

Lee Jones

'The Others': Gender and Conscientious Objection in the First World War

Abstract

In a time when 'if one was born a male, one became a soldier', what does it mean to be a man who refuses to fight? This article uses Connell's framework of 'hegemonic masculinity' to locate conscientious objectors' male identities as a suppressed, subaltern manliness that deviated from the dominant norm of martial masculinity. It argues that despite rejecting many aspects of this norm, objectors nonetheless articulated their counter-hegemonic struggle in starkly militarised language, presenting themselves as heroes sacrificing their lives for the greater good. It suggests that in order to understand, rather than merely judge, this strategy, it is important to see masculinity not as a completely discrete field of struggle, but as one of many mutually constitutive structuring principles underpinning a social order that is arranged not merely along patriarchal lines, but along lines of nation and class. In turn, these other principles impose limits on the nature of and possibilities for counter-hegemonic struggle.

Keywords

Conscientious objection, Britain, war, Gramsci, masculinity, nationalism, socialism

'The Others': Gender and Conscientious Objection in the First World War

Lee Jones

lee.jones@politics.ox.ac.uk

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF MEN:

Those who hear the call and obey,

Those who delay,

And – *The Others*.

TO WHICH DO YOU BELONG?

– British WWI recruitment poster

Introduction¹

The stark gender assumptions of British WWI recruitment posters expressed a simple message: 'if one was born a male, one became a soldier' (Bet-El 1999, 189). Yet while many men embodied this message by rushing to the colours, or were pushed into it by recruiting efforts of varying levels of coerciveness, over half of Britain's army had to be conscripted – and around 16,500 men refused even this, becoming conscientious objectors (COs). In an age of martial masculinity, what does it mean to refuse to fight? How did these men articulate an alternative male identity when labelled 'cowards' and 'shirkers'? This article argues that COs' identities differed starkly from the hegemonic norm and that they waged a counter-hegemonic struggle against what they regarded as 'British Prussianism', but this struggle was profoundly constrained by their isolation and the social and political forces of the time.

The article deploys Connell's Gramscian framework to analyse COs' struggle (1995). One of Connell's most powerful insights is that masculinity is not a monolithic identity derived from the 'male sex role'. Rather, there are multiple masculinities, structured hierarchically. 'Hegemonic masculinity' embodies 'the currently most honoured way of being a man'. In the context of WWI, it was martial, emphasising heroism, courage, physicality and self-sacrifice. While few men might actually live up to this norm, the persuasive power of hegemonic masculinity 'required all other men to position themselves in relation to it', such that many others were 'complicit' in its maintenance and were shamed into enlisting. Those with different, subaltern identities (such as homosexuals), tend to be marginalized, suppressed, and used as reviled 'others' to bolster the hegemonic norm. In WWI, this

meant men who refused to fight – COs. Hegemonic masculinity is historically constructed and thus subject to change: ‘there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832–3).

Despite generating a vast and well-respected research programme, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has been subject to much criticism (*ibid.*). Connell continues to stress hegemonic masculinity’s role in legitimising patriarchy but, as John Tosh points out, historically it has also underpinned many other power relations – for instance, cementing imperial-racial hierarchies by rendering non-whites as effeminate. Moreover, masculinity does not do this work alone, but in combination with other ideological and material factors. ‘Masculinity is better seen as one of a number of hierarchical principles which operate together to define the lineaments of the social order: in Sinha’s words, we recognise masculinity to be “constituted by, as well as constitutive of, a wide set of social relations”’ (Tosh 2004, 53–4). This insight is of particular value when we come to consider counter-hegemonic struggles, since it highlights the fact that such struggles cannot be confined to a single cultural field like gender, but are powerfully shaped by the totality of social relations. COs may have embodied a gentler form of masculinity, but the available space in which to articulate it was tightly hedged by the forces of nationalism and the wartime clamp-down on class politics. COs were forced to make political compromises necessary for collective action. These types of restrictions are likely to apply to any counter-hegemonic struggle.

Martial Masculinity and its rejection by COs

Before spelling out COs’ subaltern masculine identities, we must briefly outline the nature of hegemonic masculinity in 1914. The militarisation of ruling-class masculinity, in line with the requirements of national defence and imperial expansion, had begun in the mid-nineteenth century. However, ruling-class panic about racial degeneracy – the preferred explanation of Britain’s poor showing in the Boer War – meant that, through various social mechanisms, this model was disseminated down the social scale (Bourke 1996, 171; Bet-El 1998, 79–80; Tosh 1999). In education, army instructors and drills, Rifle Corps and Officer Training Corps were introduced to most schools and universities, and the public school ethos of violent sports, physical courage and sacrifice was spread to state schools via the 1902 Education Act (Bourke 1996, 181–182; Summers 1976, 119; Parker 1987). Philanthropic organisations were ‘manipulated and directed by conservative middle-class gentlemen... to instil the sort of patriotism and military spirit that would inspire young boys not only to fight for the protection of the physical empire but also for the social order on which that empire was founded’ (Kennedy 1981, 22–3). These included the League of Health and Strength, and youth organisations like the Boy Scouts, the Church Lads Brigade, the Lads Drill Association and the Boys Brigade. Many were supported by the Anglican Church, openly militaristic and linked to the National Service League (Bourke 1996, 138–41; Sum-

mers 1976, 113, 120; Springhall 1977; 1987; Parker 1987, 146–7). They removed boys from the ‘feminine’ clutches of the home and inducted them into a chivalric code constructed within a newly-articulated national tradition, linked with the cult of the imperial frontiersman (Warren 1987; MacKenzie 1987). Martial masculinity was also developed in what Bertrand Russell called the ‘foul literature of “glory”... with which the minds of children are polluted’. Taking advantage of the boom in working-class literacy, publishers inducted proletarian children into a national ‘imagined community’ for the first time, presenting the British Empire as ‘a place where adventures took place and men became heroes’; a place far away from the corrupting influence of women, where a ‘secure, powerful, and indeed virtually omnipotent English-British masculinity’ could be attained (Green 1979, 37; Dawson 1991, 120). ‘Halfpenny dreadfuls’, boys’ weeklies with enormous circulations, created heroic exemplars of men as soldiers, deliberately and successfully spread ruling-class values, and ‘conditioned the thought of a whole generation of boys’ (Springhall 1987, 68; Boyd 1991; Orwell 2000 [1940]; Sibley 2005, 53–8).

By 1914, martial masculinity had thereby become hegemonic. Real men became soldiers, escaped the feminine clutches of home and dashed off to chivalric adventure to serve King and Country, C.E. Carrington recalling that he enlisted ‘to demonstrate my manhood, and to be allowed to indulge a taste for anti-social violence’ (Bet-El 1999, 180). Even if few men truly embodied this challenging norm, many felt a strong attachment to it that was encouraged and exploited by recruitment efforts. Atrocity stories about nuns being raped and women’s breasts being cut off rendered Belgium ‘an innocent woman in need of a paternal male’s protection’ (Kent 1993, 22–23; cf. Wilson 1986, 25). Posters stressed the feminine passivity of home life and urged masculine action on the front, with ‘Women of Britain’ saying ‘Go, it’s your duty Lad’ (Leed 1979, esp. 41–59; Kent 1993, 12–14). One poster used in Ireland shows a man being taunted by his rifle-toting wife: ‘Will you go, or must I?’ After the Battle of Mons exposed the realities of trench warfare, just as the ruling classes had blamed working-class physical degeneracy for setbacks in the Boer War, now they turned on those ‘shirking’ their male ‘duties’. Perceived as ‘primarily working class’, apparently preferring football, pubs and betting to soldiering, they were accused of ‘Spectatoritis’. Fierce attacks on football suspended the sport for the war’s duration (Sibley 2005, 30–31; Veitch 1985). Other un-uniformed men were labelled cowards by women handing out white feathers, the ‘humiliating threat of appearing unmanly’ driving many to enlist (Gullace 1987, 184).

Nonetheless, even after conscription was introduced in 1916, some men resisted these attacks and refused to fight. Britain’s liberal identity, though dwindling in wartime, remained an important justification for war against Germany and was thus reflected in a clause in the 1916 Military Service Act (MSA) permitting absolute or conditional exemption from military service on the grounds of *individual* conscience, allowing for the expression of alternative masculinities. Like recruits, the motivations of COs varied widely.

Up to 80 per cent of the No-Conscription Fellowship's (NCF) membership comprised anti-war socialists abandoned by labour leaders whose own anti-war stance did not survive the nationalistic upsurge accompanying the conflict (see Sibley 2005, 20–1; Winter 1974, 207–13). Some of them subscribed to the NCF's 1915 statement of principles that 'they consider human life to be sacred and cannot, therefore, assume the responsibility of inflicting death'. Others would have taken up arms to fight for a workers' state, and opposed this same formulation. The remainder were religious objectors, often Quakers. Some COs opposed all war; some just this war; some would tacitly accept conscription by engaging in non-combatant or alternative service under the Home Office; 'absolutists' refused any involvement in the war effort. The NCF was deeply divided on many of these issues and never progressed beyond the lowest common denominator of respect for individual conscience (Kennedy 1981). This makes COs very difficult to treat as a group, but there are some commonalities worth drawing out, particularly among the 'absolutists'.

COs rejected the emotions they were required to feel as men, embracing instead 'nurturing' identities traditionally assigned to women: 'In war hatred becomes a duty, love ridiculous; to win the war by the denial of every spiritual faculty of man is thought to be the only possible course', wrote John Graham. 'We labour generally to preserve life, to nurture the weak, the aged, the child. We build and sow and reap. We avoid lying, tricks and chicanery. We try to be pleasant to all'. COs argued 'the sacred worth of human personality' united 'all mankind in an inviolate brotherhood... There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither German nor English, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; beyond these differences of race and class and sex, we are all one' (Graham 1922, 31–32, 36). This mingling of Quaker epistemology and socialist internationalism rejects not only gender, but also nation and class as a basis of social order, highlighting the broad nature of their counter-hegemonic threat. COs rejected martial masculinity's view of soldiers as heroic protectors, with Stanley Baldwin claiming, 'Our brave boys at the Front will be trying to poison women and children faster than the enemy is killing our own civilians' (Bell 1935, xii). The NCF newspaper, *The Tribunal*, agreed: 'Does not this spiritual attractiveness of the soldier's calling, so appealing to very many, come from the fact that for them the soldier is a picture of the Protector of the Weak...? [In fact] the soldier does not protect us from such horrors as Louvain or Lille, but creates by his act the very danger he would avert' (1916, 1).

COs displayed awareness of how martial masculinity had been constructed, and attacked the institutions involved, particularly the Church. 'We have brought in (to the injury of the Spiritual life of the Church) Football Clubs, Cricket Clubs, Scouts, Tennis Clubs & the like galore... we have sacrificed the Spiritual to the Physical & Social', Harold Wild told his congregation as he left the Methodist movement in protest. He rejected wholly the fusion of Christianity and the warrior-male ethic inherent in 'muscular Christianity', believing 'of the Christian way [the soldiers] have not been informed... Its mission betrayed, the Church may still continue to speak but it speaks with a voice that is

cold & dead' (Wild n.d., 7–9). While figures like Kitchener formed powerful individual role models for soldiers, COs like Dr Alfred Salter struggled to reclaim the figure of Jesus from the architects of hegemony:

Look! Christ in khaki, out in France, thrusting his bayonet into the body of a German workman. See! The Son of God with a machine gun, ambushing a column of German infantry, catching them unawares in a lane and mowing them down in their helplessness. Hark! The Man of Sorrows in a cavalry charge, cutting, hacking, thrusting, crushing, cheering. No! No! That picture is an impossible one, *and we all know it* (Graham 1922, 47).

'Can you imagine Jesus sticking a bayonet into a German?' John Brocklesby asked his congregation in a sermon provoking outrage in his church community (Brocklesby n.d., 13). Perhaps some could. A military representative in Manchester asked a CO if he believed the words 'The meek shall inherit the earth'. 'But,' he went on, 'how can they inherit it without anybody to fight for them?' At another Tribunal near London, a CO attempted to explain the meaning of a Bible passage 'in the Greek'. The chairman replied: 'Greek! You don't mean to tell me that Jesus Christ spoke Greek. He was British to the backbone!' (Graham 1922, 71). COs instead stressed an alternative masculinity, evoked in this depiction of a Christ-like, brilliantly androgynous youth as 'the ideal'.



Fig. 1

Counter-Hegemonic Struggle: COs as Heroes

That COs' male identities did not sit well with martial masculinity was expressed in the vitriolic reaction against COs which directly questioned their masculinity. Those non-absoluteists who served in the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) were widely pilloried as the 'No-Courage Corps' (Rae 1970, 194). COs accepting alternative service were deliberately forced to work in menial, pointless and unprofitable endeavours, demeaning their male dignity. When housed in prisons, local populations were often extremely hostile and riots – often started by women – became frequent by 1917 (Graham 1922, 235–237, 248). Tribunals, established to safeguard the right to conscience, instead sought to force as many men as possible into uniform. They frequently asked what the petitioner would do if his mother, sister or wife was being raped or assaulted by Germans, invoking all the imagery of Belgian atrocities and the construct of man-as-warrior-protector. Tribunal members often attacked men's bodies and their refusal of hegemonic stereotypes. A military member at Peebles said, 'This man would make a splendid soldier. He has a fine physique and just wants the nonsense knocked out of him' (Rae 1970, 97). At Holborn, one member demanded: 'Do you ever wash yourself. You don't look it. Yours is a case of an unhealthy mind in an unwholesome body'. At Shaw in Lancashire, another stated: 'You are exploiting God to save your own skin. You are nothing but a shivering mass of unwholesome fat!' (Graham 1922, 71). This bodily assault continued as COs denied exemption were forcibly dressed in khaki – an attempt to write martial masculinity onto their bodies which most strenuously resisted – prompting, in some cases, more serious physical abuse verging on torture (Rae 1970, 144–6).

Some individual COs were willing to accept the charges of effeminacy being levelled at them. One cartoonist CO was happy to echo propaganda against 'shirkers' by presenting COs as rather effeminate-looking, incompetent soldiers, exposed to the ridicule of women and old men (Bertiole n.d.). But the dominant response was precisely the opposite: organisations like the NCF renounced passivity, seeking to reaffirm their members' masculinity by embarking on 'an *active* protest against what we consider to be the greatest evil in the world' (Graham 1922, 220, emphasis added). Rather than critiquing the exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, COs' groups strategically heaped praise upon soldiers: 'We yield to no one in our admiration of the self-sacrifice, the courage and the unflagging devotion of those of our fellow-countrymen who have felt it their duty to take up arms' (NCF 1915). Terence Lane assured his Tribunal: 'I do not wish to cast any slur on the soldier who deserves the utmost honour for doing what he conceives to be his duty' (Lane n.d.). By establishing common ground with their detractors, COs sought to create space to articulate their own motives. Their discourse makes it plain that here was their war, 'their own Western Front... it presented similar opportunities for acts of physical courage, stoic endurance for the cause and it gave the movement its own heroes' (Pearce 2001, 158).

COs subverted the strident language of military propaganda and the dominant discourse of heroism and self-sacrifice. They also suggested conscription did not fit with liberal norms of 'Britishness', labelling conscriptionists 'Brit-Huns'. 'Refuse to be Military Conscripts!' one leaflet entitled 'United Against the British Prussians' demanded, in the urgent tones of a recruitment poster; 'DON'T DELAY! CRUSH CONSCRIPTION!'. 'Long live Voluntarism!' cried a National Council Against Conscription leaflet (PRO n.d.). 'Students of Esperanto, Forward!' was one CO's implausible motto (Millwood 1918). In a cartoon showing a 'CO's Coat of Arms', 'the special distinguishing marks worn by those courageous enough to fight the Huns' are not rank insignia from soldiers' tunics, but arrows from the prison uniforms of those incarcerated for resisting conscription, 'the armorial bearings of the fighters for freedom' (Collins 1917). In 1916 seven COs imprisoned at Wakefield told the Home Office they were refusing alternative service in favour of 'fighting the old fight for individual liberty and freedom of conscience' (Barrit *et al.* 1916). Roland Philcox's language epitomises COs' fighting talk: 'My five comrades... have decided to remain faithful even to the gates of death... I should consider it an honour to die for our cause. I have been a soldier in the real fight for freedom all my thinking life' (Graham 1922, 116). 'I am seeking to shoulder, not to shirk my social duty, & like a soldier I may not leave my post' (Philcox 1918, 3-4).

This language was not merely for public consumption. Privately, COs wrote about a future world ruled by love, but using military metaphors – the triumph of the 'Army of Reason' and the 'Sword of Justice' (Elliot 1916). Even religious objection became a martial undertaking. E.J. told his court-martial: 'However long the sentence you pass upon me, and however many sentences may follow, I will continue to obey the orders of my Commander, the Prince of Peace' (Watson 1917, 4). A correspondent to the Quaker MP T.E. Harvey told him a 'true follower of our Lord... [is] a "militant" in the best sense of the word. Such a man does not sit down when there is wickedness in the world... he is a wrestler against "the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"... he takes his stand for the Kingdom of Heaven' (Gregory 1916).

Absolutist COs also made plain their willingness not merely to struggle, but also to die heroically, describing their 'Story of an Adventure' as 'The Men Who Dared' (James 1917). 'I cannot take part in it in any way, neither can I assist those who do the combatant work. No fear of prison, or any punishment, or even the death penalty, can or will change my firm determination to adhere to this belief to the bitter end', Hubert Lane told his appeal Tribunal (Lane 1916, 15). Arthur Willy's determination was equally grim: 'I intend to resist to the last degree. They may break my soul upon the wheel of Militarism, but they will never break my principles', he wrote (Willy 1916). Despite suffering deportation and torture, J.B. Saunders stated defiantly: 'I'll die fifty times rather than endorse the wicked thing... They can have my body; my mind I will destroy rather than let the military cult take it' (Graham 1922, 150-52). 'All of us,' the NCF said, 'are prepared to

sacrifice as much in the cause of the world's peace as our fellows are sacrificing in the cause of war' (NCF 1915). Even those on alternative service desired opportunities for sacrifice, the NCF demanding real work as 'an honourable form of service for those who believe in war, though great sacrifices must inevitably follow' (Graham 1922, 228). Religious COs in particular had a long culture of sacrifice and martyrdom to draw upon and, yet again, they implied a claim to higher standards of sacrifice than soldiers. The Fellowship of Reconciliation told its members that Jesus 'opposed evil with good, hate with love, violence with meekness. On the Cross He accepted the full consequences of this choice of weapons... Let us learn again at the feet of Him whose name we take. His way is best' (Fellowship of Reconciliation 1916, 2). His way was open to those defying military authority in the form of 'Field Punishment Number One', which consisted of being suspended by the arms on the enormous wheel of an artillery carriage, known as 'crucifixion'. Partisans felt a CO suffering this ordeal 'has not failed the physical test. He bears on his body the stigmata of Peace' (James 1917, 32).



Fig.2

The importance COs attached to suffering and sacrifice produced gendered ambiguities in their campaigns. They wished to draw attention to their suffering since this won respect as a mark of conscience and even courage (even from soldiers) in a way that alter-

native service did not, proving they were not ‘shirking’ (Rae 1970, 114). However, emphasising this suffering prompted uneasy comparisons to that of soldiers in the trenches, which was likely to provoke outrage, given the hold martial masculinity had, and how many people’s relatives were at war. Moreover, there was a risk of COs being rendered as sickly, passive and, therefore, feminine. In 1917, Mrs J. Hobhouse, privately supported by NCF figures, published *I Appeal Unto Caesar*, a book detailing imprisoned COs’ suffering and urging their release. A contemporaneous NCF postcard even depicted ‘weak’ COs in female form (Anonymous n.d.) (See fig. 2 on the previous page).

Although this woman’s campaign attracted the sympathy of several powerful figures and secured the release of around 300 well-connected COs, it clearly stirred up gender anxieties and threatened to deprive COs of the only means of illustrating their manliness. One absolutist wrote to his mother: ‘I wish no sort of preference or privilege... I am not trying to “get out” of anything, and... rather than make any compromise I shall repudiate the efforts of those nearest and dearest to me’. The Quakers on the NCF Executive moved to curb these efforts (Kennedy 1981, 188–202).

The Constraints on Counter-Hegemonic Struggle

Bibbings, rightly noting the way COs’ depictions as ‘*unmen*’ prompted them to seek to reassert their manliness, argues that COs’ heroic self-depiction had ‘inherent limitations’: it ‘might have encouraged some sympathy for their plight and for their stance but in so doing they were also reinforcing the notion of heroism as a vital component of true manliness’ (2003, 355). This is true, but the implication that this was a strategic choice obscures the difficulties of counter-hegemonic struggle, which cannot be grasped by taking masculinity in isolation. As the foregoing evidence illustrates, COs were not simply presenting a different mode of manhood, but saw themselves as engaged in a broad political struggle – indeed, the NCF began life as a means of articulating a lonely anti-war position (Kennedy 1981, 43). As Tosh’s critique of Connell implies, gender is not a hermetically sealed field of struggle, but is embedded within a host of other mutually constitutive social relations which collectively serve to underpin a social order that is not merely patriarchal, but also national and capitalist. This in turn imposed serious constraints on COs’ counter-hegemonic struggle.

The theme of ‘national service’ is clearly apparent in COs’ language. Partly this reflects the conditional nature of conscientious objection: as the Home Secretary said, ‘You need not go as a soldier, because you are a conscientious objector, but it must be conditional on your performing work for the state’ (Graham 1922, 57). Like their treatment of war-time propaganda, the NCF adopted and subverted this demand for service. ‘I want to say very emphatically that the members of the NCF believed in national service long before many who are now advocating it’, Allen argued (Graham 1922, 57). ‘We have always de-

sired to assist the life of our nation, when this does not involve destroying the life of other people' (NCF 1916). However, *The Tribunal* argued, 'The greatest service we can render to mankind is to bear uncompromising testimony against war and the spirit of war' (1918, 2). Yet COs were not alone in accepting 'work for the state' and rebutting charges of 'shirking' – the most common accusation levelled at them. Many women devoted themselves to recruitment and emphasised their 'service' to the state (Grayzel 1999, ch. 6). Irish nationalist leader John Redmond, keen to ensure Home Rule was fully enacted, pledged to serve Britain, saying 'it would be a disgrace to our country, and a reproach to her manhood... if young Ireland... shrunk from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished our race all through its history' (Simkins 1988, 114). Workers against industrial conscription, likewise, emphasised that it was not that 'workers are against national service – but they are against enforced conditions of work' (Winter 1974, 209).

This reflects the Military Service Acts enmeshment in the broader framework of nationalism. The notion that service in general and sacrifice is owed to a nation-state is not an implicitly gendered one. It is a distinct ideology underpinning a particular form of constructed social order – the organisation of people into distinctive national units, governed by a state apparatus. Of course, the *types* of duties owed to the state *are* profoundly gendered: the fusion of patriotism and manliness in martial masculinity made it clear that the male duty was to soldier in defence of this social order. This in turn helps explain why COs' claim to be performing national service was broadly rejected as 'shirking' (Kennedy 1973). But the importance of officially-sanctioned 'service' in general was expressed clearly in the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which enfranchised all adult males (abolishing the property restrictions excluding many working-class men who had now served as soldiers) and all women over 30, but disenfranchised for five years all COs save those enlisted in the NCC.

The second limitation flows from the de-legitimisation of class politics. Most NCF members were socialists, some of whom preferred to overthrow the capitalist state rather than to serve it. But the highly nationalist context of war-time had de-legitimised class struggle: anti-war labour leaders felt compelled to support the war and labour unrest, which had reached epic proportions in 1911–13, was massively reduced. Socialists were on the defensive, and had to rely on Quakers, who had proposed exemption from military service on grounds and conscience to legitimise their resistance and prevent socialist objectors being totally 'isolated and despised' (Kennedy 1973, 49). Tories and their sympathisers deliberately sought to limit conscientious objection to members of religious orders, to exclude 'political' objectors. The law technically permitted the latter, but in practice the Tribunals did not, and the NCF was persistently viewed with grave suspicion as a 'subversive organisation' (Rae 1970, 45, 117, 140). Recurrent efforts were made to separate out political from religious objectors, particularly when the 1917 Russian Revolu-

tions excited the population, inspiring socialist COs on alternative service to sing *The Red Flag*, conduct strikes and hand out propaganda. The Bishop of Exeter, claiming the Princeton work centre for COs undertaking alternative service was a centre for ‘plans of bloodshed’, urged the release of religious COs as ‘good citizen[s] with fanatic views’, but political COs were ‘enemies to the commonwealth’ who should be shipped ‘to that portion of England which is frequently visited by the enemy aeroplane’. A local alderman agreed these ‘disloyal men [and] anarchists’ professing ‘a sort of bastard socialism’ should be ‘put up against a wall and shot’ (Kennedy 1973, 175; 1981, 175). In 1918, faced with the German spring offensive, the British government ‘in a moment of panic’ considered extending conscription to Ireland; General Childs, fearing potential Sinn Fein COs, demanded all ‘political’ objectors defying authority be executed (Rae 1970, 114).

The government clearly feared socialist COs far more than religious ones. While the latter could be dismissed as harmless ‘cranks’, the former posed a direct challenge to the specifically capitalist social order that martial masculinity helped defend. However, while jailed socialist NCF leaders like Allen and Fenner Brockway wanted to harness the radical atmosphere of 1917–18 by staging prison strikes, the Quakers, who exercised disproportionate power because of the legitimacy they granted to a suspect organisation, resisted any ‘political’ manoeuvres. The NCF thus continued in a broadly pacifist and relatively conservative vein, which socialists could do little to change given the circumstances. Using quite gendered language, leading socialist CO C.H. Norman argued the Quakers’ ‘passivism and submissiveness’ meant ‘the song of the organisation has been keyed rather lower than the spirit of the members in the early days justified’ (Kennedy 1981, 229, 277).

Conclusion

This article has shown how the framework of hegemonic masculinity can help identify conscientious objection as a counter-hegemonic struggle over the meaning of manliness in wartime. I have also argued that hegemonic masculinity does not merely underpin patriarchy, but is one of a number of ideologies that collectively help to legitimise a far broader range of social relations, which in turn determine the difficulties faced by those engaged in counter-hegemonic struggle. COs did not merely err in selecting a substandard strategy: the strategies available are determined by the prevailing complex of social relations. As Connell and Messerschmidt note in reply to postmodernist critics, gender is ‘not merely constructed symbolically or discursively’, but through social and material factors prescribing ‘limits to discursive flexibility’ (2005, 842). Following Tosh, this is suggestive of the organic relationships between various ideologies and the way they underpin a social order comprised of many different structuring elements: gender, nation, class, economic forces, and so on. These are rarely distinct in practice: martial masculinity welded male identity to the defence of a nation which was heavily stratified by class.

Thus, although we can analytically separate gender from other aspects of social order, it is important to recall its place within the whole, and to reintegrate it for a holistic understanding, perhaps especially when considering the possibilities for and limitations to counter-hegemonic struggle.

These limitations meant WWI conscientious objection had a limited legacy. By 1919–20, COs had been forgotten, suggesting they had been used as a focus for war-time panics about social order, morale and military setbacks – and perhaps also a means of distracting attention from the manliness or otherwise of those men who had to be compelled to enlist. Brockway's efforts to form a No-Conscription League in 1938 found little support (Rae 1970, 237). The British inter-war turn to pacifism and 'temperate masculinity', expressed by the 12m-strong 1935 Peace Ballot, had more to do with a turn to domesticity in the aftermath of a terrible conflict than the NCF's political impact. As Rose demonstrates, in WWII Britain was 're-masculinised' and while conscientious objection increased from 16,500 to 59,000, only those COs shouldering 'risk and offering self-sacrifice' were socially acceptable; others remained subject to classification as effeminate, homosexuals, 'elegant sissies', and so on; white feathers even made a come-back (2004). Although the undoubtedly courageous men of the NCF set a precedent for future war-resisters to follow, it would appear that it was not until the Vietnam War, the era of 'culture wars' and hippies, that martial masculinity faced its most serious challenge.

Notes

- 1 FHL denotes archival material at Friends House Library (Euston Road, London); PRO denotes Public Record Office (now the National Archive, Kew, London).

References

- Anonymous. n.d. Untitled postcard. FHL: TEMP MSS 122.
- Barrit, C., Gaudie, N., Helsby, A., Hughes, L., Moon, L.B., Hanton, H.J. and Hyatt, R. H. 1916. Letter to Home Office Committee for the Employment of Conscientious Objectors. In FHL TEMP MSS 62.
- Bell, Julian. 1935. Introduction. In Bell, Julian (ed.): *We Did Not Fight: 1914–18 Experiences of War Resisters*. London: Cobden-Sanderson.
- Bertiole, H. F. n.d. Dinnertime! Unpublished postcard cartoon. FHL: TEMP MSS 122.
- Bet-El, Ilana. 1998. Men and Soldiers: British Conscripts, Concepts of Masculinity and the Great War. In Melman, Billie (ed.): *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace*. London: Routledge.
- . 1999. *Conscripts: Lost Legions of the Great War*. Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton.
- Bibbings, Lois. 2003. Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War. *Social Legal Studies* 12, 335–58.
- Bourke, Joanna. 1996. *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. London: Reaktion.
- Boyd, Kelly. 1991. Knowing Your Place: The Tensions of Manliness in Boys' Story Papers, 1918–39. In Roper, Michael and Tosh, John (eds.): *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*. London: Routledge.

- Brocklesby, John H. n.d. Escape from Paganism. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 412.
- Collins, M. 1917. CO's Coat of Arms – Description of the Coat of Arms. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 122.
- Connell, R.W. and Messerschmidt, James W. 2005. Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society* 19, 829–859.
- Connell, Robert W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dawson, Graham. 1991. The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and the Imagining of English-British Masculinity. *In* Roper, Michael and Tosh, John (eds.): *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*. London: Routledge.
- Elliot, J. C. H. 1916. Letter to W. Penn, 28 May. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 594.
- Fellowship of Reconciliation. 1916. To Christ's Disciples Everywhere. Leaflet. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 122.
- Graham, John W. 1922. *Conscription and Conscience: A History, 1916–1919*. London: G. Allen and Unwin.
- Grayzel, Susan R. 1999. *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War*. London: University of North Carolina Press.
- Green, Martin B. 1979. *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gregory, C. 1916. Letter to T. Edmund Harvey, 20 August. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 835/11/4.
- Gullace, Nicoletta. 1987. White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War. *Journal of British Studies* 36, 178–206.
- James, Stanley B. 1917. *The Men Who Dared: The Story of an Adventure*. London.
- Kennedy, Thomas C. 1973. Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915–1919. *Journal of British Studies* 12, 105–119.
- . 1981. *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914–1919* Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.
- Kent, Susan K. 1993. *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lane, Hubert. 1916. Copy of Application for Exemption from Military Service. 24 February. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 585/3.
- Lane, Terrence. n.d. Application for Exemption from Military Service. *In* TEMP MSS 585/3–4.
- Leed, Eric. 1979. *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War One*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacKenzie, John M. 1987. The Imperial Pioneer and the British Masculine Stereotype in late Victorian and Edwardian Times. *In* Mangan, J. A. and Walvin, James (eds.): *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Millwood, P. 1918. Letter to The Tribunal, 13 June. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 122.
- NCF. 1915. Manifesto Issued by the No-Conscription Fellowship, September. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 122.
- . 1916. The Position of the Conscientious Objector. Leaflet. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 122.
- Orwell, George. 2000 [1940]. Boys' Weeklies. *In* Orwell, George (ed.): *Essays*. London: Penguin.
- Parker, Peter. 1987. *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public-School Ethos*. London: Constable.
- Pearce, Cyril. 2001. *Conscription and Conscience: The Story of an English Community's Opposition to the Great War*. London: Francis Boutle.
- Philcox, Roland. 1918. Letter addressed: Gentlemen. 7 June. *In* FHL TEMP MSS 594.
- PRO. n.d. HO 45/10801/307402. Samples of documents confiscated by Police during raids on the National Council Against Conscription, No-Conscription Fellowship and Independent Labour Party Offices in 1917.
- Rae, John. 1970. *Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916–1919*. London: Oxford University Press.

- Rose, Sonya. 2004. Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain. In Dudnik, Stefan, Hagemann, Karen and Tosh, John (eds.): *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Sibley, David. 2005. *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914–1916*. London: Frank Cass.
- Simkins, Peter. 1988. *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914–16*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Springhall, John. 1977. *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883–1940*. Hamden: Archon Books.
- . 1987. Building Character in the British Boy: The Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-Class Adolescents, 1880–1914. In Mangan, J. A. and Walvin, James (eds.): *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Summers, Anne. 1976. Militarism in Britain before the Great War. *History Workshop Journal* 2, 104–123.
- The Tribunal. 1916. 9 November. In FHL: TEMP MSS 594.
- . 1918. 13 June. In FHL TEMP MSS 122.
- Tosh, John. 1999. *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. London: Yale University Press.
- . 2004. Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender. In Dudnik, Stefan, Hagemann, Karen and Tosh, John (eds.): *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Veitch, Colin. 1985. "Play up! Play up! And Win the War!" Football, the Nation and the First World War, 1914–15. *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, 363–378.
- Warren, Allen. 1987. Popular Manliness: Baden-Powell, Scouting, and the Development of Manly Character. In Mangan, J. A. and Walvin, James (eds.): *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Watson, E. J. 1917. Court-Martial Statement at Mill Hill, 22 March. In FHL TEMP MSS 594.
- Wild, Harold E. n.d. Heresy up to Date. In TEMP MSS 122.
- Willy, A. 1916. Letter to T. Edmund Harvey. 17 February. In TEMP MSS 835/11/3.
- Wilson, Trevor. 1986. *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Winter, J.M. 1974. *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain, 1912–18*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Lee Jones is a Rose Research Fellow in International Relations at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, United Kingdom. His current interests are in Southeast Asian politics; the present research was undertaken during his previous affiliation with the University of Warwick.