Private Lives and Patriotism: A Study of Attitudes to Sex and Venereal Disease in Wartime Britain, 1914 – 1918

Thesis submitted to the University of Kent for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2005

ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the connections which were drawn between sexual morality and patriotism in Britain during the Great War. Sexual behaviour and sexual health were believed to impact on the nation's moral standing, and on the pursuit of the war. Private behaviour and sexual health were scrutinised and criticised, and attempts were made to eradicate behaviour and sexual diseases which were perceived to be a threat to the nation in terms of security, moral standing, or military success. Nominally private behaviour, therefore, became a public concern.

Themes addressed include gender roles; constructions of masculinities and femininities; race, nation, and patriotism; and the relationship of the state and the individual. Subjects investigated include military policy; Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act; female police and patrols; the libel trial of Noel Pemberton Billing; the 'war babies' panic; and the work of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease and National Council for Combating Venereal Disease. A variety of contemporary sources is used in order to assess wartime attitudes, including Parliamentary Debates, official records, medical records, memoirs, and the press.

The thesis takes a historiographically new approach, in order to offer a broad and comparative study, and draws different conclusions from those of previous histories. Alongside 'problematic' sexualities, sexual practices, and sexual ill-health, this thesis considers attitudes to, and the regulation of, heterosexual, married, and procreative sex, and those behaviours which were representative of the majority of the population. It also asserts that the aligning of morality with patriotism was to be found in popular, religious, and journalistic arguments, but was also deeply entrenched within the legislation and official discourses of the British state.

Chapter One investigates governmental and military policy and laws regarding sex and venereal disease among British military personnel and civilians, and the often hostile responses to these measures. Chapter Two examines responses to sexual behaviour on the home front which was believed to be a danger to national security or to the war effort. Chapter Three addresses wartime opinions about marriage, illegitimacy, procreative sex, and the moral and patriotic demands upon women. Chapter Four investigates attitudes to sex as represented in soldiers' memoirs, and the constructions of masculinities. Chapter Five discusses contemporary reactions to perceived moral and medical crises, and explores solutions which were advocated for these problems. The thesis concludes by assessing the overarching themes in responses to sex and morality during the war. The Epilogue to the thesis addresses the longer period, briefly examining contrasts between attitudes to sexual behaviour in the First and Second World Wars, and drawing out similarities in ideological and linguistic responses to sex and morality during the First World War, and those expressed during the AIDS crisis in Britain in the 1980s.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the time I have spent working on this thesis, I have incurred debts of gratitude to a number of individuals and organisations; the fact that they are too numerous to all be named here does not mean that my appreciation is any the less sincere. I am keen, however, to take this opportunity to make some specific acknowledgements for the support I have received.

My research has been generously supported by grants from the Royal Historical Society, the Wellcome Trust for the History and Understanding of Medicine, the Western Front Association, the Colyer-Fergusson awards at the University of Kent, the School of History at the University of Kent, and King Edward VI College, Stourbridge. For this financial assistance I am immensely grateful.

I would like to express my thanks to the staffs of the British Library, the British Library Newspaper Library, the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office), the Wellcome Library, the Wellcome Archives, the Institute of Historical Research, the Department of Documents and the Department of Printed Books at the Imperial War Museum, Birmingham Central Library, the Templeman Library, and the Centre for the Study of Cartoons and Caricature at the University of Kent.

I am grateful to staff and postgraduates of the School of History at the University of Kent for their support, both practical and academic. I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Mark Connelly, for his patience, encouragement, and confidence in me throughout my pursuit of this project, and for his unfailing good humour. I am also especially grateful to Anna Miller, whose cheerful assistance in matters librarian has been invaluable, and whose ingenuity in locating lost volumes and in repairing microfilm readers is unparalleled.

I have been supported in many ways throughout my time as a doctoral student by my friends, and would like to express my affection and gratitude particularly to Katherine and Rob Anderson, Sarah Emmerson, Sarah and Dave Giles, Andrew Morley, and Roger Todd.

Finally, I must express my love and thanks to my parents, without whose unconditional support and encouragement this thesis could never have been written.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations used in footnotes and references:

BL MS:	British Library, Manuscript Collections
IWM DD:	Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents
TNA:	The National Archives
Wellcome:	The Archives of the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine

INTRODUCTION

In April 1915, Cosmo Lang, the Archbishop of York, announced that Britain's 'fighting spirit' could not be sustained if 'moral decline' could be seen ahead.[1] Lang was voicing a national concern. People's conduct was perceived directly to contribute to the pursuit of the war, and private behaviour, including sexual behaviour, was no exception. The sexual behaviour and sexual health of the British populace were believed directly to impact upon Britain's moral standing, on the country's right to win the war, and on the probability of Britain securing a victory. People's sexual behaviour in wartime was seen to have revealed more about their patriotism than it did about their sexuality. Immorality, in its manifold forms, was to be checked at all costs in order to remove its potential danger to the nation. Furthermore, regardless of a person's social status, a British citizen's private life was no longer private: the state had a right to scrutinise, and to attempt to control, the sex lives of all British citizens. What was ostensibly a personal activity was personal no longer; this phenomenon highlighted one strand of the ubiquitous power of the nation at war over its subjects.

This thesis investigates the ways in which the strands of sexual behaviour and morality, and patriotism and the pursuit of the war, were interlinked. It analyses the impact of the war on shaping people's sexual behaviour, and people's attitudes to their own sexual behaviour and that of their contemporaries. It also explores ways in which sexual behaviour and morality were seen to have a direct impact on the war effort. The themes of race and nation, gender, and class ran through debates on sex and morality during the period of the war, and these debates are to be found throughout this thesis. A multiplicity of contemporary sources are employed, thereby providing insights into the views of the military, the government, the press, the medical profession, and the clergy, as well as the opinions of individuals who commented on sexual mores and venereal disease,[2] a term which, in wartime, pertained to syphilis, gonorrhoea, and soft chancre.[3] As such, the thesis offers a broad cultural history of the ways in which the relationship of the state and the individual was perceived in wartime, and of the links which were drawn between sexual behaviour and patriotism.

The early twentieth century, and the First World War in particular, were periods of prolific and fascinating writing on the subjects of sex, morality, and venereal disease. The

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[1] Cosmo Lang, Archbishop of York, 21 April 1915, cited in Ferris, Paul, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth-Century History* [1993] (London: Mandarin, 1994), p.77.

[2] The contemporary phrase 'venereal disease' is used throughout the thesis, although 'sexually transmitted disease' and 'sexually transmitted infection' are more commonly used today.

[3] See Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*: 1916 Cd. 8189 xvi 1, p.3; Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, cited in TNA MEPO 3/2434.

presence of these topics in medical, legal, police, and parliamentary records, and in the press, mean that considerable historical resources are available. Similarly, the war was the first conflict in which men were inspired in such numbers to write letters, diaries, and, subsequently, memoirs, where these subjects were also addressed. Therefore, this topic demands a broad approach, because so many social groups, professions, and individuals commented on these matters. As such, there is available, both archivally and in published works, an eclectic collection both of sources, and of the opinions expressed therein. Furthermore, as a study in detail of the years 1914 to 1918, the thesis facilitates the exploration of a variety of contemporary angles within this short time-scale. In examining such a range of material the thesis endeavours to be as representative as possible of contemporary views, and precludes the bias that might accompany a more specifically directed study. In examining the sources that it does, this thesis retrieves the attitudes of people of a variety of classes, ages, occupations, religions, and regions of the country, through an array of expressed opinions.

However, in writing a history of attitudes, it is only possible to consider those attitudes which were expressed in wartime and have been archivally preserved, and therefore no study can be entirely representative. It is also necessary to consider the fact that attitudes expressed in writing, and particularly those which were published or intended for public consumption, represent considered, rather than spontaneous, opinion. Furthermore, expressed opinions may not have been universally held, but those of a vociferous minority. The press is particularly relevant here, as newspapers' expressed views were influenced by a necessity to appeal to the loyalties and sensibilities of their readerships. Rather than presenting a problem to the historian, however, the fact that only considered, publicly expressed attitudes remain means that the opinions available reflect those which were considered to be both appropriate and desirable material to enter the public sphere.

In the study of attitudes to sex and venereal disease, it must also be considered that the early twentieth century was a period of widespread ignorance regarding such matters. Memoirists Vera Brittain[4] and F. H. Kibblewhite[5] provide first-hand testimony that this was the case, as do letters to Marie Stopes;[6] historians Steve Humphries[7] and Jeffrey Weeks[8]

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[4] See Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the years 1900 – 1925* [1933] (London: Fontana, 1979), p.49.

[5] See IWM DD 80/19/1: F. H. Kibblewhite, FBOA, Unpublished memoir: 'In the face of Adversity SMILE', p.16.

[6] See Stopes, Marie Carmichael, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* [1918] (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929); Stopes, Marie Carmichael, *Wise Parenthood: The Treatise on Birth Control for Married People. A Practical Sequel to 'Married Love'* [1918] (London: Putnam, 1937).

[7] See Humphries, Steve, *A Secret World of Sex: Forbidden Fruit: The British Experience, 1900 – 1950* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988)

also address this point. The discussion of sexual matters was, to some degree, taboo: Lesley Hall observes that 'There has been a strong tradition of discretion – which might be better described as nervous evasiveness – about sex in Britain',[9] and that factors such as conversational taboos, doctor-patient confidentiality, and the belief that doctors should talk only to other members of their profession, rather than the public, about sexual matters, make it difficult to retrieve what people felt and did about sex.[10] It has also been pointed out that 'We are in almost total ignorance of the personal sexual beliefs and behaviour of all but the tiniest minority in the world we have lost'.[11] Some sexual practices were illegal, and were, therefore, discussed even less openly, if at all. As such, this thesis eschews a detailed exploration of attitudes to homosexuality, but focuses instead on heterosexual relations: buggery was punishable by two years' hard labour under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885,[12] and, due to the illicit nature of homosexual relations at this time, frank testimonies from gay people are rare, and discussions of such matters were largely couched in the matters of its abnormality. With these considerations in mind, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that absences and silences exist within the contemporary and historical discourses. Contemporary attitudes to sexual matters can be observed through the ways in which people wrote and spoke openly about them, and, similarly, through the fact of their absence from other debates.

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Sex had been a topic of concern before the war: indeed, it is argued that, throughout history, 'Sex has frequently been regarded as a source of danger, both *per se* and because of venereal disease'.[13] In wartime, particularly, concern was intensified because of the historical problem of venereal diseases in the armed forces: in 1862, 33 per cent of all home-based forces were hospitalised with venereal disease, a figure which alarmed the authorities into the passage of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1860s.[14] Britain's

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[8] Weeks, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* [1981] (London: Longman, 1984)
[9] Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p.5.
[10] Ibid., p.3.
[11] Porter, Roy and Hall, Lesley, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650 – 1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p.7.
[12] Ibid., p.224.
[13] Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert, 'Introduction', pp. 1 – 6 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.3.
[14] Spiers, Edward M., *The Army and Society, 1815 – 1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1980), p.162, and Spiers, Edward M., *The Late Victorian Army: 1868 – 1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp.143 – 144. See also Skelley, Alan Ramsay, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859 – 1899* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp.53 – 57.

tradition of state and forensic interest in sexual matters can be traced through these Acts, the Notification of Diseases Act, 1889, international conferences on venereal disease in 1899 and 1902, and investigations into, and reports on, venereal diseases and their relation to the implementation of the Poor Law and workhouse system.[15] The Prevention of Immorality Bill, introduced in 1911, sought to raise the age of consent for sexual intercourse from 16 to 19 (it had been raised from 13 to 16 by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885), and to provide for the expulsion from the country of alien prostitutes.[16] A Criminal Law Amendment Act had been passed in 1885, and a Criminal Law Amendment Bill was proposed in 1911, but was not passed until after the war. As such, these subjects were categorised by law, as well as by matters of personal taste.

Medical interest in venereal disease, and calls for official involvement, had increased since 1910, when Paul Ehrlich announced his discovery of Salvarsan, a treatment for syphilis, the previous year.[17] A Royal Commission on Venereal Disease was appointed in 1913, and, alongside this, the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease was inaugurated in the same year. The work of the Royal Commission has been described as being instrumental in 'the moralizing of medicine'.[18] These measures evinced the state's concern with the moral and sexual health of the nation. Lucy Bland has argued that there were 'two contrasting strategies' regarding venereal disease control during the war: medical treatment and moral guidance, which persisted into the post-war years, and repressive control, manifested through the Defence of the Realm Act, which lasted only during the war.[19] This thesis examines both of these strategies, in Chapters Five and One, respectively.

Contemporary discourses characterised sex as 'natural' or 'unnatural', as defined via the motivations of procreation, love, or short-term gratification.[20] A consideration of forensic approaches to sex and its control, therefore, requires the adoption of a culturally relativistic position: the policing of a 'natural' biological urge was not so perceived in the early twentieth century. Anxiety was expressed about a poor moral standard; concerns were

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[15] See Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* [1990] (London: Fontana, 1991), pp.182 – 211.
[16] See *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885*: 48 & 49 Vict., Chapter 69 (1885); *Prevention of Immorality Bill, 1911*: 1 Geo. 5, 1911 40 iv 987; TNA HO 45/10612/194463.
[17] Brandt, A., *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880* (New York, 1987), p.9, cited in Evans, David, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge": The Creation of the Venereal Disease Treatment Centres in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', pp. 414 – 417 in *Social History of Medicine*, 5, 1992, p.415.
[18] Bland, Lucy, '"Cleansing the Portals of Life": The Venereal Disease Campaign in the Early Twentieth Century', pp. 192 – 208 in Langan, Mary and Schwartz, Bill (eds.), *Crises in the British State, 1880 – 1930* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p.200.
[19] Ibid., p.193.
[20] See Bland, Lucy, '"Guardians of the race", or "Vampires upon the nation's health"? Female sexuality and its regulation in early twentieth-century Britain', pp.373 – 388 in Whitelegg, Elizabeth, et al (eds.), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), p.376.

fuelled by memories of Oscar Wilde's trial and disgrace. A nationwide scandal had occurred in February 1914, when Sarah Elizabeth Outram, head teacher of Dronfield County Girls' School in Derbyshire, was censured by the press and the public for having taught sex education to girls at her school.[21] Furthermore, published works on sexuality, by such authors as Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis, were approached with trepidation by some commentators for the illumination they were considered to provide of the extent of 'abnormal' sexual practices which were occurring in Britain. With these facts in mind, it is clear to see that sexual immorality – and the spread of venereal disease as a result of this – were perceived as alarming. Similarities can be seen between pre-war concerns and those expressed in wartime, when it was felt that the presence of immoral and 'abnormal' sexual practices caused dangers for the British nation and its long-term security.

By 1914, sex was a topic respectable enough to be discussed in relatively mainstream published works. Fictional literature of wartime, and into the inter-war years, addressed the matter of sex in a way that made it accessible to the reading public. H. G. Wells's *Ann Veronica* had been published in 1909, causing controversy because of the sexually confident nature of its eponymous heroine, and the comments it passed on morality, the family, and the status of women.[22] A number of books were famously suppressed because of their sexual content: E. M. Forster's *Maurice* was completed in 1914 but only published posthumously in 1971;[23] D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* was published in 1915 but subsequently suppressed.[24] Intellectual and theoretical works by scientists and scholars of sexuality were also available in the public domain. Austrian scientist Richard Von Krafft-Ebing's medical study *Psychopathia Sexualis* had been published in German in 1886, and in English translation in 1892. Despite concerns about its moral inappropriateness, it was widely debated.[25] In 1899, *The Evolution of Sex* by Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thompson had been published in Havelock Ellis's Contemporary Science Series, which consisted of 'small volumes' aimed at the 'average intelligent reader'.[26] Ellis's own multi-volume series, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, was published mostly between 1899 and 1910, with the final volume appearing much later, in 1928.[27] In his collaborative work with John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion*, published in 1897, Ellis situated the topic in the public sphere, as he clearly stated that sexual matters did not

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[21] See Mort, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830 (Second Edition)* [first edition 1987] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 2000), pp.121 – 128.
[22] See Jeanne MacKenzie's introduction in Wells, H. G., *Ann Veronica* [1909] (London: Virago, 1990).
[23] Forster, E. M., *Maurice* [completed in 1914; first published 1971] (London: Penguin, 1972).
[24] Lawrence, D. H., *The Rainbow* [1915] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, date unspecified).
[25] The book's full title was *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathetic Sexual Instinct. A Medico-Forensic Study*: see Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.158.
[26] Ibid., p.155.
[27] Ibid.

concern the theologian alone.[28] Edward Carpenter's book *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) had addressed such issues as the role of women, love, marriage, and 'homogenic love', and was an influential and much reprinted work until the 1930s.[29] *The Intermediate Sex*, published in 1908, acknowledged the increased attention which was being given to 'men and women of an intermediate or mixed temperament'.[30] While works such as *Sexual Inversion* and *The Intermediate Sex* were concerned with homosexuality, they nonetheless served to assist in bringing the matter of sex more generally into a sphere for public consumption. By 1914, Freud's work was fêted, at least among the medical community.[31]

The largely scholarly works did not completely clarify or explicate the matter of sex, however. Indeed, Rita Felski has identified

> The awkward circumlocutions, the passages of dry Latin prose, the strange, defunct neologisms – 'invert', 'Urning', 'eonism' – of works by sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing and Ellis.[32]

Furthermore, Lesley Hall argues,

> [Oscar] Wilde was front-page news, and the expression 'an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort' was probably a good deal more representative of the general public's vague notions about homosexuality than Ellis's and Carpenter's 'inverts', 'intermediates' and 'uranians'.[33]

For those Britons not familiar with published works on sex, the subject still retained considerable taboos. It was widely held that matters of sexuality were the province solely of the medical profession.[34] In Lucy Bland's words, 'The venereal disease rate was... read as an index of the nation's sexual immorality... Yet it was surrounded by ignorance and taboo'.[35]

The study of sexuality, then, on the eve of the First World War, was not so much a fringe science as a potentially morally dubious, albeit fascinating, concern.[36] As such, by the war years, it was possible for writers and theorists on sex and venereal disease to draw on the established and growing tradition of sexual studies, and publish their works in a

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[28] Ellis, Havelock and Symonds, John Addington, *Sexual Inversion* [1897] (place of publication unspecified: Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 1994), p.ix.
[29] Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.159.
[30] Carpenter, Edward, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* [1908] (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., date unspecified), p.9.
[31] See Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.163.
[32] Felski, Rita, 'Introduction', pp.1 – 8 in Bland, Lucy and Doan, Laura, *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.1.
[33] Hall, Lesley A., 'Sexual Cultures in Britain: Some Persisting Themes', pp.29 – 52 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.41.
[34] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.3.
[35] Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life', p.192.
[36] See, for example, Haste, Cate, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* [1992] (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp.7 – 31, and Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, pp.155 – 201.

community which would have accepted, if not completely welcomed, their content. This acceptance meant that didactic works from medical, as well as moral, perspectives, were received into the public sphere, and were able to offer practical as well as ideological advice regarding the problems of morality, and, more specifically, venereal disease. Lesley Hall writes that 'In mid-nineteenth-century Britain, characteristic squeamishness towards manifestations of sexuality assumed that venereal diseases were too disgusting a subject for discussion, with consequent reluctance to recognize them as a problem'.[37] This attitude had clearly changed by the war, evinced in part by the discussions surrounding the Contagious Diseaes Acts in the nineteenth century; the appointment of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in 1913 demonstrated the problematisation of these matters.

While the appointment of the Royal Commission and the founding of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease had prefigured subsequent concern, the war brought an unprecedented, and possibly unexpected, level of moral panic. Extant factors, combined with the long-established anxiety regarding high rates of venereal infection in the armed forces, and the exigencies of wartime, meant that a new light was cast on sexual behaviour. Sexual morality and sexual health were considered to be necessary factors for military victory to be possible. At times of moral panic, such as that surrounding the Contagious Diseases Acts in the nineteenth century, and that of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, the nation, and its moral, as well as physical health, has historically been brought sharply into focus and critiqued.[38] The First World War was no exception here. With the elevated significance of sex in the eyes of so many in Britain, writings on this subject were extensive. Numerous lay and professional commentators addressed the theme with zeal, and recommended solutions to the perceived moral and medical crises. Official bodies also took measures to intervene in people's private behaviour, in attempts to solve these problems.

This thesis explores the connections of sex and the First World War from two angles: sex can be seen to be, and has been argued to be, an important factor in the history of the war; similarly, the war represented an influential and eventful period in the histories of sex and sexuality. The war had a particular impact on the language of, and the reception of, the work of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases. The Final Report of the Royal Commission stated that:

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[37] Hall, Lesley A., 'Venereal Diseases and Society in Britain, from the Contagious Diseases Acts to the National Health Service', pp.120 – 136 in Davidson, Roger, and Hall, Lesley A. (eds.), *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.120.

[38] See Haste, *Rules of Desire*; Garfield, Simon, *The End of Innocence: Britain in the Time of AIDS* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994); Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*; Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life.*

> The reasons for combating, by every possible means, diseases which in normal times [i.e. peacetime] operate with disastrous effects alike upon the birth-rate and upon working efficiency are... far more urgent than ever before.[39]

The imperatives of the war also provided a campaigning strategy for the Royal Commission, and for the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, which pre-war social and sexual purity campaigns did not have. A publication by this Council unequivocally stated that

> The great World War has taught us among others one lesson of supreme importance pointing to the close relation existing between domestic ethics and national prosperity. Once more we have seen that the home life of the people is as essential to the welfare of the nation as the bloodstream is to the health of the body.[40]

Similarly, Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act can be seen as part of a longer trend, and the natural successor to the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, which were introduced as measures to reduce the number of cases of venereal diseases contracted by soldiers and sailors in garrison towns and ports. This ongoing historical concern, and its need for a solution, was identified by the Royal Commission,[41] thereby showing it not to be solely a war-specific problem. Regulation 40D courted comparable controversy and opposition to that received by its precursors, and revived the old debates that had surrounded them. The fact of the Contagious Diseases Acts having been repealed in the 1880s, and then effectively replaced, demonstrates the particular impact of wartime in motivating the government to take both a controversial and retrograde legislative step.

Continuities can be seen between pre-war and wartime attitudes to sex, perceptions of sexualities and sexual behaviours as threatening or dangerous, and in the tradition of attempting to control these sexualities. The social purity movement grew in strength in the decades before the war,[42] and drew on Krafft-Ebing's maxim that 'The material and moral ruin of the community is steadily brought about by debauchery, adultery and luxury'.[43] The first decades of the twentieth century saw the explicit connection of sexual immorality and disease with the decline in churchgoing, and the consequent use of discourses of 'sin' against venereal disease sufferers.[44] From the late nineteenth century, eugenic movements publicly campaigned for an improvement in the potency of the British race,[45] in order to ensure domestic productivity, and to reinforce Britain's defence against the 'animal

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[39] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.66.
[40] Pendlebury, Mrs. M., *The Ratepayer and the Lockward* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1918), p.4.
[41] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.1.
[42] See Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, pp.81 – 89.
[43] Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p.6, cited in ibid., p.81.
[44] See Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, pp.156 – 158.
[45] See Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.87.

savagery' of other races.[46] These sentiments, described by Frank Mort as a 'racist, patriarchal and anti-democratic' vision,[47] were intensified in wartime due to increased perceived threat from other races. Anxieties about the effects on the nation of prostitution and 'white slavery', and unregulated female sexuality, were vociferated in terms of state control since the 1860s, the time of the Contagious Diseases Acts.[48]

Discontinuities can also be seen, however. Pre-war suffragists had campaigned against the state regulation of female sexuality, engaged in rescue work with prostitutes, and had argued that women should not be the sexual possessions of men.[49] Similarly, the Fabian Society had called for sexual equality both within and outside of marriage.[50] Despite the influence of such campaigns before the war, and claims of the war having liberated women, however, the punitive nature of Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act and the observations of women police in fact did the opposite.

The impact of the war was also felt in highlighting the importance of sex in existing debates, and in giving both a new vocabulary and impetus to these trends. This theory is supported by the work of Lesley Hall, who observes that the war 'brought into prominence and visibility themes already present'.[51] The war neither represented a sea-change in thinking about sex,[52] nor can it be seen as an isolated and distinctive period in which sexual matters were widely discussed and felt to be important, only for their impact to wane after the war ended.[53] This thesis disagrees with, but complements, these contentions, and argues that the war can be seen as a defining and discrete period in history, in which existing, burgeoning interest in sexual concerns proliferated. These concerns were driven into mainstream debate by their coverage in the press, and through legislative measures; they were also discussed with a new, war-specific urgency. In this respect, the impact of the war can be seen on the early career of Marie Stopes, expert in the fields of sexual pleasure and birth control. Stopes's work in wartime focussed on eugenic and racial concerns, the importance of national replenishment, and the pivotal role of the family in a healthy society. Wartime trends added credence and impact to her work, and, when her books *Married Love* and *Wise Parenthood* were published in 1918, she drew upon these imperatives, writing in her author's preface to *Married Love* that she hoped that the book 'may serve the State' in adding to the numbers of happy marriages, which were 'The only secure basis for a present-

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[46] Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p.136.
[47] Ibid.
[48] See Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, pp.87 – 88.
[49] See Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp.106 – 108.
[50] See Haste, *Rules of Desire*, pp.13 – 14.
[51] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.7.
[52] On this argument, see Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991).
[53] On this argument, see DeGroot, Gerard J., *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* [1996] (London: Longman, 1998).

day State',[54] and dedicating *Wise Parenthood* to 'all who wish to see our race grow in strength and beauty'.[55] After the war, however, these national imperatives were lost. Venereal disease treatment centres, founded as a result of the Royal Commission's recommendations, were widely attended and successful.[56] Nevertheless, the impetus of the work of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease and the National Vigilance Association declined, and, without the added impact of wartime necessities for addressing sexual problems, support for these groups had largely vanished within ten years of the end of the war.[57]

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The case studies discussed in this thesis evince war-specific experiences of sex, and expressions of moral codes, within longer extant trends. The promotion of a sense of moral righteousness was necessary in the international sphere, as well as within Britain: if the British people, and the British nation, could be seen to be moral, then the British cause in the war could more easily be portrayed as right and just. It was crucial that Britain be perceived as sexually moral, in the eyes of her own citizens and those of other nations, as opposed to her military opponents, who were defined as enemies of culture as well as enemies of Britain. Indeed, the reverse side of the British First World War campaign medal is inscribed with 'The Great War for Civilisation 1914 – 1919'. This evinces a culturally specific definition of 'civilisation', which drew the civilisation of Britain, as the victorious nation, as superior; Britain's defeated enemies could therefore be easily drawn as un- or under-civilised. From the perspective of a victorious hindsight, Britain's wartime values could be seen as having led to an inevitable moral and military victory. Alex King writes of the role of war memorials in celebrating simultaneously 'a triumph of arms and a triumph of a higher [moral] order'.[58] A cartoon in Punch in August 1914 satirised the idea of 'culture', depicting a German soldier standing victorious over the dead bodies of women and children, in a devastated village:

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[54] Stopes, *Married Love*, p.xiii.
[55] Stopes, *Wise Parenthood*, p.v.
[56] Hall, 'Sexual Cultures in Britain', p.42; Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.247; Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"'.
[57] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.247; Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p.160.
[58] King, Alex, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998), p.181.

THE TRIUMPH OF "CULTURE."

Source: *Punch*, 26 August 1914, p.185.

Furthermore, Britain's enemies were portrayed as being sexually depraved. The British self-perception of sexual morality was a significant part of British national identity, and at no time was national identity more important than when the nation was at war. The British drawing of the people of other races as inferior, uncivilised, and sexually base had permeated imperialistic ideals, and 'The rhetoric of civilized and barbarian was mobilized... in imperial discourse';[59] this discourse was easily modified to apply to Germans. The protection of the Empire was an important influence in enlistment campaigns and throughout the war. A recruitment appeal of 7 August 1914 stated that

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[59] Salter, Mark B., *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p.53.

> An addition of 100,000 men to His Majesty's Regular Army is immediately necessary in the present grave National Emergency. Lord Kitchener is confident that this appeal will be at once responded to by all who have the safety of our Empire at heart'.[60]

The idea of carnally rapacious savages of the Empire could easily be transposed onto the political climate during the Great War; these manifested themselves in stories of, among other things, marauding Huns raping Belgian women, and the propagandistic perspective afforded the Germans' execution of Edith Cavell.[61] What is peculiar here is that the allegations during the Great War were against Western European Germans, who had their own empire, rather than imperial subjects of other races. Britain approached the war from the context of having an empire, wherein Britons were, of necessity, defined as morally superior – and, as such, as superior in sexual habits and proclivities. It was, therefore, very easy for the British people to adopt the moral and sexual high ground over their wartime adversaries, as experience of this had been gained in an imperial context. Michael Roper and John Tosh write that 'lasciviousness and idleness' were negative qualities attributed by Imperial commentators to both Indians and Africans,[62] so it was necessary for Britons to reject these attributes, lest they be aligned with their colonial subjects.

Perceptions of gender, and of gender roles, made a significant contribution to people's attitudes towards sexual morality. This thesis addresses aspects of both masculinity and femininity, and their constructions during the war. The exigencies of wartime saw the realignment of both moral and gender codes, and the emergence of war-specific masculinities and femininities. A person's gender was seen, in many respects, to define the appropriateness of their sexual behaviour. Masculinities were constructed by men's military participation, but, beyond this, were influenced by men's sexual behaviour. Military convention held that sex was a physical and biological necessity for men; sex for pleasure was also demanded by military customs. While not all soldiers subscribed to these beliefs, sexual activity among soldiers played a considerable role in defining masculinities. Women were faced with a more complex situation, and stricter demands for appropriate levels of femininity. The 'double standard', which permitted casual and pre-marital sex for men but not for women, persisted during the war. Women's responsibilities were seen by many commentators to be via the patriotic activity of procreative sex, as mothers of future generations. Women were also able to adopt policing roles, as members of organisations

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[60] Marwick, Arthur, *Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change, 1900 – 1967* [1968] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p.57.
[61] Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization*, p 82.
[62] Roper, Michael and Tosh, John, 'Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity', pp.1 – 24 in Roper, Michael and Tosh, John (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.14.

which patrolled public spaces to eradicate improper behaviour. This was a complex situation; indeed, Philippa Levine observes that

> The war represents a period of considerable turbulence and confusion, in which an intense and authoritarian masculinity resurfaced, both through a valorization of combat and through an extension of governmental political power. The issue of female authority was a tenuous one in such circumstances, and we should not be overly surprised by the conflicts this polarization brought about for women who were dedicated to the advancement of women yet pulled into a world of ultimate masculinity.[63]

Standards of morality, then, while allied closely with patriotism, were not homogenous for all British citizens.

Unquestionably, the release of young men from family ties, and their socialisation in large numbers in male-dominated environments, impacted on their behaviour and moral codes: this is the case for both soldiers and non-soldiers, in peacetime as well as war. However, what is notable is the extent to which the Great War removed young men from these constraints: the massive scale of voluntary enlistment and forced conscription, and their encompassing of all social classes, was war-specific, and unprecedented. Furthermore, in wartime, unlike in peacetime, the potential threat of death was felt by soldiers, and this played no small part in influencing men's morals,[64] as did their geographical removal from their families and home communities. These dynamics can be observed through the personal testimonies of soldiers who lived through the war, who were motivated to write letters, diaries, and, subsequently, memoirs. Similarly, the sexual and moral scrutiny imposed on soldiers was war-specific not because it was applied at all, but because of the scale of its application. In wartime, this scrutiny incorporated the middle classes, as conscripts and volunteers, and men who were not part of a marginalised group, whereas, before the war, such examinations had tended to focus on lunatics, convicts, prostitutes, and servants. Moreover, the scrutiny of women of all classes, and those in public spaces, was seen on an unprecedented scale, through the wartime activities of women police.

The sexualisation of men is a trend that must be acknowledged as having been highlighted in wartime. Through their personal testimonies, men who lived through the war articulated their opinions and experiences of sexuality in a manner and on a scale which was unprecedented. The availability of these accounts to the middle-classes, paralleled with press and public debates about sexual behaviour, meant that British society as a whole was

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[63] Levine, Philippa, '"Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War I', pp.34 – 78 in *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1), March 1994, p.77.
[64] See Williamson, Henry, *The Patriot's Progress: Being the Vicissitudes of Private John Bullock* [1930] (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp.133 – 134; Graves, Robert, *Goodbye to All That* [1929; revised edition 1957] (London: Penguin, 1960), p.195; Crozier, Brigadier-General F. P., CB, CMG, DSO, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), p.48.

aware of men's sexuality. Furthermore, the question of working-class sexuality was addressed on a vast scale for the first time, through these media and through the solicitude of the Royal Commission and National Council for Combating Venereal Disease. As such, this period can be seen as the first in which working-class sexuality was acknowledged, and even romanticised, as it continues to be through fiction and histories. Bernard Waites writes that 'the uprooted quality of wartime daily life encouraged a closer sense of identity between the working classes and the nation...'.[65] Here, then, was created a levelling effect throughout British society, socially, but also sexually and ideologically, as working-class sexual behaviour became interesting to other classes, and was not merely met with disapproval or discussed in terms of racial and eugenic concerns.

However, elements of the pre-war class structure persisted during the war, and throughout debates on sex and morality in wartime ran the discourses of class.[66] Indeed, the early twentieth century saw an increase in class awareness via political and industrial antagonism, and the increasing importance of the trade union movement,[67] as well as the influence of eugenics in constructing class awareness.[68] And, as Ross McKibbin argues, English people freely categorised themselves into classes.[69] The increased class awareness notwithstanding, class differences were seen by many to have been levelled by the war; Arthur Marwick characteristically argues that 'The war had a dissolving effect on the class structure of Britain',[70] while Gerard De Groot writes that there was, during the war, a 'myth of class harmony in the trenches'.[71] If Britain's class structure had not been dissolved, then, it had certainly been questioned and reconsidered.

The First World War was not a period of great class insurgency or strife in Britain, as were the years immediately preceding and following the war. However, class divisions persisted throughout the conflict, exerting themselves via insidious, and institutional, means. Military ranks, and, of course, non-combatants, played a role in shifting the class dynamics within Britain. Furthermore, the women involved in the women's patrols and women police were expressly described as being middle-class.[72] Despite the influence of

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[65] Waites, Bernard, *A Class Society at War: England 1914 – 1918* (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg, 1987), p.274.
[66] On class in this period, see Marwick, *The Deluge*, pp.59 – 63; DeGroot, *Blighty*, pp.296 – 300; Waites, *A Class Society at War*; Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War*; McKibbin, Ross, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918 – 1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Cannadine, David, *Class in Britain* [1998] (London: Penguin, 2000), pp.1 – 23.
[67] See Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, pp.108 – 110, and p.111.
[68] Waites, *A Class Society at War*, pp.34 and 179.
[69] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.v.
[70] Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.340.
[71] DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.129; see also p.297.
[72] See Van Emden, Richard and Humphries, Steve, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* [2003] (London: Headline, 2004), p.266.

campaigners such as Josephine Butler,[73] prostitutes were seen by many commentators to be the prime source for most venereal disease, and, therefore, as a moral and social 'under-class'. Class, in wartime, was constructed via other means in addition to those of income, wealth, or employment: status was also constructed through morality and behaviour – and, perhaps more importantly, the ability to impose moral codes onto other facets of society. Bernard Waites writes that

> The them/us dichotomy does not customarily express a sense of class conflict for... it is normally used within a context of popular lore and aphorisms with which the inequalities of class society are shrugged off or deflected...[74]

Indeed, the 'them/us dichotomy' was, in wartime, manifested through those bodies suggesting and enforcing moral codes and behaviour. Such groups included the police, women police, and members of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases and the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease. These groups propagated the views of the upper and middle classes throughout society. So, while there was no schism along class lines regarding nationalism, the war, and its pursuit, divisions were evinced in terms of morality and personal conduct. Means of dealing with perceived problems of venereal disease and immoral conduct were pursued via the apparatus of class.[75] While questions of morality affected all facets of society,[76] class hierarchy suffused the military, and here, too, class divisions impacted, accusations of casual sex and moral disreputability largely being made against the lower ranking and less well educated men.[77]

Contemporary debates also considered the relationship between the state and the individual, the public and the private. Wartime necessities prompted the state to impose demands and expectations upon British citizens, which affected many aspects of people's private lives: employment, health, food distribution, and recreations. Beyond those measures demanded by a war economy, however, requirements were also enforced regarding sexual behaviour, an otherwise private and personal activity. As the ideals of sexual morality and national integrity were conflated, venereal infection and sexual impropriety, were often considered to indicate a poor moral state in the nation. As such, state-controlled interest in, and observation of, personal habits was deemed to be necessary as a patriotic imperative. People who were seen to be 'immoral' or 'depraved', or who had

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[73] See Walkowitz, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* [1992] (London: Virago, 2000), p.87; Weeks, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics and Society*; Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*; Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment.*

[74] Waites, *A Class Society at War*, p.180.

[75] Winter, Denis, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* [1978] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p.92.

[76] Wilson, Trevor, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914 – 1918* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp.411 – 412.

[77] See Graves, *Goodbye to All That.*

venereal diseases, needed to be exposed and punished, as a threat to national order and to the war effort. On this subject, Roger Davidson and Lesley Hall write that

> VD has been, and continues to be, of interest to more than the medical historian. Not only has it been significant in shaping and articulating perceptions of sexuality generally, it has also provided a rich field for the study of the state's response to perceived threats to public health occasioned by what were deemed to be inappropriate and dangerous forms of sexual and gender behaviour.[78]

Scrutiny of personal behaviour by the government, by official and semi-official bodies, by the press, the clergy, and the police, then, was endorsed. Consequently, sex was redrawn as being no longer a private matter, but a national and public concern. The wartime focus on problematic and concerning manifestations of sexuality, and their consequences, was acute, as matters were not considered to be merely distasteful or improper, but also a potent danger to the nation's safety. Indeed, Lesley Hall has pointed out that 'immorality' tends to be more reported in the media than 'morality',[79] which would fundamentally be considered uneventful, and certainly not newsworthy.

Nonetheless, certain manifestations of sexual activity created palpable social problems in wartime Britain. These were addressed by enthusiasm for vigilantism, moral patrols, and the demand for national moral rectitude. Despite the zeal with which attempts to locate and eradicate immorality were pursued, it must be noted that not all wartime sexual problems were illusory, or unnecessarily concerning. The dislocations of wartime caused problems, some of which needed attention: family structures were fragmented and moral conventions associated with the family exploded; sexual activity, and, particularly, unfaithful sexual activity, became more conspicuous; sex-related crimes and prostitution increased.[80] While these activities may have been observed by fervent policing and patrolling, they were of concern to those who observed them, as well as to the police, the clergy, parliamentarians, the press, and, of course, the public. Beyond observable manifestations of sexual activity, there was also a potential moral concern about young people losing their morals as their family structures and influences, and particular fathers, had been lost. With these facts in mind, and heightened anxieties in wartime notwithstanding, a regulatory response was justified. Furthermore, the desire to solve these problems also had a rational basis in the incapacitation that might have ensued from them, due to venereal disease.

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[78] Davidson, Roger and Hall, Lesley A., 'Introduction', pp.1 – 14 in Davidson and Hall, *Sex, Sin and Suffering*, p.1.
[79] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.3.
[80] See Levine, 'Walking the Streets', pp.43 – 45; DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.142.

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The first history of sex during the Great War to be published was H. C. Fischer and E. X. Dubois's 1937 volume *Sexual Life During the World War.*[81] This book covers a variety of topics, including marriage, prostitution, 'erotic life', and venereal disease, in a largely conversational style. There was a relative dearth of material on the subject of sex during the war until the 1980s. As Jeffrey Weeks points out in his acclaimed study *Sex, Politics and Society,*[82] sex in history was described in the early 1970s as a 'virgin field'.[83] Furthermore, more recently, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker draw a parallel between the histories of sexuality and of the Great War: they cite Alain Corbin, who writes that 'an obvious puritanism has, until very recently, weighed heavily on university research in the history of sexuality',[84] and claim that the same statement could be applied to the history of warfare, and particularly that of the Great War.[85] Volume I of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976)[86] provided an early thematic framework for a discussion of the creation of sexual discourses throughout history. The impact of Foucault's work has been felt by numerous historians: Rita Felski writes that 'One of the achievements of Michel Foucault was to dissolve... [the] barrier between a Victorian and a post-Freudian culture by revealing the essential continuity between them'.[87] Works before this period which addressed the question of sex during the First World War included Arthur Marwick's 1960s works *The Deluge*[88] and *Britain in the Century of Total War.*[89] In response to Marwick's *The Deluge*, Gerard DeGroot wrote *Blighty* (1996), which also addresses matters such as the wartime curtailment of personal, and specifically sexual, freedoms.[90] The last fifteen years especially have seen a number of published histories which address aspects of sex during the Great War. Since 1980, it is argued, social and historical manifestations of sexuality have been studied, and a 'constructionist point of view' has emerged, being developed in works by Michel Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks, and others.[91] A number of these works have influenced this thesis, both thematically and methodologically. While only a selection of

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[81] Fischer, H. C. and Dubois, E. X., *Sexual Life During the World War* (London: Francis Aldor, 1937).
[82] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society.*
[83] Vern L. Bullough, cited in Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, p.1.
[84] Alain Corbin, cited in Audoin-Rouzeau, Stéphane and Becker, Annette, *1914 – 1918: Understanding the Great War* [2000] (London: Profile Books, 2002) (translated from the original text (*14 – 18, retrouver la Guerre*: Editions Gallimard, 2000) by Catherine Temerson, p.14.
[85] Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *Understanding the Great War*, p.14.
[86] Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* [1976] (London: Penguin, 1990) (translated from the original text (*La Volonté de savoir*) by Robert Hurley.
[87] Felski, Rita, 'Introduction' in Bland and Doan, *Sexology in Culture*, p.1.
[88] Marwick, *The Deluge.* This work was revised and republished in 1991.
[89] Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War.*
[90] DeGroot, *Blighty.*
[91] Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert, 'Introduction', pp.1 – 26 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.1

recent works are summarised here, many more are employed in historical and intertextual analysis, and are quoted from, throughout the thesis.

Some important themes in the history of sex during the Great War are introduced in Cate Haste's *Rules of Desire*.[92] Haste's study provides an extensive survey of the changing attitudes to sex in Britain throughout the twentieth century; her chapter on the First World War addresses the issues of female morality, women patrols, and Defence of the Realm Act Regulation 40D, issues which are discussed at greater length, and in relation to the dynamics of patriotism, in this thesis. A rare example of oral history on this subject is Steve Humphries's *A Secret World of Sex*, in which personal testimonies about sexual behaviour and opinions about sex in the early twentieth century are explored.[93] Though criticised by a newspaper as 'the dirty doctor' whilst undertaking his work,[94] Humphries's study is not prurient, but is insightful and enlightening. In recent years a considerable and scholarly contribution to this field has been made by Lesley Hall. Her admirable work *Sex, Gender and Social Change* addresses a number of topics covered by this thesis, including the regulation of sexuality, moral codes, the changing status of women, birth control, and the wartime moral panics surrounding 'war babies' and 'khaki fever'. Hall offers an interpretation which situates the themes of the social and legal control of sexual behaviour – key themes in this thesis – in the extended period of British history.[95] With Roy Porter, in *The Facts of Life*, Hall explores the dissemination of sexual knowledge in Britain since the seventeenth century.[96] And, with Roger Davidson, in *Sex, Sin and Suffering*, Hall charts European venereal disease policy in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[97] matters which are examined in relation to the war in Chapter Five of this thesis. Lesley Hall has made further contributions in her article '"War Always Brings It On": War, STDs, the Military, and the Civilian Population in Britain, 1850 – 1950';[98] she has also co-edited volumes on sex in history.[99] Richard Davenport-Hines's brilliant and sensitive study *Sex, Death and Punishment* examines attitudes to sex, and the historical punishment of people for various sexual practices in Britain, from the perspective of the AIDS crisis. In this analysis, Davenport-Hines draws on the policies of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease and the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases as being situated within

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[92] Haste, *Rules of Desire.*
[93] Humphries, Steve, *A Secret World of Sex: Forbidden Fruit: The British Experience, 1900 – 1950* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988).
[94] Ibid., p.11
[95] Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change.*
[96] Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life.*
[97] Davidson and Hall, *Sex, Sin and Suffering.*
[98] Hall, Lesley A., '"War Always Brings It On": War, STDs, the Military, and the Civilian Population in Britain, 1850 – 1950', pp.205 – 223 in Cooter, Roger, Harrison, Mark, and Sturdy, Steve (eds.), *Medicine and Modern Warfare* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999).
[99] Eder, Hall and Hekma (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories*; Eder, Hall and Hekma, *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality.*

a longer tradition of social and sexual control in Britain,[100] a tradition which provides a valuable background for the understanding of the policies of such bodies in light of the wartime emergency; such policies are discussed here in Chapters One and Five. In *Dangerous Sexualities*, Frank Mort has addressed the questions of the legitimacy of authorities' constructions of sickness and health, as well as controls on the body, and pronouncements on sex, during the AIDS crisis.[101] This thesis addresses similar issues that arose in British society during the Great War.

Significant contributions have been made in recent years to the histories of gender, sex, and sexuality during the war. Joanna Bourke's consummate work *Dismembering the Male* examines the impact of the war on the male body, in terms of physical damage wrought by battle, and on consequent attitudes to sex among those men who fought in the war.[102] The use of personal testimony in this work provides an interesting counterpoint to the analysis of soldiers' memoirs, diaries, and letters here in Chapter Four. Bourke's *An Intimate History of Killing* draws upon the fascination with killing, and the connections of killing and sex, among men who fought in twentieth-century conflicts.[103] These dynamics were evident on the military front, as discussed in Chapter Four, but were also felt among civilians on the home front, a subject which is also discussed throughout this thesis. Adrian Caesar, in *Taking it Like A Man,* explores the impact of war experiences and repressed sexuality, and manifestations of sadistic and masochistic tendencies, among the poets Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon.[104] Chapter Four of this thesis utilises Caesar's account as an example of the study of self-writing in relation to constructions of masculinity and sexuality, homosexuality and homoeroticism, and in relation to attitudes to sex. While Caesar focuses on the writers of poetry, however, this thesis dovetails with his work, by examining prose written by Great War soldiers, in the form of diaries, letters, and memoirs. Alongside these works, collections such as *Masculinities in Politics and War*[105] and *Manful Assertions*[106] provide a theoretical framework for discussions of the construction of masculinities in relation to men's military participation and sexual activity: these issues are discussed here in Chapter Four.

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[100] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment.*
[101] Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p.171.
[102] Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996).
[103] Bourke, Joanna, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* [1999] (London: Granta Books, 2000).
[104] Caesar, Adrian, *Taking it Like a Man: Suffering, Sexuality and the War Poets, Brooke, Sassoon, Owen, Graves* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).
[105] Dudink, Stefan, Hagemann, Karen, and Tosh, John (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004). See especially Roper, Michael, 'Maternal Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival in Letters Home during the First World War', pp.295 – 315 in ibid.
[106] Roper and Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions*.

A novel and recent interpretation of the war experiences of men and women, as differentiated along gender lines, is offered by Janet S. K. Watson; her work also examines concern regarding the morals of female workers and WAACs,[107] issues which are addressed here in Chapter Two. Susan Grayzel has investigated the wartime concern with the maintenance of morale among women on the home front while men were absent,[108] and the connections of morality and wartime in relation to women's roles and responsibilities, through an exploration of women police, DORA Regulation 40D, and motherhood.[109] These trends are discussed here in Chapters One, Two, and Three, where Grayzel's conclusions are considered alongside new research. While Grayzel's work explores attitudes to women, this thesis looks more comprehensively at a cross-section of society, investigating attitudes to the sexual behaviour of both sexes. It further explores the dynamics which deemed immorality, in its manifold forms, to be unpatriotic. A specific approach is adopted by Angela Woollacott, who has examined the phenomenon of 'khaki fever' and attempts to control it, when it was felt that female expressions of patriotism got out of control, resulting in widespread casual sex and moral panic.[110] Woollacott also investigates the observation of female workers' social and sexual behaviour in wartime.[111] The concerns addressed by Woollacott are discussed here in Chapter Two, together with the wartime anxiety that was expressed about other perceived manifestations of female impropriety. Lucy Bland and Philippa Levine have both provided valuable insights into women policing, and the social and gender dynamics evinced in the monitoring and control of female sexuality by women;[112] this research is considered in Chapter Two, in relation to contemporary official and popular attitudes to the female policing movements. Gail Braybon, Claire A. Culleton, Susan Grayzel, and Lucy Bland have all afforded explorations of the wartime expectations on women to demonstrate their patriotism by fulfilling maternal procreative duties, and in helping to preserve and fortify the race.[113] A discussion of this

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[107] Watson, Janet S. K., *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[108] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women and the First World War* (Harlow and London: Longman (Pearson Educational Ltd.), 2002).
[109] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* [1999] (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).
[110] Woollacott, Angela, '"Khaki Fever" and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', pp.325 – 347 in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (2), April 1994.
[111] Woollacott, Angela, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 1994).
[112] Bland, Lucy, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', pp. 23 – 49 in Brophy, Julia and Smart, Carol (eds.), *Women-in-Law: Explorations in Law, Family & Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); Levine, 'Walking the Streets'.
[113] Braybon, Gail, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Culleton, Claire A., *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914 – 1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*; Lucy Bland, 'Guardians of the Race'.

means by which women's sexuality had a positive impact on the war effort is to be found here in Chapter Three.

While this thesis is a cultural, rather than a medical history, studies in the sphere of the history and social history of medicine are effective in providing background to attitudes to venereal disease, and to contemporary interpretations of sexual behaviour in medical terms. Indeed, Roger Davidson points out that the social history of venereal disease draws links between medicine, sexuality, and imperialism[114] – three factors which impacted considerably on wartime moral campaigns. Such works are considered alongside contemporary attitudes to the treatment of venereal disease in Chapter Five. Lucy Bland's article 'Trial by Sexology' discusses the habilitation of medico-sexual terminology into popular culture and current affairs through a case study of the libel trial of Noel Pemberton Billing in 1918.[115] This work is important in terms of its addressing of the parameters of linguistic acceptability in sexual debates, and of contemporary preconceptions about feminine innocence and sexual ignorance. Furthermore, this work offers an essay into the theme of wartime associations of nationality and sexual morality; Chapter Two takes this work as a point of departure to further examine state-approved connections of foreignness and sexual depravity. Lucy Bland has also examined British campaigns on the subject of venereal disease in the early twentieth century,[116] while Roger Davidson has explored the specifically Scottish reaction to the problem of venereal disease, in terms of public health policy.[117] These works provide some thematic background to Chapter Five's specific analysis of sexual health campaigns in the context of the war, and in relation to patriotic imperatives.

Literature has also contributed in recent years to the debate about attitudes towards sex during the war. Paul Fussell's, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) draws upon the prevailing influence of the war poets, and addresses the impact of literature in constructing attitudes to sex, and, more specifically, sexuality, during the war.[118] The intense emotional reactions engendered by the war poetry does not dissipate; a number of these authors are often remembered as much for their sexuality as for their writing. Adrian Caesar's study *Taking it Like a Man* explores the lives, works, and sexualities of four particularly famous war poets, Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and

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[114] Davidson, Roger, *Dangerous Liaisons: A Social History of Venereal Disease in Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2002), p.1.
[115] Bland, Lucy, 'Trial by Sexology? Maud Allan, *Salome* and the "Cult of the Clitoris" Case', pp.183 – 198 in Bland and Doan, *Sexology in Culture*.
[116] Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life'.
[117] Davidson, *Dangerous Liaisons*, and Davidson, Roger, 'The Culture of Compulsion: Venereal Disease, Sexuality and the State in Twentieth-Century Scotland', pp.58 – 75 in Eder, Hall, and Hekma, (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality*.
[118] Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Robert Graves.[119] Jay Winter has also investigated the influence of literature on perceptions of wartime sex and sexuality.[120] Recent fictional, or semi-fictional, literature has revived an interest in the subject of sex during the war. The popularity of Sebastian Faulks's Birdsong (1993)[121] and Pat Barker's Regeneration Trilogy (1991, 1993, 1995)[122] have played no small part here. Less famous is Ben MacIntyre's novel *A Foreign Field* (2001).[123]

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This thesis, while drawing upon the influences and methodologies of other historical works, presents a historiographically new approach. It links the themes of sex, morality, and patriotism throughout five chapters which cover different aspects of sexual behaviour and sexual health during the war. It is intended that this thesis makes some contribution to the 'detailed work' which Lesley A. Hall believes 'remains to be done' on the subject of attitudes to sex and sexuality in twentieth-century Britain,[124] and facilitates the pursuit of further scholarship in this field.

This study represents a new approach and new conclusions to the fields of the histories of sex and the First World War. Histories of this period have hitherto concentrated on analyses of particular aspects of sexual behaviour and the disapproval of and attempts to regulate them. These include female sexuality,[125] sex and motherhood,[126] 'abnormal' sexual activities,[127] and sexual ill-health.[128] In taking a broad approach to attitudes to sex during the war, and in considering the formal and state regulation of sexual behaviour alongside parallel ideological and non-official forms of regulation, this thesis is the first work to draw together under a coherently and comprehensively the strands that other histories have not explicitly connected. It explores the similarities between contemporary responses to sexual

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[119] Caesar, *Taking it Like a Man.*
[120] Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* [1995] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.204 – 222.
[121] Faulks, Sebastian, *Birdsong* [1993] (New York: Vintage, 1997).
[122] Barker, Pat, *The Regeneration Trilogy* [*Regeneration*: 1991, *The Eye in the Door*: 1993, *The Ghost Road*: 1995] (London, New York, Ringwood, Toronto, Auckland: 1996).
[123] MacIntyre, Ben, *A Foreign Field: A True Story of Love and Betrayal in the Great War* (London: HarperCollins, 2001).
[124] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.9
[125] See Bland, 'In the Name of Protection'; Levine, 'Walking the Streets'; Thom, Deborah, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* [1998] (London, I. B. Tauris, 2000); Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever'.
[126] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*; Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*; Culleton, *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain.*
[127] Caesar, *Taking it Like a Man*; Bland, 'Trial By Sexology?'; Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*; Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*; Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change.*
[128] Davidson, *Dangerous Liaisons*; Davidson and Hall, *Sex, Sin and Suffering*; Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities.*

problems from a variety of interested bodies, and elucidates the themes of patriotism and national morality that ran through them.

During wartime, sexual practices that were not considered dangerous in peacetime were observed, and attempts were made to regulate them.[129] This thesis departs from the arguments of other histories by examining the problematisation and regulation of 'normal' sexualities, such as heterosexual, married, and procreative sex, whereas previous works have focussed on such areas as homosexuality,[130] prostitution,[131] and venereal disease.[132] As such, this thesis, while considering marginalised groups and minority sexualities, also explores in detail attitudes to those sexualities and sexual behaviours which were representative of the majority of the population.

Furthermore, this study extends an existing historical debate about the extent to which the connections of morality and patriotism were established in British society. Previous works have argued that these sentiments were felt throughout Britain, but have examined specific cases or instances in which this was emphasised.[133] This thesis contends that the aligning of morality with patriotism was to be found not merely in popular, religious, and journalistic dogmas and demagoguery, but was to be found insidiously entrenched in official and state discourses and legislation. The breadth of this study means that it is able to offer both investigations and comparisons of the manifold strands through which these beliefs were manifested; previous analyses have not been undertaken in such a way as to facilitate this approach or the drawing of these conclusions.

A diversity of primary sources are employed in this thesis, in order to make a detailed exploration of attitudes to sex, morality, and patriotism. These sources were selected in order to facilitate a broad study, both in terms of the array of sources used, and the variety of accessible opinions. Within this remit, the thesis identifies and makes detailed examinations of a number of primary sources. The three major sources of contemporary evidence used are official documents and legislation, popular newspapers, and soldiers' memoirs. Specifically, sources used encompass Parliamentary Debates, records of governmental departments, official bodies, medical bodies, memoirs and personal accounts of people who lived through the war, and the press. This thesis examines the publications and recommendations of both the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease and the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, and the attitudes of these bodies

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[129] On Britain's tradition of attempting to regulate sexual practices, see Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, pp.4 – 5.
[130] Caesar, *Taking it Like a Man*; Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*; Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment.*
[131] Levine, 'Walking the Streets'; Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*; Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change.*
[132] Davidson, *Dangerous Liaisons*; Davidson and Hall, *Sex, Sin and Suffering*; Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities.*
[133] See, for example, Bland, 'Trial by Sexology?'; Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment.*

to the impact of sexual health and morality on the pursuit of the war.[134] These sources present both advantages and disadvantages, but it is intended that their analysis has been conducted with solicitude and awareness of this fact, and with consideration for the sources as well as their authors. Furthermore, at a time when the discussion and publication of work about sexual matters was less liberal, this subject was absent from some wartime sources. These absences are valuable indicators of contemporary opinion, and are considered alongside the ways in which sexual matters were discussed. Material is quoted from – sometimes at length – in order to afford the best possible appreciation of contemporary opinion.

Newspapers feature throughout the thesis, and, in considering the comment expressed therein, it is acknowledged that their content is not spontaneous, but is mediated, in order to manipulate their readerships. Also, in the newspapers here considered, right-wing opinions are predominant, and they are recognised as prevailing during wartime. Both published and unpublished memoirs by soldiers are used; unpublished works were largely found in the documents collections of the Imperial War Museum. A comprehensive study of this extensive collection was not possible, and it was therefore necessary to select the memoirs used by conducting keyword searches of the catalogue. It must also be acknowledged that there is a difference between wartime diaries and letters, and post-war diaries and accounts, and that post-war works constitute a valuable part of the history of the war. The 1960s saw a increase in the production of war memoirs, when veterans retired. These works reflected the time in which they were produced, and it must be borne in mind that the 1960s was a time when sex was more a matter of personal choice than the war with its social pressures. As such, these works are apt to be more candid and relaxed in tone than wartime or immediate post-war writings, but not necessarily more truthful. Contradictory opinions are to be found both between and within contemporary arguments. The investigation of these contradictions constitute a rich part of this study, and are particularly evident in opinions about the sexual behaviour, morality, and motivations of men and women, and the ways in which these were critiqued alongside gendered behavioural ideals.

The public debate on wartime sexuality extended across the political spectrum. This thesis examines the opinions of a variety of groups and individuals who commented on sexual matters. Debates in parliament involved Members from both sides of the House, and sermons were heard from clergymen with various principles. Female suffrage campaigners, notably Christabel Pankhurst, were vocal on these matters, as were women's groups who called for the repeal of Regulation 40D or who formed bodies to help the mothers of war babies. Published debates were to be found in newspapers from across the political

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[134] On the work and debates of these groups, see Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*; Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*.

spectrum. Right-wing press and commentators were, unsurprisingly, more bellicose and jingoistic in tone, and these opinions feature widely in debates explored throughout this thesis. Such attitudes are more likely to have been expressed in times of war than moderate or left-wing views, sentiments of patriotism and military support being more naturally aligned in the popular consciousness and journalism with right-wing opinions. Furthermore, as people tend to buy newspapers not only to be informed but to read journalistic opinion supporting their own beliefs, it is fair to assume that the readerships of such newspapers held similar views themselves.

A selection of daily, weekly, and Sunday newspapers is used. These range from *John Bull*, possibly the most patriotic newspaper ever published in Britain, through the establishment staple of *The Times*, to the erstwhile left-wing *Daily Citizen*. The *Newspaper Press Directory* categorised daily morning newspapers by political affiliation, defining the *Daily Citizen* as Labour, the *Manchester Guardian* as Liberal, the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* as Unionist, and the *Times* and *Daily Mirror* as Independent.[135] As such, a sample of journalistic opinion from across the political spectrum is used in this thesis. *John Bull* was the most popular weekly magazine in wartime, and was particularly popular among soldiers. Circulation figures increased significantly during the war, from 840,000 in June 1914, to 915,000 in January 1915, and 1,350,000 in January 1916.[136] The magazine *Everywoman's Weekly* provides a perspective on female opinion, while *The Wipers Times* affords an insight into the views of soldiers: this latter was a weekly satirical journal produced in Ypres between 1915 and 1918, by soldiers, for soldiers. In October 1916, the *Times Literary Supplement* described trench journals as 'miscellanies of personal chaff, old service jokes, crude parodies, rude drawings, spoof examination papers and bogus advertisements.[137] This description is largely accurate; and while contemporaries made such criticisms of trench journals, they provide a valuable source for the historian in illuminating the interests, preoccupations, and mindset of troops. The *Daily Mail* also provides an insight into troops' reading matter, it having been the most widely read British newspaper among soldiers in the trenches.[138] The press, and the *Daily Mail* in particular, were important in both reporting and forming wartime opinion, and, as Nicholas Hiley argues, the London press 'formed a common link' between British soldiers and civilians.[139] The periodical *Punch* offers a range of satirical interpretations of events. Circulation

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[135] [Author or compiler unspecified], *The Newspaper Press Directory and Advertiser's Guide* (London: G. Mitchell & Co., 1915) p.75.
[136] See Hiley, Nicholas, '"You Can't Believe a Word You Read": Newspaper-Reading in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914 – 1918', pp. 89 – 102 in Harris, Michael and O'Malley, Tom (eds.), *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History: 1994 Annual* (Westport and London: 1996) p.99.
[137] *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 October 1916, p.481, cited in Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914 – 1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.14.
[138] See ibid.
[139] Ibid., p.90.

figures for newspapers of this period are difficult to obtain, because Stamp Duty was abolished in 1855, and the Audit Bureau of Circulation was not established until 1931.[140] While official propaganda campaigns aimed at maintaining morale were launched, the press remained a self-regulatory body which did not need official guidance to provide support for the war effort and nationalistic propaganda.[141]

Chapter One investigates governmental and military attitudes and laws regarding sex and venereal disease among British military personnel and civilians, and the vociferous and often antipathetic responses to these measures. This chapter discusses the stipulations regarding the sexual behaviour and sexual health of soldiers, as detailed in the *King's Regulations* for the armed forces, as well as measures adopted by the army to prevent venereal disease among troops. Also under discussion here are the recommendations of, and reactions to, the 1916 Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease. Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, passed in 1918 with the intention of preventing the incapacitation of soldiers due to venereal infection, is discussed, along with the gender dynamics inherent in it, and opposition to it.

Chapter Two examines responses to manifestations of personal behaviour on the home front which were believed to be a danger to national security and a hindrance to the war effort. Such behaviour included infidelity, sexual behaviour in public places, and prostitution. The female patrols, employed to police such behaviour, are discussed. There is also a case-study of the libel trial of Noel Pemberton Billing, MP, who alleged that the dancer Maud Allan was both sexually perverted, and a German spy. The wartime dynamics of Britishness, foreignness, and related sexual moralities are explored.

Chapter Three addresses wartime opinions about marriage, illegitimacy, the importance of procreative sex, and the moral and patriotic demands placed upon women. Women were expected to make patriotic contributions through the role of motherhood, and of 'guardians of the race'.[142] This chapter also investigates the wartime panic regarding the birth of illegitimate 'war babies'. As such, questions of gender roles, femininity, and race are addressed.

Chapter Four employs a wide range of soldiers' memoirs in order to explore contemporary attitudes to sex. As Great War veteran and memoirist A. H. Davis wrote, '[Sex] is so much in evidence in a soldier's life that it is impossible to pass over the

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[140] See Wandsworth, A. P., 'Newspaper Circulations, 1800 – 1954', pp.1 – 41 in Manchester Statistical Society, *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, Session 1954 – 55* (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, date unspecified), p.1.

[141] On the role of the press and propaganda, see, for example, Badsey, Stephen and Taylor, Philip, 'Images of Battle: The Press, Propaganda and Passchendaele', pp.371 – 389 in Liddle, Peter H. (ed.), *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997).

[142] Bland, 'Guardians of the Race'.

question without touching on it'.[143] Soldiers did not write explicitly of the relationship between sexual morality and patriotism, but their memoirs are invaluable in addressing the opinions of those men who lived in a different sphere from that in which so many other opinions were expressed, and about whom such concern was voiced. As such, this chapter addresses a different set of ideas from the other chapters, but within the same conceptual framework covered by the rest of the thesis. This chapter also explores the theme of masculinity, and its construction though sexual activity.

Chapter Five presents a discussion of contemporary reactions to the perceived moral and medical crises, and explores solutions which were advocated in order to alleviate the situation. Attitudes to soldiers' morality are investigated, as are those towards women who were believed to be a source of corruption for servicemen. The beliefs and proposals of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, regarding ways to remedy the perceived proliferation of venereal disease and immorality, are also discussed. Having investigated various opinions regarding morality and sexual health in the previous four chapters, the final chapter takes into consideration contemporary responses to these matters. This final chapter uses new and different material to the preceding four chapters, but draws similar conclusions about the connections of morality, sexual health, and patriotism.

The Conclusion draws together the overarching themes of the thesis, in order to assess the nature of responses to sex and morality during the war on a national scale. The wartime relationship between the state and the individual is discussed, as is the perceived impact of personal behaviour and morality on the war effort.

The Epilogue to this thesis situates the Great War in the longer period, and briefly examines contrasts between attitudes to sexual behaviour in the First and Second World Wars. Furthermore, it provides a comparison of attitudes during the First World War with those during the AIDS crisis in Britain in the 1980s. There are many similarities to be drawn between these two periods, as linguistic and ideological responses to both crises were comparable; the discourse of moral panic persisted.

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[143] Davis, A. H., *Extracts from the Diaries of a Tommy (1916 – 19): Being the actual day to day diary kept by a soldier during the war under very difficult circumstances* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), p.261.

CHAPTER ONE

Managing Sexual Behaviour and Venereal Disease in Wartime: Governmental and Military Policy

The outbreak of war in August 1914 brought about demands upon the British state beyond the military requirements of international conflict. An increase in the perceived and actual needs of a state at war led to an extension of the controls of the nation over the lives and rights of its populace: all British citizens, whether military or civilian, came under the state's jurisdiction in arguably the first experience of total war. The necessities of a war economy, the Defence of the Realm Act, and conscription and its associated requirements, meant that regardless of a person's occupation, social status, and patriotism (or lack thereof), every aspect of their life – including their sexual behaviour – was scrutinised and regulated by the state. Specific activities were demarcated as appropriate, and others as inappropriate, for the citizens of a nation at war. As such, certain sexual behaviours were prescribed, and others proscribed, by the military and governmental authorities. Alongside this official governance, the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, which had been appointed in 1913, reported in 1916, offering insights into, and suggestions as to how to improve, the sexual health of the British people. Through these manifold concurrent influences, people's private lives and personal behaviour came under jurisdiction and official or semi-official moral scrutiny, and the right to privacy was, thereby, called into question.

Military law imposed regulations regarding sexual behaviour and sexual health on military personnel. This chapter examines the ways in which the military attempted to manage the sexual behaviour and sexual health of its service personnel, and responses to those attempts from the people who were affected by them. The sex lives of women and civilians were also placed under state control: the government enacted legislation to provide for the surveillance of soldiers' wives in Britain, to ensure that they were behaving appropriately and faithfully. Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act restricted the sexual behaviour of convicted prostitutes and all women with venereal disease. This regulation was in the tradition of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869, which had provided for, though not made compulsory, medical and police inspections of prostitutes in garrison towns and ports.[1] Publicised as purely measures to control the spread

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[1] See Walkowitz, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* [1992] (London: Virago, 2000), pp.22 – 23. The Acts were suspended in 1883 and repealed in 1886: see Porter, Roy and Hall, Lesley, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650 – 1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p.224. The Contagious Diseases Acts were never applied in Scotland: see Davidson, Roger, 'The Culture of Compulsion: Venereal

of venereal disease, the Acts were criticised as insulting and degrading to women,[2] and, when the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases was launched in 1913, one of the criteria for the Commission's successful outcome was that no return to the policies of these Acts would be endorsed. Reginald McKenna's introduction to the Royal Commission's Final Report stated that

> We have deemed it expedient that a Commission should forthwith issue to enquire into the prevalence of Venereal Diseases in the United Kingdom, their effects upon the health of the community, and the means by which those effects can be alleviated or prevented, it being understood that no return to the policy or provisions of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, or 1869 is to be regarded as falling within he scope of the enquiry.[3]

The Contagious Diseases Acts, then, had been recognised as undesirable measures both in public discourses and official policy, and have subsequently been described as a 'political debacle'.[4]

This chapter explores in detail the legal, moral, and health issues surrounding the highly controversial Regulation 40D; it also comments upon what it revealed about the British Government's attitudes towards morality, sexual health, sexual behaviour, sexual responsibility, and the relationship between these elements and wartime patriotism. Regulation 40D faced opposition, and the Government faced criticism for having introduced it, from both within and outside parliament: this chapter will examine closely responses to 40D, and governmental reaction to such opposition. The demands of total war, then, engendered an unprecedented level of state control, via which the spheres of public and private became blurred. The government and the military had claims over knowledge about, and the regulation of, people's private lives, including their sexual behaviour and their sexual health. As such, the individual was subsumed within the state, and was expected to conform to ideals deemed by the state to be appropriate and necessary for the successful pursuit of war.[5]

This chapter also examines responses to the report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, an important driving force, alongside the imperatives of wartime, for the state to implement measures through legal channels in order to address what was perceived

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Disease, Sexuality and the State in Twentieth-Century Scotland', pp.58 – 75 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.65.

[2] See Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p.159. See also Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, pp.132 – 154, and Weeks, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* [1981] (London: Longman, 1984), p.84.

[3] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*: 1916 Cd. 8189 xvi 1, p.iii.

[4] Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert, 'Introduction', pp.1 – 6 in Eder, Hall, and Hekma (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality*, p.3.

[5] For a discussion of what is described as 'a more interventionist approach' to venereal disease in Scotland than in the rest of Britain, see Davidson, 'The Culture of Compulsion'.

as alarming levels of venereal infection. In the late nineteenth century, responses to venereal disease had tended to be legal, or medical, rather than social. As a result of the burgeoning concern with the social impact of diseases of this nature, and an acceptance that measures to bring them under control had been theretofore inadequate, a Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases was appointed in 1913. The Commission can be viewed as a manifestation of the developing movement for social investigation and societal improvement in Britain. By the time the Commission made its final report in 1916, however, the matter of venereal disease had been highlighted by the war, and the findings published in its report provided further incentive for the authorities to utilise official channels to implement measures to address the subject of venereal infection in Britain.

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All British soldiers were governed by the *King's Regulations and Orders for the Army*.[6] These *Regulations and Orders*, while detailing the behaviour of a soldier which was considered to be decorous and appropriate for a man serving his king and country, omitted specific reference to his sexual behaviour, whether heterosexual or homosexual.[7] An accurate diagnosis of syphilis of gonorrhoea was difficult;[8] however, if a man was found, at his enlistment medical, to have venereal disease, the National Service Medical Board informed the recruiting officer that hospital treatment would be required upon military posting, and recommended that the infected soldier be cured before he could participate in training or active service.[9] Strict orders were imposed by the *King's Regulations* regarding those soldiers who contracted venereal disease:

> In every unit there is to be an order directing that a soldier suffering from venereal disease is to report himself sick without delay. This order will be read to the unit on parade at intervals not exceeding three months, care being taken

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[6] *The King's Regulations and Orders for The Army: 1912. Re-printed with Amendments published in Army Orders Up to 1st August, 1914* (publication details unspecified). Other editions of the King's Regulations published during the war did not change the law on the notification of VD: *Reprint of the Amendments to the King's Regulations published in Army Orders between 1st September, 1914, and 1st August, 1916* (publication details unspecified); *Reprint of the Amendments to the King's Regulations published in Army Orders between 1st September, 1916, and 1st March, 1918* (publication details unspecified); *Reprint of the Amendments to the King's Regulations published in Army Orders between 1st March, 1918, and 30th April, 1920* (publication details unspecified). Pre-war editions of the King's Regulations had made stipulations and laws about venereal disease: such measures were not war-specific, but the size of the armies during the Great War meant that the Regulations were then applied on an unprecedented scale.

[7] Buggery was punishable by two years' hard labour under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885: see Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.224.

[8] TNA NATS/1/13/M/54, cited in Winter, J. M., 'Military Fitness and Civilian Health in Britain during the First World War', pp.211 – 244 in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15 (2), April 1980, p.236.

[9] TNA NATS 1/769: Memorandum to the Commissioner of Medical Services, London Region, from J. T. Lewtas, for the Chief Commissioner of Medical Services, 20 November 1917.

> that it is specially brought to the notice of all recruits on joining. Concealment of venereal disease will be dealt with under Section 11 of the Army Act [neglecting to obey Battalion orders], and not under Section 18 (3) or 40.[10]

This regulation clearly delineated the army as an institution suffused in routine, discipline, and order; but, beyond this, it also served to demonstrate the army's concern for the health, reputation, and efficiency of its serving soldiers.[11] A handbook on military sanitation stated that 'The well being and efficiency of the British Soldier is the final aim of all Military Sanitation',[12] thereby combining the two most important factors for the army when considering venereal disease among troops: sexual health and military efficiency. At all times, and especially at those of international conflict, it was imperative that soldiers should be appropriate ambassadors for the British nation and for the British Empire. Soldiers could not be seen to be disorderly, to disobey orders, to be sexually immoral, or to allow themselves to become infected with sexually transmitted disease which would put them out of military action; and the army authorities could not condone such behaviour. Indeed, Klaus Theweleit aligns sexual health with patriotism, writing that, in wartime, 'Syphilis is not simply something one *has*. It is either a condition deliberately *given*, or a function of enemy intelligence'.[13] It was necessary to disseminate to the people of Britain and the Dominions an image of fit, orderly, responsible, healthy fighting men, thereby promoting feelings of security, and a confidence in the capabilities of the nation's armed forces in the sphere of battle. Furthermore, it was essential that Britain's military adversaries should perceive the British army as such, and as a formidable opposition. Incidences of venereal disease were also seen to have a deleterious effect on the morale of British troops:[14] while positive morale remained essential, the venereal disease rate was required to remain low.

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[10] *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Army: 1912*, p.107, paragraph 462. Hereby, the soldier who concealed his infection would be charged with 'neglecting to obey Battalion orders', rather than with 'wilfully disobeying orders by means of which disobedience he delayed the cure of disease', or 'an act, conduct, disorder, or neglect to the prejudice of good order and military discipline': Henry, Captain Ernest, *From Crime to Court-Martial: A Simplified Rendering and Index of those parts of the 'Manual of Military Law' and 'King's Regulations' which deal with a Soldier's Offences and Punishments* (London: Gale & Polden, 1918), p.2. Infected soldiers who concealed their disease could be punished with two years' hard labour: TNA WO 32/11403. The Army Act, 1881 was renewed every year; Section 11 related to a 'Neglect to obey garrison or other orders': Army Act, 1881, 44 & 45 Vict., Ch. 58.

[11] For a discussion of concerns about the more general medical health of troops, see Winter, 'Military Fitness and Civilian Health'. For a detailed discussion of army policy relating to venereal disease, see Harrison, Mark, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France and Egypt during the First World War', pp.133 – 158 in *Medical History*, 39, 1995.

[12] Blackham, Colonel Robert J., *Military Sanitation: A Handbook for Soldiers* (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson Ltd., date unspecified), page number unspecified.

[13] Theweleit, Klaus, *Male Fantasies: Volume II: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror* [1978] (Oxford: Polity Press (in association with Basil Blackwell), 1989) (translated from the original text (*Männerphantasien: Volume II: Männerkörper: Zur Psychoanalyse des weissen Terrors*: Verlag Roter Stern, 1978) by Chris Turner and Erica Carter in collaboration with Stephen Conway), p.17.

[14] Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', pp.145 – 146.

Being infected with venereal disease and failing to report the infection was a court-martial offence, the infected soldier having neglected to obey Battalion orders. This may have been dictated as much by ideological reasons as it was by practicality, the army acknowledging the necessity to be seen to be taking action against soldiers who succumbed to the temptations of sexual pleasure and consequently contracted venereal diseases. Soldiers might expect leniency at a court martial for their first offence:

> When passing sentence, a court-martial will have regard not only to the nature and degree of the offence and the previous character of the accused, as provided in evidence, but also the nature and amount of any such consequences which, by virtue of any statute, warrant, order, or regulation, are involved in their finding, or entailed by their sentence, in addition to the punishment awarded by the court... Care must be taken to discriminate between offences due to youth, temper, sudden temptation, or unaccustomed surroundings, and those due to premeditated misconduct...[15]

A soldier could be punished with two years' hard labour under the Army Act, 1881, for concealing a venereal infection. This, of course, raised the question of whether a sexual encounter which left a soldier infected with venereal disease could be attributed to 'youth, temper, sudden temptation, or unaccustomed surroundings', or was an act of 'premeditated misconduct'. The sexual intercourse itself would almost certainly have been premeditated – the infection, probably not.[16] The indignity of a venereal infection was not to be borne solely by the infected soldier, but was made brutally public: if a man was found to have VD, his pay was stopped for the period of his treatment in hospital, as was the pay he allotted to his next of kin, who was informed of his condition;[17] he was also denied leave for twelve months.[18] The stigma of becoming infected meant that consequences could be dire. Eric Hiscock, in his sexually candid book *The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling* wrote of the fate of Corporal Reginald 'John' Thomas, who was described as having 'lived and died for sex, straight and unadorned, to be found anywhere at any time', who shot himself rather than be admitted to venereal hospital.[19] The policy of informing a soldier's next of kin of his condition was abandoned in 1916, after a Major committed suicide when his wife was informed that he had venereal disease; thereafter, soldiers' families were informed that they

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[15] *The King's Regulations and Orders for the Army: 1912*, pp.131 – 132, paragraph 583.
[16] Some men deliberately contracted venereal disease, in order to get themselves into hospital and away from the dangers of battle. See Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), p.85.
[17] Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', pp.139 – 140. See also Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914 – 1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.76.
[18] Winter, Denis, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* [1978] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p.152. For an analysis of the medical treatment of venereal diseases in the British army during the war, see Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease'.
[19] Hiscock, Eric, *The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling* (London: Arlington Books, 1976), pp.13 – 14.

had an as yet undiagnosed disease.[20] A family's speculations regarding an undiagnosed condition could, of course, have created considerable panic for their loved one's health. In his autobiography *The Time Has Come*, Dennis Wheatley wrote that the penalties imposed for having venereal disease caused many men to conceal their infections, which therefore became life-long afflictions; he blamed women's groups for having encouraged the army to adopt such strict measures to deal with venereal cases, and opined that 'If I had the power to do so I would have had those pseudo-pious old women flayed alive'.[21]

When a man enlisted in the army, then, he effectively rescinded his right to be freely sexually active with whomsoever he chose, and his right to privacy regarding his sexual health. Here was evident one aspect of the state's multi-faceted wartime jurisdiction over people's private, and here specifically sexual, behaviour. Volunteer soldiers chose to abide by the *King's Regulations* and therefore to rescind these rights; those enlisted under conscription were compelled to do so: conscription, then, was peremptory in more ways than compelling a man to fight and possibly die for his king and country. Soldiers, under the jurisdiction and compulsion of military law, could not easily object to their loss of rights; on the home front, however, despite the compulsions of the Defence of the Realm Act, it was easier and more acceptable for civilians to complain about regulations such as 40D. While female prostitutes had been subjected to medical examinations by the authorities under the nineteenth-century Contagious Diseases Acts, it was not until the compulsory medical examinations of the First World War that such intrusive measures were introduced for men, and never before had these examinations been effected on such a scale.

The regular examinations by army doctors illustrate an awareness by the authorities that, the ideals expounded in the *King's Regulations* notwithstanding, soldiers would have sex, and some would, as a consequence, become infected:

> Sexual intercourse was regarded as a physical necessity for the men. Besides being the medical point of view, it became the official army point of view as well, and we were often told in lectures that it was natural, and all we had to do was to use the safeguards and preventatives which were at our disposal to save us from disease... Hundreds of thousands of men who had led comparatively pure lives until they saw France learned and were even encouraged to go with impure women.[22]

The policy of the army, then, as expressed in terms of both law and philosophy, was incongruous. Military law did not punish soldiers who had sex, but did punish soldiers who contracted VD. Concurrently, military cultural convention expected and even encouraged

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[20] IWM DD Misc. 60: 'The First World War Memoirs of P. G. Heath', cited in Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease' pp.139 – 140.
[21] Wheatley, Dennis, *The Time Has Come: The Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley: Officer and Temporary Gentleman, 1914 – 1919* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), pp.152 – 153.
[22] Graham, Stephen, *A Private in the Guards* [1919] (London: Heinemann, 1928), p.225.

soldiers to have sex. These two tenets, held simultaneously, were illogical: it was inconsistent to encourage soldiers to have casual sexual relations – albeit the less damaging ones – with women, while subsequently punishing those who contracted sexual infections. Mark Harrison draws upon the dichotomous position of military policy and convention: he cites a biographer of Field-Marshal Haig, who wrote that

> [Haig] looked, of course, for no moral Utopia but no name, nor effort, was subscribed more heartily than his to the famous Memorandum in which officers were urged to encourage in their men a belief in leading a good and healthy life, and in every way – not least by themselves setting an example of self-restraint – to protect them from a grave and devastating evil.[23]

Harrison also refers to Kitchener as 'that old warhorse of the purity movement',[24] thereby setting Haig and Kitchener up as two key military figures in promoting – at least in the ideologies they expressed – sexual abstinence, purity, and health. Their reactions to the practicalities of army life revealed somewhat different beliefs, however. Indeed, Harrison draws attention to Haig's role in a military elite which, it is claimed, 'defended the belief that army morale was contingent on sexual activity', and which was 'quite intolerant of any moral arguments on sexual promiscuity'.[25] The army's dichotomous position is thus seen to have been reflected in the upper echelons of its high command.

The army took active measures to protect the sexual health of its soldiers. Prostitutes in Red Lamp brothels (for the lower ranks) and Blue Lamp brothels (for officers) underwent compulsory regular medical examinations by Royal Army Medical Corps doctors for sexually transmitted disease, and were permitted to work only if they were pronounced clear. It is unclear whether there was any difference in the nature of Red Lamp and Blue Lamp brothels apart from the ranks of soldiers who were permitted to use them. Sources do not mention whether 'higher class' prostitutes were employed in the Blue Lamps. In terms of class differences, the fact that their prostitutes were not used and sullied by lower ranks, and lower classes, may well have sufficed for the officers who frequented the Blue Lamps. By 1917, there were 137 licensed brothels in 35 towns throughout France.[26] Prostitutes in Cologne after the war were issued with photocards. They were examined by doctors every day; doctors date-stamped women's cards so that any soldier

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[23] Arthur, George, *Lord Haig* (London: Heinemann, 1928), pp.50 – 51, cited in Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.133.
[24] Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.133.
[25] Towers, Bridget A., 'Health Education Policy 1916 – 1926: Venereal Disease and the Prophylaxis Dilemma', pp. 70 – 87 in *Medical History*, 24, 1980, p.77, cited in Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.133.
[26] Flexner, Abraham, *I Remember: The Autobiography of Abraham Flexner* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), pp.194 – 198; TNA WO 32/5597; both cited in Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.142.

wishing to have sex with them could check to ensure that she was not infected.[27] This was not conclusive proof, however, as a woman may have become infected between medical examinations. The army-approved brothels and card-carrying prostitutes were not, of course, the only source of infection. Sanitary Officers were instructed to advise soldiers that the best way to avoid venereal infection, as well as self-respect and respect for women, was abstention, but that in any case they should take care to ensure not to get penile discharge in their own or their comrades' eyes.[28] Some soldiers were provided with packets of calomel ointment and potassium permanganate so that they could disinfect themselves after sex,[29] but some men did not know what to do with the lotion, and drank it,[30] while the prevalence of venereal diseases was evidence that methods of prophylaxis were not universally adopted, or were ineffective or unreliable.

Brigadier-General Frank Percy Crozier, who, in his memoir *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, elucidated his experiences with the army's sexual health education programme, observed that a class dynamic impacted on soldiers' sexual health:

> While in the neighbourhood of Ballieul, despite the greatest care, our 'other rank' casualties from venereal [sic] give greater cause for anxiety than our losses in the line... The officers are better off. Comparative luxury, knowledge and armour stands them in good stead.[31]

The word 'armour' here is interesting: it provides an analogy between battle and sex. Furthermore, Crozier was ambiguous in his meaning: he may have meant that the officers were equipped with the moral armour to withstand temptation, or he may have meant that they were armed with condoms and prophylactic disinfectant kits.[32]

Records show that 32 out of every 1000 soldiers were found to be infected with VD in 1917.[33] By the end of the war, 416,891 soldiers had been treated for VD.[34] Figures peaked in 1918, with 60,000 British and Dominion soldiers receiving treatment.[35] It is

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[27] Davis, A. H., *Extracts from the Diaries of a Tommy (1916-19): Being the actual day to day diary kept by a soldier during the war under very difficult circumstances* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), p.262.
[28] This curious instruction was to be found in *Notes for Sanitary Officers: BEF in France* (London: HMSO, 1917) (page number unspecified).
[29] Rout, Ettie A., *Two Years in Paris* (London: Ettie A. Rout, 1923), pp.12 – 21.
[30] Ibid., p.21.
[31] Crozier, Brigadier-General F. P., CB, CMG, DSO, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), pp.127 – 128.
[32] Richard Davenport-Hines believes that Crozier means condoms: see Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* [1990] (London: Fontana, 1991), p.226.
[33] DeGroot, Gerard J., *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* [1996] (London: Longman, 1998), p.235.
[34] Winter, *Death's Men*, p.150. The three French towns with the most new cases of venereal disease were Paris, Amiens, and Rouen: see TNA WO 32/5597. For statistics regarding soldiers admitted to hospitals with venereal disease, see Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.145.
[35] Mitchell, T. J., and Smith, G. M., *Medical Services: Casualties and Medical Statistics of the Great War* (1931), pp.164 and 174, cited in Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture, p.75.

impossible to ascertain how many soldiers contracted VD during the war, because of the private nature of infection and the possibility of concealment, or how many were court-martialled for having concealed their infection.[36] The official medical history of the war states that

> It has not been possible to obtain exact figures showing the prevalence of venereal diseases amongst the British forces during the war, and the following must be regarded only as approximate... the number of cases of venereal disease treated in the period 4th August, 1914, to 11th November, 1918, was about 400,000, distributed very approximately as follows:– Gonorrhoea: 66 *per cent*; Syphilis: 24 *per cent*; Chancroid: 6 *per cent*; Other venereal diseases: 4 *per cent*.[37]

Furthermore, the Court-Martial registers of the Judge Advocate General's Office, and those for General Courts-Martial, list soldiers' charges as 'neglecting to obey Battalion orders,' and do not detail the specifics of each case. It is impossible to know the proportion of court martial cases which pertained to the concealment of venereal disease, as that charge covered a multitude of other offences.[38] Despite the records of soldiers treated for venereal diseases, these cannot be used as an indicator of levels of sexual activity at any point during the war, nor can they serve as evidence of whether a soldier was more likely to have venereal disease than a civilian. The figures are unreliable in this respect, both for soldiers and for civilians. Wartime publications exemplified the fact that concealment was not only dangerous but commonplace, in both military and civilian spheres.[39] These figures are, however, useful in demonstrating that there was an extensive problem with venereal disease: even if people did not conceal their infections, the levels of infection and incapacitation from them were considerable, with venereal diseases being responsible for 25.3 per cent of 'constantly sick' cases in the British army in 1912, equivalent to a loss of 216,445 days, or an average of over two days for each man in the service.[40] During the war itself, between 40,000 and 50,000 British officers and men were constantly out of action due to venereal disease.[41] Writing in the 1930s, H. C. Fischer and Dr. E. X. Dubois

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[36] See TNA WO 32/11403. Conversations with Professor Gerry Rubin between 3 August 2004 and 11 October 2004 provided no further evidence that reliable raw data or digested statistics for the prevalence of venereal diseases in the armed forces during the war were available.

[37] Macpherson, Major-General Sir W. G., Herringham, Major-General Sir W. P., Elliott, Colonel T. R., and Balfour, Lieutenant A. (eds.), *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: Medical Services: Diseases of the War: Volume II* (London: HMSO, 1923), p.118. Concealed cases were not included in these statistics, nor were those of men who were treated by doctors – or 'quacks' – elsewhere.

[38] See TNA WO 90/6; TNA WO 90/8; TNA WO 92/3; TNA WO 92/4.

[39] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.22. See also Torrey, Mrs., Scharlieb, Mrs. Mary, Barrett, Lady, and Wilson, Miss Helen, *Six Lectures to Social Workers* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917).

[40] May, Otto, *The Prevention of Venereal Diseases in the Army* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1916), p.3.

[41] Rout, *Two Years in Paris*, p.22. Rout adds that many of those who were out of action with venereal diseases were claimed to be padres.

conceded that 'The extraordinary prevalence of syphilis and gonorrhoea among the armies in the field was anything but an unexpected phenomenon'.[42]

The army attempted to create an alternative culture for the soldier to enjoy, consisting of sports and other recreations unconnected with sex,[43] although the efficacy of such schemes was in doubt.[44] Indeed, in Mark Harrison's words, 'Attempts to control venereal disease in the British Army during the First World War were a peculiar, and none too effective, amalgam of moralism and pragmatism':[45] old-school traditions of morality and efficiency were paralleled with 'reform-minded' officers' advocacy of a more 'scientific' and 'realistic' approach to venereal disease control.[46] Army policy was, therefore, to a certain extent, unsystematic: in Mark Harrison's words,

> When war broke out, there were three *relatively* distinct positions on VD control in the British Army: sexual continence; medically-regulated prostitution; and a more liberal approach associated with the new technologies of prevention.[47]

Gordon Corrigan writes that the French army recognised that its soldiers were young men, away from their wives and girlfriends and confronted with death, and that, consequently, they would have casual sex. He criticises the British army for its attempts to counteract sexual desires with 'good discipline and healthy exercise' and cites this as a cause for Britain's high VD rates.[48] The army's policies here were a continuation of the Victorian promotion of wholesome pastimes for the masses; such measures were deemed to be necessary in the light of large numbers of working-class volunteers and conscripts. Denis Winter writes that

> the official line was that 'efforts to attract officers and men to pleasing and health-giving recreation huts, fields of sport and places of healthy amusement during their off-duty hours or during leave in a town should be re-doubled'.[49]

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[42] Fischer, H. C. and Dubois, E. X., *Sexual Life During the World War* (London: Francis Aldor, 1937), p.359.
[43] Winter, *Death's Men*, p.152. On the British tradition of physical, but asexual, manliness, see Adams, Michael C. C., *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.38. On the nineteenth-century tradition of 'rational and uplifiting recreation for soldiers', see Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.137.
[44] On the effectiveness of such diversions in the nineteenth century, see Skelley, Alan Ramsay, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859 – 1899* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.60.
[45] Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Diseases', p.156.
[46] Ibid., p.135.
[47] Ibid., p.139.
[48] Corrigan, Gordon, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* [2003] (London: Cassell, 2003), p.94.
[49] Winter, *Death's Men*, p.151.

In addition to this, certain areas were placed 'out of bounds' for troops, so that they would not be exposed to the temptations of brothels.[50] These out of bounds areas were to be found on both the home and fighting fronts; Denis Winter writes that

> The Official History reckons that about one-third of the cases [of VD] were contracted on leave. Certainly Cloete describes being accosted sixteen times between Piccadilly and Berkeley Street, while the promenade of the Empire Theatre – a notorious rendezvous for the highest class of prostitute – had to be closed after many complaints...[51]

Similarly, the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases encouraged men to 'keep out of temptation' by 'going in for games and exercises',[52] and encouraged the provision of recreational opportunities by such bodies as the YMCA and the Church Army, asserting that

> There is not the slightest doubt that the aimless promenading in darkened streets, so familiar a feature of all garrison towns, is a fertile source of danger to the soldier, and anything that gives him other means of occupying his spare time, is a powerful aid to the avoidance of temptation.[53]

Despite these attempts at distractions, the encouragement of soldiers to use prophylactics shows that far from anticipating being successfully able to prevent soldiers from sleeping with infected women, the army authorities accepted that soldiers would do so. The government was also concerned that venereal rates in the civil population would increase after the war, if infected soldiers were demobilised without having been treated. As such, from April 1918, Army Council instructions stated that all soldiers were to be examined for signs of venereal disease before they were discharged; provision was made for the treatment of infected men on their return to civil life.[54] The government also issued an 'Advice on Demobilisation' leaflet, encouraging soldiers to seek medical treatment if they had put themselves at risk, even if they had 'no outward signs' of infection; the leaflet also implored soldiers that 'on no account' should they marry until they were cured.[55] Waldorf Astor, MP,[56] suggested that prophylactic packets be made available to the civil community after

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[50] TNA WO 32/5597: Letter from Field Marshal Haig to the Secretary, the War Office, January 1918.
[51] Winter, *Death's Men*, pp.150-151.
[52] National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, *A Cause of Military Inefficiency* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, date unspecified), p.3.
[53] May, *The Prevention of Venereal Diseases in the Army*, p.8.
[54] TNA WO 32/11402.
[55] *Advice on Demobilisation: Venereal Diseases* (London: publisher and date of publication unspecified), in IWM DD file Misc 144 (2251).
[56] The Hon. Waldorf Astor, MP, 1879 – 1952; Conservative MP for Plymouth 1910 – 1919; created Viscount Astor 1919; held offices as the Parliamentary Secretary to Lloyd George, 1917, in the Ministry of Food, 1918, and the Ministry of Health, 1919 – 1921.

the war, given their success in wartime.[57] Brigadier-General Crozier remarked that, far from retiring from their heightened sexual activity after the end of the war, demobilised and displaced soldiers' voracious sexual appetites were enlarged, and impacted greatly upon life in both France and Britain.[58] He discussed in detail the long-term implications of wartime sexual activity, from widespread venereal disease and permissiveness, to emotional trauma.[59]

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It was not just Britain's soldiers who were subjected to such scrutiny and legislation. Soldiers' wives came under similar official observation. The Women Police Volunteers, the National Vigilance Association, and patrols by members of the National Union of Women Workers scrutinised the behaviour of women who received separation allowance from their soldier husbands, and observed their houses to ensure that they did not take in lodgers, or have affairs with other men, or spend their allowances on drink.[60] Such measures provoked a variety of public responses. One correspondent, in the *Sunday Pictorial*, wrote that

> Among these breaches of the law that are not uncommon during the present war, the breach of the marriage vows by the wives of soldiers is beyond question one of the most unfortunate,[61]

and also implied that the official surveillance of women was acceptable if only to protect women from 'their own folly'.[62] Sex and marriage, then, were imbued with a sense of national importance and patriotism in wartime, in a way that had not been – and would not have been permitted – before the war. It was soldiers' wives with whom the blame lay, rather than their husbands, or the harsh conditions of wartime life and separation. Such blame evinced a gender dynamic, driven by the necessity, in wartime, for the reputations of soldiers – representatives of the nation – to remain unsullied, even at the cost to non-combatants' reputations.

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[57] Note by the Chairman [The Hon. Waldorf Astor, MP] of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Infectious Diseases in connection with Demobilisation, on Prophylaxis against Venereal Disease: 1919 Cmd. 322 xxx 427, p.3.
[58] This argument is adopted by Arthur Marwick: see Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991).
[59] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, pp.236 – 239.
[60] Haste, Cate, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* [1992] (London: Pimlico, 1994), p.35.
[61] *Sunday Pictorial*, 2 June 1918, p.5, columns a and b, 'Faithless Wives of Soldiers: should they be liable to punishment?' by Andros.
[62] Ibid.

The *Daily Citizen* disapproved of government policy on the grounds of class inequality:

> ...the wives of our soldiers and sailors object very naturally and properly to having their homes invaded and their daily lives investigated by sniffing, prying, prudish women... An officer's wife may spend large sums of money in luxurious foolishness, but no one suggests that we should invade the homes of officers and ask personal, insulting questions, and we protest against any interference with the lives of the poor that does not apply also to the rich.[63]

These objections were not just harboured by fringe, left-wing newspapers. Indeed, Mrs. Despard, General French's sister, conceded that many people were 'having their little fling at this awkward time', and baulked at the 'sweeping accusations against soldiers' wives smelling of gin and beer':

> I am happy to say that in my own district (Nine Elms, Battersea) the women have not been spending their money in the public-houses. My own experience is that many of them are working hard all day, and when they have come to see me after ten o'clock at night, not one has ever smelt of stimulants of any kind.[64]

Similarly, the Central Committee of the Women's Co-operative Guild, representing 32,000 women, wrote to the War Office and the Home Office protesting against the withholding of separation allowances from 'unworthy' women and the police powers to 'check misconduct':

> They consider such differentiation between sexes and classes utterly out of place in a democratic country, and that to place such power in the hands of the police is an intolerable interference with the freedom of individual action... They affirm that a woman's right to her separation allowance should be no more connected with what the police may consider 'worthy' conduct than a man's right to his wages.[65]

The vociferously patriotic newspaper *John Bull* expressed outrage at the state-sponsored 'prying', and called for the Home Secretary to put a stop to the 'petticoated prudes on the prowl' and their 'unnecessary, unwholesome, and un-English' behaviour.[66]

The blame and prosecution of women for what were termed 'indecent' acts was commonplace, as blame had been apportioned to women in the nineteenth century, in the case of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Sex acquired a war-specific significance: despite military law, it was deemed by contemporary military culture and convention that men who were in the armed forces were excused from moral condemnation, and even expected to

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[63] *Daily Citizen*, 14 November 1914, p.2, column b, 'The Prying Women' (leader article).
[64] *Daily Citizen*, 9 October 1914, p.3, column f, '"Sniffing Women" Plague: Mrs. Despard's Defence of Soldiers' Wives'.
[65] *Daily Citizen* 11 November 1914, p.5 column b, 'Spying on Women: Indignant Protests Against New War Office Order'.
[66] *John Bull*, 5 August 1916, p.3, column a, 'Prudes on the Prowl'.

have sex, as an expression of life amidst the death they may face in battle. As has been seen, the army adopted a contradictory position, approving of sex but punishing those who caught sexually transmitted diseases. While women on the home front were not at the same direct level of risk of death as military combatants, theirs was a world of separation, loss of loved ones, and an emotional proximity to death – but having extra-marital sex amid these conditions was not accepted, and was in fact criticised in popular culture as a sign of unpatriotic disrepute, and was also punishable by law.

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The Royal Commission on Venereal Disease was appointed in 1913. Discussions of this Commission's appointment in the press included the publication of the word syphilis – a move which was described as having been, in 1913, 'a major breakthrough'.[67] David Evans draws upon the controversies surrounding the Commission:

> The *Lancet* made clear that the medical profession envisaged an inquiry which would examine the subject from the perspective of therapeutic medicine. Feminists, on the other hand, expressed their determination that it should address the wider social causes of VD.[68]

In fact, the Commission succeeded in drawing both of these strands together. As an adjunct of the Crown, it was a manifestation of the British tradition of formal investigation into, and the implementation of policy regarding, sexual health matters.[69] Venereal disease, David Evans writes,

> was one of the *racial poisons* (along with alcoholism and feeblemindedness) that social hygienists saw as linked with *racial*, economic and imperial decline.[70]

As such, the Royal Commission and its report must be seen in the light of these ideological imperatives. Venereal disease was an urgent issue in wartime firstly because of the need for the moral decency of the nation; secondly because of the necessity for the physical fitness and labour capacity of combatants and non-combatants alike; and thirdly because of the

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[67] Hall, Lesley A., 'Sexual Cultures in Britain: Some Persisting Themes', pp.29 – 52 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.43

[68] Evans, David, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge": The Creation of the Venereal Disease Treatment Centres in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', pp.414 – 417 in *Social History of Medicine*, 5, 1992, p.416.

[69] For a detailed discussion of this tradition, stemming from the Contagious Diseases Acts, see Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, pp.182 – 211.

[70] Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', pp.414 – 415.

historical association of venereal disease with the military.[71] The mobilisation of large numbers of regular soldiers, as well as new armies, brought the issue of venereal disease sharply into focus, and exacerbated the problem, both in terms of infection rates and in terms of people's concern about such infections. The Commission's final report, therefore, had both impact and immediacy when it was published on 2 March 1916. The Commission sought to provide a comprehensive analysis and report regarding the prevalence of venereal diseases in the United Kingdom, their effect upon the community, and measures which would bring them under control. It held 86 meetings between 1913 and 1916, examined 85 witnesses, and considered 22,296 questions.[72] It defined venereal disease as being syphilis, gonorrhoea, and soft chancre,[73] and examined official statistics from the Registrar-General, the navy, the army, the police, the Local Government Board, prison commissioners, and lunacy commissioners.[74] The Commission itself consisted of respectable personages including peers, parliamentarians, and medical and venereal experts.[75] With its prestigious membership and comprehensive approach, it was anticipated to have a significant impact, in terms of newsworthiness and effectiveness; the war gave its findings more contemporary relevance.

The Commissioners exercised caution with their results, extrapolating from medical records at an East London hospital that

> in a typical working-class population of London at least 8 to 12 per cent. of the adult males and at least 3 to 7 per cent. of the adult females have acquired syphilis. If congenital syphilis were included, or if the total number of patients attending the hospital had been tested, the percentage would certainly have been higher.[76]

Furthermore, statistics for gonorrhoea and soft chancre were not included in these results, and, as infection rates for gonorrhoea were known to be higher than those for syphilis,[77] had they been included, the percentages of infected persons would have been much higher. The Commissioners pointed out another difficulty with obtaining accurate figures for rates of venereal infection:

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[71] The Royal Commission reported that venereal rates in the army and navy declined in the early years of the twentieth century, but that this could have been due to factors such as potential recruits recognising the symptoms of venereal infection, and not attempting to enlist. Incidences of venereal disease in the navy declined from 121.49 per 1000 men in 1905 to 105.95 per 1000 men in 1912; in the army, recruits rejected for having syphilis were 0.63 *per cent* of recruits in 1809, and 0.14 *per cent* of recruits in 1911-12: Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.9.
[72] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.1.
[73] Ibid., p.3.
[74] Ibid., p.6.
[75] Ibid., p.1.
[76] Ibid., p.16.
[77] Ibid., p.60.

> Except in the case of the Navy and Army, there are at present no means of arriving at an accurate estimate of the prevalence of venereal diseases. The tendency to concealment, which is a marked characteristic of those who have acquired these diseases, by militating alike against the acquisition of full knowledge of the extent of their incidence and against prompt treatment, render them peculiarly dangerous to public health... Partial attempts to obtain a local census of venereal disease have been made, but the results are not such as to justify generalisations.[78]

A leading article in the *Times* the day after the Report's publication criticised the Royal Commission for its unreliable statistical data and analysis regarding the rates of venereal infection.[79] The Commissioners' own concerns for the statistical accuracy of their findings notwithstanding, their report proved to be a cause for concern, particularly in time of war, due to the 'grave economic losses to the State'[80] incurred through venereal infection, and the loss of working days in both the navy and the army: statistics for 1912 showed that in a navy with an average strength of 119,510 men, 269,210 working days were lost; similarly in the army, whose average strength was 107,582 men, 216,445 days were lost, as a result of venereal infection.[81] As such, the Commission's recommendations for sexual health education, and free treatment[82] for all British citizens, were taken seriously.[83] In July 1916, the Local Government Board required the Council of every County and County Borough to implement a scheme for the hospital treatment of venereal diseases,[84] and by 1917, 86 out of 145 Councils, covering a population of 23.5 million people, had submitted their schemes for treatment to the Local Government Board.[85] In light of the Royal Commission, the years 1913 to 1917 were, David Evans argues, one of 'fundamental change' in state policy on venereal disease; before 1913, treatment was limited in scope, and was largely voluntary.[86] Furthermore, Evans emphasises the medical, rather than moral, motivations of the Royal Commission: while previous historians foregrounded the Commission's interest in 'moral prophylaxis', Evans asserts that the treatment centres were of central importance

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[78] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.22.
[79] *Times*, 3 March 1916, p.9, column b, 'The Report on Venereal Diseases'.
[80] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*, p.31.
[81] Ibid., p.32.
[82] Treatment was to be provided by Counties and County Boroughs, the cost of 75 per cent of which was to be paid for by imperial funds, and the remaining 25 per cent by local rates: *Prevention and Treatment of Venereal Diseases*, (London: HMSO, 1917), p.2. For details of parliamentary discussion of, and agreement to, this allocation of funds and other recommendations of the Royal Commission, see Parliamentary Debates, 3 May 1916, vol. 82, column 7.
[83] The estimated expenditure on the treatment of venereal disease in England and Wales for the year 1917 – 1918 was £303,706: TNA MH 55/532.
[84] *Prevention and Treatment of Venereal Diseases*, p.2.
[85] Ibid., p.3. By 1917, venereal disease treatment schemes were in place in London, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Croydon, East Ham, West Ham, Tottenham, Chelmsford, Colchester, Portsmouth, and Leicester; arrangements for such schemes were said to be 'far advanced' in Birmingham, Sheffield, and Leeds: ibid., p.3.
[86] Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', p.413.

to the Commission's campaign.[87] Specifically, Evans disagrees with Lucy Bland's argument, that moral instruction was the primary concern of the Royal Commission: he claims that a closer reading of the Commission's report shows the primary concern to be medical treatment, with education being a secondary concern.[88] Having been intended as an exercise in social investigation and improvement, the Royal Commission became much more than that: its findings being published early in 1916, with the war in its second year, meant that the national imperatives to solve the venereal problem were as important as the social imperatives.

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The war years witnessed an enthusiasm to introduce legal measures to prevent venereal disease among civilians. This enthusiasm was driven by imperatives other than those specific to the war. The Venereal Disease Act, 1917[89] prohibited the sale of remedies for venereal disease by anyone other than licensed practitioners, and permitted imprisonment of up to two years, with or without hard labour, for contravention of this Act.[90] More controversial was the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, read in parliament in February 1917, was catalysed into prominence by the report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease the previous year. Lucy Bland writes that this Bill

> combined clauses for young girls' protection with repressive clauses against prostitutes, and medical clauses penalising the transmission of VD. The co-existence of protective and repressive clauses should not surprise us; the 'protection' of youthful female sexuality had (and still has) underlying it the repression of any transgression of female sexual passivity.[91]

The Bill was intended to enact that

> A person who is suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form shall not have sexual intercourse with any other person or solicit or invite any other person to have sexual intercourse.[92]

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[87] Ibid., p.413.
[88] Bland, Lucy, '"Guardians of the race", or "Vampires upon the nation's health"? Female sexuality and its regulation in early twentieth-century Britain', pp. 373 – 388 in Whitelegg, Elizabeth, Arnot, Madeleine, Bartels, Else, Beechey, Veronica, Birke, Lynda, Himmelwhite, Susan, Leonard, Diana, Ruehl, Sonja, and Speakman, Mary Anne (eds.), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982); see also Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', p.419.
[89] No legislation corresponding to this Act was adopted in the Channel Islands. The treatment of venereal disease was within the jurisdiction of the Insular Governments: see TNA HO 45/12251.
[90] *Venereal Disease Act, 1917*: 7 & 8 Geo. 5, Chapter 21 (1917). This Act was passed largely as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission.
[91] Bland, Lucy, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', pp. 23 – 49 in Brophy, Julia and Smart, Carol (eds.), *Women-in-Law: Explorations in Law, Family & Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.32.
[92] *Criminal Law Amendment Bill*: 7 Geo. 5, 1917 – 18 7 i 315.

Contravention of this was intended to result in two years' imprisonment, with or without hard labour; it was also intended that Courts could order medical examinations to ascertain whether people were infected.[93] The Home Secretary, Sir George Cave,[94] lent his full support to the Bill, addressing the subject in parliament as if its passage were inevitable:

> I do not think there is any need to spend much time in arguing that there is a strong case for a Bill of this kind... The evils are patent to us all, and I think the need for remedy is urgent... I think we are all agreed that something should be done.[95]

Similarly, support for the Bill came from Herbert Samuel,[96] who admitted that 'I cannot pretend to be impartial with respect to the Bill...', and opined that

> The condition with regard to venereal diseases has probably been more serious of late than it has ever been before, and those who look forward to the conditions arising immediately after the War, and to the permanent interests of the health of our population, feel some disquietude as to the extent to which those diseases may prevail.[97]

Despite having its high profile parliamentary advocates, popular support was not so forthcoming. Correspondents to the *Times* expressed their preference that the Bill not be passed, lest it be tantamount to a return to the Contagious Diseases Acts.[98] The Criminal Law Amendment Bill was not passed during the war, and did not, in fact, become law until 1922, when an amended version of the Bill was passed as the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1922.[99] During wartime, a particularly controversial issue was that covered by Clause 2 of the Bill, which related to the rights of British citizens with venereal disease to have sexual intercourse. The practical difficulties of implementing this measure for the whole population were paralleled with an ever-growing sense of urgency to prevent the problematic spread of venereal disease in wartime. By the end of 1918, men from the lower classes were being commissioned as officers, and the requirements for enlisting men were less stringent than they had been earlier in the war. Contemporary observers may have been unsurprised, then, that venereal infection rates were higher than ever before, and this may have increased the urgency with which the authorities pursued legal measures to prevent the

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Rt. Hon. Sir George Cave, 1856 – 1928: Unionist MP; knighted in 1915; created 1st Viscount Cave in 1918; Home Secretary December 1916 – January 1919.
[95] Parliamentary Debates, 19 February 1917, vol. 90, column 1098.
[96] Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Samuel, 1970 – 1963, Liberal MP; created Viscount Samuel in 1937; Home Secretary 1916.
[97] Parliamentary Debates, 19 February 1917, vol. 90, column 1104.
[98] See, for example, *Times*, 23 February 1917, p.4, columns b and c, 'Criminal Law Amendment: Criticisms of the New Bill', letter from the Archbishop of London, and *Times*, 8 May 1917, p.5, column e, 'Criminal Law Amendment', letter from Cecil Chapman.
[99] *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1922*: 12 & 13 Geo. 5, Chapter 56 (1922).

spread of VD among servicemen. Therefore, the clause relating to the criminalisation of sexual activity for infected civilians was extracted from the Bill, amended to apply only to certain sections of the population (infected women having sexual intercourse with servicemen), and was passed into legislature as part of the Defence of the Realm Act, coming to light as the controversial Regulation 40D.

Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act was one of the last attempts by the government, during the war, to police sexual behaviour and consequently check the spread of venereal infection, and was perhaps an indicator of an increasing moral panic and concern that levels of immorality and of sexual ill-health were out of control. The motivations for the introduction of Regulation 40D were manifold: influences were to be found in the military, the church, interest groups in Britain, and calls from the governments of the Dominion countries. The Defence of the Realm Act itself had been introduced in August 1914, and added to throughout the period of the war.[100] Interestingly, the regulation was introduced one day after the German army launched its Spring 1918 offensive, on 21 March. The impact of such an attack is described by Keith Grieves thus:

> On 21 March 1918 German infantry advanced under the cover of a creeping barrage in an infiltrating attack on the British line between Arras and La Fère. Supported by low flying aeroplanes, they advanced on a battlefield which was shrouded in fog and littered with the debris of war. It was a stark reminder of two years of "attrition" campaigns fought over the same ground.[101]

The terror wrought by the launch of this attack may well have been the catalyst to the British government to introduce Regulation 40D, to be seen to be protecting British troops at least from sexual ravages, if they could not adequately be protected on the battlefield. It could also have been an attempt to boost morale, by being seen to be safeguarding British troops, at what was possibly the nadir of British morale during the internecine struggle. By this late stage in the war, and in the light of the Germans' offensive, the issue of manpower, and the quality of British troops, was paramount. Regulation 40D could be seen as a means of ensuring the quality of those troops that were available.

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[100] Arthur Marwick writes of this Act, 'The culmination of the first burst of emergency legislation was the Defence of the Realm Act of 8 August [1914]. "DORA" – the widely used name conjured up in the public mind the image of a cruel and capricious maiden who at the snap of her fingers could close down a newspaper, requisition a ship, or prohibit whistling for cabs...' Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.76. Indeed, there is an enthusiasm among historians and writers to anthropomorphise the Act: Michael Bracewell writes that the attitude towards the war as a welcome purgative agent to the unsavoury or un-English elements of society 'was officialized and defined by the Defence of the Realm Act (abbreviated, like some grotesque nanny, to DORA) which was brought in to ensure national security at a time of war but used, increasingly, to police "attitude"': Bracewell, Michael, *England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion from Wilde to Goldie* [1997] (London: Flamingo, 1998), p.22. DORA can be seen, then, as an interfering matronly woman, a member of the Women Police Volunteers, perhaps.

[101] Grieves, Keith, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914 – 1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.183.

22 March 1918 saw the advent of Regulation 40D,[102] which stated that:

> No woman who is suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form shall have sexual intercourse with any member of His Majesty's forces or solicit or invite any member of His Majesty's forces to have sexual intercourse with her...
>
> A woman charged with an offence under this regulation shall if she so requires be remanded for a period (not less than a week) for the purposes of such medical examination as may be requisite for ascertaining whether she is suffering from such a disease as aforesaid.
>
> The defendant shall be informed of her right to be remanded as aforesaid and that she may be examined by her own Doctor or by the Medical Officer of the prison.
>
> In this regulation the expression 'venereal disease' means syphilis, gonorrhoea, or soft chancre.[103]

This regulation was in addition to DORA Regulation 13A, which had been passed in 1916, prohibiting women convicted of prostitution from the vicinity of military camps.[104] Sir Edward Troup, Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, wrote of Regulation 40D that

> It will be for the Naval or Military authorities as the case may be to take the initial action in any proceedings under this Regulation: but the Police should render any assistance they can in the way of securing evidence, and should take charge of the prosecution if sufficient evidence is available...[105]

In July 1918, after discussion at the Imperial War Conference, the regulation was amended to apply equally to American troops and the areas in which they were encamped. On this occasion a regulation was also passed which prohibited the sale of alcohol within a five-mile radius of any military camp, apart from in private homes,[106] thereby reinforcing the definition of both alcohol and sex as vices, and the latter as an incitement to the former, and a consequent cause of venereal disease.

The Dominion Governments called resolutely for adequate measures to control or prevent venereal infection among Dominion troops. Visitors to Britain from America and the Dominions were, it was alleged, 'scandalised by the conditions' in British towns and military camps.[107] Ian Macpherson,[108] the Under-Secretary of State for War, pointed out

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[102] HO 45/10893/359931; DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.235.
[103] TNA MEPO 3/2434.
[104] Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', p.429; see also Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.33.
[105] TNA MEPO 3/2434: Sir Edward Troup, 4 April 1918.
[106] TNA WO 32/11404: Imperial War Conference, 11 July 1918.
[107] See Gotto, Mrs. A. C., *The Changing Moral Standard* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1918), p.1. Despite their having allegedly been scandalised, John Ellis writes that 'Judging from the VD rates, the Dominion troops seem to have been particularly active', and cites the rates of venereal disease per 1,000 troops in 1916 as 36.7 for the British army in the UK, compared with 209.4 among Canadian troops; in 1917, the figures were 32 per 1,000 troops for Britons, and 85 per 1,000

that the regulation had in fact been adopted by the Army Council as a result of pressure from the Dominion Governments:[109] with Britain's place in the world and amongst her Dominions to consider, the problem of British civilians infected with venereal disease became a minor concern when aligned with calls from overseas. W. A. S. Hewins[110] drew attention to calls from the United States, who had expressly requested that the regulation apply to their troops, and from the Dominion Governments at the Imperial War Conferences, who advocated stronger measures, some wishing to make solicitation itself criminal. In view of these pressures from external governments, the Home Affairs Committee agreed that 'it was not desirable to withdraw the protection afforded by the Regulation', and that an explanatory note clarifying these matters should be issued to the public.[111] Here was evidence of Britain asserting her high moral position, and therefore the position of sexual morality, over the governments and peoples of its dominions: in order to maintain geo-political power, the nation must be seen to be morally right in the eyes of others. As such, anti-40D agitation from within Britain could expect an unsympathetic reception, when weighed against pro-40D affirmation from the dominions. Britain's sense of nationhood, of patriotism and unsullied Britishness, was defined alongside the countries of her Empire and her Dominions. Sexual health and racial purity aligned with Britishness were not sufficient in wartime: a position of responsibility needed to be asserted, through which Britain outlined her own attitude towards sexual infection, and her ability to chaperone the sexual behaviour and sexual health of those people in her Dominions. In August 1918 it was emotively declared that

> The cry for action from the Dominions was the cry of the fathers and mothers of the flower of the manhood of the Dominions. Young lads who had left their homes unsullied found themselves exposed to new and incessant temptation. Unfortunately, some of them succumbed and were ruined in health.[112]

The citizens of the Dominions are here drawn as naïve children, requiring the nurture and guardianship afforded by motherly Britannia. Cries as impassioned as these could not easily be ignored. It was paramount that British national identity was constructed in terms

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Canadian troops: see Ellis, John, *Eye-Deep In Hell: The Western Front, 1914 – 1918* [1976] (London: Penguin, 2002), p.153.

[108] Rt. Hon. James Ian Macpherson, 1880 – 1937, First Baron Strathcarron: Liberal MP (until 1931; thereafter National Liberal); Under-Secretary of State for War, 1914 – 1919; Deputy Secretary and Secretary of State for War and Vice-President of the Army Council, 1918.

[109] TNA WO 32/4745: Seventh Meeting of the Committee of Home Affairs, 1 August 1918.

[110] William Albert Samuel Hewins, 1865 – 1931: Unionist MP; Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1917 – 1919.

[111] TNA WO 32/4745: Seventh Meeting of the Committee of Home Affairs, 1 August 1918.

[112] TNA WO 32/4745: Memorandum by Ian Macpherson, Deputy Secretary of State for War, 26 August 1918.

of sexual morality. Imperial supremacy demanded that other races were defined as sexually backward or depraved. On this point, V. G. Kiernan writes that

> In one sphere the colonialists, Britain in the lead, were far better equipped for the propaganda struggle which has been so essential a part of twentieth century warfare. They were well versed in the art of denigrating opponents, in order to justify their own less laudable acts and obviate fault-finding at home or abroad... in 1914 – 18, passion and prejudice long worked up against other races were diverted against a new target, with Germans in the role of the 'Huns'. Once again civilization confronted barbarism.[113]

Moreover, there was not only the emotional and propagandistic value of a sexually and racially pure imperial stock to be considered: manpower and efficiency were maxims in time of war:

> [Infected soldiers] became, at least for a time, wastage of man power, and in many cases they returned home to be a perpetual danger to the Dominion from which they came... every woman with this disease is a centre of infection and each centre of infection may be as prolific of 'ineffectives' and wastage of man power as German poison gas.[114]

'Manpower', in both the domestic and military spheres, was one of the most important concerns for the British authorities in what was, in Keith Grieves's words, 'a war characterised by attrition'.[115] Indeed, Grieves points out that

> Humbert Wolfe, Director-General of Labour Regulation, defined the term [manpower] as the development of policies which would enable men and women to do the work of one and a quarter or even one and a half persons, and, while increasing everybody's productivity, to ensure that such work was directly beneficial to Britain's conduct of the war.[116]

Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, asserted his view 'that every man and woman was bound to render the services that the State required of them',[117] thereby implying both moral and a civic duties for each citizen of Britain at war. Despite governmental acknowledgement and expectations that wastage would ensue,[118] there remained evident

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[113] Kiernan, V. G., *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse, 1815 – 1960* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), pp.180 – 181, cited in Salter, Mark B., *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p.82.
[114] TNA WO 32/4745: Memorandum by Ian Macpherson, Deputy Secretary of State for War, 26 August 1918.
[115] Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, p.2.
[116] Wolfe, H., *Labour Supply and Regulation* (1923), p.1, cited in ibid., p.2. For more on manpower and physical health in the Imperial context, see Jay Winter, 'Military Fitness and Civilian Health'. For more on the subject of manpower, see Towers, 'Health Education Policy', p.77.
[117] TNA CAB 37/132/28: Report of Proceedings at Meeting of the War Policy Cabinet Committee on 18 August 1915, cited in Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, p.19.
[118] TNA CAB 27/14 MPC 27, Hankey, 27 December 1917: 'The permanent British "wastage" estimated for 1918 on the Western Front and Italy totalled 583,200 men': cited in Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, p.169.

concern about levels of wastage caused by those soldiers out of service with VD. A moral distinction was drawn between inevitable battle casualties, and casualties caused by VD, which could have been avoided, may have been considered self-inflicted, and carried the taint of immorality, and, of course, of disobeying Battalion orders.

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Regulation 40D, as may have been expected, was met by a tenacious and vociferous opposition from within Britain.[119] Jeffrey Weeks writes that it

> was attacked by moralists and feminists, and was also clearly against common sense, as it made it an offence for a diseased wife to sleep with a soldier husband, even if he infected her in the first place.[120]

Weeks concedes, however, that 'it was a logical effect of the unwillingness of the state to be seen to condone immorality.'[121] In parliament, opposition to the regulation, and criticisms of it, came from MPs from across the political spectrum and with a wide variety of party affiliations,[122] thereby proving it to be an issue relating to morals and ideology, rather than to party politics. The Hampstead Branch of the Women's Freedom League held a public meeting against the regulation in June 1918, and asserted that 'This Regulation undoes the work of Josephine Butler,[123] and introduces the state regulation of vice'.[124] Christabel Pankhurst had written in 1913 that 'The sexual diseases are the great cause of physical, mental, and moral degeneracy, and of race suicide'.[125] Similarly, wartime suffragists, writing in *The Vote*,

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[119] On the general difficulties of passing legislation regarding morality without popular support, see Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p.83.
[120] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, p.216.
[121] Ibid.; see also De Groot, *Blighty*, p.235; Van Emden, Richard and Humphries, Steve, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* [2003] (London: Headline, 2004), p.265.
[122] Opponents and critics of Regulation 40D included Hastings Bertrand Lees-Smith (Labour), Sir Henry Seymour King (Unionist), Sir Robert Paterson Houston (Conservative), and Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck (Conservative).
[123] Josephine Butler campaigned against the Contagious Diseases Acts in the nineteenth century. She was primarily moved by her sense of the cruel degradation of the women involved, her disapproval of the 'injustice and folly' which interfered with women but left men free to spread diseases, and her anger at the view that recognised vice as a necessity for men, and attempted to make it safe: Creighton, Louise, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It: A Rejoinder* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914), p.40. Butler was also involved in women's rescue work: Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p.87.
[124] TNA WO 32/11403: handbill advertising 'A Public Meeting Against 40D' at St. Stephen's Hall, Hampstead, on Friday 14 June 1918 at 3pm. The meeting was billed as also opposing the Contagious Diseases Acts.
[125] Pankhurst, Christabel, *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (London: E. Pankhust, 1913), p.vi.

> vigorously campaigned against the regulation and argued that it represented a state ambition to punish specifically women for nationwide profligacy and corruption.[126]

Sentiments opposing similar legislation had existed before the war. With such a wealth of potential opposition to the regulation extant before its introduction, it is unsurprising that the government did not first invite its discussion in the public sphere. Women protesting against Regulation 40D represented two ideological factions: firstly, exemplified by the suffrage societies, those favouring the promotion of women's sexual independence, and rejecting what may have been seen as the vestiges of Victorian morality enacted through Regulation 40D; secondly, women with more traditional ideals of nineteenth-century liberalism, who believed that the state did not have the right to interfere in a person's private life. The campaign of the latter group was less defined in gendered terms, and more in terms of the rights of the individual as against those of the omnipotent state.

The Mayor of Hampstead wrote to the War Office about the anti-40D agitation in his town, and drew attention to the imprecise reasons given for the regulation, and the clandestine nature of its instigation:

> in view of the agitation which is going on it is very essential that the reasons for the enactment of this regulation should be made as public as possible wherever desirable... I shall, therefore, be much obliged if you will kindly let me have such particulars as you may think fit on this subject, in order to enable me to [publicise] them....[127]

Resistance was also expressed by the Bishop of Birmingham and his Diocese:

> That while recognising the urgent necessity for checking the ravages of Venereal Disease in the Army, this meeting of the Diocesan Chapter of the Diocese of Birmingham, the Bishop of Birmingham in the Chair, is of opinion that DORA 40D will not fulfil this object, and that it is open to great abuse. This meeting therefore respectfully asks for the repeal of this Regulation.[128]

A multiplicity of groups wrote repeatedly and persistently to the Secretary of State for War[129] requesting his receipt of a deputation of their representatives to discuss Regulation 40D.[130] The broad spectrum of groups represented here is fascinating: opposition to 40D was widespread, and was not merely a manifestation of feminist

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[126] Culleton, Claire A., *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914 – 1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p.138.
[127] TNA WO 32/11403.
[128] TNA WO 32/11403: Resolution passed by the Birmingham Diocesan Chapter, sent to Viscount Milner, 8 June 1918.
[129] Secretary of State for War: The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Derby, KG, GCVO, CB.
[130] WO 32/11403: requests for a deputation of representatives to be received by the Secretary of State for War came from groups including Christian and Jewish organisations, Fabians, Liberals, and suffrage societies.

crusading. Furthermore, in Woolwich, female workers at the arsenal were excluded from such discussions, it having been assumed that they would not have been interested.[131] This, along with the vague reasons given for its implementation, suggest that the Government and military authorities anticipated that its introduction would meet with hostility, and therefore expedited the regulation with the least possible public discussion. Even the War Council was inclined to oppose the regulation 'because it tended to identify the Army as a segregation camp for venereal disease'.[132] The motives of the authorities were also, therefore, called into question: it is unlikely that such a measure, were it solely in the interests of the war effort, and were it promoted as such, would have received such extensive criticism: even in these last months of the war, patriotic spirits ran high. Morale was at a high point on both the home and military fronts following the Germans' Spring 1918 offensive. This offensive gave rise to 'anti-alien feeling' and patriotic fervour in Britain: patriotic rallies around the country were sponsored by the British Empire Union and the British Empire League; a rally on 13 July 1918 in Trafalgar Square was described by the *Times* as the biggest crowd seen there since the outbreak of the war.[133] The regulation, then, was surely seen by the authorities who introduced it, and by those who opposed it, as a more insidious, general, moral diktat for the nation. The controversy surrounding the regulation is highlighted in a letter from Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Ian Macpherson, in October 1918. Archbishop Davidson wrote that 'this matter is so important and the subject is pressed upon me from so many quarters that it is impossible to let it rest'.[134] Indeed, this regulation, and the subject of venereal diseases in the armed forces, and throughout the Empire generally, was one in which Davidson took a great interest.[135]

In wartime, then, public opinion was of secondary importance, while what were perceived by the government as measures essential to the successful pursuit of the war were paramount. Macpherson opined that it had been 'unnecessary' to consult women's organisations before the enactment of 40D, 'as their views are perfectly well known from their attitude towards the similar provision in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill'.[136] He gave the same response when H. B. Lees-Smith[137] enquired as to why he had refused to receive a deputation 'from a combined body of fifty-six social, religious, political and

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[131] Thom, Deborah, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* [1998] (London, I. B. Tauris, 2000), pp.158 – 159.
[132] TNA WO 32/4745: War Council 461, 20 August 1918.
[133] DeGroot, *Blighty*, pp.194 – 195; see also Badsey, Stephen and Taylor, Philip, 'Images of Battle: The Press, Propaganda and Passchendaele', pp. 371 – 389 in Liddle, Peter H. (ed.), *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), p.376.
[134] TNA WO 32/4745: letter from Randall Davidson to Ian Macpherson, 14 October 1918.
[135] On this subject, see TNA PRO 30/57/91; TNA WO 32/5597; TNA WO 32/4745.
[136] Parliamentary Debates, 16 April 1918, vol. 105, column 203: Macpherson in response to Lees-Smith.
[137] Rt. Hon. Hastings Bertrand Lees-Smith, 1878 – 1941: Labour MP.

industrial organisations, representing over a million members'.[138] By 11 June 1918, Macpherson had received 'Upwards of 300' anti-40D resolutions (although some of these were duplicated); by 11 June over 400, and by 31 October approximately 600 such resolutions had arrived at the Home Office.[139] Despite the multitude of resolutions received, and the number of questions fielded in Parliament, a deputation from women's organisations was never acceded to. Macpherson also refused to invite a member of the Salvation Army to join the conference on venereal diseases, of which he was Chairman.[140]

One argument of opponents to 40D was that if it were to be enacted at all, it should apply to both sexes.[141] The authors of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill had intended that such a measure should apply equally to men and women.[142] The National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases felt that the knowing transmission of venereal disease should be a penal offence for everyone – not just those who came into contact with the armed forces. They also believed that when a mistake had been made, a woman's character should not be injured.[143] Calls for a universal implementation were suppressed by Ian Macpherson, in his capacity as Deputy Chairman of the Army Council, at the Imperial War Conference of July 1918, who dismissed such an implementation as impossible but neglected to offer any further explanation as to why.[144] In August 1918, the Home Affairs Committee attempted to clarify the necessity for the sexist nature of the regulation by stating that soldiers were punishable under military law[145] – a rather imprecise and insufficient explanation as to why men were not punished for the *spreading* of sexual diseases, and for the lack of similar legislation to 40D which applied to civilian men. Discussion of the regulation, its scope, and its modification continued throughout its life: its controversial nature meant that it could not avoid the attention of government ministers, if not in public, then at least behind the closed doors of committee rooms. At a meeting of the Committee on Home Affairs on 1 August 1918, George Barnes[146] drew attention to the agitation against the regulation, and particularly against its sexist nature. Statistics had shown, Macpherson asserted, that the disease was more rife among civilians than military personnel (due to the notifiability of infection in the army), and that pressure from the churches required the

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[138] Parliamentary Debates, 26 June 1918, vol. 107, column 1041.
[139] Parliamentary Debates, 11 June 1918, vol. 106, column 2023, 15 July 1918; vol. 108, column 720; 31 October 1918, vol. 110, column 1586.
[140] Parliamentary Debates, 15 July 1918, vol. 108, column 721.
[141] This sentiment can be found in the Resolution passed by the Birmingham Diocesan Chapter, sent to Viscount Milner, 8 June 1918: TNA WO 32/11403; and among the delegates at the Imperial War Conference of July 1918: TNA WO 32/11404.
[142] *Criminal Law Amendment Bill*: 7 Geo. 5, 1917 – 18 7 i 315.
[143] TNA HO 45/10893/359931.
[144] TNA WO 32/11404: Friday 19 July 1918.
[145] TNA WO 32/4745: Seventh Meeting of the Committee of Home Affairs, 1 August 1918.
[146] Rt. Hon. George Nicoll Barnes, 1859 –1940: Labour MP; Member (without Portfolio) of the War Cabinet, August 1917 – October 1919; resigned from the Labour Party in 1918.

maintenance of 40D as 'a regrettable necessity' in order to check the spread of VD through infected civilians.[147] Macpherson maintained that the treatment of soldiers under the King's Regualtions and women under 40D was equal.[148]

Demands were made in the Commons for the law to be made equal for both sexes, but met with negative responses from the Government. Sir George Cave responded negatively to Lees-Smith's proposal for the introduction of a regulation similar to 40D which applied to men:

> It would be impossible, under the powers given by the Defence of the Realm Act, to make such a Regulation applying to the population as a whole, but the Criminal Law Amendment Bill... will contain a Clause similar to that which was accepted by a Committee of the House of Commons last Session, and which applied equally to persons of both sexes...[149]

Sir H. S. King[150] then suggested that if the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was passed, as it contained a clause that applied equally to both sexes, that 40D be immediately withdrawn; Cave responded that that was possible, though he could not assure it.[151] Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck's[152] criticism of 40D after the Armistice, on 12 November 1918, was rather harsher: he asked the Prime Minister

> whether, in view of the fact that the Regulation 40D is regarded as offensive by the female sex, is unjust between male and female and between female and female, and is moreover futile as a health measure, the Government will take steps to withdraw the Regulation?[153]

The only response accorded him was from William Brace,[154] who informed him that a Committee was investigating the regulation.[155] These diversionary tactics, the refusal to discuss the issues in parliament but making references to discussions of such matters by committees and in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, were the norm, and were a parallel to the refusal of the Government to accept a deputation of women's groups on the subject. Groups and individuals from across the country, with the exception of the government, were eager to discuss Regulation 40D, and to bring about amendments to it, if not to secure its complete withdrawal.

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[147] TNA WO 32/4745: Seventh Meeting of the Committee of Home Affairs, 1 August 1918.
[148] Parliamentary Debates, 23 October 1918, vol. 110, column 763.
[149] Parliamentary Debates, 11 April 1918, vol. 104, columns 1618 – 1620.
[150] Sir Henry Seymour King: Unionist MP; Baronet from 1932.
[151] Parliamentary Debates, 11 April 1918, vol. 104, columns 1618 – 1620.
[152] Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, 1863 – 1931: Conservative MP.
[153] Parliamentary Debates, 12 November 1918, vol. 110, column 2489.
[154] Rt. Hon. William Brace, 1865 – 1947: Labour MP.
[155] Parliamentary Debates, 12 November 1918, vol. 110, column 2489.

In response to another request for it to become an offence for servicemen to have or solicit sexual intercourse with any woman, because of the equal importance to protect both sexes from the contraction of infection,[156] Macpherson conceded that any woman who had been infected by a serviceman was at liberty to report the incident to his Commanding Officer, whereupon the soldier would be immediately inspected: if he was found to have VD, he would be subjected to the standard punishment of two years' hard labour.[157] It was, however, unlikely that women would be prepared to approach commanding officers with such personal and potentially embarrassing accounts. In this instance, women were liable to prosecution for *transmitting* sexual diseases, while men were liable to prosecution for *having caught* them. In this one small way, then, civilian women were in fact under less rigorous control from the state, as they did not have to reveal to the authorities, as soldiers did, that they had a sexual infection, but this was small consolation to women and campaigners for women's rights or equality. In the event of a court case under this regulation,

> The soldier or sailor will be usually called for the prosecution as witness, and the persons charged are always told that they are able to summon witnesses.[158]

The efficacy of such a system was questioned by Lees-Smith, who expressed concern that in a considerable number of cases, prosecutions had been made without the relevant soldiers or sailors giving evidence in court. Cave's responded that no action was necessary: people were informed of their rights.[159] One of Lees-Smith's many objections to 40D was that it was not expressed clearly to women arrested under the Regulation that medical examinations were not compulsory, but would only take place with their consent.[160] Prison Medical Officers were instructed by the Home Office that women should not be examined without their consent, but that such examinations should be considered a 'public duty'.[161] As Lees-Smith pointed out, the obscurity of this matter was only clarified to MPs upon the asking of questions in the House, and that if it was not made similarly clear to arrested women, 'the system will, in practice, be one of compulsory examination'. Sir George Cave remained adamant, however, that there was 'no need to give any such information'.[162] Lees-Smith put this question again two months later and got much the same response: on this occasion Cave maintained that no woman was examined against her consent, and that

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[156] Rt. Hon. Sir Willoughby Hyett Dickinsion, 1859 – 1943, First Baron Dickinson, KBE: Liberal MP: Parliamentary Debates, 16 April 1918, vol. 105, column 237.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Sir George Cave, Parliamentary Debates, 30 April 1918, vol. 105, columns 1378 – 1379; reiterated by Cave: Parliamentary Debates, 9 May 1918, vol. 105, columns 2301 – 2302.
[159] Parliamentary Debates, 11 July 1918, vol. 108, column 485; 30 July 1918, vol. 109, column 227.
[160] TNA HO 45/10893/359931.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Parliamentary Debates, 9 May 1918, vol. 105, column 2301.

every woman was asked whether she would consent before such an examination took place.[163] It still seemed to be the case, however, that it was not made clear to the woman that she did not have to consent to an examination. Lees-Smith also campaigned for written consent to examination to be required.[164] Such a measure was never introduced, although it was discussed by the committee which was set up to investigate the regulation.[165] Another request from the crusading Lees-Smith was that women against whom no conviction was obtained should be compensated for having had to endure a medical examination, which was 'a terrible penalty in itself', and that if such compensation could not be offered, the Regulation should be withdrawn. Again, his request was declined.[166] The Government remained dogmatic, and while the governmental position was not universally accepted, it was justified by its alleged importance for the national interest in wartime.

Lord Robert Cecil[167] acknowledged the strength and breadth of the opposition to the regulation, and expressed his concern that

> the case against the regulation was not contemptible in argument, and the danger of blackmailing threats to young women brought before the Courts, even if not convicted, was a very real one.[168]

As a solution to the problems surrounding 40D, he suggested the appointment of a Royal Commission, consisting of three men, three women, and an ex-Cabinet Minister as chairman.[169] Indeed, in September 1918, Mr. Barnes, Sir George Cave, and Lord Robert Cecil were appointed to draw up the terms and list of members of such a Commission, which was to report within two months:[170] in less than three months, on 25 November 1918, Regulation 40D was revoked. The Committee had failed to report by the time of the Armistice, nor was there any indication of when such a report would be made, despite enquiries in parliament.[171]

Sir George Cave expressed concern about the lack of privacy afforded to women convicted under 40D, but only in late August 1918, when the regulation had been active for over five months: evidence that the regulation had been hastily enacted without

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[163] Parliamentary Debates, 11 July 1918, vol. 108, columns 485 – 486.
[164] Lees-Smith's first request for such a law received a negative response from Sir George Cave: Parliamentary Debates, 30 July 1918, vol. 109, column 228. By the time of his second request, Cave was able to reply that the matter was under consideration by the committee on Regulation 40D: Parliamentary Debates, 24 October 1918, vol. 110, column 913.
[165] Parliamentary Debates, 24 October 1918, vol. 110, column 913.
[166] Ibid. On this occasion Lees-Smith also pointed out that a woman's refusal to be examined might be considered to be evidence against her.
[167] Rt. Hon. Lord Edgar Algernon Robert Gascoyne-Cecil (known as Lord Robert Cecil), 1864 – 1958, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood: Independent Conservative MP and Free Trader; Under-Secretary and Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs, May 1915 – November 1918.
[168] TNA WO 32/4745: War Cabinet 465, 28 August 1918.
[169] Ibid.
[170] TNA WO 32/4745: War Cabinet 468, 3 September 1918.
[171] Parliamentary Debates, 12 November 1918, vol. 110, column 2489.

consideration of its implications. Cave proposed that magistrates should ask the press not to make public the name of any woman charged under the regulation until the result of her medical examination was known.[172] In this instance, then, soliciting or having sex with servicemen in itself was not considered to be criminal or worthy of public note, but engaging in this act while being infected with venereal disease was thought to be shameful, unpatriotic, and that perpetrators of such an act should be brought to public attention. Lees-Smith drew attention to cases in which women charged under 40D had their names and addresses published while the details of the soldiers were withheld. He asked the Home Secretary whether instructions could be given that either both parties' details should be made public, or kept private. Brace replied that the Home Office had no authority to either compel or prevent the publication of the names of defendants or witnesses.[173] There was, then, a desire among the courts, the police, and the press, to scapegoat women for the social problems of sexual infection, and, by making these women known, to condone and encourage their vilification. Concurrently, soldiers' anonymity was preserved, and their reputation as patriotic and morally flawless soldiers of the King was maintained. Women who had been examined and found to be free of venereal infection would still have aspersions cast on their characters if her names were revealed, for having been alleged to have participated in immoral activities.

In August 1918, Cave called for an amendment to be made to 40D along the lines of that adopted by the Canadian Government, which provided for Court-appointed physicians to conduct the necessary medical examinations, and that a proviso, similar to that contained in Clause 5 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, be added to 40D, providing that

> A woman shall not be convicted under this regulation if she proves that she had reasonable grounds to believe that she was free from venereal disease in a communicable form at the time the alleged offence was committed.[174]

In attempting to make this clarification, however, Cave added another area of contention to an already controversial regulation: it would be difficult for women to prove that they believed themselves to have been free from communicable VD at the time of the alleged offence. Cave also suggested the application of Sub-section 4 of Clause 5 of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill to the regulation, which prohibited the financial blackmail of anyone over the terms of 40D.[175] Cave believed that 'these various amendments would have some

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[172] TNA WO 32/4745: War Cabinet 465, 28 August 1918.
[173] Parliamentary Debates, 24 June 1918, vol. 107, column 719.
[174] TNA WO 32/4745: War Cabinet 465, 28 August 1918.
[175] Ibid.

real effect on general public opinion, although they would not satisfy the more active agitators'.[176]

Alongside the prohibition by regulation 13A of infected or suspicious women being in the vicinity of military camps, came calls to prohibit such women from the locales of train stations, such places being used by large numbers of apparently corruptible and infectable troops. General Rawlinson, Commander of the Fourth Army, drew attention to the problem of train stations as sites for the first step towards venereal infection, and pointed out that a considerable proportion of the venereal cases in the army were contracted in England, when soldiers were on leave.[177] It was believed that the majority of cases of venereal disease in the army were contracted in England: on this subject, Archbishop Davidson wrote to Lord Derby on 9 February 1918:

> I have been talking to-day to a man who has quite special knowledge of venereal disease among soldiers, having worked among the patients in different hospitals for venereal. His view is that of the men in France who have venereal more than half (I think he would say <u>much</u> more than half) contracted the disease in England when on leave. But he also knows of many cases in which the men have told him of their having contracted it in the duly licensed and inspected French brothel.[178]

With this in mind, Rawlinson favoured the policing of soliciting activities at Victoria Station, opining that

> adequate steps are not taken by the authorities at home to deal with this evil... As venereal disease removes men from the firing line, I request that firm and effective action may be taken to remove from officers and men the intolerable annoyance and temptation to which they are so persistently subjected by women who are known to the police to be dangerous from the point of view of health.[179]

Rawlinson was unsure as to how to respond to what he saw as a problem, and as such constructed an argument which saw the attentions of women as an 'intolerable annoyance', yet still a 'temptation'. Rawlinson, and other commentators, appeared bewildered by the situation and unsure as to how best to react. He was not the only person to comment on the problems of soldiers being seduced at stations: This matter was discussed at the Imperial War Conference in 1917, whereat Resolution XXIV was passed, dealing with the temptations to which overseas soldiers were subjected when on leave, which stated

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[176] Ibid.
[177] WO 32/5597: Memorandum from Rawlinson, General Commanding Fourth Army, 27 June 1918.
[178] TNA WO 32/5597.
[179] TNA WO 32/5597: Memorandum from Rawlinson, General Commanding Fourth Army, 27 June 1918.

> That the attention of the authorities concerned be called to the temptations to which our soldiers when on leave are subjected, and that such authorities be empowered by legislation or otherwise (1) to protect our men by having the streets, the neighbourhood of camps, and other places or public resort, kept clear, as far as practicable of women of the prostitute class, and (2) to take any other steps that may be necessary to remedy the serious evil that exists.[180]

Furthermore, Ian Macpherson wrote to Archbishop Davidson in October 1918 that

> The exclusion of undesirable women from railway stations when soldiers are arriving on leave is not a matter in which the Metropolitan Police are able to take action, as they have no jurisdiction within the stations which are private premises... It is possible to exclude persons from the platform because they can be checked at the barriers, but it would not be practicable to extend the permit system to the station premises as a whole. Further, I learn that the measures taken by the Military and Railway Police are successful in keeping the station premises clear of women of loose character.[181]

Macpherson acknowledged that the control of women at stations relocated the problem:

> The exclusion of undesirable women from the railway premises naturally leads to their congregating in the streets outside, where they can only be dealt with by the Metropolitan Police for infractions of the law... Much good work is done by the voluntary agencies, who get hold of the men upon arrival and arrange for their transport across London or to hostels so as to prevent them falling into bad hands...[182]

The necessity for voluntary agencies to prevent men from 'falling into bad hands' evinced a belief that these soldiers of the King could not be trusted, and no more could those vicious women who preyed on the men weak to temptation. As in the case of General Rawlinson, Macpherson was unsure how best to respond to this situation, and who, if anyone, to blame. The concern of both Rawlinson, in the military, and Macpherson, in the government, was to preserve the reputation of the British soldier wherever possible, and to divert from him the blame for immoral behaviour and the contraction of sexual diseases. H. L. Sant, the Chief Constable of Surrey Police, wrote acerbically regarding the 'verminous and diseased prostitutes' who had been arrested under regulation 40D and were being held at Godalming Police Station, that in addition to 'a disinfecting bath for washing the women' and 'An oven for baking their clothing',

> a motor ambulance which can be disinfected is required to convey infected prostitutes from Godalming to Holloway Prison, or a Special compartment of a train might be hired... Prostitutes suffering from Contagious Diseases cannot

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[180] TNA WO 32/11401: Memorandum, date unspecified, Imperial War Conference, 1917.
[181] TNA WO 32/4745: Letter from Ian Macpherson to Randall Davidson, 8 October 1918.
[182] Ibid.

> be conveyed in ordinary cabs, and railway trains, nor allowed to be in Waiting Rooms of Railway Stations.[183]

Sant was obviously unaware of the means of transmission of these diseases; even whilst in police custody, in his opinion, these women were a danger to public health.

Regulation 40D had a relatively short active life, having been enacted on 22 March 1918, and revoked, along with a whole raft of DORA regulations, by an Order in Council of 25 November 1918.[184] It was revoked 'despite anticipation of an enormous post-war rise in VD', and, as such, is emphatically described by Lucy Bland as 'a feminist victory'.[185] It was, surely, a tempered feminist victory, however, the regulation having only been revoked when the emergency of the war situation had been removed. T. H. Goodwin wrote for the Home Office on 31 October 1918 that the regulation had not been in force long enough to know its effects, but was confident that it would have the desired effect of reducing incidences of VD in the army if it remained in force:

> I am of opinion that Regulation 40D, if it remains long enough in force, will cause a... marked diminution in the incidence of the disease because not only are women who are convicted suffer the penalty but the fear of a prosecution will probably act as a deterrent to other women suffering from venereal disease, and thus lessen reckless prostitution.[186]

Harry John Jennings, Superintendent of the Surrey Police, opined that Regulation 40D had made it significantly easier for him to deal with the problem of 'venereal women' in the vicinity of the Canadian military camps at Witley and Bramshott. Under the regulation, Superintendent Jennings prosecuted 31 women, some of whom were in an 'indescribably filthy condition'. He felt, however, that his job would be made easier, and the regulation strengthened, if the police were given the power to arrest, without a warrant, women 'against whom they have reasonable grounds for suspicion'. and if medical examinations of arrested women were made compulsory.[187] Major P. T. Stern, also commenting on Witley Camp, wrote that since the introduction of 40D, the number of London prostitutes visiting the area declined significantly, and that the regulation was also beneficial to women who may previously have been ignorant of their condition.[188] Police statistics presented to the Home Office show that reports of 396 cases of contravention of Regulation 40D were made

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[183] TNA WO 32/11403: Letter from H. L. Sant to T. W. Weeding, 15 June 1918.
[184] TNA HO 45/10894/359931.
[185] Bland, 'In the Name of Protection', p.32.
[186] TNA HO 45/10893/359931. Goodwin's report evinces the attitude that punishment, rather than education or reform, was the solution to prostitution and widespread venereal disease.
[187] TNA HO 45/10893/359931: Superintendent Harry John Jennings.
[188] Ibid.: Major P. T. Stern. Major Stern also suggested that the regulation be extended to men.

to the police by the naval, military, and air authorities, from which 203 prosecutions resulted.[189]

Major-General Sir W. G. Macpherson was unimpressed by the efficacy of the regulation. While the Commission on Regulation 40D failed to report before the regulation itself was revoked, Major-General Macpherson drafted a report which he had intended to submit to the Commission. He criticised it on numerous points, writing that

> Beyond the fact that its mere existence tends to intimidate, Regulation 40D does not effect much to prevent disease either in the provision made for its detection, or in the penalties to which the offender is liable.[190]

He continued by making criticisms such as the fact that clever women could defeat the regulation, fines left women free to infect soldiers, and that

> Education and early preventive treatment of both women and men combined with treatment cliniques [sic] and hospitals are, in my opinion, the only efficacious methods of dealing with this form of infection.[191]

A letter to the Home Office, signed only 'A. J.', dated 2 November 1918, stated that 40D was 'a despicable and cowardly regulation' which was ineffectual and should be withdrawn; but in this instance the writer criticised not only the regulation itself, but also the military authorities, who 'encourage sexual indulgence, [and] lead men to expect and demand freedom from disease'.[192] Indeed, problems with the efficacy of Regulation 40D did not have a single cause, but were largely the result of a tradition of military condoning and encouragement of casual sex, and, as such, could not be simply solved.

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The official wartime investigation and legislative control of people's private lives and sexual health was manifested in numerous ways. The report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases in 1916, the discussion of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, and the passing of the Venereal Disease Act in 1917 all evince an unprecedented level of interest by the authorities in the sexual behaviour and sexual health of British citizens. But these were not as insidious or far-reaching as other laws which impacted upon the lives of military personnel and civilians. Lesley Hall writes of British governments' intervention in sexual matters that administrations have often been

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[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.: Summary of evidence proposed by Major-General Sir W. G. Macpherson, KCMG, CB, 30 October 1918.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.: letter from A. J. to the Home Office, 2 November 1918.

> pushed into hasty and often ill-drafted legislative action by specific immediate pressures. This has been almost inevitably in the direction of punishing or controlling sexual problems (and usually punishing and controlling the bodies of groups, such as prostitutes, perceived as embodying these problems), never of the liberalization of laws known to be causing suffering to large numbers.[193]

The actions of Britain's wartime government exemplify Hall's assertion. When a man entered the armed forces, whether by choice or by conscription, his right to have sexual intercourse with any partner he chose was withdrawn, lest he became infected and contravened military law.[194] Women lost the right to choose any sexual partner, if they were infected with communicable venereal disease. Women also lost their sexual freedom if they were married, because an extra-marital affair may be observed and noted by the Women Police Volunteers, and the payment of separation allowance would consequentially be terminated. Here, in the supposed interests of the nation and the war effort, the Government passed laws – and comments – on marriage vows, fidelity, and morality. A woman could have chosen freely to break her marriage vow of fidelity in peacetime, but in wartime this became intricately bound up with the needs of the nation and of the war effort. Regarding the equal treatment of service personnel and civilians under 40D, Sir Gordon Hewart[195] asserted that, in his opinion, an extension of the regulation of the civilian population would not pose serious difficulties, and, furthermore, such an extension would be desirable, as its broadened remit would reduce VD in the army, and help to maintain soldiers' health and fitness for battle.[196] Such an extension was, however, never made, but Hewart's suggestion of it demonstrates how omnipotent he believed the state could be, amid the demands of total war.

Laws aimed at preventing the spread of VD among troops – and their consequent incapacitation from the sphere of battle – can be understood in the light of wartime demands for manpower. That these measures were introduced with little exposure to public debate beforehand is symptomatic of the necessity for an expeditious implementation of legislation during the war; the sweeping nature of the laws, and the clumsy and offensive manner in which they were passed, is representative of a government with a moral agenda which it did not want discussed or decried. The passing of legislation about women's fidelity, which did not impact on national and military efficiency, was more akin to the government making moral statements, the legislation behind which had little direct connection with the war effort at hand. Interestingly, in implementing 40D and endorsing female patrols, the government can be seen to have – possibly ill-advisedly – expected the British populace

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[193] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, pp.4 – 5.
[194] *King's Regulations and Orders for the Army: 1912*, p.107, paragraph 462.
[195] Sir Gordon Hewart, 1870 – 1943, First Viscount Hewart: Liberal MP.
[196] TNA WO 32/4745: War Cabinet 465, 28 August 1918.

passively to have accepted further curtailments to personal freedoms (here, specifically, sexual freedom), in a war economy in which an array of personal freedoms had already been forcibly and forensically sacrificed in the interests of the war effort: such removals of rights can be seen in a number of areas of life, including military conscription, rationing, the shortening of pub opening hours, and restrictions on the sale of alcohol.[197] The natural instinct to celebrate and indulge in those pleasures which remained available meant that, when sexual freedom was curtailed, an element of resistance would be expected. This, allied with moral and feminist objections, in the wake of the Contagious Diseases Acts, ensured that 40D would have anything but a smooth voyage, as moral panics increased in fervour as the war neared its conclusion. The difficulties posed by 40D, and the government's refusal to heed any criticisms of it, alongside the controversies of the *King's Regulations* and other legislation, exemplify the fact the government succeeded in dictating people's private, sexual behaviour, in law, if not in people's actions, or in the public consciousness.

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[197] See DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.237.

CHAPTER TWO

Impropriety, Immorality, Treachery:
The Home Front

Britain channelled all of its resources into waging, and winning, the war. British people were required to behave appropriately, and even sexual behaviour was believed to impact on the war effort. Matters of national efficiency were of vital importance, on both the military and home fronts. Similarly, national security was an imperative; the government passed legislation such as the Defence of the Realm Act, to ensure that this was protected. The maintenance of national morale was demanded, in order that support for the war effort did not wane. The 'high-minded... middle-aged and middle-class ladies' who were involved in moral vigilance patrols regarded pre-marital and extra-marital sex as 'a position that could seriously undermine the nation's war effort'.[1] The *Evening News* called for action to be taken regarding prostitutes and other women of ill repute and 'shameless' intention, and proudly trumpeted that 'we should make up our minds not to allow ourselves to become weakened by the idle and the vicious'.[2] Any behaviour or activity which was seen to jeopardise the pursuit of the war, national security, or morale, was outlawed; certain manifestations of sexual behaviour were criticised by contemporary observers as detrimental to all of these factors. Sexual behaviour and sexual morals were debated in government, in the public sphere, by the press, and by the clergy, and were seen as indicators of the nation's moral rectitude, in both general and specifically sexual terms.

With the war effort in mind, it was imperative that the authorities took an interest in people's personal lives, and ensured that their behaviour was supportive of, or, at the very least, not disadvantageous to, the progress of the war.[3] As Chapter One has shown, the lives of civilian and military Britons were regulated by wartime legislation, for both practical and propagandistic purposes. Outside of the sphere of legal jurisdiction, debates on people's sexual behaviour, and this behaviour's impact on the war, were similarly widespread and impassioned. As the Defence of the Realm Act and the *King's Regulations* impacted on those British citizens who contracted venereal disease, public debate affected

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[1] Van Emden, Richard and Humphries, Steve, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* [2003] (London: Headline, 2004), p.266.

[2] *Evening News*, 24 September 1918, 'The State of Our Streets – A Warning From America', cited in Grayzel, Susan R., *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* [1999] (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.138.

[3] See Ferris, Paul, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth-Century History* [1993] (London: Mandarin, 1994). Ferris entitles his chapter on wartime 'Interfering Toads': Ferris, *Sex and the British*, pp.75 – 104: an army officer's wife said the patrols were 'interfering toads' at first but then conceded that they were 'rather wonderful': ibid., p.82.

and analysed the sex lives of *all* British citizens. The issue of blame for depravation and promiscuity, and the consequent spread of venereal disease, was widely discussed: it was questioned whether lascivious soldiers were corrupting women, or brazen women were encouraging otherwise respectable men to have promiscuous sex. Barmaids were thought to be particularly susceptible to the moral dangers of both men and drink: the state was urged to use its powers to deal with matters of sexuality arising from the employment of women as barmaids.[4] Some commentators suggested that the question of blame was an irrelevance, however, and that it was the peculiarities and strains of wartime that explained, and possibly excused, what was perceived as a rise in the incidence of promiscuous sex.[5] The moral scare was perceived as war-specific, and conspicuous because of its concentration in an already tense environment of international conflict and hardships on the home front, and it was believed that this would dissipate when the war was over. Whether the shift in moral standards was a perceived or an actual one, it alarmed significant numbers of people. The heightened security of the war years made it nominally easier to define, and to police, indecent behaviour; with much reprehensible behaviour occurring out of the public eye, however, this was not always the case. As sexual behaviour became an index of not only a person's morality but also their patriotism, the ubiquity of the means of surveillance, scrutiny, and punishment of that behaviour became not only acceptable but necessary.

This chapter examines attitudes to various manifestations of sexuality which, in wartime Britain, were considered to be unlawful, immoral, and distasteful. Contemporary responses to sexual relationships revealed not only wartime constructions of morality, but also attitudes about how sexual activity was seen to impact on the war effort. By studying attitudes to sexual behaviour in public places, in brothels, and the discourses on prostitution, this chapter provides an analysis of the means by which some sexual behaviours were defined as appropriate, and others as inappropriate, and the impact of such definitions. The 'Cult of the Clitoris' case, in 1918, in which Member of Parliament Noel Pemberton Billing made claims about the presence and depravity of German agents in Britain, provides a remarkable case-study of the wartime association between nationality and sexuality. While commentaries on the moral rectitude of sexual behaviour were not peculiar to wartime, attitudes which drew sexual morals as impacting on the nation largely were.

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[4] Thom, Deborah, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* [1998] (London, I. B. Tauris, 2000), p.82.

[5] On the subject of wartime sexual promiscuity, see, for example, Arthur Marwick, who argues that the war 'spread promiscuity upwards and birth control downwards': Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.147; Marwick's assertion is critiqued by Gerard DeGroot: DeGroot, Gerard J., *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* [1996] (London: Longman, 1998), pp.233 – 235.

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An alarming, but not inexorable, decline in moral standards had been alleged before the war started,[6] evinced by the formation of such bodies as the National Council for Public Morals in 1911, and the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases in 1913. It was announced at the inaugural conference of the National Council for Public Morals, held in 1911, Frank Mort writes,

> that prevention rather than punishment was to be the key note in the regeneration of the nation's moral life... According to their rhetoric, public morals were now not merely a job for the criminal law, but for a wide spectrum of social agencies... Morality itself now began to be redefined. Its significations were shifted away from the evangelical, nonconformist emphasis of the purity movement. Nowhere was this clearer than in moralists' take-up of scientific logic and a language of rationality.[7]

This Council conducted investigations into, and published reports on, potential moral threats to the nation, including venereal disease, the cinema, and the declining birth-rate. Late-Victorian and Edwardian writings on sex by those such as H. G. Wells, Edward Carpenter, and Havelock Ellis caused alarm, as they made the discussion of 'unconventional' sexualities available to the reading public.[8] Similarly concerning were the campaigns for women's suffrage, alongside rapid social change and technological improvement, which, while welcomed by progressives and radicals, were seen by conservatives as harbingers of an alarming new moral order.[9] Wartime tales of soldiers frequenting brothels, endemic venereal disease, and the 'war baby' crisis contributed to the notion that mores were being redrawn. The passing of legislation regarding sexual behaviour by the government and the military, and the agitation among the press and the clergy, suggested that, in the eyes of the authorities, British people could not be trusted to behave appropriately. The very presence of the King's Regulations, Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, and women police, evinced a conviction that there was a generally poor moral standard.

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[6] For a discussion of these concerns, see Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p.82.

[7] Mort, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830 (Second Edition)* [first edition 1987] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 2000), p.137. Until December 1910, the National Council of Public Morals was known as the National Social Purity Crusade.

[8] On these works, see, for example, Haste, Cate, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* [1992] (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp.7 – 31; and Porter, Roy and Hall, Lesley, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650 – 1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp.155 – 201.

[9] See Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.28.

Many diverse sources corroborate a nationwide concern for sexual immorality, in varied forms, during wartime. Trevor Wilson has noted that members of the Duty and Discipline Movement

> ...felt that they were observing a mounting tide of laxity and vice. Its causes were taken to be the war's enforced severance of family ties and the greater personal and economic freedom of young persons, as well as a sense of impermanence consequent upon the proximity of death in battle. Manifestations of this unhappy trend were to be seen in those districts where uprooted people of both sexes congregated. Not least was this true of London with its burgeoning nightclubs and the 'vulgar and suggestive' tone of its stage performances, as General Smith-Dorrien publicly protested in the autumn [of 1916].[10]

While the perceived 'laxity and vice' was considered to be inevitable, because of wartime conditions, it was nonetheless unacceptable, and, moreover, was dangerous in a nation at war. Wilson continues:

> The conclusion was easily reached that such lapses... were undermining the war effort. It followed irresistibly that enemy agents would in some way be involved. Sir Edward Henry[11] was simply acting out the assumptions of crusaders after moral improvement when he managed to envisage a connection between 'enemy agents and spies' on the one hand and cafés for Belgian refugees, containing a sprinkling of prostitutes... on the other.[12]

Concerns were also expressed by peers and parliamentarians that a belief in the war as an instrument of moral decline was spreading, and that such contentions must be checked: Lord Salisbury wrote to Lord Derby that

> Everything depends now upon keeping the people keen about the war but if the notion which has already taken root is allowed to spread that instead of being a sacred cause the war is a vehicle of vice and demoralisation there will arise an uneasiness amongst the soundest part of the people... that the war is under a curse. It is impossible to exaggerate the danger of such a sentiment.[13]

Stapleton Tench Eachus, in his diary entry for 4 June 1916, wrote that

> England has become the home of licentiousness of all manner of folly and vice. The leaders have lost their heads and in consequence the nation has gone mad. God alone knows how much deeper we shall sink, but for these reasons and others we shall never win this war.[14]

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[10] Wilson, Trevor, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914 – 1918* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p.403.
[11] Sir Edward Henry was Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police from 1903 to 1918.
[12] Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, p.403.
[13] TNA WO 32/5597: Cabinet minute, 18 March 1918; memorandum by Secretary of State for War, 18 March 1918, cited in Harrison, Mark, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France and Egypt during the First World War', pp. 133 – 158 in *Medical History*, 39, 1995, p.146.
[14] IWM DD 01/51/1: S. T. Eachus: Unpublished diaries: 'The Great War Diaries of a Signalman as written by Stapleton Tench Eachus.' Transcribed by J. K. Wickett; 4 June 1916

It was felt by some commentators that the war had indeed engendered a realignment of moral codes.[15] Roger Davidson writes that

> To Scottish health administrators, who viewed the First World War as having fractured sexual norms, new control initiatives were imperative to counter 'the lower moral code sapping the vigour of our youth'.[16]

Upon considering an application for a separation order from a woman against her violent husband, the magistrate was surprised that she felt that she had done nothing wrong in having been taken to a music hall by another man, but attributed her behaviour to the 'new code of morals'. Mr. Charles Lee, the Willesden Magistrate, refused to grant the separation order, and told the woman that he thought she had brought the trouble on herself and deserved all she had got.[17] The *Sunday Pictorial*'s rather sexist response to this tale was to admit that

> the lot of many of these anxious waiting wives is a very hard one. The poorest of them are beset with many temptations; they are often incapable of looking after their own interests, and cases of seeming injustice have arisen.[18]

This patronising view was echoed by the Home Office, who advised the police to be tactful when dealing with women who had been 'deprived of the company and guidance of their husbands'.[19] The belief that moral codes had been changed by the war was also voiced by the police. One correspondent wrote that

> A friend in the police tells me... that in his district absolutely 'respectable' and 'virtuous' women have given themselves day after day to different soldiers as if it were a sort of religious duty.[20]

In general terms, the war was believed to have 'strengthened the ranks' of sexually active and sexually independent women, who were manifest in their most dangerous form as

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[15] For perspectives on the redrawing of moral codes for civilians in France, see McPhail, Helen, *The Long Silence: Civilian Life Under the German Occupation of Northern France, 1914 – 1918* [1999] (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), especially pp.9 and 44.
[16] Davidson, Roger, 'The Culture of Compulsion: Venereal Disease, Sexuality and the State in Twentieth-Century Scotland', pp. 58 – 75 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.69.
[17] *Sunday Pictorial*, 11 April 1915, p.4, column a, 'Problem of the Soldier's Wife'.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.80.
[20] Letter from Laurence Housman to Janet Ashbee, 17 April 1915, cited in Hall, *Sex, Gender, and Social Change*, p.93.

'nymphomaniacs'.[21] Such concerns evince what Roger Davidson and Lesley Hall identify as a tradition in Britain of the scapegoating of 'marginal' or 'unorthodox' sexual groups.[22]

While there was a persisting belief in Britain in 'an assumed correlation between class and sexual "wantonness"',[23] the 'new code of morals' was not restricted to the working classes, but was even played out in the Prime Minister's relationships:

> At least one biographer has described Lloyd George as living virtually the life of a bigamist during the war. His time was deftly divided between his wife and his secretary, Frances Stevenson (whom he later married).[24]

Central Criminal Court records show that bigamy constituted 2.75 per cent of cases in 1912, 3.4 per cent in 1913, 13.35 per cent in 1917, and 20.2 per cent in 1918. So, rates of bigamy, and prosecutions for this crime, increased during the war.[25] While Britain was, ostensibly, a class-ridden society at war, the concern with national immorality was neither particularly class-based, nor driven by class-based prejudices. The concern with Wildean decadence and sexual impropriety was very real: indeed, the period was still overshadowed by the impact of Wilde's trial in 1895 and his subsequent ignominy. Questions of immorality among the upper and ruling classes, and the literary elite such as the Bloomsbury group, were widely discussed: Trevor Wilson writes of the social group that included Clive Bell, Aldous Huxley, Robbie Ross, Herbert Asquith, and Bertrand Russell, that

> ...many in this circle repudiated conventional sexual morality. Marriage for them was anything but a fixed state. And a number were well known for their homosexuality. This inclination, it may be thought, had no bearing on the war. But... a good many people felt otherwise. They held that sexual 'laxity' went hand in hand with setbacks to the British cause. The sadly unbalanced Lord Alfred Douglas was proclaiming to anyone who would listen – and it seems a good many would – that Britain's failures in the war were attributable to the 'vice' practised by Oscar Wilde. Robbie Ross was a particular victim of Douglas's enmity, to the extent that Ross brought action for libel against him. The action did not succeed. What it did accomplish was to make it public knowledge that Ross was a frequent visitor to 10 Downing Street.[26]

Such views were paralleled with comparable concern about working-class immorality: official patrols by the National Vigilance Association and Women Police Volunteers

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[21] Dr. Tytler Burke, Venereal Diseases Officer of Salford, cited in Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* [1990] (London: Fontana, 1991), pp.255 – 256.
[22] Davidson, Roger and Hall, Lesley A., 'Introduction', pp.1 – 14 in Davidson, Roger, and Hall, Lesley A. (eds.), *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.8.
[23] Davidson, 'The Culture of Compulsion', p.70: Davidson writes that this belief persisted in Britain until after the Second World War.
[24] Turner, E. S., *Dear Old Blighty* (London: Michael Joseph, 1980), p.215.
[25] Van Emden and Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front*, p.268.
[26] Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, pp.411 – 412.

focused largely on the working classes. The difference here is that the behaviour of the middle and upper classes was not scrutinised in such a way; indeed, it is unsurprising that the ruling elite did not institute patrols to observe their peers. Some contemporary and historical commentators asserted that Victorian values were being questioned and eroded by 1914, if they had not been completely rejected, and, as such, there was no behaviour considered enough of a social evil to require eradication.[27]

With the cinema seen as an influential medium, the moral tone of films was an issue of concern, so the National Council of Public Morals instituted a Commission to investigate the 'physical, social, moral, and educational influence of the cinema, with special reference to young people'.[28] The commissioners concluded unequivocally that 'vulgarity can be got rid of only by the elevation of popular taste',[29] and that

> even where indecency or obscenity, as the law would define it, may be avoided, there is often a suggestiveness in dealing with 'sex' relations which for the large number of youthful spectators... must be regarded as objectionable.[30]

F. R. Goodwin, the Chairman of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association, was keen to defend the reputation of cinemas, writing that when complaints of misconduct were investigated, 'it was usually found that the alleged misconduct was no more than the privileged manifestation of affection between the sexes'; and that far from behaving inappropriately, most married couples 'sat close together, held hands, linked arms or encircled each other'.[31] Vigilance workers, in fact, found no evidence of indecency in visits to 248 cinemas.[32]

Attacks upon immoral and inappropriate behaviour were made by the clergy, and by religious organisations. The crusading patriotic newspaper *John Bull* disapproved of these religious 'moral "faddists"' who interfered in people's private lives, in the name of promoting sexual morality. One particularly insidious means by which this was carried out was the distribution of leaflets to the public. A YMCA publication, it was reported, was

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[27] On Victorian values, see Mason, Michael, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); on the transition away from Victorian values, see Hynes, Samuel, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.vii and 4 – 5. On the move away from Victorian attitudes to and understandings of sex, see Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp.xi – xii. On the coming of Modernity with the Great War, and the changing values attendant on this, see Eksteins, Modris, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Bantam Press, 1989).
[28] National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema: Its Present Position and Future Possibilities: Being the Report of and Chief Evidence taken by the Cinema Commission of Inquiry Instituted by the National Council of Public Morals* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1917), p.vii.
[29] Ibid., p.xxix.
[30] Ibid., p.xxx. *John Bull* expressed moral disapprobation about films which it deemed to be 'over the line': *John Bull*, 7 October 1916, p.10, column b, 'Sex and the Cinema: London Picturehouse Proprietors Exceed the Limit'.
[31] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, pp.208 – 209.
[32] Ibid., p.209.

given to a man dining in a restaurant with his fiancée. The publication gained the reader's attention by opening with topical pages on the submarine menace, and continued:

> '... when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is full grown bringeth forth death'... more deadly than the submarine is the enslaving habit... of secret vice. If you wish to serve your country and to retain your manhood, avoid secret sin as you would avoid the deadly torpedo... The seducer, the wretch who will rob a girl of her virtue, is every bit as despicable as the despoilers of village homes in Belgium and France.[33]

According to *John Bull*, the YMCA distributed a range of these censorious leaflets, and, in light of them, *John Bull* argued, the association of wine with women was also a problem to be contended with, as was the National Temperance Foundation's suggestion that soldiers' rum ration should be curtailed.[34] One leaflet distributed to women in the YMCA canteen at the Derby National Shell Factory told women that 'To allow liberties is to arouse passions', and warned that 'a girl may know when to stop, but a man may not'. 'Nobody except an evil-minded pumpuritan pietist', *John Bull* asserted, 'would put upon women – especially women playing a patriotic part – so offensive an infliction'. If a priest was known to distribute such cards, the newspaper unequivocally concluded, he would deserve to be kicked.[35] Lambasting the clergy and their attempts to moralise the British people, *John Bull* was delighted to draw attention to the hypocrisy evident in the case of the Rev. James Edward Hand, of 102, Guilford Street, Bloomsbury, who was fined £20 plus £10 10*s* costs, for knowingly renting out his property to 'scarlet women'.[36]

Contrary to claims of the war creating an environment which fostered immorality, some contemporaries welcomed the advent of war, as an instrument which would eradicate the threat of sexual depravity and inappropriateness from British society, and rejuvenate the nation. Edmund Gosse, man of letters and critic, and Librarian of the House of Lords until his retirement from the post at the age of 65 in 1914, wrote, in October 1914, that

> War... is the sovereign disinfectant, and its red stream of blood is the Condy's Fluid that cleans out the stagnant pools and clotted channels of the intellect... Our wish for indulgence of every sort, our laxity of manners, our wretched sensitiveness to personal inconvenience, these are suddenly lifted before us in their true guise as the spectres of national decay; and we have risen from the lethargy of our dilettantism to lay them, before it is too late, by the flashing of the unsheathed sword.[37]

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[33] *John Bull*, 23 January 1915, p.7, column a, 'Smut and slush: Prowling Prudes and Croaking Cranks'.
[34] Ibid.
[35] *John Bull*, 29 April 1916, p.12, column c, 'Poisoned "Arrows": How a Dirty Document is Distributed'.
[36] *John Bull*, 6 March 1915, p.8, column a, 'A Clergyman and his flats: Queer mixture of religion, rent and scarlet women'.
[37] Edmund Gosse, 'War and Literature', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 220 (October 1914), p.313, cited in Hynes, Samuel, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), p.11.

The metaphor of Condy's Fluid was a common one.[38] Indeed,

> World War One had been greeted as the 'Condy's Fluid' that could purge English blood of Wildean decadence, and there were many supposedly sane men who welcomed the war as a national cleansing agent,[39]

writes Michael Bracewell, in his patriotic eulogy *England is Mine*: the advent of the war was welcomed as heralding an end to a generation of effete men by either killing them or toughening them up.[40] While Bracewell writes about the purging of individuals' sins and immorality, Vera Brittain, in a letter to her brother in 1916, wrote of a global purge:

> War is an immense Purgation – 'the washing out' as the Master of the Temple said recently, 'of the sins of the world in streams of innocent blood'. Of course, it is all terrible for individuals, who are sacrificed in apparently disregarded numbers, tortured & made mad, & seemingly lost sight of in the Great Immensity, but one can only hope that in some Hereafter these, & those who lost them, will one day realise the Whole and see what it all meant, & understand their own part in it...[41]

The purge of which Brittain wrote was more Biblical in nature, akin to the Flood.[42] After the death of her fiancé Roland Leighton in December 1915, Vera Brittain wondered whether his life and his death was but a part in an orchestrated whole.[43] Dr. Mary Scharlieb, the outspoken sexual health campaigner, and Member of the Executive Committee of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, claimed that the war was sent as punishment from God, for religious disobedience and hedonism, and as a sign that the aftermath of the war must be a time of social harmony and sexual morality, and, more to the point, that God's purge was working:

> This war, awful as it is, and punishment as it is, has been permitted by an all-wise and all-loving Father. We have justly offended God by our luxury, our mad pursuit of pleasure, our class hatreds, and our want of religion... He has changed a frivolous people into a mourning nation, and this He has done to call us to repentance, to recall us to His love, and to rekindle in our hearts the flame

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[38] Condy's fluid was a disinfecting solution of sodium and potassium permanganates.

[39] Bracewell, Michael, *England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion from Wilde to Goldie* [1997] (London: Flamingo, 1998), pp.21 – 22.

[40] For a more celebratory tone regarding *fin de siècle* 'dandyism' and decadence, see Moers, Ellen, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* [1960] (Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1978), especially pp. 287 – 314.

[41] Bishop, Alan and Bostridge, Mark (eds.), *Letters from a Lost Generation: The First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends: Roland Leighton, Edward Brittain, Victor Richardson, Geoffrey Thurlow* [1998] (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), p.259: letter from Vera Brittain to her brother, Edward Brittain, 31 May 1916.

[42] Brittain used the analogy of war as a 'flood' again, in *Testament of Youth*, describing Speech Day at Uppingham School in July 1914 as 'my last carefree entertainment before the flood': Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the years 1900-1925* [1933] (London: Fontana, 1979), p.91; also cited in Shephard, Ben, *A War of Nerves* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p.5.

[43] Bishop and Bostridge (eds.), *Letters from a Lost Generation*, p.259.

> of love towards each other. High and low, rich and poor, our men are working, fighting, and dying together. In their cheerless bivouacs and in their water-sodden trenches they are learning mutual respect and admiration. They are discovering each other's devotion to duty and the nobility of their common aim.[44]

Scharlieb added that the role of women after the war would be to remain, or to resolve to be once more, sexually pure: on behalf of British women she pledged that 'we will try to keep our bodies in soberness, temperance, and chastity'.[45] Meanwhile, Dr. Arthur Winnington Ingram, the Bishop of London, invoked a vengeful Nature to purge society of its ills:

> As to the vices of to-day, which we all know exist, they will be punished well and surely by outraged Nature. No one can break the laws of physical well-being and not suffer bitterly for it.[46]

This viewpoint, that people have free will and that Nature will take revenge on them for immorality, contradicts a previous statement in which the Bishop of London proposed 'to close cinema private boxes, to stop the sale of "suggestive literature", and to control tea-rooms and lounges'.[47] However, the discourses on purge and purification fashioned by God or Nature for the benefit of a dissolute society demonstrated the belief that social and sexual ills were in evidence before 1914. Rather than being caused by wartime conditions, they were, in some people's opinions, being effectively and deservedly eradicated by them.

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Promiscuous, disease-spreading sex and prostitution had been seen to be problems before the war. Measures had been enacted which intended to check the incidences of, and opportunities for, prostitution and brothel-keeping, and to ensure that the risk of the spread of venereal disease through prostitution was minimised. From before the Great War, 'experienced and trustworthy men who can be relied upon to use their discretion' were employed as plain-clothed police officers to 'detect solicitation by prostitutes'. It was considered by the Metropolitan Police to be 'very essential that the same officers not be employed too frequently, or for long periods, upon this or similar duty', lest they be discovered as police vigilantes and complained about.[48] The Metropolitan Police Act, 1839, was still in force, Section 54 (11) of which rendered

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[44] Scharlieb, Mary, *The Challenge of Wartime to Women* (London: National Council of Public Morals, 1916), pp.4 – 5.
[45] Ibid., p.6.
[46] *Everywoman's Weekly*, 18 November 1916 pp.272 – 273, 'What the Bishop of London told me. The Mission of Repentance and Hope from the Woman's Point of View', by Irma Blood.
[47] *John Bull*, 19 August 1916, p.1, column b, 'The Morals of London'.
[48] There is evidence of such plain-clothed police activity from 1910: TNA MEPO 2/1419; Confidential Memorandum from the Executive Branch, Metropolitan Police, 28 December 1910.

> every common prostitute or night-walker loitering or being in any thoroughfare or public place for the purpose of prostitution or solicitation to the annoyance of the inhabitants or passengers, liable to a penalty of not more than 40s.[49]

The appointment of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in 1913, and its report in 1916, perpetuated this tradition of investigating people's sexual health and sexual behaviour in the interests of the state. At the outbreak of the war, a number of laws had relevance for sexual behaviour, public solicitation, brothels, and prostitution;[50] while these laws were in force, however, wartime conditions were seen to have highlighted and even exacerbated the problems they addressed.

The behaviour of the general public, in public (and sometimes in private), alarmed many observers. The spatial areas that could be categorised as public and private were redefined, as even behaviour in people's homes was observed and could be considered unpatriotic and punishable by law.[51] Notions of space and privacy were therefore exploded for the duration of the war: every area in which an act of perceived immoral disloyalty to the country could be committed became, effectively, a public, observable, space. Philippa Levine writes that concern about women's patrols was aroused because they were seen to be 'violating the public space in the name of law and order, claiming more than just the moral authority that activist women had commonly evoked in seeking empowerment'.[52] In Grantham, for example, a town with a large military population, the army general commanding the district gave the Women Police Volunteers the right of access to any building within a six-mile radius of the army camp.[53] In such towns, the whole population, civilian and military, was affected by the extension of military authority. Matters of taste were paramount here: activities which, in peacetime, may have been considered undesirable or unsavoury, became, in wartime, explicitly unpatriotic.

Particular focal points of the perceived immorality were London parks. A history of indecent and inappropriate behaviour in Hyde park, and also a tradition of concern about it, a feeling that it must be observed, monitored, and preferably stopped, was evinced before,

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[49] *Metropolitan Police Act, 1839*: 2 & 3 Vict., Chapter 47 (1839). See also TNA HO 45/10557/166505.
[50] Details of a number of relevant Acts are cited in the Report of the Special Committee, Metropolitan Borough of Hammersmith, 17 January 1917: TNA HO 45/10557/166505. See also Section 13 of the *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885*: 48 & 49 Vict., Chapter 69 (1885), the *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1912*: 2 & 3 Geo. 5, Chapter 20 (1912), Section 76 (i) of the *Licensing (Consolidation) Act, 1910*: 10 Edw. 7 & 1 Geo. 5, Chapter 24 (1910), Section 3 of the *Vagrancy Act, 1824*: 5 Geo. 4, Chapter 83 (1824), and Section 1 (1) of the *Vagrancy Act, 1898*: 61 & 62 Vict., Chapter 39 (1898).
[51] Soldiers' wives who committed acts of infidelity in their own homes were liable to the curtailment of their separation allowance: Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.35.
[52] Levine, Philippa, '"Walking the Streets in a Way No Decent Woman Should": Women Police in World War I', pp.34 – 78 in *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1), March 1994, p.62.
[53] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.80.

during, and beyond the war years.[54] The lighting of parks was also identified as being an important contributory factor in the eradication of vice. The sexual health campaigner Mary Scharlieb wrote of the importance of adequate lighting in public places in the struggle against venereal disease.[55] A Metropolitan Police report from 1915 identified this as being particularly problematic in wartime:

> the closing at dusk of some of the gates of the Park, together with the effective lighting of the principle pathways would appreciably assist in checking indecency, but while the better lighting of the Park would certainly discourage this objectionable conduct which now occurs, this much to be desired improvement would be impracticable at the present time when the lighting of the Streets generally has to be reduced.[56]

This is a salient point: the necessity of darkness due to wartime imperatives meant that illicit acts were easier to conceal, and, consequently, that war conditions therefore facilitated sexual behaviour in public spaces. Concern was also expressed about the changing opening and closing times of park gates, which varied throughout the year depending on daylight hours and the time of sunset.[57] The National Council of Public Morals commented in their report on morality in the cinema on the fact that 'The charge has been brought against the picture house that the darkness encourages indecency'.[58] Indeed, a *London Opinion* cartoon from December 1915 depicted a soldier and his sweetheart on a park bench in darkness but for the searchlights in the background; the woman is shown to be pleased by the cover afforded their tryst by the lack of lights:

Drawn by Wilmot Lunt.

He: "There seems to be even fewer lights here than last year."
She: "Oh, yes! They've improved the place a lot lately."

Source: *London Opinion*, 11 December 1915, p.478.

[54] TNA MEPO 2/5815 details indecent behaviour in Hyde Park during the years 1892 – 1922 and its observation by the Metropolitan Police.
[55] Scharlieb, Mary, *The Hidden Scourge* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916), p.92.
[56] TNA MEPO 2/5815: Report from W. H. Kendall at the Metropolitan Police Office, New Scotland Yard, 22 July 1915.
[57] TNA MEPO 2/1720. Parks with variable opening times were St. James's Park, Green Park, Victoria Tower Gardens, Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Greenwich Park, Regents Park, and Richmond Park.
[58] National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema*, p.xxv. This is also discussed by Arthur Marwick *The Deluge*, p.181.

A letter from outraged correspondent Mrs. Ellinor C. L. Close to the Ranger of Hyde Park, in June 1915,[59] well illustrated the concern that was expressed. Close wrote that the proliferation of 'beggars and roughs' meant that it was no longer safe to enjoy recreational walks in the park. She made the extravagant claim that having 'ridden on horseback alone over a great part of the world', she was not easily frightened, but that the frequency of incidents of begging and harassment in Hyde Park was alarming. It was not merely the harassment which worried her, however, but the presence of cavorting couples:

> the gross indecency of a great number of very young girls and soldiers and civilian young men in the Park now makes it impossible for decent women to walk there after say 6pm.[60]

Walking in Hyde Park posed a threat to one's personal space and security, and an affront to one's sensibilities. Close's letter was attacked unseemly and peculiarly British behaviour – at a time when Britain's war effort and claim to national supremacy demanded a reputation as a nation of propriety: 'In no other country, Spain, Italy, Bosnia, Russia, or France, have I ever seen similar sights', she wrote. Rather than something which British servicemen would make an effort to avoid, this impropriety was identified as being peculiarly English, although the countries which Close visited before the war may well have displayed such lapsed mores in wartime. Furthermore, the soldiers were conspicuous in their uniforms, and the sight of these national representatives failing to uphold the proud virtues of King and country, was liable to cause moral outrage.

It was not just soldiers' behaviour that caused consternation, however: women being out and about alone, regardless of their comportment, was considered scandalous. Moreover, parks were not the only area of concern about indecent behaviour. E. S. Turner alleges that every man was potentially a suspect for harassment, writing that

> Many middle-class mothers were ready to regard a daughter as compromised if a man, even a fiancé, took her to a restaurant. If the daughter travelled anywhere unchaperoned she was expected to send a telegram announcing her arrival.[61]

Writing in the 1960s, Harold Macmillan observed that

> fifty years ago a young lady of good position could not walk in the street alone without damage to her reputation... To walk down St. James's Street was to put her quite beyond the pale.[62]

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[59] TNA MEPO 2/5815: 3 June 1915
[60] Ibid.
[61] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.201.
[62] Macmillan, Harold, *Winds of Change* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.103, cited in Bourne, J. M., *Britain and the Great War: 1914 – 1918* (London, New York, Melbourne, Auckland: Edward Arnold, 1989), p.235; also cited in Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.201.

On this point, Philippa Levine writes that

> Women on the streets – working women passing to and from work, a spectrum of women whose living was derived on the streets, and, most recently, the militant wing of the suffrage movement – had long been symbols of moral decay.[63]

As well as courting critiques of their morality, women abroad at night had to be wary of sexual harassment: according to London magistrate George Denman, women appearing in Regent Street after 10pm must have expected to be molested.[64] The war years offered the first evidence that this moral order was changing, however: 'These conventions relaxed during the war', writes J. M. Bourne, 'They collapsed entirely in the 1920s'.[65] One observer alleged, in 1917, that 'In cafés once frequented by tarts sat young flappers who... showed no more refinement than prostitutes and sometimes less'.[66] Women's independence in this respect was shocking for two reasons: firstly because it was in the public eye for the first time; secondly because vigilance was the watchword of the day, as shall be seen, and appropriate behaviour under the scrutiny of wartime vigilantes was required by all people at all times.

Censure at people's perceived sexual immorality did, in some cases, extend to brutal police involvement for couples who were believed to have behaved inappropriately in public. In a businesslike response to Mrs. Close's letter, Superintendent Wells asserted that the

> Police are doing all that is possible and many arrests are made for the offences which Mrs. Close complains of. Attention of the Police will continue as necessary in this matter.[67]

Indeed, figures for the period during which Mrs. Close complained (January to June 1915) show that 367 arrests were made in Hyde Park: 206 'disorderly prostitutes' were arrested, 22 people were arrested for begging, and 85 men and 54 women were arrested for acts of indecency, including sexual intercourse.[68] Police reports concerning these figures asserted that such returns showed the fine job that the police were doing, and claimed 'that with vigilance and persistent effort the evil is kept in check'.[69] The reactions of complainants such as Mrs. Close, however, proved that despite the efforts of the police, and the numerous arrests that were made, certain behaviour in Hyde Park was still nonetheless perceived as

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[63] Levine, 'Walking the Streets', p.62.
[64] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.201.
[65] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p.235.
[66] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.201.
[67] TNA MEPO 2/5815.
[68] Ibid. Police records do not give a reason for the gender imbalance in arrests for acts of indecency.
[69] Ibid.

rife and unsavoury. One Superintendent commented that people's behaviour in Hyde Park had not caused much annoyance;[70] indeed, it is possible that such behaviour in parks and public spaces was neither as extensive, nor as much of a nuisance, as was alleged. What was important was the fact that such behaviour was perceived to be widespread and problematic – a belief which was based in moral fervour, patriotism, and ideas about how British citizens should, and should not, behave, particularly in times of war.

While the police were involved in attempting to curtail inappropriate behaviour nationwide, they were not omnipotent in dealing with objectionable behaviour, and it was pointed out that

> Many persons who are not acquainted with the local conditions in Hyde Park are under the impression that acts of indecency are being committed when as a matter of fact it is only acts of indiscreet conduct, which could not be dealt with by the police.
>
> ... police performing duty in Hyde [sic] have received instructions not to interfere with couples sitting or lying on the grass unless some specific act has been committed which would justify the arrest of the offenders.
>
> I would very respectfully submit that the absence of complaints against the police performing this duty shews [sic] that the present system is working satisfactorily.[71]

It is likely, then, that many efforts to prosecute were made on the grounds of distaste rather than illegality, or as an attempt to preclude future misdemeanours by setting harsh examples. As such, attention was drawn to the important distinction between illegal acts and immoral acts. *John Bull* championed cases in which soldiers were involved and were unfairly accused. Although the newspaper may have exaggerated for patriotic effect, the authorities nonetheless took a more than usually avid interest in the private lives of British citizens. Attempts to prosecute Sergeant John Withers and Marie Possart under the Vagrancy Act and for 'acting indecently upon the public highway' were quashed by magistrates – they had done nothing but kiss 'vigorously'.[72] Another woman, charged with having 'behaved indecently in the Wolverhampton Road' with a young subaltern only had the charges against her dropped when she had been intrusively examined by a police doctor. The subaltern in question was subsequently charged with drunkenness and fined. The arresting officers, 'whose offensive account of what never occurred can only have originated in the salacious depths of their nasty imagination', according to *John Bull*, were not reprimanded.[73]

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[70] TNA MEPO 2/1720: Reports from Superintendents and Acting-Superintendents in London, 12 August 1916.
[71] TNA MEPO 2/5815.
[72] *John Bull*, 3 June 1916, p.10, column b, 'Kissing – A Crime: Peeping Peeler's Prurient Prowl'.
[73] *John Bull*, 23 September 1916, p.10, column b, 'Prurient Policemen: Cruel Charges Against Innocent Girl'.

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The police were not the only body responsible for attempts to curtail and punish immoral and indecent behaviour. A number of well-meaning but intrusive female patrol groups were active throughout the war. They were spurred into action by manifestations of 'khaki fever', a wartime phrase which described the 'excitement which reportedly gripped young women at the sight of troops in towns, cities, and near army camps', and led to their 'immodest and even dangerous behaviour'.[74] Angela Woollacott writes that 'khaki fever' not only 'seemed a flagrant challenge to the belief that sexual chastity was integral to respectable femininity', but that it was feared as a harbinger of women's social and sexual independence.[75] There had been, however, a 'long-held ambition of both feminist and social purity campaigners' to have a female force to deal with specifically female issues, but 'it was the 1914-18 war that precipitated the appearance of women patrolling the streets'.[76] Attitudes to such measures were polarised, as they had been in the nineteenth century, with the police and active social purity campaigners at one extreme, and the vociferous opponents of legislation such as Regulation 40D at the other.[77]

There were three core women's patrol groups: the National Vigilance Association, the Women's Police Volunteers (later Women's Police Service), and the women patrols of the National Union of Women Workers. Of these groups, E. S. Turner writes,

> Wielding little more than the authority which had always quelled servants, they told soldiers to be ashamed of themselves, marched drunk girls home and even forced soldiers' wives to turn their randy pick-ups out into the street; and the hardier among them did not shrink from raiding brothels and harrying pimps.[78]

These groups, not being a division of the police, were able to use their authority over couples who were behaving indecently but not illegally, in a way that the police were not. Having no laws to follow regarding such matters, however, indecent behaviour was a matter of subjective personal taste for the women patrollers. From before the war, the women of the National Vigilance Association had been engaged in overseeing the deportation of

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[74] Woollacott, Angela, '"Khaki Fever" and Its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', pp.325 – 347 in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (2), April 1994, p.326.
[75] Ibid., pp.327 and 343.
[76] Levine, 'Walking the Streets', p.34.
[77] See ibid., pp.39 – 40, and Bland, Lucy, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', pp. 23 – 49 in Brophy, Julia and Smart, Carol (eds.), *Women-in-Law: Explorations in Law, Family & Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.41.
[78] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.202.

foreign nationals and colonial subjects convicted of prostitution.[79] In wartime, this activity became bound up with national interest, over and above its judicial role. New Scotland Yard recommended that a member of the National Vigilance Association accompany the prisoner from court to ensure that they did indeed leave the country;[80] the Home Office was then supplied with a full report of each case from the woman accompanying the prisoner.[81] Members of this association were issued with membership cards, detailing the eminent members and supporters of the NVA, and thereby giving them an air of respectability:

Source:

TNA HO 45/15041

NATIONAL VIGILANCE ASSOCIATION
AND
International Bureau
FOR THE
Suppression of the White Slave Traffic

M[illegible] is an authorised Worker on behalf of the International Bureau.

PRESIDENT OF BUREAU:
The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Winchester.
CHAIRMAN OF BUREAU:
The Right Rev. Bishop Ryle, D.D., C.V.O. (Dean of Westminster).

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Albany.
Mrs. Creighton.
The Right Hon. the Earl of Aberdeen, K.T.
His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.
Monsignor M. E. Carton de Wiart.
F. S. Bullock, Esq., (Central Authority for Great Britain for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic.)
D. L. Alexander, Esq., K.C., J.P.
Claude G. Montefiore, Esq.
His Excellency Count de Torre Diaz (Spain)
The Very Rev. Eugene Smirnoff (Russia).

Miss Gilligan (France).	*Rev. A. Scholten (Switzerland).*
Herr von Ranke (Germany).	*Rev. S. Baart de la Faille (Holland).*
O. Rosen, Esq. (Germany).	*Rev. L. Rosch (Norway).*
H. C. Lavis, Esq. (United States).	*Rev. J. Lindskog (Sweden)*
E. B. Gould, Esq. (Egypt).	*Rev. T. Hunter Boyd (Canada).*

Secretary: WILLIAM ALEXANDER COOTE.

St. Mary's Chambers.
161a, Strand, W.C. OCTOBER, 1913.

With the war in mind, in Autumn 1914, the National Union of Women Workers organised

> a body of patrols to assist the Police, not so much in detecting offences as to keep young women who were not under adequate personal control from swelling the ranks of prostitutes[82]

and helping to police men who solicited women.[83] The NUWW were adamant that their 'patrol work is not in any way Rescue work', but rather was effective in preventing

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[79] For details on the pre-war history of the National Vigilance Association, see Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp.82 – 112; on the National Vigilance Association after the war, see ibid., p.160.
[80] TNA HO 45/15041: Police report, 22 May 1914.
[81] TNA HO 45/15041: Letter from Mrs. Alex Carter to the Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, 19 March 1914. The women's train fares (third class) for accompanying the convicted prostitutes were refunded by the Home Office.
[82] TNA MEPO 2/1720.
[83] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.81.

prostitution occurring at all.[84] These patrols were proposed and organised by Louise Creighton, the widow of Mandell Creighton, the Bishop of London who died in 1901, who had an interest in social hygiene, and was president of the National Union of Women Workers. She ensured that patrols were active by October 1914.[85] Their inauguration was announced in The *Times*, by a supportive letter from a number of organisations, including the Mothers' Union, the Church Army, the Girls' Friendly Society, the YWCA, and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, which also requested financial donations to support the patrols, on 13 October 1914.[86] The patrollers were 'women of tact and experience between thirty and fifty years of age' who worked in pairs, with the authority of armbands and cards.[87]

The patrols were sympathetically received by Reginald McKenna,[88] the Home Secretary and Commissioner of Police, who agreed that the patrolling women should carry cards signed by the Commissioner, requesting the police's assistance; McKenna also recommended that each chief constable in the country implement the same arrangements in their own police forces, but conceded that the influence of such patrols would differ from area to area.[89] Most of the patrolling work was undertaken in London, or around army camps and depots.[90] Over two thousand such patrols were deployed, around parks, cinemas, alleys, lanes, and shady places, with the intention of '[saving] the pleasureseekers from themselves'.[91] The NUWW were concerned about the morality of women specifically, and also founded the League of Decency and Honour

> to raise and maintain the high standard of morals and manners among women at home as our soldiers are upholding the national honour and good name in the front line.[92]

This view was somewhat optimistic about the morals of British soldiers, and, curiously for a women's group, derogatory to women. If it crossed the mind of Gertrude Tuckwell and her colleagues that soldiers were being the very antithesis of their idea of morality, such a concern was suppressed: soldiers' reputations were upheld; British women were not afforded similar support.

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[84] Minutes of the Women's Patrol Committee, 16 February 1916, cited in Levine, 'Walking the Streets', p.56.
[85] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.81.
[86] *Times*, 13 October 1914, cited in Bland, 'In the Name of Protection', p.26.
[87] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.81.
[88] Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna, 1863 – 1943; Liberal MP for North Monmouthshire, 1895 – 1918; Home Secretary, 1911 – 1915; Chancellor of the Exchequer, May 1915 – December 1916.
[89] TNA MEPO 2/1720.
[90] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.82.
[91] Van Emden and Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front*, p.266.
[92] Gertrude Tuckwell speaking at the Trades Union Congress, cited in Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.20.

The patrols were not welcomed by all observers, however. Angela Woollacott points out that

> The fact that women police and patrols were probably close to a generation older than the young women they disciplined indicates generational disparity in female behaviour, as well as interclass dynamics.[93]

Female unity did not prevail. Philippa Levine writes that 'the existence and visibility of women police offered a challenge to traditional femininity'.[94] Indeed, the women's patrols were in the paradoxical situation of attempting to ensure that women remained demure, chaste, and feminine, but, in so doing, were cast in the unfeminine role of uniformed officers themselves. A letter from 'Three Respectable Maids' suggested that the women of the League of Decency and Honour should join the 'League of Hard Work' so that they would have less time to carp at working women and their morals: 'We think it is one of the most wicked insults to us girls and also to the soldiers',[95] they wrote. Deborah Thom argues that the distaste expressed by the 'Respectable Maids' was likely to be class-based, fuelled by anger that 'ladies' did not contribute to production.[96]

The Women's Police Service, a rival group to the NUWW patrols,[97] were of the opinion that patrolling women should wear uniforms and have the same rights and powers as constables.[98] Members of the general public supported this assertion, but the Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel,[99] declared that women should not be given such powers and thereby 'exposed to the same risks that policemen are'; he also pointed out that the powers of women police, and of the general public, to make arrests, were underestimated, and that such powers were 'not only their right, but their duty to exercise'.[100] There was no provision in law for women to be sworn into the police, and it was questioned whether they could undertake the physical duties required of constables.[101] Women patrols continued alongside the police force, and, as voluntary workers, who did not receive a wage, remained a cheap source of vigilance. Herbert Samuel was in favour of such patrols, writing to Sir Edward Henry that the scheme should, in his recommendation, be implemented on a 'bold' scale, employing up to a hundred women to patrol in London.[102] Henry had initially opposed the work of the Women's Freedom League, a similar body which was later

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[93] Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever', p.327.
[94] Levine, 'Walking the Streets', p.62.
[95] Letter to the Southport Visitor, cited in Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.20.
[96] Ibid., p.20.
[97] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.34.
[98] TNA MEPO 2/1720.
[99] Rt. Hon. Sir Herbert Samuel, 1970 – 1963, Liberal MP; created Viscount Samuel in 1937; Home Secretary 1916.
[100] TNA MEPO 2/1720: Herbert Samuel, in a letter to W. Frank Perkins, 28 July 1916.
[101] Ibid.: report on the 'powers of the police'.
[102] Ibid.,: letter from Herbert Samuel to Sir Edward Henry, 23 August 1916.

incorporated into the Women's Police Volunteers, because of the suffragist politics of its leader, Nina Boyle.[103] Herbert Samuel also commented on the subject of the patrol scheme that 'it would at least give women the opportunity of helping to cope with an evil which concerns their own sex as much as men'.[104] Hereby, Samuel delineated this as a women's problem, and women's responsibility to deal with, as it pertained to the misdemeanours of their own sex.

The femininity and conventionality of those involved in women's patrols were questioned. The Women's Police Volunteers were founded by 'motorcyclist and Alpinist' Margaret Damer Dawson, who later became Chief Officer of the Women's Police Services, was able to recruit a number of upper-class suffragists to her cause,[105] and who designed a blue uniform with a felt hat for women police to wear.[106] One of her vigilante colleagues, Mary Allen, 'had been gaoled for suffragist activities, and [her] hobbies were driving and flying; she wore jackboots and breeches and usually had a monocle dangling on her chest'.[107] Paul Ferris also comments on Dawson's physical appearance, alleging that her 'firm chin and steel-rimmed spectacles would have seen off most burglars'.[108] Damer Dawson and Allen were hardly themselves the archetypes of respectable, demure femininity that they crusaded to promote, but, as Philippa Levine points out, 'policewomen trod a bewildering path between feminine unassertiveness and *un*feminine authority'.[109] Janet S. K. Watson writes that the wearing of uniforms by women made them an item of ridicule;[110] contemporaries were particularly concerned with women in khaki, but the sentiment could easily have extended to women police in uniforms. Watson further points out that

> Only patriotism – not personal benefit – was a safe motivation for challenging pre-war gender mores. Working-class women in uniform were therefore perceived as dangerous to the social order, a criticism often expressed in sexual and behavioural terms. The 'morality' of women in the military auxiliaries was constantly under question; it is no coincidence that WAAC discharge forms gave ratings for both 'work' and 'personal character'.[111]

A *Punch* cartoon from June 1915 satirised the idea of women police being unfeminine, and toyed with gender stereotypes, depicting an idle young man sitting in a park, commenting that policewomen would have little effect against 'us men'; one of his attractive female

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[103] TNA MEPO/1608, cited in Bland, 'In the Name of Protection', p.26. See also Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.34.
[104] MEPO 2/1720: Letter from Herbert Samuel to Sir Edward Henry, 23 August 1916.
[105] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, pp.202 – 203.
[106] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.80.
[107] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.203.
[108] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.77.
[109] Levine, 'Walking the Streets', p.78.
[110] See Watson, Janet S. K., *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.17.
[111] Ibid., p.34.

companions is depicted as retorting that 'the authorities think that they would be quite a match for those [men] who have remained at home'. This cartoon also served to highlight the unattractiveness to women of male 'shirkers':

Youth. "IT'S ALL VERY WELL TO TALK ABOUT POLICEWOMEN. BUT WHAT COULD THEY DO AGAINST US MEN?"
One of the three ladies (promptly). "I SUPPOSE THE AUTHORITIES THINK THAT THEY WOULD BE QUITE A MATCH FOR THOSE WHO HAVE REMAINED AT HOME."

Source: *Punch*, 9 June 1915, p.449.

Refusing to have their effectiveness questioned, Dawson claimed to have ejected 'hundreds of soldiers and girls' from houses around the military camp at Grantham.[112] The cult of vigilantism, seized upon by Noel Pemberton Billing to much infamy,[113] was embraced by members of the public, keen to root out perfidious behaviour.

With such avid interest in matters of public behaviour, figures were perhaps unrepresentative of the number of incidents of impropriety in public spaces:

> The war seems to have produced an increase in sex-related crimes and prostitution. Nevertheless, the experience of one Women Police Service member, who detailed 383 cases of prostitution in polite Grantham in 1917, suggests over-zealous policing rather than an extraordinary level of vice.[114]

[112] Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.80.
[113] Noel Pemberton Billing headed the Vigilantes, a society with 'the object of promoting purity in public life', and published the *Vigilante* (formerly the *Imperialist*) newspaper.
[114] Levine, 'Walking the Streets', pp.43 – 45, cited in DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.142.

The fervour with which patrols and arrests were carried out certainly substantiated claims of a large civilian army of concerned vigilantes, dealing with what they, at least, perceived as both moral and a patriotic threats. Immoral behaviour was believed to have been situated in geographical locations – both those in the public eye and those out of it – as well as in individuals' bodies: patrols and policing activities monitored both people and places.

In August 1916, Police Superintendents in London were required to report on

> whether there is any truth in the statement that members of the National Union of Women Workers and Women Police have, by their moral influence, cleared the parks and open spaces of London in a way which the men cannot do.[115]

A number of criticisms and complaints about the effectiveness of the women patrols were made. The most common response was that the patrols had little effect,[116] and in some areas they had consequently ceased to patrol.[117] The only area in which the patrols were reported to have had a positive effect was Wimbledon Common. Little faith was placed in the ability of women successfully to remove immoral behaviour from the streets, and it was commented that the work could be done equally well by men, and, moreover, that in places like the Wormwood Scrubbs district, it was only the work of the regular police that made it pleasant for 'respectable people' in the evening and night time.[118] It was also asserted that the considerable improvement in the behaviour of people using public spaces in early 1916 was due to a higher standard of public morals combined with the work of the regular police, and people were recommended not to afford women police too much credit.[119] In some instances, women patrols were criticised as having a detrimental effect, in that they did not eradicate antisocial and indecent behaviour, but rather that they were visible to wrongdoers, who moved themselves and their behaviour elsewhere – to places where it was more visible to the excitable and easily offended general public:

> the evil which has existed in Hyde Park without much annoyance... is being turned into the street and may become a great nuisance to the neighbourhood,[120]

wrote one Superintendent. Another Acting-Superintendent agreed:

> the class of persons who frequent open spaces for immoral purposes will, if interfered with, resort to quiet streets or secluded parts of the district. The

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[115] TNA MEPO 2/1720.
[116] Ibid.: reports from Superintendents and Acting-Superintendents in London, 12 August 1916. Such comments were made about patrols in Hyde Park, Woolwich Common, Blackheath, Hounslow, Battersea Park, and Wormwood Scrubs.
[117] Ibid. Patrols were stopped in Hounslow due to having little effect; patrols were active in Richmond from May 1915 to June 1916, but were stopped due to a lack of funds.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid. Three couples had been convicted of having sexual intercourse in Hyde Park from the time the patrols started up to 12 August 1916.

> moral ascendancy of these ladies [the women patrols] is more asserted in the streets where they enter into conversation with young girls and induce them to attend social clubs, meetings, etc., with, or without, their male companions, instead of wandering about the streets.[121]

Despite criticisms of limited success, however, patrolling activities in parks largely continued with zeal, the women involved being keen to purge immorality from London – and from Britain – and to uphold the moral aptness of a country in international conflict. In the light of female patrols in England, in the early months of the war, Duncan Millar, MP,[122] suggested that a similar scheme be instituted in Scotland, especially to deal with the problem of women in the vicinity of military camps.[123] Anecdotal evidence questioned the efficacy of female patrol groups: despite claiming that soldiers behaving disreputably 'bolted' from the sight of policewomen, Mary Allen was once told by an officer that his two female escorts who he had claimed were his cousins were, in fact, not, and that he was taking them back to his camp.[124] Without the arresting powers of male police officers, women police had to rely on goodwill and honesty, and, as a consequence, could easily be duped.

In a call for more patrols, the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury resolved

> That in every diocese steps should be taken to promote consultations, central and local, between representatives of all Christian bodies with a view to a wise, courageous, and united offensive in Christ's name against the social evils which the war has aggravated, and against the lower moral standard which must, at all costs, be raised again before the period of reconstruction begins.[125]

Through this potent religious language, the cause was adopted as a religious one, as well as a matter for the state. Dr. Winnington Ingram, the Bishop of London, headed the Mission of Repentance and Hope, a body aimed at eradicating wartime immorality through Christian teachings. This organisation was not universally popular, however, and was criticised by Horatio Bottomley, who believed that celibate clerics were in no position to make pronouncements on morality.[126]

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[121] Ibid.
[122] Sir James Duncan Millar, KC, MP, 1871 – 1932: Liberal MP for Lanarkshire NE, March 1911 – December 1918.
[123] Parliamentary Debates, 24 November 1914, vol. 68, column 928: Duncan Millar. The Lord Advocate (Mr. Munro) (for the Secretary of Scotland) replied that discussions for the arrangement of women patrols in Scotland were taking place between advocates of such a scheme and the naval and military authorities. Rt. Hon. Robert Munro, 1868 – 1955: Liberal MP for Wick Burghs, 1910 – 1918; Secretary for Scotland, December 1916 – October 1922.
[124] Turner, *Dear Old Blighty*, p.203.
[125] Resolution of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, 7 February 1918, cited in the *Times*, 8 February 1918, p.3, column c, 'Purity Patrols: A Suggestion by Canon Burroughs'.
[126] *John Bull*, 19 August 1916, p.1, column b, 'The Morals of London'.

The Women Police Volunteers were also responsible for observing the domestic behaviour of women whose husbands were serving in the forces, and ensuring that these women did not take in lodgers, spend their allowance on drink, or have affairs with other men. Such behaviour was possible, according to Canon E. A. Burroughs, who described separation allowances as 'heedlessly liberal'.[127] If soldiers' wives were found to be unfaithful to their husbands, their separation allowance was discontinued.[128] Sixteen thousand women lost their separation allowances due to allegedly 'immoral behaviour'.[129] This surveillance was carried out by women who hid behind hedges and fences in order to watch who came and went to the houses of women whose husbands were away in the forces.[130] Perhaps in the light of this, a female doctor commented that the clergy's attempts to promote and achieve high standards of morality were in vain: 'The clergy must begin to realise that monogamy is not an established practice in England',[131] she commented. Nonetheless, attempts to improve the moral state of the nation remained persistent, even if their effect was perceived as limited.

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While these problems were being dealt with by the police, vigilance groups, and women patrols, the invidious task of dealing with prostitution, on the streets and in brothels, remained. Prostitution was obviously difficult to observe and to regulate, because, by its very nature, it was a clandestine activity, and, as such, the extent of the problem could not be known. Moreover, being shameful and illicit, prostitution was largely shrouded in a taboo of silence: there does not exist a corpus of personal testimonies of those people who were involved, as prostitutes, pimps, brothel-keepers, and clients. Accounts of contemporary attitudes to prostitution tend, therefore, to be pejorative, being from the police, vigilantes, or concerned members of the public. Prostitution was a sensitive subject for the government: memories of the 1913 'Piccadilly flat case', in which prostitute 'Queenie Gerald' had been prosecuted, were still quite recent; the press had alleged that the names of members of the Cabinet and the Government appeared in books, diaries, letters, and documents that had been found at the Piccadilly flat. McKenna stated in parliament that, in the light of these allegations, he had read through all such documents and no

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[127] Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, p.162.
[128] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.35.
[129] Van Emden and Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front*, p.269.
[130] Haste, Rules of Desire, p.35.
[131] Cited in the *Times*, 8 February 1918, p.3, column c, 'Purity Patrols: A Suggestion by Canon Burroughs'.

evidence of parliamentarians' names had been found.[132] Attitudes of distaste towards prostitution were compounded by the fact that it was discussed in the emotive language of the 'white slave trade', or 'white slave traffic',[133] rather than of 'sex workers'. People's personal behaviour, in public and private, could be criticised on moral, religious, or patriotic grounds; people's individual natures could be appealed to with whatever propaganda tools were available. But prostitution, with complex networks of pimps and brothels, and the commodification of sex, would prove to be a trickier task, and one which, unless effectively dealt with, was felt to pose a greater danger to the state.[134]

Prostitution was controlled by the Vagrancy Act of 1824, which rendered

> every common prostitute wandering in the public streets or public highway, or in any place of public resort, and behaving in a riotous or indecent manner liable to imprisonment as an idle and disorderly person.[135]

Similarly, the Vagrancy Act of 1898 provided that men who knowingly lived on the earnings of prostitution, or anyone who 'persistently solicits or importunes for immoral purposes' in public places, could be imprisoned, with or without hard labour, for up to two years.[136] The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1912 rendered any person who managed or assisted in managing a brothel, or knowingly permitted the use of their premises as such, subject to a £20 fine and three months' imprisonment, with or without hard labour; second or subsequent convictions carried a sentence of a £40 fine and four months' imprisonment, with or without hard labour.[137] The penalties inflicted on brothel-keepers were considered by some commentators to be insubstantial and ineffectual, however: Sir Henry Craik[138] raised this issue in parliament, drawing the Home Secretary's attention to the case of a brothel-keeper who had been convicted at Bow Street, and sentenced to pay a fine of £20 plus eight guineas costs;

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[132] Parliamentary Debates, 7 August 1913, vol.56, columns 1761 – 1762. Home Office files evinced a press campaign against 'Queenie Gerald': TNA HO 45/24649.

[133] See Henry, E. R., *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1914*: 1916 Cd. 8188 xiv 539; Henry, E. R., *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1915*: 1916 Cd. 8405 xiv 575; Henry, E. R., *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1916*: 1917 – 18 Cd. 8827 xviii 5; Henry, E. R., *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1917*: 1918 Cd. 9204 xii 551; Henry, E. R., *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Years 1918 and 1919*: 1920 Cmd. 543, Cmd. 901 xxii 493.

[134] On the impact of prostitution and venereal disease on the British Empire, see Levine, Philippa, 'Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India', pp.579 – 602 in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 4, 1994.

[135] Section 3 of *Vagrancy Act, 1824*: 5 Geo. 4, Chapter 83 (1824).

[136] Section 1 (1) of *Vagrancy Act, 1898*: 61 & 62 Vict., Chapter 39 (1898).

[137] Section 13 of *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885*: 48 & 49 Vict., Chapter 69 (1885).

[138] Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Craik, Bart., KCB, 1846 – 1927; JP for London; Conservative MP for Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, 1906 – 1918.

evidence stated, however, that the takings of the brothel in one week were at the rate of £6200 a year.[139]

The presence of brothels, and private houses used for prostitution, having been acknowledged, lodging houses in the Metropolis during the war remained under the remit of the London County Council's By-Laws of 1903, which stated that:

> (9) Except in those lodging houses apportioned as such, no rooms are to be occupied by single men, or single women, or married couples, or parents with children under 10 years of age.
> (10) No person over the age of 10 is to occupy a sleeping apartment used by a member of the opposite sex – apart from married couples.
> (11) In any rooms for 2 or more married couples the bed must be screened out of view of others.[140]

The by-laws were simultaneously strict and lenient. The occupancy of rooms was required to be clearly defined and enforced, but married couples were permitted to share their rooms with their children or with other couples; the presence of a screen would have had a superficial effect. With the problems of slums and overcrowded housing, however, shared bedrooms were commonplace, and it was commented that this practice did not give children the opportunity to develop a healthy attitude towards sex. Wartime social commentators pointed out the difficulties of children living in overcrowded accommodation, sharing bedrooms with their parents, and being exposed to sexual behaviour from a young age. The Catholic Social Guild stated that it was 'impossible to exaggerate the importance of [an improvement in housing conditions]'.[141] Prohibiting people aged over ten years sharing rooms with members of the opposite sex evinced an acknowledgement of the problem of child prostitution. The Licensing (Consolidation) Act, 1910, stipulated laws regarding public houses, stating that a

> Licensee shall not knowingly permit his premises to be the habitual resort or place of meeting of reputed prostitutes, whether the object of their so resorting is or is not prostitution.[142]

The existence of such laws demonstrated the legislated intrusion into people's private lives.

The enforcing of these laws proved to be difficult, with approximately 500 lodging houses in the Metropolitan Police District,[143] and people's private behaviour being difficult

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[139] Parliamentary Debates, 21 February 1917, vol.90, column 1333.
[140] TNA MEPO 2/1287: London County Council By-Laws, 1 October 1903. With homosexuality still both illegal and taboo, it is unsurprising that the by-laws did not mention single-sex occupancy in these terms.
[141] M. F., *Prostitution: The Moral Bearings of the Problem* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1917), pp.129 – 130. Section 16 of *Children Act, 1908*: 8 Edw. 7, Chapter 67 (1908) provided that 'any person having the custody, charge, or care of a young person aged between 4 and 16, allowing that child or young person to reside in or frequent a brothel' was liable to a fine, imprisonment, or both. Children were removed from brothels and placed in Industrial Schools, workhouses, or returned to their parents: TNA MEPO 2/1548.
[142] Section 76 (i) of *Licensing (Consolidation) Act, 1910*: 10 Edw. 7 & 1 Geo. 5, Chapter 24 (1910).

to observe and to police. Indeed, Metropolitan Police Superintendents' reports evince the fact that the by-laws had little or no effect. Superintendent 'H', with responsibility for 40 lodging houses in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, remarked that

> ... it is very difficult for the Police to obtain evidence that the premises are used as Brothels. The prostitute engages a room for the night with the first man she can make acquaintance of, who probably remains for a short period only, leaving the woman free to use the room for the purposes of her profession, with as many other men as she can induce to accompany her...[144]

Despite the extant laws and patrols, measures relating to brothels and prostitution were not received consensually as being sufficient to deal with the problem. Hammersmith Borough Council demanded stricter measures to deal with the problem in wartime, urging that a Defence of the Realm Regulation be passed regarding habitual prostitution and soliciting. Moreover, the Borough Council drew upon the imperative nature of addressing the problem, given the war situation, being 'strongly of opinion that particularly at this time the subject of suppression of disorderly houses was of the utmost importance'.[145] Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act addressed the problems of soliciting and brothels through their links with venereal disease.

During the war, with the volume of soldiers on leave and on their way to postings who passed through London and required the use of lodging houses, their observation was difficult. With such war conditions, problems were exacerbated, and people's interest and concern was focussed thereon. Undeniably, the necessity for the moral integrity of the nation during wartime meant that any evidence of widespread and unmanageable prostitution in the busy Capital would have been disastrous for morale; if British society was riddled with such immorality, claims could be made that that the nation did not have the right to claim moral or military victory in the war. Westminster Magistrate Horace Smith was perplexed as to how to deal with certain prostitutes, and wrote to the Home Office that

> On Saturday last... three young women were before me on remand. They had been charged with 'soliciting'; I had found them guilty. They refused to listen to any suggestion as to sending for their parents or going for a while to a House or placing them on probation... They declared their firm intention to lead an immoral life in the streets... I know no remedy... The effect of remanding these girls in prison is to expose them to the influence of hardened offenders.[146]

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[143] MEPO 2/1287: Summary of Metropolitan Superintendents' reports, 19 March 1913.
[144] Ibid. For statistical records of London premises reported to the authorities as brothels, and police records of apprehensions for brothel keeping, and living on prostitutes' earnings, in the ten years before the war, see TNA MEPO 2/1720.
[145] Resolution of the Hammersmith Borough Council, 8 January 1917, detailed in letter from the Town Clerk of Hammersmith Borough Council to Lord Rhondda, President of the Local Government Board, and Sir George Cave, the Home Secretary; cited in TNA HO 45/10557/166505.
[146] HO 45/10523/140266: letter from Horace Smith to the Home Office, 11 May 1916.

In response to Smith's letter, the Home Office observed that

> So far as possible, young prisoners sent to Holloway on remand are kept apart from the older and more corrupt women, but it is, of course, impossible, however careful the supervision may be, to guarantee that the older prisoners shall never be able to speak to the younger on the way to or from chapel or exercise, and so on.[147]

Despite the legal provisions for dealing with prostitutes, then, their behaviour remained unconstrained, as personal and private behaviour often was.

In the light of the problems of prostitution, the Bishop of London, Dr. Winnington Ingram, preaching demagogically from the open-air pulpit at St. James's, Piccadilly, called for a crusade against the immoral behaviour of male pimps:

> What I have come out to denounce today are the villains more mischievous than German spies, who ought to share their fate, who lie in wait to stain the chivalry of our boys, poison their minds, and undermine their characters. For instance, what are we to say to the male hawks who walk up and down this very Piccadilly night by night, with an army of helpless and trembling girls under their surveillance, and who take from them the money the girls earn by their shame. I am not a bloodthirsty man, but I say shooting is too good for them...[148]

He continued with a patriotic plea:

> For the sake of the boys who fight for us, the boys who have died for us, for the sake of the children of the future, let us free London from the curse of lust and sin and make it the antechamber of the City which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.[149]

The *Times* alleged that the coverage of this problem in the newspaper had led to an improvement in the conditions; military and police patrols had been increased.[150] Conditions in the Horseferry Road were alleged to have been worse since the start of the war, and calls were made for more women police in this area, to protect prostitutes from themselves.[151] Dr. Edward Beadon Turner, the President of the British Medical Association, argued that the problem of prostitution could not be cured by 'wholesale restrictions and arrests', and advocated instead an increase in women police and vigilance

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[147] Ibid.: Home Office Minutes, 26 June 1916.
[148] *Manchester Guardian*, 21 September 1916, p.6, column f, 'Male hawks in Piccadilly: Bishop of London on London's Morals'.
[149] Ibid. See also *Times*, 6 February 1917, p.5, column b, 'Conditions in the Waterloo-Road'; *Times*, 22 February 1917, p.3, column c, 'A Centre of Vice: Nightly Scenes in the Waterloo Road'.
[150] *Times*, 1 March 1917, p.5, column d, 'Waterloo Road Scandal: An Improvement in the Conditions'.
[151] *Times*, 24 February 1917, p.6, column a, 'Bad Conditions in Westminster: The Horseferry-Road: Rampant Prostitution'.

patrols, as well as the establishment of clubs where young people could meet to socialise under the supervision of responsible women. He conceded, however, that the problem of prostitution was much less severe than in the 1870s, when he was once accosted 79 times between Haymarket and Lancaster Gate: by the war, he claimed, the old prostitutes had died out, and the younger ones were gainfully employed in war work.[152] This opinion was not widely supported. Most commentators observed that the problem of prostitution was worse in wartime, both numerically, and morally: problems which, in peacetime, may have been of moral concern, became, in wartime, a threat to the very status of the nation. As such, the war drew people's attentions to an already extant proliferation of prostitutes, and affected the urgency with which people felt this problem would have to be solved.

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Beyond the social problems of prostitution and public incidences of impropriety, unlawful and immoral acts were also evinced to occur at home, in people's legitimate relationships. The war itself, and the disruption it brought, obviously influenced people's personal and sexual relationships. The eyes of social commentators were on women on the home front, watching their behaviour and scrutinising their morals in the absence of men. Through this surveillance, women were seen as a site for moral disreputability. In Susan Grayzel's words

> The multiple public debates that posed female sexuality as a threat to the fighting man point to the extent to which debates about the female body as the site of temptation and the transmitter of disease became an arena for the expression of anxiety about general social disorder.[153]

One source of concern was the behaviour of flappers. While they were not seen as a moral threat in the way that prostitutes were, they were still perceived as a distraction for men, which was considered by some commentators to be inappropriate, especially given that it was wartime, and the men they were distracting were usually soldiers. One subaltern, who had been harassed by flappers, wrote to the *Daily Mirror* of their 'unwomanly' behaviour.[154] This subject was a preoccupation of the *Daily Mirror*, which ran a cartoon

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[152] *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1918, p.4, column b, 'The Soldier and the City Streets: Dr. Beadon Turner's Views'. Despite popular belief to the contrary, Dr. Edward Beadon Turner asserted that an equal moral standard for both sexes was both desirable and possible: Culleton, Claire A., *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914 – 1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p.53.
[153] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.122.
[154] *Daily Mirror*, 23 August 1915, p.5, column d, 'Miss Flapperton's Conduct: Some Criticisms of Her Frivolous Ways and Manners'; letter from 'Subaltern – Philip'.

strip about 'Miss Joy Flapperton', as well as an ongoing letters column on the subject.[155] One such cartoon warned men against introducing their girlfriends to their best friend lest they lose them both; Miss Joy Flapperton was drawn as wantonly and capriciously changing her boyfriends, and enjoying the sport of 'taming a woman-hater'.[156] Robert Baden-Powell felt 'shame' at the sight of the 'giggling, glad-eye flapper' among soldiers in London,[157] and utilised the Girl Guide movement as a means to counter the behaviour of flappers: Richard A. Voeltz writes that

> The Guides acted as a cure, or antidote, for 'flapperdom' and 'war fever' or 'khaki fever', assumed to be dangerous social and psychological afflictions which beset the girls and young women of Britain, causing them to act in unrestrained, even bold and brazen ways, thus threatening the very moral order of the country.[158]

Indeed, membership of the Girl Guide movement increased from 40,000 in 1914 to 70,000 in 1918,[159] almost doubling as a result of the war, and perhaps evidence of militaristic tendencies and the desire to wear uniform among those women and girls too young to join the auxiliary services or women police.

Wartime disruptions meant that family structures were fragmented, and the moral conventions associated with the family were exploded, at least temporarily. Women, remaining on the home front, were an obvious target for criticism of perceived immorality. Deborah Thom argues that family life was already threatened by the existing conditions of women's work: inequality in pay led to the high incidence of infant mortality and prostitution.[160] But, beyond this, war-specific factors contributed. Wartime fostered single-sex communities and single-sex interaction on a scale which had never been seen before in Britain. While homosocial culture flourished among men in the forces, women on the home front, bereft of their male companions, enjoyed their own homosocial experiences. However, Susan Grayzel writes,

> As... male heads of households enlisted or were called up, a generalised public anxiety swelled about what would become of their homes and families. In part because the war was justified as a defence of women and children, and thus

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[155] The letters published in the *Daily Mirror* evinced a variety of opinions from the public: see the letters pages in the *Daily Mirror* throughout August 1915.
[156] *Daily Mirror*, 21 August 1915, p.5, columns b, c, and d.
[157] Robert Baden-Powell, 'Women Slackers' in *Girl Guide Gazette*, November 1917, cited in Voeltz, Richard A., 'The Antidote to "Khaki Fever"? The Expansion of the British Girl Guides during the First World War', pp. 627 – 638 in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27 (4), October 1992, p.632.
[158] Ibid., p.627.
[159] Ibid., p.627.
[160] Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.29.

> implicitly of traditional gender roles, there was a good deal of concern about how wartime circumstances might alter these.[161]

Women were required to exemplify moral ideals in the absence of their menfolk.[162] Moreover, denuded of their husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons – possibly forever – the emergence of a new morality was unavoidable: J. M. Bourne observes that 'War exposed the fragility of human happiness'.[163] Susan Grayzel writes that 'the loosening of family ties' fostered a decline in morality and an increase in vice.[164] Indeed, women's social roles and their positions in families changed; paralleled with this was the emotional and physical hardship caused by the absence, or loss of, male members of the family. Moral codes in wartime, then, were re-written by women, for women.

Transgressions of moral codes by female munitions workers were seen by some critics as representative of the behaviour of all working-class women.[165] Furthermore, it has been widely argued that, thrown into women-only working environments, for example in munitions factories, women were able to gain confidence and independence on an unprecedented scale.[166] This confidence manifested itself in a number of ways, including a sexual confidence, and a knowledge of sexual matters gained from, and shared with, work colleagues, without prurience or shame.[167]

While 'some [female munitions workers] were nice and some were rude', as one wartime worker commented,[168] sexual education was, for women, an essential part of work in these factories. One munitions worker, O. M. Taylor, recalled her shock when she was told 'how babies were made':

> I refused to believe it and told those women in no uncertain terms what I thought of them, remarking, 'My mum and dad would never do that!' How those women laughed![169]

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[161] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women and the First World War* (Harlow and London: Longman (Pearson Educational Ltd.), 2002), p.62.
[162] Ibid., pp.62 – 63.
[163] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War* p.235. On 'This *carpe diem* attitude towards life during wartime', see Grayzel, Susan, 'Liberating Women? Examining Gender, Morality and Sexuality in First World War Britain and France', pp. 113 – 134 in Braybon, Gail (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914 – 1918* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), p.123.
[164] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p.64.
[165] Culleton, *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914 – 1921*, p.53.
[166] Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.20; Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p.62.
[167] See, for example, Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.20; Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, p.145.
[168] Lilian Barker, Welfare Superintendent of the Woolwich munitions workers, cited in Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.19.
[169] IWM DD 83/17/1: Miss O. M. Taylor: Unpublished memoir: 'Recollections of the Great War, 1914 – 1918', p.10. Also cited in Woollacott, Angela, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 1994), pp.145 –146, and Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.40.

An increase in sexual and genital awareness, at least, was to be expected: 'Munitions workers were', Deborah Thom writes, 'instructed to change their underwear and wash regularly in direct language'.[170] Moreover, munitions workers received 'moral hygiene' instruction, regarding venereal disease and 'womanly dignity'.[171] One memoirist commented that such lectures were not only 'boring', but also intended 'to warn the girls that an awful disease could be caught through a kiss'.[172] This misinformation about the spread of venereal disease was clearly problematic, in that people would not have known what to believe, and, as such, rumours would have been given more credence. After the war, Taylor learned that women in the WAAC 'were regarded as scum + that we had been enlisted for the sexual satisfaction of soldiers'.[173] Sexual temptations were obviously felt by both single and married women. To prevent explosions, female munitions workers were required to remove 'all personal jewellery'.[174] Munitions workers were also required to undergo an intrusive 'policing of the body' to check for jewellery, which involved the overseer running her hands over the worker's body[175] – in itself a potentially sexual experience. As well as having a levelling effect, the removal of wedding and engagement rings may have made women more inclined to philander, and men more likely to approach them, especially if the rings were left off outside of working hours.

Despite the possibilities for sexual enlightenment, however, Angela Woollacott states that there is 'insufficient evidence concerning the intimate aspects of women munitions workers' lives to say whether they experienced the war as sexual release'.[176] Given the absence of large numbers of men during the war, it was easy for concerned observers to perceive women as the key site for immoral behaviour. In many respects, this became a women's issue: female patrols dealt with primarily female offenders. This made for an interesting dynamic, however, because men were involved in those sexual acts which occurred in public and those which were denounced but which occurred in private, but were absolved, in many cases, from guilt and responsibility. While men and women were subject to different moral codes, in terms of behaviour that was expected of, and accepted from them, Janet S. K. Watson writes that the war experience afforded men and women a 'different but equal' status.[177]

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[170] Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.15.
[171] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.39.
[172] IWM DD 83/17/183/17/1: Miss O. M. Taylor, p.24.
[173] Ibid., p.27.
[174] Health of Munition Workers Committee, Memo. no. 4, The Employment of Women, 1916, Cd. 8185, p.xxiii, cited in Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.131.
[175] Health of Munition Workers Committee Pamphlet 11, Handbook for Overseers, 1916, cited in Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p.151.
[176] Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p.4.
[177] On this subject, see Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p.289.

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A curious and fascinating case which illustrated the inextricable link between wartime conditions and people's attitudes towards sexual behaviour occurred in 1918. In January 1918, the Independent MP Noel Pemberton Billing[178] published an article in his patriotic newspaper the *Imperialist* claiming that a 'Black Book'[179] was held by the Germans, naming 47,000 English men and women who were not only German secret agents, but also guilty of 'spreading debauchery of such a lasciviousness as only German minds could conceive and only German bodies execute', and of the 'propagation of evils which all decent men thought had perished in Sodom and Lesbia'. 'In Lesbian ecstasy', Billing declared, 'the most sacred secrets of State were betrayed'.[180] The alleged 47,000 secret agents included Herbert Asquith and his wife Margot, Lord Haldane, and a number of other society figures and parliamentarians.[181] In February 1918, the *Imperialist* changed its name to the *Vigilante*; that month, an article appeared in the *Vigilante*, entitled 'The Cult of the Clitoris,' which claimed that

> To be a member of Maud Allen's [sic] private performance in Oscar Wilde's *Salome* one has to apply to Miss Valetta of Duke St., Adelphi. If Scotland Yard were to seize the list of those members I have no doubt they would secure the names of several thousand of the first 47,000.[182]

Maud Allan was a dancer, and had been rumoured to have had a lesbian relationship with Margot Asquith.[183] She had also courted notoriety in 1913, when her 'exotic' dances were considered likely to cause scandal if she performed them for Bengali troops in India.[184] Far from being a fringe concern, that of a man on a jingoistic crusade through the newspaper he owned, the matter was thrown boldly into the public arena when Horatio Bottomley wrote in support of Billing's contentions in his popular newspaper *John Bull*. Bottomley and

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[178] Noel Pemberton Billing was MP for East Herts; he was suspended from the House of Commons on 1 July 1918: see Parliamentary Debates, 1 July 1918, vol.107, columns 1410 – 1412.
[179] This 'Black Book' has never been seen in the public domain: on this subject, see Rubin, Gerry R., 'Sex, Lies and the Home Office: The Pemberton Billing trial (1918) and the Black Book', pp.43 – 45 in *Labour History Review*, 60 (3), Winter 1995.
[180] *Imperialist*, 26 January 1918, p.3, column a, 'As I See It – The First 47,000'. On Pemberton Billing's preoccupation with enemy aliens and alien prostitutes in Britain, see Parliamentary Debates, 1 November 1917, vol.98, columns 1621 – 1622; Parliamentary Debates, 12 February 1917, vol.90, column 266.
[181] Bland, Lucy, 'Trial by Sexology? Maud Allan, *Salome* and the "Cult of the Clitoris" Case', pp. 183 – 198 in Bland, Lucy and Doan, Laura, *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.184.
[182] *Vigilante*, 16 February 1918, p.1, column e, 'The Cult of the Clitoris'. Further articles on this subject were published in the *Vigilante* in February 1918: 16 February 1918, p.4, 'The National Aberration of Germany', and 23 February 1918, p.3, 'As I see it – "Vanoc" and the Forty-Seven Thousand'.
[183] Bland, 'Trial by Sexology?', p.185.
[184] Greenhut, Jeffrey, 'Race, Sex, and War: The Impact of Race and Sex on Morale and Health Services for the Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914', pp. 71 – 74 in *Military Affairs*, 45 (2), April 1981, pp.71 – 72.

Billing had a relationship of mutual support and lionisation: in the *Imperialist*, in January 1918, Horatio Bottomley was described by Billing as 'versatile and wonderful'; Billing further claimed that 'Truly Mr. Bottomley is a great man and a power in this land. If all John Bulls were like him we should have won the war years before it ever began'.[185] Bottomley wrote that 'Militarism, such as Germany boasts, breeds gross vice', a rather hypocritical statement from a man so bellicose as Bottomley, and referred to 'the unspeakable Oscar Wilde' and to 'the demoralising practices which brought ancient Rome to her ruin'. Even these practices, Bottomley insisted, were 'outclassed in depravity and bestiality in the highest society of Germany'.[186] Germany had been designated a sexually degenerate and morally depraved country from early on in the war, when the popular press, and enlistment campaigns, drew upon stories about brutal 'Huns' raping Belgian women.[187]

Maud Allan brought an unsuccessful lawsuit[188] for libel against Pemberton Billing for his accusations of lesbianism: despite the writings on sexology by such authors as Havelock Ellis, the eighteenth-century belief that lesbians were atavistic and genetically degenerate still persisted, even in the medical profession.[189] On 4 June 1918, Noel Pemberton Billing was found not guilty. Moreover, Maud Allan had been shown to have a knowledge of sexual matters, such as the meanings of the words 'sadism' and 'incest'. She was also condemned for having quipped at one point in the trial that the phrase 'Mary had a little lamb' could be interpreted in a number of ways.[190] Bland asserts that Allan's 'inappropriate knowledge was part of her undoing',[191] and draws upon the persistent double standard evinced by this trial:

> a woman's knowledge of sexual terms carried different implications from a man's knowledge, for ignorant women were innocent, while women with sexual knowledge were, by definition, 'tainted'.[192]

A member of Maud Allan's counsel apologised to the ladies present in the courtroom for having to use the filthy phrase 'Cult of the Clitoris'. The only newspaper to publish the word 'clitoris' was the *Vigilante*, although the word was better known than may be assumed: Marie Stopes's *Married Love* had been published in March 1918, selling 2000

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[185] *Imperialist*, 12 January 1918, p.2.
[186] *John Bull*, 8 June 1918, pp.6 – 7, 'Vice in High Places'. Bottomley reiterated his point in similar anti-German articles: *John Bull*, 15 June 1918 pp.6 – 7, 'Behind the Billing Case'; John Bull, 22 June 1918, pp.6 – 7, 'More About the "47,000"'.
[187] See Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, pp.16 – 17.
[188] Justice Darling, the presiding judge in the trial, was mentioned as one of the '47,000': Bland, 'Trial by Sexology?', p.184.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., pp.189 and 191.
[191] Ibid., p. 192.
[192] Ibid.

copies in the first fortnight, and discussing importance of the clitoris in female sexual arousal.[193]

The libel trial received unprecedented interest for such an explicit case: even the respectable press were enthralled, and covered the story avidly and in sensationalist tones.[194] People queued for hours outside the Old Bailey to get a seat in the hearing.[195] The *Daily Mail* printed a picture of a cheering crowd outside the Court after Billing's acquittal. A leading article in the *Times* stated that

> no lawsuit of modern times has attracted such universal and painful interest as the deplorable libel action which terminated yesterday at the Central Criminal Court. Not only in London, but even more in the provincial towns and countryside, the daily reports have been read and discussed with almost as deep anxiety as the news of the war itself.[196]

The Daily Mirror wrote of 'Amazing Scenes' and 'a great storm of clapping' as Billing was found not guilty.[197] A *Times* leader article after the trial implored Billing to take the matter further, and to make public any evidence he had about the '47,000', declaring that he 'cannot possibly leave the matter where it stands and still pose as a patriotic purist'.[198] Not all observers were so supportive of the frenzy that surrounded the trial, however. In a letter to the *Times*, J. H. Thomas expressed his concern about the distraction and upset caused to 'the great mass of our people, whose minds and thoughts at this moment are concerned with the fate of their loved ones at the front'.[199]

This trial aroused such interest in the press and among the public for a number of reasons. Firstly, memories were stirred of Oscar Wilde's trial, and the nation's revulsion to alleged sexual degeneracy was revived. Secondly, the trial occurred at a time when many felt that Germany was winning the war, following the Germans' March 1918 German offensive. Michael Kettle discusses the military difficulties for Britain in the earlier part of 1918, and attributes the widespread interest in the Billing case at least partially to the fact that

> All the varied pressures on the social and political structure of the country found an outlet in political extremism – and sexual obsession.[200]

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[193] Ibid., p.189.
[194] Michael Kettle's 1977 account of the trial is called, rather dramatically, *Salome's Last Veil: The Libel Case of the Century*: Kettle, Michael, *Salome's Last Veil: The Libel Case of the Century* (St. Albans, London, New York, Sydney, Toronto, Johannesburg: Granada Publishing, 1977).
[195] Bland, 'Trial by Sexology?', p.183.
[196] *Times*, 5 June 1918, p.7, columns a – c, 'A Scandalous Trial'.
[197] *Daily Mirror*, 5 June 1918, p.2, columns a and b, 'Mr. Billing Found "Not Guilty"'.
[198] *Times*, 5 June 1918, p.7, columns a – c, 'A Scandalous Trial'.
[199] *Times*, 5 June 1918, p.7 column c, 'Common-Sense and the Billing Trial'.
[200] Kettle, *Salome's Last Veil*, pp.1 – 2.

Accusations which were made against the German people and the German nation were obviously welcome at such a period of high nationalistic emotion. Furthermore, a diversion from the newspapers' war reports, and from the details of deaths of service personnel was welcome. The case was also important in terms of positive affirmations of British moral identity, as a counter to the negative images which were wrought of the Germans. Lucy Bland writes that the case

> sent out a message equating sexual conformity, heterosexuality, and virility with Englishness and patriotism, versus sexual perversion, homosexuality, lesbianism, decadence, foreignness and treachery.[201]

Perhaps more importantly, the outcome of the trial demonstrated that the court, and the state, both accepted and reinforced the link between Germanness and sexual immorality and depravity. This connection, then, no longer resided in patriotic rhetoric alone, but was endorsed by the state.

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Immoral, inappropriate, and unpatriotic behaviour caused considerable debate in wartime Britain. Samuel Hynes asserts that a war on sexual deviancy was designated as 'the last of the home front wars' in which the British nation engaged.[202] The concern expressed by the authorities, the press, the clergy, and members of the public, and their involvement in attempting to solve these problems, clearly delineated these matters as national concerns. Indeed, increased levels of policing during the war evinced, if not an actual increase in the incidences of licentious behaviour, then a certain perception that such an increase had occurred, and would need to be controlled. As Lesley A. Hall writes, about the concern regarding the existence of certain immoral behaviours,

> The relation between regulatory codes, societal beliefs more generally, and practice is by no means simple: because certain acts or relationships are tabooed does not mean that they did not occur – proscription or deprecation indicates that a possibility, if no more, might exist.[203]

What made such behaviour most objectionable was that it often involved British soldiers in uniform, who, it was felt, should behave in such a way as to uphold the morals and virtues of the country for which they fought, rather than disgracing it by their debauchery. Concern about the prevalence of prostitution, and about the behaviour of female war workers and the

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[201] Bland, 'Trial by Sexology?', p.195.
[202] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp.221 – 234.
[203] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, pp.3 – 4.

wives of absent soldiers, showed that a considerable degree of moral concern centred around the conduct of women. Women's moral respectability was, Susan Grayzel writes, seen as one of the main factors in determining that Britain was a morally appropriate nation, and one which could win the war.[204]

The war was believed, to some extent, to have created moral problems, in disrupting social and family structures, and in creating large and concentrated bodies of servicemen around the country. Concurrently, the fact of the nation's being at war enhanced the problems in acuteness and urgency. Such behaviour may well have been expected, however. Paul Fussell quotes W. H. Auden, who observed that

> In times of war even the crudest kind of positive affection between persons seems extraordinarily beautiful, a noble symbol of peace and forgiveness of which the whole world stands so desperately in need.[205]

These palpable facts aside, Fussell considers there to be a 'severe dichotomy' between illicit personal affairs and the concurrent sanctioned mass murder, but does not explain why, in his opinion, these two occurrences cannot be reconciled.[206] On a similar note, Gerard J. DeGroot writes that

> War can be erotic. Its effect upon the libido has been grossly exaggerated, but, as with any myth, this one has a basis in fact. Take a man in uniform with leather, throw in the machismo of fighting and guns, add a woman susceptible to romance and excitement, bring them together in the urgency of a 48-hour leave, and the result can be explosive. If sexual activity did increase, it was because there was more opportunity: greater tendency to throw caution to the wind, less of the censure and control which tightly knit communities once exercised.[207]

Indeed, in wartime, heightened emotions and conspicuous sexual activity were perhaps a natural reaction to a situation in which many Britons did not feel in control. It was not the presence of such behaviour alone which was scandalous, however, but its prominence in the eyes of those concerned parties who felt it to be inappropriate. Moreover, as a perceived threat to the nation's moral standing and military potential, it was redrawn as a public concern.

Lucy Bland argues that, in wartime, concerns with promiscuity and venereal disease overshadowed concerns with morality alone.[208] Examinations of contemporary attitudes

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[204] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.155.
[205] W. H. Auden, cited in Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.270.
[206] See ibid., p.271.
[207] DeGroot, Blighty, pp.233 – 234.
[208] Bland, Lucy, '"Guardians of the race", or "Vampires upon the nation's health"? Female sexuality and its regulation in early twentieth-century Britain', pp. 373 – 388 in Whitelegg, Elizabeth, Arnot, Madeleine, Bartels, Else, Beechey, Veronica, Birke, Lynda, Himmelwhite, Susan, Leonard, Diana, Ruehl,

show, however, that the demands of the war surpassed all such concerns. The activities of the women patrols, and the development and outcome of the Pemberton Billing case, evinced a war-specific alarm, which focussed on nationality and its alignment with morality: British servicemen and their wives were required to behave morally and appropriately; German nationals and enemy agents were expected to be sexually depraved. If British people were found to be behaving immorally, they were considered to be acting not only in a characteristically un-British way, but also unpatriotically. The magnitude of these hitherto private issues was demonstrated by the volume of coverage they received in various public discourses, and, as Susan Grayzel observes, it was believed that 'the moral battles... *had* to be won if the war was to be a true victory'.[209]

Sonja, and Speakman, Mary Anne (eds.), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), p.342; this subject is also discussed in Woollacott, 'Khaki Fever'.

[209] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.155.

CHAPTER THREE

Sex, Race, and the Nation:
Women, Marriage, and Children

Relationships were affected by the separations and hardships wrought by the war. Furthermore, marriages and other relationships between men and women were imbued by many with a sense of war-specific significance. A union was no longer a commitment which involved only two people, as it was in peacetime: it was redefined in terms of the role that that relationship played in the war campaign. The interaction of sexually active adults was debated, as was their role as potential mothers and fathers: reproductive sex, within marriage, was encouraged, as a means of fortifying the British population and the race, the strength of both of which were vital at a time of international conflict. This is exemplified by a study of the moral panic which surrounded the 'war babies' crisis, through which people saw a polarisation of certain sexual behaviours and their consequences, some being aligned with support for Britain's national values and the war effort, and others with moral disreputability and detriment. This chapter contends that debates demarcated those sexual relationships and activities, and their consequences, which were desirable, and those which were not.

This chapter utilises published and unpublished fact and opinion about sex and morality in wartime Britain to examine the nature and extent of moral panics and opinions about the appropriateness of sexual behaviour as procreation. More specifically, this chapter considers attitudes to sex within and outside of marriage, the moral implications thereof, and the role of sex as a procreative force rather than a recreational activity. A case-study of the war babies phenomenon, alongside calls for an increased legitimate population, sheds light on how the questions of race and eugenics were closely linked with sex and sexual morals. This standpoint, seen by historians as contradictory,[1] was not so perceived during the war itself. Rather, it was felt to be a necessary and natural reaction to a perceived shortage of legitimate babies and a proliferation of illegitimate ones. Both of these factors were seen to be relevant to the nation's pursuit of the war. Through debates on the future of the race – for this is the terminology in which babies were discussed – women were bestowed with the role of responsible mothers of Britain's future generations, the

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[1] On the contradictions between pronatalism and reactions to the war babies crisis, see, for example, Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p.94; DeGroot, Gerard J., *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* [1996] (London: Longman, 1998), p.235; Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp.147 – 148.

advent of which were essential for a country embroiled in a deadly international conflict.[2] Motherhood was even alleged to have a 'redemptive role'.[3] Women's maternal, nurturing responsibilities ran parallel with those of men, who were fighting to protect the freedom and traditions of the nation, and were hailed by some commentators as equally important a role as the responsibilities of those in the armed forces.[4] The family was hailed as a bastion of Britishness and of national greatness, which was to be preserved against moral threats: the National Council of Public Morals took as its motto the King's contention that

> The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people. They will only remain unshaken while the family life of our nation is strong, simple and pure.[5]

This chapter, then, examines the function of sex in relation to marriage, children and the destiny of the race, and how this was understood and debated in terms of people's roles, responsibilities, and sense of nationhood, in wartime.

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Wartime saw the problematisation and debate of relationships, people's perceptions of them, and the role of sex within them. With the advent of war, and knowledge of the actual and potential deaths of sweethearts, came an upsurge in the number of marriages in Britain:

Marriage rates per 1,000 of the population

Year	England and Wales	Scotland
1913	15.7	14.2
1914	15.9	14.8
1915	19.4	15.2
1916	14.9	13.1
1917	13.8	12.6
1918	15.3	14.4
1919	19.7	18.3
1920	20.2	19.3

Source: Gates, G. Evelyn (ed.), *The Woman's Year Book 1923 – 1924*, pp.310 – 311, cited in Woollacott, Angela, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 1994), p.154.

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[2] For the French, as well as for the British, 'motherhood was synonymous with patriotism': Grayzel, Susan R., *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* [1999] (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.63.
[3] Ibid., p.89.
[4] See, for example, ibid., pp.86 – 87; also *Everywoman's Weekly*, 30 October 1915, pp.163 – 165, 'If I were a Woman' by Horatio Bottomley.
[5] King George V: Motto of the National Council of Public Morals, National Council of Public Morals, *Campaigns of Peace* (London: National Council of Public Morals, 1919), (page number unspecified).

The number of marriages in London in 1915 was the highest ever recorded: 25.9 per 1,000 of the population, compared with 19.2 per 1,000 in 1914.[6] Indeed, as one contemporary commentator observed, 'Love grows quickly in the forcing-house of war, and the dull ache of absence fosters a sensitivity and quickens response'.[7] Christmas 1914 was the quietest on record for weddings, so many couples having brought forward their marriages when the war broke out.[8] The first marriage at the front was celebrated near Arras on 23 December 1914: the bridegroom, the adjutant of a cyclist territorial platoon, was given permission to marry when his mobilisation order was issued.[9] The *Daily Mirror* was pleased to report that a soldier married his nurse in a church in Thorpe St. Andrews, Norwich, in July 1917.[10] Similarly, the front cover of an edition of *London Opinion* from May 1915 depicted a wounded but recovering soldier presenting an engagement ring to a smiling, pretty nurse:


LONDON OPINION

ONE PENNY. 1st MAY, 1915.

Vol. XLV. No. 580. (Reg. G.P.O.)

This paper insures you for £1000. For conditions see page 190.

A DECISIVE ENGAGEMENT.

Source: *London Opinion*, 1 May 1915, p.153.

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[6] *Daily Mail*, 29 September 1916, p.3, column c, 'War Makes Marriages'. See also Marwick, Arthur, *Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change, 1900-1967* [1968] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p.125; Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.147.

[7] Griffith, Llewellyn Wyn, *Up To Mametz* (London: Faber & Faber, 1931), p.107.

[8] *Daily Mirror*, 26 December 1914, p.11, column d, 'Cupid's Business not "As Usual"'.

[9] *Daily Mirror*, 8 January 1915, p.10, column c.

[10] *Daily Mirror*, 6 July 1917, p.4, columns b and c, 'Soldier Marries his Nurse'.

However, it has been suggested that marriages in wartime were not all entered into with the sincerity and earnestness that they required:

> Relationships were put under intense pressure during the war as husbands left for France, and possibly forever. Lovers, caught in the excitement of the moment, could marry without a true and lasting commitment to each other…[11]

Indeed, a London Opinion cartoon from April 1917 capitalised on these concerns, depicting a 'sweet girl' asking her new soldier fiancé what his surname was:

Drawn by Wilmot Lunt.

THESE WAR WEDDINGS.

Sweet Girl (after the proposal): "Er—by the way, Bertie, what is your last name?"

Source: *London Opinion*, 28 April 1917, p.104.

Another less than magnanimous view of people's motivations to marry appeared in *John Bull*, in the form of a letter from a reader who appealed for a curtailment of

> these disgraceful war weddings – girls and fellows meeting and marrying all in a few weeks or months, just so that the girl can get the allowance.[12]

The wives of soldiers who married after 14 August 1914 were eligible to receive separation allowance from 14 September 1914.[13] As late as September 1918, the war situation was

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[11] Van Emden, Richard and Humphries, Steve, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* [2003] (London: Headline, 2004), p.268.
[12] *John Bull*, 3 March 1917, p.4, column b, 'Meet and Marry'.

precipitating hasty marriages; a clergyman in a London suburb expressed concern about the capricious spirit with which people entered married life, and was alarmed to note that 'not more than 40 per cent' of the marriages he had solemnised were successful. He continued:

> Couples who have a few days' or even a few hours' acquaintance, wed 'for a lark'. They marry for company; to spend money together; because other people are doing it; for every reason but the solemn call of duty... I hold, and many other clergymen with me, that no couple should be married who have not known one another for two months and whose parents do not give consent.[14]

The press, and members of the public in newspapers' letters columns, commented at length on whether the increase in the marriage rate was beneficial or detrimental for the nation, on the nature of relationships and how these had been affected by the war, on when and if a couple should marry, on who should propose to whom, and on if and when people should have children. At the heart of all of such matters was a consideration of which course of action was considered to be most beneficial to the war effort. Children born in wedlock were welcomed; their parents' marriage was approved of by the church, and also by the state – the same state which was pursuing the war effort. In order to facilitate these marriages, and owing to 'the war danger', marriage licenses could be obtained at any time of the day or night from 3 August 1914, for a fee of £2 for an ordinary licence, and £29 5s 6d for a special licence, which permitted immediate marriage within the Church of England.[15] A class bias was obvious here, with swift marriages being restricted to those who could afford the more expensive licence. This may have had eugenic motivations, in that the 'poorer class' of people would be discouraged from marrying, and subsequently having children, so quickly.

Despite the evident marriage boom, the novelist Max Pemberton,[16] in the *Sunday Pictorial*, was not convinced that enough couples were marrying, and called for more weddings, of those whose love was 'born of sacrifice', specifically marriages of soldiers, who would 'have the first claim' over women:

> In meadow and lane and orchard, the lovers' lyre is freely thumbed. We enter the streets of towns and discover a very multitude of eyes looking 'love to eyes which look again'. Of marriage, however, we do not hear so frequently... The

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[13] Simkins, Peter, *Kitchener's Army: The raising of the New Armies, 1914 – 16* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.106.
[14] Cited in *Daily Mirror*, 12 September 1918, p.2 column b, 'Marriages for Fun? London Clergyman's Remarkable Experiences of War Weddings: Lads of Eighteen who Wed'. See also *Daily Mirror*, 4 July 1917, p.5 column d, '"Hasty Marriages": A Plea for Boy-and-Girl Friendships as a Remedy': letter from 'M.E.'.
[15] *Daily Mail*, 5 August 1914, p.3, column c, 'War Weddings: Licences to be had day and night'.
[16] Sir Max Pemberton, 1874 – 1950: writer and novelist.

> pity of it! For God and King and a woman's love. There is no better battle cry…[17]

Indeed, it was considered preferable for women to have relationships with soldiers, because they were representatives of the nation, and bastions of all that was British and honourable. And, it was pointed out in the 1930s, by historians of the war, women were more inclined to fall in love with men in uniform than with those in civilian clothes.[18] Soldiers were also considered to be more appropriate partners, and to have more right to be in a relationship than civilian men, who may have been cowards, or shirkers. Throughout the war, cartoons in *London Opinion* and *Punch* popularised through satire the propagandistic notion that servicemen were far more deserving than civilians of attractive female companions:

Drawn by Alfred Leete.

"NONE BUT THE BRAVE —"

Source: *London Opinion*, 5 September 1914, p.384.

"WHAT'S UP, ALF? YOU DON'T SEEM HALF IN A RAGE!"
"SO 'UD YOU BE IF YOU SAW A BLINKIN' CIVILIAN FANNING YOUR BEST GIRL WITH HIS BEASTLY EXEMPTION CARD."

Source: *Punch*, 30 January 1918, p.79.

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[17] *Sunday Pictorial*, 11 April 1915, p.7, columns c and d, 'Are War Marriages Wise? Love born of sacrifice the surest path to happiness', by Max Pemberton.

[18] Fischer, H. C. and Dubois, E. X., *Sexual Life During the World War* (London: Francis Aldor, 1937), pp.61 – 62.

With the desirable qualities of soldiers in mind – notwithstanding the fact that the descriptions of soldiers thus were propagandistic generalisations – soldiers of the King were considered to be good quality breeding stock for British children of the future generation. As such, any smear on the reputation of British soldiers, or suggestion of their sexual deviancy, was scandalous. Women who remarried after the deaths of their soldier husbands were treated unkindly, being seen to have been unfaithful – despite having been widowed.[19]

One female writer, in the *Sunday Pictorial*, suggested that Britain adopt the French system, of marrying to be life companions; she warned against criticising this system as 'marriages of convenience' if couples suited each other.[20] A subsequent article in the *Sunday Pictorial*, however, criticised the lack of romance of this, French, method of choosing a spouse: writing in May 1917, another female author expressed her preference for a marriage 'for love – not for furniture and Five per cents'.[21] A *Sunday Pictorial* leader called for 'More opportunities for social intercourse between the sexes', as a sure means to achieving happy marriages. Again, the benefits of a 'Continental' system were highlighted:

> A little more Continentalism would do us a world of good. Open-air cafés. Well-regulated dancing-halls. Clubs for both sexes... These we must have, coupled with a new convention – a convention not based on the assumption that every man is a rascal and every girl a fool.[22]

These exchanges perhaps reveal less about attitudes towards marriage, however, than about the *Sunday Pictorial*'s attempts to be seen to be forging favourable relations between the British and their French allies, by considering the lores of marriage in both cultures. As such, inter-ally marriage was seen both as a sign of support for the war effort and an act of military and cultural support for Britain's allies. The perceived benefits of a 'continental' system aside, correspondence in the *Daily Mirror* waxed upon the virtues of the British 'stiff upper lip' where emotions were concerned: a writer identified by the name 'Anti-Humbug' proudly stated that

> it is the height of bad form to show one's feelings. British 'phlegm' is the admiration of foreigners who cannot control theirs.[23]

An article in the *Sunday Pictorial* detailed the reasons that men from the Empire gave for marrying British girls. These included the facts that British women were described – rather blandly – as 'pretty', 'charming', 'good' 'fresh', and 'such bricks'. They were also praised

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[19] Van Emden and Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front*, p.269.
[20] *Sunday Pictorial*, 15 April 1917, p.5, column d, 'The "All-for-Love" Marriage. Wisdom we might learn from the French', by Agnes E. Ollivant.
[21] *Sunday Pictorial*, 6 May 1917, p.5, columns b anc c, 'The "All-for-Money" marriage. A Frenchwoman's tribute to the British way', by Lucy Clarke.
[22] *Sunday Pictorial*, 9 September 1917, p.4, column a, leader article, 'Give Marriage a Chance!'
[23] *Daily Mirror*, 23 September 1915, p.5, column d, '"Cold Courtship": British Ways in Avoiding Any "Showing Off" About Love', letter from 'Anti-Humbug'.

as being devoted nurses, and women who were prepared to listen to quiet men who were overlooked in their own countries. This article seemed to be an exercise in propaganda in promoting intra-Empire marriages, as it concluded by advocating that the new wives of Imperial men taking their brothers abroad with them, to find wives for them. 'Good old Empire!', the author trumpeted.[24] Racial prejudices and demands for nationally appropriate partners existed in many protagonist countries. In Ulm in 1916, two German girls, aged 15 and 17, were sentenced by Court-Martial to a fine of £5, or in default of payment to one month's imprisonment, for 'having love affairs with two French prisoners of war employed on a farm'.[25] Similarly, during the post-war period of British occupation, a German house owner invited British troops into his house issuing the caveat that everything in the house, apart from the 21 women, was at their disposal.[26]

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Calls for marriages, to replenish the nation, were couched in terms of duty. Mary Scharlieb wrote of the importance of Christian marriages, in which children were of prime importance. In the eyes of the Church of England, she wrote, there were three objectives of marriage: the reproduction of the race; the maintenance of social purity; and the mutual comfort and assistance of each married couple.[27] Furthermore, Walter M. Gallichan, author of books such as *Modern Woman and How to Manage Her* and *Women Under Polygamy*, wrote that the duty and destiny of man and woman was to marry – and to reproduce;[28] moreover, he claimed, celibacy among women was 'menacing to the race'.[29] He hoped that the war would make people realise that the future destiny of the race was at stake.[30] As such, with the demand for more marriages, the tradition that a woman should not propose to a man was questioned. Margaret Carruthers penned a stirring anecdote about a girl who was scared of playing cricket with a hard ball, but had the courage to propose to a man and was accepted. Happiness should not be denied, she argued, because a man 'is too shy to speak, too poor, too conscious of his physical imperfections'.[31] A cartoon in *London*

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[24] *Sunday Pictorial*, 4 February 1917, p.5, columns b and c, 'Why they wed English Girls. Our Overseas Soldiers Explain', by E. C. Bailey (author of 'Glorious Deeds of Australasians').
[25] *The Times*, 18 May 1916, p.5, column e.
[26] Graham, Stephen, *A Private in the Guards* [1919] (London: Heinemann, 1928), p.296.
[27] Scharlieb, Mary, *What it Means to Marry; or, Young Women and Marriage* (London, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1914), pp.36 – 37.
[28] Gallichan, Walter M., *The Great Unmarried* (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1916), p.9.
[29] Ibid., p.11.
[30] Ibid., p.13.
[31] *Sunday Pictorial*, 28 May 1918, p.5, columns b and c, 'Woman's Right to Propose. Would it lead to happier marriages?' by Margaret Carruthers.

Opinion satirised the idea of men brave in battle but nervous in the company of attractive women:

And the regiment call him "Daredevil Jones."
"Judge," New York.

Source: *London Opinion*, 5 September 1914, p.398.

A number of sources were enthusiastic in hailing the war as a factor which enhanced the very nature of relationships. Joanna Bourke writes that soldiers 'invited their girlfriends to share in the experience of killing', writing gruesome letters home, detailing their bayoneting of Germans, and citing their girlfriends as positive influences and incentives to kill.[32] Furthermore, the *Daily Mail* cited 'the blood-stained hand of war' as provoking eloquent expressions of devotion by amorous soldiers, alongside the function of relationships in providing a new generation of British babies:

> Lovers who, in the old days, found their thoughts so hard to express on paper, and who were rarely satisfied with their finished efforts, now sit down in trenches, in billets, in Y.M.C.A. huts, in hospitals, in camps, and in the ships that carry them away from our land and the words that were so reluctant to express their sentiments in other days now trip off the pen… with a fluency that often surprises the writers themselves… Surely the marriages that come after the Great War will result in the happiest unions that we have known. Surely the children of the next generation will be virile exponents of a proud heritage.[33]

The comments about a 'virile' generation with a 'proud heritage' employed emotive language, drawing upon the desire for eugenic quality for the British population, an important concern for Britain at war, with ideas of nationhood, and positive manifestations of Britishness, in mind. *Everywoman's Weekly*, *John Bull*'s sister publication, also drew upon the positive influence of the war on romance: examples were given of soldiers who

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[32] Bourke, Joanna, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* [1999] (London: Granta Books, 2000), p.3

[33] *Daily Mail*, 7 July 1916, p.4, column f, 'Lovers! What the war has done for romance'.

married girls who had written to them and sent them socks, although they had not met before the war. The war was claimed to have put an end to 'absurd' long engagements; and love letter correspondences were found to continue long after the wedding, in the days of wartime separation.[34] *Everywoman's Weekly* also told, in its typically sentimental language, of the importance of the engagement ring in wartime:

> More than ever cherished is the engagement ring of to-day. There is a deeper significance in its bestowal and acceptance. The man gives it, feeling perhaps that his lips are never likely to do more than taste his cup of happiness, and the girl gazing fondly at her soldier-lover wonders wistfully if it is likely to be his last gift.[35]

The Great War was the first time that men wore wedding rings on a large scale. Many soldiers also took photographs of their wives, children, or sweethearts with them to the trenches. Items such as watches, cigarette cases, and matchboxes were designed specifically for carrying these photographs. Painted cameo photographs, to be placed in small leather cases, were sold for as little as 2s 6d.[36]

The despair and anxiety felt by many, that their family life, marriage (or potential to marry), and security, had been, or would be, devastated by the war is neatly summarised by Trevor Wilson:

> For unmarried women, the departure of men for the front meant a deprivation of male company for the present and a distinct possibility that prospects of marriage, with all its connotations of motherhood, companionship, security, and social status, would be permanently blighted. Something of the desperation that this danger aroused in women is implicit in the notice that appeared in the personal column of *The Times* in 1915: 'Lady, *fiancé* killed, will gladly marry other officer totally blinded or incapacitated by the War'.[37]

This correspondent was explicit in her desire to marry an officer: her concern for the class and social status of any potential husband was clearly more important to her than any disability he may have had. An anonymous author in *Everywoman's Weekly* wrote that, amid all the 'nonsense written about war weddings and war-brides', she married her fiancé for two practical reasons: firstly, if he was killed or went missing in action, she would be happier to be a widow than a spinster; secondly, if he returned injured, she would have more right to nurse him – at their own home – than if she were merely his fiancée. 'I am

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[34] *Everywoman's Weekly*, 5 June 1915, pp.357 – 358, 'Just Between Ourselves'.
[35] *Everywoman's Weekly*, 24 April 1915, p.162, 'The Ring that Binds. Posy Rings in War Time'.
[36] *Daily Mirror*, 30 November 1914, p.4, column c, 'Dear, Familiar Faces: How Soldiers Carry Cameos of Wives and Sweethearts into the Trenches'.
[37] Wilson, Trevor, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914 – 1918* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p.708. On post-war 'marriage strategies' in the light of grief, see Audoin-Rouzeau, Stéphane and Becker, Annette, *1914 – 1918: Understanding the Great War* [2000] (London: Profile Books, 2002) (translated from the original text (*14 – 18, retrouver la Guerre*: Editions Gallimard, 2000) by Catherine Temerson, p.175.

proud of being a war-bride', she stated.[38] A similar sentiment was expressed by correspondent 'A.W.S.' in the *Daily Mirror*, who wanted to marry her fiancé so that she might better care for him if he were injured. He refused to marry her, however, for fear of being a burden in such an eventuality.[39] A respondent to 'A.W.S.' commented that marriages were, indeed, 'for better, for worse, in sickness and in health'.[40] Both 'A Soldier's Sweetheart' and 'A Sailor's Lass' wrote that they would care devotedly for their sweethearts if they were to lose their limbs in the war.[41] So, while the war increased people's emotional sensitivity and propensity for romance, it also made people approach marriage more practically. This polarisation of opinion evinced a heightened awareness of the importance of marriage due to the pressures and exigencies of wartime.

The *Daily Mirror* fielded a voluminous correspondence on the issue of if and when soldiers should get engaged or married, and represented a spectrum of opinions in its letters pages regularly throughout late 1914 and early 1915, and, with less regularity, throughout the duration of the war. A 'business girl' expressed her opinion that

> Most certainly a young man should get engaged if he is in love – before going to the war... It would be cruel to leave the girl in doubt as to whether he cared for her or not. If he were wounded she would suffer far more from the feeling she had no right to send him a line of comfort or to call and see him in the hospital on his arrival home.[42]

The contrary position was voiced by 'a married woman':

> I think it is absurd of a girl to tie herself up to a man who is going to the front... Think of the time which may elapse before she sees him again, and how her ideas with regard to him may alter. And what if he comes back unfit for employment?[43]

A correspondent calling himself 'Old Bachelor' expressed his 'surprise' at the number of people advocating marriage, and made a practical point about the conduct of married combatants:

> The married man, quite rightly, will not always take the risks a single man will take. He fights with stubborn bravery, but he is often too sensible. A good dash of hot-headed irresponsibility is good in a regiment... Therefore, if a man is about to leave for the front, I think it is far better for him to go as a single

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[38] *Everywoman's Weekly*, 14 August 1915, p.679, 'The Confessions of a War Bride? Spinster or Widow?'
[39] *Daily Mirror*, 4 February 1915, p.5 column d, 'War and Love: Objections to Sentimentality During the Stern Struggle', letter from 'A.W.S.'.
[40] *Daily Mirror*, 6 February 1915, p.5, column d, letter from 'K.'
[41] *Daily Mirror*, 12 October 1914, p.5, column d, 'Britain at War: Should the Engaged Soldier Get Married Before Leaving for the Front?'
[42] *Daily Mirror*, 8 October 1914, p.2, column d, 'Woman's problem of war and love: Should a Man Marry Before Leaving for Active Service?'
[43] Ibid.

> man and fight with the inspiration of marriage on his return, but without the haunting dread of leaving his wife a widow, with possibly an orphan child to look after...[44]

The question remained controversial.

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A quantifiable and economically driven reason for marriage was expounded by Mrs. Elizabeth Sloan Chesser,[45] a pioneer of the Motherhood Movement, who argued that the question of marriage was more important during the war than it had ever been, and advocated early marriage (and therefore early breeding): if fit men were to die in the war, women would have to 'marry men less "fit" for parentage than the boys we are losing every day'. 'Is it national economy', she asked,

> to desire to limit the recruiting of married men if we send in their place unmarried youths in their early twenties, potential fathers of a fine type, to probable death? Even if it costs more in money to the nation when a married man dies for his country if we have his children to keep, our real wealth lies in the number of healthy, fit babies born in the next few years.[46]

Soldiers' wives were recognised by the state not only in their role as reproductive mothers, but also financially, with their separation allowance. Moreover, Susan Grayzel asserts, 'Motherhood, in this ubiquitous rhetoric, defined female identity and could provide a means to unify women'.[47] To celebrate motherhood, the war years witnessed the inception of the National Baby Week Council, whose National Baby Week was first held in July 1917, with the slogan 'It is more dangerous to be a baby in Britain than it is to be a soldier'. This campaign was intended to provide women with the education the government thought they needed in order to be mothers, and 'prescribed the national protection and cultural support of mother and child'.[48] The first Mothers' Day was celebrated on 8 August 1916. Poster and newspaper campaigns, as well as the National Baby Week Council, promoted the pronatalist cause.[49] A full-page cartoon in *Punch* in July 1917 depicted a heroic female

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[44] *Daily Mirror*, 12 October 1914, p.5, column d, 'Britain at War: Should the Engaged Soldier Get Married Before Leaving for the Front?', letter from 'Old Bachelor'.
[45] For more on Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, see Mort, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830 (Second Edition)* [first edition 1987] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 2000), p.147.
[46] *Sunday Pictorial*, 26 September 1917, p.7, columns b and c, 'Are Earlier Marriages Desirable? The Anti-Social Effect of War', by E. Sloan Chesser, M.B.
[47] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.86.
[48] Culleton, Claire A., *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914 – 1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp.70 and 149. On this subject, see also Braybon, Gail, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp.124 – 125.
[49] Culleton, *Working-Class Culture*, pp.150 – 151.

rescuing a baby and a toddler from the edge of a cliff, below which could be seen the menacing hand of such social ills as 'poverty', 'ignorance', 'drink', 'dirt', and 'disease': the words below the picture referred to her act as 'the saving of the race', and called for practical help from readers for National Baby Week:

THE SAVING OF THE RACE.

["National Baby Week" is being celebrated during the current week. The object of the movement is to educate the Mothers of the Nation in the care of their children's health and their own. Universal sympathy will be felt for a cause to which our heavy losses in the War have given an added urgency. Those who desire to give practical help towards the cost of the scheme will kindly address their gifts to the Hon. Treasurer, National Baby Week Council, 6, Holles Street, Oxford Street, W.1.]

Source: *Punch*, 4 July 1917, p.9.

It was suggested, in a letter to the *Daily Mail*, that men who had been married for three years or more be enlisted first, then those married for two years, and finally the unmarried. This would mean that those going to the front would be more likely to have fulfilled their 'paternal duties'.[50] This revealed two attitudes to marriage, which were to be found throughout wartime commentaries. Firstly, the concern was to replace dead men, or

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[50] *Daily Mail*, 21 August 1915, p.4, column f, letter from F. J. Sandford West.

those who would die in war, with a fresh stock of population, rather than to attempt to end the war and its deaths. Secondly, the focus was on the quantifiable numbers of the population, rather than the emotional concerns about husbands and fathers who would die, and the wives and children who would outlive them. In general, then, a conflict existed between marriage seen as an act of love, emotion, and commitment (enhanced in intensity by wartime conditions), and marriage seen as a contract, a means of producing children to replace the nation's dead men. In parliament, H. J. Tennant,[51] the Under-Secretary of State for War, declared it impracticable to implement a scheme of replacing married men and fathers at the front with single men, and those with fewer dependants.[52] This scheme was the opposite of that suggested in the *Daily Mail*, but similarly privileged the paternal and domestic duties of fathers and husbands.

It was argued that more marriages were a natural inevitability, and the most appropriate solution to the losses of wartime: 'Thus the race has the instinct to renew its strength',[53] it was claimed. In the light of the calls for more marriages to produce more babies, the Matrimonial Clauses Act, 1917, permitted that

> a marriage may be dissolved on the grounds that the parties have been living separately for a period of three years, whether by mutual agreement or for any other reason.[54]

Max Pemberton advocated measures to facilitate easier marriages: 'Britain has suffered from a declining birth-rate since the year 1907', he wrote, 'and the terrible losses of the war must tell heavily upon the numerical and the physical strength of the population of the future'. With over a million people separated, he advocated free divorce and relief for poor people, so that they may remarry and replenish the nation with children from their new relationships.[55] Yet again, calls for hasty, procreative, marriages, with little or no concern for the quality or durability of these unions, dominated debates. Their sole purpose of such marriages was the production of children. Similarly, the prioritising in debate and in the press of the desire to have more babies persisted, while calls for an end to war deaths were negligible.

Demands for an end to the war and the deaths it was causing, amid the nation's patriotic fervour, would have been considered unpatriotic, absurd, or even treasonous. As

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[51] Rt. Hon. Harold John Tennant, 1865 – 1935. Liberal MP for Berwickshire/Berwick and Haddington 1894 – 1918; Under-Secretary of State for War, 1912 – 1916.
[52] Parliamentary Debates, 1 March 1916, vol.80, column 1037.
[53] *Sunday Pictorial*, 19 November 1916, p.2, column a, leader article, 'War Marriages'.
[54] *Matrimonial Clauses Act, 1917*, cited in *Daily Mirror*, 1 August 1917, p.5, columns b, c, and d, 'Marriage Laws After the War: Has the Great Struggle Modified our Ideas?' by Grace Curnock.
[55] *Sunday Pictorial*, 30 September 1917, p.5, columns b and c, 'Out-of-Date Marriage Laws. Urgent Need of Reform in The National Interest', by Max Pemberton. On the declining birthrate, see also Woollacott, Angela, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 1994), pp.146 – 147; Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.1.

such, the only viable option available to those who were concerned about the population was to argue for more babies to be born. Commentators seemed to have given up hope on the parents' generation, but to have relied on the strength of that of their children – both those who had been born already, and those who would be born. The impulsion for British people to reproduce in order to counter the loss of men in the war was a convenient way for the establishment to deflect criticisms of the war and its management. People's attention was diverted instead towards the neoteric and urgent civic duty to regenerate the nation and the race, and to protect the Empire. Through the nationwide adoption of this imperative, the sacrifices of servicemen could be more easily accepted. Joan Wallach Scott writes of the way in which power relations among nations and with colonial subjects have been made comprehensible by the use of the language of male-female relations. This is particularly relevant in light of the gender roles of wartime, which drew women as mothers, and men as warriors. Scott writes that

> The legitimizing of war – of expending young lives to protect the state – has variously taken the forms of explicit appeals to manhood (to the need to defend otherwise vulnerable women and children), of implicit reliance on belief in the duty of sons to serve their leaders or their (father the) king, and of associations between masculinity and national strength.[56]

Scott goes on to comment that

> To vindicate political power, the reference [to gender roles] must seem sure and fixed, outside human construction, part of the natural or divine order. In that way, the binary opposition and the social process of gender relationships both become part of the meaning of power itself; to question or alter any aspect threatens the entire system.[57]

This is particularly pertinent in the case of gender roles in wartime: to question the legitimacy of the war would have been to question the preordained roles of men to die valiantly for their country, and of women to nurture future generations of citizens. Any rejection or questioning of these facts would amount to criticisms of the *status quo*, and of the righteousness of the nation and the war effort.

The role of women, as progenitors of a new generation, and guardians of the race, was privileged; in some respects the men who were to father children were ignored. As Gail Braybon observes,

> In the trenches men were dying, or were suffering dreadful physical and emotional injuries – yet the common soldier did not merit a campaign for the saving of England's fathers. Attention was focused instead upon the women

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[56] Scott, Joan Wallach, *Gender and the Politics of History* [1988] (New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1988), p.48.
[57] Ibid., p.49.

> left behind, whether they were the mothers of existing children or the mothers of the future. Fears for the very survival of the race were pinned upon the health of working-class mothers, and the irony of the state's, and the public's apparent concern for women and babies to the exclusion of men was not always recognised.[58]

Here, a powerful gender dynamic emerged, with men and women in equal command of the security of the nation: men were fighting to save the heritage of the country, while women were in command of the birth of future generations. It was, however, uncommon for men's roles as fathers to be considered amid the preoccupation with motherhood: men were soldiers first, and fathers second. The nurturing role was constructed as the province of women alone;[59] men were engaged in masculine, military pursuits. The novelist Charles Garvice, however, suggested that 'the State should cease to consider the virtue of good citizenship its own reward and strive to lighten the [financial] burden borne by those who undertake the grave responsibilities of marriage and paternity'.[60] The concern for more marriages and more children reveals a peculiar interpretation of the figures which suggested that there *was* a marriage boom, and that the population *was* increasing, in so much as there were more births than deaths.

Appeals for more marriages were made on ideological, rather than demographic and economic, grounds. The role of procreative sex as a patriotic necessity was here reinforced, and, moreover, marital, procreative sex between two British citizens was seen as the quintessence of a sexual relationship. Lesley A. Hall asserts that the period since 1880 was one in which sex and reproduction were separated (due to factors such as contraception),[61] although birth control remained 'a morally dubious exercise' until the 1930s or 1940s.[62] In wartime, however, the two were once again united: reproductive (conjugal) sex was the epitome of the sexual duty that people were expected to perform for the state. An article by a physician in the *Daily Mail* appealed for a numerically strong population

> It is a truism that it is essential for our national safety and our commercial prosperity that we, as a nation, increase in population at least as fast as our rivals.[63]

He refuted the claim that small, healthy, well provided for families were better than sheer numbers: 'That is all very well, but we have seen plainly in the course of the war that

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[58] Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.112.
[59] On the subject of women's 'duties' to the nation, the race, and the war effort in terms of producing babies, see ibid., pp.117 – 118, and also Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, pp.111 – 120.
[60] *Sunday Pictorial*, 25 November 1917, p.5, columns a and b, 'The Need for a Marriage-Boom. How the State Handicaps parents', by Charles Garvice, 'Probably the most popular novelist of the day'.
[61] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.1.
[62] Ibid, p.2.
[63] *Daily Mail*, 15 December 1915, p.4, column d, 'The Baby Problem. What of the Future?' by A Physician.

numbers count for a great deal', and that if the numbers were not kept up, 'we shall perish and disappear from the category of great nations'.[64] Again, here was evident an acceptance that large numbers of men were being killed, and that large numbers of babies must be provided to replace them, rather than a questioning of the nature of warfare. Havelock Ellis asserted that

> the military idea that a high birth-rate means military efficiency, is altogether fallacious. This has been clearly illustrated by the Great War.[65]

He opined, however, that racial purity was more important than ever, fit people having been killed in battle,[66] and expressed his concern for the regeneration of the population:

> The Great War has drawn the attention of all the countries concerned in it to the question of their racial future. When the finest young manhood of the finest nations has been destroyed to a greater degree than ever before, when the best stocks are thus impoverished and even the survivors are to a large extent poisoned at the sources of life, it cannot be said that there are no serious grounds for this concern.[67]

Furthermore, Ellis pointed out, the armies for future wars would need to be built immediately.[68] An article in the *Times* stated that the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease 'deserve[d] the support of every one who is determined that the great upheaval of the war shall prove in truth to be the regeneration of our race'.[69] The rhetoric of reproduction was more potent than the rhetoric of unnecessary sacrifice. Mary Scharlieb voiced the predominant opinion in the country when she wrote in 1916 that

> Never before did the British Empire stand in so great need of healthy citizens. Never before was there so great a necessity for an ample supply of well-developed and vigorous children.[70]

In the light of these calls for a greater population, it was recommended that the health and welfare of unwanted and uncared for babies be given greater priority, so that the potential dangers of infant mortality could be eradicated wherever possible. Arthur Mee, writing in the *Sunday Pictorial*, appealed for the Notification of Births Act (1907), which required the registration of birth within 36 hours, to be adopted throughout the country. A

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ellis, Havelock, 'Eugenics in Relation to the War', pp. 110 – 127 in Ellis, Havelock, *The Philosophy of Conflict and Other Essays in Wartime* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1919), p.114.
[66] Ibid., p.122.
[67] Ibid., p.110.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *The Times*, 24 June 1916, p.9, column b.
[70] Scharlieb, Mary, *The Hidden Scourge* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916), p.77.

medical officer would therefore see the baby in its first, crucial week.[71] As mortality rates were so high among illegitimate children, the National Council for the Unmarried Mother, and the Conservative MP Ronald McNeill,[72] called for conditions to be improved. McNeill wrote that unmarried mothers

> both for the children's sake and for their own, should be saved from the degradation which too often follows a single lapse of virtue.[73]

In Gerard DeGroot's opinion, pronatalists' calls for more babies was myopic, as 'few paused to consider the consequences'.[74] Indeed, a distinctly concerned tone was heard from George Newman, Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health, who expressed his regret that

> we are sometimes apt to forget or ignore the heavy burden which a family of children near together in age places upon the working class mother.[75]

Indeed, it was hoped that babies would be expeditiously produced in wartime, but little heed was paid to planning for these children's lives in the post-war years.

The typically bellicose Horatio Bottomley[76] made an impassioned plea to the women of the nation for more babies to be born, in his amusingly titled article 'If I were a woman'. He emphatically drew upon biblical exegesis, economic necessity, and nationalist fervour:

> The future will be better than ever – at any rate for a generation – from the woman's point of view. *There will be more male children born!* ...
>
> The fact remains that, blindly or otherwise, Nature recoups her losses... 'The Lord Giveth and the Lord taketh away', might well be written 'The Lord taketh away and the Lord giveth'.
>
> Providence, or Nature, or the Law of Averages, or whatever you prefer to call it, is *very, very* wise.
>
> **The World Problem, the question of whether Germany shall run the earth, can only finally be settled by the number of boy babies born to this country.**

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[71] *Sunday Pictorial*, 9 May 1915, p.7, columns a and b, 'The Ghost Babies and the Real. What are we going to do about them?' by Arthur Mee (editor of *Children's Magazine*).

[72] Rt. Hon. Ronald McNeill, 1870 – 1949: Conservative MP for the St. Augustine's Division of Kent, 1911 – 1918; for the Canterbury Division of Kent, 1918 – 1927. Baron Cushendon from 1918.

[73] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914 – 1959*, pp.18 – 19, cited in DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.215. See also Parliamentary Debates, 8 April 1913, vol.51, column 1011.

[74] DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.215.

[75] Lewis, Jane, *The Politics of Motherhood* (1980), cited in ibid., p.215.

[76] Horatio William Bottomley, 1860 – 1933: Libaral MP for South Hackney, 1906 – 1911. When South Hackney Liberal Association withdrew their support, he retained his seat as an Independent until 1912 when he resigned due to Bankruptcy. He was re-elected as an Independent MP for South Hackney in December 1918, and served until 1 August 1922 when he was expelled from the House of Commons for fraudulent conversion; he was found guilty on 23 counts and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude; he was released from prison in 1927. He was proprietor and editor of the *Sunday Illustrated* and *Sunday Pictorial*, proprietor and editor of the *Sunday Evening Telegraph*, founder of the *Financial News*, proprietor of the *Sun*, and founder, editor, and principal proprietor of *John Bull*.

> The Economic Problem, the Problem of the struggle for existence, can only be settle by the number of male children born. Every man-child born should mean that one woman will escape a pitiful and hopeless and tragic and unloved and unwanted struggle in the labour market.[77]

Similarly, a *Punch* cartoon from March 1915 showed a patriotic woman proudly showing off her new baby boy to a visitor, and announcing that 'We don't want girls nowadays, and Doctor says everybody's having boys':

Visitor. "IS IT A BOY OR A GIRL?"
Patriotic Mother. "OH, A BOY, MISS. WE DON'T WANT GIRLS NOWADAYS, AND DOCTOR SAYS EVERYBODY'S HAVING BOYS."

Source: *Punch*, 25 March 1915, p.234.

Furthermore, with Germany redrawn in wartime as a savage and barbarian force, the threat of her dominance in terms of population figures was apt to be exaggerated. With such a wealth of consensual material on this subject, exaggerations were easily believed. Nineteenth-century discourses about the threat of imperial races had been mobilised against Germany, and, in the tradition of such discourses, 'Population imbalances… were invoked only in times of crisis and self-doubt'.[78] It was felt that women responded to this crisis by swarming around army camps with sexual intentions; this was drawn as 'the natural female complement to the male frenzy of killing', in the words of Mrs. Helena Swanwick, a member of the Women's International League, who argued that

> If millions of men were to be killed in early manhood, or even boyhood, it behoved every young woman to secure a mate and replenish the population

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[77] *Everywoman's Weekly*, 30 October 1915, pp.163 – 165, 'If I were a Woman' by Horatio Bottomley.
[78] Salter, Mark B., *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p.53

> while there was yet time. It was an outbreak of primitive instinct, if you will, and no more beautiful in its manifestations than many primitive instincts are in a sophisticated world; but it all fitted together.[79]

Swanwick's words implied that women were unconscious of the reasons for their actions, but were driven by some atavistic hunger put in place by 'nature', in order that they fulfil their role in replenishing the population. And, as she pointed out, 'primitive instincts' – base though they may have been – were excused as a necessary evil.

Lucy Bland argues that calls for women to do their 'duty' as 'guardians of the race' drew women as healthy and maternal, but, also, as sexualised women.[80] Thereby, definitions of women as sexual were not entirely pejorative: a dual image of sexual women emerged – on the one hand, sexually moral, dutiful, and maternal; on the other hand, immoral spreaders of venereal disease.[81] Motherhood, then, was the only channel by which a woman could be simultaneously sexual, dutiful, and patriotic. Mothers were to be cherished as a national asset.

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Parallel to these contentions, however, ran a nationwide furore about the so-called 'war babies' – those children born to unmarried mothers, who became pregnant after having sex with soldiers in training camps around the country. It has been asserted that there were two types of 'war baby', the first type being the babies of 'women who lived in nonmarital but often long-standing partnerships with men who joined the armed forces as a result of the war'; the second type of 'war baby' was the illegitimate child of an unmarried woman and a soldier with whom she was not in a long-term relationship. It is the former category of war baby with which this chapter is concerned: the presence of such children, and the fact of their illegitimacy and their mother's status as single, caused scandal in wartime.[82] Jeffrey Weeks and Arthur Marwick both assert that the 'flurry of press anxiety' about these babies was caused by a letter in the *Morning Post* from Ronald McNeill, MP, who wrote in April

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[79] Mrs. Helena Swanwick, cited in Turner, E. S., *Dear Old Blighty* (London: Michael Joseph, 1980), p.202.
[80] Fischer and Dubois write that the wartime 'laxity of sexual morals' 'affords women an opportunity to exercise their sexual instinct to the full': Fischer and Dubois, *Sexual Life During the World War*, p.57.
[81] Bland, Lucy, '"Guardians of the race", or "Vampires upon the nation's health"? Female sexuality and its regulation in early twentieth-century Britain', pp. 373 – 388 in Whitelegg, Elizabeth, Arnot, Madeleine, Bartels, Else, Beechey, Veronica, Birke, Lynda, Himmelwhite, Susan, Leonard, Diana, Ruehl, Sonja, and Speakman, Mary Anne (eds.), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), p.373.
[82] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.91.

1915 of the risks of unmarried girls living near to troops' quarters becoming pregnant.[83] *John Bull* accepted that the birth of some illegitimate children was inevitable – and attributed this to the peculiarities of wartime:

> When there are millions of young fellows in uniform, it is manifestly impossible but that there shall be some transgressions, human nature being what it is.[84]

On this subject, Vera Brittain commented, in her typically forthright style, that

> One set of people... are most unmorally moral, want to disgrace the poor girls as much as possible... The other, the hysterical party, absolutely excuses the offence on the score of abnormal conditions... [and] hold forth about 'the children of the heroes of Mons and Marne' (which they are not), and even make suggestions of compensation so extremely favourable to the offenders as to encourage others to repeat the sin, and thus undermine our whole social and moral structure.[85]

'The topic was', in Marwick's words, 'a godsend for journalists and for the letter-writing public'.[86] And, indeed, as Weeks points out, such a panic was to have been expected: due to the 'still general inefficiency of birth-control methods, and continuing widespread ignorance, pre-marital activity continued to carry penalties and stigma'.[87] Weeks also draws upon the acute anxiety of wartime, which meant that

> During the early years of the war it was still possible for a moral panic to emerge and run its course over the prospect of 'war nymphomania' and 'war babies'.[88]

James Hope, MP,[89] responded to a question in the House of Commons about legislation to legitimise the war babies, by sarcastically asking whether it was more important to 'deal properly with those writers on the subject in newspapers who are suffering from erotic hysteria [by amending] the laws of lunacy?'[90] Indeed, the concern was later found to be largely rooted in moral censure and exaggeration.

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[83] Weeks, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* [1981] (London: Longman, 1984), p.208; Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.147; Haste, Cate, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* [1992] (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp.41 – 42.
[84] *John Bull*, 1 September 1917, p.12, column b, '"War Babies" Revived. Unmerited slur on the khaki'.
[85] Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the years 1900 – 1925* [1933] (London: Fontana, 1979), p.141; also cited in Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.95.
[86] Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.147.
[87] Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, p.208.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Rt. Hon. James Fitzalan Hope, 1870 – 1949. Conservative MP for the Central Division of Sheffield, 1908 – 1929. Treasurer of the Household, May 1915 – December 1916; Lord of the Treasury, December 1916 – February 1919.
[90] Parliamentary Debates, 29 April 1915, vol.71, columns 833 – 834.

Why the existence of war babies was seen to be a serious problem is an area of much debate. The presence of such children in wartime Britain impacted upon the nation financially: because the state had to provide facilities to care for these children; socially: because a population imbalance with a top-heavy young population was predicted; and morally and religiously: because the children's parents were unmarried. Furthermore, while there was widespread disquiet about illegitimate war babies, no acknowledgement was made in wartime discourses of the fact that illegitimate children were born before, and without, the influence of the war: wartime conditions were scapegoated for a situation that was highlighted in wartime, but not uniquely a corollary of wartime conditions. No references were made by the press or the clergy to how illegitimate babies were reacted to before 1914. The marital status and nationalities of the parents of a baby born in wartime attained levels of unprecedented importance, and were seen to have implications not only for social questions, but also in terms of the pursuit of the war itself. If the war had been over by Christmas 1914, as had been claimed at its outbreak, war babies would have been born in April 1915, but it is unlikely that there would have been such moral outrage, as morality would have been less of an imperative in peacetime.

A common reaction to these babies was to criticise the men and women who had conceived a child out of wedlock. Primarily it was the mothers of the babies who were criticised, for having acted immorally in time of war.[91] Criticisms of women's morality provoked a backlash from suffragists: one woman criticised the double sexual standard for men and women, and arguments that the vote was withheld from women because of men's pleas of superiority, writing that 'no girl can go wrong by herself'.[92] This censure is particularly fascinating given that it occurred at a time during which other sources demanded the birth of British babies: the illegitimacy of babies who had been born, or remained *in utero*, was a cause for concern. This standpoint was contradictory: war babies were British, yet were paradoxically criticised as a sign of immorality and a lack of patriotism. Illegitimate war babies could have been welcomed; they were not, and were seen as a challenge to the nation. Criticisms of babies themselves were absurd; and while social conventions disapproved of pre- or extra-marital sex, the fact that unions resulted in children was the reason for the expression of disapproval, rather than the sexual activity itself. Illegitimacy was a controversial subject before the war, but the birth of illegitimate babies in wartime, at the height of national emergency, caused particularly acute reactions. In Gerard DeGroot's words, 'Two sets of values collided: an old one which abhorred illegitimacy and a new one which treasured every newborn baby'.[93] The situation was

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[91] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.91.
[92] 'United Suffragist', letter to the editor of the *Liverpool Courier*, 3 May 1915, cited in ibid., p.98.
[93] DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.235.

exacerbated by the fact that soldiers, supposedly respectable men, had behaved immorally and fathered children outside of wedlock. The issue of blame was a problematic one, however. The *Times* was reluctant to apportion blame, but warned against praising the babies' parents, adding that 'it is an even worse mistake to begin to glorify human frailty as though it were praiseworthy'.[94] A vast array of opinions were expressed about the war babies – many of them contradictory, illogical, or prejudiced. The fact that this predicament engendered such fervent comment makes it a fascinating case-study of the attitudes, and preoccupations, of a nation at war. Indeed, on this point Arthur Marwick writes that

> The 'War Babies' episode is important, not for an exact estimate of increased promiscuity, but for the illumination it throws on public attitudes.[95]

The clergy approached the war baby situation with trepidation. A Nottingham clergyman was surprised by the moral crisis, and wrote to *The Times* that in a country trying to run itself on Christian principles, and in the light of 'the discipline and solemnity of war' morals should improve and illegitimacy rates fall.[96] The Bishop of Hull argued that the state manifestly had to provide financial support for unmarried mothers, as it was the state's responsibility for having created the situation, but

> The difficulty, however, was that, while ready and willing to do something, the state was jealous of lowering the moral standard of the country. If the Church had catered for young people as did the kinemas [sic] and theatres the problem of war children would not have assumed its present proportions.[97]

In April 1915, at the scandal's highest point, the issue was discussed in the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury. The Bishop of Oxford stated that the controversy

> indicated a very wide-spread laxity of sentiment and feeling with regard to sexual matters. We find these lax views in regions where we should least expect them, and I think it is one of the most threatening aspects of our whole social life.[98]

The Archbishop of York opined that the scale of the wrong-doing manifested by the crisis did not mitigate it. He apportioned the blame for the illegitimate births not to the soldiers who succumbed to their sexual temptations, but to those women who 'pestered them with their attentions':

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[94] *The Times*, 21 April 1915, cited in DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.235.
[95] Marwick, *The Deluge*, pp.147 – 148.
[96] *The Times*, date unspecified, cited in Ferris, Paul, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth-Century History* [1993] (London: Mandarin, 1994), p.77.
[97] *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1915, p.3, column g, 'Care of War Babies'.
[98] *Daily Mail*, 29 April 1915, p.3, column e, 'Bishops on War Babies. Sacredness of Marriage Law'.

> To put the matter bluntly, nothing could be worse for public morals than to allow it to be supposed that there was some special condonation of sin if it were committed with a soldier.[99]

Soldiers in uniform, then, were not blamed for committing the sin of sex outside of wedlock, but neither was the sin forgiven if a soldier had been involved.

The Bishop of Carlisle's concern, expressed in April 1915, was that 'a considerable proportion' of those who were about to become mothers were under sixteen years of age. The primary cause of 'all this sorrow', the Bishop stated, was the 'lack of home discipline', and 'in all circumstances children ought to be taught obedience'.[100] His accusation took no account of the fact that the young mothers were exposed to the saturnalia of the early days of the war, and, if they were as young as he claimed, would have been seduced by men considerably older than themselves. Amid the plethoric discussion of morality, a lone religious voice in the *Daily Mail*, who identified himself simply by the title 'Priest', suggested a programme of contraceptive education, to preclude another similar crisis in the future:

> What can and must be done is to save from shame and suffering the hundreds of girls now in imminent danger of ruin through being sent out into the world in ignorance of the sacred facts about their own body which they have a right to know... Public opinion must be roused (1) to make mothers realise their duty of not merely warning but of definitely instructing their daughters in this most vital matter not later than the time when they leave the elementary school, and (2) to support those comparatively few workers and teachers who, in spite of harsh criticism, are striving to do what many mothers will not do.[101]

Richard Van Emden and Steve Humphries opine that

> The young unmarried mother had always been stigmatised as a 'female temptress' and a 'fallen woman'. During the war the treatment of her became even more cruel and brutal.[102]

They cite the testimony of Gina Baker, who became pregnant in her early twenties, and, on the advice of her naval officer boyfriend, attempted to abort the baby, using Epsom salts and mustard baths. When this failed she became ill, lost her job, and was kicked out of her home by her mother, with only ten shillings. She went to a church-run home for unmarried mothers, which she described as being 'more or less like prison', but was forced to leave for stealing an envelope to contact her daughter's father. After trying unsuccessfully to take

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[99] Ibid.
[100] *Daily Mirror*, 19 April 1915, p.4, column b, 'Bishop on War Babies Problem'. The Bishop of Carlisle was speaking at a sermon at St. John's Church, Carlisle.
[101] *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'War Babies', letter from 'Priest'.
[102] Van Emden and Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front*, p.266.

her own life in the River Thames, Baker found a job in domestic service.[103] This sorry tale shows that neither adequate practical nor emotional support was available for unmarried women, even those whose babies were fathered by servicemen. The presence of homes for unmarried mothers, and the instances of unmarried mothers being sacked from their jobs,[104] prove such occurrences to be commonplace. Such maltreatment of mothers was incongruous with the wartime spirit of pronatalism, however.[105]

Despite the widespread alarm about the presence of large numbers of illegitimate babies, some commentators questioned whether the problem was as severe as others were keen to make out: **'War Babies.** Where are they? Have they all miscarried?',[106] asked *John Bull* in August 1915. This expression of consternation, one year after the start of the war and three months after the first of many war babies were expected to be born, was in indignant defence of the sexual morality of the soldiers the newspaper championed. After months of speculation, an official enquiry concluded that 'the rumours which have circulated have been proved beyond doubt to have no foundation in fact'.[107] The NSPCC's inquiry into the number of war babies asserted that a 'gross exaggeration' was made, and that

> Generally, inspectors express the opinion that the conduct of the troops has been very good. The Society state that the inquiry proves that the aspersions cast on the character of women and the conduct of soldiers have no foundation.[108]

A committee under the Archbishop of York also reported that the allegations of 'an alarming increase' in the number of illegitimate births has no basis in fact, according to the inquiries it made into 62 towns.[109] The Countess of March was similarly concerned about what she termed an 'exaggeration' of the numbers of war babies and expectant mothers, which were made by people unqualified to comment on the situation, and without sufficient evidence.[110] It was published in 1918 that the birth rate from April to June 1915 had been the lowest quarter on record; a correspondent in *John Bull* proudly claimed victory over those who alleged that there was a war baby crisis:

> Last year there were thousands of soldiers in the camps around Farnham, 20,000 being billeted in the town alone. The lay and clerical caretakers of other people's morals at once commenced to be fussily busy in hedge peeping, moral

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[103] Ibid., pp.266 – 269.
[104] On this subject, see Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp.75 – 77.
[105] On the treatment of unmarried mothers, see ibid., pp.150 – 152.
[106] *John Bull*, 21 Aug 1915, p.1.
[107] *The Times*, 18 June 1915, cited in DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.235.
[108] *Daily Mail*, 12 June 1915, p.3, column c, 'Few War Babies'.
[109] *Daily Mail*, 18 June 1915, p.3, column b, 'Few War Babies'.
[110] *Daily Mail*, 6 May 1915, p.4, column f, 'War Babies', letter from the Countess of March.

> exhortation, and war-baby prophecy... The fact is, the illegitimate birth-rate in Farnham for March, April, May, and June was each month below the average, and the puritans on the prowl have had one of the gravest disappointments of their lives.[111]

The number of births from 1914 to 1918 fell, throughout Europe. Ireland's illegitimacy rate was approximately three per cent throughout the war; Scotland's was between seven and eight per cent; England and Wales's was between 4.2 and 8.3 per cent.[112] While the proportion of illegitimate births rose by 30 per cent during the war, the overall birth rate fell, and the actual number of illegitimate births declined.[113] The rise in the percentage of illegitimate births was explained by the Registrar General in terms of 'the exceptional circumstances of the year, including the freedom from home restraints of large numbers of young persons of both sexes'.[114] Arthur Marwick describes the simultaneity of a high marriage rate and low illegitimacy rate as 'highly moral'.[115] The outcry over widespread illegitimacy was largely based on people's misconceptions of illegitimacy rates, and heightened emotional sensitivity to perceived threats to the nation. Trevor Wilson attributes the public commotion about war babies to the fact that

> from early in the war... people were jumping to the conclusion that not all females were mending their ways. Much was said about sexual laxity among young women living near army camps, with a consequential crop of 'war babies' – an outcry soon dampened by the discovery that there had been no dramatic increase in ex-nuptial births.[116]

The visibility of apparently fatherless babies in wartime alarmed people; many women were seen with babies but without husbands, and a casual observer would not have known whether she was a single mother, or whether her husband was fighting in the war, or had been killed. Heightened tensions and patriotic concerns in wartime explained people's sensitivity on this subject. What is important here, however, is not the factual accuracy of any claims of the numbers of war babies, but the fact that the press, the clergy, and other interested bodies were so ferociously fascinated by the subject, and proclaimed it as a crisis with dire consequences for the nation and for the war effort.

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[111] *John Bull*, 14 August 1915, p.2, column b, 'Farnham and the War Baby'.
[112] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women and the First World War* (Harlow and London: Longman (Pearson Educational Ltd.), 2002), p.65.
[113] Jones, H., *Health and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*, p.36, cited in DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.235.
[114] Annual Report of the Registrar General, 1915, P.P., 1917 – 1918, V, Cd. 8484, p.vii; 1916, P.P., 1917 – 1918, V, Cd. 8869, p.xix, Cited in Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War*, p.125.
[115] Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War*, p.125.
[116] Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, p.162.

A major concern surrounding the war babies controversy was that of race, and how the race of an illegitimate child determined its status in a nation at war. Eugenic considerations, about the condition and future of the race, were evident throughout Britain since the science's conception in the nineteenth century.[117] Furthermore, it has been argued, in a society in which prudery reigned, 'Eugenics and "racial hygiene" provided many with an acceptable way of talking about sex'.[118] Lesley A. Hall writes of the 'eugenic discourse, with its emphasis on the importance of (fit) women fulfilling a maternal role'.[119] With the incidence of the war, these demands were more important than ever, and were subsumed into the metanarrative which demanded fit mothers and fathers producing fit British babies. One eugenicist emotively wrote that 'the pregnant woman is pregnant with the destiny of races'.[120] Concerns about the welfare of women workers in relation to their duties as wives and mothers, and the 'health of the race', have been described as having been 'a national obsession' during the war.[121] With the losses of men in battle, the responsibility for the future of the race was projected onto women – and, as such, women had to assiduously ensure the protection of their own health, so that they remained fit for their role as mothers. These debates slotted easily into the existing movement in Britain which favoured national efficiency:

> The pursuit of greater 'national (or social) efficiency' (or more broadly, social imperialism) was a widespread and influential intellectual movement in Britain during the Edwardian period.[122]

The appeal of this philosophy cut right across the political spectrum, finding support from, amongst others, Joseph Chamberlain, Arthur Balfour, David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Herbert Asquith, and Fabians, including George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb.[123] National efficiency campaigns were impelled by fears of racial degeneration and social unrest in the late nineteenth century, and Britain's experiences in the Boer War.[124] These were immediate concerns during the Great War, and combined to accentuate people's belief in the importance of the numbers, quality, and efficiency of the population. The Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, in its Final Report in 1916, drew

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[117] The science had been named and advocated by Charles Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton; the Eugenics Education Society was founded in 1907: Hall, Lesley A., 'Sexual Cultures in Britain: Some Persisting Themes', pp.29 – 52 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.44. For more on racial health, eugenics, and moral and social hygiene, see Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp.133 – 141.
[118] Hall, 'Sexual cultures in Britain', p.45.
[119] Ibid., p.44.
[120] Arabella Kenealy, cited in Bland, 'Guardians of the Race', p.375.
[121] Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.112.
[122] Goddard, Garry K., *National Efficiency in Edwardian Britain: The Emergence of a Modern Conception of the State and the Economy* (Adelaide: Flinders University, 1993), p.1.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., pp.2 – 3 and 8.

attention to the impact of venereal disease, as well as that of the war, on the nation's birth-rate and national efficiency:

> The diminution of the best manhood of the nation, due to the losses of the war, must tell heavily upon the birth-rate – already declining – and upon the numbers of efficient workers. The reasons for combating, by every possible means, diseases which in normal times operate with disastrous effects alike upon the birth-rate and upon working efficiency are, therefore, far more urgent than ever before.[125]

Eugenic campaigners were active during and beyond the war years, and their demands were brought sharply into focus with wartime debates about the quality of the race. The *Daily Mirror* commented that

> The first and most vital need of the nation is that a due prudence should regulate population. All the sacrifices which we are making now will be of little avail if the birth-rate be wrongly distributed, the poor multiplying, the rich remaining childless.[126]

At a meeting of the National Birthrate Commission in October 1918, Marie Stopes and Major Leonard Darwin advocated sterilisation for those unfit to reproduce.[127] Darwin commented that

> Improvements in environment could not be relied on to promote racial progress... Good homes contain persons on the average somewhat innately superior to the inhabitants of bad homes, and to decrease the birth-rate in bad homes would make for social progress.[128]

A strikingly invective outburst on the subject of race was an article in the *Daily Mail*, penned by 'An Englishman', which compared the national status of British war babies to those children born to Belgian women raped by German soldiers:

> Of all the atrocities, many and vile, which the Germans have committed in the invaded countries the vilest surely is the attempt which they have made to degrade the blood of France and Belgium. Wherever the insolent army came, wives, young girls, and nuns were brutally outraged. These outrages were not the mere expression of the lust of war. They were deliberately arranged and commanded by the officers of the German Army... They were determined from the outset to Germanise completely all the countries through which they passed. In their wicked vanity of heart they believed all nations decadent save their own, and they proclaimed a presumptuous intention to raise a new race

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[125] Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*: 1916 Cd. 8189 xvi 1, p.66.
[126] *Daily Mirror*, 1 August 1917, p.5, columns b, c, and d, 'Marriage Laws After the War: Has the Great Struggle Modified our Ideas?' by Grace Curnock.
[127] Cited in the *Times*, 29 October 1918, p.3, column c, 'A Healthier Race: Major Darwin on Stamping Out the Unfit'.
[128] Ibid.

> which should in the fullness of time bow down before the Dagon of Teutonic discipline...[129]

Furthermore, as Susan Grayzel points out, 'Even if women were left alive after their experience of the "outrage," their experience of procreative sexuality might be forever compromised'.[130] Despite the wealth of public concern, however, Britain's problem of illegitimacy was claimed to be

> a problem far simpler and easier than that which baffles France... Though the unions be casual and illicit, their offspring is at least of English birth. In the truest sense the children thus born are the children of the nation... We knew full well what the result would be of quartering a vast army upon the towns and countryside of England. The responsibility, then, is the nation's...[131]

The Reverend G. H. Staite wrote of the importance of seeing the difference between British war babies and those of the Belgian women 'who were debased by the enemy and were perfectly powerless in their hands', and that the problem of 'vicious women' found where troops congregated needed to be solved.[132] War babies were also born to French women, who had had affairs with British soldiers. The French government permitted British soldiers to marry the 'girls whose good name they wish to save'. While the problem of race was less marked here, the children's parents being from allied countries, some clergymen expressed concerns that in the majority of cases the child's father was Protestant and the mother Catholic. The most serious concern, however, in *John Bull*'s opinion, was that the 'problem is international, as well as moral and religious. It cannot be shelved or ignored without injury to our relations with France'.[133] Indeed, *John Bull* was dedicated to promoting and upholding the good name of the British Tommy at home and abroad; this mission could have been thwarted by the presence of pregnant women and war babies in France. The jingoistic propaganda here was evident, but, furthermore, the significance of the nationality of a baby in wartime was elucidated. Regardless of the conditions in which it was conceived, a British baby was superior to that with a German parent. Children born in wartime were given special consideration: as 'children of the nation', while illegitimate in terms of the marital status of their parents, they were legitimate in terms of their nationality, and were expected to play a valuable role in he future of their country, and their Empire. This acceptance of children into the nation clearly demonstrated that, for some commentators, during the war, nationality was the most significant categorisation of any

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[129] *Daily Mail*, 24 April 1915, p.4, column d, 'The Letters of An Englishman. "War Babies"'.
[130] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.66.
[131] *Daily Mail*, 24 April 1915, p.4, column d, 'The Letters of An Englishman. "War Babies"'.
[132] *Daily Mail*, 21 April 1915, p.4, column f, letters.
[133] *John Bull*, 19 June 1915, p.5, column b, 'War Babies – In France'.

person. The class and marital status of the child's parents was less relevant than the child's nationality. In these instances, then, race was a more important factor than legitimacy.

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The most common solution to be found to the perceived problem of war babies was the belief that responsible organisations should be formed to take care, whether morally or financially, of women and their children. As soon as the war broke out, Mrs. Helen Best founded the War Babies and Mothers League, having claimed to have foreseen the crisis. This League assisted unmarried mothers to get married while the father of their children was home on leave, so that they could collect separation allowance as soon as possible; it also provided food, clothes, and work – but not money – for the mother and her baby. 'Each individual case', Mrs. Best wrote, 'must be intelligently regarded on its own merits'. She also suggested that the adoption of war babies would be an ideal solution, but that this scheme would have to be legalised before it could prove a success. Mrs. Best commented that

> A multitude of good people, most of them with excellent intentions, are at present losing their heads over the arrival of the war baby, yet, save for this public exhibition of hysterics, nothing in particular is being done. So far, not one of them has presented any solution to the question.[134]

The War Babies and Mothers League attracted its own scandal; the Metropolitan Police warned the public against subscribing to it, and the subject was raised in Parliament, when the Home Secretary was asked

> whether he will take steps to protect philanthropic ladies from the temptation to benefit war babies which, as far as this league is concerned, appear to be mainly apocryphal. [135]

Sir John Simon[136] saw no necessity for such protection, however, replying that 'I hope that the police warning will make philanthropic persons more careful in selecting the societies or leagues which they support'.[137] At the outbreak of the war, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and the Local Government Board instituted 'maternity centres', to assist

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[134] *Daily Mail*, 1 May 1915, p.4, column f, 'How we welcome war babies. Practical work among unmarried mothers', by Mrs. Helen Best (Founder of the War Babies and Mothers League).
[135] Parliamentary Debates, 17 June 1915, vol.72, columns 779 – 780.
[136] Rt. Hon. Sir John Allsebrook Simon, 1873 – 1954. Liberal MP for the Walthamstow Division of Essex, 1906 – 1918; Attorney-General with a seat in the Cabinet, 1913 – 1915; Home Secretary, May 1915 – January 1916 (then resigned); served in France, 1917 – 1918; knighted in 1910.
[137] Parliamentary Debates, 17 June 1915, vol.72, columns 779 – 780.

women while they were pregnant and after the birth of their babies.[138] Despite these early moves, the majority of the appeals for committees to deal with the war babies problem appeared from April 1915, the time from which the first war babies were born. Calls for the formation of responsible committees came from members of the Women's League of the London Congregational Union, who drew upon the example of committees formed to care for Belgian women made pregnant by German soldiers.[139] Such calls came from Charlotte Spicer (President), Rachel Macnamara (Ex-President), and Minnie B. Herbert (Secretary) of the Council of the Women's League of the London Congregational Union, who stated that

> the matter of the number of girls shortly to become mothers as a result of the exceptional conditions created by the war has been engaging our very serious attention for some time.[140]

Similarly, Ronald McNeill advocated the reform of the bastardy laws, alongside the formation of 'an influential Committee', which would take steps to relieve unmarried mothers from shame, and guarantee their babies 'a loyal and unashamed welcome'.[141] A women's conference in April 1915, attended by such groups as the Mothers' Union, the Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the Eugenics Education Society, and the Young Women's Christian Organisation, saw the formation of just such a Council. Here, it was agreed that 'It is in the highest interest of the State that the bond of mutual affection and responsibility between the mother and the child should be preserved.' The conference, organised by the Women's Imperial Health Association, received press coverage not only because of the topic it debated, but because a number of women were refused admission; some of these women were representatives of the press, and their exclusion from the meeting indicated the controversy that the debates were expected to provoke. Nonetheless, the conference was successful in passing the resolution, proposed by Miss Llewelly Davies,

> That a committee fully representative of all voluntary societies and associations, more particularly those interested in the welfare of women and infants, be appointed to consider how best to investigate and deal with the various problems in connection with the illegitimate child birth arising out of the present war crisis.[142]

Women adopted a responsible and maternal role in seeking to help mothers and their children.

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[138] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, pp.110 – 111.
[139] *Daily Mail*, 16 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'War Babies'.
[140] Ibid.
[141] *Daily Mail*, 17 April 1915, p.3, column a, 'War Babies. Many Young Mothers. M.P.'s Suggestion'.
[142] *Daily Mirror*, 23 April 1915, p.2, column a, 'Wanted to talk about War Babies: Women's Comic Anger at Failure to Get Into Conference'.

Dundas White, MP,[143] realising the propagandistic value of acknowledging children born in wartime, resolved

> that the principle of the legitimation of children by the subsequent marriage of their parents should be applied at least as regards children born subsequent to the commencement of the war.[144]

This proposal was an early day motion in the House of Commons, suggesting how unlikely it was considered to be that the matter would be debated. Nonetheless, there was interest in such matters, and a letter in the *Daily Mail* suggested that any committees to be appointed should be the responsibility of organisations already established, such as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association.[145] The correspondent suggested that marriages by proxy could be arranged where men at the front were willing to marry the mothers of their children. In cases when the father was already married to someone else, the baby should be adopted by 'some sad and bereaved mother, herself left childless':

> Sometimes single women long for a child of their own and would lavish on it the love and care given to dogs and cats... Under my suggestion the children would grow up without stigma under the care of serious and kind women, and their environment would help them to be... stronger characters than their frail and excitable mothers.[146]

Members of the public, and the newspapers in which their letters appeared, expressed interest in the ways other countries treated unmarried mothers and their children. This was surprising in wartime, when British self-sufficiency and national pride were foregrounded. The *Daily Mail* even published a letter from correspondent Anne Topham, who praised the German system, which placed illegitimate children under the care of the authorities until they were ten years old. Topham advocated women on committees befriending and helping the 'many hapless young mothers' with the upbringing of their children.[147] These comments on women's fitness to be mothers revealed concerns about the immorality, or amorality, of unmarried mothers, solely because they were unmarried. A correspondent to the *Daily Mail* praised the American system, in which unmarried mothers, who were represented as 'emotionally unbalanced and lacking in self-control', were taught self-control.[148] This is an interesting issue, as allegations of a lack of self-control had been

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[143] James Dundas White, 1866 – 1951; Liberal MP for the Tradeston Division of Glasgow, 1911 – 1918; Secretary for Scotland, 1912 – July 1916; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Financial Secretary to the Treasury, July – December 1916.
[144] Parliamemtary Debates, 29 April 1915, vol.71, column 963.
[145] *Daily Mail*, 23 April 1915, p.3, column b, 'Problem of War Babies. General Council formed at women's conference'.
[146] *Daily Mail*, 23 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'Adoption of war babies', letter from Cordelia.
[147] *Daily Mail*, 26 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'The Problem of the "War Baby"'.
[148] *Daily Mail*, 27 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'War Babies', letter from M.B.S.

used against 'uncivilised' imperial subjects. As Mark B. Salter writes, on the subject of Malthus's 'stereotype of the fecund barbarian in the face of a declining European population':

> Restraint characterised the difference between the barbarian and the European. The barbarian's sexuality – and thus fertility – was unrestrained, while the European's sexuality – and thus fertility – was restrained.[149]

As such, women defined as lacking in self-control were seen as uncivilised and irresponsible, but, moreover, they were un-British, and enemies of the state: they had to be controlled lest their lack of restraint cause another crisis – or the birth of another illegitimate child. This lack of self-control was blamed by Dr. Mary Scharlieb on women's ignorance of the consequences of their actions:

> ... they do not realise that by want of self-restraint and undue eagerness for the society of men they break down the safeguards of virtue and open the path to sin and shame. There is no intention of wrongdoing, no love of sin, but there is an ignorance of the nature of sin and a reckless disregard of the consequences of folly that threaten to ruin the lives of many and to cloud the future of the nation.[150]

Rather than adopting a position of female solidarity, Scharlieb used a condescending and superior tone, vilifying women as guilty, irresponsible, and sexually wanton. In terms of gender-dynamics, this case is fascinating: women were impugned for the war babies situation, but not because they deliberately became pregnant. Furthermore, while blaming women for the problem, some critics paradoxically claimed that women could not have restrained their behaviour even had they desired to. The blame of women in this instance is reminiscent of the punitive Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, which held women responsible for the spread of venereal disease to servicemen. Here, again, is evinced a reluctance to condemn soldiers for any of the sexual crises that were seen to have arisen, and so women were held responsible, which was a recurrent theme throughout the war.

One correspondent suggested that the fathers of illegitimate children be impelled to be '*fully* responsible' for their children, rather than having to pay only a 'ridiculously trivial fine', and advocated the French and Scottish systems, of 'legitimising' a child by the subsequent marriage of its parents.[151] A leading article in the *Sunday Pictorial* advocated

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[149] Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization*, p.53.
[150] Scharlieb, Mary, *The Challenge of Wartime to Women* (London: National Council of Public Morals, 1916), p.4.
[151] *John Bull*, 16 March 1918, p.4, columns a and b, 'The Unwanted Child. Why penalise only the mother and the baby?' by John Flint.

an immediate change in the law to legitimise the war babies, especially given the fact that they were Britain's heritage:

> The law is ruthless. It says that such a child can never have a father, even if the man marries the mother... Our war babies are indeed a heritage which the nation cannot ignore... These are not the times to dispute over theories. With death decimating Europe, it is only human and right to care for the lives of these little children who are to be citizens of Britain. Very urgently we would impress upon politicians this matter of reform... Let [women] to-day demand the dignity of motherhood, which in the existing state of the law is a legal inexactitude and a mockery.[152]

Unlike most contemporary opinions, those expressed here equated illegitimate children with those children born to married parents, as being entitled to equal rights as British citizens, and having an equal responsibility to undertake in future generations to defend Britain and her Empire. Another supporter of such a view wrote to the *Daily Mail*, calling for male war babies to eventually be trained as soldiers and sailors, and female babies to be trained for service.[153] Reginald McKenna[154] observed in parliament that the matter was controversial, and that it was impossible to introduce relevant legislation at the present time.[155] The *Times* was unsupportive of plans to legitimise war babies, and asserted that 'The real stigma of bastardy is social, and it cannot be removed by any legislative declaration, as some people seem to suppose'.[156] Another objector to expedient, wartime measures to address the problem was F. G. Llewellin, who asked:

> In making black white 'for the period of the war', shall we not put grave temptations in the way of many a girl who up to the present has maintained her honour? Will it be the case 'that evil deeds only need to be committed on a large scale to make them 'respectable'?... many of the girls now in difficulties went out of their way to look for trouble... The present time is certainly not a right one for minimising evil-doing... we must nationally show our respect for the women of character and not slight them by honouring those who have either thrown self-control to the winds or been tempted by 'brute beasts that have no understanding'.[157]

In an attempt to rescue the reputations of the soldiers who fathered war babies, *John Bull* asserted that they should not be considered illegitimate,

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[152] *Sunday Pictorial*, 18 April 1915, p.6, column a, leader article, 'The War Babies'.
[153] *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'War Babies', letter from A.M.O.
[154] Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna, 1863 – 1943; Liberal MP for North Monmouthshire, 1895 – 1918; Home Secretary, 1911 – 1915; Chancellor of the Exchequer, May 1915 – December 1916.
[155] Parliamentary Debates, 29 April 1915, vol.71, column 833.
[156] *Times*, 21 April 1915, cited in DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.215.
[157] *Daily Mail*, 21 April 1915, p.4, column f, 'The "War Babies" Problem. What Are We Going to do About It?'

> for the little brats are legitimate enough, having complied with every law of nature before putting in their appearance, and being in no way responsible for any 'moral lapse' of their mothers and fathers.[158]

Nor should they be branded with the name 'war babies':

> a better name for them would be Khaki Kids; it was the Khaki that did it. How handsome the young chaps looked in it! And what heroes they were, going off to the front to kill the Germans and save the British Empire – *and perhaps never to return.* Surely it was pardonable to make a fuss of them, to 'walk out' with them, and to sit in the silver moonlight, hand in hand and fondle them and kiss them long good-byes.[159]

At such times, the newspaper alleged, men '[took] farewell of civilisation'. This is an interesting idea, which suggested that civilisation was a fixed set of sexual morals, rather than a fluid and socially constructed ideology, which, during the war, included chastity, and did not include pre- or extra-marital sex. It was, however, questioned whether the war babies' fathers deserved the appellation 'hero': a *Times* correspondent asserted that

> Most of the men responsible for the miserable position of these girls belong either to the Territorials or the new armies. A large proportion of them have not up till now fought anywhere.[160]

Furthermore, an angry female correspondent to the *Observer* felt that men going to war should have done 'something more noble and helpful than lowering the whole standard of womanhood'.[161]

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Marriages, in wartime, were redrawn in the terms of their impact on the war effort and on future British generations. Women, as potential mothers, were an invaluable asset. Debates about women's duties as wives and mothers, and the impact these duties had on their employment,[162] came to the fore in wartime:

> Through the bodily labor [sic] of reproduction, women provided the raw ammunition of war, and, in a variety of public wartime forums, this kind of gender-specific national work was underscored.[163]

Deborah Thom draws upon women's role in the state as procreative forces:

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[158] *John Bull*, 1 May 1915, pp.6 – 7, 'The Seed of the Soldier. Wicked old Man in the Moon! – The Problem of the War Baby'.
[159] Ibid.
[160] *Times*, April 1915, cited in Ferris, *Sex and the British*, p.76.
[161] *Observer*, 25 April 1915, cited in Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.148.
[162] On this subject, see Braybon, *Women Workers*, p.112.
[163] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.86.

> The relationship between the state and the labour market for women has always been complicated by questions of whether the state intervenes to regulate birth, motherhood and sex, and if it does, how far the intervention is constructed differently in a democracy under stress of war.[164]

Indeed, sex, in wartime, was constructed as primarily a procreative act. The discussion of sex for pleasure was generally taboo, but in wartime its reproductive function was highlighted. Moreover, procreation became a civic duty. Women's responsibilities in bearing children were a counterpoint to men's military responsibilities: through the state's focus on the 'maternal body',

> motherhood came to represent for women what soldiering did for men, a gender-specific experience meant to provide social unity and stability during a time of unprecedented upheaval.[165]

The war years saw the concepts of morality and morale being inextricably linked, throughout debates. This dynamic was exemplified by the war babies crisis. What was seen as large-scale wrong-doing was met with a nationwide moral panic, rather than social acceptance. Sentiments that pre- or extra-marital sex, and the conception of children thereby, were a sign of moral decay, were more acute in wartime, even though, ironically, it was wartime conditions which both created the situation and made it so public. As Susan Grayzel writes,

> On this issue, the link between sexual morality and social order was obvious, even if one neither approved of attacks on the unfortunate mothers or the loosening of standards of behaviour.[166]

Furthermore, moral hygiene and racial hygiene were also considered to be mutually imperative in wartime.[167] The issue was one of national concern: had it been ignored, it was felt, it would have been a threat to national security and to the race.

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[164] Thom, Deborah, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* [1998] (London, I. B. Tauris, 2000), p.4.
[165] Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p.87.
[166] Ibid., p.95.
[167] On this subject, see Bland, 'Guardians of the Race', p.377.

CHAPTER FOUR

Soldiers in their Own Words:
Reflections on Sex at Home and Abroad

Britain's soldiers in the Great War were subjected to a level of sexual and moral scrutiny that confronted no other British citizens. They were governed by military laws and codes of conduct; they also came under unofficial observation and comment from the press, the clergy, and from members of the public. As uniformed representatives of the nation, and of the British military crusade, it was expected that these men would comport themselves appropriately, would be fine ambassadors of their nation, and would exhibit morals which would not disgrace their country or their uniform. Memoirist Guy Chapman commented that sexual promiscuity was more inappropriate behaviour when a soldier was on duty in France, than when he was at home in Britain.[1] However, it was apparent that the high moral and sexual standards demanded of soldiers by public discourses were not universally attainable. For soldiers, sexual morality was not so explicitly linked with patriotism or nationalistic endeavour. Wartime experiences and military conventions combined to construct an environment in which promiscuous sexuality was not judged to be incontrovertibly immoral. These conditions, being peculiar to soldiers' experiences, were not so understood by those commentators on the home front, and, as such, two parallel sets of sexual mores emerged. This disparity was noted by some contemporary commentators: Ben Shephard writes that

> The experience of war, especially of combat, creates an unbridgeable gap between those who have been there, done the business, looked into the face of death, been through the fire – and those who have not…

Shephard continues, by explicating that

> It is… within sexual relationships that this chasm has the most effect. A sensitive woman like Vera Brittain realised, soon after her fiancé Roland went off to France, that the war was creating 'a barrier of indescribable experience between men and the women whom they loved… Quite early I realised the possibility of a permanent impediment to understanding'.[2]

Soldiers had what, for many commentators, was the most 'real' and direct experience of warfare. The war impacted on those on the home front with a greater

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[1] Chapman, Guy, *A Passionate Prodigality: Fragments of Autobiography* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), pp.19 – 20.

[2] Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the years 1900 – 1925* [1933] (London: Fontana, 1979), p.143, cited in Shephard, Ben, *A War of Nerves* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p.146.

intensity and more pressing urgency than had any conflict before it, in terms of the material and economic demands on the British people, and in terms of the emotional struggles engendered by the loss of loved ones. But it was the military fronts in which men faced the danger of death, and were removed from their family and their home. This chapter explores a variety of works written by fighting men, of a range of classes and ranks. This chapter focuses solely on the experiences and writings of those in the army. There are numerous accounts of the war written by soldiers to be found in archives, as well as those published; similar works by sailors and airmen are scarce. These works take the form of diaries, letters, and memoirs, some of which have been published and others of which remain unpublished.[3] Through these media, soldiers expressed their opinions on sex, and wrote of their own experiences and those of their comrades. Unpublished works studied in this chapter are all in archival collections; no work is cited which was intended for private consumption (such as diaries and letters) that has not entered the public sphere via archival accessibility.

The memoirs studied in this chapter constitute a crucial part of the corpus of the post-war opinions about, and the history of, the war. Letters and diaries written during the war, and not intended for public consumption, offer insights into relatively instinctive and raw responses to the war, and attitudes to sex and morality during it. Post-war memoirs were, however, written with the influence of post-war politics, morals, scholarship, and other considerations. Nevertheless, neither wartime nor post-war writings are necessarily or uniformly more representative of majority opinion, nor is either category of writing to be considered more ingenuous than the other. Considered together, however, works by the soldier in the immediate sphere of war, and by the war veteran having written a considered and historical work, constitute a valuable spectrum of opinions of individuals who lived through the war.

This chapter, through an analysis of soldiers' own words, provides insights into wartime motivations for sexual activity, notwithstanding home front contentions that the war situation demanded virtuous behaviour from soldiers of the King. This chapter investigates how, in the idiosyncratic war situation, moral codes were constructed by soldiers. It also examines the insights afforded by soldiers' writings about sex into the wartime constructions of masculinities, and their connections with sexual activity and sexual behaviour. Personal testimonies intended for publication, or to be read by other people (for example wartime letters, and memoirs in archives) thrust wartime activities into the public domain. Joanna Bourke writes that 'In their letters, diaries and memoirs, men

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[3] For an exploration of the nature and history of memoirs and autobiographies, see Porter, Roy (ed.), *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997). Particularly relevant to memoirs from the early twentieth century is Rose, Nikolas, 'Assembling the Modern Self', pp.224 – 248 in Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self.*

spoke only hesitatingly about their sexual bodies',[4] but, as is demonstrated in this chapter, some men were very open in their discussions about sex, some even graphic in their descriptions. Sex, and discourses on the subject of sex, were thrust into the public sphere. These works make possible an exploration of sexual behaviour, and attitudes to it in the specifically military environment, possible. Through soldiers' personal testimonies, an appreciation of the nature of sexual relationships in this distinctive milieu is realised.

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The act of writing a diary, memoir, or letter, was often cathartic for soldiers: in Joanna Bourke's words, 'Stories of combat provide a way of coping with the fundamental tension of war'.[5] Paul Fussell acknowledges the 'curious intercourse' between love and war: 'The language of military attack – *assault, impact, thrust, penetration* – has always overlapped with that of sexual importunity'.[6] An anthropomorphism of war, or of the land on which battle takes place, was common. Parallels were drawn between the alleged rape of Belgian citizens by Germans, and the metaphorical rape of the Belgian nation by the warfare that despoiled the land.[7] Autobiographers and epistolarians have tended to stress the 'truth' of their stories, despite the acknowledged pleasures of 'spinning elaborate and fanciful yarns'.[8] Historians have long acknowledged that 'truth' is subjective, and, when using memoirs as historical sources, it is prudent to consider the image of himself that the author wished to portray. Indeed, Janet S. K. Watson points out that

> We must read the sources for what they say (and, as importantly, do not say), and, especially, how they say it, instead of just accepting their content as either transparent reality or fictionalization.[9]

Some memoirists explicate their reasons and intentions in writing. Lieutenant R. G. Dixon, in his memoirs, wrote

> I did not write this book for publication... I quite simply... felt an urge... to set down something of my own personal experience of the Kaiser's War...

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[4] Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), p.26.
[5] Bourke, Joanna, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* [1999] (London: Granta Books, 2000), p.13.
[6] Fussell, Paul, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.270 On the historical link between sex and war, see Costello, John, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939-45* (London: Collins, 1985), pp.17 – 33.
[7] See Grayzel, Susan R., *Women and the First World War* (Harlow and London: Longman (Pearson Educational Ltd.), 2002), p.16.
[8] Ibid., pp.9 – 10.
[9] Watson, Janet S. K., *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.11.

> This has no importance to anybody other than myself, so therefore it may rightly be said that I wrote this book to please myself, and this is the only explanation possible.[10]

Of his memoir, J. W. Roworth wrote

> Whether it will gather dust in the archives of some war museum, or will be read with humour, contemp [sic], or will some who read it, brush aside as the vivid imagination of its author, or the fantasies of a senile old man. If a publisher is found and willing to print, and take the risk of making a book of it remains in the future... I would liken this work as a documentary exertise [sic], with a lot of fact, and a little dash of fiction.[11]

Captain Gameson stated that his manuscript (457 typewritten 13" x 8" pages) was unsuitable for publication, that he had never considered publication, and that the general reader would be bored by the map references he included: 'who knows if it may not at last come to rest in some museum or junk-heap, and there be fingered by searchers for detail?'[12]

Historians have recognised the importance of engaging with the texts of personal testimonies from soldiers of the Great War. In recent years, a number of works have been published which rely heavily on first-hand accounts of wartime experiences.[13] Hew Strachan acknowledges the necessity of utilising the writings of soldiers themselves, as well as recognising the symbiotic relationship between history and memoir:

> If it is neither desirable nor good that the professional historian prevail over the veteran; it is also not good that the veteran prevail over the historian.[14]

Denis Winter similarly opines that the study of fighting soldiers is preferable to the study of military theorists, when investigating wartime experiences; he cites Aron Du Picq, a veteran of the Crimean War who died in the Franco-Prussian War: 'The man is the first weapon of war', he writes, 'Let us study the soldier for it is he who brings reality to it'.[15] Paul Fussell discourses at length on the personal testimonies of those who lived through the war, and claims that '"literature" dominated the war from beginning to end',[16] because of the absence of other media such as cinema, radio, and television, and entitles one of his chapters 'Oh! What a Literary War'. By 1917, the British army on the Western Front sent 8,150,000

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[10] IWM DD 92/36/1: Lieutenant R. G. Dixon, Unpublished memoir: 'The Wheels of Darkness', p.4.
[11] IWM DD 80/40/1: J. W. Roworth, Unpublished manuscript: 'The Misfit Soldier: A War Story, 1914 – 1918' by John William Rowarth, page number unspecified.
[12] IWM DD P395 – 396 & Con Shelf: Captain L. Gameson, p.i.
[13] These works include Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, and Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002).
[14] Genevoix, Maurice, 'Commentaries on the War: Some Meanings' in Panichas, George A. (ed.), *Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914 – 1918* (London, 1968), p.486, cited in Strachan, Hew, '"The Real War": Liddell Hart, Cruttwell, and Falls', pp. 41 – 67 in Bond, Brian (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* [1991] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p.41.
[15] Winter, Denis, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* [1978] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p.13.
[16] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.158.

letters home every week.[17] This was a war in which men expressed their thoughts and emotions on paper; as such, there is a wealth of material at historians' disposal.

Furthermore, literature has had a considerable impact on perceptions of the war from a historiographical perspective. Writers from the war years have had an enormous impact upon perceptions of the war and its conduct, and some such writers have achieved iconic status. In Adrian Caesar's words, 'The English writers of the First World War have achieved... the status of cultural heroes'.[18] Regarding the production of war memoirs and similar books, Correlli Barnett writes that there was published a

> surge of books about the war immediately after 1918, and a steady trickle throughout the 1920s, the great bull market for personal trench reminiscences opened in 1927. In this year there were fifteen such books as against six in 1926. In 1928 there were twenty-one books – in 1929 thirty-nine... 1930 proved another boom year for trench horrors, and the market only subsided slowly afterwards.[19]

As the works proved popular and commercially successful, other authors and publishers were keen to produce works in the same genre. Famous and popular works alluded to by Caesar and Barnett include Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929)[20], Crozier's A Brass Hat in *No Man's Land* (1930), and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930). Janet S. K. Watson describes Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves as 'the three leaders of the cultural canon'.[21] This chapter considers famous published works, but also those which were written during the war itself, and those which were not written until decades after the war had ended. Some of the works considered were published to great acclaim, while others were never published, and remain in archival collections. Some memoirs were written as factual accounts of the authors' own experiences; others were fictions based on the authors' experiences.[22] The latter type of memoir includes James Lansdale Hodson's *Grey Dawn – Red Night* (1929), Henry Williamson's *The Patriot's Progress* (1930), and J. W. Roworth's The *Misfit Soldier*

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[17] Boyden, P. B., *Tommy Atkins' Letters: The History of the British Army Postal Service from 1795* (London, 1990), p.28, cited in Roper, Michael, 'Maternal Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival in Letters Home during the First World War', pp. 295 – 315 in Dudink, Stefan, Hagemann, Karen and Tosh, John (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.297.

[18] Caesar, Adrian, *Taking it Like a Man: Suffering, Sexuality and the War Poets, Brooke, Sassoon, Owen, Graves* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p.1.

[19] Barnett, Correlli, 'The Western Front Experience as Interpreted Through Literature', pp. 50 – 56 in *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, 148 (6), December 2003, pp.50 – 51.

[20] Graves published a revised edition of *Goodbye to All That* in 1957.

[21] Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p.248

[22] On the use of personal experiences in fictional and semi-autobiographical works, see Lodge, David, 'Fact and Fiction in the Novel: An Author's Note', pp.20 – 39 in Lodge, David, *The Practice of Writing* [1996] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997).

(unpublished).[23] *The Patriot's Progress* was influenced by Williamson's experiences on the Western Front in the Bedfordshire Regiment; the structure of the book, however, was based upon illustrations by William Kermode: 124 lino-cuts representing scenes in the life of one soldier of the Great War, for which Williamson was commissioned to write the commentary:[24] three of the lino-cuts depicted soldiers with prostitutes:

Source: Williamson, Henry, *The Patriot's Progress: Being the Vicissitudes of Private John Bullock* [1930] (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp.139, 143, 145.

Novels which appeared during and after the war also drew upon the connection of sex and war. In D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, published in 1928 but then banned as obscene until 1960, Sir Clifford Chatterley was left paralysed and unable to have sex with his wife due to a wound sustained in the war.[25] Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms (1929) addressed the subject of relations between a soldier and a nurse during the war, as well as the matters of pregnancy, and death in childbirth.[26] In E. M. Hull's novel, *The Sheik*, the issues of race and sex are raised, with the eponymous 'Sheik,' (Ahmed Ben Hassan), although initially drawn as atavistic and rapacious, reconsidered and defined as sexually acceptable, when he was revealed as being half British and aristocratic, the son of Lord Glencaryll.[27]

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[23] Roworth wrote his manuscript in the late 1960s or early 1970s: he wrote in the Epilogue that 'It is almost sixty years ago when the events of this tale occurred': IWM DD 80/40/1: J. W. Roworth, page number unspecified.

[24] Williamson, Henry, *The Patriot's Progress: Being the Vicissitudes of Private John Bullock* [1930] (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), p.x.

[25] Lawrence, D. H., *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [1928] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).

[26] Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* [1929] (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948).

[27] Hull, E. M., *The Sheik* [1921] (London: George Newnes, Limited, 1923).

'It was a proud tradition of the war that a subaltern on the spree had to be a roystering blade, devoted to women and wine; and we did our best',[28] wrote Charles Carrington in *A Subaltern's War*. His words speak volumes about the prevalent reputation of soldiers during the Great War. Philip Gosse, in his beautifully written account of life as an army doctor, wrote that while giving a lecture about rats, it was evident that the soldiers in the audience would rather have been in 'those cafés, half club, half brothel, which provided drink for the thirsty on the ground floor and solace for the bored upstairs'.[29] Some men, in their memoirs about army life, wrote of their enjoyment and pride in living up to these expectations. Even men who were, in their pre-war life, largely abstemious, happily embraced their new identity of 'roystering blades'. 'Part of the attraction of soldiering', Carrington wrote in another memoir, 'was the unspoken assumption that on active service soldiers were released from the taboos of civil life'.[30] Arthur Marwick writes that 'The best account of what it was like to fight in the war is C. Carrington, *Soldier from the Wars Returning*, 1965, which admirably blends first-hand experience with the balanced judgement of a historian'.[31] The idiosyncratic war situation enabled those men who were not soldiers before the war to embrace soldiering morals. Indeed, given the established medical connection between testosterone and aggression, it is not surprising that men involved in military activity were particularly inclined to enjoy sex.[32]

Many men chose to enlist in the army because of the adage that women were attracted to men in khaki; men were reputed to choose their regiment on the basis of which uniform would make them the most sexually appealing.[33] A cartoon in *Punch* in February 1917 showed a young man in stylish civilian clothes and a monocle, though clearly with little knowledge of military conventions, claiming that he would like to get a commission in the same regiment as a sturdy officer he saw walking by, because the 'little red tabs' on his collar looked so 'smart':

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[28] Carrington, Charles [writing as Charles Edmonds], *A Subaltern's War: Being a memoir of the Great War from the point of view of a romantic young man, with candid accounts of two particular battles, written shortly after they occurred, and an essay on militarism* [1929] (London: Peter Davies, 1929),p.128.
[29] Gosse, Philip, *Memoirs of a Camp-Follower* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1934), p.134.
[30] Carrington, Charles, *Soldier From the Wars Returning* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), p.162.
[31] Marwick, Arthur, *Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change, 1900-1967* [1968] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p.128.
[32] Friedman, David M., *A Mind of Its Own: A Cultural History of the Penis* [2001] (London: Robert Hale Limited, 2003), p.190.
[33] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p.129.

Bright Youth. "YES, I'M THINKIN' OF GETTIN' A COMMISSION IN SOMETHING. WHAT ABOUT JOININ' THAT CROWD WITH THE JOLLY LITTLE RED TABS ON THEIR COLLARS? THEY LOOK SO DOOCID SMART."

Source: *Punch*, 17 February 1917, p.125.

Historians Fischer and Dubois, writing in 1937, acknowledged the sexual appeal of military uniforms: 'Practically all women from the highest to the lowest, are easily dazzled by peaked caps, befrogged tunics and golden stripes'.[34] They further commented that 'warrior heroes' had another appeal:

> women like to be treated roughly, even brutally, hence they prefer a sexual partner in whom physical strength is allied with a somewhat coarse mentality.[35]

Once in uniform, a shy man's confidence with women grew,[36] and he was empowered to pursue a sexually active life. Stephen Graham, in his memoir *A Private in the Guards,* acknowledged that 'men who were fairly decent in their home-life became curiously rakish as soldiers of the King'.[37] Brigadier-General Crozier wrote that 'young men find themselves in this strange queue [for the Red Lamp brothel], who would, in times of peace, have hesitated to line up outside a music hall'.[38]

Carrington asserted that the army's 'pursuit of sex' was one of the essential activities for soldiers of all classes and ranks, but that this was a war-specific phenomenon: 'I rather think that young men nowadays are freer from this curious obsession'.[39] Frank Richards, in his memoir *Old Soldiers Never Die*, emphasised the pre-war tradition that made sex such a prominent diversion for Great War soldiers:

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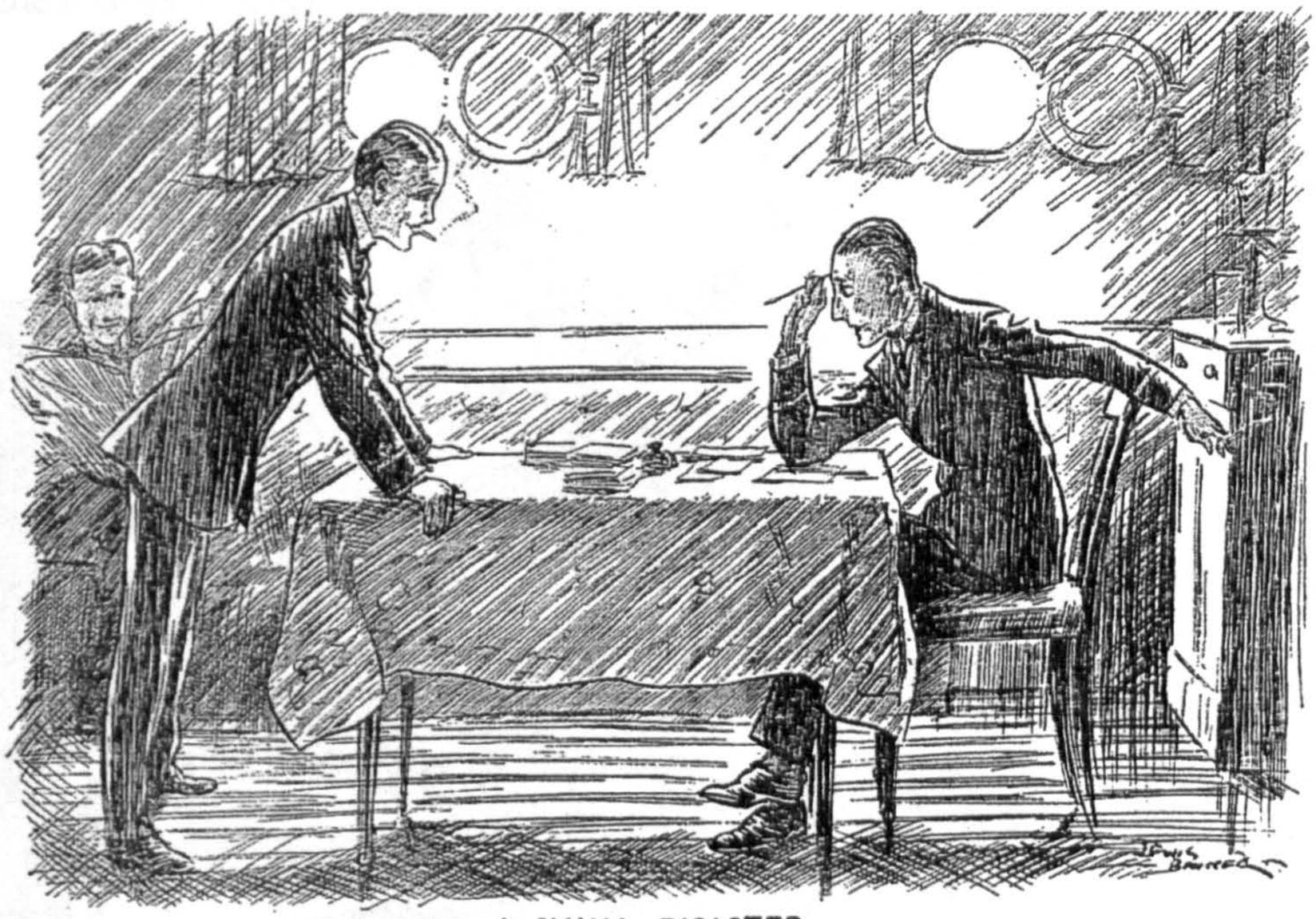
[34] Fischer, H. C. and Dubois, E. X., *Sexual Life During the World War* (London: Francis Aldor, 1937), p.62.
[35] Ibid., p.59.
[36] Carrington, *Soldier from the Wars Returning*, p.162.
[37] Graham, Stephen, *A Private in the Guards* [1919] (London: Heinemann, 1928), p.162.
[38] Crozier, Brigadier-General F. P., CB, CMG, DSO, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), pp.127 – 128.
[39] Carrington, *Soldier From the Wars Returning*, p.165.

> On arrival at a new station we pre-War soldiers always made enquiries as to what sort of a place it was for booze and fillies. If both were in abundance it was a glorious place from our point of view… Each man had been issued with a pamphlet signed by Lord Kitchener warning him about the dangers of French wine and women; they may as well have not been issued for all the notice we took of them.[40]

Indeed, the masculine trench culture fostered a number of pressures to be sexually active, unfaithful, and promiscuous; and many soldiers were. Denis Winter remarks that 'the infantry were largely working men and it was part of the working-class ethic that good health required a regular lay'.[41] In Stephen Graham's words,

> Sexual intercourse was regarded as a physical necessity for the men. Besides being the medical point of view, it became the official army point of view as well, and we were often told in lectures that it was natural, and all we had to do was to use the safeguards and preventatives which were at our disposal to save us from disease.[42]

Infidelity was also commonplace: a Church Army chaplain reported his experience of working as a censor, where he discovered that one soldier wrote the same love letter to four different girls, varying only the name at the beginning.[43] A number of *Punch* cartoons from throughout the war satirised the idea of soldiers having more than one sweetheart, and forgetting the name of the one to whom they wrote:



A NAVAL DISASTER.

Sub. "DASH IT ALL! I'VE CLEAN FORGOTTEN THE NAME OF THE GIRL I'M WRITING TO!"

Source: *Punch*, 6 October 1915, p.290.

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[40] Richards, Private Frank, *Old Soldiers Never Die* [1933] (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p.11.
[41] Winter, *Death's Men*, p.150.
[42] Graham, *Private in the Guards*, p.225.
[43] *Daily Mail*, 7 May 1915, p.3, column c, 'A circular love letter'.

Sammy. "SAY, MARM, CAN I HAVE A LOOK AT THE MAIL?" *Y.M.C.A. Helper.* "WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?"
Sammy. "WELL, I'VE POSTED A LETTER TO MY GIRL AND ADDRESSED IT TO THE OTHER ONE."

Source: *Punch*, 28 August 1918, p.138.

Similarly, a *London Opinion* cartoon from April 1915 showed a man commenting that a friend had acquired the ability to write appealing love-letters since reading examples of them in the Censor's office:

Drawn by Graham Simmons.

She : "George writes me the duckiest love-letters now."
He : "Well, look at the models he reads all day since he got that job in the Censor's office!"

Source: *London Opinion*, 10 April 1915, p.60.

The reputations of soldiers as licentious and sexually promiscuous were obviously based, to a considerable extent, in fact. Cartoons in *Punch* played on the idea of soldiers having numerous sweethearts and admirers, and buying gifts for, and receiving them from, all of them:

DON JUAN IN KHAKI.

Shop Assistant (to Tommy who has asked to see some silver name-brooches). "HERE YOU ARE. TAKE YOUR CHOICE. ETHEL, MAUD, GLADYS, PEARL, DOLLY—ANY OF THESE?"

Tommy. "YES, ALL THOSE BUT GLADYS. AND I'LL HAVE POLLY AND ALICE TOO, IF YOU 'VE GOT 'EM."

Source: *Punch*, 29 December 1915, p.527.

THE MASCOT.

Adoring Damsel. "AND YOU *WILL* WEAR IT ALWAYS, *WON'T* YOU?"

Popular young Sub. "THANKS AWFULLY. IT'S FRIGHTFULLY DECENT OF YOU, AND ALL THAT, BUT—ER—YOU SEE, THERE'S A LOT OF OTHER LITTLE CHAPS WAITIN' TO DO THEIR BIT; I'M AFRAID HE'LL HAVE TO TAKE HIS TURN WITH THE REST."

Source: *Punch*, 19 January 1916, p.47.

Another cartoon showed a wounded soldier in hospital dictating to a nurse a letter to his wife, in which he stated that the nurses were 'a very plain lot' so as to assuage any concerns his wife might have of his roving eye or infidelity.

Tommy (*dictating letter to be sent to his wife*). "THE NURSES HERE ARE A VERY PLAIN LOT——"

Nurse. "OH, COME! I SAY! THAT'S NOT VERY POLITE TO US."

Tommy. "NEVER MIND, NURSE, PUT IT DOWN. IT'LL PLEASE HER!"

Source: *Punch*, 19 January 1916, p.57

Discussions of sexual exploits and sexual matters among soldiers made this personal behaviour a public concern. While various manifestations of the law forced the issue of sex to enter the public domain, verbal discussions and written accounts of sexual behaviour moved it voluntarily into the public sphere.

In light of the existence of widespread casual sex and infidelity among servicemen, the army took active measures to protect the sexual health of troops. Brigadier-General F. P. Crozier, in his memoir *A Brass Hat In No Man's Land*, wrote extensively on the topic of sex and venereal disease in the army, having been involved in the army's attempts to

disseminate sexual health education to the troops. While not waxing about his own sexual experiences, Crozier's account discoursed at length to insist that other soldiers indulged habitually and wantonly in casual sex. He asserted that these were primarily, though not solely, the lower ranks, although there is no evidence in his work that these allegations were fuelled by class-based jealousy or distaste. Indeed, Crozier's keenness to promote sexual health among his troops revealed a genuine concern rather than contempt for ribald working-class behaviour. He arranged with a medical officer for all troops under his command, and the girls and women they slept with, to have access to free disinfectant facilities after sexual intercourse. 'Through these means', Crozier quipped,

> we were able to congratulate ourselves, on embarkation for France in the latter quarter of 1915, that although we had not yet had opportunity of distinguishing ourselves in the field, our discretion in the boudoir had been admirable![44]

Crozier defended himself against accusations that he condoned or even encouraged vice by pragmatically conceding that 'war breeds vice and venereal',[45] and acknowledging that there were 'dozens of cases [of various sexual scandals] for which the war alone is to blame'.[46] This account of his address to soldiers about forthcoming lectures on venereal disease demonstrated the army's attitude towards the class dynamics of this issue:

> Remember the venereal question. The Medical Officer is going to lecture each company tomorrow on that subject and will explain the arrangements he is making for both officers and men. He will speak to officers separately about their own affairs.[47]

His reference to 'officers' own affairs' had an amusing, and presumably intentional, double meaning. For some soldiers, army lectures on the subject of venereal disease served a purpose beyond that which was intended. F. H. Kibblewhite, in his unpublished memoir *In the face of Adversity SMILE*, explained that

> I found my name with 6 other Drivers all of my own age[48] who we all 6 of us thought the same. 'Boys were Boys And Girls were Girls' only because we were dressed different... We were given a lecture revealing!!!!! 'The facts of life' And emphasising The SEAMY SIDE OF BROTHELS And NEVER become INVOLVED!!![49]

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[44] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, p.50.
[45] Ibid., p.50.
[46] Ibid., p.91. Adrian Gregory categorises terminal syphilis as a 'war-related disability,' along with 'Skin diseases, recurrent malaria, chronic rheumatism, tuberculosis': Gregory, Adrian, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919 – 1946* (Oxford and Providence: Berg, 1994), p.52.
[47] Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, pp.89 – 90.
[48] F. H. Kibblewhite was born in Catford on 25 August 1898.
[49] IWM DD 80/19/1: F. H. Kibblewhite, FBOA, Unpublished memoir: 'In the face of Adversity SMILE', p.16.

The attitudes of the army authorities to venereal diseases were largely reflected among troops themselves. The presence of venereal disease sullied the pursuit and practice of sexual intercourse. In the words of the soldier George Coppard,

> ... the disease was regarded as a dreadful and shameful contagion. Military authority subscribed to this view and dealt harshly with a Tommy VD case. He was clapped in a kind of prison hospital down at the base and treated as an outcast... The stigma was such that very few front-line Tommies, in spite of the misery and danger they had to endure, would have swapped places with a VD man at a base hospital.[50]

Mark Harrison alleges that venereal hospitals and unpleasant medical treatments were intended as a deterrent to casual sex.[51] These deterrents were evidently of limited effect. However, Robert Graves pointed out that soldiers who became infected with venereal diseases were, at least, invalided out of the front lines and therefore out of the dangers of battle.[52] Such respite from the sphere of battle was so desired by some soldiers that

> Men bruised their penises. They deliberately sought out prostitutes infected with venereal disease or, if these exertions came to naught, they faked venereal discharge by injecting condensed milk into the urethra.[53]

Army culture was a characteristically masculine environment, in which sex played an important part. Many authors have attempted to isolate, in short lists, the pleasures of the Great War soldier, his respites from harsh conditions and the dangers of battle; the majority of such lists include the pursuit of sex. Donald Hankey wrote of a soldier at Sandhurst that 'His pleasures are simple. They are the pleasures of the body rather than the mind – sport, games, sex'.[54] Stephen Graham, similarly, commented on the importance of physical, rather than intellectual, stimulation:

> Bumble and Buck, cards, cigarettes, and when out of the line beer, *vin blanc*, and flirtation with French girls made the chief mental relief of the men. And somehow it seems natural in the army to be on the level of these pleasures... of reading and thinking in a serious way there was little.[55]

The hero of Henry Williamson's story, *The Patriot's Progress*, John Bullock, as a private, was constructed as having had a common and unremarkable experience of the war. Indeed,

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[50] Coppard, George, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai* [1968] (London: Imperial War Museum, 1980), p.57.
[51] Harrison, Mark, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France and Egypt during the First World War', pp. 133 – 158 in *Medical History*, 39, 1995, p.140.
[52] Graves, Robert, *Goodbye to All That* [1929; revised edition 1957] (London: Penguin, 1960), p.195.
[53] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 85.
[54] Hankey, Donald, *A Student in Arms* [1916] (London, Andrew Melrose, 1917), p.165. Hankey's memoir is supercilious in tone and bigoted in content.
[55] Graham, *Private in the Guards*, p.167.

emphasising the normality with which Williamson imbued Bullock, Arnold Bennett, in his *Evening Standard* review of 8 May 1930, wrote that 'John Bullock is Everysoldier, and Everysoldier would have been an excellent title for the book'.[56] Bullock acknowledged that sex signified, for his fellow soldiers, one of three reasons for living, along with being invalided home and the time spent in estaminets.[57] Historians, as well as memoirists, have attempted to define a soldier's pleasures: Paul Fussell lists sleep, food, and women[58]; Denis Winter cites tobacco first and women second, as 'a commodity and comfort to be bought'.[59] While such pleasures would be considered to be quite natural, and to be rights rather than privileges at other times, the conditions of the war – a deprivation of home comforts and the absence of family securities – elevated the status of these activities in soldiers' lives. Sex, and female company, were comforts in those harsh days.

Lieutenant James Haygate Butlin[60] wrote regularly throughout the war to his close friend Basil Burnett Hall, in England. The letters were erudite and witty, and replete with tales of the many 'flappers' with whom the two men were involved; Butlin frequently fell in love with and got engaged to various women. Butlin had little faith in the attractiveness of French girls, writing in November 1915 that 'I am longing for a sight of England & the fair sex again. One gets quite desperate out here'.[61] Butlin's escapades are endlessly entertaining, but also very revealing about wartime morality. After spending time in Rouen in 1917, he commented that

> Rouen has been ruinous to my purse (not to mention my morals) but I must confess I have enjoyed myself. I am feeling very fit + so far from catching what you said, I feel the equal of at least three Germans.[62]

His decadent sojourn in Rouen has left him fortified in spirit. In December 1915, Butlin observed that

> In my last billet, where Gomez & I stopped there lived a woman (aged about 30) who was of low (or rather no) morals. To put it plainly she was a harlot, pure & simple. She would come into your room at all hours of the day & night & dress or undress in your room. I didn't have much to do with her personally as she wasn't at all my fancy...[63]

Butlin seemed to be disappointed that the woman 'wasn't at all my fancy', despite her lack of morals. Indeed, fidelity was clearly not Butlin's priority:

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[56] Williamson, Henry, *Patriot's Progress*, p.xx.
[57] Williamson, *Patriot's Progress*, pp.132 – 133.
[58] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, pp.125 – 126.
[59] Winter, *Death's Men*, pp.149 – 150.
[60] James Haygate Butlin died in 1982, aged 86: Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, p.116.
[61] IWM DD 67/52/1: Lieutenant J. H. Butlin, 1 November 1915.
[62] Ibid., 29 March 1917.
[63] Ibid., 27 December 1915.

> Am recovering from a weekend in Bournemouth. Did not see my beloved Eileen as she was home on a week end but got off with a brace of very decent girls, another pal Stanley Hooper and myself... P.S. Bournemouth affair strictly private. Keep your mouth shut.[64]

While convalescing in Craiglockhart War Hospital, local inhabitants of which believed that the patients at the hospital were 'victims of venereal disease + confined here as a punishment',[65] Butlin wrote to Burnett Hall that 'In the intervals between love making I play a few games of tennis with my usual consummate skill'.[66] His infidelity was again apparent: 'Re Edinburgh flappers, they are as numerous as ever but of course now I have no eyes for them, at any rate when I am with my divinity [current girlfriend]'.[67] Butlin and Burnet Hall's love of life and healthy interest in women was unambiguous, and was clearly mutual. In response to one of Burnet Hall's letters, Butlin amusedly asked

> With whom did you learn dancing? At one of these low haunts where officers' characters are taken away & the presence of women of low morality is very apparent. I tremble for you, my Basil. Then, Basil, what of the flapper you describe as SOME flapper? I am pained & surprised at you, attempting to seduce a young & innocent girl.[68]

The interest of soldiers in flappers was also addressed in *The Wipers Times*, a weekly satirical journal produced in Ypres between 1915 and 1918, by soldiers, for soldiers. In a poem entitled 'On Leave', a soldiers saw a beautiful woman with 'Red hair and freckles' and 'long legs and slender':

> She speaks – a goddess tall and fair and stately –
> 'Why Jack, we haven't seen each other lately;
> Not since you went to France'. My sacred aunt!
> *Tempus et bellum omnia mutant*;
> But this their greatest change. – I scratch my napper,
> Can this be Phyllis, that unholy flapper?'[69]

Another *Wipers Times* poem addresses the issue of soldiers' sometimes unsuccessful flirtations with French women:

> Oh! madamerselle, chery madamerselle,
> You come for a nice promenay?
> Yes its [sic] always the same with your 'apres la guerre',
> And your 'me no compris' what I say.[70]

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[64] Ibid., 6 November 1916.
[65] Ibid., 5 May 1917.
[66] Ibid., 14 June 1917.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 3 January 1917.
[69] *Wipers Times*, 25 December 1917, p.11, 'On Leave'.
[70] *Wipers Times*, 1 December 1916, p.4, 'Tommy in France'.

While many soldiers were proud to boast of their sexual conquests, others wrote only of the claims and experiences of other soldiers. These accounts afford fascinating insights into the popular experiences of soldiers during the war. Sexual prolificacy was simultaneously a symbol of status and virility, and a common pursuit, from the discussion of which feelings of consanguinity could be drawn. One of the soldiers in Robert Graves' Royal Welch Fusiliers divulged to him the reputation of the regiment, announcing that after they had arrived at their training camp, 'all the preachers in Lancashire took as their text: "Mothers, take care of your daughters; the Royal Welch have come to town"'.[71] The soldiers had, Graves discovered, been escaping their quarters by crawling out of the sewers, in order to meet local women.[72] Graves continued:

> Two officers of another company had just been telling me how they had slept in the same room with a woman and her daughter. They had tossed for the mother, because the daughter was a 'yellow-looking scaly little thing like a lizard'.[73]

Similarly, Brigadier-General Crozier recorded the incident of two officers who had acquired a number of mementos from the women they have slept with:

> They 'show kit' on a [train] carriage seat. The result is astounding! Two pairs of silk stockings and a chemise, one nightdress and a string of beads. A pot of vaseline, a candle, two boxes of matches, and an envelope full of astonishing picture postcards, completes the list. 'Souvenirs', says one rascal.[74]

The Royal Welch Fusiliers' reputation was lampooned in a *Punch* cartoon of September 1916, in which a Royal Welch officer confided flirtatiously to a 'fair stranger' that they wore 'that piece of black stuff' on their backs because they had 'done something naughty'.

Fair Stranger. "PLEASE WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHY YOU WEAR THAT PIECE OF BLACK STUFF ON YOUR BACK?"
Royal Welsh Fusilier (confidentially). "WELL, STRICTLY *ENTRE NOUS*, IT'S BECAUSE WE'VE DONE SOMETHING NAUGHTY."

Source: *Punch*, 27 September 1916, p.226.

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[71] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p.64. On sermons of a similar nature, see Bairnsfather, Bruce, *Bullets and Billets* (London: Grant Richards, 1916), pp. 257 – 258, and Graham, *Private in the Guards*, p.225.
[72] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p.64.
[73] Ibid., p.103.
[74] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, p.119.

Some memoirists were candid and even explicit about their sexual experiences in the army. Bruce Bairnsfather proudly announced that he did not resort to the whores of the Red Lamp, but 'picked up' 'a respectable bit of goods' in a village near to Bethune.[75] Dennis Wheatley wrote that he visited the 'most luxurious brothel' in Rouen, where his prostitute had an eight-sided room with mirrored walls and ceiling. Post-coitally, Wheatley claimed, they both 'breakfasted off an omelette, melon and champagne'.[76] Lieutenant R. G. Dixon wrote candidly in his unpublished memoir, *The Wheels of Darkness*, that he had been a regular client at a brothel:

> There was one [brothel] reserved for officers... This we occasionally patronised; the girls were nothing to write home about, with the exception of a red-head, whose favours were competed for. My young woman was a black-haired, black-eyed wench, whose enthusiasm was quite adequate and whose skill likewise – I stuck to her on the rare occasions when a visit seemed desirable.[77]

Similarly, Hodson, in *Grey Dawn – Red Night*, reported a soldier's boast about a woman he had slept with:

> God, Charlie, she was the real stuff. Better nor bein' at home it was with her in the billet... Know the language? What the 'ell. You don't need language for that, mate.[78]

Moreover, wrote Signalman Stapleton Tench Eachus,

> It is an absolute and testified fact that 'Les Demoiselles' of France appreciate to a far more considerable extent the attentions of the British than they do that of their own countrymen,

adding that this appeal was because the British were considered to be cleaner and richer than the French, and to have more respect for women than the French did.[79]

Perhaps the most explicit war memoir is *The Misfit Soldier*, by J. W. Rowarth, about Private Casey, a young Irishman aged 17 in 1914. Despite the very detailed and explicit nature of this memoir, Roworth wrote that women's comments to him during one sexual encounter were 'unprintable'.[80] The reader is left wondering what he considered so graphic as to be unprintable. Casey's fellow soldiers were determined that he would lose his

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[75] Cited in Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die*, pp.118 – 119.
[76] Wheatley, Wheatley, Dennis, *The Time Has Come: The Memoirs of Dennis Wheatley: Officer and Temporary Gentleman, 1914 – 1919* (London: Hutchinson, 1978) p.153.
[77] IWM DD 92/36/1: Lieutenant R. G. Dixon, p.55.
[78] Hodson, James Lansdale, *Grey Dawn – Red Night* (London: Gollancz, 1929), p.218. This is a fictional account, based in fact.
[79] IWM DD 01/51/1: S. T. Eachus, Unpublished diaries: 'The Great War Diaries of a Signalman as written by Stapleton Tench Eachus'. Transcribed by J. K. Wickett Eachus, p.69.
[80] IWM DD 80/40/1: J. W. Roworth, p.49.

virginity when they were in France,[81] and, keen himself to experience sex, Casey visited a brothel and described the prostitute

> ...sitting on my knee, kissing my cheek, never my lips, and rubbing the nipples of her tits on my face, across my lips, all in view of the crowds of men who were doing the same thing, putting her hands inside my fly, and murmuring, Oh Darling you are so hard and big, you will like a short time with me, I am very good, and I make you very pleasurable... I was amazed when she took hold of my business, and examined it very carefully, satisfied I was free from the Gonna [sic], laid on the bed her bit of cheese was off, opening wide her lovely white legs... I was told to lay on top of her, then my trouble started, I went limp. And though this French hussy, [sic] tried everything she knew, even putting my thing in her mouth, I could not get hard, then she got very angry, am I not very beautiful to you, that you do not want to love me, you English are very cold, and do not know how to make love, I leave you now, get dressed, I have work to do.[82]

Casey did have sex on another occasion, and Roworth described this encounter in similarly graphic detail:

> I felt a little proud of my self because my member was standing out as stif [sic] as a ramrod, pulling me on top of her, and guiding my stifun [sic] into her, she began to move her body, in a circular motion, and with making a move I ejaculated, I got the shock of my life, I was finished before I had start [sic].[83]

When asked by his friends what his experience had been like, he replied that

> It was not as good as I thought, Its [sic] a bit like pulling your thing, but you have some one to talk to. this [sic] statement brought a gust of loud laughter from them... I did not feel ashamed of myself.[84]

Despite his experiences with prostitutes, and obvious enjoyment of sex, Casey was 'disgusted' by, and would not have sex with, the prostitutes in Greece, who sat outside their brothel 'with no drawers on, legs wide open, showing everything they had'.[85]

It has been acknowledged that among soldiers' motivations to have casual or adulterous sex must be considered the fact that they were faced with the possibility of their death or maiming in battle, and became acutely aware of their own mortality and adopted a *carpe diem* attitude. This is a powerful and persuasive argument. However, historians have debated, in recent years, why the image of soldiers doomed to a life in chthonic trenches, and unnecessary deaths due to the blundering of generals, is so dominant and so perpetuated. In 1959, Basil Liddell Hart published a revisionist article, 'The Basic Truths

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[81] Ibid., pp.9 – 10.
[82] Ibid., p.18.
[83] Ibid., p.29.
[84] Ibid., p.29.
[85] Ibid., p.38.

of Passchendaele', which argued that any defence of Haig's military strategy in the Battle of Passchendaele was unreasonable. He wrote that

> Haig had not been pressured by the French into launching his ill-fated offensive, nor had he felt obliged to continue it into the autumn to prevent a general collapse. These were excuses put forward by Haig's supporters after the war.[86]

This article sparked off historians' debates, although similar views had been expressed in works written since the time of the war itself: Siegfried Sassoon famously denounced what he described as the prolonging of the war 'by those who have the power to end it', writing in his anti-war statement that 'I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust'.[87] This image of the war was also explored in film by Derek Jarman, in *War Requiem* (1988), which utilised the poetry of Wilfred Owen, and was set to a 1963 recording of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* (1962).

However, current revisionist historiography demands that the 'myth of the lost generation', popularised by wartime writers and memoirists in the inter-war years, and revived in the 1960s, is reconsidered, and discredited: Gary Sheffield argues that anti-war sentiment and the belief in pointless slaughter is now perpetuated and 'constantly reinforced by the media'.[88] Brian Bond acknowledges the impact of war poets and memoirists, particularly Vera Brittain and Erich Maria Remarque, in formulating opinions of the tragedy of war.[89] Joanna Bourke suggests that misconceptions have occurred because accounts of the First World War have tended to stress the 'experience' of war, and to forget that men were there to kill (and not to *be* killed).[90] Janet S. K. Watson claims that memoirs and novels perpetuated and popularised the belief that the war as 'not just horrific, but pointlessly, endlessly so'.[91]

Nevertheless, the words of wartime writers on the subject of contemporary motivations for sex demand that such revisionist historiography itself be reconsidered; and this reconsideration impacts on perceptions of Great War soldiers' motivations to have sex, when faced with the possibility of death in battle. A wealth of contemporary war poetry

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[86] Bond, Brian, 'Liddell Hart and the First World War', pp.13 – 24 in Bond, Brian, *et al*, *'Look to Your Front': Studies in the First World War by the British Commission for Military History* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1999), p.21.
[87] Siegfried Sassoon, Anti-War Statement, on display in Imperial War Museum 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' exhibition, 31 October 2002 – 27 April 2003.
[88] Sheffield, Gary, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities* [2001] (London: Review, 2002), p.17.
[89] Bond, Brian, 'British "Anti-War" Writers and Their Critics', pp.817 – 830 in Cecil, Hugh and Liddle, Peter H. (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), p.827.
[90] Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, pp.1 and 2.
[91] Watson, Fighting Different Wars, p.2.

was unquestionably of the opinion that the war was tragic and unnecessary. Memoirs of the war cannot refute the statistical evidence of the number of war deaths;[92] but neither can the emotional impact upon people who lived through the war, and on their perceptions of the conflict, be questioned. Memoirists' and other writers' attempts to publicise their views on these matters must not be ignored. Some wartime writers and memoirists perceived the war to be futile, and felt that if they were going to die, they should have sex and enjoy themselves while they could. Furthermore, even if a soldier held strong patriotic beliefs, and strong convictions that the war was morally, politically, and militarily right, he may still have believed that he was likely to be killed, and fatalistic instinct may have driven him to seek out and enjoy casual sexual encounters. The peculiar conditions of wartime meant that even for those soldiers who would not usually have casual sex, there were reasons enough to do so.

Great War soldiers unquestionably lived with an awareness of their own mortality. In their experiences, death became simultaneously more relevant and less relevant: it was certainly immediate and possible, and was no longer a ceremonious and unexpected occasion. Soldiers therefore used sex as an outlet for their desire for life – sex being simultaneously life-affirming and life-giving. Memoirist Stanley Casson wrote that military victory was celebrated by the soldiers through orgy, looting, and rape.[93] The interface here between deadly battle and life-affirming sex (albeit rapacious sex) is clear. Joanna Bourke, who has studied soldiers' own words in great detail, writes that for some soldiers, questions of fidelity were nothing in comparison with questions of life and death.[94] J. M. Bourne writes that

> War exposed the fragility of human happiness. Those who did not love today might not be able to love tomorrow. Sex became a celebration of life in the midst of death. Virginity was a depreciating asset.[95]

Crozier wrote that

> The times were abnormal. Who could tell, might they not all be 'pushing up the daisies' in some foreign field shortly? Why not have a fling and enjoy the pleasures of sexual intercourse while the chance was there?[96]

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[92] Statistics of the number of war deaths are inconsistent: Gordon Corrigan claims that Britain lost 704,208 people, one in fourteen families losing a member: Corrigan, Gordon, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* [2003] (London: Cassell, 2003), pp.9 and 10. Brian Bond estimates the number of war deaths to be 750,000: Bond, 'British "Anti-War" Writers', p.827.
[93] Casson, Stanley, *Steady Drummer* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1935), p.104.
[94] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p.158.
[95] Bourne, J. M., *Britain and the Great War: 1914 – 1918* (London, New York, Melbourne, Auckland: Edward Arnold, 1989), p.235.
[96] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, p.48.

Quite simply, Robert Graves wrote, soldiers 'did not want to die virgins'.[97] This argument is to be found in countless records of those who lived through the war.[98]

With the threat of imminent death, questions of experience dominated over matters of responsibility and patriotism in soldiers' minds. Men who had sex for their own pleasure, and as an act of life-affirming defiance in the face of mortality, did not consider the potential consequences of their actions in medical or moral terms. Soldiers' concerns with their own health, their role in national efficiency, and their contribution to the nation's morality, were minimal. '*Estaminets*', writes J. G. Fuller,

> offered also the prospect of flirtation with French girls. For men starved not just of sex but contact with women and all things beautiful and civilized, this was an irresistible enjoyment.'[99]

John Bullock's principles were compromised when he was faced with the realisation of his own mortality and the probable brevity of life at the front:

> John Bullock used to think that he would never lower himself to go with anyone he didn't really love. Now with an inner thrill of exultation he said to himself that he didn't care what happened. His fears left him as he decided to see what it was like – the haunting fears of himself lying half in a shell-hole with neck and hands and body swelled dirty greeny-grey and face like an old loaf sodden in mud...[100]

Soldiers' memoirs recalled the slipping of moral standards, and the effects this had on their spirits. This approach was taken by James Lansdale Hodson for his protagonist John Hardcastle:

> Hardcastle was conscious that his standards were slipping; his outlook coarsening; his wish to serve becoming feebler. The original members of the battalion were essentially clean-living men. He rarely recalled a filthy story being told. Women were rarely discussed except with honour and love and humility. Now... he had considered French women. This was what senseless, unending warfare did.[101]

Another commentator observed that

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[97] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p.195.
[98] See, for example, Mary Agnes Hamilton, quoted in DeGroot, Gerard J., *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* [1996] (London: Longman, 1998), p.234. See also Wheatley, *The Time Has Come*, pp.152 – 153. On the motivations of soldiers to have, or to abstain from, sex, see Sauerteig, Lutz D. H., 'Sex, Medicine and Morality During the First World War', pp. 167 – 188 in Cooter, Roger, Harrison, Mark, and Sturdy, Steve (eds.), *War, Medicine and Modernity* [1998] (Sroud: Sutton, 1999), pp.167 – 168.
[99] Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914 – 1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.75.
[100] Williamson, *Patriot's Progress*, pp.133 – 134. Despite the pathos in this episode, Williamson himself, and his reviewers, declaimed that this book was not an anti-war polemic: see ibid., pp.xvii – xxvi.
[101] Hodson, *Grey Dawn – Red Night*, p.265.

> If these young men, alive today and dead tomorrow, if these young women who, as they read the casualty lists, felt fear in their hearts, did not seize experience at once, they knew that for many of them it would elude them for ever. Sex became both precious and unimportant: precious as a desired personal experience; unimportant because it had no implications...[102]

Writing in 1937, Fischer and Dubois opined that

> This complete laxity of morals accompanies all wars. In time of war the senses take command, and self-control is not only weakened but almost completely eliminated, perhaps on account of the subconscious thought, logical enough when death is omnipresent, that 'to-morrow may be too late.'[103]

A redrawing of moral codes, then, was to be expected, on both home and military fronts.

The pressures on a soldier to be sexually active did not stem solely from the imminence of death and desire for experience, however. Soldiers were regularly pestered by French women or their pimps – often young boys – for sex. In his memoir *Steady Drummer*, Stanley Casson wrote that pimps were 'the slimiest of all the slime that the great river of war cast up. Prostitutes at least gave one something in return'.[104] In Crozier's opinion, the increased levels of sexuality were attributable to the women – some, but not all, of whom were prostitutes – who flocked to uniformed men and seduced soldiers who were separated from their wives,[105] or free of domestic constraints, and thrown into the temptations of new recruit saturnalia:

> it is a fact that prostitutes and loose women follow the big drum. The more big drums there are the more prostitutes abound. There were a lot of drums in England and France in 1915... There was not much good teaching men to be good soldiers, if the prostitutes or highly placed amateurs frustrated our efforts.[106]

And, as Eric Leed writes,

> The uniform made men anonymous and public, and it was feared that women might feel that in bestowing themselves upon the uniform they were fulfilling a patriotic duty and, in any case, not committing the sin involved in acquiescing sexually to a 'private individual'.[107]

Crozier, however, was initially unaccustomed to the accepted behaviour, and expressed his bewilderment when advances were made to him in his billet:

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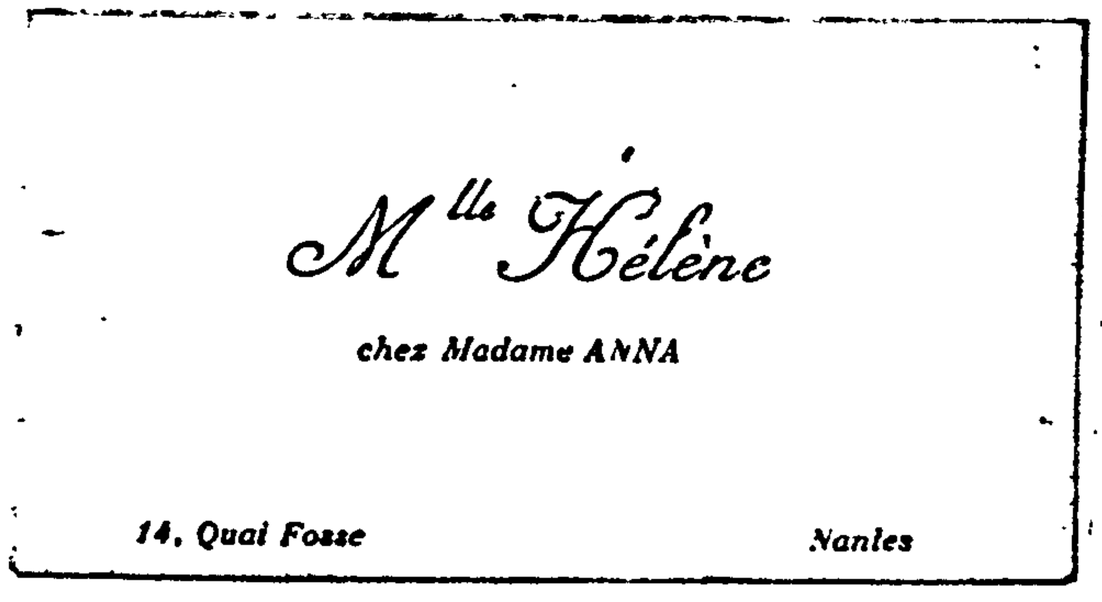
[102] Clephane, I., *Towards Sex Freedom* p.196, cited in Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991),p.149.
[103] Fischer and Dubois, *Sexual Life During The World War*, p.57.
[104] Casson, *Steady Drummer*, p.41.
[105] Graves records two incidents in which the partners of unfaithful women committed suicide: see Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, pp.89 and 103.
[106] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, pp.48 – 49.
[107] Leed, Eric J., *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* [1979] (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.45.

> I am yet to learn that many billets are much the same in France... This 'free love in billets' habit is understandable – as a biological-cum-psychological occurrence in the disorderly life of an ordered period of violent and tragic upheaval...[108]

Brothels were a lucrative business in France, with the custom of thousands of soldiers available. Prostitutes distributed business cards to potential clients; this card was found in the Imperial War Museum's archives:



Source: IWM DD M. Proctor (file number unspecified).

Captain Gameson was aware of the temptations of brothels and the temptations they offered, and wrote that '[Béthune] is no place for married men'.[109] Amiens, similarly, was felt by Gameson to be an immoral town: 'This ancient capital of Picardy is a venerable town, venereal too by all accounts'.[110] Signalman Eachus also commented that

> Walking down the principle streets of Amiens, I was astonished at the large number of prostitutes. In fact nearly all the women and young girls appeared to be in the streets for no other purpose. I was personally accosted continually...[111]

Queues and rushes at brothels were such that the seventeen year old George Coppard was shocked that 'the carnal desires of men went to such lengths'.[112] Coppard was easily shocked by sexual matters at the start of the war; by 1918 he embraced the army's sexual culture, and was sexually active himself. Henry Williamson's protagonist, John Bullock, was fascinated by the sight of French girls who waited for soldiers outside their YMCA huts, alleged to be pretty but actually 'fat and painted':

> 'Ask for a pass, Tommee', they wheedled. 'Ma chamber is ver' close 'ere!' Little boys were there, too, saying, 'Jigajig my sister for ten francs, Tommee?' and when the soldiers grinned, 'You dirty little bastards', the little boys replied unpeturbably, almost formally, with the authentic London retorts.[113]

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[108] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, pp.56 – 57.
[109] IWM DD P395 – 396 & Con Shelf: Captain L. Gameson Gameson, 15 May 1916, p.8.
[110] Ibid., 20 September 1916, p.67.
[111] IWM DD 01/51/1: S. T. Eachus, p.79.
[112] Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*, p.56.
[113] Williamson, *Patriot's Progress*, pp.44 – 45.

This was a two-way process, British soldiers adopting the wartime sexual slang and having no compunction about propositioning French women with it:

> French womenfolk crowded the streets [of Boulogne] to watch us, and a good deal of bantering went on as we passed. A few of the boys with a smattering of the lingo at their command tried out diabolical samples as greetings, such as 'Vous jig-a-jig avec me tonight ma chérie?' The women took it all in good part, screaming with laughter.[114]

Chapman records being pimped at by 'a small boy… offering the services of his sister – jig-a-jig'.[115] Gosse, a sexual abstainer, describes the invitation to 'jig-a-jig' as 'sinister and mysterious'.[116] This language and this behaviour – the indulgence in and the public advertisement of casual sex – was accepted by troops and civilians alike. Stephen Graham described the attitudes of French girls, that wartime relationships were merely transitory: '*C'est la guerre*', they commented.[117] An element of racial stereotyping of the French was also evident among British troops, who felt that French girls could not help being sexually forward: 'it's their blood',[118] wrote Stephen Graham.

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Despite the manifold pressures and expectations within army culture which dictated that a soldier should be sexually active, instances of men who were proud to define themselves as abstinent are not uncommon. Joanna Bourke observes that for a soldier, having sex with his wife before going off to war acquired a new and specific significance: it might be the last time he made love to his wife, or he may have been 'limbless' and 'faceless' the next time he saw her.[119] In his religiously polemical memoir *A Student in Arms*, Donald Hankey set himself at an antithetical position to the men 'loose in morals' whom he encountered: 'They came to our clubs and played games with us, until the more vital matter of sex took them elsewhere, and they were lost to us'.[120] He continues,

> They were drunken and loose in morals, so we heard. Yet we could never believe that they deliberately harmed anyone. Even in their amours there was always a touch of romance, and never the taint of sheer bestiality. They had their code, and though God forbid that it should ever be ours, it did somehow

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[114] Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*, p.16.
[115] Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality*, p.8.
[116] Gosse, *Memoirs of a Camp-Follower*, p.2.
[117] Graham, *Private in the Guards*, p.181.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, p.31.
[120] Hankey, *A Student in Arms*, p.105.

> seem to be a natural set off to the somewhat sordidly prudent morality of the marriage market.[121]

And, the reputations and widespread casual sex among troops aside, a number of memoirists were proud to assert their claims to faithfulness to their wives and girlfriends. Vera Brittain, writing to her brother in 1917, was keen to justify the sexual 'exclusivity' that they both enjoyed on ideological grounds:

> You & I are not only aesthetic but ascetic – at any rate in regard to sex. Or perhaps, since 'ascetic' implies rather a lack of emotion, it would be more correct to say exclusive... so many people are attracted by the opposite sex simply because it *is* the opposite sex – the average officer and the average 'nice girl' demand, I am sure, little else but this. But where you & I are concerned, sex by itself doesn't interest us unless it is united with brains and personality; in fact we rather think of the latter first, & the person's sex afterwards... you will probably have to wait a good many years before you find anyone you could wish to marry, but I don't think this need worry you, for there is plenty of time, & very often people who wait get something well worth waiting for.[122]

Hardcastle, in *Grey Dawn – Red Night* was similarly sexually exclusive, and expressed embarrassment that he had considered behaving otherwise:

> [Hardcastle] arranged with a N.C.O. to visit two 'pretty ladies' in Boulogne... He was extremely curious, felt he ought to enlarge his knowledge; but... oh, well, he couldn't. It savoured of letting Stella [his wife] down... He met the N.C.O. later, but they never referred to the latter's adventure. They both felt awkward.[123]

John Edward Sleigh, in his unpublished war diary, wrote of the habits of his fellow soldiers thus:

> Here is the programme of seven out of ten of our fellows on a pay night. Go down to town and get gloriously drunk, come back with a 'light of love' each and pair off into bunks... The women could go back 'home' on the ration lorry next morning. Strange women to tempt a man. They seem awful to me. Expressionless, and with skins of unhealthy whiteness. But then, I have only seen them in daylight. I find it better not to express my views openly about this sort of thing. It is no business of mine. As it is so general, I wonder sometimes whether I have gained or lost by avoiding these things.[124]

Arthur Hugh Sidgwick was intolerant of his fellow soldiers' behaviour, and bombastically stated that 'I believe that people can train (physically train) themselves out of not only drink

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[121] Ibid., pp.122 – 123.
[122] Bishop, Alan and Bostridge, Mark (eds.), *Letters from a Lost Generation: The First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends: Roland Leighton, Edward Brittain, Victor Richardson, Geoffrey Thurlow* [1998] (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), pp.320 – 321: Vera Brittain in a letter to her brother, Edward Brittain, 20 February 1917.
[123] Hodson, *Grey Dawn – Red Night*, p.264.
[124] IWM DD 01/58/1: J. E. Sleigh, 25 September 1920, pp.30 – 31.

and women but also fads & damfoolishness...'[125] William Linton Andrews, in his engaging memoir *Haunting Years*, was keen to assure his readers that any alleged immorality did not feature in his behaviour or that of his fellow soldiers:

> You must not think that I, being a little literary, was different from the rest. Our ploughman soldiers, though perhaps they did not keep diaries or write poems, felt just the same emotions. All thought much of loved ones at home. They did not plunge into the orgies of vice depicted by some of the War writers. We should have been astounded if we could have foreseen the impression of sexual anarchy among us which was to be produced by novelists after the War. The general moral conduct of the men I knew was up to this time as good as it would have been at home.[126]

This was a rather ambiguous comment, if Andrews felt that his soldiers would have been sexually immoral at home. He might have had the charge of a most abstemious group of soldiers; they may, on the other hand, have concealed their sexual activities from him. Rupert Brooke wrote to his girlfriend Phyllis Gardner of his difficulties in remaining sexually abstemious:

> Well, you strange Phyllis, what I'd wanted to say was this; you are incredibly beautiful naked, and your wonderful hair is blowing about you... You devil, I remember every inch of you, lying there in that strange light. 'Primitive'... did you know what you were saying, child, when you said 'why shouldn't we be primitive, now?'? God, it was a hard struggle in me, half against half, not to be. Sudden depths get moved – But it wouldn't have done.[127]

Even amid the peculiarities and uncertainties of wartime, then, not all soldiers' moral codes were compromised.

Robert Graves found the pimping activities of young boys an objectionable interference, being glad when his party 'got orders to go "up the line"', away from them.[128] He was frequently taunted by his soldiers, who could not conceive of anyone wishing to be sexually ascetic:

> I was always being teased because I would not sleep with even the nicer girls; and I excused myself, not on moral grounds or grounds of fastidiousness, but in the only way that they could understand: I said that I did not want a dose [of venereal disease].[129]

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[125] IWM DD 96/48/1: A. H. Sidgwick, p.3.
[126] Andrews, Sir William Linton, *Haunting Years: The Commentaries of a War Territorial* [1930] (London: Hutchinson, date unspecified), p.138.
[127] Rupert Brooke, letter to Phyllis Gardner, date unspecified, in Imperial War Museum 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' Exhibition, 31 October 2002 – 27 April 2003.
[128] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p.79.
[129] Ibid., p.104.

Eric Hiscock, similarly, avoided having sex because of the threat of venereal infection, and was alarmed when one of his fellow soldiers shot himself rather than face the humiliation when he contracted venereal disease: 'Can you wonder', Hiscock asked, 'that [I] remained a virgin until [I] returned to the City of Dreaming Spires on April 7th, 1919?'[130]

Some sexual abstainers claimed persistently to preserve their virginity because of their aspirations and hopes for love in the future. Even the harsh realities of war did not make every soldier take leave of his principles. John Bullock was initially determined that he would not succumb to the pressures to have sex: while marching, he was occupied with fantasies about 'a girl smiling in the darkness: the secret stealing away to a quiet deserted dug-out... the light-blasts giving him the soft glances for his desire'.[131] Hardcastle, similarly,

> was sustained throughout many trials both of body and spirit by thoughts of Stella [his fiancée] and by pictures of her face which he could conjure before his eyes. She was so essentially English-looking.[132]

Stella was both his partner and the symbol of the country he is fighting for: an individual and a nation embodied in one image.

Some sexually active soldiers were intolerant of sexual abstinence and fidelity. A. H. Davis, happily married with a daughter, had a drunken girl left outside his room by other soldiers after a party: 'Personally I was inclined to think that the girl was put on the landing outside my room for my special benefit'.[133] Davis maintained that he visited the Red Lamp but refused to go upstairs with any of the women – and was asked to leave.[134] J. G. Fuller, however, expressed scepticism that 'The large number of memoirists who record visiting a "red lamp" "for a look"' did indeed only look.[135] The taunts about Graves's sexual abstinence extended to criticisms of his contemplative lifestyle and non-participation in other such activities. He recounted an incident when, upon his return from leave in Harlech, another officer expressed consternation that Graves had, whilst on leave, been to neither dances, nor shows, nor hunts, nor 'slept with any nice girls', but had merely, in Graves's own words, 'walked about on some hills'. 'Chaps like you', the officer concluded, 'don't deserve leave!'[136] Having been approached by a prostitute in Amiens, Captain Gameson boldly stated that

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[130] Hiscock, Eric, *The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling* (London: Arlington Books, 1976), p.14.
[131] Williamson, *Patriot's Progress*, p.108.
[132] Hodson, *Grey Dawn – Red Night*, pp.109 – 110.
[133] Davis, A. H., *Extracts from the Diaries of a Tommy (1916-19): Being the actual day to day diary kept by a soldier during the war under very difficult circumstances* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), p.216.
[134] Ibid., p.36.
[135] Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture*, p.75.
[136] Graves, Goodbye to All That, pp.120 – 121.

> I had no intention of going to bed with her. Many do this sort of thing, of course. Probably most. Certainly not all. I don't. For one thing, I am engaged. For another, the practice cuts dead across some cherished family tradition with which I yet see no reason to break.[137]

He continued, commenting with disdain, that

> No decent man, by the way, however much he might pursue this kind of enjoyment himself, ever rags a man who does not. On occasion I have been ragged; invariably by poor types.[138]

Through the criticisms and 'ragging' of sexual abstinence, sexually active promiscuity was clearly defined as hegemonic, as opposed to the 'other' of sexual abstinence.[139] Public critiques of promiscuous soldiering morals were, therefore, critiques of this hegemonic position, which was not, in fact, war-specific,[140] but were more noticeable, and more easily criticised, in wartime.

More pejorative sources keenly criticised the sexual habits of soldiers as inappropriate and immoral. 'The soldier's life so far as the vast majority were concerned was largely a matter of filth, sex, beer, whisky and gambling', wrote A. H. Davis.[141] A feeling of hostility developed between soldiers at home and those abroad, the latter criticising the former as 'good-timers', 'profiteering, drinking, debauching the women'.[142] The perpetual pursuit of sex and ribaldry was found to be tedious and unseemly by some memoirists. Max Plowman, under his pseudonym Mark VII,[143] wrote that an evening of jokes and anecdotes lost its humour, because of the reliance upon smut:

> Impropriety should be served as a savoury: it needs the background of polite society to give it relish; but we had no background, so the sharp contrast which makes humour was lacking, and we were forced back on grossness, which is dull.[144]

This overabundance of impropriety, which became the norm in military circles, meant that crude stories had lost their ability to shock or amuse; the culture and expectations of

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[137] P395 – 396 & Con Shelf: Captain L. Gameson, 6 November 1916, p.88.
[138] Ibid.
[139] On the subject of hegemonic masculinity and 'otherness', see Roper, Michael and Tosh, John, 'Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity', pp.1 – 24 in Roper, Michael and Tosh, John (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.13.
[140] On nineteenth-century concerns about the immorality and promiscuity of soldiers, see Skelley, Alan Ramsay, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859 – 1899* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), and Spiers, Edward M., *The Army and Society, 1815 – 1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1980).
[141] Davis, *Extracts from the Diaries of a Tommy*, p.11. He repeats this point, for emphasis, almost word for word, later in the book: ibid., p.34.
[142] Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality*, p.165.
[143] He named himself after the label 'Mark VII', which was the official designation to be found on .303 Lee Enfield cartridge cases: see Plowman, Max [writing as 'Mark VII'], *A Subaltern on the Somme in 1916* [1927] (Nashville: Battery Press, 1996), page number unspecified.
[144] Ibid., p.134.

vulgarity had impacted on all aspects of soldiers' lives, personal and social. The soldiers' 'coarseness which is without reserve', accompanied by their dissipated drunkenness, failed to 'raise more than a mirthless laugh'.[145] Trench culture songs were famously bawdy and contained sexual swear words which were popularised during the war.[146] Popular songs included such lines as 'she married a man who had no balls at all',[147] 'Mademoiselle from Armenteers, She hasn't been fucked for forty years',[148] 'My Nelly's a whore',[149] and 'We don't care a fuck For old Von Kluck'.[150] 'Armentières', wrote George Coppard,

> had a special appeal because of the legend of 'Mademoiselle from Armenteers', which was immortalised by the Old Contemptibles' song. Not long ago there was talk of erecting a statue of the famous lady to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of her reincarnation.[151]

Even men who did not use sexual language would have been desensitised to its crudeness: Fischer and Dubois observe that 'Even the most sensitive ear' became used to filthy songs and sexual swear words.[152] Stephen Graham experienced the coarse manners of 'Sergeant No. 8', whose 'favourite way of bullying his men was by making indecent inquiries. It was very tedious and made the drudgery of being a soldier rather worse'.[153] Paul Fussell writes of a 'loss of innocence' in both sexual and linguistic terms, engendered by the war:

> [In 1914] One could use with security words which a few years later, after the war, would constitute obvious *double entendres*. One could say *intercourse*, or *erection*, or *ejaculation* without any risk of evoking a smile or a leer... Even the official order transmitted from British headquarters to the armies at 6.50 on the morning of November 11, 1918, warned that 'there will be no intercourse of any description with the enemy'. Imagine daring to promulgate that at the end of the Second World War![154]

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[145] Ibid., pp.18 – 19.
[146] Brophy, John, and Partridge, Eric (eds), *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier 1914 – 1918* [1930] (London: Scholartis Press, 1931), p.7; see also Bird, Will R., *The Communication Trench: Anecdotes and Statistics from the Great War, 1914-1918* [1933] (Ottawa: CEF Books, date unspecified), p.49, and Brophy, John, and Partridge, Eric, *The Long Trail: Soldiers' Songs and Slang 1914-1918* [1965] (London: 1969).
[147] Brophy and Partridge, *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier*, p.31.
[148] Ibid., p.49.
[149] Ibid., p.79; Brophy and Partridge, *The Long Trail*, p.57.
[150] Denison, Corrie, *From Two Angles*, pp. 59 – 104 in O'Riordan, Conal, Edmonds, Charles, Grundy, C. W., Brophy, John, 'Miles,' Denison, Corrie, Southwold, Stephen, Pattison, E.C., Hancock, Norman, Partridge, Eric, *A Martial Medley: Fact and Fiction* (London: Scholartis Press, 1931), p.63.
[151] Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*, p.24.
[152] Fischer and Dubois, *Sexual Life During The World War*, p.274.
[153] Graham, *Private in the Guards*, p.31.
[154] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.23.

Indeed, this loss of innocence is discussed by numerous historians.[155] Ben Shephard takes this argument further, arguing that innocence was necessarily lost, and morality necessarily redefined by the experience of the war. He comments that 'An Edwardian summer, a lost idyll shattered by the "guns of August": it is an historical cliché now; yet one found in almost every memory of that era'.[156]

Max Plowman expressed his contempt for the accepted and expected military practice of casual sex, and parodied the attitudes of his sexually active comrades:

> Religion, philosophy, the arts: what have they to do with us? Words, words. Are you a good sportsman? That is our test; and a good sportsman rates his life at the value of thistle-down, and the lives of the enemy at the price of rats' tails. Cheerio! Let's have another drink. Moreover, there are women in Amiens... So it all appears.[157]

Plowman's contempt for soldiers not interested in scholarly pursuits but physical prowess, beer, and women was emphasised; his disdain would not have been war-specific, but the war concentrated it and placed this behaviour in Plowman's proximity. He drew a parallel with the ignorant lack of intellectual interest, and wanton womanising. It was not sex that was dirty in Plowman's opinion, but the way the majority of soldiers talked about it and degraded it, and consequentially degraded women. His attitude throughout his book was generally scathing and supercilious toward the sexually active soldiers he encountered.

Having decided that he should lose his virginity, lest he die without ever having experienced sex, John Bullock's single experience with a prostitute proved to be distressing. His hopes that 'She would have shy, soft eyes veiled in long lashes: she would fall in love with him: he would make a night of it!'[158] were crushed. In the Red Lamp, he lost not only his virginity, but his innocent and hopeful dreams: amid the horrors of war, beauty and love were afforded no scope. Bullock, drunk and disgusted by the dirt and businesslike approach of the brothel, took his turn with 'Susanne':

> Beyond the open door he saw a fattish half-undressed woman... He wished he hadn't come... [He] strove to feel as he imagined he ought to feel, lest she become impatient and despise him as an ungrown-up weakling... Afterwards he put on his coat and belt and cap and went out without a word, unable to look at her. He slipped out of the estaminet, a part of England that has sought, in vain, to find its inner sun.[159]

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[155] See Hynes, Samuel, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp.4 – 5, and Payne, Emily, 'The Weather, The Seasons, and the Loss of Sexual Innocence in the Great War', pp. 32 – 34 in *Stand To! The Journal of the Western Front Association*, 72, January 2005.
[156] Shephard, A War of Nerves, p.5.
[157] Plowman, *A Subaltern on the Somme*, p.222.
[158] Williamson, *Patriot's Progress*, p.137.
[159] Ibid., pp.145 – 146. Despite having created this account of a Flanders brothel, both Williamson and Kermode insist that they had not been in a brothel during their experiences on the Western Front: see ibid., p.xix

Bullock, then, was not 'blest by suns of home' which so enchanted Rupert Brooke and were brought to life in his poem *The Soldier*,[160] but felt disgusted with himself.

It is manifest, from studying soldiers' personal testimonies, that those men who abstained from sexual activity during the war did not choose to do so out of a concern for their morality in connection with the war effort, and the state of the nation. Soldiers, in their memoirs, made scarce reference to matters of patriotism – such issues perhaps being, in the lives of serving soldiers, so evident as to appear unremarkable – and certainly did not link sexual abstinence with national morality, as was done so vociferously by many of their contemporary commentators on the home front.

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Life in the army, with all the pressures of a homosocial and homocultural environment, presented a distinctive milieu in which masculinities were constructed, and were subsequently discussed by soldiers in their own writings. Masculinities, in this setting, were constructed around sexual activity, and also around the tenets of nationality, nationalism, and patriotism.[161] Lesley A. Hall writes of the difficulties of defining masculinities – particularly respectable ones – for non-combatant men in wartime:

> If the soldier epitomized masculinity, what was the situation of the non-combatant – the essential worker, those too old or too young to enlist, or with minor but disqualifying ailment (quite apart from shirkers, profiteers and pacifists)? And, as the war drew on, what of the damaged males... and what indeed of the warriors of attested gallantry who declared against militarism? The generational conflict between the Old Men at home and the New Men at the Front was perhaps as, or more, acute than any war of gender.[162]

Michael Roper and John Tosh elucidate the nature of masculinity, thus,

> masculinity (like femininity) is a *relational* construct, incomprehensible apart from the totality of gender relations... masculinity... is shaped in relation to men's social power;[163]

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[160] Brooke, Rupert, *The Soldier*, cited in Silkin, Jon (ed.), *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* [1979] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), pp.81 – 82.
[161] On the construction of masculinities in the Second World War, see Rose, Sonya O., 'Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain', pp.177 – 195, in Dudink, Hagemann, and Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War*.
[162] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.95.
[163] Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction', in Roper and Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions*, p.2. On this subject see also Caesar, *Taking It Like A Man*, p.9.

they also draw attention to 'the diversity and mutability of masculinity over time'.[164] Indeed, this is an important consideration, particularly regarding the new, war-specific definitions of both masculinity and femininity: men – particularly men in the military – were redrawn as being responsible for defending the nation and its heritage, while women were redrawn as mothers, responsible for the future of the race. Despite attempts to redefine 'manliness', partly via male support for women's suffrage, Lesley A. Hall, observes, 'pervasive ideals of chivalry remained deeply imbued with assumptions about men as champions and protectors'.[165] Gerard DeGroot warns against applying present-day definitions of masculinity to Great War soldiers:

> Manliness should not be confused with what today is called machismo, since it encompassed a raft of attributes including honour, duty, sacrifice, honesty, and of course physical strength and endurance.[166]

Roper and Tosh write that 'manliness', from the 1840s to the 1930s, demanded the qualities of 'moral courage, sexual purity, athleticism and stoicism'.[167] Joanna Bourke writes that the military grading of recruits into four categories was based as much on ideas and ideals of masculinity as much as on men's physical health.[168] Mark Harrison asserts that this was a peculiarly British phenomenon, and that 'the equation of military virtue with sexual restraint was far less evident in the armies of France, Germany and the Dominions'.[169] Graham Dawson opines that

> The soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealized masculinity within Western cultural traditions... Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood.[170]

Dawson continues,

> Those forms of manliness that have proved efficacious for nationalist endeavour have been approvingly recognized and furthered with all the power at the disposal of the state, while other subversive or non-functional forms (notably the effeminate man or the homosexual) have met with disapprobation in explicitly national terms.[171]

Adrian Caesar asserts that Siegfried Sassoon was keen to adopt a masculine role and manly virtues during the war. In order to achieve this, Caesar claims, Sassoon was

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[164] Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction', in Roper and Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions*, p.2.
[165] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.85.
[166] De Groot, *Blighty*, p.32.
[167] Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction', in Roper and Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions*, p.2.
[168] Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, p.110.
[169] Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease', p.156.
[170] Dawson, Graham, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.1.
[171] Ibid.

> politically conservative, and wished to 'prove' his 'manhood' in defence of the Empire, whilst sublimating his homosexuality into a chivalrous, idealistic and chaste homoeroticism.[172]

With the nation's interests and reputation at a premium, the presence of the 'right sort' of men, displaying all the best qualities of Britishness – and therefore the 'right sort' of soldier – was obviously seen as an imperative for the nation's moral and military victory. These polar categorisations could easily be made by commentators on the home front. In the military, however, different dynamics of behaviour, and of masculinity, existed concurrently. Traditional demands for sexual purity and abstinence were set aside for the period of the war. In this period, masculinities were constructed around the indices of a soldier's sexual prolificacy, promiscuity, fidelity, or abstinence (or claims thereof), and sexual experience was deemed to be not only acceptable but also desirable. Manliness could no longer be defined in terms of Imperial authority,[173] as the war was not a colonial one. Nor were there immediate examples of women, in contrast to whom manliness and masculinity could be defined. While there were women with whom soldiers interacted – nurses, auxiliaries, families, lovers, wives, girlfriends, prostitutes – both geographically close and remote, the army was a male world, and men were primarily defined in terms of other men.

Two distinct masculinities emerged through soldiers' personal testimonies: firstly, and more commonly, a sexually promiscuous masculinity; secondly, a contemplative, abstinent or faithful, masculinity. The second of these definitions involved not only a refusal to engage in promiscuous casual sex, but a rejection of displays of machismo in favour of the pursuit of art, literature, and erudition. Authors constructed themselves as either masculine type not merely because their behaviour aligned with that definition, but because they wished to be received as such by their readership. Indeed, Michael Roper and John Tosh have shown mascunlinty to be both 'lived experience and fantasy'.[174] A rare example of sexual intercourse having the impact of making men less masculine, rather than more so, is to be found in Hodson's description of Hardcastle's wedding night experiences in *Grey Dawn – Red Night*:

> He sank, body and mind, into the softness and luxuriousness of it; but he felt rebellious too. Were men meant for this; wouldn't it undermine you, weaken your character, cause suffering to be more acute and pain less bearable? Life could be tough enough already; you needed all your manhood...[175]

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[172] Caesar, *Taking It Like A Man*, p.77.
[173] On this subject, see Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction', in Roper and Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions*, p.13.
[174] Ibid., p.14.
[175] Hodson, *Grey Dawn – Red Night*, p.139.

The crucial detail here is that loving sex, or love itself, that threatened to attack the soldier's masculinity and 'weaken his character'. Joanna Bourke draws upon the necessities of wartime life as an explanation for this:

> Aggression and stoicism were regarded as characteristically masculine – but they were traits that were expressed only because of the exigencies of military existence and men longed to return to their familiar worlds where manly nurturing and emotiveness could once again flourish.[176]

John Horne writes that the war destabilised the stereotypes of masculinity which had mobilised the populations for war in 1914.[177] Furthermore, Michael Roper argues that 'the experience of combat tested the masculinity of combatants in unforeseen and deeply ambivalent ways'.[178] He demonstrates that soldiers' letters home served a purpose in permitting a conscious construction of men's own masculinity, as well as conveying news: 'Men were anxious to communicate to mothers their capacity not only to endure the stresses of battle personally but to exhibit appropriate soldierly qualities.'[179] The same can be said for soldiers' diaries and memoirs. Indeed, autobiographical writing was invaluable as a 'discursive outlet for addressing the gulf between manly patriotism and the experience of combat'.[180]

Inextricably linked with the issue of masculinity is that of gender dynamics. This was evident in brothels, where men retained the financial hegemony. Consequently, many writers expressed concern that employment as a prostitute was financially, medically, and morally degrading to women. Concern for the moral, or, at the very least, physical health of combatants was not paralleled with a similar level of concern for their female sexual partners. A case was reported of a girl working in a brothel who had had sex with 56 men in one night; the doctor examining her put her name on the sick list and instructed her to take three or four days off.[181] In the 1930s, Fischer and Dubois wrote that 'some women received from sixty to eighty consecutive visits'.[182] Similarly, Robert Graves wrote that

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[176] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p.25.
[177] Horne, John, 'Masculinity in Politics and War in the age of Nation-States and World Wars, 1850 – 1950', pp.22 – 40, in Dudink, Hagemann, and Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War*, p.32.
[178] Tosh, John, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender', pp. 41– 58, in Dudink, Hagemann, and Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War*, p.49.
[179] Roper, 'Maternal Relations' , p.310.
[180] Horne, 'Masculinity in Politics and War', p.32.
[181] Clouting, Benjamin, *Tickled to Death to Go: Memoirs of a Cavalryman in the First World War* [edited by Richard van Emden] (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1996), pp.143 – 144.
[182] Fischer and Dubois, *Sexual Life During the World War*, p.330.

> Each woman served nearly a battalion of men each week for as long as she lasted. According to my assistant provost marshal, three weeks was the usual limit: 'after which she retired on her earnings, pale but proud'.[183]

While Graves had a propensity for literary hyperbole,[184] the point still stands that many women were debilitated by their work as prostitutes for scores of soldiers. George Coppard observed that 'As for the dames, poor dears, they seemed a jaded and worn-out lot. A couple of them were old enough to be grandmothers'.[185]

A homosexual masculinity played an important but less widely documented part in the lives of Great War soldiers: frank references to active homosexuality are rare in memoirs. However, Hiscock, despite not being gay himself, included a candid account of a homosexual encounter in his memoir. He wrote of a man, described wearisomely as 'another bugger', who made sexual advances to Hiscock on a boat home to England in 1919. When Hiscock demurred, the man gave him a ten-shilling note for sex, which he gladly took, and later happily gambled away.[186] Adrian Caesar argues that the experience of the war, and the suffering it wrought, was necessary in order for men to be able to express their affection for each other. He asserts that the subjects of his study – the famous 'soldier poets' Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Wilfred Owen – had sadistic, masochistic, and sado-masochistic tendencies, and addresses the issue of men's expressions of affection in the war.[187] Given the emotionally intense milieu in which wartime works were composed, admiration, affection, and friendship, especially expressed through the language of loss, can easily be connected with homosexual or homoerotic love or desire.[188]

A number of memoirs contain homoerotic or aesthetic appreciations of soldiers' physiques. Crozier was concerned that young men with beautiful bodies, whom he saw swimming, would be ravaged by war before having the opportunity to marry or have children:

> they are all standing stark naked on the improvised spring board, ready to jump in for a race. How wonderful they look, hard, muscular, fit, strong and supple, yet devoid of all coarseness... I realise I am, thanks to circumstances, in the presence of boys not only versed in war, but men already known to women. I think as I watch them... 'what a pity they are not married in order that they

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[183] Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, p.104. This striking reference is also cited in Vansittart, Peter, *Voices from the Great War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p.126, and Ellis, John, *Eye-Deep In Hell: The Western Front, 1914 – 1918* [1976] (London: Penguin, 2002), p.154.

[184] On Graves's propensity for hyperbole, his motivations in writing *Goodbye to All That*, and critiques of this style, see Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p.221.

[185] Coppard, With a Machine Gun to Cambrai, p.57.

[186] Hiscock, *The Bells of Hell*, p.25.

[187] Caesar, *Taking It Like A Man.*

[188] See, for example, Herbert Read's poem, which asks, 'O beautiful men, O men I loved, O whither are you gone, my company?' cited in Ellis, *Eye-Deep in Hell*, p.1.

> might plant their seed'. Mankind has ordained that they shall shortly die. Alas! The weaklings and shirkers escape and breed like rabbits, while the strong suffer and are wiped out.[189]

In this account, there was no intimation of sordidness or sexuality, but a heartfelt celebration of the beauty and power of the male physique. The fact that these soldiers were 'known to women' completed them in their status as men, rather than boys. Fussell writes, of bathing soldiers, that

> The quasi-erotic and the pathetic conjoin in these scenes to emphasize the stark contrast between beautiful frail flesh and the alien metal that waits to violate it.[190]

He draws upon the poignant words of Reginald Farrer:

> 'All those complicated bedevilments of iron and dynamite, got together at so vast an expense of thought and money and labor [sic], to destroy just – *that*'[191] – 'the beauty of that tiny frail fair thing', the naked bathing Tommy.[192]

And, indeed, Adrian Caesar writes that 'The god-like youth sacrificed in a noble cause, has obvious Christian as well as classical overtones'.[193]

Fussell's chapter 'Soldier Boys', in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, employs literary sources to discuss what he describes as 'The British Homoerotic Tradition',[194] that is to say, the propensity of Britons, or, more specifically, literary Britons, to homosexuality and homoeroticism. His argument is unfortunately misguided, however, in that he relies upon the erroneous assumption of 'the soldier's need for affection in a largely womanless world', and a consequent 'temporary homosexuality'.[195] His premise that the world of the Great War soldier was 'womanless' is wrong, as is evident from the myriad accounts of soldiers who lived through the war. Similarly, Fussell's assumption that a largely working-class infantry would 'make do' with homosexual encounters, when working-class culture required heterosexual sex as an index of masculinity,[196] and when memoirs discourse at length on heterosexual encounters, is fanciful. Fussell also fails to connect the literary tradition of homosexuality on which he relies – ranging from Virgil and Plato to J. B. Priestley, Richard Burton and Joseph Heller, by way of Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas, Graves, Owen, Housman, Sassoon and many others – with any evidence of widespread

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[189] Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, pp.92 – 93.
[190] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.299.
[191] Farrer, Reginald, *The Void of War*, pp.99 – 100, cited in ibid., p.301.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Caesar, *Taking It Like A Man*, p.1. On the historical tradition of the beauty of young soldiers, see Chapter Eight, 'Soldier Boys,' in Greer, Germaine, *The Boy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).
[194] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.279.
[195] Ibid., p.272.
[196] Winter, *Death's Men*, p.150.

homosexual activity among British troops. He also neglects to acknowledge the importance of heterosexuality sex in soldiers' lives.

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It is easy to conclude that the war witnessed a suspension of peacetime moral standards. The pressures of life in the army, and soldiers' heightened awareness of their own mortality meant that perspectives on all aspects of life, including sex, were vastly altered from those before the war. The considerable importance of sex in soldiers' lives is manifest from the fact that so many memoirists – even those who did not record their own experiences, and those who claimed not to participate in sex during the war – wrote about the topic with such fervour and interest. That people on the home front may not have comprehended the struggles of soldiers is not surprising, given the persuasive power of nationalistic rhetoric and the necessity for morale to be maintained. Calls for sexual abstinence and propriety from all soldiers were, essentially, in vain. Lieutenant R. G. Dixon neatly summarised the circumstances:

> We were not monks, but fighting soldiers and extraordinarily fit – fitter than we had been in our young lives, and fairly tough – certainly with an abundance of physical energy, or as a friend of mine of later years was in a habit of phrasing it, full of beans and bull-juice. Moreover, we were constantly in the presence of death, and no man knew when his turn might come. I suppose that subconsciously we wanted as much of life as we could get while we still had life, and if bought love is no substitute for the real thing, it at any rate seemed better than nothing...[197]

Furthermore, Dixon highlighted the war-specific nature of this redrawing of sexual mores:

> the business was compartmentalised – it was, as it were, shut off from normal human relationships, and belonged to this lunatic world of war and to nowhere else. It had nothing to do with the world of home at all... I do not feel called upon to apologise, or to go further than the foregoing words.[198]

Despite frantic concerns on the home front about the relationship between sexual morality and the state of the nation, these matters were barely mentioned in soldiers' personal testimonies. For some contemporary commentators, however, it was the sexual behaviour specifically of soldiers which caused such moral panics. Soldiers' memoirs demonstrated a marked disparity between the moral and sexual codes expected of soldiers by non-combatants, and those enjoyed by soldiers themselves. While there was not a simple polarity between these two positions, soldiers' memoirs evinced a trend towards

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[197] IWM DD 92/36/1: Lieutenant R. G. Dixon, p.58.
[198] Ibid.

sexual awareness: even those men who did not indulge in wartime promiscuity inhabited an environment where sexual language and tales of sexual activity were commonplace. Soldiers' moralities were constructed through a combination of personal pre-war value systems, a the realignment of moral standards, and added emotional imperatives, due to the exigencies of wartime. Questions of patriotism and national efficiency, as reflections of soldiers' behaviour, did not feature in their memoirs, or in their constructions of moral codes.

Alex King observes that the processes of memorialisation and commemoration since the war have, in their discourses defining soldiers as dead heroes, made it difficult for them to be remembered as men with decadent pleasures or aggressive tendencies, even though these were intrinsic to the soldiering experience. Memorials and commemoration, King writes,

> ignored the need to cultivate aggression, the weakness induced by fear and strain, the problems of discipline, the consolations of sex and drink, in order that the achievements of the dead could be presented as the outcome of moral and spiritual, rather than physical or political force.[199]

This was not merely a war-specific denial: wartime discourses of noble soldiers similarly neglected to acknowledge the moments of weakness or pleasure that soldiers may have experienced. Other historians have asserted that the memories of those who had experienced war were 'shaped through pre-existing cultural narratives'.[200] As such, conflicts occurred between soldiers' constructions of themselves and their peers in their memoirs, and cultural narratives of memory and heroism. The study of soldiers' personal testimonies, then, is invaluable to the historian, not simply in ascertaining soldiers' representations of their personal wartime experiences, but in establishing the influences upon servicemen, and the manner in which they wished to be understood. The significance of sex in soldiers' lives, as being distinct from its significance in the lives of their civilian counterparts, was complex, diverse, and multi-faceted, and must not be underestimated.

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[199] King, Alex, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998), p.181.

[200] Ashplant, T. G., Dawson, Graham, and Roper, Michael, 'The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics', pp.3 – 85 in Ashplant, T. G., Dawson, Graham, and Roper, Michael (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.18.

CHAPTER FIVE

Private Bodies; Public Bodies:
Contemporary Responses to Morality and Sexual Health

In wartime, people's sexual behaviour was seen as an indicator of the conduct and morality of the whole British nation. The consequences of sexual behaviour were, in many cases, considered to be as important as the behaviour itself, in defining it as appropriate or inappropriate. Sexual morals and sexual health were inextricably linked with the nation's moral integrity. Moral and ideological concerns, about behavioural manifestations of sexual impropriety, were expressed as fervently as were concerns about the medical and racial consequences of venereal disease. Moral panics and impassioned debates kept these issues in the public eye. Thousands of observers critiqued and criticised the moral integrity of British people; commentators offered suggestions, and proposed schemes, to manage the perceived moral crises, and to rid the nation of its iniquity. Such proposals came from concerned individuals, and from various official and semi-official interest groups. Opinions were expressed in private correspondences, the letters pages of newspapers, and published texts, by members of the public, as well as people who were famous for their work on sexual topics, including Havelock Ellis, Stella Browne, and Christabel Pankhurst, and those renowned in other fields, including Arthur Conan Doyle, Horatio Bottomley, and Dr. Arthur Winnington Ingram, the Bishop of London.[1]

Moral panics focussed on specific social groups. Military personnel, as prominent and formal representatives of the nation, were a source of considerable concern. Many soldiers were believed to exhibit behaviour which was quite the antithesis of that which was hoped and expected of them. Servicemen were easy targets for claims of moral disreputability: more explicit demands were placed on them than on their civilian counterparts that they behave as ambassadors for Britain, and for British values. Soldiers behaving inappropriately were easily noticed if they were in military uniform. Another source of concern was the conduct of women. It was not just female sex workers who were perceived as a moral threat: particularly alarming were sexually promiscuous women who were believed to entice otherwise honourable soldiers into debauchery. Of similar concern were the medical consequences of 'inappropriate' sexual encounters. Venereal disease was seen as a certain indicator of the existence and extent of immorality, manifested as sexual promiscuity; it was felt by numerous critics that sexual immorality must be outlawed as un-

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[1] On the multifarious influences on official attitudes to venereal disease policy, see Bland, Lucy, '"Cleansing the Portals of Life": The Venereal Disease Campaign in the Early Twentieth Century', pp. 192 – 208 in Langan, Mary and Schwartz, Bill (eds.), *Crises in the British State, 1880 – 1930* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), pp.193 – 194.

British, unpatriotic, and, most importantly, a destructive force in wartime. The behaviour of soldiers was seen as a reflection of the more general state of Britain's morals, which were crucial in time of war. The threat of venereal disease was considered to have more far-reaching consequences, for future generations, in post-war Britain.

This chapter draws together reactions to behavioural and medical evidence which was believed to demonstrate the existence of immorality in wartime Britain. The first part of the chapter considers contemporary responses to immorality as manifested in soldiers' behaviour, and the influences thereon. These opinions were expressed by the press, the clergy, and concerned individuals, through satire, demagoguery, and patriotic zeal. The second part of the chapter addresses the issue of wartime responses to immorality as manifested through incidences of venereal disease, which was believed to provide medical evidence for widespread sexual immorality and promiscuity. Medical personnel, social campaigners, and those involved with organisations which attempted to solve Britain's sexual health crisis, all expressed opinions on these matters.

Contemporary discourses situated immorality within men's and women's bodies, and cited sexual behaviour, and also the consequences of sexual behaviour, as evidence for the existence of such immorality. This chapter explores the ways in which interested groups, along with various individuals, demanded information, and offered advice, on these subjects. These bodies primarily discussed the matter in terms of the prevalence of immorality and venereal disease in, and its impact on, the nation. All such bodies sought to address these perceived problems and disorderly social groups, and to publicise their attendant issues. As the private and personal behaviour and health of British individuals was observed, private matters became public concerns. As such, this chapter also offers an exploration of ways in which the boundaries between the public and private spheres, regarding sexual behaviour, became blurred in wartime.

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Soldiers were notorious for their alleged debauchery. This issue was discussed at great length in the British press, and among the British public. Horatio Bottomley's patriotic weekly newspaper *John Bull* vociferously defended British Tommies against insults about their lax morals,[2] and called for soldiers to behave appropriately when out with women, so as to not invite allegations of immorality.[3] The *Daily Mirror* ran a prolonged

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[2] *John Bull*, 31 October 1914, p.10, column a, 'Clerical Insults to British Soldiers'; *John Bull*, 28 November 1914, p.6, column b, 'Tommy Atkins, Villain'.
[3] *John Bull*, 26 February 1916, p.23, column a, 'Naughty Tommy'.

debate about whether soldiers should marry their sweethearts before going to the front;[4] this was a simple way of circumventing criticisms of pre-marital sex, and claims of caddish soldiers refusing to commit to their girlfriends. Soldiers' proclivities were parodied in a satirical lonely hearts column in *The Wipers Times*, a weekly soldiers' journal published in Ypres between 1915 and 1918:

> LIEUT-COLONEL – Gone grey through loneliness. Feels that his life could be brightened by the introduction of a female element. Romantic disposition, and has had many 'affaires', but would entertain an opportunity of settling down. Widow preferred. Money no object, but would like one with small public house.[5]
>
> BRIG.-MAJOR. – Young and good-looking, whose priceless personality and charming manners have fractured many feminine hearts, wishes to settle down. Applicants for his hand must be young, pretty, open-minded, and not of jealous disposition.[6]

There was evident a certain reflexivity among the soldiers who wrote for and produced the magazine: they were aware of their reputations, but not ashamed of them. *The Wipers Times*, being a journal by soldiers and for soldiers, did not need to embrace demagoguery, but sardonically addressed 'an appreciation' 'to the P.B.I.':

> Don't let Tommy's vices shatter your sleep,
> When you write to the 'Times' stick to 'Little Bo-Peep',
> As a subject she's really much more in your line
> Than licentious soldiery, women, and wine...[7]

The writers of satirical magazine *Punch* were clearly aware of soldiers' propensity for flirtation and relationships – and indeed the same propensities in women. The magazine addressed a response to a fictitious correspondent, 'Sweet and Twenty', stating that

> I do not think your mother could object to your tucking up your charming wounded officer for the night as long as you don a Red Cross cloak over your evening attire. It is not usual to kiss these wounded heroes unless you or they are under seventeen or over seventy.[8]

Dr. Arthur Winnington Ingram, the Bishop of London, was confident that the nation's moral decline could be checked by a simple restoration of men's self-respect, thereby making them disinclined to indulge in 'excessive drinking and other wickednesses'.[9] He

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[4] See *Daily Mirror* 8 – 20 October 1914.
[5] *Wipers Times*, 1 December 1916, p.9, 'Our Matrimonial Column'.
[6] *Wipers Times*, 25 December 1916, p.11.
[7] *Wipers Times*, 1 December 1916, p.7, 'To the P.B.I. An appreciation'.
[8] *Punch*, 13 January 1915, p.21, 'War Etiquette: Answers to Correspondents'.
[9] *Everywoman's Weekly*, 18 November 1916, p.272, columns a and b, and p.273, columns a and b, 'What the Bishop of London told me. The Mission of Repentance and Hope from the Woman's Point of View', by Irma Blood.

also believed that the contraction of venereal disease should be a criminal offence for all British citizens. Winnington Ingram exemplified the paradoxical views held about British soldiers and their morals: from 1916 onwards, he was invited to unveil war shrines, and, on such occasions, always spoke about British soldiers upholding their country's honour.[10] Ingram was a regular correspondent to *The Times* on such matters. In February 1917, he wrote that,

> ...surely the military authorities might act with far more strictness... The attempt to depict our soldiers as poor innocent lambs led to the slaughter is ridiculous to those who know the facts. Many of them are out looking for trouble.[11]

These numerous accounts aside, it has been alleged that the images of ubiquitous depravity among British troops were no more than exaggeration. William Linton Andrews, in *Haunting Years*, was keen to emphasise that those few of his troops who visited a Red Lamp 'regretted the waste of money on a wholly unattractive experience'.[12] However, whether the concerns about soldiers seeking out casual sex were based in fact or conjecture, the point remains that influential clergymen were moved to write to the *Times* on the matter. Furthermore, concerns expressed by the clergy had an implicit respectability, and a sense of legitimacy accompanied their claims.

Criticisms of the lax morals of British Tommies abounded. Clad in khaki and a soldier of the King, he was considered by many interested, and sometimes exaggerating, parties to be possessed of a peculiar caddishness and propensity to seduce vulnerable women. Horatio Bottomley, in *John Bull*, regularly cited the accusations made against soldiers, and railed heartily against them, defending soldiers as brave and upstanding men prepared to fight and die for their country and its moral codes. A satirical poem, drawing upon the perceived moral dangers posed by soldiers to women, was published in *John Bull*:

> Daughter, dear daughter, come home with me now,
> The clock in the steeple strikes eight;
> You might be accosted by soldiers,
> That would be a terrible fate.
> You say they are fighting for us, dear,
> In trenches out somewhere in France?
> I'm talking of those who are here now
> To betray you if they get the chance.[13]

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[10] See Connelly, Mark, *The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916 – 1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2001).
[11] *Times*, 7 February 1917, p.9, column e.
[12] Andrews, Sir William Linton, *Haunting Years: The Commentaries of a War Territorial* [1930] (London: Hutchinson, date unspecified), pp.216 – 217.
[13] *John Bull*, 9 January 1915, p.11, column b, 'Oh! Let us be Joyful', by J.K.

John Bull called upon British soldiers themselves to prove their own reputation to 'pumpuritan' 'pulpitarians' by whom, it was asserted, they were being 'wilfully and recklessly calumniated': the British soldier, Bottomley wrote

> must make himself unassailable. He has to stand for his own character; he must maintain his own reputation. This is obviously the special job the professional pulpitarians have put upon him at home, and we have confidence that he will do it with as stout a heart as he will do the job he has put upon himself abroad – that of fighting the battles of liberty and justice and righteousness for his country.[14]

Rather than celebrating the Church of England as a bastion of British values, Bottomley drew attention to prurient clergymen. With the necessities of wartime, his priorities were with British soldiers and their reputations, which were, at that time, more important and more prominent as a symbol of the nation than the Church of England. As such, the Church was subject to increasingly impassioned and derisive attacks, one notable case being that of the clergyman who was alleged to have rented out his properties as brothels.[15] An article about the Reverend Boyd, the Rector of Bath, adopted a tone of moral censure that such attacks were damaging to army recruitment.[16] One of the earliest articles, which contained a caustic defence of soldiers against the clergy's accusations, was published in October 1914, and criticised the 'deplorable and scandalous resolution of the... [Sevenoaks] Church of England Men's Society', which called upon the District Council to take means to secure that, except on Saturday nights, 'the female inhabitants do not frequent the streets after 8.30, at which time the curfew bell would be rung' from the churches, 'during the present military occupation of the town'.[17] The article continued by praising the Reverend J. Booker, the vicar of Sevenoaks, for suggesting in a local newspaper 'that those people who are really interested in the welfare of our town should exercise a little more restraint in the proposals they make', and admitting that 'as a whole, the soldiers behave excellently'.[18] Booker was not without criticism from *John Bull*, however, for suggesting that

> parents of young girls should 'see that their daughters are not allowed to wander about at nights, and to be led into trouble, or lead others into trouble, through their thoughtlessness, and often through ignorance'.[19]

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[14] *John Bull*, 28 November 1914, p.6, column b, 'Tommy Atkins, Villain. Who will defend his character and reputation?'
[15] *John Bull*, 6 March 1915, p.8, column a, 'A Clergyman and his flats: Queer mixture of religion, rent and scarlet women'.
[16] *John Bull*, 5 December 1914, p.2, column a, 'Tommy Atkins, Villain'.
[17] *John Bull*, 31 October 1914, p.10, column a, 'Clerical Insults to British Soldiers. Are Women Safe when Tommy Atkins is about?'
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

John Bull objected to the implications of this warning, not because of allegations of women's ignorance or thoughtlessness, but because of the notion that British soldiers would get them into trouble. The same tone of censure was also adopted regarding a circular addressed 'to the women of Gloucester and the neighbourhood' from the Bishop of Gloucester and members of the Free Church Council, telling women that

> the one way they can assist their country now, especially at this time when our city is full of soldiers, is by being very careful that your young girls, or girls under your care, are not out and about the streets in the evenings... You and your children must do all you can for our soldiers, and be kind and courteous to all, but not allow any familiarity or put temptation in their way.[20]

John Bull criticised 'This foul clerical ignominy', and asked,

> What do the fathers and mothers...who have given sons to the bloody hazards of the war... think of this moral stain and stigma put upon Lord Kitchener's Army?...[21]

The article continued in strident tones, declaiming that

> We believe that the minds of these young men going forth to war are at least as clean, and that their hearts beat as high, as those of the professional clerics who revile them... We believe there is not a fear that they will sully the uniform they wear so proudly by the molestation of women, who will resent, and have a right to resent, the discredit sought to be flung wholesale at British soldiers by clerical calumniators.[22]

By wearing the King's uniform, then, according to the patriotic bluster of *John Bull*, a man was seen to become exempt from having aspersions cast upon his moral character. The Reverend W. Younger, of Harrogate Methodist Church, claimed to have

> seen with his own eyes sights that made his blood boil. Young women had met men in the streets, about whom they knew nothing, and, after a casual interview, had gone off with the men. Could anything be more horrible?[23]

In response, *John Bull* replied:

> Let us tell him what is far more horrible. It is that a puritan parson should slander all the maidens of Harrogate, and suggest that because a girl goes off for a stroll with Tommy she must be a degraded hoyden... Why should a man be more lewd and libidinous because he wields a gun rather than a pen or a hammer?[24]

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] *John Bull*, 20 March 1915, p.9, column a, 'Horrors of Harrogate. Meretricious Minxes and their Morals'.
[24] Ibid.

This response could be criticised as naïve and an instance of crass generalisation: propaganda defending the reputations of fine upstanding Tommies was to be expected in wartime, but Bottomley, and, furthermore, his readership, must have known that not all British soldiers – and not all women – were as pure and honourable as he would have liked them to be.

A circular distributed by the clergy in Kendal drew upon the sexual and biological ignorance of young women, and the ease with which they could be seduced and corrupted by experienced soldiers. *John Bull* quoted from the circular, which read:

> The young man knows full well what the risks are. But the young girl does not, in hardly any case, realise where these things are likely to lead her. She is ignorant... of the temptation that these unhindered lonely walks night after night might present to her male friend. She is ignorant that once she has lost something from her own body, which can never be regained, she will be different forever. She is ignorant that there are moments in her life when she is weak and may lend herself to sins that can hardly be atoned for...[25]

John Bull further commented that the circular was not merely an 'insult' to soldiers, but that 'it is a figment of the minds of those who think evil'.[26] In this battle, the clergy were at one pole and servicemen at the other. The clergy remained unconvinced, however, and it might have been assumed that such bombastic attacks as those made by *John Bull*, and such impassioned pleas for soldiers to behave morally, were conspicuous and exaggerated. Bottomley may not, in fact, have believed that soldiers were as pure in spirit and morality as he would have had his readership believe. As editor of possibly the most patriotic newspaper ever published in Britain, however, Bottomley did not let facts impede the bravado of his patriotic claims.

It was not merely the clergy who bore the wrath of Horatio Bottomley, however. A suffragist lady, who had criticised 'the doings of soldiers billeted in so many formerly quiet towns', was criticised more for her gender than on her accusations, which her respondent conceded may well have been substantiated:

> What we say is that fussy females and pinchbeck puritans exaggerate, distort, and hystericise the facts. We believe that in the mass the men in khaki are just as decent, just as sober, just as moral as they were out of it... Where the truth is, we do not deny that the truth may be sad and bad; but it is a scandalous thing that our soldiers as a whole should be slandered and libelled by organisations of female patrols, hypochondriacal puritans, and teetotal bigots.[27]

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[25] *John Bull*, 8 April 1916, p.11, column a, 'Insulting the Soldier Again. Kendal Clergy's Prurient Epistle'.
[26] Ibid.
[27] *John Bull*, 27 March 1915, p.3, column b, 'So says a lady'.

Such outbursts confirmed the fascinating character of Horatio Bottomley as a defender of the British soldier regardless of whether his defences were to be supported by fact. He was therefore admired by many as an indomitable patriot: in 1917, the National War Aims Committee sent the 'demagogue' Horatio Bottomley to visit both the army and the Grand Fleet.[28] Bottomley's post-war critics may have believed him to be inappropriately placed to comment on issues of morals, as he was convicted of fraud and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in 1922.

Bottomley also launched attacks on military officers who did not permit the 'unsoldierly' practice of NCOs walking arm-in-arm with women.[29] Another such article, about the punishment of soldiers on the Isle of Wight who were caught holding hands with women, wittily concluded, 'We hope they will not be punished when they use their arms upon the Huns!'[30] A military commentator, advocating the socialising of soldiers and women, was Lord Esher, president of the County of London Territorial Force Association, who addressed a letter to the young men of London stating that: 'At such a time as this, no girl should be seen abroad with a youth who is not wearing the King's Uniform'.[31] Similarly upholding Tommy Atkins's reputation, John N. Raphael, the *Sunday Pictorial*'s Paris Correspondent, wrote that the French had expected British soldiers to be uniformed in red, and to be ill-mannered, because of French newspaper reports about British soldiers in the Boer War. But, on the contrary, 'France found him chic, smart, and – marvel of marvels – clean!' The thing that endeared the British soldier to French women the most was the fact that he shaved every day.[32]

Women and girls were criticised for their gullibility in believing warnings about soldiers' sexual morality. 'Certain parsons and persons' on the Isle of Anglesey, it was claimed, had convinced Anglesey's girls that Tommy Atkins was not to be trusted:

> The girls have therefore become members of a Chadband-*cum*-Gundy concern yclept the Legion of Honour, wherein and whereby they are pledged to hold high their heads and avert their eyes, neither speaking unto Mr. Atkins nor smiling upon him when he appears in the midst. Llangefni is a whole village of supererogatory female virtue. For a Llangefni maiden to be caught talking to a soldier marks her for the way of iniquity and the pit of destruction.[33]

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[28] Badsey, Stephen and Taylor, Philip, 'Images of Battle: The Press, Propaganda and Passchendaele', pp. 371 – 389 in Liddle, Peter H. (ed.), *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), p.379.
[29] *John Bull*, 26 February 1916, p.23, columns a and b, 'Tommy's Troubles. A weekly tribune of the trenches and the camp': 'Naughty Tommy!'
[30] *John Bull*, 28 April 1917, p.16, columna a, b, and c, 'Tommy and Jack. Naughty Tommy'.
[31] *Daily Citizen*, 27 August 1914, p.3, column b, 'Soldiers as Girls' Sole Escorts'.
[32] *Sunday Pictorial*, 25 April 1915, p.7, columns a and b, 'Tommy Atkins as the Darling of all France. Loved and Respected because he is such a Good Fellow'.
[33] *John Bull*, 3 April 1915, p.4, column b, 'The Legion of Honour'.

In order to encourage women to be proud of soldiers, and not to be alarmed by the presence of such Leagues, an article in *John Bull* told of a 'Severe Female' on a train attempting to convince 'Sweet Seventeen' not to speak to or walk out with soldiers again, and even to join the 'Spurn the Soldiers League'. The older woman warned: 'Beware of the khaki coat! Too often it covers not only a man of blood, but a man devoid of truth and all moral principles', to which Sweet Seventeen replied that soldiers were '*splendid* fellows!' and left the train at the next station – she was not so demure as she first appeared, and she would be proud to consort with the King's soldiers.[34] Parents were concerned that their daughters, enlisting in the WAAC, would be shamelessly corrupted by iniquitous soldiers. One VAD ambulance driver commented, rather ambiguously, that

> Mother was horrified, like all Victorian ladies she had never mentioned the facts of life to any of us, it wasn't done, and because of that she thought we should get into all sorts of trouble. We soon learned.[35]

C. W. Grundy, in the short story 'Lost and Found', wrote that WAACs' Unit Administrators warned them of the perils of catching VD from men, whereat one woman revealed that she 'Still believed in the stork theory'.[36]

In October 1917, Lieutenant Herbert Arthur Samson was granted a Free Pardon for a conviction at the Hythe Petty Sessional Court of 'unlawfully and knowingly permitting certain premises to be used for the purposes of habitual prostitution'.[37] While Lieutenant Samson had been found on the premises when they had been searched, there was no evidence to connect him with the management of the premises. The propaganda value of a Lieutenant being cleared of such an offence would have been enormous. The besmirching of the name of a British soldier by having been accused – and wrongly accused – of being involved with a brothel would have been shameful. Indeed, the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions agreed that the conviction was 'outrageous'.[38]

Horatio Bottomley adopted rather a different stance to that he took in *John Bull* in his second newspaper, the *Sunday Pictorial*. Here, he accepted and was even proud of the fact that British servicemen had reputations as cads. He addressed an article to both soldiers and sailors. To soldiers he wrote: 'And the girls – don't you love 'em and don't

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[34] *John Bull*, 27 March 1915, p.24, columns a and b, 'Heard in the train. The puritan ogre'.
[35] Alice Christabel Remington, née Proctor, in an interview about her experiences as VAD ambulance driver in France, cited in Brown, Malcolm, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the First World War: A Great Conflict Recalled in Previously Unpublished Letters, Diaries, Documents and Memoirs* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1991), p.195.
[36] Grundy, C. W., *Lost and Found*, pp. 11 – 19 in O'Riordan, Conal, Edmonds, Charles, Grundy, C. W., Brophy, John, 'Miles,' Denison, Corrie, Southwold, Stephen, Pattison, E.C., Hancock, Norman, Partridge, Eric, *A Martial Medley: Fact and Fiction* (London: Scholartis Press, 1931), p.12.
[37] TNA HO 144/1482/347866: Lieutenant Samson had been convicted on 7 August 1917 and fined £5; the Free Pardon was granted by the King on 15 October 1917.
[38] TNA HO 144/1482/347866: letter from the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions to Sir Edward Troup, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, 27 September 1917.

they love you! But we'll talk about them later on – when the fighting is finished'.[39] To sailors, his address was more explicitly about sexual desire, and encouraged the flirtations and infidelities of sailors:

> Do you know, I sometimes think you should be rechristened 'Jack Dreadnought' – for I am certain you don't care a tinker's cuss – or, shall I say, a sailor's cuss? – for anybody or anything – *except, of course, the girl*... Hoist your slacks; dance the hornpipe, and if, perchance, you meet a pretty girl in a foreign port – well, give her a kiss, *and think of the missis!*

What Bottomley was advocating here is ambiguous. He may have been suggesting that sailors kiss all the pretty girls they meet – but no more than that. Conversely, it is possible that he deemed it appropriate for sailors to have sex with women around the world, as long as they remembered their wives and returned to them when they returned to Britain. Nonetheless, when read alongside his myopic propaganda in *John Bull*, this article revealed him to have been a fickle correspondent – if a fine journalist.

The Wipers Times addressed a poem to subalterns on leave, poking fun at the attitude that soldiers should be purged of all depraved tendencies when at home in Britain:

> Now you subs of tender years
> For your morals, it appears,
> (You must admit they're open much to question)
> There is shortly going to be
> A morality O.C.,
> Who will see that vice does not spoil your digestion.[40]

The poem continued with a subaltern on leave having to be escorted by an 'aged chaperone:'

> Should you dare to want a drink,
> With a look she'll make you think
> What an awful well of sin a sub can be...
> For you must admit that you were most immoral,
> You will find when leave's expired
> That your fancies will have tired
> For the glass that sparkles, and for lips of coral.[41]

Opinions about soldiers and their morality were dichotomous, and were diametrically opposed. Alongside the possibly excessive panics of moralists and the clergy, and patriotic trumpeting of Horatio Bottomley and his ilk, opinions such as these, expressed in *The Wipers Times*, illustrate the fact that these matters were viewed, by some commentators at least, with a sense of humour and self-reflexivity. The humour, however, derived at least

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[39] *Sunday Pictorial*, 15 August 1915, p.6, columns b, c, and d, 'To "Tommy" and "Jack". A chat with the two men who matter', by Horatio Bottomley.
[40] *Wipers Times*, 1 December 1916, p.5, 'Virtue'.
[41] Ibid.

partially, from the fact that these issues were recognised as being such a national preoccupation.

Concerns about soldiers' morality are unsurprising, given the historical trend that has identified sexual purity or abstinence as requirements for masculinity and virtue in fighting men.[42] Furthermore, it is argued,

> Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is only attainable in battle... the soldier has become a quintessential figure of masculinity.[43]

This list of admirable virtues did not allow for sexual pleasure in a soldier's life, and, being in contradiction to the perceived prevalence of sexually active – and immoral – soldiers, explained such violent and vitriolic reactions to this.

Indeed, paradoxical views persisted throughout the war, and were expressed frequently and with considerable vehemence. The opinions expressed often reflected the more general beliefs of those articulating them; they also reflected the ideological needs of these parties, be they ideologies of politics, patriotism, or moral crusading. As such, soldiers were concurrently portrayed as virtuous defenders of the British nation and the British Empire; as brave heroes in the face of death who could be excused, and were entitled to, casual sexual encounters; and as immoral representatives of Britain, whose dissipated behaviour was a disgrace and a danger to the nation they were supposedly defending. Similarly, women were simultaneously identified as being innocent angels, preyed upon sexually by voracious servicemen; and as sexually wanton *femmes fatales* who lured otherwise honourable British Tommies to their moral doom and detriment.

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Immoral women were a focus for discourses of blame for the perceived decline in moral standards. Debates about dissipated women formed part of the controversy surrounding the legal and official control of women's sex lives and private behaviour, evinced through the discussions of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, and women's patrols. Rather than holding soldiers responsible for their own actions, such accusations of female immorality held women responsible for tempting men into vice in such a manner that did not admit of soldiers

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[42] Roper, Michael and Tosh, John, 'Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity', pp. 1 – 24 in Roper, Michael and Tosh, John (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.2.

[43] Dawson, Graham, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.1.

having any free will to resist. A Metropolitan Police Report wrote of the increase in the number of young women adopting the way of life of the prostitute, that

> This deplorable tendency is readily explained by the abnormal conditions and excitements of war; the weakening of parental control and other restraining influence [sic]; the temptation to earn money easily, and the fact that soldiers under training, especially Colonial troops, have plenty of money to spend.[44]

Women were here drawn as providing easy and accessible distractions and temptations for soldiers. However, the portrayal of soldiers as weak-willed when confronted with women's pestering, distractions, and temptations, was in direct contravention of the notion of their being both strong in mind and strong in body: well-rounded individuals as representatives of the nation.

From the outbreak of the war, women's participation in recruitment campaigns made use of their femininity and sexuality. The presenting of white feathers to men who were not in uniform was a prominent means by which this occurred, but it was not criticised, as it was felt that attention should be drawn to cowards and shirkers, so that they would be embarrassed into joining up for fear that they did not look manly enough to women. Other recruitment campaigns, however, while patriotic, sometimes took a form which some observers considered to be inappropriate. A recruiting song from the music halls, and also heard at village fêtes, was dubbed 'not quite nice' by some commentators:

> On Sunday I walk out with a soldier,
> On Monday I'm taken by a tar,
> On Tuesday I'm out
> With a baby Boy Scout,
> On Wednesday with a Hussar,
> On Thursday I gang oot with a Kiltie,
> On Friday the captain of the crew,
> But on Saturday I'm willing, if you'll only take a shilling,
> To make a man of any one of you.[45]

Indeed, in Susan Grayzel's words, 'popular wartime media offered an ambivalent message about women and sex', with alluring women used as incentives to men to enlist, and as rewards, at least in the form of propaganda, to fighting soldiers.[46] The Metropolitan Police acknowledged that, during the war, some young women adopted a life of prostitution due to the 'abnormal conditions and excitements', and that a number of those who did not turn to prostitution engaged in 'immoral conduct with soldiers'.[47]

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[44] TNA MEPO 2/1720: Metropolitan Police Report, 'Measures for Dealing with Prostitutes'.
[45] Wilson, Trevor, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914 – 1918* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p.706.
[46] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women and the First World War* (Harlow and London: Longman (Pearson Educational Ltd.), 2002), p.63.
[47] TNA MEPO 2/1720.

Concern was expressed about sexual and platonic relationships between servicemen and female civilians or VAD nurses. The response of the public, the press, and the clergy to this topic sheds highlights the wartime behaviour considered appropriate for both sexes, and the debate over who was corrupting whom. An article in *John Bull* criticised Mrs. Ryle, the wife of the Dean of Westminster, who had criticised the immorality of women who collected money for Belgian Relief Funds in the streets:

> Who has appointed Mrs. Ryle, and such ladies as Mrs. Ryle, to censure other women helping good causes, for sacrificing their self-respect? The fact that this lady is the wife of a Dean does not give her Divine warrant or Divine authority to plunge into this orgy of exaggeration, slander, and insult in which Pump and Stiggins has been rioting since the beginning of the war.[48]

This carping at soldiers' and women's behaviour, the article alleged, discouraged recruitment. The article continued, commenting that

> Many of the fussy folk, male and female, who have appointed themselves guardians of other people's morals, and slanderers of other people's characters, are now explaining that they are not striving to save the women from the importunities of the soldiers, but the soldiers from the seductions of the women…[49]

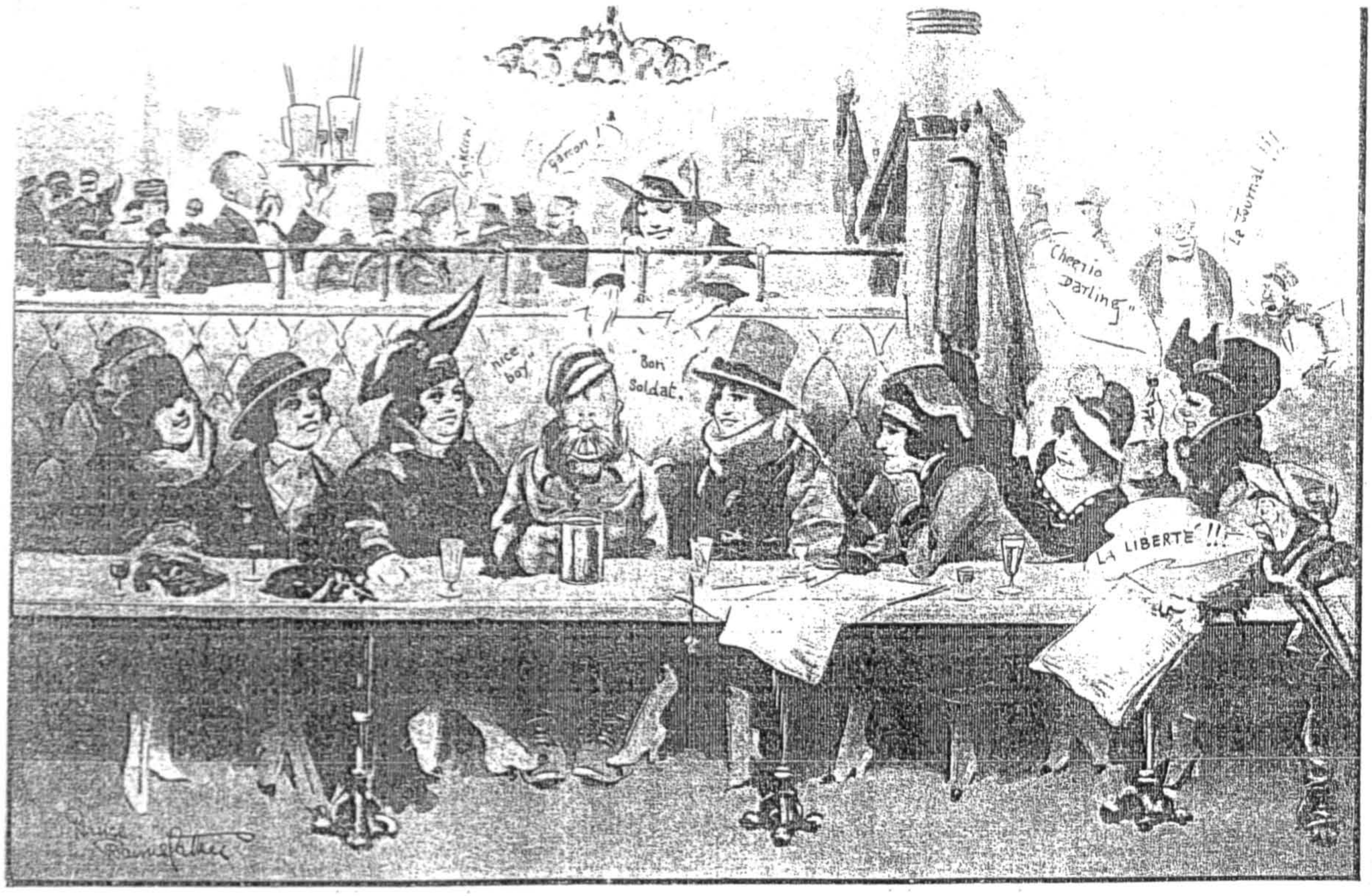
A number of sources apportioned the blame for sexual immorality to vicious women as the seducers of innocent soldiers. Two of Bruce Bairnsfather's cartoons from his *Fragments* series showed bewildered soldiers in situations with admiring and flirtatious women, and wishing themselves elsewhere: one soldier sardonically commented to his friend that, given the perils of loose women and their attentions, 'it's safer in the trenches':

Entanglements

"COME ON, BERT. IT'S SAFER IN THE TRENCHES"

Source: Bairnsfather, Bruce, *Still More Bystander's Fragments from France* ['Fragments' Volume III] (London: 'The Bystander', date unspecified), p.7.

[48] *John Bull*, 12 December 1914, p.8, column a, 'The Great Pump and Purity Slander. Latest Activities of Mischievous Moralists'. Bottomley frequently made references to Dickensian characters, such as those in this extract.
[49] Ibid.



Perils of War—and of Popularity

Old Bill wishes now that he had never gone into that café on the Boulevard des Italiennes

Source: Bairnsfather, Bruce, *The Bystander's Fragments from All the Fronts number six* ['Fragments' Volume VI] (London: 'The Bystander', date unspecified), pp.16 – 17.

Arthur Conan Doyle was preoccupied with the moral state of the nation, and particularly the controversial issue of who to blame for British servicemen becoming infected with venereal disease.[50] On this subject he was a frequent and vitriolic correspondent to *The Times*. He wrote of 'the vile women who prey upon and poison our soldiers in London':

> …these harpies carry off the lonely soldiers to their rooms, make them drunk with the vile liquor which they keep there, and finally inoculate them… with one or other of those diseases which, thanks to the agitation of well-meaning fools, have had free trade granted to them amongst us. Our present policy is to shut the museums… but to keep open the brothels…[51]

Conan Doyle continued in another letter:

> These women are the enemies of the country. They should be treated as such. A… Bill should be passed empowering the police to intern all notorious prostitutes in the whole country, together with the brothel keepers, until six months after the end of the war. All women found to be dangerous should be sent to join them.[52]

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[50] On Arthur Conan Doyle's attitudes to sexual denial, as manifested through Sherlock Holmes, who was 'estranged from women' and preferred taking drugs to having sex, see Adams, Michael C. C., *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.76.

[51] *Times*, 6 February 1917, p.9, column c, 'Soldiers in London'.

[52] *Times*, 10 February 1917, p.7, column e, 'Soldiers in London'.

In Conan Doyle's writings were expressed the blame of women for the physical problems of sexual infection, and the moral problems of degeneracy.

Gender dynamics permeated wartime debates on sex, a fact which has been noted by Trevor Wilson as evidence of the perennial sexual double standard for men and for women.[53] Indeed, it was widely alleged that it was acceptable for men to be unfaithful, though not for women to be. The sexual health campaigner Louise Creighton asserted unequivocally that there was 'a low moral tone in society generally', and that

> These evils would be remedied at once if there were a higher moral standard amongst men, and that double standard which exacts purity for women and condones incontinence in men were abolished...[54]

The double standard was believed to be a threat to Britain's racial, national, and imperial health.[55] It was maintained that between 80 and 90 per cent of British men had pre-marital sex,[56] and that in order to eradicate the double standard, an improvement in public opinion was essential, which could be achieved through popular media such as cinema, stage, and fiction.[57] This claim was clearly intended to draw men as promiscuous and responsible for the gulf in standards between men and women, and therefore the low moral tone and high incidence of venereal disease. Furthermore, it was claimed that an emotional imperative made it difficult for women to adopt the same sexual standards as men: 'If *they* [women] let a man, why, they love him, and it's all UP with their husbands'.[58] The medical impact of the double standard was manifested in the spread of venereal disease from an unfaithful partner to a spouse, and possibly to children. Christabel Pankhurst wrote, in feminist terms, of the danger of 'innocent' women being infected by their 'immoral' husbands.[59] A. Maude Royden asserted that it was important not to assume the guilt of either sex.[60]

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[53] See Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, p.725. For a discussion of the traditions of the double standard, and its threat to women's physical health, see Savage, Gail, '"The Wilful Communication of a Loathsome Disease": Marital Conflict and Venereal Disease in Victorian England', pp.35 – 54 in *Victorian Studies*, Autumn 1990.

[54] Creighton, Louise, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It: A Rejoinder* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914), pp. 12 – 13 and p.28.

[55] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* [1999] (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.155.

[56] Gotto, Mrs. A. C., *The Changing Moral Standard* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1918), p.3.

[57] Ibid., p.4.

[58] 'Miles', *Three Episodes of the War*, pp.21 – 45 in O'Riordan, et al (eds.), *A Martial Medley*, p.28.

[59] Pankhurst, Christabel, *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (London: E. Pankhust, 1913), p.11. On Christabel Pankhurst's views on sex, venereal disease, and divorce, see Savage, 'The Wilful Communication of a Loathsome Disease'.

[60] Royden, A. Maude, *The Duty of Knowledge: A Consideration of the Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, Especially for the Use of Social Workers* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917), particularly p.6.

The press's treatment of the issues of promiscuity and casual sex revealed a different double standard: soldiers' reputations were defended at all costs, while the reputation of women were not treated with such care. *John Bull*, while quick to defend the reputation of British soldiers, was not so disposed towards women who were accused of seducing them:

> There are women, and ladies. We regret to note the number of complaints from our hospitals concerning V.A.D. workers. The bulk are sympathetic and kind, but unfortunately many have slipped in who are vixens, and haze the Tommy they should be out to protect. If the superior authorities do not look into the matter, we shall have to pillory some of the flagrant offenders.[61]

The *Daily Mail* saw a spate of letters and articles criticising night clubs as places frequented by 'vile women' and that 'There are... horrible things done in these vile dens, all of which ought to be closed by the police'.[62] In a move to protect otherwise honourable officers from the alleged perils of nightclubs, the *Daily Mail* suggested that the police

> should have the right to close nightclubs in cases where it is established that their continued activities are a danger to the defence of the realm.[63]

This argument was ambiguous as to what the danger to the defence of the realm was perceived to be. It could have pertained to distractions from soldierly duty, or the evils of gambling. More likely, however, was that nightclubs were perceived as sites which encouraged casual sex and the potential infection of a serviceman with venereal disease. From March 1915, therefore, London nightclubs imposed a policy of refusing admission to officers in uniform[64]. This moral censure about the sexually corrupting potential of nightclubs saw soldiers drawn as innocent men, free of the will to resist such temptations and easily corruptible. It was not acknowledged in the press that it was probably the appeal of these 'vile women' and the sexual evils they were deemed to purvey who attracted soldiers – who were far from naïve – to the nightclubs. Dr. Winnington Ingram, the Bishop of London, declared that

> I want to see the night clubs done away with. They are disgraceful places, into which our men are trapped when they should be preparing for war.[65]

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[61] *John Bull*, 15 December 1917, p.13, columns a, b, and c, 'Tommy and Jack. Concerning the V.A.D.'.
[62] *Daily Mail*, 23 January 1915, p.4, column f, 'Dangers of London Night Clubs', letter from 'A father'. On the subject of women robbing soldiers, see also *Times*, 22 February 1917, p.3, column c, 'A Centre of Vice: Nightly Scenes in the Waterloo-road'; and *Times*, 23 February 1917, p.4, column b, 'Waterloo-Road: How Soldiers are Waylaid'.
[63] *Daily Mail*, 9 March 1915, p.3, column b, 'Night Club Control. Suggested plan to protect young officers'.
[64] *Daily Mail*, 10 March 1915, p.3, column c, 'Night Clubs. No officers in uniform'. Officers could presumably be admitted if they chose to wear civilian clothes.
[65] *Daily Mail*, 15 March 1915, p.4, column e, 'The 1915 Nightclub', by Nigel Playfair.

In the light of this, Nigel Playfair, writing for the *Daily Mail*, wrote that in 1895, nightclub were 'seedy, shameful', but, by 1915, 'Grubbiness and secrecy had vanished', and there was 'brilliance and light and a luxury of decoration by no means tasteless'. The soldiers who frequented nightclubs were described thus:

> one gathers that the great majority of the men are home for a couple of days from the horrors of the trenches, and bent on indulging as much gaiety as possible, and as little as possible in retrospect or anticipation... Preparing for war indeed! They've done their share, these boys, and will do it again.[66]

While servicemen were championed, and their reputations upheld, by the press, women in the auxiliary services were not so venerated. An 'Indignant WAAC' wrote to the *Daily Express*, protesting against the 'unpleasant and unreasonable rumours' being spread in Britain about the moral conduct of WAACs.[67] The double standard of sexual morals persisted in the armed forces, as well as in civilian society. Trevor Wilson asserts that

> it was the presumed sexual aspirations of WAACs towards British soldiers that aroused adverse comments, not the corresponding inclinations of soldiers towards WAACs.[68]

Gerard DeGroot critiques 'the myth of free love' which he claims has pervaded secondary literature on the war. He points out that a 1918 commission, investigating fears of licentious WAACs corrupting British soldiers, could find no justifications for such accusations.[69]

Far from all women using their feminine guile to seduce and corrupt soldiers, however, reports were published about women who had obviously modified their behaviour in order to fend off amorous servicemen. These feisty women were praised in *John Bull*, a position which was at odds with the newspaper's overarching argument that British soldiers could universally be trusted. A poem, entitled 'The Refugee', saw a man rejected:

> Upon a dingy afternoon, when strolling down the Strand,
> I spied a buxom little lass whose movements did command
> My sympathy, because she seem'd a stranger in the land...
>
> No doubt she was a Belgian, thus much was pretty plain;
> Still, if she knew but Flemish, all my lore would be in vain
> So '*Voulez-vous permittez-moi*,' I tried just once again.
>
> At last her tongue was loosened. With a sudden turn of head

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[66] Ibid.
[67] *Daily Express*, 30 January 1918, p.3, column e, 'Indignant "WAACS"'.
[68] Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, p.725.
[69] Braybon, Gail, and Summerfield, Penny, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*, p.113, cited in DeGroot, Gerard J., *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* [1996] (London: Longman, 1998), p.236.

> And glance that utter'd volumes, she emphatically said
> 'Get out, you blooming idiot!' And thereupon I fled...[70]

The poem's author concluded that he was indeed the 'refugee'.[71]

Another source of potential sexual corruption for soldiers was seen to exist in published writings on sexuality. In October 1915, Stella Browne, famous for her campaigns for the use of contraception, and the promotion of sexual knowledge, wrote excitedly to Havelock Ellis,

> No doubt you have heard of the Home Office's sudden attack on Carpenter's 'Intermediate Sex' – after seven years! – Pretty cool, what? Is it feared that it might endanger the innocence and virtue of the British barrack-rooms, stuffed with 'single' conscripts, I wonder??[72]

An Inspector from Scotland Yard had asked Carpenter's publishers if they were prepared to withdraw the book, as it was considered to be 'indecent and unfit for publication'; Carpenter and his publishers answered in the negative.[73] *The Intermediate Sex* was not, in any case, an obvious source of incitement to homosexual debauchery. This subject matter and lengthy high-brow discourse were unlikely to have interested the majority of soldiers.[74] However, beyond demonstrating governmental concern about the dissemination among troops of literature which described homosexuality as natural, the reaction of the Home Office evinced a more general concern about any potential distraction of soldiers away from their role in the war effort, and from their responsibilities as British representatives.

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The persistence of, and what was perceived as an alarming prevalence of, sexually transmitted diseases, was seen as confirmation that there existed a widespread sexual immorality in Britain. The incidence of venereal disease was seen to provide physical, rather than moral or ideological, evidence, of impropriety. As medical fact, venereal problems could be targeted via the implementation of corporeal means. In Roger Davidson's words,

> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, VD became in many European countries a metaphor for physical and moral decay; for the forces of

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[70] *John Bull*, 23 January 1915, p.9, column b, 'The Refugee', by T.M.
[71] Ibid.
[72] BL MS Add. 70539 Havelock Ellis: letter (ff.56 – 61) from Stella Browne to Havelock Ellis, 13 October 1915, ff.59 – 60.
[73] Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p.96.
[74] Carpenter, Edward, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* [1908] (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., date unspecified).

> pollution and contamination that appeared to threaten the institutions of social order and racial progress.[75]

This belief was highlighted on a grand scale by the war, when 'social order and racial progress' were paramount. Myriad contributory factors meant that venereal diseases could be located throughout the British populace. Social conditions, the social stigma of sexual infection, a shortage of sexual health education, a lack of prophylactic awareness and provision, insufficient treatment facilities, and the double sexual standard for men and women all contributed to the extent of infection. Furthermore, these conditions meant that those who were infected could not easily and confidentially obtain the necessary treatments, cures, and knowledge. The necessities of wartime cast a new light on venereal matters, and added a new imperative for addressing the problems. Havelock Ellis declared that

> The perils of venereal diseases were also beginning to be realised before the war, and at last faced courageously... But these diseases are not only more destructive than war, they are immensely increased by war, and that not only among soldiers, but the civilian population.[76]

Lucy Bland writes that

> For many, Venereal Disease stood as a metaphor signifying and condensing fears of the period. There was widespread concern about national efficiency and the physical and mental 'deterioration' or 'degeneracy' of civilians and troops... An imaginary scenario was constructed, heightened by war imagery, in which the family and the nation were portrayed as the prey of these lethal invading diseases.[77]

Expressions of anxiety about the prevalence of venereal disease escalated throughout the war, both manifested in, and fuelled by, the publication of the report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in 1916, and parliamentary activity, including the controversies surrounding the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, the Venereal Diseases Act, and Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act.

Furthermore, as the experience of 'total war' affected all groups in society and all British citizens, venereal disease similarly affected all social classes, and, as such, campaigns and proposed solutions needed to be addressed to the whole British population. Sexual diseases did not only affect the poor or the privileged. The highest death rate from syphilis was among unskilled labourers, followed by the upper class, then the middle class; the lowest number of deaths was among agricultural labourers, then miners, then textile

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[75] Davidson, Roger, 'The Culture of Compulsion: Venereal Disease, Sexuality and the State in Twentieth-Century Scotland', pp. 58 – 75 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.58.
[76] Ellis, Havelock, 'Eugenics in Relation to the War', pp. 110 – 127 in Ellis, Havelock, *The Philosophy of Conflict and Other Essays in Wartime* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1919), p.122.
[77] Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life', p.192.

workers, and skilled labourers.[78] However, Roger Davidson expresses his agreement with David Evans, that

> Even when treatment was effective, the experience of patients may have been stigmatizing and disempowering. Patients were likely to be working-class and may have experienced the treatment and education they received as a form of social control.[79]

Historians Roger Davidson and Lesley Hall acknowledge that venereal disease in history provides a rich field of study of the

> state's response to perceived threats to public health occasioned by what were perceived to be inappropriate and dangerous forms of sexual behaviour.[80]

Indeed, in the light of the war, a proliferation of published discourses on this topic transpired, discussing sexual health crises in relation to wartime responsibilities, apportioning blame for their existence, and offering solutions to them. Such publications, while discussing matters which were not entirely comfortable and respectable in the public sphere, received a sympathetic welcome, being, as they were, in the traditions of works by Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter, and drawing upon the immediate necessities of physical, sexual, and moral health during the war. With national efficiency being imperative in wartime, and venereal disease potentially affecting all groups in society, its threat to the nation's productivity was seen to be grave. Mary Scharlieb, member of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, and prolific author and spokesperson on such matters, devised an easily reproducible and distributable flow-chart diagram about the losses to the quality and productivity to the national and racial stock caused by widespread venereal infection:

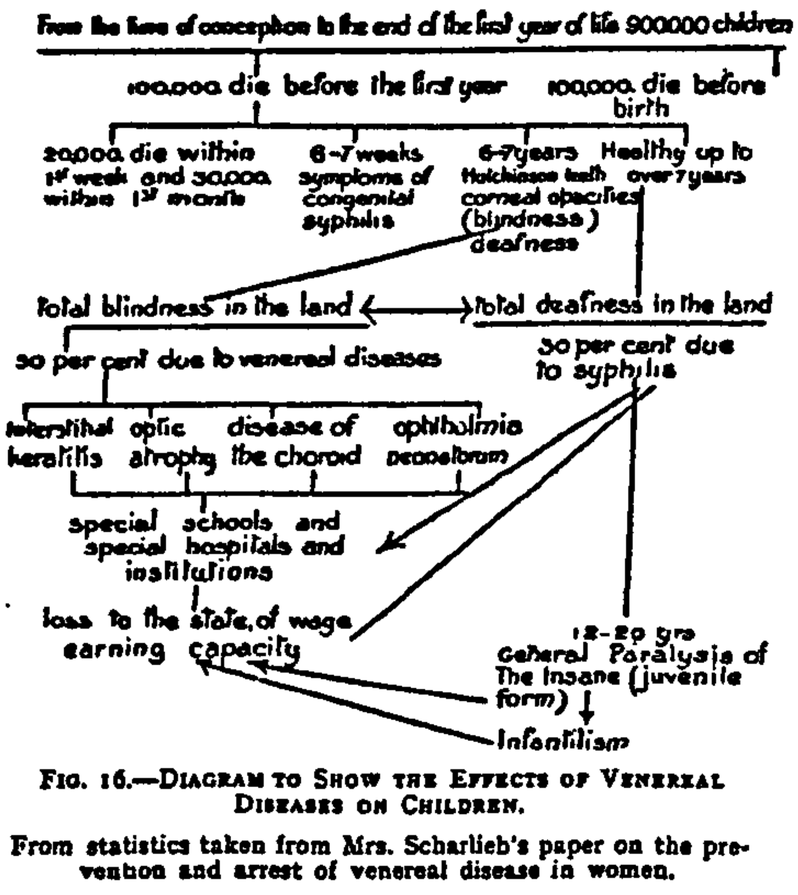

FIG. 16.—DIAGRAM TO SHOW THE EFFECTS OF VENEREAL DISEASES ON CHILDREN.

From statistics taken from Mrs. Scharlieb's paper on the prevention and arrest of venereal disease in women.

Source: Watson, J. K., *The Venereal Diseases Problem: A book More Especially for Nurses and Midwives* (London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1917), p.42.

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[78] Barlow, Sir Thomas, *The Incidence of Venereal Diseases and its Relation to School Life and School Teaching* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917), p.4.
[79] Evans, David, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge": The Creation of the Venereal Disease Treatment Centres in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', pp. 414 – 417 in *Social History of Medicine*, 5, 1992, p.431, cited in Davidson, 'The Culture of Compulsion', p.70.
[80] Davidson, Roger and Hall, Lesley A., 'Introduction', pp.1 – 14 in Davidson, Roger, and Hall, Lesley A. (eds.), *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.1.

Concern about sexual health had traditionally focussed on prostitutes as the centre for infection and immorality: female prostitutes were censured as the human manifestation of social ills. Josephine Butler's nineteenth-century campaigns were motivated by the 'injustice and folly' that she believed existed in the interfering with women, while men were left free to spread diseases.[81] Similarly, wartime commentators wrote of the problems inherent in moralising. Ettie Rout, in her work on venereal problems in wartime Paris, wondered that

> It is sometimes difficult to decide which of the two – the Prostitute or the Puritan – is the more mischievous and irresponsible... I am convinced that the Good Women do more damage than the Bad Women. The Bad Women can be kept clean, and they will aid in the medical prevention of diseases, as a rule. The Good Women won't. They use every effort to prevent the medical prevention of disease, on the ground that *Cleanliness is worse than Godliness*.[82]

Writing in the 1950s, Great War sexual health lecturer Fred A. Hornibrook opined that

> As long as ignorant and misguided so-called moralists will try to prevent disease by moral measures only, so long will these diseases flourish. What the puritans have never learned is that disease itself is immoral, especially if it can be prevented.[83]

Similarly, wartime commentator Maude Royden, asserted that it was both 'unscientific' and 'unchristian' to withhold treatment.[84]

Medical procedures to treat venereal diseases had been in place since before the war.[85] The Wasserman Reaction, devised by August Wasserman in 1906 to test for the presence of syphilis,[86] involved blood being drawn from a vein without anaesthetic, because anaesthetics could make negative blood sera produce a false positive result.[87] Syphilis was treated by injections of Salvarsan, also known as '606' or the 'magic bullet', which

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[81] Creighton, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It*, p.40. See also Walkowitz, Judith R., *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* [1992] (London: Virago, 2000); Porter, Roy and Hall, Lesley, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650 – 1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* [1990] (London: Fontana, 1991); Weeks, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* [1981] (London: Longman, 1984); Weeks, Jeffrey, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* [1981] (London: Longman, 1984).

[82] Rout, Ettie A., *Two Years in Paris* (London: Ettie A. Rout, 1923), p.11. For a biographical analysis of Ettie Rout, see Tolerton, Jane, *Ettie: A Life of Ettie Rout* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

[83] Hornibrook, Fred A., *Without Fear or Favour* (London: The Cresset Press, 1955), p.49.

[84] Royden, *The Duty of Knowledge*, p.10.

[85] For a medical perspective, see Harrison, Brevet-Colonel L. W., *A Sketch of Army Medical Experience of Venereal Disease during the European War, 1914 – 1918* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1922).

[86] Scharlieb, Mary, *The Hidden Scourge* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916), p.37. On this subject, see also Evans, Hideous Scourge, p.415. The causative organism of syphilis was identified by Fritz Schaudinn in 1905: see Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', p.415.

[87] McDonagh, J. E. R., *The Biology and Treatment of Venereal Diseases and The Biology of Inflammation and its Relationship to Malignant Disease* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1915), pp.65 – 68.

contained arsenic.[88] Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, treatment centres were established throughout the country, in which Wasserman tests and the use of Salvarsan were widely employed: four hundred thousand cases of venereal disease were treated during the war, of which about a quarter were syphilis.[89] Lesley Hall writes that medicine had an increasing impact on the relationship between sexuality and health,[90] a relationship which was highlighted during the war. Wartime campaigners for moral improvements were keen for medicine to be used to treat extant venereal cases. Mary Scharlieb wrote,

> I wish to point out that it is necessary to regard disease as disease and to treat it as disease – there must be no plea that, because venereal diseases are frequently the results of immorality, such diseases must be left untreated.[91]

Vera Brittain, who detailed her harrowing wartime experiences in her memoir *Testament of Youth*, was shocked when, as a nurse, she encountered a syphilitic death:

> When I first had to nurse a case of venereal disease – which I had hitherto seen referred to in the Press only under the title of 'the hidden plague' – I did not know exactly what it was; I was fully enlightened only in 1917, when in a Malta hospital I watched a syphilitic orderly die in convulsions...[92]

Soldiers and prostitutes were provided with packets of prophylactic medication. The printed instructions on boxes of calomel ointment and tubes of potassium permanganate, to be used for disinfection after sex, drew upon the imperatives of military efficiency in wartime as an incentive to use disinfectant, imploring:

> REMEMBER that if you have disease, not only are you doing yourself serious harm by delaying treatment, but YOU ARE HELPING THE ENEMY by rendering our men unfit to fight.[93]

It was alleged that women were pleased to use these items,[94] and Metropolitan Police records show that many women were well-prepared and used preventative treatment either immediately before of immediately after intercourse.[95] Some packets were reported to have

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[88] See Wellcome RAMC/1212. Salvarsan was hydroxide of dioxydiamidoarsenobenzol; its formula was $C_{12}H_{12}N_2O_2AS_2(HCl)_2$. Salvarsan substitutes were also used: these were Galyl and Neokharsivan: see TNA MH 55/535. Salvarsan was discovered by Paul Ehrlich in 1909: see Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', p.415. See also Davidson and Hall, 'Introduction' in Davidson and Hall (eds.), *Sex, Sin and Suffering*, especially p.7.

[89] Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p.94.

[90] Ibid., p.3.

[91] Scharlieb, *The Hidden Scourge*, p.10. On Mary Scharlieb and her views, see Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, pp.220 – 221.

[92] Brittain, Vera, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the years 1900 – 1925* [1933] (London: Fontana, 1979), p.49.

[93] Rout, *Two Years in Paris*, p.15.

[94] Ibid., p.13.

[95] TNA MEPO 3/2434.

contained faulty items, however, such as calomel lotion that was mixed so strong that it was painful when applied; soldiers thought that medical officers had deliberately included this painful lotion as a form of punishment.[96]

Various contemporary observers expatiated upon ways to solve the venereal disease crisis. With the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in place from 1913, and its import and impact enhanced by wartime needs for an efficient and morally and physically healthy population, official debate on these matters had been thrust into the public sphere. Other commentators were in accord with this official debate: Louise Creighton asserted that the 'conspiracy of silence' on this subject should be ended,[97] and that the women's movement should draw attention to these social problems.[98] Psychological theorist Hugo Münsterberg wrote that any discussion, and increased awareness of sexual health matters, were beneficial:

> The evil was the result of the silence itself. Free speech and public discussion alone can remove the misery and cleanse the social life. The parents must know, and the teachers must know, and the boys must know, and the girls must know, if the abhorrent ills are ever to be removed.[99]

The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology held its inaugural meting on 12 July 1914, whereat it declared its unanimous support for thorough, free investigations of all sex problems.[100] This Society's work was, however, curtailed by the war, and the International Medical Congress on sex questions, at which it was to participate, was to be held in Autumn 1914, was postponed indefinitely.[101]

Christabel Pankhurst, writing in 1913, clearly drew venereal disease as a political issue, declaring that

> Votes for Women will strike at the Great Scourge in many ways. When they are citizens women will feel a greater respect for themselves, and will be more respected by men. They will have the power to secure the enactment of laws for their protection, and to strengthen their economic position.[102]

The only way to solve the problem of venereal disease, she argued, was to secure an equal moral standard, through votes for women, and chastity for men.[103] Indeed, as Frank Mort writes, feminists increasingly drew a link between the issues of citizenship and morality:

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[96] Rout, *Two Years in Paris*, p.41.
[97] Creighton, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It*, p.11.
[98] Ibid., p.17.
[99] Münsterberg, Hugo, *Psychology and Social Sanity* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), p.4.
[100] British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, *Policy and Principles: General Aims* (London: C. W. Beaumont & Co., 1914), p.4.
[101] Ibid., p.9.
[102] Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge*, p.viii. For a more detailed exploration of Pankhurst's views, and their expression in *The Great Scourge*, see Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life', p.196.
[103] Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge*, pp.37 and 121.

'The vote was perceived as bringing political and *moral* benefits to women'.[104] This argument appreciated in impact during the war, because of the political and emotional effect of the sacrifices and contributions that were made to the war effort by both men and women. The matter of venereal disease provided a vehicle for political discourse: Lucy Bland writes that

> For many feminists... venereal disease indicated not simply the 'perils of promiscuity' and the extent of prostitution... but also the horrific consequences of male moral hypocrisy... The feminist focus on venereal disease became a way of 'speaking out' about sexual immorality and male double standards.[105]

Considerable numbers of feminists were doctors, and feminist campaigns therefore utilised medical arguments, to exploit what Lucy Bland describes as a neoteric 'medical hegemony'.[106] Despite the interest of many feminists, including Christabel Pankhurst and Millicent Fawcett, in this issue, views were not unified: Lord Sydenham, the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, took an anti-feminist stance.[107] Louise Creighton criticised the fact that 'Society has accepted prostitution as a necessity', and emphasised the need to eradicate this aspect of the double standard.[108] Furthermore, Christabel Pankhurst argued, prostitution must be eradicated, because a cure for venereal diseases was 'illusory'.[109] Pankhurst attacked Major French's claim that prostitution was a necessary part of male, and particularly military, culture; she professed to thinking better of men than that they required state-approved sex workers.[110] The Medical Women's Federation took as its strongest influence the writings of Dr. Abraham Flexner, who, in his acclaimed 1917 book *Prostitution in Europe*, declared that

> A verdict unfavourable to regulation has been found... not because it violates personal liberty, but because it fails; because it is at least useless in respect to order and worse than useless in respect to venereal disease.[111]

The Federation advocated sexual and moral education for both sexes, an acknowledgement of the influence of alcohol, and the teaching of self-control to children. It also campaigned for raising the age of consent to 18 for both sexes, and provisions for easier marriages and

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[104] Mort, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830 (Second Edition)* [first edition 1987] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 2000), p.109.
[105] Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life', p.192.
[106] Ibid., p.195
[107] See Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"', p.417.
[108] Creighton, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It*, pp.28 – 29.
[109] Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge*, p.5.
[110] Ibid., p.33. See French, Major H. C., *Venereal Disease in the Army* (publication details unspecified, 1906).
[111] Flexner, Dr. Abraham, *Prostitution in Europe*, 1917 edition, p.359, cited in 'Some suggestions as to the Duty of the State in the Control of Venereal Disease' drawn up by the Committee of the Medical Women's Federation, in Wellcome SA/MWF/B/4/7.

divorces.[112] Many observers saw great importance in educating children in self-respect, sexual health, and awareness about venereal disease. As the future of the race, children were to be raised as moral and upstanding British citizens.[113] It was recommended that boys should be warned that masturbation was a symptom of insanity,[114] and that sexual intercourse should not be indulged in wantonly, and was not a cure for acne, but that a 'course of salts or sulphur', a Turkish bath, or 'a course of Harrogate [sic]' would be more effective in this regard.[115] Advice for girls stressed the importance of self-control, and the avoidance of intimacy before marriage, even during an engagement.[116] Official bodies became involved with the sexual education of children, and, in 1914, the Educational Board advertised courses in schools for parents which were 'intended to assist them in the intelligent supervision of boys and girls in matters of sex and the like'.[117]

The most prolific, and perhaps most influential body, to be concerned with the eradication of venereal diseases, and their attendant social problems, was the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease.[118] This prestigious Council was established in 1913 as a result of the appointment of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, and could count among its members physicians, peers, bishops, and high-ranking military officers, many of whom were experienced in dealing with the medical or social problems of venereal disease, and some of whom were simultaneously involved in the investigative work of the Royal Commission. These members included the eugenicist Major Leonard Darwin, venereal disease experts Mary Scharlieb and Louise Creighton, Sir Watson Cheyne (President of the Royal College of Surgeons), and Dr. Frederick Taylor (President of the Royal College of Physicians).[119] The work of the Council was supported by Britain's religious spokesmen; sentiments of co-operation were expressed from three religious leaders, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Very Reverend Monsignor Brown, and the Chief Rabbi.[120] Having been established in 1913, the Council's work acquired a new significance

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[112] Ibid.
[113] On sexual education and advice to boys and girls, see Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp.149 – 156.
[114] Barlow, *The Incidence of Venereal Diseases and its Relation to School Life and School Teaching*, pp.6 and 8.
[115] Ibid., p.9.
[116] See Scharlieb, Mary and Butts, Barbara, *England's Girls and England's Future* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917), and Scharlieb, Mary, *What Mothers Must Tell Their Children* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917). See also Scharlieb, *The Hidden Scourge*; Scharlieb, Mary, *Venereal Diseases in Children and Adolescents: Their Recognition and Prevention* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1920).
[117] TNA ED/22/57: Department of Education and Science, 23 October 1914.
[118] In 1925 the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases changed its name to the British Social Hygiene Council. For a more detailed discussion of the policy and activities of this Council, see Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, pp.230 – 244.
[119] See National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, *Aims and Objects* (date and publication details unspecified: in Wellcome SA/BSH/L.1), and Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, *Final Report*: 1916 Cd. 8189 xvi p.1.
[120] See Barlow, Sir Thomas and Morris, Sir Malcolm, *The Problem of Venereal Diseases: How Ministers of Religion Can Help* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917).

in wartime. It was praised by the *Times*, in which a leading article congratulated the Council for having 'definitely broken down the barrier of silence', and stated that 'Their energy in educational work is altogether meritorious'.[121]

By 1919, there were 91 branches of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease: 79 in England and Wales, 4 in Scotland, 4 in Ireland, and 4 overseas.[122] While venereal disease clinics were part of a national system of public health administration, educational provision was delegated to the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease.[123] The Council originally received governmental grants; later, funding was devolved to Local Authorities – some of which were unwilling to contribute.[124] The Council received £16250 in 1916, and between £10,000 and £15,000 per year, between 1918 and 1929.[125] With venereal disease treatment centres established throughout the country by 1917,[126] tens of thousands of people were being treated for venereal diseases as both in- and out-patients.[127]

The Council, with its respectable members and respectable reputation took an unprecedented approach to the problem: it did not isolate a particular social group as its cause; nor did it attempt to solve the problem solely via legal or medical channels: these means had proved largely ineffective theretofore, as they did not directly impact on the majority of the population, and, as such, could be circumvented. The Council aimed to educate people about venereal disease, its causes and manifestations; to press for free and confidential treatment for all British citizens, whether for prevention or cure; and to remove the social stigma of seeking medical help regarding sexual matters. Alongside these progressive tenets, the Council also promoted dogmatically the conservative attitude that infidelity, promiscuity, and prostitution were morally wrong, irrespective of their impact on sexual health.

The aims and objectives of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases were sevenfold:

1. To provide accurate and enlightened information as to the prevalence of venereal diseases, and as to the necessity for early treatment.
2. To promote the provision of greater facilities for their treatment.
3. To increase the opportunities for medical students and practitioners for the study of venereal diseases.

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[121] *Times*, 24 June 1916, p.9, column b, 'The Weakness of Ignorance'.
[122] Wellcome SA/BSH.
[123] Hall, Lesley A., 'Sexual Cultures in Britain: Some Persisting Themes', pp.29 – 52 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.42.
[124] Ibid., p.43.
[125] See Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.231.
[126] *Prevention and Treatment of Venereal Diseases*, (London: HMSO, 1917), p.3.
[127] See TNA MH 96/1135 and TNA MH 55/535.

4. To encourage and assist the dissemination of a sound knowledge of the physiological laws of life in order to raise the standard both of help and conduct.
5. To co-operate with existing associations, to seek their approval and support, and to give advice when desired.
6. To arrange, in connection with such organisations, for courses of lectures, and to supervise the preparation of suitable literature.
7. To promote such legislative, social, and administrative reforms as are relevant to the foregoing aims and objectives.[128]

With these aims and objectives in mind, the Council delivered lectures to groups such as Friendly Societies, Mothers' Unions, Girls' Clubs, military establishments, and munitions workers.[129] In wartime, matters concerning venereal disease were considered to be more important, but target groups, such as servicemen and female workers, were easily accessible. The Council addressed topics such as the problem and prevention of venereal disease in the military, the connections of alcohol and venereal disease, the sexual and moral education of boys and girls, and the impacts of venereal disease on the race and on national efficiency. The Council, then, established itself as a moral commentator, as well as a body in favour of sexual health promotion. Arguably, attention was diverted from health concerns toward matters of principle, and while infected persons were encouraged to obtain medical treatment without the fear of stigma, they could easily have felt that they were subject to moral censure for the acts that brought about their infection.

By March 1916, through working with the military, the Council had delivered 750 lectures, to 500,000 troops. These lectures each covered ten points:

1. The importance of self-restraint.
2. The evils of promiscuity.
3. Chastity – which was advertised as being simultaneously possible, not unmanly, and not unhealthy.
4. Definitions of gonorrhoea and syphilis.
5. How to prevent infection.
6. How venereal disease can be cured.
7. Three tenets, to which servicemen should adhere:
   'It is criminal to infect a healthy woman'.
   'It is base to seduce a virgin'.
   'It is dangerous to have to do with a prostitute'.
8. Details of safeguards against venereal disease – including recreations.
9. The importance of the army for staying healthy, so as to prevent wastage.
10. Possible temptations for the soldier, both at home and abroad.[130]

Three ways to avoid temptation were cited by the Council as being the avoidance of drink, the participation in games and exercises, and the avoidance of filthy books and filthy

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[128] National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases pamphlet (no date or publication details), found in Wellcome SA/BSH/L.1.
[129] Ibid.
[130] National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, *Syllabus of Lectures to the Troops* (date and publication details unspecified: in Wellcome SA/BSH/L.1).

conversations.[131] With these lists in mind, the Council omitted references to the potential problems posed by, or even acknowledgement of, the emotional pressures faced by troops in time of war, and did not consider the incentives and reasons of wartime stresses and separations for infidelity and promiscuity.. A selective ignorance of such matters impacted upon the efficacy of the Council's policies. Nor did the Council consider the fact that army culture, and even official opinion in the army, deemed that sex was a healthy and respectable diversion for troops, and soldiers themselves acknowledged the fact that army culture and conventions were more influential than the lectures which contradicted them. This aside, the lectures were delivered with gusto and powerful rhetoric, drawing heavily upon the responsibilities of soldiers to their army and to their nation. One lecturer boldly stated that

> in the Army code, it's a 'crime' to conceal venereal disease; but from the man's own point of view, it's worse; it's a tragic blunder. A man who does so is not merely gambling with his future health, and gambling not on an even chance, but with all the odds dead against him, but he's also jeopardising the health and happiness of his future family. So, if you remember nothing else of what I tell you, *do* remember this, if you should get disease of this sort, report it *at once* to your Medical Officer and so make sure of being put in the way of thorough and effective treatment.[132]

Charles C. Osborne, in a 1916 publication, adopted a religious tone, and wrote of the necessity to control 'God-given sexual passions' with the faculty of reason,[133] and that the best way to overcome the 'evils' 'which are eating like a canker into our national life' was to resolve, in William Blake's words,

> I shall not cease from Mental Fight,
> Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand;
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land.[134]

Blake's enduring sentiments of patriotism, military metaphor, and promise of a finer England in future days, were persuasive, particularly in time of war. Nonetheless, despite the extent of debate on these matters, some observers communicated their convictions that people were inclined to panic and over-react. Lieutenant James Butlin wrote to a friend in 1917,

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[131] National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, *A Cause of Military Inefficiency* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, date unspecified).
[132] May, Otto, *A Lecture to Troops* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1918), p.13.
[133] Osbourne, Charles C., *Ignorance: The Great Enemy* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1916), p.10.
[134] Ibid., p.23.

> Did you read that unspeakable trash re venereal disease in the Weekly Despatch by Max Pemberton? Why can't these people keep to fiction? From what he says you would imagine that the soldier gets clap from looking at a harlot in Piccadilly. No man need get venereal disease, unless he wants to, & I should have thought Max P was old enough to know that.[135]

Indeed, these issues attracted such interest and concern that, for some commentators, they were of comparable importance to the war itself. The venereal problem in Britain was seen to require such urgent attention that venereologists were brought back from the front in order to work in British venereal disease clinics.[136]

Venereal disease was seen as a manifestation of spiritual ill, as well as being a social problem. Syphilitic infection was seen as a liability by insurance companies. Dr. Theodore Thompson concluded in 1915 that no syphilitic proposer should be accepted for life assurance if he could not provide evidence of having undergone treatment for at last two years.[137] It was often written or spoken of as an 'evil' or a 'social evil', and inappropriate sexual activity as a 'sin', As such, immorality and sexual diseases were constructed through religious, or quasi-religious, language. Throughout the Edwardian period, sexual immorality had been connected with impiety, or a lack of church-going: Richard Davenport-Hines writes that

> Those 'with no fear of God' were 'a law to themselves': their sexual relations were 'incredibly evil'. The whole nation was weakened by the 'horrible' sexuality 'in the squalid parts of our large towns'.[138]

The discourse of punishment was also prevalent. A soldier's anecdote reveals the idea that venereal disease was divine retribution for immorality:

> Some junior officers were discussing the possibility of reducing the amount of venereal disease among the troops, on which the old gentleman reminded us that syphilis was the 'finger of God'. I remember that I was never again invited to the mess because I could not help enquiring what the rest of God was like if one of his fingers was syphilis.[139]

Louise Creighton suggested that

> we are constrained to feel that these diseases with their terrible results are a punishment for the callousness and indifference of society with regard to the evils of unchastity.[140]

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[135] IWM DD 67/52/1: Lieutenant J. H. Butlin, 3 June 1917.
[136] See TNA MH 96/1131.
[137] See Thompson, Dr. Theodore, *The Assurance Medical Society: Syphilis of the Nervous System in Relation to Life Assurance* (London: publisher unspecified, 1915).
[138] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.157
[139] Haynes, E. S. P., *The Enemies of Liberty*, p.105, cited in Rout, *Two Years in Paris*, p.2.
[140] Creighton, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It*, p.29.

Mary Scharlieb was concerned that there had

> arisen a form of national hypocrisy which has stimulated a desire for vicarious punishment and which sometimes condemns the victim instead of the sinner.[141]

Christabel Pankhurst claimed that all women believed that sexual intercourse without love was 'forbidden by Nature herself, and more strictly forbidden and more harshly punished than any other sin...'[142] The Archbishop of Liverpool wrote that 'any use of the sex appetite outside the state of marriage sets God's laws at defiance',[143] and the Catholic Social Guild advocated Christian teachings to solve the moral and spiritual problems of promiscuity.[144] The White Cross League, a Christian organisation, encouraged men, particularly those in the military, to treat women with respect, to discourage indecent jokes and coarse jests, and to believe in the necessity of purity for both sexes. Only by adhering to these 'White Cross obligations', it was declared, could men prove themselves to be 'manly'.[145] Hugo Münsterberg referred to the fight against venereal disease in terms of its being a 'holy war':[146] this was powerful rhetoric in time of conflict.

Some observers drew a connection between venereal disease and shellshock. Victims of both conditions had symptoms which were not necessarily obvious, and, with the bodies of men with both conditions looking uncontaminated, their conditions were easily confused amid speculation, gossip and rumour. Neurasthenic patients at the Craiglockhart hospital, where Siegfried Sassoon was famously treated, were thought to have venereal disease. One patient at Craiglockhart wrote that the local inhabitants believed that the patients at the hospital were 'victims of venereal disease + confined here as a punishment'.[147] A number of experiments were conducted on shellshock victims, which revealed that premature ejaculation was one symptom of shellshock.[148] A connection had long been drawn between venereal disease and mental health problems.[149] It was alleged, the conditions of the war afforded the mentally deficient greater opportunities to have sex and spread venereal diseases.[150] McDonagh wrote of the war as 'a potent cause of syphilitic

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[141] Scharlieb, *The Hidden Scourge*, p.45.
[142] Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge*, p.26.
[143] Archbishop Thomas, Archbishop of Liverpool, in M. F., *Prostitution: The Moral Bearings of the Problem* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1917), p.x.
[144] Ibid., pp.129 – 130.
[145] The White Cross League, *A Paper for Men* (London: publisher and date of publication unspecified: in Wellcome SA/BSH/L.4). On passages in the Bible on the subjects of monogamy, sinful love, and chastity for the unmarried, see Northcote, Hugh, *Christianity and Sex Problems* [1906] (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1916), pp.14 and 73. The passages referred to are Gen, 2:24; Canticles; II Sam. 13:1; Lam, 1:2; Ezek. 16; I Cor. 7:9.
[146] Münsterberg, *Psychology and Social Sanity*, p.5.
[147] IWM DD 67/52/1: Lieutenant J. H. Butlin, 5 May 1917.
[148] Van de Velde, T. H., *Ideal Marriage* (1926), p.165, cited in Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.214.
[149] For the legal position in this regard, see *Mental Deficiency Act, 1913*: 3 & 4 Geo. 5, Chapter 28 (1913), and *Mental Deficiency and Lunacy (Scotland) Act*: 3 & 4 Geo. 5, Chapter 38 (1913).
[150] Ibid., p.5.

neurasthenia, as well as every other form of neurasthenia; indeed, it has caused a neurasthenia of its own'.[151]

While Arthur Marwick's contention that 'the war destroyed old-style sexual reticence'[152] has now been critiqued, by Gerard J. DeGroot, who describes Marwick's contention as 'more lyrical than logical since it reinforces stereotypes of a lusty working class and overstates the dissemination of contraceptives',[153] it is fair to say that by the end of the war, the discussion of sex had attained a new level of respectability, which enabled Marie Stopes, in her 1918 book *Married Love*, freely to expatiate on matters of sexual desire and sexual pleasure, from both medical and emotional perspectives. Stopes addressed sexual concerns in an unprecedented way, and the popularity of her work clearly illustrated the fact that concerns about sexual matters were to be found throughout Britain. In 1917, the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology published Stella Browne's pamphlet *Sexual Variety and Variability Among Women*.[154] This pamphlet sold well, and had a wide public circulation;[155] it did not, however, anticipate the success and impact of Stopes's *Married Love* the following year. *Married Love* was published in March 1918 and sold 2,000 copies in its first week,[156] and over 400,000 copies by 1923,[157] having been reprinted 22 times.[158] It was claimed by Havelock Ellis 'to represent the most notable advance made during recent years in the knowledge of women's psycho-physiological life'.[159] Stopes was aware of the wartime imperatives which surrounded the publication of her book, and stressed in the Preface that

> More than ever to-day are happy homes needed. It is my hope that this book may serve the State by adding to their numbers.[160]

The sequel to *Married Love*, *Wise Parenthood*, elucidated the matter of contraception – albeit within marriage – and enjoyed similar success: it was published in November 1918 and sold over 300,000 copies by 1924.[161]

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[151] McDonagh, *The Biology and Treatment of Venereal Diseases*, p.480. McDonagh was probably alluding here to shellshock.
[152] Marwick, Arthur, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Second Edition)* [first edition 1965] (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.12.
[153] DeGroot, *Blighty*, p.236.
[154] This pamphlet was based on a lecture of 1915: see Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.182.
[155] See ibid., p.182.
[156] Haste, Cate, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* [1992] (London: Pimlico, 1994), p.60.
[157] McKibbin, Ross, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918 – 1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.319.
[158] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.60.
[159] Stopes, Marie Carmichael, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* [1918] (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), p.xxi.
[160] Ibid., p.xiii.
[161] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.319.

Into the inter-war years, moral crusades continued. While the imperatives of wartime were no longer urgent, it was believed that a nation which had resisted military defeat should not succumb to moral or racial downfall in time of peace. To this end, the National Council of Public Morals issued, in 1919, a leaflet entitled *Campaigns of Peace*, which declared that

> In this war the moral forces which make for righteousness were ranged on our side. And our victory is not the triumph of might or of political sagacity, but the victory of morals.[162]

In the post-war world, the Bishop of Birmingham wrote, young adults must be 'warned of danger' and 'stirred to high ideals'.[163] As such, the National Council of Public Morals instituted peacetime campaigns to promote race regeneration, the ideals of parenthood, the Empire, and morality in the cinema.[164] The war years had made a considerable impact on the acceptability of sex and venereal disease as subjects for discussion in the public sphere, and in published texts; it was clearly the intention of authors and moral crusaders that this should persist after the war.

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Concerns regarding moral and social problems received considerable attention during the war. Writings on the subject of soldiers' morality, on women's behaviour relating to soldiers, and on venereal disease, evinced the principle that personal matters, pertaining to behaviour and health, were of national concern and relevance in wartime. The morality and behaviour of soldiers impacted upon contemporary attitudes, and upon perceptions of the conduct of the war. Soldiers' allegedly immoral behaviour was evident because of the focus of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, the military authorities, and the government, on this matter. While soldiers were visually conspicuous because of their uniforms, and ideologically conspicuous because of their responsibilities in serving the country, the attentions of various organisations on soldiers' behaviour were at least partly necessitated by the fact that casual sex, and venereal infection, did occur to the extent of having an impact on the armed forces: allegations and rumours about soldiers' behaviour were based on a degree of fact. Concurrently, it was believed that venereal disease would have an impact on the nation after the war, and upon future generations of Britons. The wartime commentator Stephen Paget warned that

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[162] National Council of Public Morals, *Campaigns of Peace* (London: National Council of Public Morals, 1919), p.7.
[163] 'Preface' to ibid., p.3.
[164] See ibid.

> The war so fills and overfills our minds that we are in danger of forgetting everything else. It will be a bad day for us if we shelve and forget the Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, and pay no heed to its recommendations.[165]

With the war effort in mind, venereal diseases were seen to be problematic because, as Christabel Pankhurst wrote, 'The sexual diseases are the great cause of physical, mental, and moral degeneracy, and of race suicide'.[166] Indeed, in Roger Davidson's analysis, the alarm over venereal disease, manifested in the form of policy and morality campaigns, 'provided a powerful justification for the social construction and proscription of dangerous sexualities'.[167]

The extent of the activities and publications of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease clearly demonstrated the importance with which sexual health, and sexual morals, were imbued, in a national context. While this Council was inaugurated in 1913, as a result of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, the incidence of the war meant that it had a greater mission, and a greater impact, than would have been assumed at its inception. Importantly, the nationwide alarm about problems of sexual disease and sexual morality, specifically because of the war, meant that the Council's impact was considerably increased. Moreover, the Council's platform had significantly more gravitas when matters of military imperative and racial health were taken into consideration. The first annual report of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, produced in June 1916, stated that

> It is too soon to attempt to forecast the effects of this terrible war upon the social structure of the nation. We are being tried in the fire, and we must earnestly hope that many of the evils which are manifest will disappear, and that we shall rise to a purer national life once the war has ended. If that is so, the gallant men who have fallen in the defence of our honour and our liberties will not have died in vain. But the vigour of the race can never be strengthened until we have brought this particular scourge under complete control, and to that great end this Council must work unceasingly.[168]

This bold statement, exploiting the discourses of national struggle and national greatness, exemplified the attitudes of the Council, that the fight against venereal disease was as imperative a cause for the British nation as was the pursuit of the European war. This

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[165] Paget, Stephen, *The Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1916), p.1.
[166] Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge*, p.vi.
[167] Davidson, Roger, *Dangerous Liaisons: A Social History of Venereal Disease in Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2002), p.1.
[168] National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, *First Annual Report of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, June 1916* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1916).

extract, especially, implied that the reason for participating in an international conflict was to improve the moral and sexual health of the nation. While immorality and sexual ill-health, understood to be demonstrated by both behaviour and medical evidence, were believed to be detrimental to Britain's war effort, this debate remained convincing and ubiquitous.

CONCLUSION

This thesis opened by claiming that Cosmo Lang, the Archbishop of York, expressed the nation's concerns when, in April 1915, he declared that sound morality was imperative in order for Britain to win the war.[1] The thesis has illustrated the prevalence of this attitude, and the fact that, in wartime, the ideals of sexual morality and patriotism were inextricably linked. Numerous contemporary discourses expressed these attitudes. While Archbishop Lang drew upon the dangers posed by immorality on the pursuit of the war, his contemporary, and renowned author on sexual matters, Havelock Ellis, wrote that venereal disease, the medical manifestation of sexual immorality and promiscuity, was 'more destructive than the war'.[2] The explicit expression of such opinions ran concurrently with their implicit expression in wartime laws and policies. The proliferation of opinions, variously and vociferously expressed, clearly demonstrated the belief that moral standards in Britain and among British service personnel bore a direct influence on military success.

While the discussion of sexual matters remained largely taboo in the early twentieth century, wartime discourses redefined sex as a public concern. The government and other bodies sought to expose and to eradicate immorality from British society, with the express intention of aiding the war effort. The extent of wartime debate on the subject of sexual morality, by individuals and by official, semi-official, and non-official bodies, demonstrated the nationwide importance of this issue. Opinions were voiced publicly, in published works, official debate, and personal debate. The subject was prominent in the press, where it was the only topic to be discussed with as much avidity and consistency throughout the war as that of the war itself.

While contemporary concern was manifest, however, the work of historians has not fully reflected wartime anxiety about the extent to which sexual morality and sexual health were believed to have impacted on the war effort. Various historians have investigated aspects of attitudes to sex, morality, and patriotism in wartime; Susan Grayzel, in her work on women during the war, observes that 'morality at home was seen as the key to British victory'.[3] However, no work has hitherto examined a spectrum of official and popular attitudes in order to make a comprehensive study of reactions throughout British society; this thesis has intended to provide such an analysis.

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[1] Cosmo Lang, Archbishop of York, 21 April 1915, cited in Ferris, Paul, *Sex and the British: A Twentieth-Century History* [1993] (London: Mandarin, 1994), p.77.
[2] Ellis, Havelock, 'Eugenics in Relation to the War', pp.110 – 127 in Ellis, Havelock, *The Philosophy of Conflict and Other Essays in Wartime* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1919), p.122.
[3] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* [1999] (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.138.

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Wartime diatribes about the threat posed to Britain by immorality were both virulent and widespread. Some commentators believed, as did Justice Darling, the judge in Noel Pemberton Billing's trial, that 'the harm the war had done to the morals of the people... was far beyond any material damage that had been done';[4] other contemporaries were adamant that morals had not lapsed,[5] or that the war had in fact been instrumental as the 'sovereign disinfectant' which had eradicated pre-war indulgence and immorality.[6] Accord on these matters was not necessary to inspire patriotism and animated debate in wartime; a belief in the connection of morality and the military endeavour was sufficient. The war years served both to highlight existing moral panics, such as the blame of women for acts of sexual indecency, and to create new ones, including the impact on military efficiency caused by servicemen having venereal disease, and the reactions to illegitimate 'war babies' fathered by soldiers. In wartime, the nation's morals were under the scrutiny of British commentators, and those from other nations. The importance of sexual behaviour was highlighted by the unsettled social and political situation, manifested through the separation of families, and the potential threat of death in wartime.

Ideological attacks on immorality were paralleled by medical concerns about the prevalence of venereal disease. Such diseases posed a threat to the pursuit of the war in physical terms; alarm about national inefficiency effected by the incapacitation from venereal disease of essential workers and troops was well documented.[7] The Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, and the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, advocated the implementation of free and comprehensive treatment, without stigma, but the problem was still discussed in the emotive terms of its being a 'social evil'.[8] Concern about the levels of venereal infection grew throughout the war, and was evinced by the publication of the report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in 1916, as well as by official measures, including the introduction of the Venereal Diseases Act in 1917, and Regulation 40D of the Realm Act in 1918. This mounting concern was also reflected

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[4] Justice Darling, *Sunday Times*, 1 June 1919, cited in Grayzel, Women's Identities at War, p.139.
[5] See Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, pp.139 – 140.
[6] Edmund Gosse, 'War and Literature', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 220 (Oct 1914), p.313, cited in Hynes, Samuel, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), p.11.
[7] See National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, *A Cause of Military Inefficiency* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, date unspecified). For an account from the immediate post-war years, see Harrison, Brevet-Colonel L. W., *A Sketch of Army Medical Experience of Venereal Disease during the European War, 1914 – 1918* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1922).
[8] See National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, *First Annual Report of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, June 1916* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1916), and Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* [1990] (London: Fontana, 1991), especially p.157.

by the increasingly fervent activities and publications of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, and similar interested bodies. Discussions of venereal disease as a source of military inefficiency, drew, at least implicitly, a connection between sex and patriotism.

National efficiency, security, and morale were essential for military success, and threats posed to these by sexual impropriety required exposure and elimination. The unprecedented level of interest shown by the authorities in the morality and sexual health of British citizens meant that sexual behaviour and sexual health were no longer private matters. This interest was manifested by military medical inspections and control of the sexual conduct of service personnel, and by the activities of female patrols and police. Acts of perceived immorality in public spaces became the concern of the state. In the case of female surveillance of the wives of absent soldiers, private houses became a site of official scrutiny, and of the suppression of immoral behaviour.

Gender dynamics were evident throughout wartime discourses. The army was a masculine culture which embraced the pursuit of sex, and, while not all soldiers had casual sex, sexual activity was an important contributory factor in the construction of wartime military masculinities, and the war '[made] possible new ways of rationalizing sexual activity'.[9] Moral panics surrounding men's sexual impropriety centred largely around their disgracing their standing with inappropriate behaviour, and in their spreading venereal disease to their innocent wives and children. However, female sex workers, flappers, munitions workers, illegitimate mothers, and the wives or alleged seducers of servicemen were all perceived as being potential sites for sexual immorality. Legislation, including the controversial Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, reflected the official interpretation that immorality could be situated primarily within female bodies and women's behaviour. Similarly, the creation of women patrols characterised public manifestations of iniquity as a problem regarding women, to be solved by women. These opinions were held even in situations in which it was illogical to blame women solely: in the case of illegitimate children, men's roles were largely ignored. Women were also portrayed as a national asset, whose civic duty was in the bearing of British children, and the protection of the future of the race, while men protected the nation's heritage through military endeavour. Sex, in wartime, was ideally a procreative act, and marriage a precursor to this. Opinions which were expressed about the gendered manifestations of sexual activity were often inconsistent, and were constructed around the ideologies and necessities of those who espoused them. Soldiers were concurrently portrayed as brave and

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[9] Sauerteig, Lutz D. H., 'Sex, Medicine and Morality During the First World War', pp. 167 – 188 in Cooter, Roger, Harrison, Mark, and Sturdy, Steve (eds.), *War, Medicine and Modernity* [1998] (Sroud: Sutton, 1999), p.181.

virtuous defenders of the British nation and the British Empire, for whom sexual activity was an expression of masculinity, and as debauched men whose behaviour disgraced and endangered their nation. Similarly, women were simultaneously represented as innocent victims of sexually rapacious soldiers, and as brazen seductresses who distracted and corrupted British servicemen.

Two particular case studies in this thesis – those of illegitimacy, manifested via the war babies crisis, and the libel trial of Noel Pemberton Billing, MP – addressed the subject of race, and explicitly equated moral health with Britishness. The birth of illegitimate 'war babies' was due to the war, but the moral panic surrounding these children was exacerbated by wartime imperatives. The alleged proliferation of illegitimate children was believed to reflect unfavourably on Britain's moral and political standing. In the Billing trial, plaintiff Maud Allan was allegedly a lesbian and an enemy agent; Billing's acquittal confirmed officially the link between Germanness and sexual depravity. While these case-studies have been examined by other historians,[10] this thesis further explored the extensive and state-supported discourses which constructed wartime attitudes to nationality, nationalism, and sexual morality.

The demands of total war, then, provoked an unprecedented degree of state control, via which the spheres of public and private became blurred. The government and the military had claims over knowledge about, and the regulation of, people's private lives, including their sexual behaviour and sexual health. As such, individuals were subsumed within the state, and were expected to conform to ideals deemed by the state to be both appropriate and necessary for the successful pursuit of war.

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[10] See Bland, Lucy, 'Trial by Sexology? Maud Allan, *Salome* and the "Cult of the Clitoris" Case', pp. 183 – 198 in Bland, Lucy and Doan, Laura, *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Kettle, Michael, *Salome's Last Veil: The Libel Case of the Century* (St. Albans, London, New York, Sydney, Toronto, Johannesburg: Granada Publishing, 1977).

EPILOGUE

It is important to avoid a Whiggish interpretation, which necessitates an assessment of wartime attitudes and policies as inevitable developments towards sexual liberalisation. However, while the post-war liberalisation of the attitudes of the state, and of individuals, was not inevitable, authoritarian wartime measures, such as Regulation 40D of the Defence of the Realm Act, and the insidious, invasive activities of female patrols, did not persist into peacetime. The year 1918 may be regarded as a turning point in attitudes towards sex: Marie Stopes's successful and unprecedentedly candid books *Married Love* and *Wise Parenthood* were published;[1] the war ended; laws such as DORA Regulation 40D were revoked; and women gained the right of citizenship via the Representation of the People Act. Samuel Hynes writes powerfully of the enormity of the war's impact in having created a sense of a complete 'discontinuity' from the pre-war world.[2] It is not surprising, therefore, that similar trends can be witnessed in attitudes to sex and sexuality as were felt throughout society.

At times of moral panic and national emergency, discourses have tended to draw connections between sexual immorality and national moral decay. Sexual ill-health and immorality have traditionally been seen as indicators of social disorder, from centuries'-old concerns about syphilis, through the punitive Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, the patriotic concerns of the First World War, and the moral outrage of the AIDS crisis, the latter period being one when hedonistic behaviour was particularly explicitly connected with national weakness.[3] The Great War was part of this longer trend, at which time it was essential that British citizens trusted in their nation's sound moral standing, in order that morale did not suffer. There were believed to be 'moral as well as physical battlefields'[4] on which the war was fought. It was equally important for the British nation to appear morally right to foreign nations, be they Colonies, allies, or military adversaries. For these reasons, Britain was on a moral crusade, as well as a military one. During the First World War, the British tradition of connecting sexual health and morality, and the condition of the nation, was crystallised and emphasised.

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[1] On the impact of Stopes's work after the war, see Rose, June, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution* [1992] (London: Faber & Faber, 1993); Hall, Ruth (ed.), *Dear Dr. Stopes: Sex in the 1920s* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1978); Holtzman, Ellen M., 'The Pursuit of Married Love: Women's Attitudes toward Sexuality and Marriage in Great Britain, 1918 – 1939', pp. 39 – 51 in *Journal of Social History*, 16 (2), 1982.

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

[3] See Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* [1990] (London: Fontana, 1991), pp.157 and 330.

[4] Grayzel, Susan R., *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* [1999] (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.133.

In the inter-war years, sex became a more respectable subject for public debate, and the discussion of sex in the public sphere remained widespread. The 1920s saw debates about whether men could claim war pensions for disablement or debility due to the wartime contraction of venereal diseases.[5] The issue here was raised of who was responsible for a man's sexual activities while he was a soldier, and the question posed as to whether men had surrendered to the Army's will in lieu of their own. Reliable methods of birth control were adopted more widely; 'Dreadnoughts', the first latex condoms, were introduced in the 1920s.[6] Measures introduced in wartime, as a result of the Royal Commission's recommendations, impacted on sexual health into the inter-war years, with millions of people attending state-funded venereal disease treatment centres in the years immediately following their creation. For this reason, Lesley Hall claims that 'In spite of the many problems faced by venereologists (for example, their continuing pariah status within hospitals), the British system was a remarkable triumph'.[7] The success of the treatment centres was also seen in statistical evidence:

> The incidence of new syphilitic infection fell by almost 50 per cent in the fifteen years after 1917, with most of this improvement occurring by 1924 as the result of the educational breakthrough in methods of prophylaxis and cure which followed the public discourse and controversy of 1917 – 21.[8]

These medical improvements notwithstanding, when the war ended, the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases lost a major campaign imperative: the necessity for sexual health in ensuring wartime military efficiency and moral integrity. By the 1930s, concern had waned, and funding for preventative campaigns against venereal disease had declined.[9] Support for groups such as the National Vigilance Association also dissipated when the war was over, amid what Frank Mort terms 'the demise of purity'.[10] Most importantly, in peacetime, with commemoration rather than militarism the norm, sexual morality could not so obviously be demanded through jingoistic calls for its necessity in ensuring international supremacy.

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[5] See TNA PIN 15/370 and TNA PIN 15/368.
[6] McKibbin, Ross, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918 – 1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.305.
[7] Hall, Lesley A., 'Sexual Cultures in Britain: Some Persisting Themes', pp. 29 – 52 in Eder, Frank X., Hall, Lesley A., and Hekma, Gert (eds.), *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.42. See also Evans, 'Tackling the "Hideous Scourge"'.
[8] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.247.
[9] Ibid., p.260.
[10] See Mort, Frank, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830 (Second Edition)* [first edition 1987] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 2000), p.160.

Similar dynamics to those witnessed in the Great War occurred in Britain during the Second World War,[11] although connections between sexual morality and patriotism were less explicitly drawn. Wartime conditions, including the 'sexual allure of the blackout,' were seen an incentive to casual sex.[12] The government used posters, films, radio adverts on the BBC, and mobile cinemas to publicise its anti-VD campaigns.[13] Sexual health inspections were carried out upon military enlistment, and troops received lectures on venereal disease.[14] It is argued that governmental policy was energised following the arrival in Britain of American troops, famously 'oversexed, overpaid, and over here!' in 1942;[15] free prophylactic condoms were available for troops abroad from May 1942.[16] In the model of Regulation 40D, Defence (General) Regulation 33B was enacted in November 1942, following discussions since October 1940.[17] Thereby, persons cited to doctors by two or more patients as a source of venereal infection were required, and could be legally compelled, to undergo treatment.[18] This regulation was controversial, but arguably less so than its precursor 40D, as it did not seek to treat the informants, who posed a similar risk of infection.[19] It has been argued that, despite avoiding obvious gender discrimination, the regulation bore more punitively on women.[20] William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, threatened to resign over the regulation, which, he believed, sought nothing more than 'to make fornication medically safe'.[21] Homosexuality in the army was dealt with by courts martial under the charge of 'indecency'. There were 790 such cases during the war, many being handled with leniency, as it was held that homosexuality did not necessarily indicate military uselessness:[22] in this conflict, then, military considerations were paramount, and sexual behaviour and orientation were not considered to be detrimental to them.

The connection of patriotism with morality having dissipated in the Second World War, it re-emerged with a new vigour in the late twentieth century, alongside the advent of AIDS. Similarities can be drawn between the moral panics of the Great War and of the

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[11] See Harrison, Mark, 'Sex and the Citizen Soldier: Health, Morals and Discipline in the British Army during the Second World War', pp. 225 – 249 in Cooter, Roger, Harrison, Mark, and Sturdy, Steve (eds.), *Medicine and Modern Warfare* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999).
[12] See Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, pp.264 – 269.
[13] Porter, Roy and Hall, Lesley, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p.243; Haste, Cate, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* [1992] (London: Pimlico, 1994), p.133.
[14] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, pp.112 – 113.
[15] See Chapter 15, 'Oversexed, overpaid, and over here!' in Costello, John, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939-45* (London: Collins, 1985). See also Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.266.
[16] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.113.
[17] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.268
[18] Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.133.
[19] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.268.
[20] Porter and Hall, *The Facts of Life*, p.242. See also Haste, *Rules of Desire*, pp.114 and 134.
[21] Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.268.
[22] See Haste, *Rules of Desire*, p.118

AIDS crisis in Britain in the 1980s.[23] Lesley Hall explores the persisting prejudices about sex and the expressions of sexualities, asserting that 'Changes do not necessarily mean increased tolerance or sexual enlightenment'.[24] Indeed, similar language was used to condemn AIDS victims to that which was used in wartime about people with venereal diseases. Despite the secularisation of society, 1980s criticisms used religious terminology, drawing on biblical arguments and the language of 'sin'. In wartime, promiscuous sex was described as a 'social evil'[25] and 'secret sin'.[26] Outraged commentators in the 1980s described AIDS as a 'mortal sin';[27] a tabloid columnist angrily asked, 'Since the perverts offend the laws of God and nature, is it fanciful to suggest that one or both is striking back?'[28] The response of much of the tabloid press was objectionable, but this was not necessarily surprising. As Frank Mort points out,

> The very fact that symptoms can be represented so dramatically, cutting down superstars and handsome young men in their prime, has made AIDS highly accessible to the long-standing protocols of popular investigative journalism. With their sharp polarities between health and disease, good and evil, they set up a direct relation between cause and effect and point to simple, graspable solutions.[29]

In wartime, unfaithful husbands were, it was claimed, prey to the inevitable and appropriate punishment of venereal disease for their sexual indiscretions.[30] The tradition of blame, and the rhetoric of 'deserved' infections for the 'guilty' or 'immoral' can be traced throughout moral and sexual panics in British history, and, in the early days of the AIDS crisis, homosexuals were cruelly targeted by the press as deserving their 'gay plague'.[31] People who received infected blood in transfusions, however, were portrayed as innocent victims.[32] Frank Mort has observed that

> the accelerating impact of the AIDS pandemic was casting its own grotesque shadow over the utopias of science and progress which had underwritten the belief in sexual freedom. The moral crisis precipitated by AIDS forcibly

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[23] On reactions to AIDS in Britain, see Garfield, Simon, *The End of Innocence: Britain in the Time of AIDS* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994); Chapter Nine, 'Hating Others: AIDS' in Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*; Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, pp.165 – 172. On sexual dangers since the 1980s, see Hall, Lesley A., *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (London: Macmillan, 2002).
[24] Hall, *Sex, Gender, Social Change*, p.2.
[25] See, for example, Creighton, Louise, *The Social Disease and How to Fight It: A Rejoinder* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914); Scharlieb, Mary, *The Hidden Scourge* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916; Pankhurst, Christabel, *The Great Scourge and How to End It* (London: E. Pankhust, 1913).
[26] *John Bull* 23 January 1915, p.7 col.a, 'Smut and slush: Prowling Prudes and Croaking Cranks'.
[27] Ray Mills, 'The Angry Voice', in the *Star*, 2 September 1986, cited in Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.337.
[28] Ray Mills, 'The Angry Voice', in the *Star*, 9 September 1986, cited in Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.337.
[29] Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p.167.
[30] See, for example, Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge.*
[31] See Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment*, p.334.
[32] See ibid., p.335.

> challenged permissive morality, reasserting the historical links between health and disease and moral and immoral notions of sex.[33]

As syphilis in wartime did not affect only those of one social class,[34] neither did AIDS discriminate by class or wealth; the deaths of high-profile celebrities from AIDS-related conditions have been seized upon by the media and the public consciousness. In the 1980s, decisions to abstain from sex were made on health grounds, to avoid the risk of contracting the incurable and potentially fatal HIV. Concurrently, moral imperatives to abstain from sex were renewed, as the public connection between ill health as a result of promiscuous sex and scandalous depravity was reinforced by the press and the Establishment. The public connection of sexual immorality and national moral decay continued.

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[33] Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities*, p.xiii.
[34] Barlow, Sir Thomas, *The Incidence of Venereal Diseases and its Relation to School Life and School Teaching* (London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, 1917), p.4.

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GC/219: Dorothea Naysmith

MS/849: John George Adami

MS/850: John George Adami

MS/3472: Louisa Martindale

MS/5415: Martin Wentworth Littlewood

MS/5707: William John Ritchie Simpson

MS/7891: Florence Jane Watkins

PP/BAR: Sir Thomas Barlow

PP/FPW: Frederick Parkes Weber

PP/HRW: Helena Rosa Wright

PP/JRH: James Randal Hutchinson

PP/MCS: Marie Charlotte Carmichael Stopes

RAMC: Royal Army Medical Corps

SA/BMA: British Medical Association

SA/BSH: British Social Hygiene Council
(National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases until 1925)

SA/CMO: Association of County Medical Officers of Health

SA/MWF: Medical Women's Federation

SA/PHC: Pioneer Health Centre, Peckham

SA/SMO: Society of Medical Officers of Health

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