four More Whistles*. The article described a lower strain called “Whitebandocci” – referring to the white bands officer cadets wore around their caps – and compared it to the higher form “Bacilli Commissionis,” which the author had been able to grow “on a culture medium of respect and diplomacy.”<sup>217</sup> In another article, entitled “An Irish Industry,” the Fermoy-based OCB journal *The White Band* referred to Moore Park, the site of the Officer Cadet Battalion, as a “unique factory ... producing in the short space of 5 months an officer and a gentleman...”<sup>218</sup> This comparison could be read as somewhat subversive since it humorously located the production of officers, who were historically an upper-middle-class creation, in the midst of an industrial factory traditionally staffed by working-class people. Nevertheless, such a comparison, even though unorthodox, was still indisputably masculine.

The same could not be said of “A Few Recipes from Lichfield,” an article that compared the creation of officers to the traditionally female art of cooking. “To Train an Officer” advised readers to “take a few barracks ... insert a few cadets ... mix in a few officers... pound well... (s)train gently over an open heath, and serve at an exam.” The companion recipe, “To Pass an Exam,” advised readers to cook cadets in a pot “full of the juice of knowledge” and, “on pouring out, serve with commissions...”<sup>219</sup> The article played with irony in the way it imagined the officer cadets as ingredients in a typically feminine literary form which had the creation of true manliness as its intended outcome. This was overtly humorous and could also be read as subversive, although the humour was gentle and we get the impression that the author’s intention was not to undermine the process but only to satirize it. Although the tongue-in-cheek recipes could potentially be read as showing the officer cadets in a feminizing light, this interpretation becomes puzzling

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<sup>217</sup> *Four More Whistles*.

<sup>218</sup> *The White Band* (No 7 OCB)

<sup>219</sup> *Wind-Up*.

when we realize that the author of the article was himself an officer cadet, not a member of the establishment. An alternative explanation comes from Peter Schwenger, who posits that to consciously think about masculinity is to become less masculine oneself. Building on the Renaissance concept of *sprezzatura*, or nonchalance, Schwenger contends that “to be seen to labour in anything deprives a man of credit; whereas admiration doubles if he seems to throw it off without effort or forethought.” Extending the concept to the domain of masculinity, Schwenger argues that “any consciousness of manhood (besides mere self-congratulation) implies a female element, a place just outside of manhood from which to view its contours.”<sup>220</sup> By extension, playing with symbols of masculinity, and even taking on certain feminine roles and characteristics, implies supreme confidence in one’s manhood. Thus, in an ironic way, placing aspiring officers and gentlemen in the context of the feminine medium of culinary recipes demonstrated confidence in their masculinity on the part of the officer cadets publishing the OCB journal.

Alongside references to transformations of various kinds, the OCB journals contained evidence of the officer cadets’ genuine desire to become good officers and gentlemen, and of their instructors’ earnest efforts to mould them accordingly. The journals contained some of the same top-down advice that had been meted out in the officer manuals examined at the beginning of this chapter. Aspiring officers were told things like: “Don’t use bad language – it’s not good form” and “[d]on’t parade your wealth – most officers are poor.”<sup>221</sup> For many of the officer cadets this was a moot point since they had little wealth to parade; for others, such as a few of the lower-middle-class men discussed in later chapters, parading the bounty of their officer wages would have been considered a waste given the option of saving their money for a post-war civilian future. Nevertheless, military authorities deemed it advisable to counsel the cadets in class-appropriate officer behaviour. Other advice given in such articles included: “Always turn out smartly in uniform and set a good example...” and “[a]lways consider the comfort

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<sup>220</sup> Peter Schwenger, *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 30-31.

<sup>221</sup> *The White Band* (No 20 and No 21 OCB).

and well-being of the men in your platoon first...”<sup>222</sup> According to *Ultimus Magazine*, the OCB instructors did their best to demonstrate what “an officer and a gentleman” should be, leading by example, treating their cadet charges as men and demonstrating a personal conduct worth emulating.<sup>223</sup>

The cadets took such advice to heart, writing their own articles on subjects of military discipline, good leadership, and what it meant to be a gentleman. One such article read: “A gentleman may be defined as one who constantly sinks his own pleasures, ease, appetites and likes, in order that he may consider first the good and comfort of other people.” It assured its readers that cadets can become gentlemen “because we have formed the habit of acting at all times as gentlemen would act.”<sup>224</sup> The preoccupation with becoming a gentleman, in the moral sense of behaving in a way others would admire, was clearly present in the pages of the OCB journals. Despite the feverish excitement of the officer cadets to get their new officer uniforms – one article described this excitement in terms of a disease termed “gladragomania”<sup>225</sup> – it is clear that the prospect of becoming an officer was viewed as an opportunity to make a real contribution to the war effort rather than just a chance to play dress-up. The general impression one gets in reading the OCB journals is that the officer cadets wanted to merit the title of officer and gentleman by virtue of their conduct and leadership, not only in name, and that they worked hard to make this a reality. The OCB journals contain various examples of actual examination questions, used by cadets to study for their final exams,<sup>226</sup> countless images and jokes referring to cadets “swotting” or studying, as well as

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<sup>222</sup> *Four Whistles*.

<sup>223</sup> “*Ultimus*” *Magazine*.

<sup>224</sup> *The Souvenir*.

<sup>225</sup> *The Blimp*. Evidence from officer cadets’ letters to their families, examined in the later chapters, seems to confirm the existence of such breathless excitement.

<sup>226</sup> *The Gunner Cadet*. For more examples of OCB examination papers, see: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant C. Carter, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents.7988; Liddle WW1/GA/OCA5.

numerous references to the cadets' fear of failing their OCB course and being RTU or returned to unit. The OCB journals also contain letters from alumni, now gazetted officers posted to the trenches, who write serious advice to their colleagues in training on subjects such as what equipment is essential in France – hint: buy a compass – and what aspects of their OCB training have the most practical applications in trench warfare.<sup>227</sup> It is clear that, to most of the officer cadets undergoing training at an OCB, becoming an officer and a gentleman was a serious responsibility they did not take lightly.

Throughout the pages of the OCB journals, the cadets were frequently satirized for their social origins and pretensions to gentlemanliness. Although this was generally done in the spirit of good fun with the aim of eliciting laughter and not inflicting hurt, it did at times touch on matters that were no doubt sensitive to cadets who may have felt insecure about their own claims to hegemonic masculinity. Sometimes the target of such humour was specifically the lower-middle-class origins of some of the cadets. However, such satire was balanced with proud assertions on behalf of certain cadets that they came from lower-middle-class backgrounds, an explicit rejection of class snobbishness in the context of the war effort, and overwhelmingly positive portrayals of individual soldiers with clear lower-middle-class characteristics. In its “Things we want to know” column, a staple in most OCB journals, *Four More Whistles* asked: “Who was the cadet who mistook a naval captain for a hotel porter?”<sup>228</sup> The implication is that the cadet could not tell the difference between the two kinds of uniforms owing to his lack of experience – both army experience and the kind of *savoir faire* that would have been common among men who were no strangers to “good” society. A similar column in another journal inquires about “[t]he name of the Cadet who is reputed to have said, ‘I can’t play rugger, I can’t play soccer, but, damn it, I can play chess.’”<sup>229</sup> In this case, the gentle criticism is directed at a man who admitted to lacking the sort of athletic prowess that would have

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<sup>227</sup> *Buzz*.

<sup>228</sup> *Four More Whistles*.

<sup>229</sup> *The White Band* (No. 7 OCB).

been expected both in a working-class cadet and in one with a public school background. It is fair to speculate that his scholarly bent could have categorized him as a member of the lower middle class. Yet another journal refers to a “bedder” who had remarked that “she only had to ‘do’ for gentlemen until the Cadets came to Cambridge” and wondered what gratuity she should receive.<sup>230</sup> Although, at first glance, the point of this anecdote is that the cadets being billeted at Cambridge are not gentlemen, it can also be read as critical of the housekeeper for remarking on the class barriers that were under attack in the OCB project and which, in the official view, were not supposed to matter while the country was at war.

Still, whether or not such things were supposed to matter, there was no erasing the cadets’ awareness of class differences. *The Connecting File* makes a dig at some of the cadets’ way of speaking by offering them “Professor Knight’s Pronouncing Dictionary,” which was designed to help cadets “play with dignity the part of holders of his Majesty’s Commission.”<sup>231</sup> It is impossible to know whether “Professor” Knight’s pronunciation was good or bad, and whether his own particular way of speaking – which may have included an especially pedantic way of enunciating his words, or perhaps a speech impediment – was at the heart of the joke. Either way, it is certain that many of the cadets at the OCB had accents that immediately gave them away as not belonging to the traditional officer class – hence the perceived need to help them “play” a certain part when they obtained their commission. Moreover, the idea of mimicking their “betters” and transcending porous class boundaries through imitation was not foreign to the lower middle class<sup>232</sup> – one of the groups at which this particular joke was aimed.

There is evidence cadets were fully aware of their in-between status – neither soldier nor officer and in many cases neither commoner nor gentleman. Until they obtained their

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<sup>230</sup> *The Garrison Officer Cadet Battalion Chronicle*.

<sup>231</sup> *The Connecting File*.

<sup>232</sup> Peter Bailey, “White Collars, Gray Lives? The Lower Middle Class Revisited,” *Journal of British Studies*, 38:3, *Masculinity and the Lower Middle Class* (July 1999): 273-290.

commission and were gazetted, such uncertainty would persist – and, in the case of many cadets whose social backgrounds did not easily lend themselves to making the transition to officer and gentleman status, it would continue even after they were commissioned. One cadet expresses his frustration in a humorous poem: “I’m not a blooming private and I haven’t got a star, I mayn’t take cocktails at the lounge or bitter at a bar, the Tommy who salutes me says, ‘I wonder what he are.’”<sup>233</sup> The uncertainty he refers to is about rank. Other cadets embraced the uncertainty of their in-between status, and made no attempts to conceal their civilian origins. In fact, a number of references to the varied origins of OCB cadets nearly brim with pride at the diversity of their civilian identities. One article states: “Three years ago we were all busy at our desks and counters, because chance offered nothing better.” In contrast, now that they are at the OCB, “knight and squire, slim page and stalwart bowman are afoot again for England and St. George.”<sup>234</sup> In this instance, the reference to desks and counters can be read as indicating a lower-middle-class background on the part of some of the cadets. Another journal jokingly states that “snobbishness was conspicuously absent everywhere” at the OCB, and remarks that the one remnant of the old idea that “all gentlemen were blue-blooded” appeared on Saturdays when, on undergoing an icy bath and waiting around in the cold to be inspected by the medical attendant, all cadets’ “feet, finger tips, cheeks and lips were looking decidedly blue...”<sup>235</sup>

Such class-leveling sentiments were not always expressed using humour; sometimes the approach taken was earnest and reverent. One journal article describes two clerkly soldiers sent as replacements to a tough platoon in nothing short of glowing terms. Although physically they were not imposing: “you’ll grip the type when I tell you that they were about five foot three, obviously desk-bred, knees never braced ... pale...” they were nonetheless “keen and intelligent in all things unmilitary.” One preferred to read

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<sup>233</sup> *Wind-Up*.

<sup>234</sup> *The White Band* (No. 7 OCB).

<sup>235</sup> *The White Band* (No 7 OCB).

rather than go drinking with other soldiers, while the other collected antiques. The description of their physical appearance and interests show that the article refers to men of a lower-middle-class background. In the end, both become casualties of war: one was wounded and the other one killed. The tribute concludes with the admission that “[i]n spite of first impressions and peculiarities, there were many of us who admired them,” and with the statement that “they were gentlemen, and that is saying some.”<sup>236</sup> Such high praise for men who were obviously lower-middle-class is significant in the context of a publication read by many men of a similar background. It indicates the existence of a significant thread of pride in their identity and, as the author of an article entitled “My Platoon” claimed, a lack of a sense of shame.<sup>237</sup> This is the impression that is given in a feature in another journal, which harshly castigates any remnants of snobbishness in the OCB. Following the title, “Is it True?” one of the bullet points continues the question: “that a certain member of A Coy was heard to give thanks to the deity ‘because there was only one ranker in their Coy; all the rest were gentlemen’; and if it would not have been more in keeping with the spirit of the times if he had raised a humble prayer for their forgiveness instead?”<sup>238</sup> This is not merely a neutral assertion of the value of men of working- and lower-middle-class origins in the OCB; it is a battle cry. The fact that the author justifies his – and certainly others’ – opinion by calling on the spirit of the times does not diminish the power of his statement or its near-radical implications that working- and lower-middle-class men were just as capable of becoming officers as their “superiors.” Sentiments like these tend not to be published in a vacuum, so it is fair to speculate that lower-middle-class cadets read his words, agreed with them, and may even have expressed similar opinions – in speech or print. That means many, if not most, of the lower-middle-class men who were sent to an OCB felt they had every right to be there.

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<sup>236</sup> *The Connecting File*.

<sup>237</sup> *The Jab*

<sup>238</sup> *Wind-Up*.

The officer manuals examined in this chapter represented the official view of the British Army, and attempted to teach ranker-officers the proper way of behaving when they were given commissions. Although their practical advice met a genuine need, and “temporary gentlemen” did purchase them and read them, such publications took an upper-middle-class perspective and were sometimes judgmental and patronizing in the way they counseled their readers to avoid typical working-class and lower-middle-class habits. In contrast, the Officer Cadet Battalion journals were more mixed in their perspective and often presented a dual view: that of the establishment, which offered up an ideal for the cadets to strive for, and of the cadets themselves, who both embraced that ideal and demonstrated a great deal of confidence that they were well suited to fill the shoes of officers and gentlemen. Within their pages, OCB journals presented an idealized vision of the junior officer, celebrated the importance of tradition and clearly followed the pedagogical model of public schools and Oxbridge colleges. They othered various non-hegemonic masculinities such as Germans, the Irish, and conscientious objectors, but also criticized the brass hats. Moreover, they celebrated the transformation of cadets into officers, demonstrated the strong desire on the part of officer cadets to become good officers, and challenged the snobbery of the view that rankers were not good gentleman material by insisting on such men’s worth. Overall, the sources examined in this chapter show that lower-middle-class officer cadets wished to emulate the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity promulgated in the officer manuals and taught at the OCBs and that they considered themselves worthy and fitting candidates for the officer class.

## Chapter 2

### Wartime letters of *lower* lower-middle-class temporary officers

This chapter examines representations of masculinity and identity in the wartime letters home of four men I consider to be *lower* lower-middle-class, and who began the war in the ranks and were subsequently sent for training to an Officer Cadet Battalion and commissioned. (For details of how the lower-middle-class men examined here were selected, please see the “Methodology – Selection Process” section on page xxv of the Introduction.) The reason I look specifically at *lower* lower-middle-class men – and, in the next chapter, specifically at *upper* lower-middle-class men – is to get a clearer picture of the characteristics of lower-middle-class masculinity by examining its gradations and the way its characteristics subtly shift as its access to privilege and stability increases. Economically, and in some cases culturally, the *lower* lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter were only a few steps removed from the working class, although their chosen cultural allegiance was firmly to the middle class. This precarious position might have rendered them insecure and servile; certainly the middle-class press at the time painted the lower middle class as desperate and pathetic class climbers. However, their writings reveal they had a secure sense of self and their determination to advance in life was underpinned by a solid confidence in their own worth. This glimpse into the lower echelons of the lower middle class shows that, as a class, it had a solid base that was distinct from the class below it and confident in its own potential.

Leslie Emmerson, from Leeds, was twenty-seven years old when the war broke out; Frank Markham, from Stony Stratford in Buckinghamshire, was seventeen years old in 1914 and did not attempt to join the war effort until 1915; William Orchard, from London’s borough of Islington, was twenty-two years old in 1914; and John Lawton, from Chesterton in Staffordshire, was seventeen years old when the war began. Leslie Emmerson served with the 1/6th Battalion Norfolk Regiment in the United Kingdom in October 1915 before being commissioned in November 1915 and spending two months at the Cambridge University School of Instruction for Officers, followed by further

(unspecified) training in the United Kingdom until October 1917. He saw active service with the 31st Divisional Signal Company RE on the Western Front from November 1917 to September 1918. His file in the Imperial War Museum (IWM) contains 34 manuscript letters written to his parents, spanning his war experience.<sup>239</sup> Frank Markham served in the ranks of the RASC with the Graves Registration Commission from October 1915 to March 1917, then was hospitalized with trench fever and remained in a convalescent hospital from December 1917 until January 1918. He trained with an OCB from May to September 1918. From May to June 1919, he served with the Oxfordshire Light Infantry in Ireland and Constantinople, followed by service as a subaltern with the 11th Rajputs at Kila Drosh, India, from February 1920 to February 1921, and with the 1st Battalion 94th Russell's Infantry in Mesopotamia from December 1920 to January 1921. His IWM file contains eight manuscript and typescript letters, both personal and official, written by himself and various official personages. It also includes a letter written to him by his mother. In addition, the file contains a handful of personal jottings in diary format, as well as his Application for an Admission to an Officer Cadet Unit.<sup>240</sup> William Orchard trained with the 1/12th Battalion London Regiment (3rd London Brigade, 1st London Division) from September to December 1914, then served on the Western Front with the 84th Brigade, 28th Division, until he was wounded during the Second Battle of Ypres. He served with the Machine Gun section of The Rangers and then with the 168th Machine Gun Company (56th Division) behind the lines from August 1915 to May 1916, with the Brigade on the Somme from July to August 1916, and at Laventie from August to November 1916. He joined the Machine Gun Corps and then the Tank Corps workshops as a tank fitter from November 1916 to September 1918. From October 1918 to January 1919, he underwent his officer training with an OCB. His IWM file contains 214 manuscript letters written to his family throughout the war.<sup>241</sup> John Lawton served with

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<sup>239</sup> IWM catalogue note for Lieut. L. Emmerson, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 9907.

<sup>240</sup> IWM catalogue note for Major Sir Frank Markham Kt DL, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 10512.

<sup>241</sup> IWM catalogue note for W. Orchard, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 6672.

the 1st (Home Service) Garrison Battalion East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), based at Dover, from December 1915 to December 1916, and then with the 5th (Reserve) Battalion Royal Fusiliers, also at Dover, from March to April 1916. He trained with an OCB at Magdalene College, Cambridge, from January to March 1917. Subsequently, he was posted briefly as a 2nd Lieutenant to Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment) at Hartlepool before seeing active service with the 24th Labour Company on the Western Front from July 1917 to November 1919. His IWM file contains approximately 250 manuscript letters to his family, spanning the length of his wartime service, as well as an edited (and slightly abridged) transcript of the letters (197 pp) privately published by his son in 2003.<sup>242</sup>

Using soldiers' letters to family members reveals these lower-middle-class men's personal relationships and domestic identities.<sup>243</sup> To date, no studies of the lower middle class have used letters as a source, focusing rather on autobiographies or, more commonly, public perceptions of the lower middle class as expressed in contemporary newspapers, magazines and books. This dissertation examines lower-middle-class soldiers' letters as a way of exploring personal feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. Although I include dates of the letters whenever possible, many of the letters are undated.

The decision to distinguish between *lower* lower-middle-class and *upper* lower-middle-class is a difficult and somewhat arbitrary one, especially since many of these men's class affiliations changed and shifted over the course of their lifetimes as they rose in prominence and accumulated wealth. I focus on the basic differences of professionalism and financial stability at the time the First World War broke out. In other words, those men who fall into the *upper* lower-middle-class category had stable professional jobs as clerks with organizations such as banks or architectural firms, and they demonstrated a long-term allegiance to the profession they exercised. They also had a guarantee of a job

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<sup>242</sup> IWM catalogue note for Lieut. J. Lawton, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 13471.

<sup>243</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13.

to come back to after the war, and were often being paid a partial salary by their employer for the duration of their time in the army. As such, their situation was more stable than that of the men I categorize as *lower* lower-middle-class, whose occupational and financial status was more precarious. The differences in education and cultural polish are often minor, although the families of the men falling into the *lower* lower-middle-class category tended to have more obvious working-class origins.

Leslie Emmerson's family owned a tobacco shop, and he was employed as a clerk according to the 1911 UK Census, living away from home as a boarder. His younger brother also worked as a clerk and the family had no live-in servants. Emmerson's letters express concern with the fate of the family business, and the language he uses, while correct, displays no upper-class affectations. He does not speak French and addresses his parents in his letters as "Dear Dad and Ma."<sup>244</sup>

Frank Markham came from a large family headed by a man employed as an assurance agent at what his son affectionately referred to as "the Pru." Although the 1911 UK Census shows his older brother was employed as a carpenter and wheelwright, Frank had higher aspirations: he spoke fluent French and German, knew shorthand, and volunteered to join the British Army *as a clerk*, not a simple infantryman, getting an MP of his acquaintance to write reference letters to help him secure a job with the Graves Registration Commission. Although the language he uses in his letters is educated, careful, and almost pedantic, the respectability he strives to establish seems to have been a deliberate effort: a sole surviving letter written by his mother shows she was far from educated. The entire letter consists of one long run-on sentence, scrawled in a shaky hand, with colloquialisms throughout. The family, although large – the Census shows seven children at home – had no live-in servants.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 9907.

<sup>245</sup> Major Sir Frank Markham Kt DL, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 10512.

William Orchard's family owned a laundry business in London; his father was described as a "laundry proprietor," and the 1911 UK Census lists William employed as a launderer. By the time war broke out, Orchard was working as a manager for a different laundry business. The family, which had three children, considered education important, and even briefly thought about sending the youngest daughter to boarding school, although eventually decided against it. They had no live-in servants. The language William Orchard uses in his letters is educated but not erudite, with the odd spelling mistake. Orchard was also an amateur artist who liked to draw and paint when circumstances permitted. A few of his sketches survive among his letters.<sup>246</sup>

John Lawton's family owned an ironmonger's business in a small village in Staffordshire, selling mostly to local farmers. His mother had been a clerk/telegraphist before her marriage, and his father taught himself to play the piano and speak French as an adult, which demonstrates his cultural aspirations. According to the 1911 UK Census, the family, which had three children, was well off enough to employ one domestic servant, a young girl. John spoke French and had worked as a student teacher before the war. However, his family's cultural aspirations did not extend to knowing how to correctly pronounce "Magdalene College" – something which John explains to them in one of his letters.<sup>247</sup>

## How the *lower* lower-middle-class men of this chapter fit into the larger argument of the dissertation

Based on the letters they wrote, the lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter were comfortable with who they were and confident in carving out their own path. Although they did try to emulate the officer and gentleman model of masculinity, at least up to a point, they were confident in the qualities they themselves already had. Public opinion may have seen them as upstarts – scholars of masculinity would have classified

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<sup>246</sup> W. Orchard, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents.6672.

<sup>247</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents.13471.

them as a subordinate group, at best complicit with the hegemonic project<sup>248</sup> – but they did not see themselves as lacking or unworthy. Family closeness was a source of great strength and joy for them, while romantic love – some got married during the war – was seen as a close partnership, with the wife’s emotional and financial contribution a key component of the relationship. In keeping with what was typical for the lower middle class, they followed the companionate marriage model. Yet, in contrast to the negative popular view of their class at the time, they did not see themselves as “emasculated Pooters.”<sup>249</sup> They were proud of their skills as clerks and lowly managers, and wished to put them to good use and to prove their abilities. Nor did they seem to have concerns about any perceived lack of masculine prowess owing to their status as men “between two stools,”<sup>250</sup> lacking the authority of the upper-middle-class and the physicality of the working-class male. Their skill at straddling the class divide through reading others and mimicking their “betters” meant it was natural for them to try to emulate the model of masculinity presented to them at the Officer Cadet Battalions.<sup>251</sup> And yet this willing emulation did not come from a place of insecurity or self-doubt; on the contrary, it came from a place of strength, pride, and certainty of their own self-worth.

## A closer look at the *lower* lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter

The specifics of how these men represented themselves in their letters allows me to examine issues of class and identity by looking at the following themes: attitudes toward family and the role family relationships played in these men’s lives, advancement as a

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<sup>248</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>249</sup> James A. Hammerton, “The English Weakness? Gender, Satire and ‘Moral Manliness’ in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 164-182.

<sup>250</sup> John Tosh, “What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994): 194.

<sup>251</sup> Peter Bailey, “White Collars, Gray Lives? The Lower Middle Class Revisited,” *Journal of British Studies*, 38:3, *Masculinity and the Lower Middle Class* (July 1999): 273-290.

key motivator for these men's actions, attitudes toward money, the role artistic pursuits played in these men's daily lives, their attitudes toward other classes, their endurance and stoicism, their attitudes toward war and peace, and responsibility.

### Attitudes toward family

One of the characteristics that typified these men was close family connections. Their letters demonstrate the close-knit bonds of their nuclear families, with an affection and caring that bridged the distances imposed by wartime conditions and helped to alleviate the stresses and loneliness of life in the army. The letters they wrote show them focusing on family-centric and "off-duty" aspects of their identity as opposed to warlike and martial aspects, confirming Jessica Meyer's argument that soldiers in the First World War enacted a "domestic" identity in letters home from the front.<sup>252</sup> Their letters also demonstrate evidence of the primacy of the companionate marriage model, both in the relationships between their parents and in the romantic relationship of William Orchard, who married his fiancée during the war. James Hammerton has dealt with the ways in which domestic partnership formed a key part of the identity constructed by lower-middle-class men, and his observations are borne out by the evidence in the letters examined in this chapter.<sup>253</sup>

Leslie Emmerson's letters contain a repeating motif of concern for his younger brother, Bert, who was himself in the army. In November 1915 Leslie reports he sent Bert "some cigarettes and some cough mixture" for his cold. In January 1916 he asks his parents whether they had received the photographs of Bert, taken on leave, which he had ordered to be sent to them. In May 1916 he reassures his parents that Bert "was looking decidedly better for his week's holiday" when he last saw him, and adds that he had written to Bert "just so he will have a letter soon after he gets back." His concern and affection is not

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<sup>252</sup> Meyer.

<sup>253</sup> James Hammerton, "Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920," *Journal of British Studies* 38:3, *Masculinity and the Lower Middle Class* (July 1999): 291-321.

limited to his brother: he asks about his grandfather in December 1915 and expresses a wish to see him again. What is more, he encloses a poem clipped out of a newspaper (now lost), explaining that “I am sending it to Ma because I think it is very good and I feel that way just now.” His family connection was not limited to practicalities but also extended to sharing thoughts and feelings, specifically with his mother.<sup>254</sup> Emmerson’s letters reflect Michael Roper’s assertion of the importance of the maternal bond in soldiers’ letters home from the front.<sup>255</sup>

Frank Markham was explicit about his love for his parents, especially his mother. After complaining of being jilted by a female love interest, he states, “there is one person and a splendid lovely type of the ideal that I really do love and always shall love. That is Mother.” He adds that after a year away from home he has lost some of his cynicism and is “just beginning to appreciate the loving kindness of my Father and Mother and all they have done for me.” He claims that, whatever he is doing, he is always thinking of his family home, and recollects an incident from his early adolescence when he refused to kiss his mother good night, stating with remorse that “I can now see the cruel stab it may have given to my dear Mother’s heart.” His file also contains a letter written to him by his mother that demonstrates her worry over his fate. In a rambling style, she chastises him about his eagerness to be transferred to more active duty, assuring him that he is not a coward: “well, lad I do know that is utterly impossible, why, well you have not that sort of blood in you ... don’t think I want to preach to you that this is only what I feel.” Markham’s letters are not all serious and sentimental; some are lighthearted and full of humour. But even the latter contain evidence of his closeness with his parents: from inside jokes and intellectual discoveries he shares with his father, through teasing jabs directed at his brother, to complaints that he is not receiving enough letters from his

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<sup>254</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

<sup>255</sup> Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

parents – “your letters are as scarce as winter blooms” – his relationship with his nuclear family was vibrant and loving.<sup>256</sup>

William Orchard’s letters also demonstrate not just a love for his family, but an active relationship with his family members that helped sustain him through the war years. His concern for his parents is evident, as is the fact that the family enjoyed each other’s company: William teases his father about his habit of “leg pulling” but admits to being addicted to the same habit himself. He signs birthday wishes to his father with “your affectionate son, Shrimp.” He relays news of his siblings to his parents, and commiserates with them about missing his little sister, Mary, whom the family call “Toby”. Orchard’s relationship with Toby is touching: his file contains numerous letters he sent her, obviously addressing a child – she was nine years old when the war broke out – in which he states things like, “You must write and tell me about your new school and your teachers, do you still write fairy tales.” On March 31, 1918, William jokes that he must start calling her Mary now, since she is growing up and “in such an exalted position as the head of her school, what!” The letters to Toby contain humorous sketches of sights he came across in his daily life: funny faces of his fellow soldiers and drawings of lorries and barracks where he was billeted – all designed to pique the interest of a little sister whom he obviously loved.

William Orchard’s relationship with his fiancée, Eva, was just as important to him during the war. He married Eva before the war ended, which caused friction in his family relationships as his parents adjusted to his shifting priorities and loyalties. It was a love match, and the couple considered each other to be both spouse and best friend – as was the accepted ideal among lower-middle-class couples at the time. According to James Hammerton, the lower middle class pioneered modern companionate marriage, which entailed greater romantic expectations and placed the focus of the couple’s attention on each other. By the same token, lower-middle-class men in the late Victorian and Edwardian era constructed an identity based on domestic partnership as an alternative to

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<sup>256</sup> Major Sir Frank Markham, papers.

the hegemonic upper-middle-class ideal of public authority and in contrast to the ideal of working-class male independence and physical domination.<sup>257</sup> All this is clear in Orchard's attitude to his new wife, whom he adores and idolizes – "I KNEW! my feelings for Eva before I saw her, and her power for good over me was positively astonishing" – and in his anticipation of a satisfying domestic life after the war – he includes a sketch of "A Bungalow" in a letter to his father, describing it as the type of cheaply built home "chaps in my position want." Orchard focuses on his new wife to the exclusion of other people: "I don't want any pals now, somehow, the spirit of Eva is sufficient for me." He also prioritized her in allocating his precious leave in Blighty even though this caused his parents heartache when he chose to visit Eva's family home instead of his own. The obvious upside of close nuclear family relationships was that they helped sustain the men emotionally in the midst of adverse circumstances. The downside was the friction that resulted when young men created nuclear families of their own and attempted to shift their allegiances to their wives. Orchard's file contains a number of letters filled with an anguished attempt to reconcile the fact that he misses his childhood home with the belief that "it doesn't do for a couple in our position to be too much in the home nest." In the end, he chose Eva, but was left with some resentment against his parents who did not make that choice easy.<sup>258</sup>

John Lawton was shy around girls and did not marry until after the war, but his letters contain numerous examples of his loving relationship with his family of origin. He cheered his father's fulfilled ambition of becoming Church Warden and worried about his mother's health and emotional wellbeing. He anxiously followed the news of Zeppelin raids near his home village, reassuring his parents as best he could. He solicited his parents' advice on whether or not he should volunteer for a spell at the front, taking their views to heart although not always being bound by them. He gently teased his little sister, telling her that "it is a good thing for you to have a friend older and wiser than yourself

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<sup>257</sup> Hammerton, "Pooterism or Partnership," 291-321.

<sup>258</sup> W. Orchard, papers.

and of course quieter.” He joked with his younger brother Raymond, whom he sometimes called “Raybold,” and looked out for him, both by sending money and by giving advice. In a letter posted on February 9, 1917, he worries about Raymond when the latter joins the army, and shares his opinions with his parents: “It absolutely hurts me physically to think that he may have to go through what I have gone through.” On Raymond’s 19th birthday, John wrote to him that “the morning I said good-bye to you ... [y]ou made me cry although you did not know it” and states that “I should dearly love to be back by your side at home to help you and advise you.” John Lawton wrote many letters home during his wartime service and his friends teased him about it: “[t]he fellows ... are very surprised indeed to see me write home so often” and “tell me that I am a bit of a mystery to them because I never write any letters to anywhere but home and never receive any only from home.” His family was a key source of emotional support during his wartime service.<sup>259</sup> In fact, all the men studied in his chapter were typified by close bonds with their immediate families, to whom they looked not only for practical help, such as socks and food parcels, but also for moral, spiritual, and emotional sustenance.

### Advancement as a key motivator

Another characteristic that was typical of the *lower* lower-middle-class men studied in this project was that the achievement of career advancement and success was one of the key motivations for their actions. They viewed the First World War as an unfortunate occurrence that required them to do their duty, which in itself was a grind because it placed them in danger, subjected them to unpleasant conditions, and took them away from their families. But at the same time they saw the war as a series of opportunities they otherwise would not have gotten, and upon which they wanted to capitalize to the best of their ability. Being recommended for a temporary commission and sent to an Officer Cadet Battalion was for many the greatest opportunity the war would afford them; they viewed it with excitement and some trepidation over whether they would manage to pass the required exams, but above all with a determination to do the job well.

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<sup>259</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

Their excitement over becoming officers and gentlemen was often spurred by the perception – theirs and their families – that they were temporarily being accepted into the upper middle class. For the most part, they enjoyed this opportunity to the fullest and reveled in its perks while sometimes speculating on whether it would translate into any permanent gains in their post-war lives. But their attitude to the process was far from servile: they were determined to live up to the standards set for them and proud when they did so, and they genuinely enjoyed the process they were engaged in – studying for exams, learning to be good leaders, and taking care of the men under their care once gazetted – rather than viewing it simply as a means to a class-climbing end, as portrayals of the lower middle class in the popular press would have it.<sup>260</sup> In short, they saw themselves as good potential officers, and were pleased that wartime conditions gave them an opportunity they could build on.

Leslie Emmerson enjoyed his time at the OCB at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He writes to his parents: “I shall ... be sorry to leave here. I love this life – it is what I have always longed for – and it will be with feelings of regret that I leave it behind.” He characterizes his time at the OCB as “quite a good time ... notwithstanding the hard work” and reports that he was glad the course was keeping him busy since there was little to do in Cambridge: although the colleges were beautiful, he feels that “the town itself is quite ordinary.” Emerson was not a young man who was overawed by his proximity to what an Oxbridge education represented. He was, however, working hard and proud of his results: he reports to his parents that, with regard to examinations in Drill and “Moving a Squad about on the Parade ground,” he had “managed to ‘satisfy the examiners’.” His brother, Bert, was also attempting to make his way up the army ladder, and Leslie tries to reassure his parents about how long the process was taking: “His Commission certainly seems to be taking a long time but perhaps it is hung up somewhere. All in good time.” It seems the entire family was invested in both brothers’ advancement. Leslie himself was given more responsibility once he was sent to France,

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<sup>260</sup> George Grossmith and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, ed. Peter Morton (Buffalo, NY: Broadview Editions, 2009).

which he willingly took on despite the increased workload and harder living conditions. His command of a Brigade section was at first temporary, but he confides his ambitions to his parents: “I hope to get a Brigade Section permanently one of these days.”<sup>261</sup>

Frank Markham also saw the war as an opportunity from which he was determined to profit: he got former MP Walter Carlile to recommend him for the position of clerk with the Graves Registration Commission – a position for which he beat out three other applicants on the strength of Mr. Carlile’s recommendation. From the outset his ambition was to avoid service as a foot soldier and instead to “offer [him]self for service in France, as a clerk.” He enjoyed his work with the Commission greatly, stating that he “enthused over it” and had “carefully nurtured all the records from when we started with merely 14 German graves,” and admitting to being “downhearted” when the registers and books were transferred to London, away from his care. He refers to his work as “difficult and interesting,” and values it because it kept his language skills sharp. He tells his parents he was thinking of focusing on languages since he had “got on simply astoundingly with French,” becoming the French expert among sixteen clerks, “ahead of everybody else in the office.” His post-war prospects were not far from his mind. However, he genuinely reveled in the work itself, not just in the advantages it might afford him: one of his letters contains a typewritten page about the intricacies of Belgian law, on which he was “rather keen” and which he thought “so curious.” He apologizes for boring his parents with it, but justifies his rambling because his parents “can see just how I’m developing intellectually,” adding that he could not help sharing his intellectual excitement with his family. Markham was keen to take every opportunity to develop his skills while contributing to the war effort, all the while keeping in mind how his skills would be useful to him after the war ended. He was also keen to remain in France: after the Commission’s records were moved to England, Markham applied for a temporary commission in the infantry, offering to “furnish the names of several gentlemen of position in England” who would be able to testify with regard to his “moral character and

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<sup>261</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

ability” as a way of bolstering his application. It seems he was ready to explore another route to advancement and service.<sup>262</sup>

William Orchard also took advantage of wartime opportunities while they were offered, despite the fact that a note left in his file – presumably from someone who knew him during his lifetime – describes him as “unambitious.” He chose to apply for a commission and asks his father to “get the necessary signatures as soon as possible” so his application could move forward. When his initial effort got mired in bureaucratic red tape, he applied again in an attempt to get “the Commission stunt,” although he sheepishly admits to his parents that he could not “put anybody great in my papers as being able to vouch for me.” Since officers enjoyed better living conditions both at the front and in England, the benefits of applying for a commission were obvious even for men who were not filled with a zeal to make their way up through the ranks. By the time Orchard was sent to an OCB, the war was drawing to a close, but he was happy enough to bide his time in cadet school until demobilization since “it is very comfortable... the food is splendid, we are waited on by WAACs and everything is served up very nicely.” What is more, he writes: “we are in every way treated as officers.” In William Orchard’s own words: “I’m not ambitious, in the Army; but if a chance comes my way I shall take it.” By 1918, Orchard was so focused on looking forward to a future with his new wife and getting back to civilian life that he viewed his wartime service as an intermission.

John Lawton was more ambitious. He saw his time in the army as a chance to learn, and he seized on every opportunity. As a serious and earnest young man, he was able to take the long view and patiently do his duty while always keeping his future in mind. From the beginning he was keen to advance and reports home on his prospects: “[l]ife is worth living down here, now I have been transferred to the Company where... I stand a good chance of promotion.” On June 22, 1916, he writes that he is dissatisfied with being stuck in a Home Service Regiment in Dover and wishing he could go “across the ‘herring-pond’,” an opinion that he explains to his parents in a letter. Part of his reasoning is

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<sup>262</sup> Major Sir Frank Markham, papers.

shame when he contrasts himself with his peers who had fought in France, but part is pragmatic: he wonders about “the position a spell at the front will afford me in my career when I come back.” His letters reflect his awareness of his personal development – “every day I feel greater confidence in myself” – and his willingness to increase his chances of getting on in the world – “I am going in for another class of instruction ... quite voluntary on my part” which “will need a little extra time put in but it will do me a world of good.” His growing self-awareness, however, made him question the desirability of associating himself with the army in peacetime, as his father advised. In a bitter letter, he explains to his parents that “[i]n the army individuality is a thing unknown,” and even a man who rises high never amounts to more than “a cog-wheel in the military machine.” He adds that the situation is different in a time of war, when “a chap must put up with all this,” but in peacetime he would advise men to “keep as far away from the Regular Army as possible.” The source of his bitterness becomes clear when he confides in his parents that the reason his promotion has been slow is that he is “not at all ambitious to get on in the army” because he is unwilling to treat the men under him “as mere tools or dogs.” His condemnation of the army, whose discipline he labels as “very babyish indeed,” veers into a direct criticism of the army as a perceived locus of tough masculinity or, as David Morgan has described, of the warrior as a key symbol of masculinity.<sup>263</sup> It is a sign that Lawton was not simply interested in advancement for its own sake, even if it meant the subjugation of his individual instincts and opinions to the hegemonic military machine, but rather had enough backbone to want to succeed on his own terms. In his railing against an army where “one is embittered and soured by the appalling ignorance of ... the majority of those placed in authority over one,” Lawton indirectly criticizes the way hegemonic masculinity functions in the army, through the control of men by other men.<sup>264</sup> When he is finally made Sergeant, Lawton enjoys the change: “[t]he

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<sup>263</sup> David H.J. Morgan, “Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities,” in *Theorizing Masculinities*, eds. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, 165-182 (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994).

<sup>264</sup> The concept of hegemonic masculinity, developed by R.W. Connell, is the culturally contingent idealized form of masculine character which most men perceive as the “right” way of being a man and to which most men aspire. Building on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, hegemonic

responsibility and authority is quite pleasing after having been at everyone's beck and call for so long. Now in my house I am a sort of Solomon. Any little dispute is settled by me. ... I am a sort of little king." His disapproval of the way the army treated its foot soldiers lessened when he found himself in a position where he could exercise more control. So did his negative impression of the relationship between the army and manliness: he writes to his parents that the war is "changing us from schoolboys to men."

When he was recommended for a Commission, Lawton jumped at the chance for advancement and asked his parents for assistance in getting his paperwork together and obtaining good recommendations. And when he is told he has been accepted and would be going to Cambridge to take his cadet course, he gushes to his parents: "I am lucky aren't I?" and signed his letter "your loving and elated son." Once at Cambridge in January 1917, he was impressed by the traditions of Magdalene College, writing accounts of student dinners by candlelight where grace was said in Latin, and sending his parents a detailed summary of a lecture he attended on the college's history. Yet, although he is slightly dazzled by the way the OCB held out promise of upper-middle-class polish – "[w]e are treated as officers all the way through and are to behave ourselves generally as 'cadets and gentlemen'" – he is not completely bowled over by the experience, criticizing Magdalene College as "not being by any means a thing of beauty" and therefore not represented on many post cards. Lawton leaves the impression of a man trying to strike a balance between an eagerness to join the officer-gentleman hegemonic masculinity model and his certainty in his own skills. Although he asked his parents to frame his Commission, of which he was clearly proud, and requested that they send him green blinds at his first posting in an effort to fit in since "all the other officers have green blinds and I'd like it to match," he wonders if having a servant is "perhaps ... not always good for one" and is convinced that ranker officers are superior to ones who have not risen through the ranks since "an officer who has risen from the ranks is looked upon

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masculinity is an imposed masculine standard that is seen as the accepted cultural norm, natural and inevitable rather than artificially constructed. Although, in any given society, only a handful of men embody the ideal perfectly, it nonetheless benefits most men to uphold the ideal and aspire to it. See: Connell, *Masculinities*; Mike Donaldson, "What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?" *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993): 643-57.

with pride by the men of the regiment.” By the end of the war, Lawton could state with gratification that he was a popular officer among his men because “it doesn’t matter what rank a man is ... I can sympathize with him as I have held his rank myself.”

As the war drew to a close, Lawton attempted to parlay the experience and status he had acquired as a temporary officer into a better civilian position than the one he had held before the war. In a November 23, 1918 letter, he tells his father he does not want to go back to teaching, stating that “I’d rather go window-cleaning.” He considers applying to the government for “a job on state railways, after the war, in the Colonies or something like that.” Then he changes his mind about quick demobilization and tells his father that, “if my slip comes through ... I shall refuse to go home.” He decides to stay on in the army for the time being, earning a paycheque, because “the Government spoilt my professional career and they must make it good.” For a while he has hopes of getting a Captaincy owing to his improved skills – “[t]his Demob has been a great training for me in business and organization and interim economy routine” – but his hopes never come to fruition. He flirts with the idea of becoming a chartered accountant, but changes his mind again because he realizes he “should never be able to rise any higher than I would if I stuck to teaching.” Clearly, being able to rise in his profession and make something of himself was important to him. As a temporary gentleman who was about to lose the elevated status he had held while hostilities lasted, Lawton shared the fate of many temporary officers who found themselves demobilized only to face dispiriting employment prospects.<sup>265</sup> When he was finally demobilized, John Lawton went to university and became a teacher.<sup>266</sup>

## Money and artistic pursuits

The men studied in this chapter had two more characteristics in common that could at first glance be considered contradictory: they had a keen grasp on the financial realities of

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<sup>265</sup> Martin Petter, “‘Temporary Gentlemen’ in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,” *The Historical Journal* 37:1 (March 1994): 127-152.

<sup>266</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

life and were concerned with money, and at the same time they had a sensitive or artistic side that made them value certain things above financial matters. The concern with money – the cost of goods and whether one could afford to purchase them – was natural for members of the lower middle class who tended to struggle to keep up appearances and maintain a standard of respectability on a limited income.<sup>267</sup> Accordingly, it is not surprising that the letters of these men contain mentions of the expenses they incurred and the remuneration they received while in the army, especially during their transition to becoming officers, which entailed both extra pay as well as extra expenses and heightened expectations for keeping up appearances. The letters also contain references to these men's ongoing worries about their families' financial situation at home. It is apparent money was a subject that was frequently discussed at home, and these men's financial decisions were of interest to their parents.

Leslie Emmerson wrote home with concerns that “the new taxes must have affected business very much,” but reassured his parents that “perhaps it will recover in time.” While in Belgium, he could not help judging the local village shop with the critical eye of a shopkeeper's son: “They have hardly anything to sell and I've never seen a customer in yet. I don't know how these people manage to make a living.”<sup>268</sup> For his part, William Orchard explained to his parents that he could not afford to see his sister too often, saying that “every time I see her means money, and ‘I ain't got none.’” After purchasing a couple of shirts, he writes to his mother that he had got them at Selfridges, and adds that “they were 3/6 each and were about as cheap as any I have seen, they all seem to be about 5/6.” Getting a good deal on clothing would have been of interest to a lower-middle-class mother who would have been used to shopping the sales to make the family's income stretch further.<sup>269</sup> In that spirit, when Orchard purchased a pair of kid gloves, he felt it

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<sup>267</sup> Christopher P. Hosgood, “Mrs. Pooter's Purchase: Lower-Middle-Class Consumerism and the Sales, 1870-1914,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 146-163.

<sup>268</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

<sup>269</sup> Hosgood, “Mrs. Pooter's Purchase.”

necessary to explain to his mother that “they are very nice and very useful, being one of the things which is “expected” of a Cadet.” Whenever he obtained a raise in pay, Orchard shared the news with his family: “I have been granted 2<sup>nd</sup> Class mechanist pay, which will entitle me to 3/9 per day.” He also inquires about the family business and rejoices with his family when their laundry business is booming: “I am so glad the old ‘bus’ is going so well, it is doing remarkably well.” As a responsible young man, he saved his money whenever he could, proudly reporting to his parents: “...altogether, I am about £50 in credit, not so bad eh?” When the war ended, his responsible nature would not let him waste £5 on a Christmas visit home with his wife because his financial prospects were uncertain. As he explains to his mother: “I feel I must pull up!! and seriously consider common sense ... it’s horrible having to let such a question be settled by money, but it must be.”<sup>270</sup>

John Lawton’s attitude toward money was even more measured and careful. He mentions the subject in letters home several times, with regard to both spending and saving. When he arrives at Magdalene College for his OCB training, his letter to “Dear Mother and Dad” contains detailed calculations of what a cadet uniform costs and whether it is worth ordering a better quality uniform right away which could then serve as an officer’s uniform once he receives his commission. He explains that the cadet uniform “costs £3..6s..0 for tunic and £1..17..6 for breeches totaling £5..2..6” and argues that it is “no good being ‘penny wise and pound foolish’ in scrimping in the short term, but believes that some cadets paying over and above the £50 allowance granted to them by the army amounts to “extravagance.” He later complains that being an officer cadet is expensive: “[t]he Company Officers seem to think that we are possessed of a mint of money,” and he apologizes for writing home for money, explaining that he thinks it is “rather absurd of the authorities really to expect a cadet to keep up appearances on a private’s pay.” We can speculate that the problem of keeping up appearances on a limited income was a familiar one to his parents. The sociability required of cadets was also expensive. One of

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<sup>270</sup> W. Orchard, papers.

Lawton's letters recounts in painful detail a Saturday afternoon during which some of his friends compelled him to participate in billiards, a restaurant outing and "the Kinema," and wanted him to have drinks as well, which he refused, feeling "mortified." He told his parents: "[i]t almost broke my heart to spend all that money." Lawton's careful money management led him to ask his father to put his money in the War Loan so he would be in a better position to repay his parents once the war came to an end. In the process, he asks his father: "How much money have I in the Savings bank and how long ago is it since the books ... went up to London to have the 2½% tacked on?" Towards the end of the war, when subalterns' pay went up, Lawton sent detailed calculations home with an excited projection: "Isn't it fine? ... I can see myself buying £500 worth of War Bonds before I've finished." He was not far off; a letter dated February 1919 he proudly tallies up his wartime savings at £493-5-0, with the assessment "I'm hot stuff!" tempered with the hope that his parents do not think him "mercenary or a miser" since he would give them the money at a moment's notice if they asked.<sup>271</sup>

Although these men were well aware of the value of money, they were not obsessed with it. Rather, their inner lives left plenty of room for sensitivity and artistic sensibility, which they shared with their families. Although the dismissive view of the lower middle class in the mainstream press maintained that any artistic pretensions on their part were motivated solely by the desire to keep up appearances – such as Charles Pooter's cottage piano purchased "on the three years' system"<sup>272</sup> – it is clear from these men's letters that this was not the case. They read poetry, listened to music, and sketched because their inner lives demanded it and because it made their wartime experiences more bearable. Leslie Emmerson sent his mother a poem he had read in a newspaper because he could

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<sup>271</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

<sup>272</sup> Grossmith and Grossmith, 55. According to Rita Felski, George Orwell wrote that lower-middle-class status anxiety was manifested by "a craven respect for high culture accompanied by almost complete ignorance of its content." Rita Felski, "Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class," *PMLA*, 115:1, Special Topic: Rereading Class (Jan. 2000): 35-6. Also according to Felski, Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes the gap "between the petite bourgeoisie's respect for high art and its ignorance of the prevailing styles and codes of interpretation." Felski, 41.

relate to the feelings expressed in it, saying: “I feel that way just now.” In another letter to his parents he praised the band playing outside the mess, once again in an attempt to share his experience: “It is a glorious band. I wish you could hear it.”<sup>273</sup> Frank Markham participated in an Amateur Dramatic Society while in a convalescent hospital, where he acted in a play and received rave reviews for his performance.<sup>274</sup> William Orchard was a good amateur artist and singer. With a voice that was praised by his peers, Orchard sang a number of solos in several choral performances organized over the course of his wartime service. He also kept up his drawing, and often asked his parents to send art supplies, although he found painting a bit challenging a hobby to keep up in wartime conditions: “I’m afraid it would be difficult to get canvass, and it’s too cold at present for painting, but I could do with a small sketch book, about 6” x 8”.” He spent time sketching whenever he could carve out free time from his duties; his letters occasionally include accomplished drawings.<sup>275</sup> John Lawton, despite his pragmatic and frugal side, enjoyed music and hankered after a “good cabinet-gramophone” that would help him forget his “troubles and trials for an hour or so during these times of stress.” Music moved him and, reflecting his strong faith, music on a religious theme affected him even more. In a letter home he writes: “. . . my eyes are full of tears. The boys in a tent a few yards away are singing some of the beautiful old hymns I love so much.” He also sang in a choir while in the army, although he feared his parents would think his performing was “a huge joke.” He explains that the men thought he had “a beautiful baritone voice,” and adds that he had told them he had been “1st baritone in Chester Cathedral for many years.”<sup>276</sup> Their letters make it apparent that these lower-middle-class men were as convinced of the validity of their emotional experience as expressed through artistic pursuits as their upper-middle-class counterparts. And after all, why shouldn’t they be? The dismissal by

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<sup>273</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

<sup>274</sup> Major Sir Frank Markham, papers.

<sup>275</sup> W. Orchard, papers.

<sup>276</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

journalists of lower-middle-class aspirations to “reinforce their middle-class audience’s sense of superiority over a class they despised” was a hostile outsider’s view that did not reflect what members of that derided class actually thought or felt.<sup>277</sup>

## Attitudes toward other classes

Yet another characteristic these men shared was a measure of snobbery against classes other than their own – usually the working class. As lower-middle-class men, they were keen to distinguish themselves from individuals or groups they saw as rougher, less educated and less sophisticated than themselves, and to assert their own unshakeable respectability – a reaction typical of their class.<sup>278</sup> Sometimes this attitude was directed at foreign Others – usually civilians they encountered in occupied countries.<sup>279</sup> However, these men were also confident enough to allow themselves the pleasure of jokingly adopting personae of other classes – both working class and upper class – or using language that was readily identifiable as not of their own class to amuse themselves and the recipients of their letters. This level of comfort with assuming other class personae is indicative of their ability to blend in with other social groups, and may have been a feature of lower-middle-class life. According to Hammerton, lower-middle-class men

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<sup>277</sup> Christopher P. Hosgood, “Mrs. Pooter’s Purchase,” 148. Geoffrey Mortimer criticized the lower-middle-class suburbans as follows: “The denizens of Villadom tell you that they have their livings to earn, dinners to cook, and houses to control; therefore there is no time for cultivating their intellects, and developing their sense of the beautiful in nature and art. No time! It is the old plea of the men and women who squander hours in tittle-tattle and loafing.” Geoffrey Mortimer, *The Blight of Respectability: An Anatomy of the Disease and a Theory of Curative Treatment* (Watford: The University Press, 1897), 88-92. In *The Diary of a Nobody*, one such villa owner showed off the paintings on his wall by saying that “he was no judge of pictures himself but had been informed on good authority that they were worth some hundreds of pounds, although he had only paid a few shillings apiece for them, frames included, at a sale in the neighbourhood.” Grossmith and Grossmith, 160.

<sup>278</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>279</sup> According to R.W. Connell, relations of power which exist among masculinities (hegemony, subordination, complicity, marginalization) govern the way that men behave. The process of othering is inherent in the experience of being a man since the concept of masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity, and the contestable nature of hegemonic (or dominant) masculinity means that individuals who aspire to being identified with it are always metaphorically looking over their shoulder. Connell, *Masculinities*.

were used to “straddl[ing] multiple class identities,”<sup>280</sup> while Peter Bailey has called them “a class of mimics and dissemblers . . . well schooled in reading others.”<sup>281</sup>

Whatever form that mimicry may have taken in other class-climbing contexts, in their letters home it manifested simply as a means of communicating something about their surroundings while providing some amusement to their families. After all, the people at home knew who these men were and so the goal was not to “fool” them. Rather, the contrast between how they usually spoke and the posh or rough language they temporarily adopted served as both comic relief and a critical commentary on the environments in which they found themselves.

Leslie Emmerson’s letter home dated October 1915 compares the disjunction between pre-war life and his current situation to “what ‘the other Army’” calls ‘being born again’!!!” His use of quotation marks and his inclusion of no less than three exclamation marks signal that this is a tongue-in-cheek comparison to the Salvation Army, which drew its membership almost exclusively from the ranks of the working class. His casual reference to a working-class organization in a way that implicitly Others it is a sign that he felt confident in his own social level and is a way to distance himself from the class below his own. Later, when he was stationed in France, he criticizes the local infrastructure and inhabitants: “[t]hese French villages are not very comfortable places and the few people remaining in them are of a very poor type.” He also calls the local houses “jerry built” and claims that they tended to fall apart less from artillery fire and more from premature wear and tear. His implicit contrast between the locals’ habits and his own family’s way of doing things showed himself as firmly rooted in a culture of respectability, solidity, and diligence.<sup>282</sup> William Orchard also affirmed his membership among the respectable in various ways. In a letter expressing his sadness over the death of an army friend, he says he admired him because “he was one of the very few chaps out

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<sup>280</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism or Partnership?” 316.

<sup>281</sup> Bailey, 289.

<sup>282</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

here who don't swear, or would have nothing to do with anything which he would be ashamed to tell his Mother." In a similar vein, Orchard commiserates with his father on the latter's experience of hearing rough language while travelling, explaining that "that sort of thing is a very frequent experience out here with Lorry drivers," whose language "is not to be found in the dictionary." And yet he feels confident enough in his own family's position to poke fun at class, calling an inspection by the Colonel "a horribly posh affair," and joking about his daily life by teasingly using language that typically falls outside his sphere, using words like "ain't" but carefully denoting them as imports by placing them in quotation marks. He uses army slang – "I'm doing A1 for grub now" – although he occasionally has to explain the meaning of it in subsequent letters. He also makes class-related jokes about accent and pronunciation, taking aim both above and below, such as when he praises a particular situation he is in by saying it is "fums up," and when he tells his parents that he hopes they will give him the "pleshah!" of attending his wedding.<sup>283</sup> According to K.C. Phillipps, speech was a class marker in England, with certain words and certain ways of pronouncing words being "a principal, precise, pragmatic, and subtle way of defining one's position, or of having it defined by others."<sup>284</sup> Upper-class usage and a "U" accent were notoriously difficult to acquire if one had not mixed in the proper circles as a child, making blending in as part of the traditional officer class challenging – a fact that all temporary gentlemen would have been constantly reminded of – so Orchard's use of such language would have been purely for comedic effect. We can speculate that his family sometimes joked in this way among themselves. Doing so would have established distance between the speaker and the class being imitated, thus reaffirming his confidence in belonging to his own class.<sup>285</sup> As for

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<sup>283</sup> W. Orchard, papers. Orchard's request was an awkward one since his parents were not enthusiastic about the prospect. It is possible that one intended purpose of using the class joke was to defuse familial tension.

<sup>284</sup> K.C. Phillipps, *Language and Class in Victorian England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1984), 3.

<sup>285</sup> Frank Markham's care to word his letters properly and to not use working-class speech, not even in jest, may be explained in part by the fact that, for his mother, writing with a working-class flavour was an everyday reality. Markham may not have felt comfortable making jokes about this matter.

John Lawton, he frequently used the odd word of army slang in his letters as a joke – the collection of letters edited by his son is entitled “In the Pink.” He also made a point of setting himself apart from both the working- and the upper classes, confidently affirming his membership in the class to which he belonged. Shortly after being made Sergeant, he wrote of being stationed in an “aristocratic neighbourhood” where his window allowed him to “see quite easily the progress of the five course luncheon” and “hear the breakfast and dinner gongs ringing.” He adds that his own room had no window coverings, and thus “we have nothing to screen us from the eyes of both the plebs and the patricians.” The contrast between himself and the aristocrats whose habits he observes is clear, as is the way he sets himself apart from both social groups that might be watching: those above and those below. Implicit in this declaration is his own confident self-positioning as somewhere in the middle, between the patricians and the plebs.<sup>286</sup>

## Endurance and stoicism

Yet another characteristic that defined these men’s masculinity was an attitude of stoicism in the face of difficult conditions and danger. It appears in their determination to remain cheerful and do their duty because the job had to get done and in a tendency to downplay their fears and gripes in letters home because they wanted to ease the burden on family members rather than add to it. According to Michael Roper, the gender scripts of middle-class Edwardian Britain dictated that young men provide emotional support to their mothers, which meant withholding certain information that might unduly worry them. Roper also argues that men of this generation were anxious to communicate to their mothers their ability to exhibit the soldierly qualities deemed appropriately manly.<sup>287</sup> This may have played a part in the stoic attitude of the men studied in this chapter, although their letters tended to be addressed to both parents. Another factor may have been that the masculinity these men had grown up viewing as the ideal was robust and

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<sup>286</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

<sup>287</sup> Michael Roper, “Maternal Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival in Letters Home During the First World War,” in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, eds. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 298, 302, 310.

hypermasculine, as demonstrated best by the stiff upper lip taught at public schools and in the world of boys' adventure stories.<sup>288</sup> Even though men of the lower middle class seem to have been less susceptible to the perceived "flight from domesticity" that characterized masculinity around the turn of the century, since they tended to focus their lives around their nuclear families rather than homosocial environments like public schools,<sup>289</sup> the ability to keep their negative emotions in check was seen by the temporary officers studied here as a necessary component of being the right kind of man.

Leslie Emmerson repeatedly attempted to cheer his family up by setting a good example, writing: "Everybody is extremely cheerful out here under all sorts of conditions so there's surely no need for people at home to be downhearted" and "there's nothing to be done but "carry on" which we are doing quite cheerfully." His appeals for cheerfulness are occasionally coloured with reminders of why carrying on might have been difficult – "[t]here are many homes which have become bereaved during the last week or two" – and at times one gets the sense that his refusal to dwell on the negative was a little like whistling past the graveyard: "I sincerely hope ... that the luck we have had up to now will continue." Nevertheless, he steadfastly steers his readers towards looking for the silver lining: "we as a family have little to complain about up to now, comparatively speaking."<sup>290</sup>

William Orchard shared this attitude. In a letter to his mother early in the war, he says, "I'm sorry to hear you're rather dispirited, personally I'm the reverse, and I think the majority of us are the same." In a letter to his father, he admits to being "fed up" but explains that "of course "fed upness" isn't the same as downheartedness. "I'll never be that, for more than about five minutes." As the war drew out, he continued to try to keep up his mother's spirits, although by mid-1918 his attempts at spreading good cheer

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<sup>288</sup> Martin Francis, "The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity," *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002): 637-52.

<sup>289</sup> Hammerton, "Pooterism or Partnership?"

<sup>290</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

acquire a world-weary flavour: “[w]e all have our moany moments Mother, they are inevitable, and so long as we don’t keep on moaning, it doesn’t matter much, have a good old grouse now and then, and then feel better and laugh at myself for being an ass.” He promises himself that he will enjoy every moment of his life after the war, and “if at any time I find myself grouching or downhearted, I’ll look back at these years of World wide unhappyness [sic] and kick myself.” But even at the end of his long years of service, he insists that “every cloud has a silver lining, and damn it ... I consider that I have had 3½ years of the finest training a chap could wish for since I have been in France especially.” Even at his most weary and tired, he is determined to keep up his family’s spirits: “it is hard I know, but keep on smiling.”<sup>291</sup>

John Lawton also attempts to downplay the hardships he suffers in letters home. When he spends some time in hospital with a septic knee, he writes to his parents: “I’ve no doubt you will be very upset but I do hope you wont [sic] as really I am going on very nicely and the doctor says that I shall soon be about again.” When his parents suffer a Zeppelin bombing raid, he writes to them with practical advice, chastising them for getting under the stairs and counselling them to lie flat on the ground in an open field if they should ever experience another raid, though he adds: “I pray God to spare you from such another experience!” He also does his best to keep up their spirits: “Keep your peckers up! Keep smiling! Pack all your troubles in your old kit bag and forget all about the raid. A miss is as good as ten thousand miles.” He seems to have an affinity for the wartime song “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag” and uses it as a metaphor for his entire attitude toward the war, or what he calls his “war-philosophy.” He counsels his parents to adopt the same attitude: “If you worry about the war it does not help it on one jot but if you go about with a seraphic smile upon your face seeing the funny side of everything and taking things as you find them you are helping on the war immensley [sic]. ... There is nothing

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<sup>291</sup> W. Orchard, papers.

more infectious than a smile.” He ends his appeal for optimism with a quip that sums up his views on the subject: “If you can’t get margarine use dripping.”<sup>292</sup>

## Attitudes toward war and peace

The men studied in this chapter also exhibited an attitude that curiously combined Boy’s Own-type heroism with a longing for peace, with the former being more prevalent at the beginning of their wartime experience and the latter slowly taking over as it became clear that the war was not going to end quickly and as their service dragged on. This is not simply a case of initial wartime enthusiasm morphing into later disillusionment and cynicism – a trajectory that has been sanctified in popular culture as the prevailing Myth of the War view.<sup>293</sup> The men studied here may have grown weary of the difficult job they had to do in dangerous conditions and away from their families, but they never questioned the rightness of the cause for which they fought. When war broke out and they volunteered, they were eager to contribute and were convinced of the necessity of fighting the enemy, but they still viewed the war as a necessary evil, not a fortuitous opportunity to experience their own Boy’s Own adventure story. This view intensified as they grew tired and their enthusiasm wore down: they may have lost their illusions about what active fighting was like, but they were still convinced that the cause was right and the job needed to get done – and that it was their duty to do it. The sources used for this chapter are letters written during the war and not memoirs written in retrospect, so the post-war Myth of the War, with its attendant disillusionment, had not yet taken hold.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

<sup>293</sup> The so-called Myth of the War is the view that prevails in popular perception that the First World War was nothing but a bloodbath and a futile waste. Most historians now agree that the war was a more complex phenomenon and was not unequivocally brutal and meaningless. However, works of popular culture such as films and television miniseries continue to perpetuate the belief – taken as Truth by the majority of consumers of such entertainment – that most participants’ war experience involved muddy trenches, bad leadership, pointless objectives and great suffering. The Myth has been in the making from the late-1920s, and has especially taken root during two waves of commemoration (and related publishing of war memoirs) in the 1930s and the 1960s. Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005).

<sup>294</sup> Todman.

Like the others, Leslie Emmerson was enthusiastic at the beginning of his war experience. In 1916, while working as an instructor in England, he wrote to his parents: “I hope they send me to France. I am getting rather tired of staying behind and all the boys I was with before coming here are out there... It makes me feel rather ‘out of it.’” By Christmas 1917 he was saying that “I wish I could be with you but perhaps by next year we shall all be home again and this job over”: he thought of his soldiering as a job that needed to get done even though it was at times dreary. In a letter written in May 1918, Emmerson expresses the kind of mixed emotions that seem to be characteristic of this group of men: “Truly I don’t much like this defensive game and am looking forward to the time when it will be our turn to ‘push’ [the enemy]. Then we’ll get our own back. But of course more than anything I’m looking forward to the time when it will all be over.” His dislike of the “defensive game” may have been because passively taking fire in a stationary position – such as a trench – was more stressful for many First World War combatants than actively attacking the enemy.<sup>295</sup> And yet there is something of the martial and heroic about his looking forward to getting “our own back” in active combat. More than anything it expressed the opinion that he still believed in fighting this particular enemy, nearly four years into a long war.<sup>296</sup>

Frank Markham expressed a similar attitude. He began the war as a clerk, but by 1917 he was chomping at the bit to play a more active role. A letter from his mother illustrates her horror at the prospect of the son she loved willingly putting himself in physical danger. She says, “I cannot understand you at all, being so eager to get transferred” and tries to persuade him that he can do his duty just as well in the office where he is currently working. She also reassures him that he is not a coward simply because he is helping the war effort as a clerk and not on more “active” duty, advising him to stay put. From this letter it is possible to deduce that, two years into his war service, Markham felt he had gone as far as he wanted to in his position with the Graves Registration Commission, and

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<sup>295</sup> Joanna Bourke, “Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-Shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35:1 (2000): 57-69.

<sup>296</sup> Lieutenant L. Emmerson, papers.

that he wanted to do something more heroic by participating in combat. The documentation in his file shows that he applied for a commission and was recommended for OCB training. A year after the letter from his mother, he was in a convalescent hospital, recuperating from trench fever: Markham had got his wish to experience the war first-hand.<sup>297</sup> William Orchard felt the pressure to join up from the beginning of the war. In September 1914, he wrote to his father: “I ... feel I must join” since everyone around him was doing so. According to him, employers were sacking their young male employees to compel them to join the army. He continues: “those who don’t enlist for whatever reason are looked upon as funks and shirkers, so you can imagine my feelings, as I can’t bear to be thought a funk.” He adds that he had told a good friend of his he would not join “unless forced to,” adding “I simply must.” He joined shortly after. Once in the army, he found he enjoyed it enough and looked forward to fighting: “I shouldn’t atal [sic] mind going over and having a go” at “licking ‘em.” However, he was still under the impression that the war would not be a long one: “I think my liking for soldiering will last the length of the war, as ... by the time we have learnt how to be a soldier we shall have to come out.” A year and a half into his war experience, although well aware of the hardships that war entailed, he insists he “wouldn’t be in England in “civies” [sic] for anything.” After another year, his response to his family’s question about how long the war would last sounds rather more weary: “you can gauge that better than we ... the best thing to do is to settle down[,] imagine it always has been, we were fools enough to allow it to happen so we must put up with the consequences.” He still took pride in his military accomplishments, but his longings for peace had increased. In a letter written in April 1918, he recalls in detail his participation in a battle at Leuze Wood, which he calls, with typical British understatement, “a very interesting time.” He devotes two paragraphs to an account of the fighting, in which he played an active role, and then abruptly turns to a different subject, admitting with obvious longing: “I wish I were mowing the lawn, I remember how enjoyable it was to step out on a good old Blighty lawn...” Yet, he never questions the reasons for the war, and he never wonders whether or not he should

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<sup>297</sup> Major Sir Frank Markham, papers.

continue to play a part in it. Although he wants to the hostilities end and longs to go home, he is determined to do his duty.<sup>298</sup>

John Lawton shared this attitude. He wrote to his parents that witnessing an ocean liner being sunk by a mine made him realize “the grim horror of war & the truth of the scriptural proverb and epigram ‘in the midst of life we are in death’.” And yet this opinion about war in general did not prevent him from wanting to play an active part in the fighting. A few months later, he wrote to his parents about how dissatisfied he felt about being in the Home Service Regiment in which he was serving because of his weak eyesight: “I am terrifically fed up with lounging about in Dover... It ought never to be said that a Lawton failed to do his duty to his king & country in their own of need.” He also worried about what his peers would say about his not having been to France. Peer pressure and the consideration of people’s opinions played a role in how he felt about the war and his part in it. Although he did not like the army, he admitted that war created the necessity of putting up with being “a cog-wheel in the military machine.” Lawton articulated the fact of the existence of a honeymoon period for young and enthusiastic men who joined the army, saying that “the 1st 3 months of my career in the army were amongst the happiest days of my life,” but adding that things start to look a little different once “the novelty has worn off.” Although he was of the opinion that the war had the beneficial effect of changing boys into men, he cautioned his brother not to “delude himself with any silly heroic ideas about soldiering.” And yet, once his chance to go to France came in the summer of 1917, he admits to feeling “as happy as a young sandbird just hatched,” adding: “I’ve been loafing about long enough.” His eagerness was not diminished by his first-hand experience at the Third Battle of Ypres, during which he was “crumped.” Although he admits that having a near-miss “puts the fear of God into a man’s heart,” he was not eager to get away from the danger, saying: “I feel I’m doing something at last.” The impression one gets from his letters is belief that the war was right and had to be fought, commitment to his duty, and satisfaction in taking an active

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<sup>298</sup> W. Orchard, papers.

part and being useful –jokingly signing a September 1919 letter, still sent from the army, with “John Euseless.” (His middle name was Eustace). His attitude to heroism was skeptical, especially as the war dragged on. In 1918 he wrote his parents about a book he had been reading, according to which a man working hard “without a sweetheart or wife was nothing less than heroic.” He poked fun at his own single state by saying, “‘Some’ hero, me. (??)”<sup>299</sup>

## Responsibility

Despite their war weariness, these men acted with unwavering responsibility – for themselves, for others, for the men under their command, for their family, and for their finances. They tended to have a serious and earnest approach to planning for their future, and were prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of a later payoff. Even in wartime conditions, which were likely to make people live for the moment, they were the champions of delayed gratification – a typical middle-class trait.<sup>300</sup> This focus on responsibility, as opposed to autonomy and independence, can be seen as a key difference between middle-class and working-class masculinity. Where, in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, working-class men were keen to demonstrate their independence by having money to spend at a pub with their work mates– an activity that in many cases could be, and occasionally was, injurious to their families – middle-class men tended to view responsibility for their families as the thing that proved they were worthy of being called “men.”<sup>301</sup> They took pride in providing for their wives and children in such a way as to ensure a respectable and secure standard of living – an ability that demonstrated to the world their capacity as mature family men and breadwinners. The difficulty posed by limited salaries and the resulting straitened financial circumstances meant they often

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<sup>299</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

<sup>300</sup> Simon Gunn and Rachel Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London: Cassell & Co., 1996), 45.

<sup>301</sup> Pamela J. Walker, “‘I Live But Yet Not I for Christ Liveth in Me’: Men and Masculinity in the Salvation Army, 1865-90,” in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, eds. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 92-112.

delayed marriage and starting a family until they could afford it, sometimes not until their mid- to late twenties.<sup>302</sup>

The men studied in this chapter made a point of living their lives responsibly, even when it involved personal sacrifices. With the war ending, William Orchard carefully planned for life after demobilization. Financial stability was at the top of his list of concerns: he counted on his father to provide him with a job in the family laundry business, and knew he could not ask for a high salary. At the same time he was aware that his pre-war salary would no longer be sufficient owing to inflation: “At Bury, I was getting 30/-. That would be useless now, wouldn’t it?” Although he admitted that “twice that” would be the equivalent, he said he did not expect to get as much right from the start. Rather, he humbly requested a living wage, and confidently proposed that his hard work would lead to a raise before long: “I feel certain that by my own efforts I can make the business go ahead, & an increase of salary can come to me, when I prove that I am worth it to the firm.” In the meantime, he patiently saved his wages as a subaltern and tried to manage his money wisely for the sake of his peacetime future. William Orchard had married his fiancée partway through the war, to the great surprise of his parents, but he and his new wife delayed starting a family. Once the war ended, financial considerations continued to dictate their decision to delay having children. When his mother inquired about the possibility, he replies: “No, Mother ... July even, won’t see You a Grandmother... I should be delighted to oblige You, but I’m afraid, it is just part of the cruelty of the War, to us chaps. I’ve been standing still for four years, so far as material advancement is concerned, & so must not yet create the full realisation of what I ought, & wish to, in my love for Eva.” Clearly, he did not feel it would be responsible to have children before first achieving a certain material standard for his family. Eva spent the latter part of the war being financially responsible, working as a private teacher.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Geoffrey D. Spurr, “The London YMCA: A Haven of Masculine Self-Improvement and Socialization for the Late-Victorian and Edwardian Clerk,” *Canadian Journal of History* 37 (August 2002): 275-301.

<sup>303</sup> W. Orchard, papers.

John Lawton's attitude toward the prospect of marriage was cautious. As a timid and earnest young man, he did not have a sweetheart while in the army. But even he thought about the idea of marriage, if only in theory, and his conclusion was not optimistic: "even if the war ends next year as is mighty improbable I should not be in a position to marry for five or six years." Writing to his brother, Ray, who was interested in girls, John dispenses sage advice: "Unless you are seriously inclined towards some girls it would be much better for you to leave all girls alone & to enjoy the society of your male friends... it would be a safer line of conduct for a few years until you can settle down in life properly." John thought girls were "trouble" and counseled his brother to "[k]eep walking round the fringe of the whirlpool" and not to "plunge in until the right time comes." While his natural timidity may have played a part in his attitude, it is also clear that he saw marriage as a solemn responsibility, one he did not take lightly.<sup>304</sup> John trained as a teacher after the war, and married a fellow teacher. His timing was eminently responsible: the marriage did not take place until he had obtained his B.A degree and teacher's certificate, and had started paid work as a teacher.<sup>305</sup>

The lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter shared several similar characteristics that defined them as people, and as men. They were close to their families, motivated by career success and advancement, stoical and capable of endurance under great stress, and typified by an attitude of responsibility. Some of the characteristics that defined them seem at first glance to be contradictory: although these men were concerned with money, they could also rise above petty financial concerns in their love for the arts; although they had a measure of snobbery against classes other than their own, they felt comfortable enough playing with class scripts and poking gentle fun at those other classes and themselves; although they were keen to "do their bit" at the front and believed in the war effort, they longed above all else for peace and the opportunity to return home. But above all, the impression one gets in reading their letters written during

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<sup>304</sup> His attitude toward drinking was similar: "What fools men are, who put beer in their mouths to steal their brains away!" Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

<sup>305</sup> Lieutenant J. Lawton, papers.

the war is one of men who were comfortable with who they were and confident in taking charge of their future. Although they did accept the primacy of the officer and gentleman model of masculinity and attempted to live up to the accepted standard, they did so with self-confidence and conviction in their own self-worth.

## Chapter 3

### Wartime letters of *upper* lower-middle-class temporary officers

This chapter examines representations of masculinity and identity in the wartime letters home of three men I consider to be *upper* lower-middle-class, and who began the war in the ranks and were subsequently sent to an Officer Cadet Battalion and commissioned. (For details of how the lower-middle-class men examined here were selected, please see the “Methodology – Selection Process” section on page xxv of the Introduction.) In the previous chapter I examined *lower* lower-middle-class men as a way of parsing the gradations and characteristics of the lower middle class as a whole. In this chapter I look specifically at *upper* lower-middle-class men – the top echelon of the lower middle class that had more access to privilege and stability. Both economically and culturally, the *upper* lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter were closer to the middle class proper than the men discussed in Chapter Two. Their claims on respectability and even gentility had a more solid footing, and this shows in their letters: their determination to advance and succeed was not as pronounced as that of their *lower* lower-middle-class counterparts. Because they could already claim a measure of success and stability, they were not as aspirational as the men studied in the previous chapter. But the foremost message that comes across in their writings is the same: they were comfortable with their origins and proud of who they were. This glimpse into the upper echelons of the lower middle class shows that, as a class, its top was as solid as its bottom: distinct from the class above it and confident in its own potential.

The difficulty in deciding whether these three men fit the *upper* lower-middle-class model is in and of itself an illustration of how challenging it is to affix the lower-middle-class label, let alone to determine where exactly in the lower middle class a particular individual fits. Because the lower middle class was an aspirational class, its members tended to try to improve their social and financial situation over the course of their lives. As a result, many people’s class status shifted from childhood to adulthood. Because of their level of education and employment, at times even members of the same family

could have slightly different class affiliations: for instance, one brother could be employed as a clerk, while another was a manual labourer. If we add into the mix the associations people belonged to, the neighbourhoods they lived in, the accent with which they spoke – or the level of language they adopted in their writing – and the type of culture they chose to consume, a complicated picture begins to emerge. I focus on the basic differences of professionalism and financial stability when the First World War broke out to distinguish the *lower* lower middle class from the *upper*. Thus, the men examined in this chapter had stable low-level white-collar jobs with big organizations that paid them a percentage of their salary for the duration of their wartime service and guaranteed them employment when they were decommissioned. As such, they also had an allegiance to the firm that employed them, and often an allegiance to the profession they practiced. Their families tended to be solidly lower-middle-class, and their parents' ties to the working-class community were not as strong as those of the *lower* lower-middle-class group.

At the outbreak of the hostilities, Alfred Victor Clements, from Croydon, was nineteen years old ; Percy Gordon Foster, from Wimbledon, was twenty-four years old; and John Stewart Thomson, also from Wimbledon, was twenty-one years old. Alfred Victor Clements served with the London Scottish Regiment in France, first training in Dorking, in January 1915, then embarking for France in March 1915. He saw action in the Neuve Chapelle area in May 1915, and was hospitalized on a number of occasions both in France and the UK. He underwent officer training at the 20th Officer Cadet Battalion in Crookham, Hampshire, starting in October 1917. His IWM file contains 123 manuscript letters and 25 postcards written by him to his parents throughout his war experience.<sup>306</sup> Percy Gordon Foster was stationed at a camp in Aldershot and later served as a Corporal in an unknown Cyclist Company on the Western Front. He underwent officer training with the 4th Officer Cadet Battalion at Wadham College, Oxford from May to July, 1917. His Imperial War Museum file contains nineteen manuscript letters and two picture

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<sup>306</sup> A.V. Clements, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 16608.

postcards, one showing Foster in uniform, written to his sister.<sup>307</sup> John Stewart Thomson volunteered in 1914. He served as an NCO with the 1/14th Battalion London Regiment (London Scottish) (1st Brigade, 1st Division) on the Western Front from September 1914 to January 1916. Following his commission, he served as a subaltern with the 112th Brigade Royal Field Artillery (RFA) (25th Division) on the Somme from July to December 1916. His IWM file contains fifty-five manuscript letters and postcards written to his parents and three longer manuscript letters that he wrote to his brother David while recovering from wounds at home in May 1915 and March 1917. The letters to his brother contain information that would have been censored in his letters from the front, covering his involvement in the First Battle of Ypres (November 1914), the fighting around Givenchy (December 1914), and the Battle of the Somme (July 1916).<sup>308</sup>

Alfred Victor Clements was a bank clerk in 1914; his employer guaranteed him a job after the war and paid £30 a year in quarterly instalments to fellows who took commissions during the hostilities. After the war ended, the bank offered Clements his old salary plus a fifty per cent raise, which put him in a better position than many demobilized men. Clements' father was a silversmith. The 1911 Census describes him as a "silversmith's assistant," but Clements' many letters during the war referred to the business as a family concern. Although his family of origin had no live-in servants, Clements' secure job placed him in a privileged position that alleviated a lot of uncertainty and worry during the war. He married his fiancée, Grace, during the hostilities and looked forward to setting up his own household after the war. In the meantime, Grace worked in an office and contributed to the family income. In his letters, Clements alternately referred to his parents as "Mother and Father," "Mother and Dad," and "Mater and Pater" – comfortably mixing lower-class slang with upper-middle-class affectation. His father's love of gardening – both flower and vegetable – is also a clear

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<sup>307</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents.17025.

<sup>308</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents.12968.

middle-class marker.<sup>309</sup> Percy Gordon Foster's bank clerk job remained secure during the war. The 1911 UK Census describes his father's occupation as "solicitor's clerk," and the family had no live-in servants. Foster had two sisters, one older and one younger, and the wartime letters contained in his file are addressed to his younger sister, Stella. Stella, who had finished her general schooling, was taking a business course and Foster encouraged her efforts at learning typing and shorthand, sharing her excitement at the prospect of her earning her own money. In his letters to Stella, Foster refers to their mother as "Mum," but his writing betrays an ease with upper-middle-class colloquialisms and foreign phrases. The odd mention of playing tennis also indicates that the family was not destitute.<sup>310</sup> John Stewart Thomson had been an "architectural student" in 1911 according to the Census. By the time he wrote his wartime letters, he was employed full time and getting a regular salary from his firm during his wartime service. Thomson's father was also an architect, with a wife and four children, but they had no live-in servants. In addition to his own letters, Thomson's file contains a handful of letters written home from the front by his brother, Gordon. The two brothers were on active service, and their paths crossed occasionally although they served in different units. According to the Census, Gordon had been a "tobacco factory clerk" in 1911. By the time the war broke out, he was working for a firm that also paid his salary for the duration of his wartime service. As such, both brothers were privileged because of their employment stability and regular civilian paycheque during the war. Stewart's professional affiliation, coupled with the fact that his father was a professional, might have indicated his membership in the middle class proper – possibly even inching into upper-middle-class territory. However, the family had no live-in servants and neither brother had received a public school education – clear signs that Stewart was in the upper echelons of the lower middle class at the beginning of the war.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

<sup>310</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers.

<sup>311</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

## How the *upper* lower-middle-class men of this chapter fit into the larger argument of the dissertation and how they differ from *lower* lower-middle-class men

Like their counterparts in Chapter Two, these *upper* lower-middle-class men aspired to join the dominant class, or at least get as close to it as they could, but they had the advantage of greater bargaining power and they used it. Their education and skills were a means to obtain skills like mathematics and architectural expertise, which, in turn, helped them obtain a commission in an artillery regiment. Paradoxically, this leverage did not translate into increased ambition. They were proud of their professional skills and wished to put them to good use to advance but, perhaps because they had started out slightly higher on the social ladder than their *lower* lower-middle-class counterparts, they were not as aspirational or determined to achieve career advancement. They saw their commission as a duty that brought with it some nice perks, and they enjoyed those perks and worked hard to prove themselves, but they did not view being a temporary officer as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve their civilian lives after the war. Possibly because they felt more secure in their jobs in England, or possibly because they had a more well-defined professional identity in a specific field – rather than a vaguely lower-middle-class job in a field that was interchangeable with any other – they were not as obsessed with promotion as their counterparts in Chapter Two.

## A closer look at the *upper* lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter

The specifics of how these men represented themselves in their wartime letters allows me to explore class and identity by looking at the following themes: attitudes toward family and the role family relationships played in these men's lives, attitudes toward money, the role artistic pursuits played in these men's lives, their attitudes toward other classes, their endurance and stoicism, their attitudes toward war and peace, and responsibility.

### Attitudes toward family

As in the case of *lower* lower-middle-class men, one of the characteristics that typified *upper* lower-middle-class men was close family connections. They maintained a regular

correspondence with their families, sharing news and concerns and sometimes writing to keep their spirits up. In their letters, they expressed thanks for care packages, asked for specific items they needed, inquired about other family members, relayed news of life in the army, asked for advice or dispensed it, reassured their loved ones and asked for reassurance in turn, shared memories of peacetime, and looked forward to a time after the war. As in the previous chapter, Jessica Meyer's observation that soldiers in the First World War enacted a "domestic" identity in letters home from the front<sup>312</sup> is demonstrated in the letters examined in this chapter, which show these men focused on the family-centric and "off-duty" aspects of their identity as opposed to the warlike and martial aspects. Their letters also reveal evidence of the primacy of companionate marriage, especially in the romantic relationship of A.V. Clements and his fiancée, whom he married during the war. James Hammerton has explored the importance of domestic partnership to the identity of lower-middle-class men, and his observations are borne out by the evidence in the letters examined in this chapter.<sup>313</sup>

A.V. Clements wrote regular letters to his parents while serving during the First World War. He also wrote frequently to his fiancée – and later wife – although those letters do not survive in his file. He received many food parcels from home, which he appreciated. He expresses concern about his mother's emotional well-being – "I expect the Mater gets a little lonely..." – and physical state of health: "I trust that Mother's illness is not serious. She must take every possible care of herself." It is clear that his family was also worried about his health and well-being, and that they expressed their concerns in letters to him – to an extent he found excessive. Early in the war he writes in an exasperated tone: "Why are you all so concerned about my nerves? I never felt better in all my life." His morale was shaken somewhat by missing his family, a fact he readily admits while recovering from a wound: "I am dying to see you. That, I think, is my chief hurt." But his

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<sup>312</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>313</sup> James Hammerton, "Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920," *Journal of British Studies* 38:3, *Masculinity and the Lower Middle Class* (July 1999), 291-321.

missing home was as much an asset as a liability, since the connection to his loved ones strengthened him over the many years he was away. As the war continued, the strain began to show and Clements complained in a bitter letter written in the fall of 1917 of the estrangement between himself and his parents that his prolonged absences had imposed on their relationship: "... I have been with you only in such brief snatches that we have been almost like strangers; unfamiliarity has put us all on our best behavior in those brief periods. It is as if these War years were cut clean out of one's life..." But, again, the fact that he minded both the literal and the emotional distance to such an extent is an indication that what he regarded as the norm was a close-knit emotional bond with his family.

Clements was also concerned about his siblings and nieces, sending "little Betty & Peggy my kisses" and signing his letter to his sister and brother-in-law with the words: "your loving brother, Alf." Little Peggy fell ill, and he followed the status of her condition closely, worrying about the girl's prognosis. By the summer of 1916 a letter from his parents prompted him to comment that "[p]oor little Peggy must be in a terribly bad way," and in a subsequent letter he tries to offer his parents some comfort in anticipation of what he believes to be the inevitable: "[y]ou must not worry yourselves too much over the matter, serious & pitiful as it unhappily is. If the Father of us all takes her, we must believe she is happy in escaping the perplexities & dangers of this life." Clements was right in anticipating the worst, for a short while later Peggy died. At his fiancée's suggestion, he sent white lilies to his sister and her husband to express that he and Grace were "both sharers of their grief." And once again he attempted to comfort his parents by taking a philosophical view of the tragedy: "Well, she was a dear kiddie; but the Father of all knows best."

The fiancée who had prompted him to send the white lilies played an important role in Clements' life. Like William Orchard in the previous chapter, Clements married his fiancée during the war and had to navigate the tricky waters of reconciling his relationship with his new wife and with his family of origin. Initially, relations between Grace and his parents seemed to be on a good footing; they had asked her to come and live with them as their son's fiancée, and she had accepted. Clements was thrilled,

writing that, “I had been hoping against hope that something of the sort might happen; & now that it has, I feel almost as glad as if the War were over & I was at home with you.” Shortly after, in a carefully worded letter to his parents informing them of the news “which will doubtless surprise you,” he says that he and Grace had decided to get married immediately – this, despite his parents’ advice to wait. His parents disapproved of the timing of the event since, a mere two weeks after the ceremony took place, Clements wrote a scathing response to a critical letter they had sent him on the subject. To their accusations that “for some it is all pleasure,” he replies that they should be ashamed to assume that his and Grace’s lives were easy. “Are you angry because we try to be happy while we may? ... Have we no troubles or anxieties of our own? Do you imagine I am riotously happy here in this deadly place...?” he asked with bitterness. In the letter, he tries to explain his position to his parents because their opinion mattered to him. But it is also apparent that he went against their wishes by taking the side of his wife over his family of origin – a pattern that would continue. As with William Orchard in Chapter Two, one of the disadvantages of having a close relationship with his parents was the difficulty of integrating a new family member into the family unit and transferring his loyalties from his mother to his wife. Both sides attempted to mend fences and Grace temporarily moved into his parents’ home – a turn of events that thrilled Clements. He idealized the situation, viewing it through the prism of cherished childhood memories: “What a treasure chest is that little house at Addiscombe! So much tenderness & goodness in so small a space!” His lower-middle-class reverence for home and hearth shows here. But the idyll was not to last: Grace left Clements’ parents’ home suddenly, in response to an air raid that left her “shaken up.” Clements apologized to his parents in a letter, but again took Grace’s side in the matter, although his disappointment at having his dream of a big happy family under one roof dashed was palpable. Grace did not return. By 1917, Clements had given up on the idea of reconciling the two sides and supported his wife. Citing the “insults & abuse” Grace had received at the hands of his father, he informed his parents that he would spend his next leave with his wife, stating that he had “long-since despaired of pleasing everyone in anything, & I now take it as my duty to please my wife first.”

Unlike upper-middle- and working-class men in the late Victorian and Edwardian era, lower-middle-class men constructed an identity based on domestic partnership as opposed to public authority or physical strength.<sup>314</sup> Clements followed that well-established lower-middle-class pattern. He loved Grace; in one of his letters from the latter part of the war, he wrote that the one bright spot in the midst of the horrors of war was his marriage: “the mere fact that she is mine & I hers suffices to make me better & more hopeful than I otherwise should be.” But Clements based his own idea of what a marriage should be on the example of his parents – both stalwart lower-middle-class adherents of the companionate marriage model. The same letter that sings the praises of his wife and the virtues of having such a close and loyal companion also acknowledges the debt he owes to his parents’ example. The heartbreaking irony of having had the example of a close nuclear family at home and of wishing to create one of his own was that the necessity to do so on his own terms disrupted the relationship with his family of origin. Clements could be loyal to his parents or to his wife, but not to both.<sup>315</sup>

P.G. Foster’s relationship with his family of origin was also important. His file contains a collection of letters he wrote during the course of the war to his sister, Stella, who was twelve years younger. Stella grew from a teenager into a young woman during the war, and the letters are a touching reflection of a brother’s love: chatty with news, at times teasing, always interested in Stella’s own experience, and trying to reach her on her own level. Foster, who signed his letters “Percy,” devoted time during his leave to take Stella for an outing for her pleasure and enjoyment. He also encouraged her in her studies, counselling her to take her business studies seriously because they would be important to her future: “you must put your whole heart & soul into [these studies], in order to get as much knowledge as possible into your noodle.” He took his role as big brother seriously, and attempted to safeguard his little sister’s well-being. But he also recognized that she

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<sup>314</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism or Partnership?”

<sup>315</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

was growing up and gently teased her about turning into a young woman, jokingly asking her whether she had “received ... [some] love letters, now own up.”

In addition to focusing on Stella, Foster used the letters to help him get through the wartime difficulties he faced, obtaining emotional support from his little sister as much as he gave it. During training at the Officer Cadet Battalion at Wadham College, Oxford, he writes: “The worst of it is we have an Exam: every fortnight, just as you get over one, another one is due, I get fed up with them I can tell you.” The pressure of exams took its toll on him, since his future would be determined by the results: “There were six cadets sent back to their units yesterday because they had failed in the Exams: & two of them were cyclists ... I never want to go back to that place I can tell you.” Writing to Stella helped ease Foster’s anxieties about the dangers and hardships he faced in the OCB. For her part, Stella did her best to keep her brother’s spirits up, sending letters and, on one occasion, flowers. In a note appended to a letter written to Stella, Foster shows how he counted on his mother for the necessities that made his life bearable, writing: “Will you ask mum if she will kindly send me a few cigarettes & also at any chemists get me a small box of Harrisons Pomade...” But he also counted on her for emotional sustenance and missed her. In one of his letters to Stella he tells the story of a shell shock victim whom he encountered in France and who told him that “the first person he was going to see was his dear old mother.” Percy seemed moved by this exchange, confiding to Stella that, “I am going to do the same, because I think likewise, & I hope you always will.” He adds, with the weariness of someone who had seen the darker side of life and survived: “You haven’t been away & roughed it like I have, but as soon as you go away from home you realize these things.” Being away on active service deepened Foster’s appreciation of his home and family.<sup>316</sup>

J.S. Thomson’s family was also important to him. His letters demonstrate an active effort to maintain relationships with family members despite the physical separation of wartime. Thomson, who sometimes signed his letters “John” and sometimes “Stewart,”

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<sup>316</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers.

was overseas at the same time as his younger brother, Gordon. They served together at first but later were separated. In addition to his own letters, J.S. Thomson's file contains a handful of letters home from Gordon. The brothers looked out for one another and did their best to keep their family informed about each other's news. It is also evident their families made a concerted effort to keep the brothers' spirits up by writing letters. Early in the war, Stewart writes that he had just received a letter from his mother, in addition to "ones from A. Georgie, Uncle Fred & Norman, & G. got ones from A. Katie & Father." Speaking for both himself and his brother, he reassures his mother, "We are both still keeping very well... G. is quite settling down & is getting on very nicely."<sup>317</sup> His role as protective big brother is also evident in a letter written a month later, in which he tells his mother how glad he is "to hear G. was at home, lucky chap! I had only heard he had got as far as the base hospital. Hope he is better now, but tell him from me to be quite sure he is alright before doing anything." He also talks about his little sister, Betty, who was eight years younger than him, asking his mother to "please thank Betty for her very nice letter. Was very interested in her prize giving & kitten. Hope she has read her very interesting prize!" Thomson's letters show how important it was for him to express an interest in his younger siblings and maintain a strong family connection.

The file also contains a number of letters Stewart wrote to another brother, David, who was five years younger than him. Stewart's letters to David differ significantly from the letters he wrote to his parents and younger sister. While the letters to his sister were written to a child and the letters to his parents contained practical information and family news but tended to downplay the hardships and dangers he faced at the front, the letters Stewart wrote to David were explicit about life in France. Long and detailed – up to ten pages in contrast to the maximum three or four for letters addressed to his parents – the letters to David talk about dodging bullets in shell holes, having the man next to him shot dead, "paddl[ing] for ... miles in liquid mud" and having to do what Stewart deemed "an

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<sup>317</sup> For his part, Gordon's attachment to home is evident in a letter he wrote to his mother in which he says: "I shall be glad when we get home again, it seems literally months since we left & I already feel quite homesick." 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

awful job.” In one letter, Stewart tells David about the time a trench wall was blown in on top of him, and a telephonist pulled him out “just like the dentist lugging a tooth out.” He also refers to the “dam trench mortar” and tells his brother that the telephonist complained that he, Stewart, used bad language. These are details that never appear in letters to his parents. It is significant that these letters were written from England while Stewart was on furlough in the spring of 1915, since this meant that Stewart was not subject to direct censorship by his commanding officer or constrained by time – the handwriting is neater and not as hurriedly penned as in the letters written at the front proper – but just as significant is the person they were addressed to. Obviously Stewart felt he could be more open and honest about his experience with his brother than he was with the parents from whom he was trying to spare harsh details. We can speculate that being able to honestly discuss his life at the front with his brother helped Thomson process the events he was going through, which made experiencing them easier. It is also fair to speculate that the sense of connection that came from having a whole army of family members who were interested in his well-being, and whose well-being mattered to him in turn, made a positive difference to Thomson during the war.<sup>318</sup>

### Attitudes toward money

The *upper* lower-middle-class men of this chapter had a keen grasp on the financial realities of life and paid attention to money. Their preoccupation with money – earning it, saving it and spending it within a limited budget – came naturally to members of the lower middle class, who tended to struggle to keep up appearances and maintain a certain standard of respectability on a limited income.<sup>319</sup> Although the *upper* lower-middle-class men studied in this chapter were better off than their counterparts in Chapter Two, they were still not well off enough to stop paying attention to the role money played in their lives. Accordingly, they worried about their family’s financial situation back home,

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<sup>318</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

<sup>319</sup> Christopher P. Hosgood, “Mrs. Pooter’s Purchase: Lower-Middle-Class Consumerism and the Sales, 1870-1914,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 146-163.

discussed financial matters in letters home, and kept track of what things cost and how much they spent.

Demonstrating concern with financial matters, A.V. Clements worried about his family's business, writing to his father: "Well, Dad, I trust the slight improvement in business will be a lasting & increasing one. It must be simply awful for you when things are so utterly slack." He also worried about his sister's family's business, referring to the "big Q of finance" and writing: "I pray that Lil may be able to save the business from disaster." Clements did his best to live within his means, constantly aware of the value of money as he tried to make it go as far as possible. Telling his family about a YMCA canteen, he writes that "this afternoon we had tea there at ½ franc per head, with cigars & music included." The value of the money he spent and what he got for it made an impression on him. When his mother and his fiancée, Grace, made plans to visit him in the hospital, he told them that he would "try to get a cheap railway voucher for two." Clements occasionally entrusted his parents with taking care of his finances, such as when he sent them "an Army M.O. for 30/-" which was apparently payable "only at Addiscombe." He asked his parents to either cash it for him or "pay it in for me at the Bank." Clements was a saver. He also took financial matters into account whenever possible when planning his future. In a subsequent letter, he told his parents that he had written to a friend "about what the Bank is doing for chaps who take commn's" and relayed that "they are paying £30 a year in quarterly instalments." He added with satisfaction, "[t]hat's not so bad, is it?" For A.V. Clements, financial security was something to get excited about.<sup>320</sup>

Money also came up in P.G. Foster's letters. In praising his sister for doing well on her exams, he tells her that if she continued in her chosen path, "well, I shall be able to borrow a little money off of you, eh what?" This shows his pride in her accomplishments, but is also a sign of how important he considered Stella's efforts to become financially independent. When discussing the prospect of Stella "earning [her] daily bread," Foster counsels her: "[y]es I should think if you are careful you could get at least 25/- a week,

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<sup>320</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

but of course in peace time I daresay it would be a little less, but get what you can by all means Stella.” Partly because she was his little sister, he sent her money as a reward for doing well in school – a gesture that he may not have made with a sibling his own age or older. The impression one gets from these exchanges is that money was valued and kept track of in the Foster household. Apparently Stella shared Percy’s attitude toward using money carefully since, in one of his letters, he responded to her chiding him over having been irresponsible. He wrote: “[y]es it was rather foolish I know jumping into the river with my watch on, but I quite forgot to take it off, & I am very much afraid that it will cost me a bit when it has been remedied at the jewellers.” If an expense could be avoided, the family viewed it wise to do so.<sup>321</sup>

In a similar vein, J.S. Thomson and his brother Gordon were both concerned about how finances affected their lives. On October 23, 1914, Gordon wrote home to ask his mother how much money he was getting from the office, “as I am very anxious to know.” A few days later, on October 28, Stewart wrote to his parents of his pleasant surprise at the news that both his and Gordon’s firms were paying the salaries of their employees who had volunteered. Far from being a spendthrift, Stewart paid attention to the value of money. In addition to discussing banking percentages and the perks of earning high interest rates in a letter to his mother, he asked for “a small draft of a few francs” to be sent to him, explaining that “[s]topping for any time in one place is rather an expensive game. The people here are all on the make.” The fact that they charged “war prices” did not make it any more right in Stewart’s mind. When Stewart obtained his commission and faced the expensive prospect of purchasing his uniform and kit, he went out of his way to ensure that he was getting a good deal. In a letter to his mother, he brags: “I think I have done quite a good deal at Ordnance Stores. I got a whipcord jacket ... for 2.10. q, a fine pair of bedford cord pants for 19.6 & a pair of field boots for 36.6. Of course we get the stuff for practically cost price & under the circs I thought it hardly worth while Ward’s making the stuff & sending it out.” Since the Army Ordnance Department held supplies of clothing

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<sup>321</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers.

and equipment for officers in the field,<sup>322</sup> Thomson was fortunate to be able to obtain his kit in such a convenient manner. He did not mind that it was not made to measure by a tailor back home and being able to save money was an added bonus that a money-conscious man like him would not turn up his nose at.<sup>323</sup>

### Artistic pursuits

The *upper* lower-middle-class men studied in this chapter were not concerned with money to the point that it left no room for sensitivity and artistic sensibility. On the contrary, in the midst of danger and hardship they stopped to pay attention to the beauty of nature and made time to write a diary – not to show off, but because they felt an inner compulsion to do so and because it made their wartime experiences more bearable. The dismissal by journalists of lower-middle-class aspirations as mere uppity aping of the habits of their “betters” was a hostile outsider’s view that did not reflect what members of that derided class actually thought or felt.<sup>324</sup> Furthermore, it was not true that these lower-middle-class men exhibited a “craven respect for high culture” without truly understanding it, and that this was a manifestation of their status anxiety.<sup>325</sup> Rather, these three men were convinced of the validity and importance of their emotional and spiritual experience, and believed it was their right to express it as they saw fit.

A.V. Clements conveyed his artistic sensibility through writing. In one of his letters home, written on August 1, 1915, he describes to his parents the sunrise he had witnessed

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<sup>322</sup> Army Council Instruction No. 1837, entitled “Officers proceeding to join Expeditionary Forces with uniform and kit incomplete,” stated that officers proceeding overseas “frequently arrive with deficient kits, anticipating that they will be able to complete their kits by purchases from the Army Ordnance Department at the Base.” It affirmed that “[o]nly small supplies of articles of clothing and equipment for officers are sent abroad,” for line officers only, and warned that the supplies were “in no case to complete the kits of officers arriving from home.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>323</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

<sup>324</sup> Hosgood, “Mrs. Pooter’s Purchase”, 148.

<sup>325</sup> Rita Felski, “Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class,” *PMLA*, 115:1, Special Topic: Rereading Class (Jan., 2000): 35-6.

while being on guard in the early morning: “It was a very fine sight, to watch the clouds gradually becoming tipped with gold, & then to see the blue break through in patches with silvery clouds that just caught the early sun rays.” This poetic description shows that he views this kind of esthetic and emotional experience as being just as worthy of reporting as practical or financial matters. Clements was a good writer, and even the mundane events that appear in his letters come to life owing to his lively and imaginative descriptions. In one letter he describes how “...the Brigade got on its feet ... & made its way, like a drunken serpent of stupendous size, half across France.” In another letter, he describes a routine brigade march – a different one this time: “The stars & a great orange-coloured moon made the night like day, except where the road dipped under the thick trees, & there we stalked thro’ inky blackness, in which the pack of the man ahead glimmered & bobbed like a tantalising spirit.”<sup>326</sup> The writer who expressed the most artistic or emotional sensitivity in the papers of J.S. Thomson was his brother Gordon – some of it through his own words, and some through Stewart’s. In a postscript to a letter Stewart wrote to his parents, he states simply: “G. would like a prayer book,” practically interceding for his brother’s spiritual needs. In a subsequent letter, Gordon himself tells his mother that he went “to Mass at a very beautiful R.C. church Sunday – it is about 13<sup>th</sup> century & partly in ruins & the service was very quaint but I enjoyed it very much.” We can speculate that the enjoyment Gordon derived from participating in a religious service for a denomination not his own was twofold: the religious component of the mass met a spiritual need while the visual beauty of the ancient ruined church met an esthetic one. Gordon had needs of both kinds, tried to ensure that they were met if at all possible, and told his family about the process. On October 28, 1914, Gordon informed those at home that: “I am keeping a diary so that I shall be able to tell you a lot more when we get back.” It was not just the literate upper classes who felt that their words and experiences were worth recording, either for their contemporaries or for posterity. Although the upper crust had the financial means and connections to get their diaries published either during or after the war – with the result that the majority of such books on library shelves today

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<sup>326</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

were written by men who had gone to public schools – the lower middle class also believed their experiences merited being recorded in detail.<sup>327</sup>

Unlike the letters of J.S. Thomson, P.G. Foster's letters to his sister Stella are not filled with emotional revelations or artistic efforts. There may be a number of reasons for this. First, this particular collection of letters is small, and we therefore have only a limited amount of source material on which to draw. Second, Thomson wrote the letters to his sister, who was significantly younger and still a child when the war started. His attitude toward her and the approach he took in his letters may have been less revelatory than that taken in letters written to a contemporary or to a parent with whom he had a close relationship.<sup>328</sup> Nevertheless, Foster's letters contain a mention of pressed flowers Stella sent him, which he carefully kept with him – a sentimental gesture on both Stella's and his part. Thomson told Stella he would keep the flowers pressed "in [his] pay book." This choice of location for such a memento may have been simply a practical decision, but it is still a telling juxtaposition of the pragmatic and the esthetic – a combination that was typical of the *upper* lower-middle-class men discussed in this chapter.<sup>329</sup>

### Attitudes toward other classes

The *upper* lower-middle-class men in this chapter shared another characteristic: a sense they were superior to classes other than their own or groups they saw as less educated and less respectable than themselves. Sometimes they engaged in the process of "othering," which was frequently directed at foreign "others" – usually civilians they encountered in occupied countries.<sup>330</sup> However, these men were also secure enough in their identity and

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<sup>327</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

<sup>328</sup> For instance, Michael Roper has argued about the importance of the maternal bond in helping to keep soldiers' spirits up during the First World War. Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

<sup>329</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers.

<sup>330</sup> According to R.W. Connell, relations of power that exist among masculinities (hegemony, subordination, complicity, marginalization) govern the way that men behave. Since the concept of masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity, the process of "othering" is inherent in the

self-worth to allow themselves some latitude in using language that was normally used by other classes<sup>331</sup> as a way of both capturing the flavour of their day-to-day lives – sometimes ironically – and serving as comic relief in letters that sometimes told of things that were quite serious. The men studied here demonstrate the kind of comfort in crossing class barriers identified by Hammerton and Bailey.<sup>332</sup> But, unlike the *lower* lower-middle-class men in the previous chapter, the *upper* lower-middle-class men examined here sometimes expressed a measure of solidarity with the lower orders that went beyond simply using the odd slang expression. We can speculate that the reason they felt comfortable enough to sympathize with working-class issues and attitudes was they felt more secure in their class position – both socially and financially – than their counterparts in Chapter Two.

Demonstrating his comfort with various class idioms, A.V. Clements played with language in his letters home. When talking about the food that his company was given, he says: “The grub has been so far very good. ... Of course, the methods of serving it are a trifle barbarous.” On the one hand, Clements complains that the way his food is served is “barbarous,” clearly disavowing the kind of uncivilized habits the Army forced on him. At the same time, he uses the word “grub” – a slang word he likely would not have used at a typical family dinner. The juxtaposition of these tongue-in-cheek messages – one playing at being a class snob, the other playing at being a rough soldier – seems to indicate that Clements thought it was great fun to be slumming, provided it was only for the duration of the war. However, a subsequent letter reveals that his sympathies for the working man ran deeper than mere imitation of his speech. Addressing his father directly, he states with some force: “you mustn’t get so indignant with the chaps at home whom

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experience of being a man. In addition, the contestable nature of hegemonic (or dominant) masculinity means that individuals who aspire to being identified with it are always metaphorically looking over their shoulder. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>331</sup> For speech as a class marker in England see K.C. Phillipps, *Language and Class in Victorian England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1984).

<sup>332</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism or Partnership?”, 316; Peter Bailey, “White Collars, Gray Lives? The Lower Middle Class Revisited,” *Journal of British Studies* 38:3, Masculinity and the Lower Middle Class (July 1999), 273-290.

you call “shirkers.” Remember that if they do imperil their country by shirking, at the same time the employers are no less imperiling their country by refusing to grant the extra farthing an hour or whatever it is.” Clements was a soldier on active duty, making his attitude all the more surprising. He must have felt secure in his own class identity and masculinity to express tolerance and understanding for a group of lower-class workers who were criticized for their perceived failure not just as citizens but as men.<sup>333</sup> Clements demonstrated somewhat less tolerance and understanding for the French civilians he encountered while fighting abroad. In a letter written later in the war, he confesses: “I cannot rid myself of the prejudice which gives all French people an unhealthy, animalistic appearance in my eyes.” His comparison of French people to animals is an explicitly dehumanizing way of treating them as an “other.” Clements was conscious of the fact that his judgment of the French may have been unfair: he refers specifically to the concept of “prejudice” and to his inability to rid himself of it, and qualifies his judgment with the sheepish admission: “I suppose I am fed up with their country.”<sup>334</sup>

P.G. Foster’s “othering” of the civilians he encountered during his wartime service was restricted to women. In a letter to his sister, he says: “[w]ith regard to the French girls I do not like the look of them at all as it happens, you know you can’t beat an English girl.” Perhaps he was simply homesick or reassuring a family concerned about him falling into bad habits while serving abroad. Either way, this case of “othering” in his papers has a ring about it of insisting on his own virtue and setting a good example for his little sister. The second case of “othering” in Foster’s letters is dramatically different from the narrative found in the letters of his contemporaries. In planning his visit home with Stella, Foster tells her that he will have a friend with him – presumably a fellow soldier – who is

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<sup>333</sup> The fact that the masculinity of working-class men was centred principally around their physical strength and prowess and around their ability to bring home a good wage, meant that their refusal to work (while at the same time failing to volunteer to fight) was a lightning rod issue that sparked discussion not only about citizenship but also about manliness and masculinity: the strikers ran the risk of being labelled not only “shirkers” but also failures as men. (For the physicality of the working-class male, see John Tosh, “What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), 179-202.)

<sup>334</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

not white. He then tells Stella that she will enjoy meeting him, and sings his friend's praises: "...the Fiji Islander as you so aptly call him is not exactly black but a dark chocolate colour, of course you wont [sic] mind that, will you, not bad looking either, you will be sure to like him, he is such a decent sort of chap." Nevertheless, while calling someone "a decent sort of chap" instead of "animalistic [in] appearance" is an improvement, the fact remains that Foster still "others" his "Fiji Islander" friend by presenting him to his sister as an exotic attraction. As for playing with language, Foster does a little of that, jokingly telling his sister that he has "been about the country abit [sic] since I have been a "sojder"." The fact that "sojder" is in quotation marks signals to the reader that it is a tongue-in-cheek imitation of a working-class pronunciation of the word soldier. We can speculate that, like A.V. Clements, Foster was content to slum during the special circumstances created by war.<sup>335</sup>

J.S. Thomson also engaged in some gentle "othering" in his letters. When he became an officer, he wrote home that his servant was "a wild Irish boy." Half-jokingly he complains: "The only trouble is I can't understand half [of] what he says. I hope he isn't a Sinn Feiner." After seeing "native troops" in person while wounded and on the way back to an English hospital, he reports that they looked "like a circus," calling them "quaint" and making a point of noting "the Cuirassiers with their breast plates, & fireman's helmets with long plumes." Here, again, Thomson's description is not critical or negative, but he "others" the colonial troops through descriptions of their perceived exoticism. Like the other men examined in this chapter, Thomson felt confident enough in his respectability and level of education to imitate working-class speech patterns in letters home – in a humorous way, of course. After giving his parents an extensive list of the luxuries he consumed at the officers' mess, including coffee, liqueurs, whiskey and cigars, he concludes: "S'norful thing war is!" The contrast between the sentiment expressed, the level of language used, and the reality on which it was used to comment makes the humour more effective. We can speculate that because Thomson had just

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<sup>335</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers.

joined the ranks of “officers and gentlemen” he had an extra bit of confidence to play with language. When he was not joking, Thomson’s views of what sort of language was respectable and what was not were more conservative. In an early letter, he comments that some of the French “youngsters” had picked up a bit of English “from the British Tommy,” adding that “some of them could almost compete with a navvy.” While amusing, this was not an approving comment. In his own letters, Thomson swore or made references to himself using bad language only rarely – exclusively in letters to his brother David and in connection with extreme battlefield stress.

But Thomson’s opinion of the “British Tommy” was not low, despite his disapproval of the rank-and-file soldiers’ bad language. In fact, after he had been commissioned and had had a chance to enjoy the perks of being an officer, his sympathy toward the Tommies increased. In a letter that gleefully listed the advantages he enjoyed as an officer – better food, better transportation, and better billeting arrangements – he admits: “It is some better than the old bully beef & biscuit on the floor stunt. I have a greater respect than ever for the foot slogger now.” His improved circumstances did not cause him to repudiate the group to which he had not long ago belonged. Likely, this was in part because he felt confident in his own class position and thus did not need to underscore the distinction between “us” and “them” at every turn.<sup>336</sup>

## Endurance and stoicism

Another characteristic that defined *upper* lower-middle-class men’s masculinity was an attitude of stoicism and cheerfulness despite hardships and loneliness, a determination to do their duty, and a tendency to put a brave face on things in letters home to spare family members grief and worry – especially parents and younger siblings. One reason these men repeatedly assured their parents that they were in good spirits and encouraged them

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<sup>336</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

in turn to keep their spirits up,<sup>337</sup> may have been that young men of Edwardian Britain felt pressure to support their mothers emotionally and spare them worry.<sup>338</sup> Another reason may have been an internal compulsion to live up to the hegemonic masculinity ideal that was tough and stoical at the turn of the century.<sup>339</sup> Historians have argued that turn-of-the-century masculinity was characterized by a “flight from domesticity.” Although lower-middle-class men may have been somewhat exempt from that trend, since they tended to focus on their home life and family,<sup>340</sup> emotional control was seen by the men in this chapter as a key way to demonstrate that they were real men. The one significant difference between the *lower* lower-middle-class men of Chapter Two and the *upper* lower-middle-class men studied here is that the latter sometimes felt freer to express their cheerfulness and endurance in ways that were humorous while at the same time challenged authority. Possibly this was because they did not harbour as keen a desire for advancement as their counterparts in Chapter Two and therefore did not feel as bound to follow rules.

P.G. Foster demonstrated an attitude of cheerfulness and stoicism in his letters to his sister. His approach was that of an older, more experienced sibling to a younger one; he enquired about Stella’s well-being, offered her advice, and tried to cheer her up when things went badly. However, on occasion he also reassured her that he himself was doing all right, writing: “I still retain my good health & good spirits & hope to remain so for quite a long time.”<sup>341</sup> As for J.S. Thomson, on October 3, 1914 he reassured his mother

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<sup>337</sup> The one instance of letters containing explicit battlefield descriptions was written by J.S. Thomson to his brother David, who was old enough to be considered a contemporary who could handle such harsh truth. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

<sup>338</sup> Michael Roper, “Maternal Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival in Letters Home During the First World War,” in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, eds. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>339</sup> Martin Francis, “The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity,” *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002): 637-52.

<sup>340</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism or Partnership?”

<sup>341</sup> Lieutenant P.G. Foster, papers.

that both he and Gordon are “both still keeping very well.” Two years later he sent a carefully worded letter that communicated the information that he had been wounded while at the same time taking care to minimize its negative impact. Thomson broke the news humorously, telling his mother that he “had a bit of an argument with a trench mortar shell and the TM won.” After comparing the incident to a “Saturday night brawl,” he jokes that he “got [his] money’s worth & made sure of getting Christmas out of the trenches.” Lest his mother expect him to be sent to England while he recovered, he cautions her that “Bliteys are hard to get now. So don’t be unduly optimistic...” but ends his letter with the reassurance that “you can bet we are still merry & bright” – this despite the fact that he had two black and swollen eyes, injuries to both wrists, and a chunk of flesh missing from his left thigh and right shin.<sup>342</sup>

Similarly, A.V. Clements tried to cheer his parents up in his letters, telling them things like: “keep your peckers up and remember the millions who are a deuced sight worse off.” He chose to minimize the peril he was in by treating the subject of the daily dangers he was exposed to at the front with humour. After telling his parents that the British trenches were only about 25 yards away from the German ones in places, he says that “the Huns ... indulge in such little pleasantries as bombing & mining.” Writing about his health and well-being, Clements tried to minimize both the physical and emotional toll the war was taking on him, doing his best to downplay a bullet wound in his arm. Upon learning that a female relative of his had cried when she heard the news of his being wounded, he comments: “Why people should take it like that, I don’t know. I was feeling rather pleased.” One reason he’d have been pleased to be wounded may have been the prospect of being shipped to a hospital in England to recover. A “Blighty,” or a wound that was neither life-threatening nor disfiguring but was serious enough to warrant a ticket home, was coveted by legions of British soldiers.

In a way that was unique to the *upper* lower-middle-class men examined here, A.V. Clements sometimes expressed his cheerfulness in humorous ways that challenged

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<sup>342</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

authority. Early in the war, he recounted an incident that had taken place during mealtime. To the Orderly Officer's question concerning the meal Clements was still waiting to receive, "How do you find it?" he replied cheekily: "Haven't found it yet, sir!" He proudly tells his parents that this "set the table in a roar." Clements also challenged the authority of army censors in humorous ways. In a letter that refers to certain comments made by the censor on his previous correspondence,<sup>343</sup> Clements reassures his parents that nothing is wrong and that censorship of this extent is a normal part of wartime. He adds that, if all soldiers followed censorship guidelines to the letter, "you poor recipients at home ... would be driven mad by trying to [extract] some meaning out of our letters." Feeling particularly rebellious, he adds: "That's the Censor told off!"<sup>344</sup> The overall impression one gets from Clements' letters is that he was determined to remain cheerful and do his duty. His outlook is neatly summarized in a passage from the letter in which he chastises his parents for being critical of his marriage. He states, with great force, that "it certainly is part of every ... man's duty to bear his burdens silently & to do all in his power to increase the happiness of those around him." This is an explicit statement about the type of masculinity that Clements aspired to embody and, as is evident from his letters, he did his best to live up to his own ideal.<sup>345</sup>

### Attitudes toward war and peace

These three *upper* lower-middle-class men juxtaposed a desire to fight the enemy with a longing for peace. In general, they started their wartime experience with enthusiasm and determination and gradually became tired and somewhat disappointed with the reality of fighting a drawn-out war. Nevertheless, the fatigue that took hold of them after years on active duty and the questions they began to ask about how the war was being fought should not be confused with the kind of total disillusionment that came to be known in

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<sup>343</sup> That particular letter is not preserved in Clements' file.

<sup>344</sup> The censor responds directly to this challenge: next to Clements' words appears a sentence written in different handwriting, which states: "Someone else will get told off."

<sup>345</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

the 1960s and beyond as the Myth of the War – a type of attitude that was generally not expressed in contemporary reports of the war but, rather, in retrospective accounts such as memoirs.<sup>346</sup> Nevertheless, the *upper* lower-middle-class men in this chapter tended to express more disillusionment than the *lower* lower-middle-class men studied in Chapter Two. Although they did not go as far as to proclaim that the war was pointless or wrongheaded, they questioned the unfair distribution of the burden of the war and criticized the vast war machine that treated men as cogs in a machine. Because they did not view the war as a fortuitous opportunity for advancement, but rather as simply an interruption of their civilian path to success and a duty to be done, they may have derived less benefit from it and therefore had less patience for its long duration. Still, even at their most exhausted and jaded, these men continued to believe it was necessary to see the war through to a successful end.

J.S. Thomson's experience is a good example of this transition from initial enthusiasm to war fatigue. He started out in 1914 as a keen young soldier, eager to get involved in the fighting. Two years into the war, on July 31, 1916, he still displayed a martial attitude, telling the folks at home that "[i]t is a great stunt watching for Huns & then dropping a surprise iron ration on them" and bragging that the soldiers he fought with still displayed "[t]he same old spirit of "let 'em all come"." But during the third year of the war, on March 8, 1917, he wrote to his brother David about his disappointment that, although he had tried to impress upon his medical board that he was unfit for duty, "it didn't work, & they put me down as fit for general service again." In the same letter, Thomson advises David to remain a civilian for as long as possible: "Take my tip & stick over there as long as you can." The bloom was off the rose as regards the glory of fighting a war. He also felt bitter about the selfishness of young men who were reluctant to volunteer. Writing

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<sup>346</sup> The so-called Myth of the War, which took root during two waves of commemoration in the 1930s and 1960s, is the popular perception that the First World War was a pointless bloodbath which should never have happened, that the soldiers who took part in it were sacrificed by their incompetent military leaders for no good reason, and that the war achieved no useful political objectives. Repeated from an earlier footnote. Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005); Joan Tumblety, ed. *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

about an acquaintance who had “not joined anything yet” and viewed possible army service as “an awful waste of his time from the point of view of his business (!!!),” Thomson comments that there were “a great deal too many young men about with the same views, entirely selfish ones.” He found such an attitude appalling mainly because of the sacrifices he and his comrades made on a daily basis. He expresses the view that “compulsory service” would be a “jolly good thing” as it would “equalize things more, & those already serving would get the best terms.” We cannot easily explain the contradiction that Thomson urged his brother to stay home for as long as possible while at the same time complaining about young men who refused to volunteer. However, it may have been a human reaction that prioritized the safety of his little brother over the call of ideology. It is also possible that Thomson felt that, owing to his own direct participation in the fighting, his family were already doing their part.

One particular comment made by Thomson holds the key to his views and those of his *upper* lower-middle-class counterparts. After telling his brother that he would not mind being left behind in England but “for one or two reasons I should like another whack” at combat, he says: “...nobody who has been literally at the front can honestly want to go back. It’s the chaps who have had “cushy” jobs at the base etc, who are not yet fed up.” Thomson felt that those who had fought at the front were entitled to feel disillusioned to an extent, although they would continue to do their duty because they were men, and that was what men did. Thomson underscored the key distinction that was made by both soldiers and officers between men they respected and those for whom they felt a certain amount of contempt: active participation in the fighting. Elsewhere, I have argued that a “trench” masculinity was constructed in British trench journals in opposition to the dominant image of manliness enjoyed by senior staff officers. This “trench” masculinity was composed of two distinct strands: the front-line officer and the rank-and-file Tommy. However, the key characteristic of both strands was risking your life in direct contact

with the enemy, as opposed to directing operations from the safety of the rear.<sup>347</sup>

Thomson echoes his contempt of so-called “brass hats,” or senior staff officers, in the following passage: “We also had sundry inspections, viz by the Prince of Wales, who dropped into our billet one afternoon, General French, the King, having first scraped all the mud off the road for him, & sundry other swell ’brass hats’.” The implicit judgment is that his company’s time would have been spent more productively doing something that was vital to the war effort rather than trying to whitewash the reality of war for the sake of sparing the delicate sensibilities of a few privileged men.<sup>348</sup>

A.V. Clements shared Thomson’s dislike of brass hats, writing to his parents that “[t]oday, in the morning, we did Battallion [sic] drill before some bloomin’ Staff Officer, & repeated this afternoon. A bit fed up...”<sup>349</sup> Thomson’s contempt for men who were not active participants in the war was not reserved exclusively for officials. He also expressed outrage that a man who had brought down a Zeppelin over England had received the Victoria Cross and an income for life. Calling the fuss that had been made over him “disgusting,” Thomson calls attention to the countless pilots at the front “who go up day after day & bring down balloons & planes not over friendly country but right over the Hun lines, with ... machine guns potting at him as hard as they can all the time – 22 brought down on Friday – & all that happens is that perhaps you read a little paragraph Capt X or Lieut Y brought down a plane...”<sup>350</sup> A.V. Clements sarcastically comments “what courage!” about a friend who had said that he was going to enlist because conscription was imminent.<sup>351</sup> Both Thomson and Clements felt strongly about the moral superiority of the men who risked their lives every day. Likely, they not only felt these

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<sup>347</sup> Magdalena Hentel, “Dapper Gentlemen and Hard-working Tommies: Constructions of Masculinity in British Trench Journals, 1915-1919” (presentation, Bruce McCaffrey Memorial Graduate Seminar, Western University, October 2012).

<sup>348</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

<sup>349</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

<sup>350</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

<sup>351</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

men were morally superior, but also superior in terms of their masculinity – actively participating in the fighting confirmed that they were indeed real men.

The trajectory of A.V. Clements's attitude toward the war mirrored that of J.S. Thomson. He began the war appalled at the brutality of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, reporting that "it has enraged our fellows; we hear officially that the Tommies absolutely refuse to take prisoners..." and expressing some sympathy for this reaction. Two years into the war, Thomson still had his bloodthirsty moments, writing home on July 27, 1916 that "[t]hank the Lord we're getting some revenge for the good lads who have fallen." He was also happy when he heard that the burden he and his comrades bore would soon be shared, commenting: "...they are going to compel single men to enlist. And about time too!" However, he makes it clear that he was only in the army because it was his duty, saying that: "[p]ersonally, I prefer a peaceful life." And by mid-1916 he started to show signs of weariness with combat, commenting "Lucky devil!" about a fellow soldier who would probably be discharged following a serious injury that left one of his legs shorter than the other. But the worst of his disillusionment did not come until late 1917, when the years of being separated from his family and young wife began to wear on him in earnest. He complained about "this cursed War" and, when his wife fell ill and he could not go to her, he says he felt "like an animal chained to a pole, unable to do anything..." Seeing the new army drafts arriving, he judged some of the men "obviously quite unfit." Although he was critical that they would have to be rationed and clothed at the country's expense, he comments that "[t]hey are the victims of War, & have my sympathy." To refer to conscripts as victims of war when not long before he had cheered the idea of conscription was a marked transformation. In his letters home, Clements began to show signs of disenchantment not just with the conditions under which he was living but with the idea of war itself. He had come to see war as "a vast business concern; the goods we turn out are fighting-men; they come back to us damaged ... & we repair ... them, & turn them out again." This image of war as never-ending industrial production was underscored in a subsequent letter to his parents when he told them that little had changed in the war during the past three years: "[m]aybe the oscillations are less violent, but the result seems the same – what we lose on the swings we gain on the roundabouts, & vice versa." What he perceived as a hopeless stalemate led him to propose, with dark humour, that "it would

be a good idea to stop this old war, of which everyone is tired ... & start a nice new one,” preferably with a fifty-year hiatus between the two. The perk of the fifty-year hiatus would be that by the time the new war started Clements would be “well over military age.” He was reaching the limit of his endurance. However, even in this state, his conscience brought him up short when he considered the impact such an approach would have on future generations. Even though he was exasperated and despondent, Clements concludes that “the only way & the best is to set one’s teeth & see the business through.”<sup>352</sup>

## Responsibility

Another key characteristic that defined these men was a solemn sense of responsibility and duty. These three men earnestly planned for the future, carefully handled their finances, and approached any responsibilities assigned to them as soldiers and officers with the utmost diligence. Despite the looming prospect of being wounded or killed in battle, the probability of which increased once they obtained their commissions, these men chose to invest in their future rather than focus on the present day – behaviour that has been identified as typically middle-class.<sup>353</sup> Their focus on responsibility, as opposed to autonomy and independence, has been seen as a key difference between middle-class and working-class masculinity. Working-class men in Victorian and Edwardian Britain demonstrated their independence by having money to spend at a pub with their work mates,<sup>354</sup> and middle-class men viewed taking responsibility for their families as precisely what proved they were worthy of being called “men.”

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<sup>352</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

<sup>353</sup> Simon Gunn and Rachel Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London: Cassell & Co., 1996), 45.

<sup>354</sup> Pamela J. Walker, “‘I Live But Yet Not I for Christ Liveth in Me’: Men and Masculinity in the Salvation Army, 1865-90,” in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, eds. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 92-112.

The men in this chapter took responsibility for both their families and the men under their command. P.G. Foster went out of his way to encourage Stella to take her business studies seriously. His encouragement was in line with the attitudes of the middle class, whom Gunn and Bell have called “the people who pass exams.” For the middle class, education was “a form of capital which could be turned into lifelong prosperity and security” and which could be parlayed into social mobility.<sup>355</sup> For the lower middle class, education was often the one asset they could reliably lay their hands on. J.S. Thomson took the prospect of obtaining a commission seriously, asking his parents’ advice on which of his educational certificates to submit in support of his application and keeping them up to date on its progress. Although he did not count on his temporary commission as a way of permanently advancing his career or social status, he was determined to do his duty to the best of his ability. He was diligent in his work, proudly reporting to his parents that the CO had congratulated him on his map-making skills. He also got his brother Gordon to send him “a book called Animal Management,” so he could take care of the horses under his care. He often worked late and got little sleep: “I have only had 2 nights full sleep since last Sunday week. Otherwise it varies from about ½ hour to perhaps 4 hours.” But even when exhausted, Thomson made sure that his responsibilities were seen to before he let himself rest. In one of his long letters to his brother David, he reports on a weary day at the end of which “we found billets for the night” and “slept the sleep of the just as soon as we got there.” He adds, with emphasis: “Except yours truly who, as company orderly corporal, had to get all the rations, distribute them etc. & do several odd jobs, draw blankets & so on.” This was a man who believed that if a job was worth doing, it was worth doing well.<sup>356</sup>

Like Thomson, A.V. Clements did not count on his commission as an opportunity for advancement; rather, he saw it as a duty that happened to come with certain perks. He made his attitude explicit in a letter home to his parents, writing: “Now, about this

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<sup>355</sup> Gunn and Bell, 124.

<sup>356</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

Commission business. I have seen enough of war to hate it, so you need not fear that I should embrace it as a profession. . . . But our skipper says it is our duty, I agree with him; & practically all our decent chaps are applying.” Although he admits that “in ordinary trench warfare the officer’s risk is less than the ranker’s,” he claims that “that doesn’t count.” This is not the attitude of someone who hoped that a temporary commission might open doors for him once the war was over and help him advance. Rather, it is the attitude of someone who is keen to do his duty. He also felt strongly about doing his duty in the context of his personal life – for himself and for others. Telling his parents about a “terribly despondent letter” he had received from his sister Lil, who had recently lost her child to illness, he was critical of what he perceived as her tendency to wallow in her grief and neglect her family. He says: “I cannot help thinking that, heavy tho’ her loss has been it is time she had somewhat recovered her interest in things & settled down to do all she can for Ern & Betty.” When it came to his own life, he did not make decisions rashly, trying to do the responsible thing at all times. When he and Grace made the decision to marry, they did so after carefully considering all the pros and cons of not waiting until the war was over. Financially, Clements had considered the issue from every angle – a calculation he describes in detail to his parents: “Grace will get the Army Allowance & proposes to return to the office after a short holiday, so that she would continue to earn her living. My salary would still, therefore be in reserve, ready for us to start a home with whenever I may be at liberty to settle down. So that, altogether, on the money score I see no great difficulty.” His careful consideration of the matter would have been expected in lower-middle-class circles at the time, since marriage was a huge undertaking and lower-middle-class men were often forced to delay it owing to their limited salaries and resulting straitened financial circumstances.<sup>357</sup> Clements reminds his parents that he and Grace “fully realize that this is a terribly momentous step” and that their decision to marry “cannot be termed hasty” because they had known each other for seven years and been engaged for two. He was keen to ensure that his family perceived his decision as

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<sup>357</sup> Geoffrey D. Spurr, “The London YMCA: A Haven of Masculine Self-Improvement and Socialization for the Late-Victorian and Edwardian Clerk,” *Canadian Journal of History* 37 (August 2002): 275-301.

responsible, asking them to “tell me you think I am neither headstrong nor imprudent nor inconsiderate – for I have striven not to be.” Being responsible both in his work and in his private life was important to A.V. Clements.<sup>358</sup>

## Attitudes toward advancement

The primary difference between the men studied in the previous chapter and the men studied here is that the men in this chapter were not as aspirational or determined to achieve career advancement. They viewed their temporary commissions as a duty that carried certain benefits, like better conditions and reduced risk in the trenches, but they did not count on it as a springboard that would launch them into greater success in their post-war civilian lives. Their secure white-collar jobs in England and their professional identity tied to a specific occupation meant they were not as obsessed with promotion as their counterparts in the previous chapter. Moreover, they did not approach the process of applying for a commission empty-handed: their civilian professional skills were an asset which opened doors that traditionally only opened to public-school-educated men. The traditional route to becoming an officer was through an OTC at one of Britain’s public schools, or alternatively at Oxbridge.<sup>359</sup> Men who attended these schools, generally members of the upper- and upper-middle-classes, were given an education in the classics and mathematics, with subjects such as modern history, modern languages, and science only grudgingly making their way into the curriculum.<sup>360</sup> Instead, public schools focused on teaching leadership, giving their students a good pedigree, and indoctrinating them with the fundamentals of the era’s ideal stiff-upper-lip masculinity. Although the men studied in this chapter lacked such a traditional education, along with the pedigree and

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<sup>358</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

<sup>359</sup> Keith Simpson, “The Officers,” in *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, eds. Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson, 63-98 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

<sup>360</sup> Gunn and Bell, 125.

influence it entailed, they possessed technical skills that were in demand in trench warfare and thus had bargaining power in wartime conditions.

A.V. Clements felt he had such bargaining power, although he was nonchalant about using it. When he applied for a commission, he did so because his superior said it was his duty. Although he did not consider himself privileged or in a position to warrant special treatment – Clements told his parents that being sent to England to wait with one’s regiment was “for the lucky devils with influence behind them” – he did not seem to doubt his chances of obtaining a commission. He calmly set about getting his papers together, asking his parents to get his “Matriculation Certificate; that is safe at home, probably in the top long drawer in my room” and to obtain a character reference from “a clergyman or a magistrate or a Naval or Military Officer.” He also spent a paragraph speculating on which regiment he would most like to join and which “I should not care about, having seen some of them here.” Clements put many of the professional skills he had acquired as a civilian to good use in the jobs he did during the war. As he wrote to his parents, he had “quite a considerable amount of writing to do in connection with my job.” In another letter, he complains that “I am quite fed up with clerical work by the time evening comes...” He may have been fed up with it, but his civilian expertise would have made him competent at clerical work.<sup>361</sup>

J.S. Thomson was similarly confident. His allegiance to his civilian profession was strong; even in wartime, he thought of himself as an architect-in-training. In a letter to his brother David – who was taking up “Land Surveying & Civil Engineering” – he complains: “I am getting very rusty out here. It will be rotten starting to work again for my final when we get back.” He also looked at the destroyed landscape around him with an architect’s eye, telling David that “[a]rchitects ought to be very busy out here after the war judging by the way some of the villages & towns we pass through have been smashed up.” Thomson was also confident about obtaining his commission, in large part because his civilian training in architecture had given him skills that were in demand,

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<sup>361</sup> A.V. Clements, papers.

writing to his parents that the Colonel had told him that “he was not allowed to recommend anyone for artillery unless they had special qualifications,” specifically in mathematics and related subjects. Thomson had such training. He asked his parents’ advice about what documents to send in support of his application, considering things like “the Cambridge Local” and “the Board of Education certificate for geometry (honours).” He also wondered if he should “get a note from Mr Paterson at Mercer’s saying what I did with him in Mathematics, Dynamics, Trigonometry & Geometry.” The military authorities were already putting Thomson’s specialized skills to good use: he was “making a billet map of the village, & several copies, from rough drawings & a tracing from an old map ... for Div H.Q., Bde H.Q., Town Major, etc.” and doing so in a rough drawing office with a leaky roof, “no tee- or set-squares, the drawings pinned down with nails to a rough trestle table, & a fag end of candle in a bottle.” The drawing work that Thomson ably carried out, along with his technical education, meant that the army was interested in his candidacy despite its concerns that he had no qualifications in artillery work. Accordingly, he was told that “every endeavour would be made to get me my commission.” The kind of technical education J.S. Thomson had received was not typical of a traditional officer and gentleman. And yet his technical skills were what made the army keen to give him a commission because of the demands of modern trench warfare. Thus, as an educated lower-middle-class man, Thomson found an alternate route into the officer class on his own terms, if only for the duration of the war. R.W. Connell has written about a polarity that developed within modern hegemonic masculinity between dominance and technical expertise as management became divided from the professions. According to Connell, to date neither version has displaced the other. Rather, “[t]hey currently coexist as gendered practices, sometimes in opposition and sometimes meshing.”<sup>362</sup> Thomson’s success in obtaining his commission on the basis of his technical know-how, which was accorded respect by army officials – in other words, by

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<sup>362</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 194.

the models of hegemonic masculinity whose club he was trying to join – can be read in this light. Although he aspired to emulate them, he did so on his terms.<sup>363</sup>

The *upper* lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter shared many characteristics that defined them as men, a number of which they had in common with the *lower* lower-middle-class men studied in the previous chapter. These men were close with their families, had a solid grasp on the value of money, and acted responsibly in their private and professional lives. They also made room in their lives for sensitivity and artistic sensibility, and exhibited a measure of snobbery against classes other than their own and groups they considered less respectable – sometimes foreign “others.” Nevertheless, they felt confident enough in their own class standing to jokingly use lower-class language in their letters home. Like the men in the previous chapter, they exhibited an attitude of stoicism, endurance, and cheerfulness in their dealings with the folks back home, but in contrast with their *lower* lower-middle-class counterparts they sometimes did so in ways that challenged authority. Like the men in the previous chapter they fought the enemy with conviction but their enthusiasm drained away as the war continued. Although the resulting disillusionment did not go as far as the revisionist view of the First World War did in the 1960s, it was nevertheless more pronounced than that of the *lower* lower-middle-class men in Chapter Two – perhaps because the *upper* lower-middle-class men viewed the war less as a vehicle for personal advancement and therefore had less of a personal stake in it. The main difference between the men in this chapter and those in the previous chapter is that the *upper* lower-middle-class men studied here were not as aspirational in their behaviours or attitudes, perhaps because they could already claim a measure of success and stability in their civilian lives. They were also able to capitalize on their lower-middle-class training and skills to open doors that traditionally only opened to upper-middle-class men educated in public schools. Like their *lower* lower-middle-class counterparts, these men had a secure sense of self and a solid confidence in their own worth. They also did not aspire to opt out of the dominant officer and

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<sup>363</sup> 2nd Lieutenant J.S. Thomson, papers.

gentleman hegemonic masculinity model, but to join it. However, their professional skills gave them greater leeway to do so on their own terms.

## Chapter 4

### First-wave memoirs of lower-middle-class temporary officers

This chapter examines representations of masculinity and identity in first-wave memoirs of five lower-middle-class men who received temporary commissions during the First World War and later reminisced about their experiences. (For details of how the lower-middle-class men examined here were selected, please see the “Methodology – Selection Process” section on page xxv of the Introduction.) Three of the memoirs have never been published, while two were published years after they were written. The overall message they convey is in line with that expressed in the wartime letters of lower-middle-class men studied in Chapters Two and Three: the men were comfortable with who they were, confident in forging their own destiny and proud of the skills and character traits with which their background had equipped them. These men wrote about their experiences in memoir form at different points in their lives: some set down their recollections shortly after demobilization, while others waited until their twilight years and the leisure afforded by retirement to look back on their wartime activities. Although many based their written recollections on diaries and letters written in wartime to ensure their memoirs were as factually accurate as possible, the finished product was always in some way shaped by the cultural climate of the time during which it was written.<sup>364</sup> Thus, while memoirs penned immediately after the war were influenced by the general feeling of relief at the war being over, those written in the late 1920s and 1930s tended to share the sense of disillusionment expressed in popular war novels such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The publication of such memoirs predictably coincided with public interest in the topic and the resulting demand for material. There were two so-called war books booms in Great Britain, both reflecting the zeitgeist and in some way responding to contemporary needs and concerns: the initial boom, in the 1920s and early 1930s, gave vent to anxieties about domestic and international unrest. The second boom, in the 1960s,

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<sup>364</sup> Joan Tumblety, ed., *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the First World War and a generally pessimistic reassessment of the event in popular media – a reassessment which in turn led to the wholehearted acceptance by the public of the “mud, blood and futility” view of the war.<sup>365</sup> I have divided the lower-middle-class memoir sources into two groups, roughly corresponding to the two war books booms, and have labelled them as “first-wave memoirs” and “second-wave memoirs.” The first-wave memoirs examined in this chapter were written immediately after the war and into the mid-1950s.

Clifford Carter, from Yorkshire, was twenty-one years old when the war broke out; William Reginald Brown, from Oxford, was twenty years old in 1914; Edward Jarman Higson, from Altrincham in Cheshire, was twenty-two years old when the war began; Ernest Parker, from Battersea, was just short of his eighteenth birthday when he enlisted in August 1914; and Henry Ogle, brought up in Lancashire, was twenty-five years old when the war began. Clifford Carter enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion (1<sup>st</sup> Hull), East Yorkshire Regiment in September 1914, and trained with it until December 1915. He subsequently served with the Battalion (92nd Brigade, 31st Division) in Egypt from December 1915 to February 1916, and in France from March to July 1916, before transferring to the 7th Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment (50th Brigade, 17th (Northern) Division), still in France. He was wounded at the Battle of Arras in April 1917. From November 1917 until April 1918, he underwent officer training with an Officer Cadet Battalion in Ireland. He then served as a subaltern in the 2nd Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment (16th Brigade, 6th Division) during the final Allied advance on the Western Front from September to November 1918. He finished his wartime service with the Army of Occupation in Germany from December 1918 until March 1919. William Reginald Brown was a pre-1914 Territorial of the 1/4th Battalion, Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (48th Division), and trained with them before serving in France from March 1915 until December 1916. He took part in the Battle of the Somme

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<sup>365</sup> Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1992); Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005).

in July 1916 and was invalided home. Subsequently, he underwent officer training with No. 7 Officer Cadet Battalion in Ireland in 1918 and was commissioned. He served with the 11th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry (59th Division) from September to November 1918 and was demobilized in May 1919. EJ Higson enlisted with the 16th Battalion Manchester Regiment (90th Brigade, 30th Division) and trained in the UK from September 1914 to November 1915. In October 1915 he embarked for France, where he was based in the Somme sector. He was wounded by shrapnel on July 9, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme, and evacuated to a hospital in the UK. He underwent officer training at the 17th Officer Cadet Battalion in Kinmel Park, North Wales, starting in May 1917. He was sent back to France as a Lieutenant with the 10th Battalion Cheshire Regiment (7th Brigade, 25th Division) at Givenchy, and then in December 1917 on the Somme until the spring of 1918, where he saw action during the German Spring Offensive. He was wounded on the Ypres Salient on April 14, 1918, and sent home. Ernest Parker enlisted on September 1, 1914, two weeks before his eighteenth birthday, having given a false age. He joined a Reserve Cavalry Regiment (15th and 19th Hussars). By 1915, he had been drafted to the Durham Light Infantry (10th Battalion). Parker crossed to France in August 1915 as a reinforcement draft for the 10/DLI, and fought at the Somme in 1916. He was promoted to Corporal and then applied for a commission. In December 1916 he joined the Officer Cadet Battalion at Kinmel Camp near Rhyl, and was then posted to the 2/Royal Fusiliers in the 29th Division. He was wounded at Poelcappelle on October 9, 1917 and never returned to the front. Henry Ogle joined the Royal Warwicks, part of the 48th Division TF, in September 1914 and went to France in March 1915 as a private soldier. He was promoted to corporal during the Battle of the Somme. He was sent to the 19th Officer Cadet Battalion in Pirbright, Surrey, and commissioned in 1917. Subsequently, he served as a subaltern with the 2/5th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment TF, and won a Military Cross in the spring of 1918. In late September 1918 he was wounded and did not see action again.

Memoirs can give us insights into these men's thoughts which they would not have disclosed in letters to family. They shed light on the martial side of their war experience which they would have self-censored in personal correspondence during the war – in terms of military actions, wartime relationships, and their allegiance to their

“professional” soldier identity.<sup>366</sup> They also give a forum for these men’s retrospective reflections on issues they would not have had time to dwell on while preoccupied with daily survival. Yet, individual memory can be influenced by shared or cultural memory, especially when it comes to such a seminal event as the First World War, and memoirs written after the fact can tell us as much about the time during which they were written as about the time of which they tell.<sup>367</sup> Nevertheless, as deeply personal and reflective documents, memoirs give us an unparalleled glimpse into the writer’s thoughts and beliefs. Peter Bailey has examined the autobiographies of lower-middle-class men in an attempt to bring the focus away from top-down portrayals of this “subordinate” class.<sup>368</sup> However, his work does not deal with memoirs written during wartime. Gary Sheffield draws on a handful of lower-middle-class memoirs, in addition to recollections by men of other classes and contemporary letters, in his work on officer-man relations.<sup>369</sup> However, his focus is on relationships between the ranks in a military context, not on personal identity and subjective experience. This PhD project makes a unique contribution in looking at the wartime memoirs of lower-middle-class temporary officers, laying bare their thoughts on issues such as class, identity, and patriotism. Although their civilian identity took precedence, these men believed strongly in doing their duty by fighting at the front. They also bought into the idea of paternalism once they were commissioned, thus upholding the officer and gentleman masculinity standard that had previously excluded them, rather than undermining it. They further shored up this ideal by criticizing those officers they thought fell short of the standard and praising those who they thought exemplary. This PhD dissertation makes a contribution to the field of masculinity studies

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<sup>366</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>367</sup> Tumblety.

<sup>368</sup> Peter Bailey, “White Collars, Gray Lives? The Lower Middle Class Revisited,” *Journal of British Studies* 38:3 (July 1999).

<sup>369</sup> G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 2000).

through examining the attitudes of lower-middle-class men who, due to an accident of history, were given temporary membership in a higher class that had previously excluded and disparaged them. These men, whose lower-middle-class allegiance had previously not entitled them to the descriptor “manly” in popular perception, were given the chance to prove their mettle in the most traditionally hypermasculine setting: an army at war.

I use a somewhat different approach to class when dealing with memoirs written in retrospect in contrast with letters written in the heat of the moment. First, the personal circumstances – and therefore class allegiance – of these men may have changed between their temporary gentleman experience and the time they put pen to paper. At the time of writing, many were in the beginning stages of a steady upward social trajectory which, though generally not meteoric, nonetheless made them feel more securely middle-class and alleviated some anxiety about the prospect of sliding back down the social scale. Paradoxically, this sometimes had the effect of making them more open about discussing their lower-middle-class experience during the war. Second, societal attitudes towards class shifted in the wake of the First World War, and the post-war public debate about temporary gentlemen brought their situation into the mainstream.<sup>370</sup> In the wake of 1918, class was discussed in a way it had not been before. Gary Sheffield argues that, following the First World War, upper-middle-class subalterns developed an affection for and a better understanding of the lower classes because they were exposed to them while serving alongside them. He posits that their experience later bore fruit in the “emergence of consensus attitudes in British society.”<sup>371</sup> The attitudes of the lower-middle-class men who sat down to write their memoirs were influenced by those of the society in which they lived, and this was expressed in the ways they addressed the issue of class. For the purposes of this chapter, I consider their class allegiance as it was in the years 1914-1919,

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<sup>370</sup> Martin Petter, “‘Temporary Gentlemen’ in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,” *The Historical Journal* 37:1 (March 1994).

<sup>371</sup> Gary Sheffield, “The Effect of the First World War on Class Relations in Britain,” in *Command and Morale: The British Army on the Western Front 1914-1918*, 213-228 (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Praetorian Press, 2014), 225.

while at the same time contending with their shifting attitudes when their memoirs were written.

Clifford Carter was an insurance clerk employed at the Hull office of the Eagle Star and British Dominions Insurance Company when the war broke out. He enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment – popularly known as the Hull Commercial – in September 1914. His salary continued to be paid throughout the war. The 1911 UK census lists him as a “clerk – shipbuilding” as well as a “student – civil service.” The same census record lists his father’s occupation as “Baptist minister” and discloses that both his father and mother were born in Stepney in London’s East End, a poor area of the city. The family had no live-in servants. Education and the opportunity for advancement that it offered were important to Clifford Carter. In fact, his skills paid dividends while he was in the army: he was employed as a teacher as part of the Army’s Educational Scheme after the armistice. Carter wrote his memoir in 1920-21, basing it largely on his letters and the pocket diaries he kept during the war. The handwritten memoir is fascinating because it is also a scrapbook of sorts: Carter pasted into it photographs, bits of letters, postcards, documents, and other mementoes. It reveals a man who saw overseas service as a fortuitous opportunity to see as much of the world as possible and learn as much as he could.<sup>372</sup>

William Reginald Harold Brown composed his typeset (but not published) memoir in 1922-23, based on memories of his wartime experiences. He would have had access to the equipment and know-how needed to ensure such a neat presentation of his recollections because he was in the printing business. The 1911 UK Census records that W.R.H. Brown was an “Apprentice Compositor” involved in “Linotype Operation” – an occupation to which he returned after being demobilized. It also lists his father as an overseer in a newspaper office, in charge of the printing press. Linotype operators walked a fine line as white-collar workers in a blue-collar environment. Brown’s occupation qualified as mental rather than manual labour because it was firmly rooted in literacy and

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<sup>372</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers, IWM Catalogue number: Documents. 7988.

there was a white-collar dress code for linotype operators. For this reason, as well as some of the “typically middle-class” attitudes revealed in his memoir, I have chosen to treat him as lower-middle-class.<sup>373</sup>

Edward Jarman Higson was a clerk who enlisted in the 1st Battalion Manchester Pals, a battalion of Manchester Clerks and Warehousemen. The 1911 UK Census lists his father’s occupation as “agent” and reveals that Edward and his two brothers were employed as clerks. His family had no live-in servants. Edward was ambitious: after the war he worked in the textile industry and eventually became the Production and Weaving Manager for Burgess Ledward. Owing to his occupation at the time the First World War broke out, as well as his ambitions and his family’s lack of live-in servants, he can be considered lower-middle-class. Higson composed his memoirs sometime after the First World War ended but did not make them public or share them with his family. They were discovered by his son, Geoffrey, only after the death of Geoffrey’s mother in 1984. (Edward died in 1968.) Since the memoirs were closely based on the diaries Edward kept throughout the war, with little post-war editorializing and no hint of the kind of anti-war feeling that pervaded memoirs in the 1960s, and since it is more likely that Edward wrote them during the many decades of his life, including his retirement, that preceded the 1960s, I have chosen to include his memoirs in the first-wave memoir chapter. The memoirs were typed up by Geoffrey Higson’s daughter-in-law and neatly compiled into a self-published booklet for the benefit of “future generations of the family” in 2000, but never formally published.<sup>374</sup>

Ernest Parker was still in school at the time of the 1911 UK Census. The census record shows his father as having a building and picture framing business, and his sister as a shorthand typist. The family had no live-in servants. Parker left school at age fourteen and began work at Longmans, Green & Co. where his intelligence and aptitude for work were soon recognized by the office manager. After the war he continued to work at

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<sup>373</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, IWM Catalogue number: Documents. 4566.

<sup>374</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 11596.

Longmans as a travelling salesman; in his later years, he became a successful educational publisher. Parker's memoir, *Into Battle 1914-1918*, was written in the early 1920s but not published until 1964, on the 50th anniversary of the First World War and at the height of the second war books boom. Although the foreword to the first edition refers to poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon – strong indications of its 1960s disillusionment bent – and the preface to the first edition, written by Parker, looks back on the war as a horrible thing, the memoir itself does not share that outlook. Its title, “Into Battle,” refers to the title of a poem by Julian Grenfell which ends with the words “And he is dead who will not fight; And who dies fighting has increase” – hardly an anti-war sentiment. Despite its late date of publication, Ernest Parker's memoir falls squarely within the first-wave memoir group. The reason *Into Battle* was not published until the 1960s was ostensibly because the manuscript had gathered dust for years and was only “disinterred” by Parker's son, Ian. It also likely had to do with the fact that it was only later in life that Ernest Parker had the kind of professional success that would make publishing memoirs easy for a man who had started life as a member of the lower middle class – the kind of success he bragged about by casually mentioning the fact that his son had gone to Oxford. The memoir was initially published by Longmans, Green and Co Ltd., the company that employed Parker.<sup>375</sup>

Henry Ogle was born in Australia, where his father, a first-generation British immigrant, had established a printing business. Henry was shipped back to Britain at the age of six after his father died suddenly and was adopted and raised by his uncle, a Congregational minister in Lancashire. Since he was born into a first-generation British family, raised in England and spent the bulk of his life there, I have chosen to treat him as British rather than Australian. Henry's adoptive family was not wealthy, but they encouraged his love of books and art. He attended teacher training college and then the Leamington Spa College of Art. When his schooling was completed, he made his living as an art teacher. The 1911 UK Census lists his occupation as “schoolmaster – student.” Henry Ogle's

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<sup>375</sup> Ernest Parker, *Into Battle 1914-1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994).

memoirs began as essays explaining the various drawings and paintings he had made during the war; even when in the line, he always carried a sketchbook and paint box with him. He began writing in 1937-1938, during an illness, and kept rewriting until the mid-1950s. He did not have his memoirs published on his own; rather, they were edited and published in 1993 by Michael Glover, who condensed Ogle's 159 essays into one book and provided explanatory notes at the beginning of each chapter, setting the historical context of the military actions referred to in Ogle's reminiscences. As Glover stresses in the book's preface, the text is composed entirely of Henry Ogle's own words, with no editorializing.<sup>376</sup>

### Why it is so hard to find published lower-middle-class memoirs of the First World War

Although many First World War memoirs were published during the initial war books boom, finding ones that were written by lower-middle-class men has been more of a challenge than I anticipated. We can speculate that the primary barrier to publishing such reminiscences on the part of lower-middle-class men, as opposed to letting the manuscript or typescript languish in an attic somewhere, was access to the publishing world. It was far more common for upper-middle-class or middle-class men to publish their memoirs because their public school connections and the circles their families moved in made publishing a book easier. The first-wave memoirs of lower-middle-class men that were eventually turned into books tended to be published later in the century, either because the author's occupational and social standing had improved enough to grant him easier access to publishing houses – as in the case of Ernest Parker, who had become a successful figure in the publishing world – or because a third party had come across the manuscript in an archive, had deemed it of historical interest, and had endeavoured to edit it and have it published – as in the case of Henry Ogle, whose memoirs were edited and shepherded to publication in the early 1990s by Michael

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<sup>376</sup> Henry Ogle, *The Fateful Battle Line: The Great War Journals and Sketches of Captain Henry Ogle, MC*, ed. Michael Glover (London: Leo Cooper, 1993).

Glover.<sup>377</sup> A survey of published middle-class war memoirs demonstrates that their authors' social background and occupation made access to the publishing world easier than it was for the lower-middle-class men examined in this dissertation. Books like Stanley Casson's *Steady Drummer*, C.W. Longley's *Battery Flashes*, Douglas H. Bell's *A Soldier's Diary of the Great War*, Charles Douie's *The Weary Road: Recollections of a Subaltern of Infantry*, Charles Edmund Carrington's *A Subaltern's War*, and Donald Hankey's *A Student in Arms* are only a handful of examples of middle-class war memoirs published in the wake of the First World War.<sup>378</sup> These men's professional and social connections made publication accessible in a way that it was not to lower-middle-class men, making published lower-middle-class war memoirs more difficult to find.

### How the lower-middle-class men of this chapter fit into the larger argument of the dissertation and how their message differs from that expressed in wartime letters

Overall, the message conveyed in the first-wave memoirs of the lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter is similar to that expressed in the letters of the men examined in Chapters Two and Three: the memoir writers felt secure about their background and used it as a solid framework for their wartime exploration of officer status. Their ability to straddle the class divide through reading others and mimicking their "betters"<sup>379</sup> meant it was natural for them to try to emulate the model of masculinity presented to them at the Officer Cadet Battalions. And yet their willing emulation did not come from a place of insecurity or self-doubt. Their confidence in their own worth meant they often willingly

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<sup>377</sup> Both Parker's and Ogle's memoirs were published by Leo Cooper, a publisher of military history books who had an affinity for unusual stories. Michael Barber, "Leo Cooper obituary," *The Guardian*, December 3, 2013, Academic OneFile.

<sup>378</sup> Stanley Casson, *Steady Drummer* (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1935); "Wagger," *Battery Flashes* (London: Murray, 1916); [D.H. Bell], *A Soldier's Diary of the Great War* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1929); Charles Douie, *The Weary Road: Recollections of a Subaltern of Infantry* (London: The Strong Oak Press with Tom Donovan Publishing, 1988); Charles Edmonds [C.E. Carrington], *A Subaltern's War* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1930); Donald Hankey, *A Student in Arms* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1917).

<sup>379</sup> Bailey, 273-290.

chose friendship over status. Moreover, while they readily took on a paternalistic role, they did not give up their own lower-middle-class identity.

There were differences between the first-wave memoirs and the wartime letters of lower-middle-class men. In their memoirs, the men tended to focus on their martial identity, as opposed to their domestic one. This is in line with Jessica Meyer's book, *Men of War*, which found that the identity that emerged in the memoirs of men who had fought in the First World War tended to be heroic, as opposed to the domestic identity that emerged from letters home written at the front.<sup>380</sup> The lower-middle-class men studied in this chapter did not always present themselves as heroes worthy of emulation; they focused on their jobs as soldiers, as opposed to their relationships to their loved ones. They devoted their attention to camaraderie with their fellow soldiers, writing about spending time with friends and being loyal to them. The lower-middle-class men in this chapter were also more willing to focus on the complexity of war in their first-wave memoirs, presenting a less-than-rosy picture of their service experience. While this is not as dark a picture as presented in the second-wave memoirs studied in the next chapter, it includes descriptions of inadvertent blunders or light treatment of serious offences such as falling asleep on guard duty. In line with their willingness to unflinchingly examine the complexity of war, these men showed two conflicting beliefs: a measure of disillusionment with their pre-war ideals – more than the men in Chapters Two and Three, but not as much as the men in Chapter Five – coupled with pride in the experience they had gained while being subject to the conditions that caused their disillusionment. Like labouring men who take pride in the way hard labour uses up their bodies, since the physical destruction their bodies suffer is proof of their toughness,<sup>381</sup> these men took pride in the credit they had gained through suffering in a war that lacked the traditional compensation of honour and glory. Moreover, the lower-middle-class men in this chapter were willing to criticize all members of the officer class when they perceived them to fail,

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<sup>380</sup> Meyer.

<sup>381</sup> Mike Donaldson, *Time of Our Lives: Labour and Love in the Working Class* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).

not just brass hats, and held themselves up to the same standard as gentlemen and leaders after they had received their commissions. They maintained their own lower-middle-class identity even while they accepted the public school officer model as the standard of hegemonic masculinity, and they did their utmost to emulate the paternalistic attitude that came naturally to upper-middle-class officers.<sup>382</sup> As such, these memoir writers did not try to create an alternate model of masculinity for themselves, but attempted to measure up to the existing one, personified in the emblematic figure of the “gentleman.” Furthermore, they did their share of policing those who failed to live up to the officer and gentleman standard. Possibly their motivation for doing so was an attempt to prove they were just as worthy of the gentleman label as those who carried it by virtue of their birth and social standing, but this policing upheld the existing model of hegemonic masculinity rather than undermine or challenge it.

## A closer look at the lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter

In this chapter I explore the issues of class and identity by looking at the following themes: the opposition of these men’s soldier and domestic identities, attitudes toward the officer class and individual officers, attitudes toward status and advancement, negative and positive interpretations of their war experience, quiet heroism and the use of traditional romantic tropes, attitudes toward the Other, and empowerment.

### The opposition of soldier and civilian identities

The men in this chapter focused on their heroic or martial identities in their war memoirs.<sup>383</sup> This is not surprising, since the purpose of their memoirs was to tell the story of the authors’ wartime experiences, the bulk of which was divorced from home and family. Quantitatively speaking, much of their memoirs are taken up with military

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<sup>382</sup> Donaldson, “What is Hegemonic Masculinity?” *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993); G.D. Sheffield.

<sup>383</sup> This is consistent with what Jessica Meyer found in her book on wartime masculinity. Meyer, *Men of War*.

matters. At the same time, the memoirs give a clear impression that army life was a temporary interlude for them, and that their civilian identity took precedence. They gave voice to this attitude in the decisions they made, especially toward the end of the conflict. Laura King argues that the First World War marked the beginning of a trend toward “an increased emphasis on the family as an independent social unit ... linked to the increased prominence of ‘companionate marriage’ as an ideal.”<sup>384</sup> The behaviours and decisions of the men in this chapter are consistent with that trend.

When E.J. Higson enlisted in the Manchester Clerks and Warehousemen Battalion, he commented on how his “title had changed from ‘Mr’ to ‘Private’.” This transition sets the tone for his memoir, which concerns itself with martial things. In punctuating his stories with phrases like “...the next exciting incident occurred...” Higson privileges accounts of danger and excitement. In recounting his participation in the Battle of the Somme, he is proud of the military success of himself and his friends, especially that they proved themselves as soldiers and men. Yet, his war stories never get mired in bragging; rather, he focuses on duty and competence. His memoir ends with the simple sentence: “Thus ended my experiences of active warfare,” and he remarks on the joy he felt when he was finally “marked for Blighty”: his soldier identity, while important, was only temporary.<sup>385</sup>

W.R.H. Brown also focuses on martial things in his memoir, calling his wartime experience “our Great Adventure” and expressing pride in his Battalion for conducting themselves well. He, too, tries to engage his prospective readers by creating a thrilling narrative, calling the Battle of Hill 60 an “exciting time.” Nevertheless, he longed for peace and normalcy: he called the day “when I returned to civil life” a “red-letter day” and admits that he and his fellow soldiers “often said we would willingly lose a limb to get out of it all.” His attitude is best summed up in the closing statement of his memoir,

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<sup>384</sup> Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, c.1914-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>385</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers.

where he says he “had the pleasure of settling down” and “recommencing my civil occupation ... after having passed though many exciting and interesting experiences.”<sup>386</sup>

Ernest Parker’s memoir also gives the impression that his soldierly identity was important to him, but only for the duration of the war. In describing his unit’s first journey up the line, he mentions seeing signs of destruction: “we looked at them on this first occasion with the eyes of civilians” entering the “Valley of the Shadow of Death.” Parker makes explicit reference to his change in allegiance from civilian to military, stating, “towards this transmutation of our personalities we now marched.”<sup>387</sup> The memoir is full of stories of trench life and battle experience, which Parker found transformative – to the point that he struggled to return to civilian life . When he heard Armistice celebrations outside his hospital window in London, he admits that he had trouble sharing the civilians’ excitement: “I felt myself a stranger.”<sup>388</sup> And yet, his civilian identity is at the core of his experience. He writes how, in the midst of battle, while lying on a ridge with a bullet hole in his helmet, he “fell into a peaceful reverie, thinking of the beautiful years of peace, and the happiness of my old home.” He pictured a series of scenes from his civilian life, such as the faces of his family members. He also “smelt the acrid odour of printer’s ink on fresh sets of galley and page proofs” and “began to fall in love with the job which was to be mine for the rest of my working life.”<sup>389</sup> Since Parker spent his life in publishing, this is a sign that his civilian identity formed the core of his being even in the most dire of wartime circumstances.

Henry Ogle’s memoir, written with the express purpose of explaining his wartime sketches and paintings, describes in detail what it was like to be a soldier in the First World War, with all its attendant hardships and dangers. Like the other memoirs, it

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<sup>386</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

<sup>387</sup> Parker, 20.

<sup>388</sup> Parker, 96.

<sup>389</sup> Parker, 55.

focuses on the author's martial identity by virtue of the events and circumstances he describes. Even the way Ogle chooses to end his memoir – “like a proper soldier . . . with a grouse”<sup>390</sup> – underscores the way he had internalized his soldier identity. And yet Ogle's civilian identity is ever-present in his memoir by virtue of his artistic ability and focus. As he himself admits, even in the most difficult conditions, he saw the world through the eyes of an artist: his visual imagination ensured that every sight he saw was a potential sketch. His civilian drawing skills ensured that he was assigned special jobs in his unit that other rank-and-file soldiers were not qualified to do. Ogle and his friend John – whom he had known in peacetime – were assigned to do a survey and make maps of a sector; they set up a makeshift “surveyor office” where they spent days working as they might have in civilian life, but in rougher conditions. Ogle promptly sketched the office, the way he sketched every interesting wartime sight he came across. Ogle's wife, Muriel, was another factor that kept him in touch with his civilian identity; when Ogle was in England for OCB training or stationed at the Battalion Depot, she found lodgings in town to be close to her husband. Muriel's presence and Ogle's art kept him focused on his civilian identity even while he was immersed in the business of soldiering.

C. Carter's scrapbook memoir also reflects the duality of his identity, which is martial during the war, but civilian after. While his two-volume scrapbook is filled with documents and mementoes of his soldiering, he highlights his relationship with his fiancée (whom he later married) by giving a detailed account of his repeated attempts to obtain leave from his OCB for their wedding – a wedding that had to be postponed a number of times owing to Army bureaucracy. At times Carter's superiors called upon his civilian skills; he was proud and happy to make himself useful. During his time at an OCB in Fermoy, Ireland, an officer from London gave a lecture and Carter was asked by the Captain to “take it down in shorthand, and transcribe it the next day.” Carter did so and proudly reported that the longhand added up to 40 pages: he was proud of the skills he had acquired as part of his civilian occupation. But Carter's most telling gesture comes

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<sup>390</sup> Ogle, 204.

at the end of his memoir, after the Armistice, when he is offered “a very good job ... in connection with the Educational Scheme in the Army.” He was given the opportunity to teach at the temporary Brigade School for a good salary and being sent for a month’s course at Oxford – a chance which he “should have jumped at” if he could bring his wife along. However, since taking the army job might have interfered with his demobilization, he turned it down. Starting a proper civilian life at home with his new wife took precedence over army life, just as his civilian identity took precedence over his martial one.<sup>391</sup>

### Attitudes toward the officer class and individual officers

R.W. Connell has referred to the modern English gentleman as an example of the original “hegemonic masculinity.”<sup>392</sup> The officer and gentleman standard of masculinity, which was personified in the typical Sandhurst-trained, public-school-educated officer and which the OCBs attempted to instill in the men who underwent training, was considered the ideal masculine behaviour. The men in this chapter were not afraid to make fun of or criticize individual officers who, in their estimation, had failed to live up to that standard. They were also willing to give praise where praise was due, extolling the virtues of officers who did their duty well. When the men studied here obtained their commissions, they did their utmost to live up to the officer and gentleman standard, taking a paternalistic interest in the soldiers under their command and trying to be the type of officer they had admired while in the ranks. Rather than create an alternate project of masculinity or undermine the accepted hegemonic masculinity standard, they upheld it and attempted to live up to it themselves – without relinquishing their best qualities as members of the lower middle class.<sup>393</sup> Philip Mason argues that part of the reason the ideal of the gentleman was so widely accepted in 1914 was because “no one was quite

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<sup>391</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>392</sup> R.W. Connell, “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History,” *Theory and Society* 22:5 (1993): 597-623.

<sup>393</sup> Donaldson, “What is Hegemonic Masculinity?”

sure who was a gentleman and who was not.”<sup>394</sup> Since the ruling class, which called itself “gentlemen,” was not a closed caste but rather continually recruited new members from the training establishments that were the public schools, many people hoped to one day join its ranks. As Mason states, “the paradox lay in the fact that while the rank had little point if it included everyone, almost everyone thought that it might one day include himself or at least his son, and almost everyone admired the ideal of conduct.”<sup>395</sup> It is not surprising that the aspirational lower middle class should wish to join the ruling class rather than undermine it.

In that vein, E.J. Higson adopted an attitude of paternalism once he was granted a commission, doing his best to take care of the men under his command as a good officer should. Throughout his memoir he refers to them as “my men,” and gives the impression of being competent, decisive, and concerned about their safety and well-being. Yet, despite his paternalistic bent, E.J. Higson demonstrated that he was not afraid to make fun of officers by relating a story of soldiers helping to save animals from a barn fire in France. After a soldier reached into the barn expecting to pull out a chicken but instead finding a young pig, he threw it away from him in disgust. The pig landed “on the chest of one of our officers. Officer and pig went down together on a manure heap...” In ridiculing his officer, Higson used the perspective of enlisted men and stressed the difference between the ranks. Higson also expressed muted criticism of untried officers when he told the story of his first posting as a subaltern. When he and a few other freshly minted officers reported to the transport officer and were told that their Battalion was in the line and they would have to wait for three days, Higson writes that “[k]nowing a thing or two about trenches I did not complain” about being kept away from danger. In

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<sup>394</sup> Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1982), 9.

<sup>395</sup> Mason, 200-201.

contrast, “two of the subalterns grouched a little” at being kept back from the action. In a tone dismissive of their lack of experience, Higson adds, “it was their first trip.”<sup>396</sup>

W.R.H. Brown praised the actions of an officer who demonstrated good judgment and concern for the men under his command. When Brown and a few other soldiers were given the job of erecting wire entanglements under fire and had to seek shelter from “increasingly deadly” shelling, the officer in charge “refused to expose us any longer.” Brown adds that “had our officer been an unreasonable man, probably none of us would have returned...” Reason and good judgment were qualities to be praised in a good officer. When Brown became an officer, he did his best to emulate those qualities. When he had to carry out reconnaissance of enemy positions later in the war, he went on a night raid because it was safer. He contrasted this to another officer’s ill-considered decision to reconnoiter in daylight, which ended in the death of the “unfortunate fellow.” Brown did not like taking unnecessary risks, although he did so willingly if duty required it or if it meant saving his men from danger. Once he was commissioned, he took on the paternalistic qualities of the officers he emulated, going to extraordinary lengths to save one of his men during a raid after the latter had been shot and had called out, “You won’t leave me, sir, you won’t leave me?” – an action for which Brown received the Military Cross. He also participated in paternalistic rituals that involved officers waiting on their men in mess during Christmas dinner.<sup>397</sup>

C. Carter explicitly criticizes the Company Commander of his OCB, whom he called “the most ignorant, uneducated, ungentlemanly specimen of humanity that I ever saw.” In a section he entitled “An Officer – but not a gentleman!” Carter complains that the officer in question “tries to cover up his ignorance by shouting & swearing at us...” and constantly lectured the cadets on “how officers should behave” despite his own behaviour falling far short of the gentlemanly standard. Carter – who was participating in OCB training to learn how to be an officer *and a gentleman* – was critical of the OCB

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<sup>396</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers; Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*

<sup>397</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

Company Commander on the grounds that he did not meet the gentlemanly standard. Carter held up the standard and expressed his desire to meet it.<sup>398</sup>

Ernest Parker also praised good officers when he thought the compliment was deserved; early in the war, he comments that he “had the good luck in having an excellent officer.”<sup>399</sup> Parker was especially fond of “our dear old Bombing officer,”<sup>400</sup> whom he found to be pragmatic and understanding; when Parker and another soldier had been given too much rum ration and had briefly fallen asleep on sentry duty – a court martial offence – the officer in question did not report them. Parker was unstinting with praise for senior officers as well, calling Colonel Stevens “a Commanding Officer any man would be proud to serve under”<sup>401</sup> because he took good care of the men in his Division. Parker also set up the way things were done under General Beauvoir de Lisle as the yardstick by which he measured all other styles of leadership. But Parker was vocal in his criticism of officers who did not do a good job. He shook his head in disbelief when faced with new officers without battle experience who were “foolhardy” enough to light a cigarette “out of bravado when in front of our own firing line.”<sup>402</sup> He is dismissive of Major S—, who took charge of the Battalion temporarily “after a long period of duty as Town Major, or some similar rest cure” and who returned “to his safe job” soon after, “following his usual habit.”<sup>403</sup> Like the lower-middle-class men in Chapters Two and Three, Parker was not impressed with brass hats or staff officers who stayed out of the line of fire. He was also not impressed with officers who were sticklers for detail but failed to provide good leadership. When surviving stragglers of his Battalion limped their way back to safety

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<sup>398</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>399</sup> Parker, 14.

<sup>400</sup> Parker, 36.

<sup>401</sup> Parker, 67.

<sup>402</sup> Parker, 63.

<sup>403</sup> Parker, 50-51.

after a gruesome action, “a new Captain, fresh from a rest camp, paraded us for rifle inspection and bullied every man of us for having a dirty rifle.” Even worse, “no officer spoke to us on our return from this battle, or attempted to find out what our experiences had been.”<sup>404</sup> Parker found this a sign of incompetence and bad leadership. He had more positive things to say about his fellow OCB cadets, whom he judged as “keen, serious students of the art of war” who “brought an entirely new spirit into the ranks of the junior officers.”<sup>405</sup> He thought them worthy of the title officers and gentlemen.

Henry Ogle expresses rancour for “brass hats and red tabs” in the introduction to his memoir. He demonstrates little regard for so-called Base Wallahs, senior officers who stayed far from the fighting but expressed loud opinions about it. According to George Mosse, masculinity was “regarded as of one piece from its very beginning: body and soul, outward appearance and inward virtue were supposed to form one harmonious whole.”<sup>406</sup> If we take Mosse’s argument that the male body is used to define a conception of manliness by associating physical attributes with inner qualities, Ogle’s physical description of such officers – “face ... empurpled; ... thick in the neck and jowled, ... eyes bloodshot, ... voice raucous and loud” – can be read as casting doubt on their masculinity. He makes his, and his fellow soldiers’, opinion of such senior officers even clearer when he states that men in the trenches uttered a “general curse to include the weather, the General Staff and Jerry.”<sup>407</sup> But Ogle is democratic in his contempt for officers who fall short in their duties. He is bitter at the medical officers who delayed x-raying his leg until it swelled up despite his assertions that the wound had been labelled incorrectly, and was also critical of a junior officer who was “dodging the column” by finding various types of occupations for himself in the Battalion depot for a year or

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<sup>404</sup> Parker, 61.

<sup>405</sup> Parker, 65.

<sup>406</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>407</sup> Mosse, 136.

longer.<sup>408</sup> When Ogle himself was commissioned, he ranked the good of his men above his own frustration; when “seniority evil” leads to an important scouting mission being assigned to a captain’s command, instead of his own capable and experienced scouting team, resulting in a predictable debacle, Ogle’s anger gives way to a “desperate desire to get out of this ridiculous situation without losing a man.”<sup>409</sup> And when he was given the Military Cross for a successful scouting mission, he admitted that it took many men to earn it even though he was the only one to actually receive it. Ogle openly criticizes the fact that non-public-school officers found it harder to advance than officers with a higher social background. Although these officers “were of the business, professional and works-managerial classes ... their outlook was wide and their personal knowledge of men of many walks of life far greater than that of the Regular Army officer.”<sup>410</sup> His bitterness at the class prejudice of the army system becomes clearer when he gives an account of his time at the OCB. He criticizes the Commanding Officer, saying “he told us that his job was to make us into Officers *and Gentlemen*. Why he thought we could not already be gentlemen I don’t know.”<sup>411</sup> He felt that he and other ranker-officers were worthy of the title “gentlemen” and he felt that this title was something to aspire to.<sup>412</sup>

### Attitudes toward status and advancement

The men studied in this chapter were not obsessed with status or advancement, valuing other things above the possibility of social climbing and turning down opportunities because other matters took precedence. While they enjoyed the perks of being an officer and saw training opportunities as “luck” that took them away from the mud of the trenches for a while, they did not take themselves too seriously and even laughed at

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<sup>408</sup> Mosse, 153.

<sup>409</sup> Mosse, 199.

<sup>410</sup> Mosse, 5.

<sup>411</sup> Mosse, 152.

<sup>412</sup> Mosse, 152.

themselves when they got too self-important. They valued time spent with friends, were loyal to their comrades, and accorded importance to wartime camaraderie in their memoirs. Some of these men went against army convention to maintain friendships in the ranks after they were commissioned – a practice that was seen to undermine army discipline and which most officer manuals counsel against.<sup>413</sup> The impression one gets when reading these memoirs is that, for these men, human relationships mattered more than status. Once commissioned, some of these men went so far as to use their familiarity with men in the ranks to their advantage to establish connection, respect, and authority. They treated their ranker-officer status and their less-than-conventional officer background as an asset rather than a liability.

E.J. Higson privileged community over ambition. After being promoted to corporal, he retained that rank for a few months and then “discovered it cut me off from my old chums so bang went the stripes.” He did not completely lack ambition: he applied for a commission on his own initiative and was impatient for the OCB training to begin – in part no doubt because it would get him away from the trenches. When training is delayed, he expresses his “disgust.” He also refers to the day he passed his officer cadet final exams as “a great day.” Still, when he sums up “the life of a soldier on active service,” one of the things he focuses on is “a comradeship not to be equaled anywhere on earth.”<sup>414</sup>

W.R.H Brown also praises the “wonderful spirit of camaraderie” he found among his fellow soldiers. One of the features of his memoir is the frequent mentions of the men in his company by first and last name – they were not a nameless group. Many were killed in action and he lamented each death. Three of his best friends were killed in one attack, and Brown was faced with the “sad duty” of writing letters to their parents. He writes that he, “felt their loss acutely.” At the beginning of the war, he was briefly promoted but he

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<sup>413</sup> [T.D. Pilcher], *A General's Letters to his Son on Obtaining His Commission* (London: Cassell, 1917); Thomas O'Toole, *The Way They Have in the Army* (London: John Lane, 1916).

<sup>414</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers.

“soon grew tired of being an unpaid lance-corporal, so I asked my Company Commander ... to allow me to revert to the ranks.” We can read a number of things into Brown’s choice. Choosing to revert to the ranks was not the action of a man bent on advancement; rather, it was the action of a man who valued being part of a community. Furthermore, insisting on the importance of being paid was the action of someone used to working for a living who recognized the value of money. As Gunn and Bell have argued, the ethic of *noblesse oblige*, with its attendant expectation that the wealthy should be helpful and generous with no expectation of reward, was “a luxury that only the rich and secure could afford.”<sup>415</sup> Insisting on payment was the province of the working and lower middle class. W.R.H. Brown spoke of advancement opportunities in terms of “luck,” seeing them as a chance to break away from the monotony and danger of a ranker’s life in wartime. He was diligent about doing his duty, and did it well, but did not take promotion too seriously. Speaking about a bombing school, he writes, “I was lucky enough to get a week at the school, and ... was allowed to wear a cloth bomb on my sleeve!” When he was encouraged to apply for a commission and sent to an OCB, he brought a similar attitude to the experience, studying hard but making time to enjoy himself with new friends. The transition from the ranks to the officer class made an impression on Brown, and he rejoiced in the perks he received. When the Brigadier sent him and another new officer to their Battalion in his car, Brown comments, “This was one of the privileges of being an officer! When I was in the ranks I had to “slog” every yard on foot.” And yet becoming an officer did not prevent him from rekindling a friendship with his buddy Jenkins when Brown was posted to Jenkins’ company. Brown remarks that, “we were glad to be together again” and, despite the difference in ranks, the two happily work together, Brown learning the local geography from Jenkins during a night raid. Brown teases Jenkins when the latter is recommended for a Military Cross, and when Brown himself is recommended for one, he comments that he “could once again consider myself a fit companion for Jenkins!” In fact, the circumstances under which Brown received his

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<sup>415</sup> Simon Gunn and Rachel Bell, *Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl* (London: Cassell & Co., 1996).

Military Cross underscore his attitude toward social advancement: he requested that it be sent to him by post because he hated ceremony. As he states, “I thus missed the ordeal of being decorated at Buckingham Palace.”<sup>416</sup>

C. Carter was not obsessed with promotion either, although he was excited when he heard that his application for commission had been accepted. With two exclamation marks, he notes “I am to have a course of training at a Cadet School!!” Although he was proud to be an officer cadet, he appreciated the opportunity just as much for the chance it offered to be away from danger as for the promotion itself. When there was a delay at the OCB that prevented half the cadets from receiving their orders, he comments: “Another month’s training, however strenuous, was much to be preferred to the same period in the trenches!” Like the other men in this chapter, Carter appreciated the improved conditions of his army life, stating: “How different the conditions are as an officer! . . . little huts waiting, each holding two beds & a servant ready for us – a good dinner too.” But, also like the others, he did not let the idea of advancement get in the way of camaraderie with his fellow officer cadets, enjoying “whist drives, chess tournaments, dramatic entertainments” and mountain excursions. He had made two particularly good friends at the OCB in Fermoy, Ireland and he included their photos in his scrapbook memoir as reminders “of the glorious times we had together.” But the most telling example of Carter’s attitude toward advancement in the army was his decision to turn down a lucrative teaching job offer in the Brigade School in favour of timely demobilization and return to civilian life. Like other lower-middle-class men in this chapter, he felt no need to remain in the army.<sup>417</sup>

Ernest Parker also commented on the difference between the conditions experienced by men in the ranks and those experienced by officers, stating that, “a subaltern’s war was a

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<sup>416</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

<sup>417</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

different affair from the private's war."<sup>418</sup> His decision to apply for a commission was framed in pragmatic terms; he stated that his Platoon Commander told him to apply, "as a means of getting home for a short time."<sup>419</sup> Throughout his memoirs, Parker referred to the important role camaraderie played in his life during the wartime years, both in a general sense and with regard to specific individuals. When Parker fell thirteen times during a winter march, utterly exhausted, he recalled that "my comrades supported me" by carrying his rifle and half-carrying him to his billet.<sup>420</sup> The primacy of war relationships over civilian life while at the front is reflected in the story Parker tells about a package of chocolate he received for his birthday from a friend in England, which he promptly divided "among my section."<sup>421</sup> Henry Ogle also alluded to the importance of comradeship in the trenches, referring to "troops bound together by lifelong friendship," especially in a Territorial Battalion where the soldiers all knew each other from civilian life.<sup>422</sup> In this case, the civilian and the martial blended as relationships from home were cemented by sharing front-line hardships. Ogle recalled how being sent back up the line made him feel that he belonged. Referring to the general mindset of soldiers, he states: "home was where their families were but, after all, their *friends* were up the line."<sup>423</sup> But the most moving testament to Ogle's wartime friendships is a poem entitled "J.T.," written in tribute to Jack Taylor, who was killed in 1916: "In danger, in discomfort, in the petty joys / That soldiering affords, so fleetingly / You were my friend."<sup>424</sup> A relationship that would move a man to write poetry was an important one.

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<sup>418</sup> Parker, 82.

<sup>419</sup> Parker, 64.

<sup>420</sup> Parker, 37.

<sup>421</sup> Parker, 53.

<sup>422</sup> Ogle, 36.

<sup>423</sup> Ogle, 66.

<sup>424</sup> Ogle, 206.

Ogle's decision to apply for a commission was made with full awareness of the dangers and benefits such a promotion entailed. On the plus side, he would be sent for training to England; on the negative side was the high likelihood of being killed: "no one with eyes or brains had any illusions about the life of a subaltern in this war. The fact that we were being asked told its own tale."<sup>425</sup> Ogle's reference is to the established army prejudice against officers from backgrounds other than the upper-middle and upper classes. He believed that the army must have been getting desperate if it was recruiting working-class and lower-middle-class men. Ogle's disagreement with this army prejudice and his feeling that ranker officers had a great deal to offer came across in the way he describes the approach he took when dealing with the men under his command: "I found my intimate knowledge of the East Lancashire dialect was much appreciated in my platoon," he said. "A remark in dialect ... helped to bring us into closer touch." On occasion, Ogle had to translate the words of his batman, who spoke "one hundred per cent Bolton dialect" and whom not even the soldiers in the ranks could understand.<sup>426</sup> Clearly, as Ogle tells it, having experience of different walks of life served a ranker officer in good stead when it came to leading his men. He did not go as far as to argue that ranker officers were superior to traditional Sandhurst officers or ones who had been to a public school – that kind of assertive belief does not manifest itself until the second-wave memoirs – but he demonstrated pride in his abilities that stemmed directly from his background. Ogle, while generally adopting the kind of paternalistic stance that inter-rank relations were based on, embarked on friendships with men in the ranks – a practice that was frowned upon by the army. He describes the batman who spoke only Bolton dialect as "a faithful friend to me,"<sup>427</sup> and recounts with loving detail his friendship with his next batman, Private Cecil Cockerill, a man who had been a store department manager in civilian life. Cockerill was "a man of wide interests and knowledge," and

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<sup>425</sup> Ogle, 146.

<sup>426</sup> Ogle, 157.

<sup>427</sup> Ogle, 157.

Ogle admits that, “we soon became good friends” as they made the job of officer’s servant into a game of challenges and enjoyed the resulting humour.<sup>428</sup>

## Negative and positive interpretations of war experience

These first-wave war memoirs were written when public feeling had turned away from patriotic fervor and public discourse had begun to deal with the negative side of the war. Although not as fervently anti-war as 1960s memoirs, these first-wave memoirs did sound a note of disillusionment with the high ideals people had held in 1914.<sup>429</sup> The men in this chapter drew attention to their transition from inexperienced rookies eager to participate in the glory of war to seasoned veterans who no longer thought of war as a glorious thing. Their initiation into the brutal reality of war was characterized in two ways: a positive celebration of their experience and the credit they had gained through suffering, and a negative disillusioned view with its attendant mud, blood, and lack of glory. In their treatment of disillusionment, the memoirs in this chapter differed from the letters studied in Chapters Two and Three, which were written while the war was still going on and were more patriotic in tone. In addition to dwelling on the positive and negative aspects of the experience they had gained in the trenches, the men who wrote these memoirs dealt with the complexity of war, recounting blunders and negative situations that would likely not have been reported in letters home. We can speculate that it was easier to do so from the perspective of looking back on a war that was over, and that men would not have been willing to discuss such matters in letters for reasons such as censorship and a desire not to let their side down.

A story E.J. Higson wrote about his first patrol duty as an officer illustrates the kind of pride these men expressed in having gained experience at the front. A sergeant assigned to him who “had not seen me, or my gold stripe, before” began to try to “put the wind up” to a man he thought was a new recruit, telling him horror stories about how

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<sup>428</sup> Ogle, 168.

<sup>429</sup> Todman; Hynes.

dangerous this particular sector was. An amused Higson let the sergeant go on, and finally comments: “From what you have told me this sector may be worse than those I was in on the Somme or Flanders.” The reaction of the sergeant, described by Higson as “complete collapse,” served as a satisfying punchline in a tale that automatically granted respect to the experienced warrior. The gold stripe Higson referred to was a wound stripe, given to all soldiers who had been wounded as part of the conflict. From the standpoint of masculinity studies, Higson believed respect was owed him in part because of his wound. This idea of gaining credit through suffering reflects the work of Mike Donaldson, who writes about working-class men taking pride in the way their labour had used up their bodies, since the destruction their physiques had suffered was proof of their masculine toughness.<sup>430</sup> In the case of Higson and other soldiers who wore the gold stripe, outward proof of their having been wounded was a badge of pride.

In wartime conditions, even men who did not perform physical work in their civilian lives and whose masculinity was not ordinarily based on the physical felt more like men because they had been subject to physical suffering in the archetypally masculine context of war. E.J. Higson makes the distinction between ignorance and experience early in his memoir, telling of when he and his friends left England: “We only thought of glory. Our ideas of war were as we had read or seen in paintings.” He then contrasts this uninformed view with what the reality turned out to be: “Very soon we knew what the hardships were ... Many were never to come back, some were to come back blind, others maimed.” His description of a typical day in the trenches paints a picture of “a chaotic sea of mud, barbed wire, stumps of trees, endless shell holes,” with the watching sentries feeling rain trickling down their necks, tired from having been too cold to sleep for days but aware that falling asleep on duty could get them shot. Yet his perception of what life was like on the front lines was not all negative;<sup>431</sup> he writes of hearing a lark sing at dawn and

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<sup>430</sup> Donaldson.

<sup>431</sup> The fact that the disillusionment expressed in these recollections was not all-encompassing was a feature of the first-wave memoirs.

feeling “that it was good to pour forth praise and thankfulness for life” even in the trenches.<sup>432</sup>

W.R.H. Brown was also excited to find himself in France at the beginning of the war, but when his Battalion encountered men of the East Lancashire Regiment who “expressed the desire to die rather than spend another winter under similar conditions,” he began to realize that war was not as glorious as he had assumed. Later in his memoir, Brown explicitly expresses this: “War and the deeds of heroes make fine reading, but for those actually engaged in war nothing on earth could be more miserable, more fearsome or more difficult to undergo.” Brown is not afraid to write about the darker side of war, from violence, through the hazing of unpopular officer cadets at the OCB, to unbearable emotional strain: “I have seen strong men lying down in partial hysterics, crying like children, through sheer exhaustion.” Brown also does not shrink from showing himself in a less than glorious light, presenting his own experiences as examples of the complexity of war. Sometimes those examples are humorous, such as when he tells of how he had wedged his head and body into a hole in no man’s land to repair the British trench, “leaving my nether regions fully exposed” and expecting a “puncture.” At other times, they are more serious, such as when he admits to falling asleep on a listening patrol, fifty yards from the German line, because he had not slept for three days. He admits that, “I should probably have been shot had I been reported” since falling asleep on guard duty was a serious court martial offence that carried the death penalty. With the war safely over, Brown may have felt comfortable admitting to the sort of mistakes or wrongdoing he would not have dared to air in public during wartime.<sup>433</sup>

Lacking experience, Ernest Parker set off for war with a “strange feeling of elation,” convinced he was doing the right thing – a conviction which never left him.<sup>434</sup> But the

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<sup>432</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers.

<sup>433</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

<sup>434</sup> Parker, 1.

darker side of war soon became apparent in his memoir. He describes his first sight of Ypres as his company's "solemn moment of initiation" and recalls a feeling of "great tension" during his first experience in the firing line. He and his fellow new recruits had "great respect for the seasoned veterans in that as yet vaguely dreadful place."<sup>435</sup> Parker's recollections include passages of disillusionment, like the night he spent wandering around the trenches in the mud, "bitterly hoping to be blown to pieces and put out of my misery."<sup>436</sup> But they also include moments of happiness, as in the morning following a night of digging, when he and his comrades "spread out across the fields and hungrily picked raspberries, red currants and strawberries, now growing wild in the deserted market gardens." On that morning, they "all felt happy."<sup>437</sup> This is in keeping with the trend in first-wave memoirs, which presented a mixed view of war, not a strictly disillusioned one. Parker's memoirs include many mentions of the complexity of war, or stories that would probably not have made it into letters home from the front. He mentions the time the lance corporal went insane, ate most of the section's rations, and distributed trench duties in such a way that Parker almost did not sleep at all for five days. He also refers to preventing one man's suicide, falling asleep on sentry duty despite the possible consequence of being shot, and losing "our heftiest bomber" to a self-inflicted wound.<sup>438</sup> One of his most gruesome anecdotes involves a latrine where "a man's booted leg projecting from the bench served as a hanger for our equipment."<sup>439</sup> The anecdote is told in an off-hand manner that suggests such sights were commonplace at the front. It is hard to imagine relating such a sight in a letter home to one's mother, which is probably why the letters examined in Chapters Two and Three do not contain stories of this kind. Parker generally does not brag about the credit he gained in

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<sup>435</sup> Parker, 25-26.

<sup>436</sup> Parker, 31.

<sup>437</sup> Parker, 42. Please confirm

<sup>438</sup> Parker, 47.

<sup>439</sup> Parker, 48.

experiencing hardship at the front. The one explicit mention of the knowledge and skills he had acquired in the line comes when he talks about being sent on a Lewis gun course and being “accused with some indignation of having been on the course before” even though he had not. Apparently his ability to select the right tactical position for a machine gun post was “the result of battle experience.”<sup>440</sup> There is a sense of satisfaction in Parker’s tone when he recounts that story. He was proud of having acquired experience in the front line even though that experience was brutal and painful at times.

Henry Ogle’s first weeks in the army were similarly marked by inexperience. When he enlisted, he thought the conflict was “a jolly old war.”<sup>441</sup> He was so excited he even had a “secret ambition ... to sample pack drill”<sup>442</sup> – a punishment which no soldier with any experience would look forward to. After the Battle of the Somme, Ogle’s stories become less cheerful: he tells of seeing dead soldiers following a battle, describing the scene as: “mounds which indicated corpses, with here and there an exposed knee or head.” The sight (and the smells) made a powerful impression on him since he “never had a strong stomach.” Accordingly, he “smoked Digger Mixture in a corn cob until my mouth felt like pickled leather.”<sup>443</sup> In another anecdote, Ogle mentions the effects of a shell bursting in a trench, including “a headless corpse at my feet” and a frightened soldier crawling on all fours, “in a pitiable state, recognizable as human by general shape only...”<sup>444</sup> Although these stories show a measure of disillusionment with war and document the shift in Ogle’s attitude from initial excitement to jaded realism, Michael Glover, who edited Ogle’s memoir, emphasizes how little negativity there is to be found in the

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<sup>440</sup> Parker, 86.

<sup>441</sup> Ogle, 12.

<sup>442</sup> Ogle, 17.

<sup>443</sup> Ogle, 104.

<sup>444</sup> Ogle, 138.

narrative and “how little he blames the senior commanders.”<sup>445</sup> Glover’s surprise at the measured nature of Ogle’s disillusionment despite the “accepted truth”<sup>446</sup> that the First World War was horrid can be explained by the fact that Glover wrote his introduction in 1993, a time when the Myth of the War as an endless parade of mud, blood, and despair had become accepted truth. When Ogle wrote his memoirs, such a one-sided view had not yet taken deep root, which explains why the memoir is not scathing in its criticism of high command and is balanced in its recollections.<sup>447</sup> Ogle gives some examples of the darker side of war, and the attitudes he reveals demonstrate that he thought war was a complex business. Recounting the story of a man with a self-inflicted wound, he sympathized with the man and did not think any worse of him. In another instance, Ogle was part of a firing squad following a court martial resulting in a death sentence and he made no secret of his relief at being promoted and transferred before the execution took place. He refers to the presence of prostitutes on a number of occasions, noting with cool detachment that some men spent money on girls and “took the consequences” – presumably referring to venereal disease.<sup>448</sup> This sort of detail would not appear in a letter to family. Ogle refers to his experience and status as an old hand in an anecdote about a convalescent camp in Blackpool, where he spent time shortly before the Armistice. All subalterns were required to attend lectures on subjects as banal as “trench sanitation, care of feet, construction of trenches and shelters.” Ogle comments that the lecturers knew less than those they lectured to, and that “after about four years’ intimate experience of the stuff,” the subalterns found this to be “more than could be endured.” But endure it they did, in an effort not to offend the lecturer, and simply “sat with glazing eyes directed inwards to our memories of the real thing.”<sup>449</sup> The superiority of the

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<sup>445</sup> Ogle, 117.

<sup>446</sup> Ogle, 1.

<sup>447</sup> Todman; Hynes.

<sup>448</sup> Ogle, 119.

<sup>449</sup> Ogle, 202.

subalterns, who had been there and bore the wound stripes to prove it, over the lecturer who only knew theory, may not have been explicitly stated but was implied. Clearly, they believed the credit they had gained through their suffering at the front had entitled them to the kind of respect that non-combatants would never merit.

### Quiet heroism and the use of traditional romantic tropes

The men in this chapter often behaved heroically during the war, but they tended to recount their actions in an understated way. After they experienced the reality of war, they also tended to poke fun at sentimentality and yet continued to use high diction and heroic language to document the deeds of others or to deal with serious subjects such as death and patriotism. According to Jay Winter, a great shift to modernist cultural expression did not take place during the First World War; rather, communities continued to use traditional modes of aesthetic expression to give vent to their grief.<sup>450</sup> Paul Fussell argues that the First World War and the disillusionment that resulted from the combatants' response to the insanity of trench warfare led to a seismic shift from Romantic cultural tropes to modernist ones. Yet, Fussell has been criticized for his narrow range of sources and for treating the upper-middle-class poets he examines as representatives of the rank-and-file.<sup>451</sup> The men studied in this chapter continued to use Romantic tropes and high diction to talk about important things that happened to them during the war. Although they were literate and believed their stories were worth recording for posterity, they were not a part of the cultural or intellectual elite. This may have been one reason they did not gravitate toward modernism. Another may have been that, when it came to dealing with big questions such as death or sacrifice, traditional modes of expression were the only "language" these men spoke. It is therefore not surprising that they used them to express feelings and ideas that seemed out of place in everyday conversation.

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<sup>450</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>451</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

According to the son who edited his memoirs, E.J. Higson rarely spoke of his wartime exploits and did not brag about his courage. However, the son states that he believes the accounts “to be modestly written” because stories told by an army friend of Higson’s paint a more heroic tale. Indeed, some of the actions Higson describes in his memoir, although downplayed, seem impressive. Nevertheless, Higson tends to jokingly deprecate his appearance and actions even when there is an underlying seriousness to them. For instance, he states that their new uniforms make him and his chums look like “tram conductors.” But when it comes to talking about death or danger, Higson falls back on the heroic tropes he had read in books. Talking about friends lost in battle, he says, ““They had lain down their lives for their brothers.”” In another instance, again talking about the aftermath of a big action, he says: “When dawn began to spread its grey mantle over the earth...” they saw “our gallant comrades lying about. They had paid the supreme sacrifice.” Higson sometimes draws on phrases from literature or popular culture to help him express what he means. After describing a lively exchange of rifle fire, he comments: “That was a sample of ‘all was quiet on the Western Front.’” He draws on a piece of modernist war literature dealing with the theme of disillusionment to express some sentiments, while drawing on traditional heroic tropes to express others. In one passage, Higson also uses medieval imagery to convey his message, saying: “It was a glorious thing to be on a journey like the Knights of Old ... we were out to slay the dragon of hate and sin...” Here Higson makes clear reference to St. George, and his use of medieval imagery in the context of the First World War would have reflected official government propaganda.<sup>452</sup> Once again, he falls back on generally accepted ways of talking about some aspects of the war to help him express what he wants to say. For all his high diction, Higson makes a point of satirizing the kind of sentimentality he thought was out of place among those who knew the reality of war. Describing the differing reactions to a moonlit night on the part of women at home and a wiring party out in no man’s land, he says: “the maiden in England ... gazing from her window, would declare ‘the same clear

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<sup>452</sup> Allen Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

moon is shining over him. Oh! That he would speak to me now.’ She would have been rather shocked to have heard *his* remarks about that same dear moon.” His imaginary maiden’s use of high diction to express her uninformed opinion shows that he used this trope consciously to communicate a certain mood, rather than parroting it back without thinking.<sup>453</sup>

W.R.H. Brown used high diction to talk about matters of life and death side by side with ordinary language to discuss matters that were more prosaic. When the first fellow in his company was killed, he refers to the man as having made “the great sacrifice.” When recounting the death of another man, he says: “He had fought his fight and had made the great sacrifice. . . . he had won his crown.” It seems that high diction was the code that Brown, like the other men in this chapter, had been taught to use when discussing death in war. Still, Brown gives the impression that he did not use it in an unthinking way. Recounting a battle where “advance was impossible” and “[c]onfusion reigned supreme,” he makes the judgment that “our officers and men were falling too fast to make such sacrifice profitable. . . .” He did not consider all sacrifice to be necessary or positive.<sup>454</sup> Ernest Parker often uses poetic language in his memoirs, but it was more nuanced than a simple pairing of high diction with death. He writes: “the flowers began to struggle through the ruins and to cover up the wounds of war,”<sup>455</sup> and “[g]olden fields rippling in the wind healed the sight of our eyes . . . quietened the tortured nerves of our bodies.”<sup>456</sup> When he went on leave to Blighty, the pastoral sights outside his train window made him feel that “death itself” was “a fair price to pay for England’s immunity.”<sup>457</sup> Brown found Romantic and traditional tropes relevant when expressing his feelings about the war.

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<sup>453</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers.

<sup>454</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

<sup>455</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 38.

<sup>456</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 45.

<sup>457</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 65.

Another clue to his allegiance to such tropes are the poems he quotes at the end of some of his chapters. Rupert Brooke, with his, “swimmers into cleanness leaping,”<sup>458</sup> or Laurence Binyon, with, “They went with songs to the battle ... Straight of limb, true of eye ... They fell with their faces to the foe,” represent the Romantic school rather than the modernist, and use high diction when talking about war and death. Using “fell” instead of “die” and “foe” instead of “enemy” gives the poems a tone that contrasts with Wilfred Owen’s “those who die like cattle,” which focuses on the brutality, rather than the glory, of war. Parker chose to bookend his chapters with these particular poem excerpts and admired heroism: he related with admiration the story of a man in charge of a bomb store who had an accident but “heroically screened his comrades ... by taking the full blast of the explosion himself.”<sup>459</sup> But when it came to talking about himself and his own actions – which the high diction crowd would have called “deeds” – he uses prosaic language and downplays his achievements. After he returned to his unit and found that it had been involved in a successful, but deadly, bombing attack, he comments that he feels “I had missed the best show yet.”<sup>460</sup> In recounting his brutal experiences in the Battle of the Somme, and focusing on the nearly hopeless defense of the apex of a salient by a straggling band of survivors of a decimated Battalion, the most praise he gives himself and his fellow soldiers is, “Not one of us thought of going back.”<sup>461</sup>

Henry Ogle’s memoir, *The Fateful Battle Line*, takes its name from a line in a poem he wrote in 1915, which has a marked tone of high diction: “... the fateful battle line / That loops the ghost of Ypres, a name / By sacrifice of youth immortal made.”<sup>462</sup> Both the syntax and the mention of immortality and sacrifice echo traditional Romantic tropes.

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<sup>458</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 16.

<sup>459</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 34-35.

<sup>460</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 49.

<sup>461</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers, 58.

<sup>462</sup> Ogle, 205.

Ogle continued to maintain a Romantic sensibility throughout his war years, as evidenced by his memoir – although, as he was an artist, this sensibility comes out more through his paintings and sketches than through his words. Realistic images of people and equipment alternate with pastoral landscapes and images of European towns that could just as well have been painted in peacetime. But, after his initial patriotic fervour was tempered by the reality of war, Ogle lost all sentimentality about war. His verbal description of a landscape in the midst of the Battle of the Somme is bleak: “There was nothing to contemplate in this stilled maelstrom that suggested the works of man as a creative being.”<sup>463</sup> As for heroism, Ogle did his share of heroic things, as evidenced by the Military Cross he was awarded at Buckingham Palace, but his assessment of his own actions tends to be limited to whether or not he was doing a competent job. Like the others, his accounts of his own courage tend to be quiet and understated.

### Attitudes toward the Other

The men in this chapter presented varying portrayals of the Other in their memoirs – some positive, some negative. They did this to underscore the exoticism of their wartime experience, to point out the alienation they felt while away from home and family, but above all to reinforce the impression of their own respectability and to stake a claim to membership in the middle class proper. They often highlighted the contrast between themselves and the less educated, the working class, and those locals whom they considered to have questionable hygiene habits. Reactions such as shock at how many men in the ranks were almost illiterate were probably genuine for these lower-middle-class men, who were themselves educated and were enough at home with books to attempt to write their own. But they nonetheless served as a defense mechanism against any suspicion that these men and the people they singled out as different should have anything in common. E.P. Thompson defines class as relationship; in this case, the lower-middle-class men were keen to establish themselves as the ones with the upper hand.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Ogle, 104.

<sup>464</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (London: Penguin Classics, 2013).

Respectability was important to members of the lower middle class because it was an outward signal that they were not working-class. Ross McKibbin notes that members of the lower middle class often held middle-class attitudes more strongly than those more solidly established as middle class, in part because “they stood in the front line of the class war.”<sup>465</sup> Many of them had working-class roots and had contact with working-class people through their work, so the distinction was crucial. In wartime, when various classes came together in the Army, making that distinction could seem even more imperative.

When E.J. Higson remarked that a part of soldiering in wartime involved learning how to swear like an old soldier, he made a point of emphasizing that this was not something that he or his friends were used to doing in peacetime: “The language when these incidents occurred would have been a credit to old soldiers and this was from men who, before joining the army, never knew what it was to relieve their feelings in strong language.”<sup>466</sup> W.R.H. Brown tells a similar story of a sentry who was so nervous that he refused to believe Brown was a “friend” until he had sworn “violently at him.” The reader gets the impression that Brown did not usually use such language, which is why he thought the anecdote worth telling. Brown makes references to a number of foreign others in his memoir, generally in ways that reflect favourably on the British. The Germans, who “ran away for all they were worth” when the British reached their trench, ended up “dying like sheep.” This comparison not only likens the enemy to animals but strips them of courage. Brown’s description of Portuguese soldiers – “the worst one could wish to meet” – and “rowdy Chinese” of the Chinese Labour Corps reads like a passage out of a seedy novel. Brown had to “make an entire round of the sentry-groups at dead of night” and “always made sure my revolver was loaded and handy.” This shows him in a respectable light, in contrast to the dangerous foreign other. He was slightly kinder to the French. When his Battalion took over French trenches, Brown wrote: “I have no wish to cast a slur on the

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<sup>465</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 45.

<sup>466</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers.

French soldier, but we found the trenches in a filthy state ... swarmed with lice and ... pestered with rats." His implication is that the French were filthy – unlike the British, who noticed the filth and disapproved of it. Brown makes a similar judgment when talking about the rural Irish near his OCB camp. When he and a group of friends stopped in an Irish peasants' cottage for tea, they found the conditions "simply appalling," with everything seeming "very dirty and insanitary." What was worse, "a peculiar smell hung about," poultry ran around and "on our forks were distinct signs of a former meal." They did their best to eat "the unappetizing mess" out of politeness and then left. Shortly after, one of his friends "was violently sick, having been upset either by the smell of the place or by fancy." According to Gunn and Bell, being middle class is related to "a specific and habituated set of responses, of disgust, restraint and embarrassment."<sup>467</sup> Brown's suspicion that his friend's urge to vomit was caused by "fancy" indicates that the reaction was likely in response to what the physical conditions in the cottage represented. The fact that Brown relates the story in detail suggests he had a stake in his friend's visceral reaction.<sup>468</sup> When C. Carter was instructed to proceed to an OCB in Fermoy, Ireland, he took the attitude of an open-minded tourist and was prepared to be entertained by whatever he encountered. It is an interesting curiosity that Carter also dropped in on an Irish farmhouse to ask for tea, but that his experience was different from that of Brown. Carter found it a "lovely little farm ... real good feed in the most spotless room you could imagine ... & when we asked how much, they wouldn't take a penny." Carter may have visited a different farm where the conditions were better. But his judgment of the farm and its inhabitants, although positive, was based on the same markers as that of Brown: good hygiene. To his lower-middle-class mind, this reflected well on the inhabitants' respectability. Carter, who censored his men's letters after being commissioned, also makes a point of noting what he found to be a jarring lack of education among some of the rank and file. He found it "simply amazing ... how few men had any grasp of grammar, spelling or composition." Later, after the Armistice, when he was employed in

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<sup>467</sup> Gunn and Bell, 73.

<sup>468</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

teaching the men in an improvised Army school, he was appalled to find that “[t]here were three men in the Company who could neither read nor write. One of them had no desire to learn!” This last bit of information would have been unthinkable to Carter, who believed in education and in taking every opportunity offered to better himself. In a sense, he found these labouring men to be more alien to him than the foreign “others” he encountered in Ireland.<sup>469</sup>

Ernest Parker’s assessment of foreign “others” was a mixture of positive and negative. He was amused by “the gamins’ monotonous petitions for ‘Boolee bif’ and ‘Biskwi’” in France – and makes a point of emphasizing the foreign sound of the words by using odd spelling to render them.<sup>470</sup> Sitting down at a “dirty table” in a French farm kitchen, he was “strangely” impressed by the “primitive bareness of the room, probably hundreds of years old,” with its “massive pot simmering over the fire.”<sup>471</sup> Although Parker thought the sight was impressive, his reference to the space as primitive establishes the distance between his own civilized respectability and the locals’ presumed inferiority. His emphasis on the dirty table heightens the impression: the locals may have been exotic and even interesting, but they did not measure up to British standards. Elsewhere, Parker marvels at French civilians for continuing to till their land “while the long-range shells from both sides roared through the sky above their heads,” calling them “hardy folk.”<sup>472</sup> Here, again, the praise was tempered with an implication of negative otherness: they may have been hardy and even brave, but they had the physicality of the working class about them. Parker’s reaction to others of a different race was excitement at their exoticism, which he found picturesque. He describes “swarthy troops of Indian cavalymen” gazing down from their saddles “as the pageant of the Armies of the Empire paraded for the

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<sup>469</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>470</sup> Parker, 17.

<sup>471</sup> Parker, 21.

<sup>472</sup> Parker, 38.

South.”<sup>473</sup> Although positive, this description appropriates the Indian troops for the purposes of Empire. This contrasts with his descriptions of Anglo-Saxon others, whom he endows with more agency. He admires the “wonderful ... self-help” of the ANZAC infantry<sup>474</sup> and is impressed by the Americans, who looked tall and well fed. Although he comments on the Americans’ physicality, he treats them as equal allies, not subordinate troops – an impression reinforced by his admission that “our girl friends ... quickly deserted us to dance with a party of American officers.” Clearly, the Americans were also serious competitors, and that made them worthy masculine opponents.<sup>475</sup>

Parker’s treatment of British others of a lower social background is similar to his treatment of others of a different race. He gives them full credit for their special abilities, but establishes himself as superior. Thus, when he was assigned to a company of Durham miners, he comments that “[t]he Durhams secretly enjoyed digging, and ... it was always a source of satisfaction to my miner comrades that they could work more than twice as fast as a mere Southerner.”<sup>476</sup> Although Parker seems to be putting himself down and making the miners look good, he is in fact establishing that the Durhams were enacting their working-class masculinity, based on physical prowess, while he did not have to resort to physicality since he was middle-class.<sup>477</sup>

Henry Ogle’s treatment of foreign others was similar: he was curious about their difference, and made comments that were sometimes positive and sometimes negative. He is so fascinated by “a party of Gurkhas who squatted round a little charcoal-burning brazier and made chapattis”<sup>478</sup> that he sketches the group. He admires the Germans’

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<sup>473</sup> Parker, 44.

<sup>474</sup> Parker, 94.

<sup>475</sup> Parker, 91.

<sup>476</sup> Parker, 53.

<sup>477</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*.

<sup>478</sup> Ogle, 65.

engineering prowess but he finds their way of thinking “strange.”<sup>479</sup> The Australians are good in a fight but undisciplined: they are “a perpetual insurance against dullness or boredom” but “a heavy liability” in “any circumstances other than a tight corner.” Once, against his wishes, he was made the Commanding Officer of a train transporting a group of Diggers, and struggled to get the group to obey his orders. One of the men who was sitting on the roof of the train without permission fell off and was killed. Ogle makes it clear that this was the fault of the Australians’ irresponsible attitude.<sup>480</sup> But the most interesting treatment of the Other in Ogle’s memoir concerns the working-class Tommy. From the outset he establishes a gulf between them and himself in terms of education and refinement. His account of a typical Tommy first seeing a railway wagon used to transport troops has the Tommy reading the foreign words as, “‘Chevorks eight, ommies forty,’ ... ‘What’s that mean ...?’”<sup>481</sup> The description emphasizes the Tommy’s lack of education and inability to understand French. Ogle also relates the anecdote of being taught how to dig properly by Tom, a middle-aged collier in civilian life. Ogle describes Tom with the kind of respect he grants to people who are different than him, making a point of remarking that Tom carried his beer “without trouble either to himself or to anybody else” and that he was never drunk. This is not the sort of comment he would make about an officer he respected. When Tom sees Ogle trying to dig a trench, he decides to correct his technique, telling him that, “you’m a schoo’master an’ knows a thing or two that’s no use in this bloody place but when it comes to pick an’ shovel work ... that’s *my* job.” Tom proceeds to demonstrate his proficiency and intelligence when planning an extensive dig. Calling Ogle a “book feller[],” he adds that, “you’ll be a PROPER MON all round when you can dig an’ delve as good as” the young pitmen in the company.<sup>482</sup> Although Tom is ostensibly schooling Ogle in the art of being a man,

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<sup>479</sup> Ogle, 115.

<sup>480</sup> Ogle, 165-166.

<sup>481</sup> Ogle, 25.

<sup>482</sup> Ogle, 141.

rather than be offended or unsettled, Ogle is amused. Ogle also feels secure enough in his own masculinity to relate the anecdote in detail in his memoir. Ogle's own lower-middle-class masculinity as a "book feller" may have been different enough from Tom's working-class physical masculinity to render competition between them non-existent. Ogle, who aspired to a middle-class managerial masculinity, thus humoured being "schooled" by Tom in the art of digging as a "proper mon."<sup>483</sup> As in the other examples given in this section, the message conveyed here is that the author is a respectable man with a claim to membership in the middle class proper – a claim which is only reinforced by the contrast between himself and the Other.

## Empowerment

Another difference between the portrayal of these men in their memoirs as opposed to the letters examined in Chapters Two and Three is that they dared to recount the ways they stood up to authority. They give the impression that they felt empowered enough to question orders, turn down opportunities, or work around military bureaucracy to achieve their goals. Without putting the interest of the army or their country at risk, they advocated for themselves in a way that demonstrated both their conviction that their interests were worth fighting for and their ability to navigate the system to their advantage.

Following the Armistice, C. Carter was urged by his Colonel to stay on for six months as Battalion Educational Officer, and was offered a Captaincy in addition to extra duty pay of nearly £10 a week. He was tempted by the offer, but turned it down because he could not bring his wife with him.<sup>484</sup> When Ernest Parker was confined to hospital with "nearly all the bombers in 'A' Company" because of suspected scabies, and the R.A.M.C. orderlies' rigid rules did not sit well with "our ruffianly crowd of Durham bombers," Parker and his friends defied orders, put on their uniforms, and scaled the fence to enjoy

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<sup>483</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*.

<sup>484</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

themselves in the village. The R.A.M.C. orderlies were intimidated enough not to report the incident.<sup>485</sup> When E.J. Higson and two other subalterns were leading sixty men – “all we could find of the battalion” – back to the new line after a battle, they met a man on horseback, dressed as a British General. He “called us names for retiring,” which they resented, knowing that holding on for any longer had been impossible, and “ordered us back again.” Higson and the two other officers discussed the matter and decided to disobey this direct order, thinking it misguided. As Higson comments, “[I]ucky for us we did, for we afterwards learned that he was a German spy and badly wanted.” While the decision proved correct in hindsight, Higson did not know that the man was an impostor when they decided to disobey a superior officer’s order.<sup>486</sup> W.R.H. Brown successfully advocated for himself. When Brown, who had been recovering from a wound, was “put on a draft for France” even though he had been recommended for a period of light duty, he “objected to this, and told the medical officer what I thought of things in general and of their method of drafting in particular.” His objection had the desired result as he was allowed to remain with his Reserve Battalion for several more weeks. Apparently this success emboldened him to push the envelope, since he used all his resources to achieve early demobilization at the end of the war. Brown, who was again in hospital, went before a medical board and asked to be demobilized. Instead, he was given three weeks’ sick leave and ordered to rejoin his battalion in Dublin. As he said, “[u]nless compelled to, I had no intention of going to Ireland.” He therefore wrote to the War Office asking for demobilization, but received no reply. After returning to hospital, he went to the War Office in person, “to press my claim” but “did not gain much by my visit.” Having run into the metaphorical brick wall, most men would give up, but not Brown. He “interviewed the demobilization officer attached to the hospital” who gave him “a batch of the latest Army Orders to read.” He found one that supported his claim for immediate demobilization, requested a medical board, was “boarded,” and “a quarter of an hour later was a civilian, free from the red tape that had tied down many a promising young man

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<sup>485</sup> Parker, 39.

<sup>486</sup> Lieutenant E.J. Higson, papers.

and had rendered him a machine.” Brown’s perseverance and ingenuity in finding a sanctioned way to achieve what he wanted are impressive. He was empowered when dealing with a huge bureaucratic machine such as the Army.<sup>487</sup>

The lower-middle-class men in this chapter believed their wartime experiences were worth preserving, although most of them thought the only people likely to read their reminiscences would be their families. Their memoirs show that they shared many characteristics that defined them as men, some of which were apparent in the letters examined in Chapters Two and Three. They were not obsessed with status or advancement but did enjoy the perks of being officers and were determined to do their job well. They contrasted themselves with a foreign other – different in terms of nationality, ethnicity, or class – in a way that underscored their own respectability, although they often admired the unique qualities of such others, when they found them non-threatening. The memoir format and the fact that these reminiscences were written at some remove from the events of the First World War meant that these men could deal with issues – or admit to behaviour – which they would have shied away from in letters to family. In line with Jessica Meyer’s argument,<sup>488</sup> they presented a heroic and martial identity in their memoirs while making clear that their soldiering was only a temporary occupation and that civilian life took precedence. They wrote about the importance of camaraderie and wartime friendships to their lives in the front lines. They used high diction to discuss subjects like death, sacrifice, and patriotism, but did not buy into the Myth of the War as a glorious thing and tended to poke fun at sentimentality. They behaved heroically but did not brag about it. Unlike the men whose letters were examined in Chapters Two and Three, these men felt free to criticize all officers, not just brass hats, when they felt criticism was warranted – and they offered praise where they felt praise was due. Once they were commissioned, they did their best to live up to the standard of gentlemanliness that had previously excluded them on the basis of their lower-middle-

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<sup>487</sup> 2nd Lieutenant W.R.H. Brown, papers.

<sup>488</sup> Meyer.

class status and the idea of paternalism when leading their men. In doing so, they recognized and upheld the hegemonic masculinity and did not try to undermine it or opt out of it. Since they were writing about a past event whose resolution was no longer at stake, they felt free to discuss the complexity of war, with its blunders and seamier side. They also expressed a greater measure of disillusionment with war than was seen in Chapter Three – although not as great as would come out in the memoirs of the 1960s – coupled with pride in the credit they had gained as men through suffering and hardship. Above all, they had a secure sense of self and a solid confidence in their own worth, like the lower-middle-class men in previous chapters. They may have aspired to emulate the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity model, but they did not disavow their own lower-middle-class values to do so.

## Chapter 5

### Second-wave memoirs and oral interviews of lower-middle-class temporary officers

This chapter examines representations of masculinity and identity in the second-wave memoirs of four lower-middle-class men and the oral interviews of two lower-middle-class men who received temporary commissions during the First World War. (For details of how the lower-middle-class men examined here were selected, please see the “Methodology – Selection Process” section on page xxv of the Introduction.) The memoirs examined here were never published; they were written from the 1960s through the 1980s by men who wished to set down their wartime experiences and were later deposited in the archives of the Imperial War Museum, likely by the men’s families. The oral interviews were conducted by researchers employed by the Imperial War Museum in the late 1980s and early 1990s in an attempt to preserve the wartime experiences of men who were in their nineties. The overall message conveyed both in these memoirs and in the oral interviews echoed that expressed in the previous chapter: the men were comfortable with their background, proud of the skills and character traits with which their upbringing and education had equipped them, and confident they had a great deal to offer. In an attempt to ensure accuracy, the memoirs were often based on wartime diaries and letters, yet they inevitably reflected the concerns and opinions of the time during which they were written.<sup>489</sup> The memoirs examined in this chapter were written during the so-called second war books publishing boom, which coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the First World War and a general acceptance of a disillusioned view of the war in the popular media; those attitudes are expressed in their pages.<sup>490</sup> The oral

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<sup>489</sup> Joan Tumblety, ed. *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as a Source* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>490</sup> Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1992); Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain’s Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005).

interviews were shaped by the questions asked by the interviewer, which in turn reflected the concerns of the time. However, the interview subject could, and often did, answer in such a way as to redirect the focus of the interview to what they themselves felt were the key issues, thus subverting the interviewer's intentions. For instance, the recorder who conducted the oral interviews used in this chapter asked explicit questions about class divisions in the army and in the Officer Cadet Battalions, phrasing his enquiries in a way that expected conflict between classes. However, his interview subjects sometimes skirted his questions or used them as an opportunity to talk about wartime camaraderie.

Clifford Carter, from Yorkshire, was twenty-one years old when the war broke out; B.A. Minnitt, from Laneham, Nottinghamshire, was twenty years old in 1914; L.K. Rushworth, from Weston-super-Mare, did not turn eighteen until March 1916, but he enlisted in "Lord Derby's Army" in December 1915; K. Palmer, originally from Sheringham but working in Manchester, enlisted in September 1915 on his twenty-seventh attempt, having been turned down twenty-six times owing to his hernia; T.E. Rogers, from St. Leonards on Sea, Sussex, was seventeen years old at the start of the war; Laurie Field, from Rotherfield, Oxfordshire, was twenty-one years old in 1914; and Jim Davies, from Windsor, was eighteen years old at the start of the war. Clifford Carter enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion Yorkshire Regiment in September 1914, then served in Egypt and France. From November 1917 until April 1918, he underwent officer training with an Officer Cadet Battalion in Ireland. He then served as a subaltern in the 2nd Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment during the final Allied advance on the Western Front, finishing his wartime service with the Army of Occupation in Germany. Bernard Arthur Minnitt served with the 11th Battalion Sherwood Foresters from February 1916 to March 1917, then trained with the No. 7 Officer Cadet Battalion in Fermoy, Ireland. He was wounded by a shell in March 1918 and awarded the Military Cross. L.K. Rushworth served in the UK with the 4th Reserve Battalion Somerset Light Infantry from March 1916 to January 1917. He served in India and Mesopotamia before returning to the UK and training with the 18th Officer Cadet Battalion at Bath until the end of the war. K. Palmer enlisted as an Adjutant's Clerk with the RAMC when his application was finally accepted. He underwent officer training at the No. 3 Officer Cadet Battalion at Bristol, starting in November 1916, and embarked for the Western Front. He served with 513th

(London) Field Company RE (56th Division) from May 1917 to 1919. T.E. Rogers served with the 2nd Field Company RE (8th Division) on the Western Front from December 1914 to June 1916, then with the 1/6th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders on the Somme in July 1916. He underwent officer training with the No. 2 Officer Cadet Battalion at Cambridge from August 1916 until the spring of 1917. He served as an observer with No. 6 Squadron RFC over the Ypres Salient in the fall of 1917, then trained as a pilot. Laurie Field joined the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1911, was called up in August 1914 and sent to France shortly after. He underwent officer training at the Officer Cadet Battalion in Gales, Scotland in 1917 and trained with the Royal Flying Corps from November 1917 to May 1918. He flew with the RAF until his demobilization in May 1919. Jim Davies enlisted with the 12th Battalion Royal Fusiliers in August 1914, and served in France. He underwent officer training with the No. 10 Officer Cadet Battalion at Kinmel Park from December 1916 to February 1917, and was commissioned into the 5th Battalion Royal Fusiliers in March 1917. He fought on the Western Front, was wounded twice, and resigned his commission in November 1919.

There are several characteristics that define these men as lower-middle-class. Clifford Carter is the same man we encountered in the previous chapter. He was an insurance clerk in Hull, whose salary continued to be paid throughout the war. In addition to the handwritten scrapbook memoir examined in the previous chapter, Carter wrote a shorter typescript memoir in 1978, which digests his wartime experience from the perspective of an older man. I examine the second memoir in this chapter.<sup>491</sup> B.A. Minnitt wrote his typescript memoir in 1978. The 1911 UK Census lists his occupation as “grocer’s assistant,” and his father’s as “grocer and draper.” Minnitt’s older brother was listed as a “baker’s assistant.” The family owned a business that sold primarily to farmers in Nottinghamshire. Although the family had live-in servants, I am treating B.A. Minnitt as

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<sup>491</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 7988.

lower-middle-class owing to his and his father's occupations.<sup>492</sup> L.K. Rushworth wrote his brief typescript memoir in 1984. He left school at the age of 14 and went to work in the insurance industry. Rushworth's chosen occupation as well as the age at which he left school are both typically lower-middle-class.<sup>493</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer had worked as an assistant architect in a London office before the war broke out. He expresses sympathy for and an allegiance to people belonging to the lower middle class in the pages of his typescript memoir, which was most likely written in 1963.<sup>494</sup> T.E. Rogers wrote his typescript memoir in 1965. When the war broke out, Rogers was training to become an electrical engineer. The 1911 UK Census lists his father as a "shopkeeper" and "general draper." Rogers' older sister was a milliner and his family had no live-in servants. Rogers' family background, attitudes, and the fact that he had not yet completed his professional studies at the time the war broke out all make him lower-middle-class.<sup>495</sup> Jim Davies family lived comfortably and employed a maid and a cook. His father owned a furniture and antiques business. When asked by the interviewer about his background, Jim responded: "lower middle class, tradesmen." Laurie Field's father was a chemist (pharmacist) who owned a shop in a small town. Field attended the local school until the age of fourteen and did well thanks to the nurturing of his schoolteacher mother. Field took evening classes to become a clerk; in 1914 he worked at the Westminster Bank. I believe him to be lower-middle-class because of his family background, the importance his family placed on education, his own educational path, and his occupation in 1914.<sup>496</sup>

This chapter draws on both memoirs and oral interviews. Oral interviews can shed light on the experience of individuals who did not leave written records. Institutions like the

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<sup>492</sup> Lieutenant B.A. Minnitt M.C., papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 17631.

<sup>493</sup> 2nd Lieutenant L.K. Rushworth, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 3647.

<sup>494</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 7275.

<sup>495</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers, IWM Catalogue Number: Documents. 6527.

<sup>496</sup> Laurie Field (IWM Interview), IWM Catalogue Number: 11376.

Imperial War Museum used oral interviews to record the experiences of elderly First World War veterans to ensure that their recollections would not be lost upon their deaths. Using oral interviews as a source requires scholars to be aware that such documents are influenced by a myriad of factors, ranging from the time of recollection and the cultural scripts used in popular culture, to the approach taken by the interviewer and even the interviewer's gender, age, and social class. While keeping in mind that oral interview subjects "compose" their memories to make sense of the past,<sup>497</sup> and that recollections are obscured by "a patina of historical postscripts and rewritings,"<sup>498</sup> historians can use their awareness to include the accumulated layers of meaning as part of the object of study. Oral histories have been widely used by historians of twentieth-century war, such as Penny Summerfield's study of women's lives in the Second World War,<sup>499</sup> Alistair Thomson's work on Anzac memories of the First World War, and Peter Hart's popular *Voices from the Front: An Oral History of the Great War*.<sup>500</sup> In using oral interviews to shed light on the masculinity and identity of British lower-middle-class men in the First World War, this dissertation mines the complex interplay of these men's experiences with class and the pecking order of masculinity during the war and their reflections on these issues years later. They reveal both an acceptance of the class order as it then stood and a confidence about their worth in that context. The oral interviews used in this chapter are held at the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive. From its inception, Sound has conducted an ongoing oral interview program where interviewers visit subjects' homes – especially in the case of elderly war veterans – after subjects offer to participate in the project. The two interviews used here were conducted by Peter Hart as

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<sup>497</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>498</sup> Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983).

<sup>499</sup> Riley.

<sup>500</sup> Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); Peter Hart, *Voices from the Front: An Oral History of the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

part of a larger sample of 183 interviews carried out with First World War veterans in the 1980s and early 1990s for the IWM Sound Archive.

## Why it is so hard to find published lower-middle-class memoirs of the First World War

Although many First World War memoirs were published during the second war books boom, I have not been able to find any published memoirs written by lower-middle-class men. The primary barrier to publishing their second-wave memoirs may have been the same reason we encountered in the previous chapter: access to the publishing world. The lower-middle-class men who wrote their wartime experiences later in life did not have the kinds of connections that would make publication accessible. Just as during the first war books boom in the 1930s, it was more common for upper-middle-class or middle-class men to publish their memoirs because of their access, connections, and career success. Lower-middle-class men who set down their reminiscences later in life, often in retirement, may have done so for their own benefit and that of their families, and they may not have had the energy or desire to pursue publication on their own. If their children did not publish the memoir, the manuscript sat in a drawer until someone donated it to an archive. A survey of middle-class war memoirs published during the second war books boom shows that their authors' social background smoothed the way to publication in a way that was not accessible to the lower-middle-class men examined in this dissertation. Books like John Nettleton's *The Anger of the Guns: An Infantry Officer on the Western Front*, Dennis Wheatley's *Officer and Temporary Gentleman: the Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley*, Charles Carrington's *Soldier from the Wars Returning*, Herbert Read's *The Contrary Experience*, J.B. Priestley's *Margin Released: A Writer's Reminiscences and Reflections*, V.F. Eberle's *My Sapper Venture*, Bryan Latham's *A Territorial Soldier's War*, and Hugh Boustead's *The Wind of Morning* are some examples of middle-class war memoirs published during the second war books boom.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> John Nettleton, *The Anger of the Guns: An Infantry Officer on the Western Front* (London: William Kimber & Co. Limited, 1979); Dennis Wheatley, *Officer and Temporary Gentleman: 1914-1919* (London: Huthinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1978); Charles Carrington, *Soldier from the Wars Returning* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Gregg Revivals, 1991); Herbert Read, *The Contrary Experience* (New York:

Some First World War writings by lower-middle-class men were published during the second war books boom; however, such books tended to be wartime diaries that had been unearthed in an archive and edited by third parties, not by the men themselves. As such, they tended to be more scholarly project than memoir, and were framed by the editors with varying degrees of editorial comments that situated the participants' experience in the context of contemporary debates about the First World War. Such books, and especially the editorial comments they contain, tell us less about the point of view of the men whose diaries were used as primary sources and more about contemporary debates and opinions about the war. This section presents two such edited diaries of lower-middle-class men as well as a third-party memoir of the war experiences of a working-class man, by way of comparison. These books are important for the purposes of this dissertation, for three reasons. First, despite having been edited by third parties, they contain the first-person accounts of the wartime experiences of these lower-middle-class men, and can therefore be mined for information in the same way other primary sources can. Second, the editorial comments in each book reveal information about the issues surrounding the First World War as they were perceived by the public at the time of publication. Third, the contrast between the treatment of the lower-middle-class men's reminiscences and those of the token working-class man is illustrative of the way lower-middle-class men's literacy was key to their maintaining greater control over how their experiences were remembered.

*A Sergeant-Major's War: From Hill 60 to the Somme* is the wartime diary of Ernest Shephard, edited for publication by Bruce Rossor with the assistance of Dr. Richard Holmes. Shephard's father had a thriving photography business, successful enough for the family to be classified as lower-middle-class. Shephard enlisted in the Regular Army in 1909 and seems to have been a highly competent professional soldier. He was killed in 1917, and his diary remained hidden in a chocolate box in his brother's wardrobe for

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Horizon Press, 1963); J.B. Priestley, *Margin Released: A Writer's Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1962); V.F. Eberle, *My Sapper Venture* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1973); Bryan Latham, *A Territorial Soldier's War* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd, 1967); Hugh Boustead, *The Wind of Morning* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971).

years until the brother's son uncovered it and passed it onto Rossor, a colleague. Rossor's scholarly project received encouragement from Dr. Richard Holmes, who also "provided the avenue to publication."<sup>502</sup> In the case of lower-middle-class memoirs or diaries shepherded to publication by third parties, it was not social or literary connections but scholarly ones that were key to the books finally appearing in print. Rossor emphasizes his intention to "present as much of the diaries as possible with the minimum of intrusion,"<sup>503</sup> and he limits himself to providing editorial notes at the beginning of each chapter, commenting mostly on the historical background and military implications of the events Shepherd mentions. Rossor shrinks from engaging head-on in any of the scholarly/military debates on the First World War, saying that "[t]his is not the place to go into any of the controversies of the Battle of the Somme, about which so much has been written." But he does make a point of clarifying to the reader that Shephard's attitude toward the war was typical for his time: he had no doubts about the war's purpose, he was optimistic about its outcome, and he respected most officers at battalion and brigade level and above. Rossor also mentions that Shephard expressed criticism of the Somme and Gallipoli, along with grumbling about certain army procedures. Rossor's explanations of Shephard's attitudes toward the war, including criticisms – or lack thereof – makes sense when we look at the date of publication: 1987. By then, scholars had taken a step back from the disillusionment attitude that prevailed in the 1960s and had begun to consider the myths of the war in popular perception – although some of the major books dealing with the topic would not be published for a few years.<sup>504</sup>

Frank Hawkings' wartime diary, *From Ypres to Cambrai: the Diary of an Infantryman 1914-1919*, edited by Arthur Taylor, was published in 1974. Hawkings' father had been a clerk before the war; he himself was sixteen years old when war broke out. After

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<sup>502</sup> Ernest Shephard, *A Sergeant-Major's War* (Marlborough: The Crowood Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>503</sup> Shephard, 16.

<sup>504</sup> Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Hynes.

demobilization, Hawkings served in the Indian Auxiliary Force and worked as a planter in India. It was not Hawkings' idea to publish his memoirs; the drive to see the story in book form came from his editor, Arthur Taylor. In fact, Hawkings was "mildly surprised that his diary could be a matter of general interest so long after the event."<sup>505</sup> Taylor had an undergraduate degree in history, a professional background in the army, and a penchant for publishing books on topics dealing with war and the military for Shire Publications Ltd, a popular non-fiction press. Although Taylor did not interfere with the body of Hawkings' diary and confined the editorial notes at the beginning of each chapter to a minimum, focusing on the details of the various military campaigns, he expressed his opinions in the book's introduction. With his military background, Taylor's allegiance is to Frank Hawkings and the men of his generation. He lays the blame for the First World War at the foot of Germany and claims that the "successors" of the war generation squandered the achievements of the First World War to the point that "the work had to be done a second time."<sup>506</sup> He refers to Britain's willingness to take on a share of the guilt and blame for the war as "masochistic" and a "confidence trick."<sup>507</sup> Although the editors of these lower-middle-class war diaries express their opinions more or less clearly in the books' introductions and editorial notes, it is undeniable that the core of the books remains in the lower-middle-class men's own words. Although, as a class, these men may have lacked influence and thus lacked the ability to fully control the route their books took from concept to publication, their literacy meant they could at least minimize the intrusion of third-party points of view into their work.<sup>508</sup> Although edited, their diaries were still their own; they served as primary sources which could be interpreted in various ways but which could not be fundamentally altered.

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<sup>505</sup> Frank Hawkings, *From Ypres to Cambrai: the diary of an infantryman 1914-1919*, ed. A. Taylor (Morley, Yorkshire: The Elmfield Press, 1974), ix.

<sup>506</sup> Hawkings, xiv.

<sup>507</sup> Hawkings, xii.

<sup>508</sup> The upper-middle-class men had the power to eliminate that sort of intrusion.

In contrast, *Not For Glory*, the story of the war experience of Gilbert Hall, co-written by P.W. Turner and R.H. Haigh, is a working-class man's war memoir that was entirely written by third parties in 1969. Gilbert Hall came from a "respectable working class" family and worked as a collier before the war because his family could not afford to send him to grammar school.<sup>509</sup> During the war, he started out in the ranks and later underwent officer cadet training and was commissioned. Turner and Haigh conducted extensive interviews with Hall, which they supplemented by details from archives.<sup>510</sup> In the book, written in the third person, they use the convention "Gilbert remembers" to preface personal recollections, and provide context for Hall's experience. Although the book is ostensibly Gilbert Hall's story and is dedicated to him, the authors' point of view is apparent. They describe the war as entailing "millions of men living under inhuman conditions for months on end, slaughtering and in turn being slaughtered over the same piece of blood-soaked ground."<sup>511</sup> The editors denounce the Battle of the Somme as unnecessary and state outright that "Haig must be held responsible."<sup>512</sup> They also raise the issue of class, which figured prominently in public consciousness at the time of the book's publication. They reveal Hall's point of view, admitting that "At no time during his training did [Hall] remember any instance of friction between cadets hailing from different social groups, nor did the course seem to favour cadets originating from the more conventional middle-class background."<sup>513</sup> These denials on the part of Hall seem to indicate that Turner and Haigh asked direct class-related questions in their interviews – in a manner similar to that of the Imperial War Museum researchers conducting oral interviews in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although the book chronicles Hall's war experience, the fact that no part of it was written by him makes it possible to question

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<sup>509</sup> P.W. Turner and R.H. Haigh, *Not for Glory* (London: Robert Maxwell, 1969), 12.

<sup>510</sup> Turner and Haigh seem to have been secondary school teachers whose scholarly project was done on their own time with some encouragement from a member of the faculty at the University of Sheffield.

<sup>511</sup> Turner and Haigh, xiii.

<sup>512</sup> Turner and Haigh, 62.

<sup>513</sup> Turner and Haigh, 80.

whether it truly is his story. As a working-class man who did not keep a diary to record his wartime experiences, he had even less control over his story than that available to lower-middle-class men.

## How the lower-middle-class men of this chapter fit into the larger argument of the dissertation and how the message in the second-wave memoirs and oral interviews differs from that expressed in the first-wave memoirs

The overall message conveyed in the second-wave memoirs studied in this chapter is consistent with that of the previous chapters: the men did not feel inferior, insecure, or lacking in worth. Arno J. Meyer has argued that the lower middle class had a predisposition against revolutionary confrontation and, in times of crisis, tended to side with the class above it in return for the cultural “bribe” of their social superiors’ seeing them in a positive light as a group.<sup>514</sup> This also seems to be the case with individual members of the lower middle class: the men studied here fully embraced the accepted model of hegemonic masculinity – that of the Sandhurst-educated officer and gentleman who belonged to the upper middle class – and measured themselves by the same yardstick. And yet, they were vocal in their opinion that they not only could fill the role as well as those born to it, but could do it better. This was one of the differences between the second-wave memoirs and the first-wave memoirs examined in the previous chapter: the men writing from the 1960s through the 1980s were convinced that ranker officers – and, specifically, lower-middle-class ranker officers – made better officers than those commissioned via the traditional route.

There were three ways in which second-wave memoirs differ from first-wave memoirs. First, they are more explicit about issues of class, discussing it openly and portraying it both in a positive and a negative light. The men examined in this chapter display cynicism towards issues of class during the War, but also praise for what they saw as

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<sup>514</sup> Arno J. Meyer, “The Lower Middle Class as a Historical Problem,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 47:3 (Sept. 1975): 409-436.

tolerance of class differences at the time. They joke comfortably about class, making tongue-in-cheek references to it and displaying confidence in their own class identity. They do not downplay or ignore the issue, demonstrating that their level of comfort with class differences is higher than that of lower-middle-class men writing in an earlier era, who may have chosen to report only their positive class-related experiences or may have attempted to self-identify as middle-class. Part of the reason for this personal level of comfort with the issue of class is that class was widely discussed in society at the time, and thus would have been a natural focal point for men looking back at their experiences as temporary officers in wartime. This becomes apparent in the oral interviews, which were directed by researchers representing an outside institution. In the questions they ask, the interviewers openly push the class agenda, not only asking questions about background, schooling, and class allegiance, but almost assuming that class conflict was a standard part of Army life and looking for evidence of it. The veterans' responses indicate a more accepting attitude: although they are somewhat cynical about class in retrospect, during the war they were happy enough to play by the existing rules and used their skill at blending in to emulate the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity. Although they did not feel inferior, they also did not want to cause trouble. The second way that second-wave memoirs differ from first-wave memoirs is in their exploration of the complexities of war, which is darker and not always presented in a humorous way. The men examined in this chapter admit to both witnessing and participating in actions that were morally dubious and not entirely legal. Going beyond inadvertently falling asleep on duty, the events discussed shed light on the dark underbelly of war. The third way that second-wave memoirs differ from first-wave memoirs – and from the letters examined in earlier chapters – is that the disillusionment with the war expressed in their pages goes beyond simple criticism of conditions on the ground or incompetent local leadership in a necessary war: they question the reasons for the war and challenge the competence of authority at the highest levels. This would have been consistent both with the treatment of the Myth of the War in the 1960s and 1970s in the popular media and with the zeitgeist of the era that made a virtue out of challenging authority.

## A closer look at the lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter

Several themes in these memoirs and interviews help me explore class and identity: attitudes toward class; the role that duty, stoicism, and active participation in the fighting played in the way these men defined manliness; comradeship and the importance of civilian identity; attitudes toward the Other; disillusionment and agency; and these men's willingness to discuss the unpleasant side of war.

### Attitudes toward class

The subject of class receives more explicit treatment both in the memoirs and the interviews. This is likely because class tended to be openly discussed in the period during which the interviews were conducted and the memoirs were written. Both the possibilities of social mobility and the continuing presence of class divisions were a preoccupation in the public discourse, and the realities of lower-middle-class life were also changing in response to changes in society.<sup>515</sup> Since memoirs can reveal almost as much about the time they were written as about the time they recall and oral interviews are invariably influenced by the agenda of the interviewer, the focus on class is not surprising in the memoirs and oral interviews examined in this chapter.<sup>516</sup>

In the IMW interviews, aspects of class were raised not by the veterans themselves but by the interviewers, who attempted to highlight differences and discord. The veterans' counteracted that attempt. When talking about joining the Territorials before the First World War, Laurie Field is asked whether his fellow privates were "fellows like you ... the same social [class]." The interviewer then asks whether there were "any noticeable differences in background" between Field and "men from the works," to which Field replies that there were not since many of them were "artisans." When asked whether "the

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<sup>515</sup> Rita Felski, "Nothing to Declare: Identity, Shame, and the Lower Middle Class," *PMLA*, 115:1, Special Topic: Rereading Class (Jan., 2000): 33-45.

<sup>516</sup> Tumblety; Hilary Young, "Hard Man, New Man: Re/composing Masculinities in Glasgow, C.1950-2000," *Oral History*, 35:1, War and Masculinities (Spring 2007): 71-81.

various groupings mixed together well,” Field answers in the affirmative. It appears that the interviewer is searching for stories of class conflict where there are none. Yet, Field’s attitude toward class was not revolutionary. When asked about what made him want to become an officer, his answer is pragmatic: “I said to myself, anything was better than the trenches. The officers used to have their pick of the dugouts, and that sort of thing. Everything was better. As it should be, I think really. I’m not complaining about it. [laugh]” His view of a commission as a temporary perk is clear, as is his attitude of wanting to improve his personal position as part of a system he does not wish to change. His laughter indicates a self-conscious awareness of a disconnect between what Field believes and what he thinks the interviewer wants to hear. Field is not a leveler: he accepts the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity as a model and aspires to join that group, even if only for a time. As such, his attitude is typical of the lower-middle-class men examined in this chapter.<sup>517</sup>

Jim Davies self-identifies as “lower middle class” – an indication he was aware of class issues. Later in the interview, when Davies describes the initial excitement about the war among crowds in front of Buckingham Palace, the interviewer asks him what kind of crowd it had been. Davies’ responds: “Just the British people as I knew them... The working class there... not like they were shouting for peace in those days, they were just as keen as we were... Oh, I say ‘we were’... [laugh] I was just above the working class.” His self-conscious laugh indicates that he is slightly embarrassed that he has made the distinction between himself and a group of people he considers different than him – and possibly slightly inferior. He quickly attempts to correct that impression by bringing himself down a notch. When discussing Davies’ initial enlistment, the interviewer asks him about the “social mixture” within the group and how Davies got on with his fellow privates. The interviewer then asks, “Was there any trouble between the social groups?” – to which Davies replies with a definite: “No, no, no, no, no...” When discussing Davies’ Officer Cadet Battalion experience, the interviewer asks whether the cadets were “all

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<sup>517</sup> Laurie Field, interview.

from mixed origins” or “of a broad social class,” inquiring about the cadets’ educational background to clarify things further. Davies answers that the background of those involved was broad, but that he “got on with them easily.” Possibly in response to the interviewer’s repeated inquiries as to whether he got along with the men around him – whether fellow soldiers or fellow officer cadets – Davies offers the following as an explanation: “I suppose I could mix all right, you know, being an actor,” and explains that stepping into an unfamiliar situation was just like “playing another part.” The lower-middle-class ability to straddle the class divide through reading others and mimicking their “betters”<sup>518</sup> was exaggerated in Davies’ case by his acting talent and experience. When the interviewer asks Davies about whether the soldiers treated him differently because he was a ranker officer and not a Sandhurst officer, Davies explains that his identity as a ranker officer would have been obvious but that, by 1917, little distinction was made out in the trenches. He says: “[B]y the time I was commissioned the difference between ranker officers and Sandhurst officers had gone. Most of the blokes by 1917 had served in the ranks.”<sup>519</sup> This comment indicates that the war had served as a class leveler, even if it was only in the trenches and only for the duration of hostilities. Such attitudes would have fostered confidence among lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen, who were keen to prove they were as good as, if not better than, the Sandhurst officers they replaced.

The second-wave memoirs also raise issues of class more openly, this time from the perspective of the veterans themselves. Clifford Carter’s 1978 typescript memoir covers the same ground as his 1920-21 scrapbook, but shows some incidents and issues in a slightly different light. In his second memoir, Carter is more conscious of class issues and discusses them more openly. Although his account of his battalion being first issued with uniforms is summed up with: “We were real soldiers and all class distinctions were gone forever,” the rest of Carter’s memoir contradicts that optimistic statement. At the Étapes

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<sup>518</sup> Bailey, 273-290.

<sup>519</sup> Jim Davies (IWM Interview), IWM Catalogue Number: 9750.

army base, Carter volunteered to be a waiter in the officers' mess to escape the never-ending parades. He enjoyed "this delightful occupation." As he recalls, "I dined early and I dined late. I ate the crumbs from the rich-man's table, so to speak, and I made a fortune in tips!" The image of eating the crumbs from the rich man's table is used jokingly but indicates an awareness of a class system and of his place in it. Once he was commissioned, Carter enjoyed the perks of being an officer in a system that gave officers special treatment. After the war, he relished his time in Cologne before demobilization, with "seats reserved at the Opera House" and "free trips on the Rhine." He also took advantage of free travel on German trains, where "a first-class carriage was always reserved for officers," to do a great deal of sightseeing. Carter mentions that, whenever his battalion entered a conquered German town at the end of the war, all the German men and boys had to "raise their hats to our officers, which they did rather sheepishly." This was a demonstration of submission by the men of a conquered state to the exemplars of the conquering nation's hegemonic masculinity. Carter's detailed recounting may indicate that he enjoyed being included in the hegemonic group.<sup>520</sup>

B.A. Minnitt also commented on class in his memoir. In recounting his training at the OCB in Moore Park, he proudly states that "we were having to learn in four months what potential officers at Sandhurst were given three years to do." With obvious pride, he adds that, "my having been on Active Service benefitted me. The knowledge gained by my experience in trench warfare ... enabled me to help some of the other aspirants to the position of Major-General." He sums up his OCB training with the proud admission that his final exam results placed him "fourth out of some three hundred" in his class. Clearly, Minnitt took great pride in being a ranker officer – not *despite* not having gone to Sandhurst but *because* of it. Like other men in this chapter, Minnitt's consciousness of class issues extended to being granted a temporary commission. Like many others, Minnit saw being an officer as part duty and part perk, and took pride in his achievement while at the same time enjoying its benefits. After being commissioned, he commented:

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<sup>520</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

“...what an alteration to when I was ... in the ranks. This time we have guides to meet us everywhere, Officers’ Clubs to go to, first-class compartments to ride in, and every other possible convenience...” His assessment of the change is as follows: “Sometimes I have wondered whether I was doing right in accepting a commission, but every day that passes makes me realize the difference, and the splendid advantages a commission carries with it.” He enjoyed the perks of the position.

L.K. Rushworth also demonstrates an awareness of power and influence in his memoir. When he and his friend, Victor, applied for a commission, Victor’s application was not accepted because “he was not too bright (as a soldier).” However, Victor’s father had been “Chaplain General of the Forces during the South African War and had some influence at the War Office.” He “pulled some strings” and both men’s applications were later accepted. The men were grateful for the influence that ensured their advancement. Rushworth enjoyed being an officer during the war, seeing it as a temporary perk. Although he found the training to be intensive, he enjoyed being kitted out with an officer’s uniform, which he wore proudly. He also appreciated the monetary advantages of his commission as well as the temporary status that came with being gazetted.<sup>521</sup>

Lieutenant K. Palmer’s memoir was permeated with an awareness of class, although Palmer seems to have had mixed feelings on the subject. He expresses the opinion that “snobbery is an awful thing to behold” and states that he “hoped that after the war it would cease to be,” yet he criticizes the public’s general acceptance of all men in khaki at the beginning of the war, saying that, “no distinction was made between the uncouth and the educated; a kind of ‘blind eye’ was turned towards the former.” Still, Palmer gleefully recounts stories of “everyone mucking in together, all trying to do their bit,” including upper-class people doing manual work. His personal recollections demonstrate less cooperation and more conflict. He recalls an RAMC Lieutenant who was “eaten up by his own vanity” and enjoyed the feeling of power he had when dealing with privates. Palmer’s opinion of the officer in question was that he was “an upstart” rather than “a

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<sup>521</sup> 2nd Lieutenant L.K. Rushworth, papers.

gentleman.” Palmer was determined to respond stoically to the officer’s bullying. Palmer recalls his experiences at an Officer Cadet Battalion as “the happiest four months of my life” and a time when “we had to work hard and play hard.” He and his fellow cadets were keen to be commissioned because of “the personal pride it carried with it; it was not easy to get a commission then and so we all strove for the honour.” The fact that they had been “hand picked from their units” and “only the very best had been chosen” also added to the sense that they were part of an elite group. When he was gazetted in the *Times* as a member of a famous regiment, Palmer was “delighted.” But practical matters played a part in how he enjoyed his commission: officers’ wives received special ration books and had access to special foodstuffs, which made a material difference in their lives. Although he criticizes some of his fellow officer cadets as being “a little too big for their boots,” he is of the general opinion that Territorial officers were superior to Regular officers because they had obtained experience in their civilian occupations before the war and “had a more versatile mind.” He states that, at one point during the war, Territorial officers were told that they could dispense with wearing the identifying ‘T’ on their tunics which indicated that they were not professional officers. According to Palmer, few Territorial officers removed the symbol because “they preferred to be amateurs and they liked the ‘T’ to distinguish them as such.” Palmer prefers amateur officers over Sandhurst-trained officers. He also implies that a great many of those Territorial officers he praises are ranker officers: that is, not just temporary officers but also temporary gentlemen. Like the other men examined in this chapter, Palmer believed that ranker officers not only measured up to the Sandhurst standard but did so better than many of the traditional officers.<sup>522</sup>

T.E. Rogers, a ranker officer who later fought with the R.F.C., first as an observer and later as a pilot, also believed in the superiority of battle experience over theoretical training. In his view, R.F.C. observers who obtained their “observer’s single wing” on active service and later trained as pilots were viewed with more respect by their comrades

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<sup>522</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers.

than pilots who had trained at home. The right to wear an observer's wing "was of terrific snob-value, for it indicated positively the wearer to have flown on active service." After the war ended, Rogers applied for a permanent commission in the R.A.F. He remarks that some of the official questionnaires he was required to complete "were obviously aimed at the individual's social standing." One of them asked: "Would you be willing to play polo?" The consensus in his squadron was that this referred to willingness rather than qualifications, so all the applicants answered in the affirmative.<sup>523</sup>

### Duty, stoicism and active participation in the fighting

The men studied in this chapter may have felt excited about the prospect of war, but that excitement quickly faded and was replaced by a determination to do their duty. None of them came through the war with their "Boy's Own" enthusiasm intact, and some made fun of that naiveté. In addition to doggedly doing their duty, these men thought that taking an active part in the fighting was a manly behaviour. They admired others who had extensive experience at the front, who volunteered for active service, and who willingly put themselves in danger: they held themselves up to the same standard. They contrasted this with men who shirked their duty by staying behind in England, demonstrated a cowardly attitude at the front, or held pacifist views. They also contrasted their masculinity with the cushy situation of senior officers who were not in immediate physical danger. This attitude formed a key component of the masculinity of both British subalterns and rank-and-file soldiers during the First World War.<sup>524</sup>

When Jim Davies is asked why he was so happy that war had been declared, he answers: "I was young and stupid, I suppose. Full of patriotism and Boy's Own Paper, on which my boyhood was based." The implication is that Davies quickly learned his lesson. When the interviewer asks Davies what he thought about people who did not want to join the

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<sup>523</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers.

<sup>524</sup> Magdalena Hentel, "Dapper Gentlemen and Hard-working Tommies: Constructions of Masculinity in British Trench Journals, 1915-1919" (presentation, Bruce McCaffrey Memorial Graduate Seminar, Western University, October 2012).

army, he replies: “I didn’t meet any... It was a fever, like hooliganism is today.”<sup>525</sup>

Clifford Carter sums up why he joined up in 1914: “I had not the slightest desire to kill anybody but I was determined to do my bit for my country.” Once in the army, Carter demonstrated a pragmatic attitude, expressing gratitude for being “lucky” to be chosen as the officer who remained behind at headquarters while the rest of the battalion went to the trenches. He says, “I always suspected that the real reason behind this arrangement was to ensure that if all the officers in the trenches were killed there would be someone to take over.” Carter appreciated the temporary respite from the dangers of combat, yet he describes going out to no-man’s land the night before an attack to cut down barbed wire as “a most exhilarating experience.” He says, “I was no longer standing helplessly in a trench but doing something worthwhile and dangerous.” Carter saw danger as a positive attribute when experienced in the service of something worthwhile; by implication, keeping away from dangerous front-line service had no worth.<sup>526</sup> Carter’s preference for danger when it was coupled with productive action reflects the attitude of many First World War soldiers, who found that being exposed to danger while in a passive situation, such as taking fire in a trench, was more stressful than actively attacking.<sup>527</sup>

B.A. Minnitt also addresses the change in attitude that young recruits underwent when faced with the reality of wartime. When he joined up in 1916 and was marched through the town with his fellow recruits, soldiers in khaki who observed them called out, “You poor b-----s!” Minnitt sums up the incident with the words, “Little did some of our group realize that in nine weeks ... they would be under the sod in France.” From the perspective of an old man recalling his wartime experiences, excitement about the prospect of deployment is something to be derided. Elsewhere, Minnitt exhibited a pragmatic attitude toward military service. Commenting on his youngest brother’s

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<sup>525</sup> Jim Davies, interview.

<sup>526</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>527</sup> Joanna Bourke, “Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-Shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35:1 (2000): 57-69.

enlistment in the Royal Naval Air Service, Minnitt expresses happiness but adds that he was “inclined to think he has joined for too long – twelve years. It would have been more sensible for three years and then extended his term of service if he liked it.” In Minnitt’s view, doing one’s duty was necessary but signing one’s life away to the army or navy was not. Minnitt’s other brother also did his duty in the army, coming home as “an absolute wreck,” to the point that Minnitt did not recognize him the first time he saw him: “holding his head in his hands and, having lost all his hair, he just looked wretched.” Minnitt expresses his sympathy for his brother and “a large proportion of the best manhood of the nation” who “would never return” from the war. He contrasts that devotion to duty and willingness to lay lives and health on the line with “[m]any of the fellows who had evaded serving the nation and had become newly rich,” whom Minnitt considered to be shirkers. The contrasting language – “best manhood” versus “fellows” – indicates that Minnitt felt the former to be manlier than the latter owing to their active participation in the war.<sup>528</sup>

L.K. Rushworth also exhibited pragmatism about his army service. When he writes about enlisting in “Lord Derby’s Army,” he states that one of the benefits of doing so was that it entitled “volunteers for service to wear a khaki armlet bearing a red crown that signified the wearer had accepted the ‘King’s Shilling’” and that this “saved the volunteer from receiving a white feather from patriotic females.” Here Rushworth’s motivation for joining up seems to be more about avoiding public ridicule than about genuine war enthusiasm. Yet he was keen to do his duty and was not merely killing time while in the army; when he and his pal Victor “began to feel that we were not making much progress towards winning the war” while stationed in the Middle East, they answered the call for volunteers and applied for training as officers in India. Although the living conditions in Nasiriyah were difficult, the soldiers were not in excessive danger. By volunteering for a commission, Rushworth and his friend ran the risk of putting themselves in more perilous

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<sup>528</sup> Lieutenant B.A. Minnitt, MC, papers.

situations, yet they preferred to help the war effort as much as possible by putting their talents to good use.<sup>529</sup>

At the beginning of his 1965 memoir, T.E. Rogers criticizes the attitude of himself and many other young men at the time the First World War broke out, saying that, “[t]o the average young male of that time, the thought of war was the thought of cavalry charges, honour, glory, the V.C., fame; at least until he had experienced war.” Explaining this attitude, Rogers says, “we were not callous, just callow, our youthful mental pictures were rose tinted and unreal,” adding that, at a time when he and his comrades had yet to experience combat, “[w]e still had much to learn.” By the time he and his friend Davy went home on leave, all dreams of heroism had evaporated. When Davy’s sister greeted her brother and Rogers, she gave them each a kiss, demonstrating what Rogers interpreted as “adulation . . . a primitive, savage rewarding of two supposed heroes.” Rogers was surprised at her reaction, believing that “[w]e were not heroes . . . The idea of becoming such had faded months previously.” When Rogers underwent training at an OCB, the Colonel commanding the battalion dwelled on the beauty of death in combat and encouraged his young charges to take risks that might result in their heroically being killed in action as soon as they got back to France. Rogers disagrees with “his philosophic views on violent death,” seeing them as “outmoded by our seldom mentioned sophisticated variety which resulted from bitter experience.” He and his peers were willing to do their duty, but they did not have a death wish. When he joined the R.F.C. and flew as an observer in combat, he was thankful to be trapped in the cockpit of an airplane because it banished “the fear of fear which might cause one to involuntarily betray a trust” or act in a cowardly manner. He compares those flying above the trenches to German machine gunners who were sometimes chained to their guns at their own request to “make certain of avoiding shame.” Rogers admits to the presence of fear in

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<sup>529</sup> 2nd Lieutenant L.K. Rushworth, papers.

combat, which demonstrates his experience of the less glorious side of war; his relief of being held to account shows how determined he was to do his duty.<sup>530</sup>

K. Palmer is judgmental in his memoir when he compares the men who enlisted or shirked, and about their perceived manliness – or lack thereof. In his words, “[a]ll men worth their salt enlisted.” Because of his physical disability – he suffered from a hernia – he had trouble enlisting, and finally got into the RAMC on his 27th attempt, stating that he “had to more or less beg my way in.” Holding the opinion that “war shows a man’s personal worth,” he makes the distinction between members of the R.A.M.C. who suffered from various types of physical ailments that made them unfit for service overseas but who were keen to fight, and those who were glad of an excuse to remain safe. Palmer eventually got an operation for his hernia, applied for a commission and passed the medical exam despite his poor eyesight; two officers conspired to help him pass the eye test by allowing him time to learn the eye chart by heart. Given the lengths he had to go to in order to be allowed to fight overseas, it is no wonder Palmer thought little of men who were not as keen. Seeing thousands of civilian young men in “reserved occupations” watching a football match “made me sick,” he says. In his opinion, “the best type of manhood did join up and thousands of them were killed or wounded, whereas the worst type lived and continued to breed...” When one man told him that he would rather commit suicide than join, he “told him it was a pity he didn’t.” His opinion of conscientious objectors was particularly low: he calls them “a measly crowd of human beings” and “a disgrace to fellow humans.” As for his opinion of officers, he believed that high rank went hand in hand with the temptation to remain out of danger: “the higher in rank an officer became, the more chance he had to look after himself.” This interfered with good leadership since, in Palmer’s view, a good officer always shared the danger with his men. Palmer believed that doing his duty was a prerequisite to proper manhood, calling an officer who shirked his duty “the nastiest piece of so-called manhood I have ever come across.” When he found an officer crying out of fear, he said that he had

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<sup>530</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers.

“never felt more disgusted with a so-called man, and officer too... I didn’t think a man could sink so low.” As he recalls, he was as afraid as the officer in question, but he focused on doing his duty and did not give into fear: real men had to “keep a stiff upper lip” and “bluff our way through.” When summarizing his general outlook on life and reflecting on the death of his own son in the Second World War, Palmer takes pride in being able to “deal with a personal tragedy, to hide it and not pass it on to others.” He feels it is a demonstration of strength to be “able to suffer in silence.” Clearly, doing his duty and taking an active part in the fighting was for Palmer a mark of true manhood.<sup>531</sup>

### Comradeship and the importance of civilian identity

For some of the men examined in this chapter, their civilian lives took precedence over their identity as soldiers. This would have been consistent with the importance that lower-middle-class people placed on companionate marriage and a close-knit family life.<sup>532</sup>

Other men in this chapter treasured the comradeship that was found in sharing difficult conditions and danger, although in some cases they were keenly aware that such comradeship was contingent on their being on active service and was thus ephemeral.

Clifford Carter’s 1978 memoir has a martial focus, in marked contrast to his 1920-21 scrapbook memoir, which demonstrates his unwavering allegiance to civilian life. This is in line with Jessica Meyer’s book, *Men of War*, which found that the identity that emerged in the memoirs of men who had fought in the First World War tended to be heroic, as opposed to the domestic identity that emerged from letters home written at the front.<sup>533</sup> Carter, who had devoted countless pages in his first-wave memoir to chronicling his struggle to obtain leave to get married, and who had reported turning down good employment opportunities with the army in favour of getting home to his wife after the

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<sup>531</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers.

<sup>532</sup> A. James Hammerton, “Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920,” *Journal of British Studies* 38:3 (July 1999): 291-321

<sup>533</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the Great War in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

armistice, mentions his wedding only briefly in his second-wave memoir. He reports that “my fiancée and I tentatively arranged to be married” and that “there followed a typical army drama.” He gives a half-page timeline of relevant dates and concludes that he wore his new officer’s uniform for the wedding. In this version of events, the most important detail seems to be that he was “entitled to wear a gold braid wound stripe on the left sleeve and two chevrons on the right sleeve, indicating two years active service.” When he looks back on his wartime experiences as an old man, military details seem the most worthy of documenting.<sup>534</sup>

Similarly, B.A. Minnitt enjoyed the company of his fellow soldiers in wartime. When he first joined up and reported for service, he noticed some friends amongst the other volunteers – friends he lists by name – and “so did not feel lonely.” But his allegiance clearly lies with the folks at home. Partway through the war, on the advice of a kindly sergeant, Minnitt applied for an extension of his leave on agricultural grounds so he could help his father manage the three acres of land he owned. After the armistice, he and a few other officers were offered “an extra year’s army life up in Schleswig-Holstein at some thirty marks a day extra pay, plus allowances ... to supervise and arrange the carrying out of a plebiscite.” Although many men enthusiastically accepted, Minnitt turned the offer down “owing to the news from home that the business was heading for queer street.” Minnitt’s civilian life took primacy even in wartime.<sup>535</sup> L.K. Rushworth’s attitude was similar: he enjoyed the camaraderie of soldiering, but we get the sense that his friendships with other soldiers were contingent on their being thrown together by wartime conditions. When recounting the journey to Cape Town on board the *Empress of Britain*, in “appalling” conditions, he states he and his friend Victor “had to take it in turns to grab two hammocks and guard them on deck in the afternoon to sleep on deck at night” because the conditions below deck were a nightmare. Rushworth refers to Victor as “my pal” on more than one occasion and they spent time together during the war, but

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<sup>534</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>535</sup> Lieutenant B.A. Minnitt, MC, papers.

Rushworth's allegiance is to those at home. According to his account, the most important event of the eight months he spent training at an Officer Cadet Battalion was meeting his future wife, "17 year old Miss Olive Jones, who has been my wife for the past 62 years!!"

T.E. Rogers' recollections of wartime are similarly nuanced. He remembers his time at the OCB fondly, writing: "My salient memories are of perfect comradeship, devoid both of pettiness and self-seeking..." He remarks that he missed his former colleagues, and proceeds to list the names of the men he had managed to run into over the years, which gives credence to his claims that these friendships were important to him. When recalling the dangers of the trenches, he recounts the anecdote of a soldier, beloved by his entire company, who was shot in the head by a sniper. His "staunch friends" set out under heavy fire to retrieve him from No Man's Land because they refused to give up hope that he might be saved. While this anecdote paints wartime camaraderie in a positive light, another mention of wartime friendship shows the phenomenon from a more nuanced perspective. Rogers describes the life of a fighter pilot, and reminds the reader that "[a] fighter pilot remained alive only if successful" and that repeated successes brought with them the ghosts of friends who had been killed, and who "would frequently plague and rob him of his sleep; except when he had participated wholeheartedly in revels in the mess..." In this case, Rogers recalls the value of drinking with his comrades as a way of keeping at bay memories that he would rather forget. This is why, as he states, returning home could be so difficult: "[a]t home, there was no friendly mess in which to drink and to forget."<sup>536</sup>

K. Palmer recounts a similar attitude towards wartime camaraderie, which eschewed sentimentality in favour of pragmatic mutual support that sometimes included the liberal consumption of alcohol. During his time at an OCB, an old Captain claimed that Guest Nights were a time for the sentimental remembering of "past officers of the Battalion who have long since died." In Palmer's experience, Guest Nights were something else altogether: "many of the officers were so drunk that I have seen them stand up when toast

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<sup>536</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers.

time had arrived, and fall over backwards...” Palmer insists that “no insult was intended,” but that “it just happened that way.” Speaking of the nature of wartime friendship, he says, “the fellows were all chums in as much that they were all friendly and always out to help each other. ... Each knew that most of us would catch a packet in the form of wounds or death, sooner or later.” He sums up the time as “wonderful days of friendship among ships that pass in the night.” Looking back on the experience, Palmer wonders how many of his old wartime friends are still alive; he has not kept in touch. And yet he says that “I have never forgotten that unique experience of comradeship. It is a pity that we didn’t carry on with it...” Palmer’s emotional ties to his family were more permanent and were treated as such even during the maelstrom of war. He married his fiancée, a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse), while in uniform, and when he was stationed in a camp in England, arranged for her to live in a nearby cottage so they could spend the nights together – with the Adjutant’s permission. When Palmer was shipped overseas, he took the departure hard, although he did his best not to show it. He describes his departure by train in vivid detail, calling himself and his loved ones hypocrites for smiling through the whole ordeal. He adds, “I did not feel sorry for myself, it was the family whom I felt sorry for; they had to stay put whilst I was on the move...” Civilian ties were important to Palmer.<sup>537</sup>

### Attitudes toward the Other

The men examined in this chapter made various remarks about the Other in their second-wave memoirs. Some of those remarks were positive, others negative, but all served to reinforce the upper-middle-class model of masculinity these men were keen to emulate. As part of the othering process, the men also highlighted the contrast between themselves as educated and refined, and others who were less educated and uncouth. As with the men in the previous chapter, these men did so to place themselves on the “correct” side of the class relationships in which they were involved, siding with the

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<sup>537</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers.

middle as opposed to the working class.<sup>538</sup> They also wanted to distance themselves from any hint that they themselves might be, or have ties to, the working class.<sup>539</sup>

When Laurie Field recalls his schooling, he tells the interviewer he “was destined to be a clerk” and that he always got top marks in English because he wrote well. Field does not go out of his way to extol his own social standing over that of others, downplaying the differences between himself and the “men from the works” who enlisted in the army at the same time. He is also humble enough to admit to being “slow to learn” skills as a pilot during the First World War. He says, “My brain never worked quickly... I took much longer than my fellow friends to pick up a thing.” Nevertheless, when it comes to obvious differences in education or to embarrassing social gaffes, he makes the distinction. He recounts an anecdote about “a very gentlemanly sort” of OCB instructor who gave a thorough dressing down to a man who asked whether “females” were allowed in the mess. In an attempt to teach proper “officer’s language,” the instructor replied with disgust, “don’t call them females; you call them women.”<sup>540</sup> Even at an advanced age when he did the interview, Field finds this story highly amusing. Field gives the impression that his allegiance was to the gentlemanly instructor, and that he found the gaffe-maker ridiculous. And yet, at the time, Field’s position was that of a student being taught about the respect due to an officer and gentleman, not that of an expert. We can read this incident as an example of the lower-middle-class tendency to side with the class above it in an attempt to obtain acceptance and approval.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (London: Penguin Classics, 2013).

<sup>539</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 45.

<sup>540</sup> According to military protocol, ladies’ names were “not to be lightly used at the Mess table.” David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>541</sup> Mayer; Laurie Field, interview.

Jim Davies refers to himself as “lower middle class.” He was an actor and thus part of a group that were “a different class entirely in those days” and thought of as “vagabonds,” yet he distinguishes himself from the working men who served in the army alongside him, whom he describes as a “lot of Gor Blimey Cockneys.” Davies credits his ability to “mix all right” as an actor with the fact that he and his fellow soldiers from a different social background got along. He speaks well of the university students who volunteered for Kitchener’s Army but has fewer kind words to say about some of his fellow officer cadets at the OCB, saying that “some of them, even you and I couldn’t understand why they were up there ... one or two there were beyond the pale, they were almost illiterate.” He explains that the reason that such men were recommended for officer training was that “we’d had severe casualties in France, they were very, very hard up for officers. ... They’ve got to get them somewhere.” The implication is that some of his fellow cadets were substandard officer material, but that he himself was not. Davies allied himself with the system in place and did his best to emulate the hegemonic masculinity that was put forward as the ideal.

Clifford Carter commented on some of the soldiers’ lack of education when he recalls censoring the men’s letters as an officer: “I was amazed how few men had any grasp of grammar or spelling...” For someone for whom education was important, this would have been a shock. When it came to his perception of Others of a different nationality, Carter came down hard on German soldiers and supported the practice, following the armistice, of making all German men and boys raise their hats to salute British officers. But he speaks highly of civilians on both sides of the conflict. He thought the practice among Belgian children of putting out their wooden sabots near the kitchen stove on the night before St. Nicholas Day was “very nostalgic.” He is full of gratitude toward his German landlady and cook, saying that not speaking each other’s language “was no obstacle to the kindness they showed me.” According to him, “the cook looked after me like a mother and many were the tit-bits she brought to my bed-sitting room on baking day” while the landlady helped cure him of a bad cold. Carter also claims that the conquered Germans “showed no resentment” toward the British and that the safety precautions initially taken by the British army were soon relaxed. In Carter’s words: “Many had lost husbands and sons but ‘c’est la guerre’ and now its [sic] over. Some

families preferred English to German soldiers billeted on them – they were cleaner and better-behaved, they said.”<sup>542</sup>

B.A. Minnitt also comments on the disconnect between his own standards of behaviour and those of some of his fellow soldiers. His first night in barracks after joining up was horrible, by his account. The drunkenness, mess and bad language he witnessed “was enough to put any decent fellow against the Army forever.” He uses the adjective “decent” to describe himself in contrast to some of his comrades. This impression is reinforced by his statement that “the only time I was really drunk” occurred after the armistice, while stationed in Germany. He distances himself from the men whose habit of drinking to excess became apparent from the first night in barracks. Minnitt behaved in an open-minded and generous way toward foreign civilians. He relates an anecdote of receiving food from an Italian woman who was “delighted” when he and his friends spilled a few drops of wine on the floor mat as “an act of goodwill towards [their] host” and when they later gave three lire to each of her children. He made an effort to speak rudimentary Italian to her – spelled incorrectly in his memoir – and praised her table for being “spotlessly clean.” But the most interesting commentary about Others in Minnitt’s memoir is his account of the Irish officer cadets at the OCB in Fermoy, Ireland. The Irish people in Dublin hated the British soldiers owing to their recent actions in the Easter Rising. Minnitt writes that the southern Irish Roman Catholics were “practically all Sinn Feiners.” However, Irish officer cadets in training, of whom there were several, “bore no rancour towards us.” Of 30 men billeted in Minnitt’s hut, he and one other were the only Englishmen. Minnitt admires the Irish men’s physical skill, saying that, “[i]t was marvelous how some of those Irishmen caught a hockey ball in mid-air with the flat side of their hockey stick...” But he also notes that they had a propensity toward drinking and fighting. One night, Minnitt and a Scottish friend observed as a fight broke out in their hut, with all the Irish lads taking part, even the “grey-haired schoolmaster” who helped Minnitt with the metric system. In Minnitt’s words, the men “rolled about on the floor,

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<sup>542</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

fighting and kicking all and sundry, they obviously enjoyed the scrap.” The next morning, “despite bruises and black eyes, they were just as friendly as ever.” Minnitt comments that such behaviour “seems to be a trait in the make-up of the Irish when they get excited.”<sup>543</sup> This is in line with Joanna Bourke’s finding that Irish men were commonly thought by the English to be particularly aggressive, brave, passionate, and frequently undisciplined, which made them good soldiers but difficult to handle and thus in need of strong paternal leadership – specifically, British leadership.<sup>544</sup>

In recounting his experiences of being posted overseas, L.K. Rushworth revels in the exoticism of foreign cultures and places. His treatment of the Other in his memoir is generally positive, although he seems to take it for granted that British soldiers are superior to the locals. In Cape Town, he and his fellow soldiers “found the people most hospitable.” However, when he was laid up in hospital with sand-fly fever, Rushworth found the early mornings to be “disturbed by the wailing of prayers by Arabs from an adjoining minaret,” so it is clear he thought being in an exotic place had some drawbacks. In Secunderabad, the soldiers’ “stay was ... very pleasant with no thoughts of the war.” Part of the reason was that “[n]atives waited on us daily, cleaning buttons, boots and cutlery after meals and frequent unpicking of the coir mattresses, all for 4 annas a week!” Rushworth enjoyed the unequal power dynamic, and reveled in the fact that the economic realities of the place made it affordable. He recalls being invited to take part “in a hockey match against The Mahajara [sic] of Patiala’s Lancers who played in bare feet,” summing up the game with the words: “my side won 2-1 and I scored the winning goal from outside right.” The implication is that playing in bare feet – an uncivilized approach – did not serve the losing team well.

There is one more mention of the Other in Rushworth’s memoir: in telling an anecdote about a concert party that provided entertainment for the troops, he compares the group to

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<sup>543</sup> Lieutenant B.A. Minnitt, MC, papers.

<sup>544</sup> Joanna Bourke, “Irish Tommies: The Construction of a Martial Manhood 1914-1918,” *Bullán*, 6 (1998): 13-30.

the BBC sitcom “It Ain’t Half Hot Mum,” and recalls that “one ‘cissy’ type (like Melvyn Hayes) almost needed an armed escort back to his hut (he was in drag dress)!” In obliquely referring to homosexuality, Rushworth references a form of subordinate masculinity both from his secure perspective as a member of the dominant heterosexual group and from his slightly less secure position as a lower-middle-class man complicit in the shoring up of hegemonic masculinity. His use of the derogatory term “cissy” reinforces that relation of dominance/subordination; possibly Rushworth was trying to emphasize his allegiance to and membership in the dominant group. His comment can be read in one of two ways: either the performer in drag dress needed protection because the troops were aggressively derisive or because they were keen to give him some positive attention that was either humorously affectionate or outright amorous. If the first is true, Rushworth’s keen reporting of the incident is a way to self-identify with the dominant group, separating him from the subordinate masculinity of the “cissy.” If the second is true, his admission that the “cissy” type was popular among the troops seems to undermine the prohibition of homosexual affection that was taken for granted under the dominant patriarchal paradigm. We can interpret that in the following way: in saying that *other people* flocked to the performer in drag, he distances himself from any hint of taint by attempting to put himself on the correct side of the straight/queer equation. But the tone with which he writes is more amused than offended; as a man in uniform during wartime, Rushworth may have felt confident enough in his own masculinity to accept the evidence of alternative sexual practices without feeling threatened. We can also speculate that it would have been more common and more acceptable to write about such things in the mid-1980s, when Rushworth wrote his memoir.<sup>545</sup>

T.E. Rogers’s portrayal of the Other is at times positive and at times negative, although even the positive accounts in his memoir tend to be somewhat patronizing. He thinks highly of civilians, referring to a kind French family who billeted the men in his unit for a

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<sup>545</sup> 2nd Lieutenant L.K. Rushworth, papers. For relations among masculinities (dominance, subordination, complicity) see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

night, “amused by my distortion of their tongue, but too kindly to permit the real reason for their laughter being readily apparent.” He has high praise for a Maori officer cadet from New Zealand who was awarded the Military Medal: “He was thought much of by his white compatriots; they took great care of him. Where they went he went; they would have refused an invitation had it not included him.” Rogers also writes with emotion about Jackson, a Cockney Jew in his unit who taught Rogers and his fellow soldiers that appearances can be deceiving. Although he was ugly, “[h]is was a great soul, consigned to a soul-case suited to a meaner spirit.” While he was initially disliked, soon “[t]hat bloody Jew boy’ became Jacko. . . . we admired him for what he was; in the end we loved him.” The unit loved him so much, in fact, that they risked their lives to retrieve Jacko’s body, under fire, from no man’s land when he was shot. And yet Rogers’ ultimate description of Jacko’s virtues is a double-edged sword; he describes Jacko’s “selfless, Christ-like love found more frequently in a humbled dog than in the human.” Although Rogers intimates that Jacko was god-like, he also compares him to an animal. He metes out similar treatment to the Catholic girls of Belgium who “eased up a bit on chastity” in the excitement of post-armistice celebrations. While obviously happy to enjoy the benefits of their loosened sexual mores, Rogers comments – a bit snidely, perhaps – that they did so “perhaps having in mind their right to confession and the good prospect of absolution.” Rogers’ well-meaning yet patronizing attitude comes out in another anecdote. He recounts an incident in the Middle East when he barely managed to land his plane safely, evading death or serious injury by mere inches. Since “[t]his happened in a Moslem country,” he reacted by saying, “Praise be to Allah!” While this instance of cultural appropriation may have been meant as a gesture of inclusion, it does not necessarily achieve that effect.<sup>546</sup>

K. Palmer’s opinion of the Other was generally low. He “found the habits of both the French and Belgians very low and dirty” but concedes that perhaps he “only saw the worst side of it and also it was wartime.” He found the citizens in French and Belgian

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<sup>546</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers.

cities “medieval and somehow always disgusting and dirty” but again concedes that “maybe I ran into the wrong class.” Palmer, a Protestant, remarks that Belgian girls tended to be cynical about the Catholic practice of confession, which they used as a convenient way to excuse their habitual bad behaviour. Again, he tempers this criticism with the proviso: “perhaps I met the wrong type.” Palmer has harsh words for most Others who crossed his path: he disparages men who were weak, thinks conscientious objectors were “a disgrace to fellow humans” and wishes that the Army would adopt the practice of marking all conscripts with a ‘C’ on their collars, to distinguish them from the (more manly and more courageous) volunteers. Palmer’s extremely negative and critical attitude may have had to do with his personality, not just his class background. Among the lower-middle-class men studied in this chapter, he is the only one who consistently put down most men (and some women) in an attempt to make himself look better.<sup>547</sup> Although Palmer may indeed have been an upstanding young man, such a relentless campaign at self-aggrandizement suggests he likely had some personal issues. His comments exhibited some attitudes seen among the other lower-middle-class men in this chapter, namely, the tendency to try to set himself apart in terms of education and refinement from other, less educated, soldiers. He remarks that “not all the NCOs and Privates were particularly brainy” and says that some commissioned officers overseas “could not even speak the King’s English.” He also favourably contrasts his own sexual abstemiousness with what he considers other men’s out-of-control sexual appetites and disgusting behaviour. When faced with a group of fellow cadets who were discussing their sexual experiences, he says, “I found my pleasure in other forms of true sport but of course I understood the type; the type was typical of those days.” He also thinks the idea of picking up a prostitute to be “ruddy crude” but hastens to explain that, “I am not a killjoy and guess I am the same as other men, the only difference being that I can control myself.” The idea of self-control is a middle-class precept.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> Tumblety.

<sup>548</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers.

## Disillusionment and agency

The men examined in this chapter tended to openly discuss their disillusionment with the war – both the day-to-day difficulties they experienced and the big-picture issues, including the way the war was run and the political decisions made during its course and after the armistice. Their disillusionment went beyond that expressed in first-wave memoirs – a trend consistent with the evolution of the Myth of the War in post-war British society.<sup>549</sup> Around the fiftieth anniversary of the First World War, unreserved criticism of all aspects of the war was expressed openly in the media, and was reflected in public attitudes toward the War. The criticisms expressed by the men in this chapter reflect those attitudes. Moreover, like the men in the previous chapter, these lower-middle-class men also recounted their experiences of demonstrating agency when standing up to various forms of authority. They were empowered to advocate for themselves and did not feel intimidated.

At the beginning of his second-wave memoir, Clifford Carter recalls the “sheer physical exhaustion” that accompanied his first trip to the front line, caused by incessant rain, mud and lack of sleep. But his criticisms soon become weightier. He sums up the first day of the Battle of the Somme with the statement that he and his fellow soldiers felt “terribly depressed, for though some progress was made on other sectors, our attack completely failed to gain an inch of ground.” As an officer censoring his men’s letters, he witnessed others’ disillusionment, commenting that “[p]articularly bad ‘grouses’ had to be crossed out so as not to upset the folk at home.” And when he was recovering in hospital from a shrapnel wound, he complained that “the lives of the patients were miserable” because the matron, “a severe woman with a passion for discipline, treated us like children.” He and his fellow soldiers rebelled when faced with a notice saying, “No patient must accept an invitation to tea in the village without first obtaining Matron’s sanction” and organized

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<sup>549</sup> Hynes; Todman.

a strike. They won a victory against the oppressive matron and reveled in the opportunity to successfully exercise their agency.<sup>550</sup>

B.A. Minnitt's criticism of the war was personal. He admits that visiting a friend's parents while home on leave and giving them the details of their officer son's death "took the guilt off the gingerbread somewhat." Seeing as the young man's "life as an officer had been so short," the parents were "quite concerned about me now training to be one." In a memoir that generally takes a positive tone, this is a poignant reminder of the real risk of death that Minnitt had to come to terms with. He is optimistic about his experiences and does not tend to "grouse" a lot, but the end of the war brought with it disillusionment as he watched his wounded brother struggle with bad health yet not be granted a pension. In the end, he was disillusioned about the way the army had treated his brother.<sup>551</sup> L.K.

Rushworth describes appalling conditions aboard a ship bound for Cape Town, where the food was rancid, the rationed water was a "rusty colour," and the water closets overflowed over the decks. Apparently the ship was so overcrowded that the ship's captain had refused to take responsibility for the soldiers' safety. He was ordered to sail anyway – a fact on which Rushworth bitterly comments years later. He also tells an anecdote about being tricked by a sergeant to volunteer for what he thought was "a game of hockey on mud flats," but which turned out to be the unpleasant duty of burying a dead mule. After marching back to camp, "exhausted and fuming at the trick which had been played on us," Rushworth "could not help thinking what a difference between burying a dead mule and a British soldier who was wrapped in an old blanket, lowered into a shallow grave & had a volley of blanks fired over it by his mates." His anger at the army in general and the sergeant in particular was channeled into this revenge fantasy. Rushworth expresses doubt about the army's standards when he tells the story of a Regimental Sergeant-Major who handed in his final OCB exam paper blank and yet was given his commission anyway, since "the Army wanted good officers and not scholars."

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<sup>550</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

<sup>551</sup> Lieutenant B.A. Minnitt, papers.

But his greatest disillusionment came when his parents received a telegram notifying them that their son, L. Rushworth, had been killed – and they were not certain which of their two sons, both of whose names began with “L”, had died and which was still living. Rushworth had to send a telegram to them, reassuring them that he was still alive while at the same time breaking the news of the death of his brother, Leslie. He was upset at the cruelty of a system that would set in motion such a chain of events.<sup>552</sup>

K. Palmer’s self-assured attitude meant he was not shy about standing up for himself or his rights in the course of his wartime experience. When people treated him unfairly, he often confronted them directly or openly defied them. When he considered minor rules to be an inconvenience, he skirted them or simply ignored them, hoping not to be found out. While in training at an Officer Cadet Battalion, he made a habit of staying out late. As an officer billeted in a camp, he found lodgings for his wife in a nearby village and used to leave camp in the evenings to spend the night with her. He admits, “I was somewhat windy at slipping out of camp, however sometimes fortune favours the brave.” In his case, fortune did favour the brave – and the outspoken who asked for what they want. When Palmer wanted to be posted to the same regiment as a friend with whom he had worked as an assistant architect before the war, he went to see the G.O.C. and requested it, explaining his reasons. Initially, the G.O.C. “saw the point but he still argued.” However, “in the end he could see that I was adamant” and backed Palmer’s request. Palmer is just as outspoken in his memoir about his criticism of the war. At the beginning of his memoir he claims that, when the war broke out, his “feelings ... were one of sorrow and even of sadness in the stupidity of man in allowing a war to take place.” He criticizes the English for having sold scrap metal to Germany which later became the ammunition used to kill English soldiers. Talking about the soldiers who died in the war, Palmer praises them and criticizes society for forgetting about them. He says, “Memory is short lived, and as most of those fine men have ‘departed hence,’ ‘They lie forgot, as in a dream dies at the opening day.’” Later, he expresses the sort of view that

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<sup>552</sup> 2nd Lieutenant L.K. Rushworth, papers.

could have come straight out of a 1960s popular program about the First World War, perpetuating the Myth of the War: “Oh! The curse of war in which the prime young men gave their lives after suffering hardship because bloated madmen had created war for their own gain and to put themselves into the limelight. May they all rot in hell ... Blast them.” In summing up the various problems with the war, such as England’s lack of preparation in 1914, Palmer says the fault lay not with the soldiers on the ground but with “the inefficient others, in England running things, and sometimes ... some of our leaders and their advisors who were often wrong in their outlook.” Recalling times when the English artillery could not reply to the German artillery’s bombardment because they lacked the necessary shells, he says, “I used to curse those who were responsible for our being in such a precarious state; it just wasn’t right or fair.” He also criticizes the pacifist voices that sprang up in England after the armistice saying that, “the pacifist outlook is absolutely the wrong way to go about things.” Palmer’s criticism of the war is extensive.<sup>553</sup>

T.E. Rogers also went far in his criticism of the First World War. During a visit to the war memorial in Ypres in 1964, he thought of “that Great Phantom Army beyond the veil” and, in an encounter with another veteran wearing the Military Cross, asks, “To what end?” Recalling that visit, he asks, “Why shout and cant to God to rectify free-thinking man’s folly and futility?” and refers to the pointlessness of war as “a lesson still unlearned.” Elsewhere in his memoir, he is more specific in his criticism. Referring to the totality of the Battle of the Somme, he says: “A single day of such slaughter could have been a glorious failure, but not this sustained squandering of the cream of the New Army, Kitchener’s Army; not this stubborn refusal to admit gigantic error in assessing the strength of the enemy’s fortifications and his man-power.” He is also critical of the post-war situation of veterans, referring to Lloyd George’s “unctious [sic] rhetoric about making ‘Britain a fit country for heroes to live in’” – rhetoric that proved to be “meaningless balderdash.” Not surprisingly, Rogers is similarly critical of the inefficient,

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<sup>553</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers.

and sometimes ridiculous, workings of the unwieldy system that was the British army. He recalls, in detail, the story of his underage friend Phil, whose parents managed to get the Army to agree to grant him long-term leave on account of his nervous condition but who was arrested anyway on grounds of desertion because the Army's left hand did not know what its right hand was doing. Rogers expresses his admiration for Phil's "cynical, justifiable contemptuous attitude" toward the Army's (ultimately thwarted) attempts to have him executed. Rogers was able to stand up to authority when such action was warranted, either by expressing his displeasure or managing to achieve his objectives through less than official channels. When a plane taking off ran into his plane as he was attempting a landing and the Wing Commander unjustly accused him of wrongdoing, he relished his insolent replies, explaining that, "[o]rdinarily I had high regard for authority, but he had called me something foul..." On a previous occasion, Rogers had managed to get himself into the cockpit of a plane, for the first time, by a ruse. As he recalls, "My wish to fly became a craving. An opportunity came; I bowled a fast one." Although he had never handled a plane before, he says he was "cocksure" that he could learn quickly. His brazen confidence had led to his "sneaking a flight – complete with free instruction from a Wing Commander." Rogers did not consider authority to be a barrier to achieving his own ends.<sup>554</sup>

### Willingness to discuss the dark underbelly of war

One of the most interesting things about these second-wave memoirs is that the men writing them felt comfortable enough to talk about the dark side of war: unsavoury events or deeds they had either witnessed or participated in. Although the memoirs discussed in the previous chapter contain a measure of such disclosure, the second-wave memoirs contain revelations that are darker and not always framed humorously. Whether it was drinking, scheming, shirking, stealing, or prostitution, these revelations are not whitewashed and, as such, give a fascinating glimpse into the darker side of wartime. The more extreme nature of these revelations, as compared with those in the previous chapter,

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<sup>554</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers.

is consistent with the changing attitudes toward the First World War in the public consciousness.<sup>555</sup> We can also speculate that changes in social mores in the latter half of the twentieth century made it more acceptable to discuss such matters openly.

Clifford Carter's 1978 memoir was full of references to shirking his duties, in dramatic contrast to his 1920-21 scrapbook memoir, which presented Carter as a soldier and officer who was conscientious to a fault. Carter admits that, during his training in England, he "learnt the art of dodging parades. The secret was to volunteer for any job that cropped up." Even when undergoing officer training at an Officer Cadet Battalion, Carter put his skills at dodging tedious work to good use, saying that he "managed to escape the treadmill for a day or two by volunteering to take down in shorthand a lecture by an officer..." This is in contrast with the same event that Carter had presented in his 1920-21 memoir through a prism of pride in his clerical skill and keenness to advance by being useful. Carter also recalls an incident which neatly summarizes his – and likely others' – attitude towards appropriating the property of German prisoners of war. He tells the story of taking a German officer prisoner and states that, "I relieved him of his field glasses and iron-pointed walking stick (which I still possess) and no doubt he 'lost' other items on his way to the 'cage'!" The gleeful pleasure he takes in engaging in what is essentially looting, as well as the fact that he takes for granted that such behaviour is widespread, tells us that British officers did not always behave in a gentlemanly manner in wartime.<sup>556</sup>

B.A. Minnitt shows us another bleak side of war when he describes the conditions in occupied Germany shortly after the armistice. He comments on seeing "thin and half-starved" women engaging in the practice of smuggling food, by train, across the border of the zone occupied by British soldiers. The women would set out on their trip looking thin and laden with baskets; they would return having "increased their girth very considerably in the meantime," with their baskets filled to the brim. Some of the goods purchased in

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<sup>555</sup> Todman.

<sup>556</sup> 2nd Lieutenant C. Carter, papers.

the British zone “they were taking risks in carrying,” and therefore “many were the German marks that changed hands with our riflemen as their passes were shown.” This was apparently a lucrative business since “the platoon sergeant in charge before we took over had cleared 24,000 marks in the previous month...” The extent of the corruption and widespread acceptance of this so-called system do not reflect well on the British Army or its soldiers and such an admission would have been unlikely to appear in a memoir written before the 1960-1980 period. A different account in Minnitt’s memoir sheds light on the reason why British soldiers might have felt entitled to such spoils of war. In recounting his return to England after demobilization, Minnitt says that most soldiers had “various presents” that they wanted to bring home, but that they “had no trouble with Customs.” He sums it up with: “Perhaps they realized these were poor compensation for what we had passed through.”<sup>557</sup>

K. Palmer mentions the odd minor offence in his memoirs, such as falling asleep while on duty as a hospital orderly – the nursing sisters took advantage of the occasion to pull a prank by painting his face – or helping a Canadian cheat on his mock OCB exams – they were scared to get found out and were glad to have gotten away with it. He also refers to many officers’ habit of drinking nightly in an effort to get as much enjoyment out of life while they were still above ground. Palmer claims to be tolerant of such behaviour: “I saw no harm in that sort of thing; I didn’t do it myself but I understood...” However, Palmer is more critical of his fellow soldiers’ sexual indiscretions. He recounts an anecdote of attending a lecture on venereal disease. Right before the lecture, a friend of his told him that “he had been with a fat woman” – a confession that surprised Palmer since the fellow “was a quiet and rather good type of chap.” The man looked disturbed during the lecture and was “quiet and morose thereafter, and Palmer thought to himself subsequently: “Let that be a lesson to you to watch your step in future.” Palmer remarks that “there were quite a number of men who had been out with ‘Fat women’” – a conclusion that seems to have been borne out by fact, as “before the completion of the

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<sup>557</sup> Lieutenant B.A. Minnitt, MC, papers.

lecture several present fainted and had to be taken out of the hall.” Palmer was proud that he abstained from sexual activity with strange women. Elsewhere in his memoir, he recalls a hotel in Le Havre where officers used to pick up prostitutes, a habit which he found “very crude.” He admitted that watching the game being played “intrigued” him because he felt “it was all part of life and ... I should never see its like again.” Although Palmer never participated because it did not appeal to him, he did not begrudge others the pleasure; still, he found it “a sordid affair” and “a nauseating business.” He remembers watching a specific merchant marine officer, who “was off his ship for an hour or so and was out for a good time,” come to a hotel, equipped with supplies from his medical officer to “prevent him from coming to any harm.” Within five minutes he had “fixed up with a prostitute” at the next table, and within an hour the woman was back waiting for another customer. He found the transaction “ruddy crude” and considered prostitutes “vultures in human form.”<sup>558</sup>

T.E. Rogers also mentioned the seedy side of life in the army in recounting the story of “a baby faced pilot of nineteen” who confessed to him that he had lost his virginity to an infamous woman called “Netheravon Liz.” Since Rogers did not train at Netheravon, he “had not had the misfortune to meet the bad lady” but he had heard about her. The young pilot was remorseful about having fallen so low, and explained that he simply “could not bear the thought of dying without experiencing sex.” Elsewhere in his memoir, Rogers relates more evidence of “the grimness of war” in recounting the story of an ex-corporal who was executed by a firing squad for having fallen asleep on duty in a listening post. Rogers recalls being awake at dawn when the execution was to take place and watching the sky: “scurrying wind-torn clouds beneath a sullen grey bank of more clouds.” He calls the incident a “tragedy.” A more humorous anecdote recalls how a newly minted subaltern was called upon to impersonate the absent Flight Commander during a visit to

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<sup>558</sup> Lieutenant K. Palmer, papers.

the squadron's mess of the Prince of Wales and his brother, Prince Albert. All those present conspired in pulling the wool over the eyes of the heir to the throne.<sup>559</sup>

The men whose second-wave unpublished memoirs and oral interviews are examined in this chapter were confident in their self-worth to the point that they felt they could play the part of the officer and gentleman even better than the traditional Sandhurst-trained candidates. Like men in previous chapters, they bought into the existing hegemonic masculinity model and did not attempt to undermine it. Their memoirs and, in the case of the men interviewed by the IWM, oral interviews were more explicit about issues of class than the first-wave memoirs studied in Chapter Four. They also dwelled in more detail on the darker side of war, recalling events that were likely deemed too unseemly for memoirs written in an earlier era. Moreover, these men expressed a more pervasive and widespread disillusionment about the war and its effects, going farther than first-wave memoirs in casting blame on generals and politicians. Although the men in this chapter were not brimming with military enthusiasm, they were keen to do their duty and admired active participation in the fighting as the mark of a real man. They felt comfortable standing up to authority and went to some lengths to achieve their own ends. Some valued civilian life greatly while others cherished the camaraderie they had experienced in wartime, but even the latter felt that such friendships were fragile and contingent on wartime circumstances. They spoke about the Other in mixed terms, painting some with a negative and others with a positive brush, but even their positive portrayals tended to be slightly patronizing. Like the lower-middle-class men in other chapters, they took the opportunity to set themselves apart from those they considered uneducated and unrefined. In their treatment of the Other – as in everything else they did – they reinforced the existing hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, the main message that comes across in their writings is that, even though they strove to emulate the officer and gentleman model given to them as an example and did not attempt to create their own alternative masculinity, they were secure in their ability to fill those shoes.

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<sup>559</sup> Lieutenant T.E. Rogers, papers.

## Conclusion

The British popular press at the turn of the century depicted lower-middle-class men as insecure, ridiculous upstarts whose role in society was insignificant and who – as a class – did not have a heroic dimension.<sup>560</sup> In contrast, the lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen studied in this PhD dissertation were confident in their own worth, comfortable with their class background, and convinced they could contribute to the war effort. In drawing strength from their closeness to their families of origin or their relationship with their fiancées or wives, they adhered to the kind of family structure that was considered typically lower-middle-class. They also proudly embraced their lower-middle-class allegiance by making use of their civilian professional skills – often clerical in nature – in the context of wartime, capitalizing on them both to obtain perks for themselves and to optimize their contribution to winning the war. They did not attempt to create an alternate model of masculinity but fully bought into the officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity presented to them and did their best to emulate it. Yet, they were not servile in their emulation and they felt confident that their character traits and skills had equipped them well to take up commissions. The numbers of lower-middle-class men who became temporary gentlemen during the First World War meant that their contribution to the war effort was quantitatively significant.<sup>561</sup> Moreover, the nature of their efforts during the war – their high level of skill, deeply ingrained motivation to excel, and strong work ethic – ensured that their contribution was qualitatively significant as well. Accordingly, it is fair to speculate that lower-middle-class temporary gentlemen contributed to the subtle shift of societal attitudes about class in the wake of the First World War in Great Britain. I therefore argue that lower-middle-class men, as a class, did indeed have a heroic dimension.

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<sup>560</sup> Hammerton, “Pooterism or Partnership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920” *Journal of British Studies* 38:3 (July 1999); Geoffrey Joel Crossick, ed. *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977).

<sup>561</sup> See discussion of numbers and statistics in the Introduction, section “Historical background: who were the ‘temporary gentlemen’?”

Certain trends become visible throughout this dissertation as the focus of enquiry moves both from the *lower* lower-middle-class men to the *upper* lower-middle-class men and from contemporary sources such as letters to retrospective sources such as memoirs. The *lower* lower-middle-class men in Chapter Two were strongly motivated by the prospect of success and career advancement, perhaps because their opportunities in England were limited and they saw their temporary foray into the officer corps as a stepping stone that could make a difference to their future prosperity. They felt confident they could measure up to the officer and gentleman standard and they did their utmost to do so. As the war continued, they became disillusioned, but that disillusionment never went beyond physical and mental fatigue coupled with a grim determination to carry on. The *upper* lower-middle-class men in Chapter Three differed from their counterparts in Chapter Two in that they had and used the better bargaining power afforded to them because of their education and skills to advance in the Army. Paradoxically, that leverage did not translate into increased ambition on their part; in contrast to the men in Chapter Two, they were less ambitious and aspirational. While they saw their commission as a duty and enjoyed its perks, they were not as obsessed with promotion as the *lower* lower-middle-class men. This was probably because they had jobs waiting for them back home and could expect to pick up their careers where they had left off upon enlistment. Like their counterparts in Chapter Two, they exhibited stoicism, endurance, and cheerfulness in their letters home, but sometimes they did so in ways that challenged authority – something the *lower* lower-middle-class men did not dare do. Moreover, the disillusionment they expressed was more pronounced than that of their *lower* lower-middle-class counterparts, although it did not go as far as that expressed by men in the post-war years. In examining these subtle changes it becomes apparent that, as the occupational situation of the men under study became steadier and as their middle-class status became more secure, their desire to advance lost its edge. As they grew more confident in their conviction that they were worthy of commissions, they also became slightly more complacent in their attempts at class advancement, while at the same time becoming bolder in their criticism of authority.

The first-wave memoirs of lower-middle-class men examined in Chapter Four demonstrate a continuation of some of these trends. The sources used in this chapter were

retrospective rather than contemporary, which brings out other trends that may otherwise not have become apparent. The lower-middle-class men in Chapter Four felt free to criticize all officers, not just officials, while holding themselves up to the same high, paternalistic standard. They also expressed a greater degree of disillusionment with the war than the men in Chapter Three, likely because doing so was more culturally acceptable in a post-war context than while the war was still being fought. Here we see the pendulum swinging further away from deference and acceptance of their place on the class scale, toward an awareness that their opinion had as much value as anyone else's. Their confidence in their own worth meant they were often willing to choose friendship over status, while the retrospective nature of their memoirs meant they were more willing to present a tarnished picture of their wartime experience, admitting to behaviour they would not have included in their letters home. Here we see the continuation of the trend away from advancement as a primary motivator and toward a bolder criticism of authority. The second-wave memoirs and interviews of the men studied in Chapter Five take these trends to their logical conclusion: the authors of these memoirs and subjects of these interviews felt they could play the part of the officer and gentleman not only as well as traditional upper-middle-class candidates, but even better. They were convinced that ranker officers, and specifically lower-middle-class ranker officers, made better officers than those trained via the pre-war route. Coupled with this belief was their willingness to take their disillusionment with the war beyond a simple criticism of harsh conditions or incompetent local leadership on a small scale, questioning the reasons why the war had been fought and challenging the decisions of authorities at the highest levels. Here we see that the pendulum has swung all the way toward a conviction that they were indeed better than their "betters" and away from a tacit acceptance of the status quo toward a bold criticism of the core of authority.

The third way second-wave memoirs differed from first-wave memoirs – and from the letters examined in Chapters Two and Three – was their explicit treatment of class, portraying it both in a positive and negative light. This represents a pendulum swing away from camouflaging their lower-middle-class origins or focusing only on their positive class-related experiences, toward embracing the multi-faceted ways that being lower-middle-class had played out in their lived experience. This attitude toward class as

expressed by the men in Chapter Five is, in a sense, a microcosm of the approach toward class taken by the larger group of lower-middle-class men in this PhD dissertation. Although they were cynical about issues of class in retrospect – likely prompted by the open discussion of class in post-war society – during the war they had been happy enough to live by existing class rules, using their trademark lower-middle-class skill at blending in with other groups to fit in with the hegemonic group they had been asked to emulate. Although they did not feel they were lacking, they were also not interested in upending the entire class order, rather feeling content to improve their standing on the existing class ladder, even if only temporarily. Using the vocabulary of masculinity studies, they were not interested in creating an alternate “subordinate” masculinity, but were complicit in shoring up officer and gentleman hegemonic masculinity. With their trademark commitment to excellence, they were determined to do so to the best of their ability – and they did.

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Worthington, Ian. "Antecedent Education and Officer Recruitment: the Origins and Early Development of the Public School-Army Relationship." *Military Affairs* 41:4 (December 1977): 183-189.

Young, Hilary. "Hard Man, New Man: Re/composing Masculinities in Glasgow, C.1950-2000." *Oral History* 35:1, War and Masculinities (Spring 2007): 71-81.

# MAGDALENA HENTEL

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## EDUCATION

- 2017**      **Ph.D. in History**  
 Western University, London, Ontario  
 Dissertation Topic: *Temporary Gentlemen: the Masculinity of Lower-Middle-Class Temporary British Officers in the First World War*
- 2007**      **M.A. in History**  
 McGill University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2000**      **Honours B.A. in Translation**  
 Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Ontario
- 1999**      **Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing**  
 Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Ontario
- 1997**      **Honours B.A. in History and French**  
 Huron University College, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario  
 - *Graduated with distinction*

## ACADEMIC AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

- 2013–2016    Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral  
 (total value \$105,000 over three years)
- 2014–2015    Western Graduate Research Scholarship (total value \$7,900)
- 2013–2014    Western Graduate Research Scholarship (total value \$7,000)
- 2012–2013    Western Graduate Research Scholarship (total value \$12,900)
- 1997          Ontario Graduate Scholarship for graduate studies in French (\$11,850) –  
 declined
- 1997          Nominated by the University of Western Ontario for the Rhodes  
 Scholarship
- 1996          Yolande Chicoine Klementowicz Prize for French 332/334 (\$100)

1995	Leigh Clarke Prize for French 271 (\$100)
1995	Cornelia Maria van der Wel Book Prize for French 290
1993–1997	Colonel Ibbotson Leonard Huron College Entrance Scholarship (total value \$10,944)
1993–1997	Dean's Honour List
1993	Monsignor Feeney Endowment Fund Father Finn Scholarship Award (\$750)
1993	Bernard J. Rooney Gold Award
1993	Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Ontario Scholars' Award

## TEACHING EMPLOYMENT

- Winter 2017** Teaching Assistant for HIS 2401E: Introduction to Medieval Europe (Prof. Margaret McGlynn), Western University: An introduction to the political, religious, economic and social history of Europe between c. 1000 and 1450.
- 2014/2015** Teaching Assistant for HIS 1807E: Introduction to the History of Business (Prof. Jeffery Vacante), Western University: A practical introduction to how the market functions today and a consideration of the history of capitalism.
- 2013/2014** Teaching Assistant for HIS 1803E: Introduction to the History of Business (Prof. Jeffery Vacante), Western University: A practical introduction to how the market functions today and a consideration of the history of capitalism.
- 2012/2013** Teaching Assistant for HIS 2812E: Plague, Pox and Flu: Disease in Global History (Prof. Shelley McKellar), Western University: The role of disease in history, from antiquity to present day.
- Winter 2007** Teaching Assistant for HIST 383: Eighteenth-Century Britain (Prof. Brian Lewis), McGill University: A survey of Great Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century.
- Fall 2006** Teaching Assistant for HIST 323: History and Sexuality 1 (Prof. Nancy Partner), McGill University: The cultural meanings and social institutions that create the historical context for sexual behaviours, from antiquity to Early Modern Europe.

## SEMINAR AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Mar. 2014**    Marching Through Time History Symposium, London Central Library  
*“Men Who Will Fight Out Here”*: Representations of Masculinity in Trench Journals during the First World War
- Oct. 2013**    Law and Governance in Britain Conference, Western University  
*An “Insignificant-Looking Little Man”*: Press Representations of Lower-Middle-Class Masculinity in the Crippen Case
- Oct. 2012**    Bruce McCaffrey Memorial Graduate Seminar, Western University  
*Dapper Gentlemen and Hard-working Tommies: Constructions of Masculinity in British Trench Journals, 1915-1919*
- Nov. 2009**    War and Men: Masculinity under Fire Conference, McGill University  
*Men in Uniform, Men in Drag: Masculinities and Gender in British Trench Journals, 1915-1919*
- Jan. 2008**    Montreal British History Seminar, McGill University/Concordia University  
*“Men Who Will Fight Out Here”*: Constructions of Masculinity in Trench Journals during the First World War

## TALKS

March 2, 2016, *Temporary Gentlemen: The Masculinity of Lower-Middle-Class Temporary British Officers in the First World War* – presentation given to Dr. Geoff Read’s class, History 4802G, “Masculinity and Modern History”

## NON-ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS (SELECTED)

“International Date Line,” *Children, Churches and Daddies Magazine*, 8/09 (v. 199), August 2009, pp. 36-40.

Senécal, André. “Translation and Bullfighting.” Translated by Magdalena Hentel. *Language Update*, volume 5/2, June 2008, pp. 11-12.

*Educating Teens about Dating Violence*. Translated by Magdalena Hentel. Saint-Léonard, Quebec: CLSC Saint-Léonard, 2000.

## NON-ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL Experience

**Translator** *Translation Bureau, Government of Canada*,

Montreal, Quebec, September 2002 – 2012; Toronto, Ontario, April 2016 – present

- translate a variety of administrative, human resources, immigration and legal texts from French to English
- edit high-profile documents, such as Ministers’ speeches, for grammar, syntax and flow
- translated the transcripts of the Gomery and Maher Arar Commissions

**Freelance Translator**

Montreal, Quebec, August 2001 – July 2009; London, Ontario, August 2010 – present

- translate a variety of economic, financial, medical, operations, marketing and administrative texts from French to English
- manage various aspects of a home business

**Translator** *National Bank of Canada*

Montreal, Quebec, August 2000 – August 2001 (contract position)

- translated a variety of economic, financial, insurance, operations, marketing and administrative texts from French to English
- assisted in the translation and proofreading of the Bank’s Annual Report as well as documents for the Annual Special Meeting of Shareholders

## SERVICE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- **Hot Dinner Co-ordinator**, Treble Training and Concert Choirs, Amabile Choirs of London, 2016
- **Member**, Graduate Students' Gender and Sexuality Reading Group, History Department, University of Western Ontario, 2012–2013
- **Member**, Graduate Students' Empire Reading Group, History Department, University of Western Ontario, 2012–2013
- **Choir Manager**, Prima Women's Ensemble, London, Ontario, 2011–2012 (managed the administrative aspects of a forty-member choral ensemble)
- **Fundraising Committee Member**, UWO Laboratory School, 2011–2012
- **Board Secretary and Chair of Fundraising Committee**, Ensemble Musica Orbium, Montreal, Quebec, 2007–2009 (raised \$30,000 during the 2008–2009 season fundraising drive, matched by the federal government for a total of \$90,000)
- **Choir Member**, Ensemble Musica Orbium, Montreal, Quebec, 2000–2009
- **Choir Member**, Prima Women's Ensemble, London, Ontario, 2009–2012
- **Choir Member**, Amabile Youth Singers, London, Ontario, 1991–1996