

‘ART OF A SECOND ORDER’
The First World War From The British Home Front Perspective

by

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Abstract

Little art-historical scholarship has been dedicated to fine art responding to the British home front during the First World War. Within pre-war British society concepts of sexual difference functioned to promote masculine authority. Nevertheless in Britain during wartime enlarged female employment alongside the presence of injured servicemen suggested feminine authority and masculine weakness, thereby temporarily destabilizing pre-war values. Adopting a socio-historical perspective, this thesis argues that artworks engaging with the home front have been largely excluded from art history because of partiality shown towards masculine authority within the matrices of British society. Furthermore, this situation has been supported by the writing of art history, which has, arguably, followed similar premise. This study will demonstrate that engagement with the home front inevitably meant that artists' work could be interpreted as supporting different values to the pre-war period. However, the reintegration of ex-servicemen after the war resulted in the promotion of the wartime ordeal of male combatants. Not only did this restore the pre-war position of men, it inspired canonical values for British First World War art to uphold masculine authority. Consequently much art engaging with the home front has been deemed antithetical to established canonical values and written-out of art history.

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Finally, in 1968, shortly before his death, my great grandfather William Henry Roberts gave my mother two items: his wife's diamond engagement ring and a collection of postcards depicting images of the war-torn Flanders landscape during the First World War, where he had served as a serviceman. Handing the items to my mother Will-Henry informed her that 'these are for the maid.' The 'maid' referred to was me, at the time a small child. Forty years later in April 2008, after I had begun research for this thesis, I was told the aforementioned story. I was immediately struck with awe at the poignant significance of the postcards as a gift to me all those years earlier. I subsequently searched and found the postcards in my grandparents' attic. My great grandfather was not a wealthy man and my great grandmother's diamond ring, which I still cherish today, was perhaps the most valuable item he possessed. The fact that, along with the ring, I had been bequeathed postcards showing the effects of the First World War signified to me the importance of such items as mementos of the conflict to my great grandfather and perhaps most, if not all, of his generation. This demonstrated to me the profundity of the impact of war upon human society. Therefore, lest we should ever forget, this thesis is ultimately dedicated to anyone whose life is or has been touched by war.

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Introduction

In December 1929 the Imperial War Museum (IWM), London, received the extant version of *Youth Mourning* (c.1928, Fig. 1) by Sir George Clausen (1852-1944).¹ Featuring a bent-double, nude, female figure and a single cross located within a landscape of water-filled trenches, Clausen's painting can be understood to symbolize the experience of the First World War (1914-18) from the perspectives of both combatants on the battle front and civilians on the home front.² In *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1), signalling the sacrificial nature of the war, the single cross, located within the landscape of flooded trenches, operates as a sign for the bodies of servicemen killed or deemed missing in action on the Western Front battlefields. On this basis Clausen's painting suggests the selfless, yet piteous, heroism of men whose experiences of war comprised mainly of facing both ever increasing industrialized weaponry and hostile weather conditions. Meanwhile the incongruous placing of the nude female figure, bent-double as if seized with pain into a position similar to that assumed by a foetus in its mother's womb, has a dual function. On one hand, the absurd location of the figure can be understood to signal the senseless loss of men who had died fighting valiantly to protect the British nation and loved ones on the home front, such as wives and children. These

¹ The IWM was founded in March 1917 with the intention of collecting and displaying material as a record of all aspects of war and other military operations involving Britain and its Empire since 1914. Suzanne Bardgett (ed.), *Imperial War Museum Review*, London, No. 8, 1993, 107.

The painting was given to the IWM by its owner, who was called Luxmoore. Kenneth McConkey has noted that in 1928 all but one of the crosses in the original version of *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 61) of 1916 were removed. According to McConkey the reason for this change 'remains unexplained,' but he has speculated that the re-working of the painting was done at the request of the painting's owner, perhaps to make the work more acceptable to the IWM. Kenneth McConkey, *Sir George Clausen, R.A. 1852-1944*, exhibition catalogue (Bradford, London, Bristol and Newcastle), Bradford and Newcastle, 1980, 91.

² The war, which commenced for Britain on 4 August 1914, has been referred to by a number of appellations, including the 'Great War,' 'World War One' and the 'First World War.' The term First World War is used throughout this thesis. The Second World War of 1939-45, when mentioned, is also treated in the same way.

were relatives who, as suggested by the demeanour of the female figure in Clausen's painting, were most likely convulsed with feelings of dreadful worry because they had to wait for news of servicemen on the battlefield. On the other hand, the foetal pose of the figure can be understood to allude to the exclusively feminine role of motherhood, which, according to sociologist Siniša Malešević, was seen as providing an innate reason for the exclusion of women from combat roles.³ The result of which was the legal prohibition of British women from combat during the First World War.⁴ This meant that on the home front during the war there was a disproportionately high ratio of women to men compared to peacetime. Consequently, allusions to motherhood in Clausen's painting can be interpreted as implying that not only were wartime roles defined by sexual difference, but also both home and battle fronts could be viewed respectively as feminine and masculine zones.

Initially there had been some confusion at the IWM concerning the accession of *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1), because the museum had wrongly gained the impression that it was to have received *Renaissance* of 1915 (Fig. 2), another symbolic painting by Clausen, which had proved to be very popular with art critics during the war.⁵ Frank Rutter art critic for *The Sunday Times*, for example, had declared *Renaissance* (Fig. 2) to be 'the

³ Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence*, Cambridge, 2010, 296-297.

⁴ *Ibid.* Later on in the war the need for additional manpower on the battle front led to the creation of women's divisions of the services: 1917 Women's Army Corps; 1917 Women's Royal Naval Service and 1 April 1918 the Women's Royal Air Force. Within these services no woman saw active service at the battle front. Women were only engaged in work that was ancillary to men. Jenny Gould, 'Women's Military Services In First World War Britain,' Margaret Randolph Higonet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret Collins Weitz (eds.), *Behind The Lines: Gender and The Two World Wars*, New Haven and London, 1997, 114-125, 122-125.

⁵ George Clausen File, ART/WA1/223, correspondence 23 March 1918 – February 1936, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 16 June 2010.

most memorable picture [...] in the 1915 [Royal] Academy' summer exhibition.⁶ Adopting a similar view, a review in *The Times* on 1 May 1915 noted Clausen's 'allegory succeeds better than the realism of other painters [...] We should like this picture to be bought for the Chantry Bequest.'⁷ Indicating the destructive effects of war in general, and more specifically the sack of Belgium and the killing of the country's civilians by the invading German army in the autumn of 1914, in *Renaissance* (Fig. 2) a number of prostrate and forlorn, downward-looking, figures are placed within the ruins of a war-torn city.⁸ Additionally, the foregoing figures and landscape are juxtaposed to a youthful, nude, female figure. Again, like the female figure in *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1), the nude body of the figure, which this time is fully exposed to the beholder's gaze, has the potential to draw attention to the feminine role of child-bearing by making evident her breasts, upon which an infant might suckle. The female figure points with her right arm towards the ruined buildings, whilst holding in her right hand a bunch of spring-flowering Crocuses. With her left hand the figure points in the direction of the ground, which is covered also by the same flowers. As a result, the compositional organization of *Renaissance* (Fig. 2) invites the beholder's eye to follow an imaginary diagonal line. Starting from the female figure's raised right hand, pointing towards the war-torn city,

⁶ Frank Rutter, 'The Influence of The War on Art,' J.A. Hammerton and H.W. Wilson (eds.) *The Great War*, London, 1919, Vol. XII, chapter CCLXIII, 161-180, 175.

⁷ Anonymous, 'The War In Art, Pictures At Royal Academy: Kings And The Wounded,' *The Times*, Issue 40843, col A, 1 May 1915, 5.

⁸ Supporting the theory that *Renaissance* (Fig. 2) alluded to the sack of Belgium and the influx of Belgian refugees into Britain in the first few months of the war, an article in the *Burlington Magazine* of May 1915, noted that the bearded male figure in the left foreground of the painting was 'a portrait of the well-known Belgian sculptor M. Victor Rousseau' (1865-1954). Rousseau, who had fled to Britain on the outbreak of war, took part in the *War Relief Exhibition* that took place at the Royal Academy of Arts (7 January to 27 February 1915), for which Clausen sat on the organizing committee. Anonymous, 'A Monthly Chronicle,' *Burlington Magazine*, London, No. CXLVI, May 1915, 126; Royal Academy of Arts, *Council Papers 1913-1918*, xxiii and xxix, 2 Volumes, RAA/PC/13, accessed 18 February 2009; Oliver Fairclough, Robert Hoozee and Caterina Verdickt (eds.), *Art in Exile: Flanders, Wales and The First World War*, exhibition catalogue (Ghent 12 January to 17 March 2002, Heino/Wijhe 30 March to 2 June 2002 and Cardiff 22 June to 15 September 2002), Antwerp, 2002, 51.

via her nude body, the line terminates at the spring flowers at the figure's feet. This arrangement, combined with the nudity of the figure and the presence of the spring-flowering Crocuses, allows the painting to signal the 'renaissance' or rebirth of war-torn civilization which would follow victory by the allied forces. Consequently, in line with Rutter's opinion, *Renaissance* (Fig. 2) can be interpreted as epitomizing 'the national view of Hunnish atrocities and the invincible optimism which held true in the darkest days of the war.'⁹

In a letter, dated 4 December 1929, Ernest Blaikley, Keeper of Pictures at the IWM, wrote to Clausen asking if the museum might borrow *Renaissance* (Fig. 2), which was still in the artist's possession.¹⁰ In his letter, Blaikley observed that it 'would be interesting to exhibit the two paintings here, as they treat war from a rather different aspect from that of most pictures in the Collection, which [...] consist of paintings seen from a more realistic and *actual* point of view. We are, therefore, glad to have this opportunity of including some work of a more symbolic character.'¹¹ As mentioned, in addition to being more symbolic in character than most of the artworks in the IWM collection, both *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1) and *Renaissance* (Fig. 2) also, arguably, relied upon prevailing concepts of sexual difference to construct the First World War as a social crisis which engulfed all of humanity, irrespective of sex, age, ethnicity, combatant or civilian status. Therefore, although not specifically stated in his letter, Blaikley's keenness to show Clausen's two paintings together can be interpreted as being an early

⁹ Frank Rutter, 'The Influence of The War on Art,' *The Great War*, 175.

¹⁰ Letter from Ernest Blaikley to George Clausen, dated 4 December 1929, George Clausen File: ART/WA1/223, correspondence 23 March 1918 – February 1936, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 16 June 2010.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

admission that the IWM's collection of fine art (which is defined herein as paintings, drawings and sculpture) engaging with the First World War was (and is still largely) deficient in the scope of its diversity of visual responses to the war. Ever since its inception in March 1917 the museum's collection of First World War fine art has been almost exclusively comprised of artworks engaging with the perspective of the male combatant on the battle front. Consequently, reflecting the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War, most works in the IWM collection can be understood to promote a new model of masculine bravura (different to that suggested by traditional battle paintings), which was based upon the pitting of men, not just against human adversaries with manual weapons, but ever increasing industrialized weaponry and hostile weather conditions. Furthermore, it could be argued that the one-sided nature of the IWM collection, which includes almost every artwork produced for the British Official War Artists Scheme, can be seen to endorse long-held notions of masculine strength and authority in Britain, which were promoted, not only by dominant narratives relating to war, but also by the general stratification of both public and private life by binary premise in relation to male and female roles before, during and in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.¹² The effect of this can be interpreted to be two-fold. Firstly, the IWM collection, as the national repository for British war art, has functioned to imbue the wartime experiences of male combatants on the battle front with an elevated status above all other perspectives of war. This suggests that the canon of British First World War art, upon which the IWM collection policy was based, has been informed

¹² The British Official War Artists Scheme was set up in 1916 by Wellington House, a propaganda bureau which was opened in 1914 and run by Liberal politician C.F.G. Masterman. The aim of the scheme was 'to preserve a pictorial record as complete as possible of the various sites and stages of the war.' Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and The Great War: Witnessing, Testimony and Remembrance*, New Haven and London, 2004, 13.

strongly by prevailing concepts of sexual difference promoting masculine authority within British society. Secondly, the one-dimensional nature of the IWM collection can be understood to imply that war is predominantly a masculine preoccupation, and that, as a consequence, artworks engaging with the perspective of the home front, which it can be argued was viewed as a ‘feminine’ zone during the First World War, are less essential responses to war. As a result, the restricted scope of the IWM collection can be seen to imply that fine art engaging with the home front perspective should be treated as being ‘art of a second [and less important] order.’¹³ Exemplifying this situation is the fate of Clausen’s two paintings. Today, nearly one hundred years later, *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1) still remains a notable anomaly within the collection of the IWM, whilst *Renaissance* (Fig. 2), once considered ‘the most memorable picture’ of 1915, is believed to have been destroyed sometime before 1970.¹⁴ As Kathleen Palmer, current Head of Art at the IWM, has recently observed in the contexts of war art produced by women artists, ‘[w]ar art encompasses far more than battle scenes or life at the front line – it is about artists’ creative responses to all aspects of war as seen and experienced by ordinary people, civilians as well as servicemen.’¹⁵ Moreover, realizing that war, and especially increasingly industrialized warfare, involved civilians and combatants equally, Kenneth Clark, as Director of the National Gallery, made sure to commission works engaging with both the home and battle fronts produced by male and female artists, in variety of

¹³ Kenneth Silver, *Esprit De Corps: The Art of The Parisian Avant-Garde and The First World War 1914-1925*, Princeton, 1989, 30.

¹⁴ Frank Rutter, ‘The Influence of The War on Art,’ 175; Email from Kenneth McConkey to Richenda Roberts, 22 June 2009.

¹⁵ Compounding further the one-sided nature of the IWM collection, as Palmer has also noted, although a number of works were produced by female artists for the Canadian Official War Artists Scheme, only four female artists were asked to submit artworks for the British scheme during the First World War. Of the four, three had their work rejected and one did not take-up their commission. Kathleen Palmer, *Women War Artists*, exhibition catalogue (IWM, London), London, 2011, 1-2.

artistic expressions, when charged with organizing the British Official War Artists Scheme for the Second World War (1939-45).¹⁶ Nevertheless, in spite of war being increasingly acknowledged as an all-encompassing social and political crisis, little has been done within the academic discipline of art history to expand the canon of British First World War art beyond the scope of the wartime experiences of male combatants on the battle front, thereby effectively writing-out home front perspectives. Consequently, both the treatment of Clausen's two paintings and the apparent discriminatory nature of much previous art-historical scholarship suggest the existence of a link between canonical values for British First World War art and concepts of sexual difference prevalent in early twentieth-century Britain, which promoted masculine authority and the wartime perspectives of male combatants over that of civilians, especially women.

In order to address why art-historical scholarship has been so selective, this thesis is, therefore, concerned with revealing how the juncture of war with concepts of sexual difference informed both the production and the reception of fine art responding to the circumstances of the First World War from the British home front perspective.¹⁷ Focusing primarily on paintings which were either exhibited publically or disseminated in print form during the war, adopting a socio-historical perspective, this study will reveal that fine art responding to the British home front perspective has been largely written-out of art-historical scholarship as a result of sexual discrimination within both

¹⁶ A comprehensive account of the British Official Artists Scheme during the Second World War is given in Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*, New Haven and London, 2007.

¹⁷ Throughout this thesis the term 'sexual difference' is used to refer to relational positionality deriving from a combination of the biological, the social, psychological and discursive. The term 'gender' is used, herein, when reference is made to socially-assigned roles.

the matrices of British society and the academic discipline of art history. To this end, it will be argued that canonical values for British First World War art were inspired by the culturally-ingrained nature of concepts of sexual difference within British society, which espoused the promotion of masculine authority. Moreover, this thesis will demonstrate that the discriminatory effect of the promotion of masculine authority within early twentieth-century British society upon art responding to the home front perspective has been compounded further by the hierarchal character of art-historical writing, which, as art historians Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock have argued, has also been fundamentally structured by sexual difference.¹⁸

To provide a cogent explanation as to how culturally-ingrained concepts of sexual difference were implicated in the formation of the canon of British First World War and the writing-out of many fine art responses to the home front perspective, this thesis has two main aims. Firstly, to identify how, by the commencement of the First World War, as a result of the influence of cultural, political and social imperatives within late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British society, concepts of masculine and feminine roles as being disparate to each other had become accepted as custom. A key outcome of which was that, on the outbreak of conflict, not only were women excluded from combat, all wartime roles were, initially at least, assigned on the basis of sexual difference. Secondly, to explore how so many paintings engaging with the home front perspective might be interpreted as constructing concepts of sexual difference in a way which was different to traditional values, thereby making evident the destabilizing effects

¹⁸ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, London and Henley, 1981.

of war. The result of which, this study argues, was that art engaging with the home front perspective has become viewed as being antithetical to established canonical values for British First World War art and consequently written-out of art history.

Review of Previous Art-Historical Scholarship

Prior to 1980 art-historical scholarship on the subject of British First World War art is represented mainly by biographical accounts, produced mostly during the inter-war period, such as *Art in My Time* by Frank Rutter and *Paint and Prejudice* by Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889-1946).¹⁹ However, supporting the argument of this thesis, scholarship from 1980 onwards has been dominated by studies concerned with artworks presenting the perspective of the male combatant on the battle front; not least the many examples within the collection of the IWM, especially works created for the Official War Artists Scheme. To demonstrate this point the aforementioned body of scholarship will be summarized briefly. A fully comprehensive survey of the history of the British Official War Artists Scheme during the First World War was first provided by Sue Malvern in her PhD thesis of 1981.²⁰ Augmenting the scope of her thesis, Malvern has continued to expand the field of study with the publication of a number of articles and a lengthy monograph, published in 2004, entitled *Modern Art, Britain and The Great*

¹⁹ See, for example, Frank Rutter, *Art in My Time*, London, 1933, 161-177 and Frank Rutter, 'The Influence of The War on Art,' J.A. Hammerton and H.W. Wilson (eds.) *The Great War*; C.R.W. Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, London, 1937; John Rothenstein, *British Artists and The War*, London, 1931; Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling, *William De Morgan and His Wife*, London, 1922. Although his first name was Christopher, Nevinson was referred to as 'Richard' by his own family, in line with this practice the artist will hereafter be referred to as Richard Nevinson throughout this thesis. For similar treatment see Michael J.K. Walsh, *C.R.W. Nevinson: This Cult of Violence*, New Haven and London, 2002.

²⁰ Susan Malvern, *Art, Propaganda and Patronage: An History of The Employment of British War Artists 1916-1919*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, September 1981.

War: Witnessing, Testimony and Remembrance, which have aimed to bring ‘to light more recent scholarship’ about artists working under the aegis of the Official War Artists Scheme and the directions taken by their careers in the inter-war period.²¹ However, rather than choosing to expand the canon of British First World War by seeking-out additional perspectives, such as the home front, the direction of much subsequent scholarship has followed Malvern’s lead. Consequently, over the last three decades, the wartime perspective of the male combatant has remained the dominant theme within most art-historical scholarship concerned with British First World War art. This body of scholarship ranges from early studies, such as the book *The War Artists* by Meirion and Susie Harries of 1983, which has a very similar format to Malvern’s thesis, to very recent ones, for example the article ‘Censored Flesh: The Wounded Body as Unrepresentable in The Art of The First World War,’ by Debra Lennard, which was published in the autumn of 2011.²² In the summer of 1916 an amendment to the Defence of The Realm Act (DORA), which had been introduced on the commencement of war under the auspice of protecting national security, made it illegal to produce ‘any play or picture or film intended [to] or [which was] likely to cause disaffection, or to prejudice recruiting or training.’²³ In addition to the censorship of DORA prescribing how artists could represent the war, the British government’s decision not to repatriate the bodies of war-dead and the destruction, beyond recognition, of servicemen’s bodies on the battlefield

²¹ Sue Malvern, “‘War as it is:’ The Art of Muirhead Bone, C.R.W. Nevinson and Paul Nash 1916-17,’ *Art History*, Vol.9, No. 4, December 1986, 487-515; Sue Malvern, ‘War Tourism: “Englishness,” Art and The First World War,’ *Oxford Art Journal*, 24.1, 2001, 45-66; Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and The Great War*. Paul Gough, *A Terrible Beauty: British Artists In The First World War*, Bristol, 2010, 323.

²² Meirion and Susie Harries, *The War Artists*, London, 1983 and Debra Lennard, ‘Censored Flesh: The Wounded Body as Unrepresentable in The Art of The First World,’ *The British Art Journal*, London, Vol. XII, No. 2, autumn 2011, 22-33.

²³ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, London, 1992 (first published 1990), 80.

by shells rendered experiences of death and bereavement on both battle and home fronts largely in terms of unrepresentable absence.²⁴ Nevertheless, demonstrating the apparently enduring strength of long-held canonical values, Lennard's recent article has again concentrated on artists' indirect allusions to the ordeals of maimed and wounded servicemen.²⁵ Therefore a primary function of this present study is to demonstrate how circumstances of war were constructed in a very similar way in artworks engaging with experiences of injury, death and bereavement from the home front perspective, for example paintings like *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1). This will be done to make evident that the devastating effects of the First World War did indeed encroach upon the lives of civilians as well as combatants.

Additionally, as the title of Malvern's book has suggested, much previous scholarship on British First World War art has also favoured the output of the younger generation of male artists who were not only closely associated with the Official War Artists Scheme, but also modernist practice. These were artists such as Richard Nevinson, Eric Kennington (1888-1960), Charles Sargeant Jagger (1885-1934), Paul Nash (1889-1946) and Percy Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), whose lives and works have been discussed extensively in a number of surveys and monographs, most notably those produced by Paul Gough, Michael Walsh, David Boyd Haycock and Paul Edwards.²⁶ The present

²⁴ See Alyson Booth, 'Figuring The Absent Corpse: Strategies of Representation In World War 1,' *Mosaic*, 26.1, winter 1993, 69-85.

²⁵ Debra Lennard, 'Censored Flesh,' 22-33.

²⁶ Paul Gough: 'The Empty Battlefield,' *Imperial War Museum Review*, London, No. 8, 1993, 38-47, 'The Experience of British Artists in The Great War,' Hugh Cecil and Peter H Liddle (eds.) *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, London, 1996, 841-853 and *A Terrible Beauty*; Michael J.K. Walsh, *C.R.W. Nevinson: This Cult of Violence*; Charles E. Doherty, *Nash Nevinson and Roberts at War: A Catalogue Raisonné of First World War Paintings, Drawings and Prints by Paul Nash, C.R.W. Nevinson and William Roberts*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin,

study argues that emphasis placed upon the primacy of modernist practice by much previous scholarship has also influenced significantly the writing-out of artworks responding to the home front perspective. As noted, Parker and Pollock have argued that the writing of art history has been fundamentally structured by sexual difference.²⁷ In particular Parker and Pollock have suggested that, throughout much of the twentieth century, critiques of modern art have frequently defined modernist practice as being an act of heroic avant-gardism akin to the concept of bravura, which can be viewed as being much more readily associated with masculinity than femininity.²⁸ Emphasis placed upon the essential virtuosity of modernist practice, not only allowed it to be identified with masculinity, but also to be set in contrast to alternative, and perhaps more traditional, approaches adopted by artists, which it could be argued lacked innovation and therefore represented passive impotency commonly associated with femininity. Within a society based upon the promotion of masculine authority, such as Britain in the early twentieth century, this made it easy to readily associate other forms of artistic expression with the *weakness* of the ‘negative’ category of femininity, thereby allowing artworks, especially those created by women, to be considered to be less important to the canon of art history than works created using modernist practice.²⁹ It can, therefore, be argued that the partiality shown by much previous art-historical scholarship to modernist artworks engaging with the battle front perspective has encouraged further the writing-out of fine art responding to the perspective of the ‘feminine’ home front. Demonstrating the

Madison, 1989 and ‘The War Art of C.R.W. Nevinson,’ *IWM Review*, No.8, 48-62; David Boyd Haycock, *A Crisis of Brilliance: Five Young British Artists and The Great War*, London, 2009; Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, New Haven and London, 2000.

²⁷ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 44-45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

existence of the premise that modernist artworks were somehow more effective at conveying the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War, social historian Arthur Marwick has observed that ‘the war did not create [...] vital new movement[s] in the arts,’ but the unprecedented levels of global devastation it brought rendered traditional battle painting increasingly untenable, thereby allowing modernist practice, especially that produced by artists working for the Official War Artists Scheme engaging with the battle front perspective, to be understood as providing the most rigorous and essential responses to modern warfare.³⁰ Certain scholarship has followed such premise, thereby endorsing Marwick’s observation. One such example is the way in which artworks engaging with the home front perspective have been treated by Jonathan Black in his PhD thesis ‘*Neither Beasts, Nor Gods, But Men*’ of 2003, which examined how masculinity is constructed in the work of Nevinson, Kennington and Jagger.³¹ Although acknowledging that images of the ordinary British soldier or ‘Tommy’ during the First World War, created using modernist practice, drew upon a long-established ‘model of normative masculinity,’ Black dismissed other more naturalistic paintings responding to the home front, such as *The Creditors* (Fig. 3) of 1915-16 by John Charles Dollman (1851-1934), which seemingly displayed a similar approach.³² According to Black, paintings like *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), which juxtaposes four injured servicemen with an able-bodied female nurse, were nothing more than ‘Victorian genre’ with a didactic

³⁰ Arthur Marwick, *Britain in The Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change 1900-1967*, Harmondsworth and Ringwood, 1970 (first published 1968), 114.

³¹ Jonathan Black, ‘*Neither Beasts, Nor Gods, But Men: Constructions of Masculinity and The Image of The Ordinary British Soldier or ‘Tommy’ in The First World War Art of C.R.W. Nevinson (1889-1946); Eric Henri Kennington (1888-1960) and Charles Sargeant Jagger (1885-1934)*, unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, January 2003.

³² *Ibid*, 175

function.³³ Addressing such claims, a key function of this thesis is to dispel the distortion created by much previous scholarship that fine art responding to the home front circumstances of war, irrespective of the mode of artistic expression used, is in any way less relevant to studies of British First World War art than artworks engaging with the battle front perspective, not least examples created using modernist practice. To this end within this study it will be argued that fine art engaging with the home front perspective does present equally rigorous and essential responses to the devastating circumstances of the First World War. Indeed, an aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the use of sexual difference in many paintings engaging with the home front actually resulted in the construction of radically altered concepts of masculinity and femininity than pre-war “normative” models. Therefore, such artworks can be considered as being just as effective at making evident the effects of war on British society as images of servicemen against backgrounds of battlefields ravaged by the combined effects of industrialized weaponry and inclement weather.

As observed, in contrast to the foregoing body of scholarship, only a limited amount of attention has been paid to fine art responding to the First World War from the British home front perspective. Exemplifying this point, a number of biographies, autobiographies, monographs, theses and exhibition catalogues briefly include references to artists’ works engaging with the wartime circumstances on the British home front, not least *Women Artists Between The Wars*, *Sir George Clausen R.A., Art and Survival in First World War Britain*, *Picture Making: Charles Sims Technique and Inspiration* and

³³ *Ibid*, 126.

*'A Bright Memory to Remain' The Life and Work of Charles Sims R.A. (1873-1928).*³⁴

The contribution made by the above mentioned scholarship to the field of study has, nevertheless, been duly evaluated and incorporated where relevant into the argument of the present study. Meanwhile, artists' use of sexual difference as a mechanism to engage with the First World War has already received limited consideration in studies concerned with the work of Richard Nevinson, Jessica Dismorr (1885-1939) and Helen Saunders (1885-1963) by Michael Walsh and Jane Beckett; whose scholarship on the subject is also engaged with in this thesis.³⁵ The cursory nature of much existing scholarship is, however, perhaps best demonstrated by the exhibition catalogue *A Bitter Truth* of 1994 by Richard Cork.³⁶ Surveying all aspects of so-called "European avant-gardism" concerned with the war, Cork allocated only a small number of pages to British fine art engaging with the effects of the war on the home front.³⁷ Paintings mentioned in *A Bitter Truth* notably included *Clio and The Children* of c.1913-15 (Fig. 4) by Charles Sims (1873-1928) and again *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1).³⁸ Demonstrating the different aims of the present study, in contrast to the foregoing scholarship, the aforementioned two paintings will be examined at length herein.

³⁴ Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between The Wars: 'A Fair Field and No Favour,'* Manchester and New York, 2010; Kenneth McConkey, *Sir George Clausen, R.A. 1852-1944;* Stuart Stillars, *Art and Survival in First World War Britain,* Basingstoke and London, 1987; Alan Sims, *Picture Making: Charles Sims Technique and Inspiration, With A Critical Survey of His Work and Life by Alan Sims,* London, 1934; H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain: The Life and Work of Charles Sims RA (1873-1928),* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Northumbria, July 2005.

³⁵ Michael J.K. Walsh, *C.R.W. Nevinson: This Cult of Violence* and Jane Beckett, '(Is)Land narratives: Englishness, Visuality and Vanguard Culture 1914-18,' David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (eds.), *English Art 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity,* Manchester, 2000, 195-212.

³⁶ Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and The Great War,* exhibition catalogue (Berlin 10 June – 28 August 1994 and London 29 September – 11 December 1994), New Haven and London, 1994.

³⁷ *Ibid,* 127-139.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Over the last decade more rigorous studies of artistic practice and fine art responding to the home front perceptive have begun to be produced. Modernist practice on the British home front is, for example, combined with the subject of pacifism by Grace Brockington in her doctoral thesis entitled *Above The Battlefield: Art for Art's Sake and Pacifism in The First World War* of 2003, which formed the basis for the book *Above The Battlefield: Modernism and The Peace Movement in Britain*.³⁹ The primary focus of both Brockington's PhD thesis and subsequent book is the artistic activities, ranging from the production of fine and applied arts to the writing of literature and the staging of plays, of the group of painters, poets, writers and intellectuals who were closely associated with the Bloomsbury Group and Omega Workshops.⁴⁰ This group included artists Vanessa Bell (1879-1961), Duncan Grant (1885-1978) and Maxwell Armfield (1881-1972), playwright Constance Smedley (1876-1941) and author and social commentator Vernon Lee (1856-1935), who also all shared a pacifist worldview.⁴¹ 'Expanding the accepted canon' of British art engaging with the First World War, Brockington has argued that the 'crisis of war compelled artists to make a commitment for or against the principle of aesthetic autonomy, and the few who chose to defend it,' who are the subjects of her thesis and book, did so in order to promote the concept of 'positive peace,' which was 'constructive, not simply reactive, promoting social, political and cultural reform to eradicate the causes of war.'⁴² However, as Christopher Reed has observed, aesthetic autonomy, as practiced by artists such as Bell and Grant, which was

³⁹ Grace Brockington, *Above The Battlefield: Art for Art's Sake and Pacifism in The First World War*, unpublished DPhil thesis, Wolfson College, Oxford, Michaelmas Term, 2003 and *Above The Battlefield: Modernism and The Peace Movement in Britain*, New Haven and London, 2010.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Grace Brockington, *Above The Battlefield: Modernism and The Peace Movement*, 2.

often, arguably, removed from direct engagement with prevailing social and political contexts, could also have the opposite effect, thereby creating the impression that artists' works were aloof and therefore essentially private responses to war.⁴³ As a result, it can be argued that adherence to artistic autonomy might also have actually helped to diminish both the public profile and irenic impact of home front responses to the war. Themes of pacifism in British art responding to the First World War have additionally been discussed briefly in a number of studies concerned with the work of individual artists, particularly Joseph Southall (1861-1944) and Evelyn De Morgan (1855-1919).⁴⁴ Adding to this body of scholarship, the present study will argue that the work of individuals, including De Morgan and Southall, indicates that the culturally-ingrained nature of binary premise relating to male and female roles within British society, and the war's impact on such traditional values, also made it possible for artists to allude to sexual difference in their work in order to circulate, through public display, meanings and values which made clear to many contemporaneous beholders the iniquities of war and social injustice. Nevertheless, this study will demonstrate that this important display of artistic freedom, done in a time of great social crisis, has become largely obscured

⁴³ Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity*, New Haven and London, 2004, 157-163.

⁴⁴ George Breeze, *Joseph Southall 1861-1944 Artist-Craftsman*, exhibition catalogue (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery 8 August - 7 November 1980), Birmingham, 1980, 101-06; Margaret Glover, *Images of Peace in Britain from The Late Nineteenth Century to The Second World War*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 2002; Judy Oberhausen, 'A Horror of War,' Catherine Gordon (ed.), *Evelyn De Morgan Oil Paintings*, exhibition catalogue (Russell-Cotes Gallery, Bournemouth September 1996 – April 1997), London, 1996, 75-92 and Richenda Roberts, *Pacifism and Egalitarianism: Evelyn De Morgan's Responses to War*, unpublished MPhil thesis, The University of Birmingham, 2009. Pacifism can have many interpretations. In this thesis the pacifist worldview of artists during the First World War is treated as being very much in line with prevailing views within the early peace movement; that the absence of war and violence was absolutely essential for peace. Gail Chester and Andrew Rigby (eds.), *Articles of Peace, Celebrating Fifty Years of Peace News*, Bridport, 1986, 1.

because of the effects of the structuring of British society, the canon of British First World art and the writing of art-historical scholarship on the basis of sexual difference.

More recently, James Fox has written a number of articles and a PhD thesis entitled *Business Unusual: Art in Britain During The First World War*, all of which have been concerned with the production of art on the British home front during the First World War.⁴⁵ Like the present study, Fox's doctoral thesis has sought to provide an explanation as to why so little scholarly attention has been previously paid to British fine art engaging with the home front perspective. Focussing on the 'material disruptions' of war upon artists, exhibiting groups, galleries and art institutions, ranging from the censorious effects of DORA, the imposition of luxury goods tax, inflation and the collapse of patrons' financial investments, to the demonization and internment of artists as 'shirkers' and potential spies, the main contention of Fox's doctoral thesis (parts of which are repeated and expanded in his articles) is that the effects of the war created a home front environment that was uncondusive to the production of fine art.⁴⁶ Fox's thesis is compelling and the 'material disruptions' that he has identified can be understood to have certainly exerted a good degree of influence upon the cultural field of art production extant on the home front.⁴⁷ However, research for the present study, for example the survey of reviews of exhibitions held in London before and during the war period, indicates that, despite such obstacles, the production and exhibition of fine art, when

⁴⁵ James Fox, 'Traitor Painters: Artists and Espionage in The First World War, 1914-18,' *The British Art Journal*, London, Vol. IX, No. 2, autumn 2008, 62-68; 'Fiddling While Rome is Burning: Hostility to Art During The First World War, 1914-18,' *Visual Culture in Britain*, 2010, 11:1, 49-65 and *Business Unusual: Art in Britain During The First World War, 1914-18*, unpublished PhD thesis, History of Art Department, Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, 2009.

⁴⁶ James Fox, *Business Unusual*, 19-20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

compared to immediate pre-war levels, was actually only very slightly diminished.⁴⁸ Moreover, within the body of artworks that was produced and exhibited on the British home front during the First World War a significant number of paintings, and to a lesser extent drawings and sculpture, not only engaged with the war, but also responded to the home front perspective using sexual difference as a mechanism to construct meanings and values for war. Therefore, whilst material disruptions can be understood to have resulted in there being slightly fewer examples of artworks for critics and art historians to appraise and write about, research for this thesis indicates that, arguably, the most fundamentally influential factor in the dearth of previous scholarship concerned with fine art responding to the home front perspective has been the impact of sexual discrimination within the institutional matrices of British society and the academic discipline of art history. Indeed, this study will show that it was not simply material constraints, the age or sex of an artist and mode of artistic expression used, which caused the writing-out of fine art responding to the home front perspective. Instead it was how the manifest and latent meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity constructed by artworks were, or might have been, interpreted in relation to the contexts of war, the structuring of British Society and the discipline of art history.

⁴⁸ Exhibition reviews in leading newspapers and magazines, including *The Burlington Magazine*; *The Connoisseur*; *The Daily Mail*; *The Daily Herald*; *The Graphic*; *The Illustrated London News*; *Manchester Guardian*; *The Queen*; *The Lady's Newspaper*; *The Saturday Review*; *The Sphere*; *The Studio*; *The Sunday Times*; *The Times* and *The Westminster Gazette*. Newspaper cuttings in artists' archives, such as the De Morgan Archive, London; Sims Archive, Newcastle; Nevinson papers, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7311/1-14, London; Press Cutting File of International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Engravers, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 738/7;. Exhibition catalogues for the period 1914-1919, Royal Academy of Arts, London; New English Art Club, London; Doré Gallery, London; Leicester Galleries, London and De Morgan, Edith Grove, London.

The Effects of the Juncture of War and Sexual Difference During the First World War

Commenting on the role of sexual difference in the stratification of early twentieth-century British society, Joyce Berkman has argued that ‘women as potential and actual mothers enjoyed reproductive power at the expense of physical and intellectual prowess. As mothers, they [arguably] belonged in the home, away from the hurly-burly of the market place, no less the battlefield.’⁴⁹ Consequently, it can be argued that under such social parameters male authority was indeed culturally-vaunted and female dependency on men for ‘economic and physical protection’ was ‘almost always presented as “natural,” as is the state of peace.’⁵⁰ ‘In contrast, war appears to be “unnatural,” “abnormal” – but warranted in part, by men’s need to protect and defend.’⁵¹ Not only did such premise allow the experience of war to be largely understood as being determined by sexual difference, it also seemingly gave legitimacy to fine art displaying images of servicemen located on the battlefield, exemplified by the IWM collection. Nevertheless ‘such tropes’ of *weak* femininity and *strong* masculinity are only ‘valid as long as’ they ‘remain stable.’⁵² However, Judith Butler has observed that concepts of sex ‘are not simple fact or static condition,’ but perpetually unstable and subject to constant redefinition.⁵³ Butler has proposed the theory of ‘gender performativity.’⁵⁴ According to Butler, instead of being fixed as a result of biological differences separating men and

⁴⁹ Joyce Berkman, ‘Feminism, War and Peace Politics: The Case of World War 1,’ Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (eds.), *Women, Militarism and War: Essays in History, Politics and Social Theory*, Savage, 1990, 141-160, 143.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* and Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (eds.), *Behind the Lines: Gender And The Two World Wars*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ *Ibid* and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of “Sex,”* New York and London, 1993, 2.

⁵⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, London and New York, 1999 (first published 1990).

women or social constructions contingent upon assumptions of the same, all gender identity is performativity constituted by social subjects acting upon a set of specific imperatives at different times under diverse contexts.⁵⁵ Butler's theory suggests that whilst certain examples of gender performance, for instance women seeking employment as nurses, might be said to uphold prevailing values legitimized as "normal" by dominant narratives, such as binary premise in relation to male and female roles, others, which do not conform to such "normality," can be understood to function conversely to destabilize, thereby promoting alternative perspectives or agendas and the concept that identity is fluid and variable under different circumstances.⁵⁶ Supporting Butler's observation, scholars concerned with how concepts of sexual difference were constituted during the First World War, such as Susan Grayzel and Deborah Thom, have argued that on the home front the mass mobilization of men into military service, injury and death, along with the need for additional supplies of munitions, led to large numbers of wounded, seemingly helpless, men, enlarged female employment and women assuming roles as heads of households.⁵⁷ The effect of this was to raise perceptions of expanded feminine authority alongside notions of masculine weakness.⁵⁸ As a result concepts of *strong* masculinity and *weak* femininity temporarily (for the duration of the war only) 'underwent radical change, thus destabilizing the [pre-war] tropic balance.'⁵⁹ Furthermore, in line with the way in which masculinity and femininity can be interpreted

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Preface (1999), vii-xxvi.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and The First World War*, Harlow, 2002 and *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France During The First World War*, Chapel Hill and London, 1999, 11-49; Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I*, London and New York, 2000 (first published 1989).

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (eds.), *Behind the Lines*, 5.

as being inscribed in *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1), military historian Eric Leed has argued that during the First World War ambiguity caused by the meeting of pre-war values of sexual difference with the effects of wartime circumstances resulted in the home and battle fronts being understood as largely sexually-differentiated zones.⁶⁰ On one side was the feminine home front, where women were increasingly viewed negatively, especially by disillusioned servicemen, for contributing to the injury and death toll as a result of undertaking activities such as the handing-out of white feathers to shame men into enlistment and the manufacture of weapons that maimed and killed.⁶¹ On the other side was the masculine zone of the battle front, which was considered by both civilians and combatants alike as being a place where heroic men risked life and limb in terrible conditions to protect nation and loved ones.⁶² Therefore, the juncture of traditional binary premise in relation to male and female roles and the devastating impact of war can be understood to have made evident the inherently unstable nature of gender identity, thereby inspiring ambiguity surrounding concepts of masculinity and femininity, which in turn encouraged a gender-based divide between home and battle fronts.

Additionally, social historian Adrian Gregory has observed that ‘the British frequently use traditional forms precisely in order to gloss over radical change.’⁶³ According to Gregory this behaviour is exemplified by the reinstatement of dominant narratives, such as articles in wide-circulation newspapers and magazines, promoting masculine authority and the traditional stratification of British society on basis of binary premise concerning

⁶⁰ Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War One*, Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne, 1979, 199-204.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and The First World War*, Cambridge, 2008, 293.

male and female roles, which emerged in the immediate post-war period.⁶⁴ Gregory has argued that, although the Armistice on 11 November 1918 had brought victory, tensions between the British state, civilians and ex-servicemen meant that, up until the General Strike in 1926, the threat of civil and industrial unrest in Britain ‘was more or less [a] constant presence.’⁶⁵ Engaging with the issue of post-war tension, Gregory has suggested that a key purpose of the reinstatement of traditional values of sexual difference was to regain a semblance of pre-war “normality” in order smooth the reintegration of large numbers of disillusioned ex-servicemen back into civilian society.⁶⁶ He has observed that a direct consequence of this action was the creation of the cult of the fallen serviceman, which allowed both dead and living ex-servicemen to assert their superiority over civilians, thereby allowing the wartime experiences of masculine combatants to assume an elevated status above all other perspectives of war.⁶⁷ Consequently, despite female property owners and householders’ wives who were over the age of thirty having been given the right to vote in February 1918, the effect of such action was to largely restore pre-war positions of masculine authority and feminine weakness.⁶⁸

In line with the foregoing arguments, this thesis will show that the culturally-ingrained nature of binary premise concerning masculinity and femininity within pre-war British society can be seen to have endorsed the demarcation of war by sexual difference,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Angela Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain During The First World War*, Aldershot and Burlington, 2005, 131.

thereby encouraging both the production and reception of many paintings (and other examples of fine art) engaging with the First World War to do the same. Demonstrating this point is the approach to representing the war that was adopted by most of the artists working for the British Official War Artists Scheme. Although it was not stipulated what should be produced in terms of subject matter or mode of artistic expression used, most of the artists working for the scheme chose to follow binary premise concerning male and female roles by identifying war as a masculine preoccupation.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, supporting Butler's argument that gender identity is never static, the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War radically altered concepts of masculinity and femininity. Consequently the use of sexual difference as an instrument to engage with war in many publically displayed paintings had the potential to encourage the interpretation of alternative meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity to those traditionally espoused by dominant narratives within pre-war British society. This study will argue that this meant that, unlike most battle front imagery, which could be interpreted as continuing to extol and uphold masculine authority, images of wounded men and women seemingly assuming greater authority in many paintings engaging with the home front perspective could be viewed as promoting the reversal of traditional tropes of masculine strength and feminine passivity. The effect of this was that such artworks not only made evident the devastating impact of war, but could also be viewed as supporting the destabilizing abnormality of wartime. As a result, many examples of British art engaging with the home front perspective could be interpreted as presenting perspectives of war that were diametrically opposed to those prescribed by established canonical standards for British First World War art, which were based upon enshrining

⁶⁹ Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, 49.

masculine authority in line with pre-war cultural custom. This study argues that as a consequence many examples of fine art engaging with the home front perspective have been written-out of art-historical scholarship on the basis of being considered uncanonical. Moreover, as noted, this thesis also argues that the foregoing situation has been compounded further by the rigid adherence of much previous art-historical scholarship to established canonical values upholding masculine authority. This action has resulted in the failure to acknowledge more recent theories about the dynamic nature of gender identity, for example those espoused by Butler, which can be understood to not only provide a paradigm that can be used to reassess the impact of war upon society in general, but also the scope of the canon of British war art.

Methodological Approach

As a study concerned with the interpretive impact of how meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity are constructed in paintings, the approach of the present work has been informed strongly by research and methodological models investigating how concepts of sexual difference have been (and are) constituted both in general and more specifically during the period of the First World War. In addition to Judith Butler's scholarship, the work of feminist writer Michèle Barrett has been particularly useful to the approach of this thesis. In her article 'The Concept of Difference' Barrett identified three concepts of sexual difference.⁷⁰ Firstly, experiential diversity or difference, whereby the roles assigned by society to masculinity and femininity are defined on the

⁷⁰ Michèle Barrett, 'The Concept of Difference,' *Feminist Review*, Basingstoke, No. 26, summer 1987, 29-41, 30.

basis of biological difference.⁷¹ Secondly, positional difference, which, Barrett has suggested, originates in the work of post-structuralist writers, especially Jacques Derrida.⁷² Positional difference assumes ‘that meaning is constructed through linguistic opposition rather than absolute reference.’⁷³ Sexual identity is, therefore, constructed by the play of ‘position and relationship (that is, by *difference*).’⁷⁴ Thirdly, psychoanalytic difference, explored for example in the work of psychoanalysts, including Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, which can be used to ‘account for how ideologies are imposed upon subjects and how sexual identity is acquired.’⁷⁵ In essence, Barrett’s three concepts can be interpreted as suggesting that constructions of sexual difference are strongly informed by relational positionality deriving from a combination of awareness of different biological propensities, social, psychological and discursive interaction. Additionally, in provision of a model for examining the juncture of war and sexual difference in relation to art-historical studies, the work of Lisa Tickner has been most helpful in informing the approach taken by the present study. Responding to Barrett, Tickner, in her own article entitled ‘Feminism, Art History and Sexual Difference,’ has proposed that all three of Barrett’s categories ‘are clearly related.’⁷⁶ Art history, she has claimed, is interested in ‘social subjects with particular histories, [which] have as part of those histories the structuring of unconscious desires and identifications deriving from the play of difference in discourse.’⁷⁷ According to Tickner a combination of all three of

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Also see Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes The War System and Vice Versa*, Cambridge, 2001, 1-10 and Lisa Tickner, ‘Feminism, Art History and Sexual Difference,’ *Genders*, Boulder, No. 3, fall 1988, 92-128.

⁷² Michèle Barrett, ‘The Concept of Difference,’ 30.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁶ Lisa Tickner, ‘Feminism, Art History and Sexual Difference,’ 116.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Barrett's concepts of sexual difference are, therefore, essential to fully analyse concepts of sexual difference in relation to the production and reception of artworks. This approach has been pursued by the present study in determining how sexual difference was constituted in Britain in the period just before, during and immediately after the First World War, thereby providing an understanding of how the meanings and values which were constructed by paintings engaging with the First World War might have been interpreted.

Moreover, in the establishment of a contextual framework for artists' responses to war that is relevant to the socio-political environment of the period of the First World War, Tickner's work has again been particularly useful in a number of ways to the methodological approach of the present study. Firstly, although not directly concerned with war, Tickner's book *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of The Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914* provides an art-historical model which can be used as a paradigm of how primary source data can be combined with analysis of the meanings and values constructed by visual imagery in order to investigate attitudes towards sexual difference and gendered power relations prevalent within early twentieth-century British society.⁷⁸ Secondly, drawing on the work of social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, Tickner has pointed out that the cultural field of production that informs the creation and reception of artworks:

embraces the works themselves, related within a (historically developing) space of possibilities; the producers of works (whose strategies and trajectories derive

⁷⁸ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of The Suffrage Campaign 1907-14*, Chicago, 1988.

from their positions and dispositions as agents); and all those instances of legitimization by which cultural products are recognized and ranked (by audiences, publishers, curators, academies and critics, in public and personal economies of meaning and value).⁷⁹

The forgoing framework, suggested by Tickner, has been adopted within the present study when examining and evaluating the cultural field of production extant on the British home front.

Additionally, art historian Francis Francina has observed that ‘conventions are social arrangements, sets of rules. To learn them is to enter into, or to accept, a ‘collective contract’ with other speakers of the particular language. [Therefore], we ‘contract’ to abide by the rules in order to communicate.’⁸⁰ On this basis, in order to be considered antithetical to canonical values enshrining masculine authority, or to present a challenge to dominant narratives promoting the same, the reception of home front art had to rely upon a majority of beholders understanding that British society was traditionally structured on the basis of binary premise in relation to male and female roles. As mentioned it is, therefore, a key aim of this thesis to not only establish how the polarization of male and female roles became culturally-ingrained as “normal” within early twentieth-century British society, but also how such “normality” was temporarily destabilized by the impact of war. Within his theory of the cultural field of production,

⁷⁹ Lisa Tickner, ‘English Modernism in The Cultural Field,’ David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (eds.), *English Art 1860-1914*, 13-30, 24.

⁸⁰ Francis Francina, ‘Realism and Ideology: An Introduction to Semiotics and Cubism,’ Francis Francina, Charles Harrison and Gillian Perry (eds.), *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, New Haven and London, 1993, 118.

Bourdieu developed ‘the concept of *symbolic power*[,] based on the diverse forms of capital which are not reducible to economic[s].’⁸¹ Although, as noted, ‘capital’ has many forms, Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural capital’ is particularly relevant to the present study.⁸² According to Bourdieu, ‘cultural capital’ is ‘accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of family or group members [...], educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions.’⁸³ Consequently, Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural capital’ provides a theoretical model that can be applied in the pursuit of discovering how binary premise in relation to male and female roles not only became culturally-ingrained within pre-war British society, but was also temporarily destabilized during wartime. To this end, in conjunction with primary source data, such as articles in newspapers and magazines, biographical information about artists and visual analysis of relevant artworks engaging with the home front perspective, Bourdieu’s theory is used by the present study to elucidate the shaping of concepts of gender identity, responses to the impact of war, the rationale behind the formation of canonical standards for British First World War art and reactions to artworks engaging with the home front perspective.

Scope of Thesis, Archives and Resources

In order to demonstrate that fine art responding to the home front perspective has been written-out of much previous scholarship as a result of sexual discrimination, the scope of this thesis is limited to examining the impact of social stratification based on sexual

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, Randal Johnson (ed.), *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Oxford, 1995 (first published 1993), 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

difference, a restricted art canon supporting masculine authority and previous scholarship upholding the same, upon the production and reception of artworks engaging with the British home front during wartime. To this end, the present study specifically focuses on examples of artworks which were publically exhibited in Britain during the period of the First World War. Within such parameters this thesis examines examples of art which were exhibited during the war by both individuals and formal groups of artists in private studios, commercial art galleries, academies and public institutions, such as museums. Additionally, the scope of this study also includes artworks, which were either commissioned for mass circulation as prints or subsequently widely disseminated via the same cultural form.

The public display of artworks allowed artists to sell their works, if they so wished. It also provided artists who were so minded with an opportunity to publically disseminate personal worldviews or group ideologies. Moreover, public exhibition had the potential to expose artworks to the critical scrutiny of a much broader audience than just the immediate associates of the artist. Frascina has argued that in order to communicate effectively cultural forms need to draw upon or directly reference concepts or customs that are understood by beholders.⁸⁴ On this basis, it can be argued that the culturally-ingrained nature of binary premise concerning male and female roles within pre-war British society meant that sexual difference provided artists working in Britain with a most suitable mechanism through which the effects of war could be communicated to a likely audience of people familiar with such cultural custom. However, the impact of war radically altered concepts of sexual difference. As mentioned, this thesis argues that

⁸⁴ Francis Frascina, 'Realism and Ideology,' 118.

the impact of war had a two-fold effect upon the production and reception of art. Firstly, the war's impact upon concepts of sexual difference provided artists, like De Morgan and Southall, with an opportunity to protest against war and instances of sexual discrimination, thereby giving insight into individual's worldviews and the effects of war on British society. Secondly, however, allusions to male weakness and feminine strength, which might be interpreted in artworks, although a sign of the impact of war, could also be interpreted as failing to uphold pre-war values, upon which the canon of British First World War art was based.

As noted, in order to reveal the extent of artist's engagement with the home front perspective, part of the initial research for the present study took the form of a survey of fine art exhibitions held during the First World War. This survey revealed that the use of sexual difference as a mechanism to engage with war was a common theme shared by many paintings and to a lesser extent drawings and sculpture. Furthermore, the survey made evident that many drawings and sculpture engaging with the war, which are extant today, fell into two distinct categories. Firstly, many drawings engaging with the war were discovered to have not been publically exhibited or offered for sale during the war as a result of being unfinished preliminary sketches for paintings, which were exhibited. Secondly, a large proportion of the sculpture and sculptural reliefs engaging with the war took the form of memorials to the dead, who were usually servicemen. As a result, like most of the IWM collection, much of the sculpture created during the First World War, because it only featured images of men in armed services uniforms, can be understood to have functioned to more directly promote the wartime experiences of male combatants

on the battlefield than the home front perspective. The status of many drawings and sculptures, therefore, meant that the majority of fine art responses to the impact of the First World War upon the home front in Britain can be identified in paintings, preliminary drawings or prints of the same; hence paintings forming the primary focus of the present study. Furthermore, the survey of exhibitions also indicated that within this group of paintings a significant number of examples could be interpreted as constructing sexual difference in a way which suggested feminine strength and masculine weakness. Consequently, it can be observed that such artworks could be, or might have been, interpreted as presenting a provocative challenge to pre-war values of sexual difference, which not only underpinned the structuring of British society, but also provided the standards for the canon of British First World War art. Moreover, created using a diverse range of modes of artistic expression, by both male and female artists of all ages, who possessed a variety of worldviews and social aspirations, the only other common dominator shared by paintings suggesting altered concepts of sexual difference was the almost total absence of such works from previous art-historical scholarship. The number of paintings, which could be interpreted as constructing altered concepts of sexual difference, and the absence of such works from previous studies, can be understood to uphold the argument of the present study in a number of ways. Firstly, the absence of such works from much previous scholarship suggests that the canonical standards for British First World War art have indeed been strongly informed by social stratification within pre-war Britain, which was based upon promoting masculine authority. Secondly, it can be argued that the prolific instance of altered concepts of sexual difference which can (or might) be identified in paintings functioned to promote a

general alignment of home front art with the temporary ‘abnormality’ of feminine authority during wartime. This study contends that the creation and upholding of an art canon enshrining masculine authority, along with the return to pre-war values following similar premise in the immediate aftermath of war, has meant that the impact of such alignment has been that all examples of fine art responding to the home front perspective, irrespective of subject matter or mode of artistic expression used, have become viewed as uncanonical. Examining a wide selection of paintings from the aforementioned group, ranging in diversity of artistic expression from examples of modernist practice by Saunders and Nevinson, works of a naturalistic nature by Dollman, to symbolic paintings by De Morgan and Sims, the present study will reveal how, as a result of either deliberate action by the artist or unintentional ‘oscillation between sign and referent,’ to a greater or lesser extent, each artwork can be interpreted as constructing concepts of masculinity and femininity in a way which not only revealed the destabilizing effects of war, but also presented a challenge to traditional gender hierarchies and canonical values promoting masculine authority.⁸⁵ Consequently, in conjunction with historical and biographical research, visual analysis of the examples of artworks examined herein will help to affirm the argument of this thesis that fine art engaging with the British home front perspective has been written-out of much art-historical scholarship as a result of sexual discrimination inspired by cultural custom and circumstances of war, which has been largely upheld by the perpetuation of similar premise within the academic discipline of art history.

⁸⁵ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 209.

Augmenting the findings of visual analysis of artworks, in addition to reference to secondary scholarship, the investigative scope of this thesis has entailed the gathering and surveying of large amounts of primary source data. To this end, as mentioned, research for the present study has included an investigation of artists' biographies, contemporary critiques of fine art and exhibition culture active on the British home front during the war. Additionally, reflecting concern with the impact of dominant concepts of sexual difference within British society, research for the present study has not relied upon the single-point perspective of a contemporary commentator on gender identity, such as Henry Havelock Ellis.⁸⁶ Instead, in order to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the culturally-ingrained nature of binary premise pertaining to masculinity and femininity in pre-war Britain, research for this study has examined how concepts of sexual difference were constituted in a number of cultural forms and dominant narratives. To this end, sources consulted have included daily newspapers, government papers, religious speeches, advertisements and posters. Moreover, in addition to examining the foregoing primary sources, research for this thesis has involved a survey of narratives contained within wide-circulation magazines aimed at a broad spectrum of British society, in terms of readership age, sex, social aspirations and worldviews, which were published from the beginning of 1912 to the end of 1919.⁸⁷ Publications consulted range from examples aimed more specifically at a single-sex readership, such as *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper* or *Modern Man*, to those aimed more generally at readers of both genders

⁸⁶ See for example Henry Havelock Ellis, *Studies in The Psychology of Sex*, Vol. 4, *Sexual Selection in Man*, Philadelphia, 1931 (first published 1905) and Vol. 6, *Sex in Relation to Society*, Philadelphia, 1925 (first published 1910).

⁸⁷ Newspapers and magazines consulted: *Daily Mail*; *Daily Herald*; *Manchester Guardian*; *The Sporting Times*; *The Sunday Times*; *The Times*; *The Westminster Gazette*; *Modern Life*; *Modern Man*; *The Boy's Own Paper*; *The Girl's Own Paper*; *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper and Court Chronicle*; *Home Chat*; *The People's Friend*; *The Passing Show*; *The War Budget*; *The Labour Leader*; *The Woman's Dreadnaught*; *The Worker's Dreadnaught*; *The Mermaid*; *Light and Occult Review*.

including *The People's Friend* and *The Passing Show*. Magazines have in particular been chosen because, as Margaret Beetham has observed in *A Magazine of Her Own?*, they offer invaluable insight into cultural fields, social communities and individual self-awareness.⁸⁸ 'A crucial site for advertising [... magazines are] deeply involved in capitalist production and consumption as well as circulating in the cultural economy of collective meanings and constructing an identity for the individual reader as a gendered and sexual being.'⁸⁹ To this end, although often London-centric in terms of the scope of articles and site of publication, the circulation of second-hand editions of magazines among family members, neighbours and domestic staff ensured that they reached diverse audiences by crossing boundaries of social class, age and sex.⁹⁰ As a result, magazines from the years immediately preceding, during and just after the First World War provide valuable insight into prevailing constructions of sexual difference and dissemination of the same.

Additionally, demonstrating further the perceived second-class status of fine art engaging with the home front perspective, in order to establish current ownership or location of artworks and to obtain images of suitable quality for reproduction, the research process of the present study has also necessitated the seeking-out and identification of a number of paintings which have been hidden largely from public view for the best part of a century. This task has involved a significant amount of internet searches and communications with individuals and institutions located in many countries which were

⁸⁸ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in The Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914*, London and New York, 1996, 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

formerly part of the British Empire. In a number of instances the outcome of these activities has been the detection of wrongly catalogued works and the discovery that many paintings, like *Renaissance* (Fig. 2), which were listed as being exhibited during the war, have been lost or destroyed. Hence it has been necessary to accompany the text of this thesis, in some instances, with either poor quality black-and-white photographic reproductions or illustrations from previous literature.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapters one and two combine a socio-historical perspective with pictorial analysis to achieve two aims. Firstly, to examine how culturally-ingrained concepts of sexual difference, in conjunction with western iconographic customs, strongly informed perceptions of war, masculinity and femininity in Britain. Secondly, to reveal how the reception of cultural forms, not least paintings, employing concepts of sexual difference as an instrument to interpret the circumstances of the First World War was intervened by the destabilizing impact of the conflict upon pre-war societal values. Whereas, demonstrating the extensive reach of cultural customs, expanding the scope of enquiry, a more thematic approach is adopted in chapter three to examine artists' use of sexual difference to engage with the experience of death and bereavement from the British home front perspective.

Divided into two sections, chapter one contextualizes the constitution of concepts of sexual difference within British society during the period immediately preceding the First

World War and up to the watershed of the first anniversary of commencement of the conflict in August 1915, by which time the devastating impact of the war was clearly evident to both combatants and civilians. To this end, in line with Barratt's argument, the first section of the chapter will demonstrate that an individual's awareness of concepts of sexual difference within British society in the immediate pre-war period was indeed informed by different biological propensities, social and psychological intervention and discursive interaction. Moving on to examine examples of paintings produced during wartime alongside other forms of cultural expression, ranging from cartoons in newspapers to political and religious speeches, the second section of the chapter will demonstrate that reliance upon sexual difference as a mechanism to assign roles and negotiate circumstances of war can indeed be understood as being the result of inculcation of long-held traditions endorsed by both dominant narratives and iconographic customs within western art practice. Moreover, addressing the concept of 'positive peace,' this thesis will argue that traditional binary premise relating to the positions of men and women within pre-war British society also allowed certain artists to use to allusions to sexual difference in their work to construct and, therefore disseminate through public display, a narrative that was intended to counteract dominant discourses endorsing war as justified. Furthermore, this study will reveal that in addition to being used for just irenic aims, sexual difference was also employed by some artists, such as De Morgan, to protest against instances of sexual discrimination against women, which were not only inspired by the circumstances of war, but also, as will be shown, endorsed by the legislation of DORA, dominant narratives and even other paintings, such as *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) of 1917 by Nevinson.

Comprised of three sections, chapter two will show how the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War, by as quickly as the spring of 1915, destabilized traditional concepts of sexual difference, thereby encouraging the interpretation of radically altered meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity in artists' works. Examining a selection of paintings, including *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), section one will show that the depiction of injured or disabled servicemen repatriated to the home front alongside able-bodied women can indeed be interpreted as constructing masculinity and femininity in a way which encouraged notions of increased feminine authority and masculine weakness, thereby, arguably, helping to destabilize pre-war values. Focussing on artists' engagement with changing values assigned to the concept of chivalric sacrifice and the sacrificial nature of the war from the home front perspective, the second section of the chapter will show that artists' reliance upon sexual difference, functioned in a way which helped to endorse claims of a gender-based divide between home and battle fronts that was being suggested by disillusioned servicemen who felt that their 'sacrifices' had not been acknowledged by civilians and the British government. Although the injury of men suggested weakness, it also acted as a sign of masculine bravura in the face of much adversity, thereby endorsing notions of masculine patriotism and the justification of war as an act of national protection. In contrast female involvement in supporting enlistment and work in munitions factories, which arguably implicated femininity in the injury and death toll, functioned to assign aggression to women and promote notions that they were also profiting financially from war. The effect of this was to deny women any mitigation for apparent complicity in war-related

injury and death. Demonstrating this point, the third section of the chapter will reveal how, owing to oscillation between sign and referent encouraged by the destabilising effects of war, women increasingly came to occupy a dual position. It will be argued herein that the juncture of concepts of sexual difference with wartime circumstances meant that during the war women were seen increasingly as either active agents of war, through their role in the production of weapons which maimed and killed, or as passive objects of protection as a result of long-held tradition. Therefore the use of female figures and allusions to feminine wartime roles in paintings engaging with the home front perspective generated much ambiguity. As a consequence many paintings, such as *S.O.S.* (undated, Fig. 6,) by De Morgan, which can be understood to use female figures as a mechanism of positive protest, paradoxically, because of the destabilizing effects of war on concepts of sexual difference, also, most likely unintentionally, lent endorsement to instances of sexual discrimination against women which took place during wartime.

Carol Acton has suggested that grief and mourning can also be viewed as being 'prescribed as part of the larger gendered constructions of wartime roles for men and women.'⁹¹ Drawing on Acton's argument, the final chapter of this thesis examines how, again inspired by cultural convention and the circumstances of war, artists relied upon sexual difference to generate meanings and values for war-related death and bereavement. Section one will examine how long-held traditions within western culture assigning the role of mourning primarily to women, exemplified in art practice by the figure of the Virgin Mary as chief mourner for Christ in Christian iconography pertaining to the crucifixion, provided a precedent for artists to follow. Additionally, Michael Roper

⁹¹ Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, Basingstoke and New York, 2007, 1-7.

has observed that during the First World War motherhood acquired a special status.⁹² Engaging with Roper's observation, the second section of the chapter will examine how, although directed by custom and circumstance, allusions to mothers and motherhood in paintings engaging with death and bereavement, because it also suggested feminine complicity in the massive injury and death toll, made evident the abnormality of war. Finally, Jay Winter has observed that the practice of Spiritualism, by which the 'living 'saw' the dead [...] and used their 'return' to help [...] cope with their loss and their trauma,' seemingly promised a way to unite people with deceased loved ones.⁹³ Supporting this observation, during the First World War there was a marked increase in Spiritualism undertaken as a way of coping with war-related bereavement. Research for the thesis indicates that, constrained by the legislation of DORA and the absence of bodies caused by the non-repatriation of corpses, an additional way in which artists chose to engage with bereavement on the home front was to combine cultural concepts of sexual difference relating to war and mourning with allusions to Spiritualism. The final section of chapter three will, therefore, investigate the conflation of sexual difference with allusions to Spiritualism in paintings, such as *The Mourners* (undated, Fig. 7) by De Morgan and *Remembrance* of 1917 (Fig. 8) by Sims with two aims. Firstly, in order to demonstrate the novelty of such artistic practice as an approach to visually representing war. Secondly, to demonstrate that the conflation of sexual difference and Spiritualism again meant that artworks engaging with the home front perspective could be interpreted as suggesting feminine strength and masculine weakness. This study contends that, as a

⁹² Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in The Great War*, Manchester and New York, 2009, 1-43.

⁹³ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge, 1995, 54.

result, the conflation of Spiritualism with sexual difference also allowed artworks responding to the impact of the First World War on the British home front to be deemed as antithetical to canonical standards for war art, which were based upon preserving masculine authority.

In pursuing such areas of investigation, in addition to providing a cogent explanation for the previous writing-out of much British fine art responding to the home front perspective, this thesis has two main aims. Firstly, by placing emphasis on the possible *raison d'être* behind the creation as well as the interpretation of artworks within the specific socio-political contexts of the period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath, a key function of this study will be to reinstate artists' creative freedom, which is demonstrated by the diverse use of allusions to sexual difference in paintings responding to the home front perspective. As mentioned, this important aspect of British art engaging with the home front perspective during the First World War has been largely negated by adherence to canonical values, which rigidly restrict the parameters of war art to the perspective of male combatants on the battle front. Secondly, by embracing the dynamic nature of gender identity and exposing the negative implications of canonical standards based on sexual difference, it is anticipated that the outcome of this study will be the presentation of a new interpretation of artists' engagement with the First World War, which allows the war to be understood as an all-encompassing social crisis, rather than a masculine preoccupation. This interpretation is informed by exploration of the juncture of notoriously capricious concepts of sexual difference with the destabilizing effects of war, which this study will show can provide much evidence about how visual

culture is used to construct meanings and values in times of social crisis. As a result, it is hoped that, in addition to augmenting the existing field of art-historical scholarship and the canon of British war art, this thesis will provide a useful analytical structure for future studies (not necessarily those restricted to the First World War period), which can be drawn upon when investigating meanings and values constructed by the intersection of gender, war and conflict in artworks.

Chapter One
Establishing the Link: ‘The Reciprocal Metaphorization’ of War and Sexual
Difference at the Beginning of the First World War.⁹⁴

In *1914* (1914, Fig. 9) by Evelyn De Morgan three figures stand at the edge of the sea. On the left, the first of two female figures, dressed in an ornately decorated blue robe, wearing a headband of grapes and vine leaves, carries a sheaf of wheat. In possession of such iconographic attributes this figure can be understood to personify of the concept of plenty.⁹⁵ Next to the first figure, peace is also personified in the painting by another female figure who wears on her head a torn olive wreath, which has shed some of its leaves onto the figure’s shoulders and chest.⁹⁶ Additionally, this second figure wears red robes that match her fire-red-coloured hair. De Morgan’s choice of the colour red for the figure’s robes and hair is highly significant because the use of red-coloured pigment invites analogies to the colour of blood. Conflated together, the damaged condition of the figure’s olive leaf headdress (a key iconographic attribute associated with peace) and the blood-red colour of her robes bring to mind the shattering of peace by violence and bloodshed in wartime. Moreover, standing immediately behind the two female figures is a demonic-looking, winged, male figure. In Christian iconography demons or fallen angels traditionally represent evil.⁹⁷ This suggests that the demonic figure, who seemingly waits to ambush, and then overwhelm, the female personifications of peace and plenty, can be interpreted as war, personified by a male figure, which, according to

⁹⁴ Nancy Huston, ‘The Matrix of War: Mothers and Heroes,’ Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed.), *The Female Body in Western Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1986, 119-136, 132-3.

⁹⁵ James Hall, *Hall’s Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, London, 1993 (first published 1974), 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 76 and 238.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 238.

De Morgan, was ‘the threatening horror dawning on peace and plenty.’⁹⁸ Therefore, in addition to signalling De Morgan’s horror at the prospect of war, thereby revealing its creator’s pacifist worldview, the way in which peace and plenty are personified by female figures and war by a male in *1914* (Fig. 9) also assigns passivity to women and the aggressive pursuit of war to men in line with prevailing values of sexual difference. Dated 1914, De Morgan’s painting was produced early in the duration of the First World War, before the unprecedented circumstances of war had radically altered concepts of sexual difference. Consequently the way in which masculinity and femininity are inscribed in *1914* (Fig. 9) can be interpreted as an indication that, in common with most of the British population, De Morgan, imbued with the culturally-ingrained influence of prevailing customs relating to male and female positions, understood that wartime roles, like the general stratification of society, were demarcated on the basis of sexual difference.

In order to evaluate the influence of pre-war values pertaining to the gendering of societal roles and artists’ use of sexual difference as a mechanism to engage with war, the purpose of the first chapter of this thesis is to establish and explore how, in the immediate pre-war period and the early months of the war, concepts of masculinity and femininity were constructed in accordance with, and authorized and sustained by, a set of social and political imperatives based upon binary premise in relation to masculinity and femininity. This will be done in order to confirm that in the early years of the twentieth century the stratification of British society was so deeply demarcated by the polarization

⁹⁸ Entry next to exhibit 2, Evelyn De Morgan, *Catalogue of An Exhibition of Pictures*, London, 1916, unpaginated.

of male and female roles that on the outbreak of the First World War concepts of sexual difference were seen to provide the most obvious, exemplary, model upon which to assign wartime roles.

The topic of the relationship between war and sexual difference in general (rather than historically specific to Britain and the First World War) has been the subject of a good deal of research and literature, not least that by Joshua Goldstein, Nancy Huston and Siniša Malešević; all of whose work the present study has drawn upon in approaching the subject.⁹⁹ In spite of its non-specificity to the First World War, such research is still relevant to this thesis because within it there is a general consensus that ‘causality runs both ways between war and gender,’ thereby suggesting strongly that it is through the play of presence or absence of perceived differences between masculinity and femininity that wartime roles have been (and still largely are) demarcated. Furthermore, it is on the same basis that individuals have been and are coaxed, induced or even tricked into participating in war.¹⁰⁰ Adopting a structuralist approach, in order to examine the relationship between war and gender from pre-history to the twenty-first century, from a sociological perspective, Goldstein has put forward a convincing argument that sexual difference, be it biological, socially-constructed, psychologically or discursively inscribed, is indeed highly influential in determining how men and women are perceived in relation to war and the assignment of wartime roles.¹⁰¹ Although he has conceded

⁹⁹ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender*; Nancy Huston, ‘The Matrix of War’ and Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence*.

¹⁰⁰ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Goldstein prefers to use the term gender rather than sexual difference to ‘cover masculine and feminine roles and bodies alike, in all their [biological, social, psychological and discursive] aspects,’ *ibid*, 2.

that there are always exceptions that present a challenge to a structuralist approach, for example some women would qualify as suitable for fighting war just as some men would not, Goldstein has, nevertheless, provided a table of data suggesting that most men, because of their naturally greater physical strength and larger stature than women, are seemingly better biologically equipped to carry out strenuous tasks, including fighting wars.¹⁰² Furthermore, Goldstein has additionally noted that despite certain levels of diversionary intervention a majority of male children display a seemingly natural proclivity to gravitate towards aggressive behaviour much more than their female contemporaries.¹⁰³ To this end, he has argued that '[p]lay themes revolve around aggression more for boys than girls, and boys often assume the role of a heroic character and act out fantasies with themes of danger and righteous combat.'¹⁰⁴ Making a similar observation, but from a more psychoanalytically-informed perspective, art historian Carol Mavor, in *Reading Boyishly*, has identified boys' play as having a relationship to aggression and war because it includes 'mouths making the sound of guns and bombs-an approach from behind-metal-toys-rust-string.'¹⁰⁵ Additionally, Goldstein has observed that certain social conditioning makes boys develop a higher capacity for roles requiring displays of aggression such as fighting wars. This he has argued is exemplified by the apparent willingness of some parents and other individuals in positions of influence to indulge, without intervention, small boys in pursuit of their apparent natural propensity for aggression through the playing of 'rough-n-tumble' games.¹⁰⁶ On the social and

¹⁰² *Ibid*, table 7.1, 404.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 234.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁵ Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J.M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust, and D.W. Winnicott*, Durham and London, 2007, 72.

¹⁰⁶ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 244.

psychological conditioning of boys Goldstein is again supported by Mavor who has argued that whilst western society has to some extent always encouraged 'girls to be tough, to play the man's game, we rarely encourage our boys, especially older adolescent boys, to be feminine, maternal, soft, caring,' thereby instilling in boys a higher readiness for aggression rather than compassion.¹⁰⁷ In listing maternity as a metaphor for femininity, Mavor's observations about the social conditioning of boys and girls have additionally drawn attention to the most obvious biological difference separating men and women - the exclusively female ability to conceive and give birth. Linking war with child-birth in a similar way to Joyce Berkman, Malešević has argued that imperatives of species survival have meant that it was not merely notions that men possessed superior physical strength, but rather primarily their unique child-bearing ability that until very recently denied women combative roles in wartime.¹⁰⁸ According to Malešević, within the traditional structuring of most human societies, emphasis placed on child-birth as the primary determinant of assignment of wartime roles meant that women were 'relegated [...] almost exclusively to the domestic sphere,' thereby allowing femininity to become inextricably associated with passivity, weakness and domesticity.¹⁰⁹ Malešević's observation therefore suggests that sexual difference can be understood to be the primary definer of wartime roles by implying that in order for the human species to survive it was a social imperative for men to engage in combat in order to protect both property and women who, on the basis of biology at least, were arguably more suited to nurturing future members of society, thereby ensuring species survival. Approaching the same subject from a feminist perspective, Nancy Huston has observed that 'the analogy

¹⁰⁷ Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 32.

¹⁰⁸ Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence*, 296-297.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

between war and child-birth hinges on what might be called ‘reciprocal metaphorization,’ whereby the laudable, exclusively female, withstanding of the pain of labour in child-birth finds equal only in men through valiant fortitude in the face of the ‘pain’ of battle.¹¹⁰ She has, therefore, pointed out that as a result ‘girls are [often] taught [... that] motherhood can make women of them, whilst boys are taught that [it is] war [that] can make men of them,’ thereby endorsing notions of sexual difference and war as reciprocal definers of each other.¹¹¹ Huston’s concept of the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference provides a conceptual model against which the changing perceptions of war, masculinity and femininity caused by the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War can be measured and evaluated. The reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference is, therefore, fundamental to the investigation of this study because, having established that war and sexual difference were indeed viewed in reciprocal terms within the social stratification of pre-war British society, the concept can be used to examine how the effects of war meant that many paintings might have been interpreted as constructing meanings and values for masculinity and femininity which were considered ‘abnormal’ compared pre and post-war values.

Reflecting the rigid structuring of British society by binary premise relating to masculinity and femininity and the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general, as mentioned, on the outbreak of the First World War women were legally prevented from fighting. Additionally, before the impact of the massive male

¹¹⁰ Nancy Huston, ‘The Matrix of War,’ 131.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 132-3.

injury and death toll had been fully realized and had a chance to influence contexts and opinions significantly, women were initially discouraged from undertaking jobs left vacant by voluntarily-enlisted men.¹¹² Moreover, before the introduction of conscription in the spring of 1916, the predominant approach used by much British pro-war propaganda was to evoke the link between war and sexual difference in order to induce men to enlist voluntarily.¹¹³ As an article in *The Times* of 3 September 1914 by Bampfylde Fuller noted, men were therefore urged that patriotic enlistment to fight in order to protect nation and loved ones was the way to establish an individual's manliness and would be 'rewarded' by 'revenge, glory and women's smiles.'¹¹⁴ Furthermore, evoking the seemingly innate link between wartime roles and child-birth, as a result suggesting that aggression in wartime was purely a masculine preoccupation, an article published in *The Graphic* on 22 August 1914 entitled 'The Woman's Attitude to War' informed readers that 'the primal woman is opposed to war because her mission in the eternal scheme of things is to produce life not destroy it [...] destructive is the male.'¹¹⁵ The prevalence of concepts of sexual difference to demarcate wartime roles in a variety of cultural forms ranging from official pro-war propaganda to articles in national newspapers, periodicals and visual imagery suggests that the polarization of masculinity and femininity was indeed already very well established within British cultural convention as a way to define societal roles in the years immediately before the First World War. The extent to which sexual difference influenced the stratification of British

¹¹² Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 29-30.

¹¹³ Before conscription was introduced for England, Wales and Scotland in the spring of 1916, getting men to volunteer was the primary method of recruitment operated by the British armed services during the First World War. Arthur Marwick, *Britain in The Century of Total War*, 69.

¹¹⁴ Bampfylde Fuller, 'The Spirit of Sacrifice,' *The Times*, London, Issue 40624; col. F, Thursday 3 September 1914, 9.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, 'The Woman's Attitude to War,' *The Graphic*, London, Vol. XC, No. 2334, Saturday 22 August 1914, 314.

society is made evident by a survey of the content of a broad range of magazines published in Britain during the period 1912 to 1919, the years immediately preceding the First World War, during and immediately after the conflict's end, which has been undertaken in the course of research for this thesis. The survey of magazines has confirmed that, despite challenges from certain reforms in family law, greater female employment opportunities and the high profile campaign of militancy waged by certain sections of the women's suffrage movement, in the immediate pre-war period binary premise pertaining to masculinity and femininity informed strongly the stratification of roles within both private and public life. Moreover, concepts of sexual difference also influenced strongly how masculinity and femininity was constructed in all cultural forms with the effect of encouraging sexual discrimination against women. Indeed the construction of masculinity and femininity in magazines has revealed that, in spite of there being some evidence of reform, by the start of war little progress towards sexual equality had been actually achieved. Women and girls were in a majority expected to most likely assume roles as homemakers or engage in employment in professions considered suitable for women.¹¹⁶ The latter also being largely dictated by social class and an individual's level of education, ranging from certain factory work to professions such as teaching.¹¹⁷ Therefore, in line with Berkman's observations, on the outbreak of war it can be argued that a woman's role within British society was largely dictated by her sex, because expectations for women outside of the home in business or political roles were still very low. Consequently, as Huston has suggested, this meant that all a young woman was expected to do 'was [to] imitate the life of her mother [...] and she

¹¹⁶ Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 4.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

would be adequately prepared for her adult life.¹¹⁸ Whereas, in line with the content of magazines, Michael Roper has observed, in his article ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity,’ that in the period immediately preceding the First World War, ‘in an era of international commercial competition, imperial dominance and military threat’ British men, to maintain their positions of primacy as heads of families or as political, business, military and clerical leaders, were required to demonstrate their possession of the attributes of ‘imperial masculinity.’¹¹⁹ According to Roper, this meant that, in order to succeed in such a highly politicized and commercially aggressive climate, men of all social classes needed to demonstrate their possession of manliness based on physical and mental fitness, strong leadership qualities, sexual prowess and above all self-control.¹²⁰ Therefore, as John Tosh has pointed out ‘[t]he injunction “Be a man!” implied that there were certain ways in which one *could* be a man, and they demanded a high degree of effort and suppression of self.’¹²¹

Additionally, as its name suggests, the fashioning of manliness in line with the ethos of imperial masculinity was not only intended to aid national and international business, it was also done to both confirm the British nation’s military reputation and maintain control of its empire. As Mark Girouard has suggested in *The Return To Camelot*, by 1914 confidence in Britain’s ability to protect and rule its empire had been eroded

¹¹⁸ Nancy Huston, ‘The Matrix of War,’ 132.

¹¹⁹ Michael Roper, ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity:’ The “War Generation” and The Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950,’ *Journal of British Studies*, No. 44, April 2005, 343-362, 347.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ John Tosh, ‘The Making of Manhood and The Uses of History,’ John Tosh (ed.) *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire*, Harlow, 2005, 13-28, 17.

seriously by a number of colonial insurgencies.¹²² These notably included the Indian mutiny of 1857 and a subsequent series of revolts amongst the populations of its African colonies; not least the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which proved to be particularly difficult for Britain. Firstly, the success of the small Boer states in battles had shown Britain's military prowess wanting.¹²³ Secondly, the ill-treatment and deaths of Boer women and children in British concentration camps caused much dissent in Britain at a time when social and sexual inequality were already very much in focus as a result of the activities of trade unions and the women's suffrage movement.¹²⁴ Evidence that British fitness to rule had been shaken is exemplified by an extract from *The Decline and Fall of The British Empire* which, in 1905 during the post-Boer War debate about Britain's military prowess, arguably, suggested that Darwin's theories on the survival of the fittest justified war by stating '[the] unalterable law concerning the survival of the fittest is just as applicable to the life of the Nation as it is to the briefer existence of an animal or a human being.'¹²⁵ This statement reiterated the ethos of imperial masculinity by encouraging the notion that physical fitness and mental fortitude were seen as the key to successful military prowess, which in turn won wars; the winning of which established and maintained national and even racial superiority. Demonstrating the pervasive power of imperial masculinity, similar sentiments of military prowess through courage and physical strength can also be found promoted in boys' papers, for example by the words

¹²² Mark Giraud, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and The English Gentleman*, New Haven and London, 1981, 219-230.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* Also see Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 3-24 and Malvern Van Wyk Smith, *Drummer Hodge: The Poetry of The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*, Oxford, 1978, 120-154 and 251-305.

¹²⁵ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 186, note 143, citing *The Decline and Fall of The British Empire*, published anonymously by a young Tory pamphleteer called Elliott Mills, 1905, 22.

of song a called *Fight for The Right* by Fred A. Jackson, which was published in the *Boy's Own Paper Annual* of 1911-12:

Fight for the right, boys, that's the thing to do; fight with all your might, boys,
pluck-y through and through[...] Brace your spirit for the fray, gal-lant be, and
fair. Nev-er mind a knock or two, nev-er mind a throw, get up on your feet a-
gain and march right in [...] You can have the strength of ten; if the right you'll
do. Nev-er mind your feelings much [...] Nev-er mind your fear; play the man to-
day boys first and last.¹²⁶

Additionally, Marina Warner has noted that in western culture female figures have, consistently, since ancient times, with the assignment of the Greek goddess Athena as protector of the city of Athens, been used to symbolize cities and nations.¹²⁷ The effect of this has been symbolically to invest femininity with power which is usually denied to women by societies promoting masculine authority as paramount.¹²⁸ Following such convention, the British nation has been (and still is) often symbolized by the female figure of Britannia, whose symbolic value has undergone extensive metamorphosis from one sign to another over roughly two thousand years. Complete with shield, trident and helmet of war, the generic figure of Britannia, which has remained, in compositional terms at least, virtually unchanged on British coinage up to the present day, first appeared as a symbol of the British nation on farthings and half-pennies produced during the reign

¹²⁶ Fred A. Jackson, 'Fight for The Right,' *Boy's Own Paper Annual*, London, Vol. 34, 1911-12, 12.

¹²⁷ Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of The Female Form*, London, 1985, 63-87.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, Introduction, xx.

of King Charles II (1630-85).¹²⁹ Paradoxically, however, the model that John Roethier, chief engraver for the Royal Mint in the 1670s, chose to copy was images of the British nation symbolized by female figures on Roman coinage issued during the reigns of emperors Hadrian (76-138 CE) and Anthoninus Pius (138-161 CE), which were struck to celebrate Rome's colonization of Britain.¹³⁰ These were coins representing the disarmed, often semi-draped, figure of Britannia as a powerless captive in order to 'draw attention to the victor's [Rome] own prowess, in subjugating Britain.'¹³¹ Based on the Roman example, although equipped with certain attributes of war, Roethier's Britannia is also dressed in a diaphanous robe, with no body armour, thereby rendering her defenceless if attacked. Defenceless Britannia, armed with token attributes of war, has subsequently, over the last four centuries, been transferred to many other cultural forms. However, rather than making her role as protector of the nation redundant, long-held belief in female passivity, along with the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, has allowed Britannia to not only symbolize the nation of Britain, but more importantly to symbolically wield power by acting as an almost constant reminder that British sovereignty must be defended always, like the frail body of its female symbol, through male protection. In the immediate pre-war period, following the ethos of imperial masculinity and convention of using female figures to symbolize nations, visual imagery including paintings such as *The British Empire* of c.1900 (Fig. 10) by John Hassall (1868-1948) conflated the protection of women with the British nation and notions of its imperial might. The effect of this was to strengthen the sense that women were both

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 45.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 46.

property and symbols of national victory.¹³² With a date suggesting that it was most likely produced in response to the Second Anglo-Boer War, Hassall's painting shows a little girl wearing a Union flag (also known as the Union Jack), which covers her whole body in a way, similar to that of the figure of Britannia on British coinage of the period, which mimics the roughly triangular-shaped outline of the island of Britain. Seated on a chair, the small girl looms large over a collection of male toy soldiers placed in the foreground. In addition to the large size of the child (in comparison to that of the toy soldiers), functioning to confirm the tremendous might of Britain's commercial strength and political influence, the world-dominance of the British Empire, which at the time encompassed twelve million square miles or approximately one-quarter of the world's habitable land-mass, is also alluded to by the shaded areas on the map that hangs on the wall in the background.¹³³ However, in contrast, irrespective of her seemingly disproportionately large stature compared to the toy soldiers, the youth and femininity of the girl (the latter enforced by the flowers worn in her hair) additionally implies fragility more generally associated with women and children. The linking together of nation and femininity in Hassall's painting thereby enforced notions that, whilst powerful, the British Empire, like *weak* women and children, was perhaps a fragile powerbase that was constantly under threat. Additionally the threat to Britain is symbolized further in Hassall's work by the non-western figures painted on the walls that surround the little girl. The use of women (and girls) to personify Britain and its empire in cultural forms,

¹³² Suggested in Margaret Randolph Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet, 'The Double Helix,' Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret Collins Weitz, (eds.), *Behind The Lines*, 31-47, 37.

¹³³ The size of the British Empire changed very little between 1900 and the commencement of the First World War in August 1914. Ronald Hyam, 'The British Empire in The Edwardian Era,' Judith Brown and Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of The British Empire*, Vol. IV – The Twentieth Century, Oxford and New York, 2001 (first published 1999), 47-63, 48.

such as Hassall's painting, in the immediate pre-war period, therefore, helped to enforce further the link between nation and femininity as objects of masculine protection. Not only did this underscore the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general, during the First World War it also provided a culturally-familiar precedent for pro-enlistment propaganda to draw upon in order to justify war.

Additionally, in relation to the construction and dissemination of meanings and values for war, Malešević has observed that war propaganda:

functions as a mechanism for self-justification [...] Instead of changing people's views, war propaganda provides an external outlet, a social mirror that [...] facilitates the articulation and reinforcement of [...] attitudes and practices that already permeate public opinion [and are] often grounded in what [a] majority of individuals perceive [or have been convinced into perceiving] to be [in] their [...] or collective interest.¹³⁴

In Britain, at the outset of the First World War, the frequency that wartime roles, meanings and values for war were determined by sexual difference, not just in pro-war propaganda but in a wide variety of cultural forms, supports Malešević's argument. However Judith Butler has observed that, being unstable and subject to renegotiation, concept of sexual difference are not only 'produced [but also] destabilized in the course of [...] reiteration,' thus creating ambiguity and encouraging polysemy, thereby

¹³⁴ Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence*, 206.

engendering alternative interpretation.¹³⁵ Butler's observation is upheld by the effects of the juncture of concepts of sexual difference with the events of the First World War. As the conflict progressed, the massive male injury and death toll coupled with an increased awareness of seemingly self-reliant women on the home front presented a challenge to long-held cultural expectations of *strong* men defending *weak* women. This meant that, under the circumstances of war, reliance upon reiterating pre-war constructions of sexual difference to define wartime roles became increasingly invalid resulting in the positions of men and women becoming increasingly ambiguous, enabling the generation of alternative meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity. As noted, it is the aim of this thesis to argue that this temporary instability or destabilization of pre-war values, which lasted for the duration of the war only, played a key role in making it possible for many paintings engaging with the home front perspective to be interpreted as being uncanonical. Firstly, however, it is necessary to establish how concepts of sexual difference were constituted within British society just before and at the beginning of the war in order to demonstrate the effects of the destabilization that followed. Therefore, to this end, this chapter is comprised of two main sections. Section one will consist of a survey of the content of magazines, aimed at both male and female readers, covering a period from January 1912 to August 1914, undertaken to establish, not only how concepts of masculinity and femininity were constructed and disseminated in the years immediately preceding the First World War, but also how such ideas became culturally-ingrained. Having established how masculinity and femininity were constructed in the immediate pre-war period, the second section of the chapter will examine the way in which sexual difference is inscribed in relation to both the concept of chivalric sacrifice

¹³⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 10.

and the alignment of women with peace in examples of paintings, including *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6) by Evelyn De Morgan and *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) of c.1914-15 by Ethel Walker (1861-1951), alongside other forms of cultural expression, ranging from services recruitment posters to speeches made by members of parliament and the clergy. This will be done to demonstrate that reliance upon the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, as both a mechanism to negotiate circumstances of war and assign wartime roles on the basis of gender, can indeed be understood as being informed strongly by long-held cultural traditions within British society.

1.1 Pre-war Constructions of Sexual Difference in Early Twentieth-Century Britain

1.1.1 Masculinity

Mark Girouard has noted that in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War it was predominantly pursuit of the desired élite masculine attributes akin to those espoused by the ethos of imperial manliness that influenced the way in which masculinity was constructed, perceived and conveyed to men and boys.¹³⁶ This took shape in a variety of forms ranging from family life, the public and state school systems to books, features and advertisements in newspapers and magazines. Moreover, Joanna Burke has pointed out in *Dismembering The Male*, that the combined values of stalwart hardiness, strong personal character and piety espoused by advocates of imperial masculinity can be understood as an extension of the ethos of mid-nineteenth-century ‘muscular Christianity.’¹³⁷ Muscular Christianity was the name applied, by the *Saturday*

¹³⁶ Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, Introduction, 61-62 and 142.

¹³⁷ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male: Men’s Bodies and The Great War*, London, 1999,

Review on 21 February 1861, to the nexus between manliness, hard work and strength of character that was advocated by supporters of Christian socialism, a movement set up in April 1848 by a group of middle-class gentlemen and clerics who supported social reform.¹³⁸ Supporters of Christian socialism, led by J.M. Ludlow (1821-1911), Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872), Charles Kingsley (1822-1896), Thomas Hughes (1819-1875) and E.V. Neale, argued that in the face of social change ‘Socialism was a force which could not be ignored or destroyed, and would shake Christianity to its foundations unless it was Christianised.’¹³⁹ Agreeing that ‘social and personal regeneration was more important than politics’ the group set out with three main aims which were intended to improve the lives of the working-classes.¹⁴⁰ The improvements supporters aimed to effect were: firstly, to form co-operative associations; secondly, to fight for better working and living conditions; and thirdly, through the Working Men’s College, formed in 1848, to improve standards of education.¹⁴¹ As Bourke has observed, by the start of the war, in addition to the efforts of the Working Men’s College, the equation of manliness with physical and mental strength had also spread to men and boys of all social classes of British society as a result of the state and public school systems. In relation to state schooling, Bourke has suggested that evidence of this can be found in the debates that took place in the late nineteenth century concerning the provision of playing fields for state schools, which ‘may have been concerned with enabling poorer boys to adopt the masculine traits implicit in the viewpoint of muscular Christianity.’¹⁴² In order to acquire

(first published 1996), 12-13.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 13.

¹³⁹ Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, 61-62 and 142.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 133.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁴² Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, 13.

the qualities seen as desirable for secular and religious leadership, middle and upper-class boys were also instilled with a similar ethos of work based on physical and mental discipline from an early age. The inculcation of middle and upper-class boys, Roper has suggested, was done initially when they were small children within the home environment and later much more intensively through ‘the playing of games, and by the removal of boys from domestic comforts and their subjection to Spartan surroundings’ of public schools.¹⁴³ Additionally, boys and young men were instilled with the equation of manliness with physical and mental strength through activities of self-improvement organized by movements such as the Boys’ Brigade (founded in 1883) and the Boy Scouts (founded in 1907). As mentioned, books and mass-circulation magazines aimed at boys and adolescent men, such as the *Boy’s Own Paper*, also constructed concepts of masculine bravura through examples of daring adventure stories and articles where physical and mental prowess were extolled in order to prescribe the ethos of imperial masculinity, which was in turn communicated as being prerequisite for the acquisition of suitably masculine careers, for example military appointments or commercial work such as banking.¹⁴⁴ Moreover girls and women were conspicuous by their absence in the same publications aimed at boys and adolescent men. This made women and girls all the more obvious when they did occasionally appear. When mentions of women and girls did occur in publications like the *Boy’s Own Paper* it was usually as the binary opposites of

¹⁴³ Michael Roper, ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity,’ 347.

¹⁴⁴ The *Boy’s Own Paper* covering a period January 1912 to December 1919 has been chosen as a vehicle through which to explore how sexual difference was constructed and presented to boys and young men in the years immediately preceding, during and immediately after the First World War. A weekly paper until 1913, when it became monthly, the *Boy’s Own Paper* enjoyed a large readership with 200,000 copies sold per issue at the height of its popularity in the 1880s and 1890s. Richard Noakes ‘The Boy’s Own Paper and Late-Victorian Juvenile Periodicals,’ Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Graeme Gooday, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth, & Jonathan Topham (eds.), *Science in The Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading The Magazine of Nature*, Cambridge, 2004, 151-171, 151.

boys and men. In most scenarios featuring women or girls a female subject frequently required rescuing or protection from a dangerous situation, from which the male subject eventually emerged heroic, thereby enforcing notions of masculine strength, the male protective role and feminine weakness. In addition, perhaps as a reaction, or challenge, to greater female employment (especially in professional roles), the activities of the women's suffrage movement, or more simply as a means to promote binary premise concerning masculinity and femininity, women and girls are also found in the *Boy's Own Paper* aligned with individuals or groups who, like themselves, were viewed as representing something 'other' than western masculinity. This is exemplified by the story, in the *Boy's Own Paper Annual* from 1912-13, of the 'plucky woman' who, armed with a pistol, attempted to defend a group of 'Negroes' from a lynch mob in America.¹⁴⁵

Magazines aimed predominantly at men, such as *Modern Man* and the *Sporting Times* (known alternatively as *The Pink'un*) were also key places in the years immediately preceding the First World War where the ethos of imperial masculinity was promoted.¹⁴⁶ These publications regularly ran features equating success in life with physical and mental strength and dexterity. Articles and features in *Modern Man* for example included ones on 'Rapid Physical Development,' 'Business is Business' and 'Sporting Stories,' which were placed alongside advertisements for self improvement aids,

¹⁴⁵ Anonymous, *Boy's Own Paper Annual*, London, Vol. 35, 1912-13, 90.

¹⁴⁶ Priced at one pence and two pence respectively in 1912, *Modern Man* and *The Sporting Times* have been included in a survey of how masculinity is constructed from January 1912 to December 1919 because they are two magazines primarily aimed at men and can, therefore, provide a contrast to *Home Chat* and *The Queen*, two magazines of the same period, which were in the main intended for a female readership and are surveyed in the section of this chapter which examines constructions of femininity.

including one for I.C.S. Training, which apparently ‘makes a man feel big.’¹⁴⁷ Evoking the ethos of imperial masculinity, the *Sporting Times* of 27 January 1912 described the archetypal Englishman as being a ‘solid, virile, bulldog [...] the breed who built up in them had the gospel of fitness, the greatest of Britain.’¹⁴⁸ Perhaps in order to increase the diversity of its readership, *Modern Man* also ran features that were seemingly aimed more with women in mind, such as ‘The Modern Woman’s Interest’ page. However, paradoxically, at the same time the publication not only created its own movement for the promotion of masculinity called the Modern Man League, but also expended a significant amount of print attacking women, especially the career-minded ‘modern woman,’ suggesting their inferiority in all ways to men. This is exemplified by an extract from an article entitled ‘Intrusive Woman’ from *Modern Man* of 27 April 1912, which, in spite of its author denying any misogynistic intentions, informed readers:

the leading characteristic of the modern woman is intrusiveness [...] The modern middle-class woman is singularly devoid of inner resource. She is usually ill-read, mentally narrow, and physically restless. Stupid indeed must be the person who is bored by himself, but the modern woman dreads her own company and insists on boring a man with it.¹⁴⁹

Following a similar theme, the article ‘Plain Speaking’ in *Modern Man* of 8 June 1912 gleefully informed readers that Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), leader of the Women’s

¹⁴⁷ Anonymous, *Modern Man, A Weekly Journal of Masculine Interest*, London, 1 June 1912, No.187, 478, 482 and 485.

¹⁴⁸ St. Giles, ‘Civil War,’ *The Sporting Times*, London, 27 January 1912, No. 2523, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Anonymous, ‘Intrusive Woman,’ *Modern Man*, No. 182, 27 April 1912, 863.

Suffrage and Political Union (WSPU), ‘refused at her trial to say how old she was. How very like a woman!’¹⁵⁰ Despite including the sporting achievements of women in a certain amount of its articles, *The Sporting Times* was also not against attacking the women’s suffrage movement through satire. For example, on 21 September 1912 the paper informed its readers humorously that ‘Mrs Crankhurst has issued an ultimatum that the Sex war will start next week. She orders the women of the world to kill all male infants and forcibly feed all husbands with meals cooked by Suffragettes.’¹⁵¹ The playfully attacking manner of responses to support for women’s suffrage in *Modern Man* and *The Sporting Times* can be seen as a reaction against the movement’s activities (especially those of WSPU members), which, in order to highlight the case for women’s enfranchisement, had lost the support of many British people, both men and women alike, through resorting to acts of violence, including the wilful damaging of paintings, throwing of missiles at properties and arson.¹⁵² As a result, such actions by supporters of women’s suffrage provided publications like *Modern Man* and *The Sporting Times* with a ready-made excuse to attack seemingly more independent ‘modern’ women, thereby revealing the existence of an underlying degree of opposition to calls for expanded opportunities for women, which was in turn counter-attacked by Suffragists.¹⁵³ Furthermore, in spite of *Modern Man* changing its name half-way through 1913 to *Modern Life*, which again suggested perhaps an attempt to attract a broader readership, themes promoting masculine authority, and the ethos of imperial masculinity in particular, persisted until the publication ceased completely in 1915. This is exemplified

¹⁵⁰ Anonymous, ‘Plain Speaking,’ *Modern Man*, No. 188, 8 June 1912, 995.

¹⁵¹ Anonymous, ‘The Suffrage Movement,’ *The Sporting Times*, London, No. 2557, 21 September 1912, 9.

¹⁵² Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 8 and 135-6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

by *Height and Money* an advertisement for Arthur Girvan of London, published in *Modern Life* on 13 September 1913 (Fig. 12), which again clearly conflated financial or business success with greater physical stature.¹⁵⁴

A survey of publications including newspapers and magazines aimed at boys and men from January 1912 to August 1914, therefore, indicates that in the period immediately preceding the First World War masculinity was very much constructed in line with the ethos of imperial masculinity, which in order to promote male authority equated masculine success in both public and private life to physical and mental strength. Moreover, whilst to some extent acknowledging awareness of moves towards increased rights for women, through satirical attacks on ‘modern’ women and Suffragettes, the content and tone of *Modern Man*, *Modern Life*, the *Sporting Times* and the *Boy’s Own Paper* all indicate that men and women were very much viewed (and portrayed as such in the publications aimed at men and boys) as opposites operating in the main within securely established enclaves where their roles were already well acknowledged. In pre-war magazines and papers aimed at men and boys, constructions of sexual difference, therefore, focused predominately on imbuing readers with perceptions of binary differentiation whereby the womanly woman was stoical and domesticated and the manly man was actively fit in body and mind, courageous and patriotic. Furthermore, any deviation, such as that perceived as being advocated by the women’s suffrage movement, was more often than not addressed through opposition and ridicule.

¹⁵⁴ Anonymous, *Height and Money*, advertisement for Arthur Girvan, *Modern Life*, London, No. 19, 13 September 1913, 451.

1.1.2 Femininity

Magazines such as *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper*, *Home Chat*, *The Passing Show* and *The People's Friend* provided places where constructions of femininity were not only defined in line with biological difference and subsequent social conditioning but were also to some extent contested, thereby signalling the influence of improved women's legal rights pertaining to children and the home alongside calls for further expansion of the same into the spheres of work and politics.¹⁵⁵ As a result, the content of such magazines during the period January 1912 to August 1914 reveals that, although 'the meaning of femininity was and is radically unstable,' and constantly being re-worked, constructions in the years immediately preceding the war can be understood as being particularly volatile.¹⁵⁶ In the period immediately before the war the ambiguity of constructions of femininity are epitomized in magazines by the juxtaposition of articles and advertisements aligning women with the domestic sphere with features indicating some acceptance that women of all social classes (not just the working-class, who were

¹⁵⁵ At six pence a week in 1912, compared to one penny for *Home Chat*, *The Passing Show* and *The People's Friend*, *The Queen* is by far the most expensive of the four magazines under consideration. Focusing primarily on features about women's clothing, their employment, home interiors and house management alongside advertisements for associated products, *The Queen* is also the only publication where the assumed audience is much more evidently feminine. In addition to a female readership, provision for men and children is, to a limited extent, found in *Home Chat*, *The Passing Show* and *The People's Friend*. *Home Chat* featured 'The Playbox' a regular children's page and correspondence pages featuring letters from both men and women; whilst *The Peoples' Friend* possessed an agony uncle called 'Uncle Jack,' who corresponded with readers of both sexes. Moreover, providing regular court circle and social season articles the content of *The Queen* is also apparently aimed at individuals with aspirations of higher social class or those with upward social mobility in mind. In contrast, although more egalitarian in anticipated audiences, the contents of *Home Chat*, *The Passing Show* and *The People's Friend* are aimed much more at working or lower middle-class family life and the domestic sphere in general; focusing primarily on cooking tips, clothes making, gardening, the resolution of sundry personal and family dilemmas alongside advertisements on similar themes. *The People's Friend* is also the only one of the publications discussed in this section of the thesis to be published outside London in Dundee.

¹⁵⁶ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, 4.

traditionally associated with domestic service, certain factory work and ‘sweated labour’) had a right to both vocational careers and mass employment. *The Queen*, for example, whilst running regular features on home management, fashionable clothing and domestic interiors, also carried editorials on working women. Demonstrating this point the magazine ran a weekly advice column on ‘Public Works and Women’s Employment,’ which gave advice on potential employment that was available for women, from office jobs to medical and legal careers, providing details of the qualifications needed to obtain such work.

If magazine features promoting the employment of women can be understood as indicators of some progress towards increased women’s rights and a realignment of female roles within society as whole, the contemporaneous reporting on the activities of the women’s suffrage movement and alternative commentaries on working women in the same publications, although perhaps not done to deliberately attack women, like certain articles in male-dominated magazines, still nevertheless arguably enforced traditional constructions of sexual difference by their ambiguity. On 18 May 1912, at the height of women’s suffrage militancy, *Home Chat*, for example, published an article entitled ‘Hard Labour for Suffragettes.’¹⁵⁷ Despite giving the impression of pitying the plight of women imprisoned for their beliefs, the tone of the article additionally implied that, not only were the prisoners confined because of their own actions, but the conditions of poor diet, limited exercise, enforced discipline and prison dress were also ‘frightfully unbecoming

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous, ‘Hard Labour for Suffragettes,’ *Home Chat: A Weekly Journal for The Home*, London, Vol. LXIX, No. 896, 18 May 1912, 345-46.

to a lady.’¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, whilst reporting news of rallies and activities, the noncommittal approach that was adopted towards the women’s suffrage movement by *The Queen* is equally ambiguous. It can, therefore, be argued that rather than promoting the extension of women’s rights, responses to the activities of the women’s suffrage movement in magazines aimed primarily at female readers actually encouraged binary premise in relation to masculinity and femininity. Firstly, as a result of their apathy. Secondly, by suggesting that in order to be considered feminine and enjoy a comfortable lifestyle it was better for a woman to behave passively, thereby confirming traditional stereotypes of femininity and indirectly masculinity. As a result, magazines constructed femininity in a way which can be understood to have been designed to maintain the traditional social order in which masculine authority was socially-vaunted in the face of increasing challenges from high profile suffrage militancy and sustained social enquiry by organizations, such as the Fabian Women’s Group, which focused public attention on female education and employment.¹⁵⁹ Demonstrating the tenuous status of femininity in the pre-war period, an article entitled ‘Why Women Should Value Their Beauty, Some Points of View and Advice by a Mere Man’ published in *The People’s Friend* of 2 February 1914, commenting on working women, informed readers that:

The plain girl, not expecting a fairy prince, works hard because she expects to have to keep herself [...] She creates no distraction among clerks, is too ambitious to want to get off early and is equitable in temper. The pretty girl dislikes to be rebuked, thinks too much of fashions [...]; distracts the clerks,

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 24-29.

comes late [...] and when she knows her work she leaves to be married. Hence business men now want nothing but plain girls!¹⁶⁰

In what can be interpreted as a negative reaction to both the increase in female employment and the work of women's rights groups in promoting the same, although somewhat tongue-in-cheek, the foregoing article played upon perceptions of femininity, sexual attraction and increased employment opportunities for women, in a way which supported sexual discrimination. Firstly, it can be understood as an attempt to deter women from work by implying that women who did not or could not marry, and therefore had to work to support themselves, were subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers. Secondly, it can be viewed as acting to warn employers that women made less reliable employees than men by implying that many female workers were feckless, fickle and ultimately not worth investing time and money in training, because they would leave to marry and have children.

In common with publications aimed more specifically at men, the contents of magazines aimed both primarily at women and a more general readership alluded to a limited increase in expansion of opportunities for women in the form of engagement with ongoing debates about female education and employment. However, the ambiguous way in which the same publications, such as *The Queen* and *Home Chat*, presented employment opportunities for women and the activities of women's suffrage movement did very little to promote greater feminine authority or refute the content of articles such

¹⁶⁰ Anonymous, 'Why Women Should Value Their Beauty, Some Points of View and Advice by a Mere Man,' *The People's Friend*, Dundee, Vol. LVII, No. 2301, 2 February 1914, 105.

as that by 'A Mere Man' in *The People's Friend*, which, as noted, can be understood as an attempt to discredit women in order to maintain the traditional social and political authority of men. Therefore, the contents of magazines reveal that, in the years immediately preceding the commencement of the First World War, despite some acknowledgement of limited increases in women's rights within the home and workplace, the construction of femininity as passive, commercial and politically ineffectual, concerned primarily with the domestic sphere and self-beautification, continued to be enforced strongly.

1.2 Reiterating Past Practice: The Legacy of Traditional Values and Constructions of Masculinity and Femininity at the Start of the First World War

1.2.1 The Role of Chivalry In The Promotion of Male Enlistment for War

In the centre of *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) by Evelyn De Morgan a figure stands perilously close to the edge of a small rocky island, which is made constantly wet by the turbulent surrounding sea.¹⁶¹ With arms stretched out to form a cruciform shape the figure looks skyward, seeking salvation signified by a rainbow.¹⁶² Although somewhat androgynous, the length of hair, slight build and the way in which the folds of clothing are rendered to delineate breasts suggest that the figure most likely represents a young woman.¹⁶³ The

¹⁶¹ Evelyn De Morgan dated few of her paintings. Therefore the chronology of her paintings has had to be based on either identification of specific events in their imagery or by similarities in style to other dated works. See Catherine Gordon (ed.), *Evelyn De Morgan Oil Paintings*, 27.

¹⁶² In Christian iconography rainbows are associated with the pardon of God and reconciliation, because one appeared after the Old Testament flood. George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, Oxford and New York, 1961 (first published 1954), 43. The symbolism of rainbows in western art is also usefully discussed in John E. Thornes, *John Constable's Skies: A Fusion of Art and Science*, Birmingham, 1999, 82.

¹⁶³ My own research on De Morgan's paintings and drawings indicates that the use of clothing to delineate the form of breasts occurs in a number of works featuring female figures, Richenda M.

limited area of rocks on which the figure stands connotes notions of danger from the wild sea, such as the threat of being engulfed by waves or slipping on the wet stones, falling into and drowning in the water. In addition to being in danger from the sea, the figure in De Morgan's painting is surrounded by menacing, dragon-like, monsters. In terms of iconographic inspiration for *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6), the *Bible* identifies dragons or serpents with the devil. Not only is the serpent the agent of evil responsible for encouraging the fall of Adam and Eve in the Old Testament book of Genesis (3:1-24), the New Testament book of Revelation (12:7-9) specifically associates dragons with war by referring to a battle between the Archangel Michael and the Devil in the guise of a dragon:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.¹⁶⁴

Annoyed at his expulsion from heaven, in Revelation (12:13-17), Satan in the form of a dragon makes war on Christians 'which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.'¹⁶⁵ Based on biblical references, dragons or serpent-like creatures are most commonly identified in western iconography, as signifiers of the

Roberts, *Pacifism and Egalitarianism: Evelyn De Morgan's Responses to War*.

¹⁶⁴ John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, London and Glasgow, c.1861, Genesis (3:1-24), Old Testament, 3-4 and Revelation (12:7-9), New Testament, 280. Although its exact publication date is unknown, this *Bible* was first published around 1861. The copy referred to in this thesis was purchased new by my great grandfather during the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Being available to purchase or consult during the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries means that this edition of the *Bible* can, therefore, be considered as being contemporaneous with the lives and work of the artists studied within this thesis.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Devil; the malevolent partner in the struggle of good versus evil.¹⁶⁶ In addition, Revelation (12: 15-16) specifically links dragons with the destructive power of water because it mentions that ‘the serpent cast out of his mouth water as flood.’¹⁶⁷ Commenting on the association of dragons with water, Samantha Riches has argued that this provides a basis for the creatures’ common association with marshland or water in western iconography.¹⁶⁸

The subject of *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6) suggests that the *Bible* might well have been the source for the iconographic origins of the signifiers of danger and evil (the water and the monsters). Nevertheless, the *Bible* does not directly connect dragons with young women, thereby indicating the looseness of association with conventional Christian iconography in De Morgan’s painting. However, water, danger, evil and a young woman are conflated in the classical myth of Perseus and Andromeda from *Metamorphoses* by Ovid.¹⁶⁹ In Ovid’s story the hero Perseus rescued the princess Andromeda who was pinioned by chains to a small rocky outcrop in the sea, where she was doomed to be the prey of Cetus, a fearful sea monster.¹⁷⁰ There are a number of reasons why De Morgan could have taken some inspiration for the composition of her work from the story of Perseus and Andromeda. Unlike many of her female contemporaries, De Morgan received the same education as her two brothers.¹⁷¹ As a result, the comprehensive nature and high standard of her

¹⁶⁶ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 16.

¹⁶⁷ John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, Revelation (12:15-16), New Testament, 280.

¹⁶⁸ Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr and Myth*, Sutton, 2000, table 3 ‘Comparison of Literary Versions of The Legend of St. George and The Dragon,’ 220.

¹⁶⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Translation by A.D. Melville, Oxford, 1986, 93-98.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling, *William De Morgan and His Wife*, 144.

education included classical scholarship.¹⁷² De Morgan's education meant that she would most likely have been familiar with Ovid's text and understood that the heroic rescuing of a vulnerable woman by a man communicated similar constructions of sexual difference to those used to induce male enlistment during the First World War. Moreover, the myth was also a popular subject with late nineteenth-century artists with whom De Morgan was acquainted. There is, for example, *Andromeda* of 1869 (Fig. 13) by Edward Poynter (1836-1919). Furthermore, Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) also produced a cycle of works based on Ovid's story (c.1875-95). De Morgan was most certainly familiar with the work of both men. Poynter had been Professor at the Slade during her period of study at the art school and Burne-Jones was known to her as a close associate of both her husband William (1839-1917) and maternal uncle, the artist John Rodham Spencer-Stanhope (1829-1908).¹⁷³ De Morgan's familiarity with both Poynter and Burne-Jones provides a plausible explanation as to why the compositional structure of *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6) bears more than a passing resemblance to that found in Poynter's work and the sixth image in Burne-Jones' sequence, *The Rock of Doom* (Fig. 14). Additionally the iconography of *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6) can also be understood to have been inspired by well-established cultural customs pertaining to patriotism towards the British nation and visual representation of the same. Riches has pointed out that the classical myth of Perseus and Andromeda became Christianised through amalgamation in the medieval *Golden Legend* with the story of Saint George.¹⁷⁴ In Britain particularly, from its medieval origins up until the present day, the idea of good overcoming evil has become inextricably linked to

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Catherine Gordon (ed.), *Evelyn De Morgan Oil Paintings*, 9.
Lois Drawmer, *The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on The Works of Evelyn De Morgan, 1870-1919*, unpublished PhD Thesis, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, 2001, 41.

¹⁷⁴ Samantha Riches, *St George*, 25-61.

the chivalric or manly protection of women and national patriotism through images and texts conveying the story of the slaying of a dragon to save a princess by Saint George, England's patron saint.¹⁷⁵ Prevailing interest in medieval revival, chivalric conduct and nationalism meant that Saint George was another popular theme in paintings during the second half of the nineteenth century, for example *The Fight: St. George Kills The Dragon VI* of 1866 by Burne-Jones (Fig. 15).¹⁷⁶ Girouard has noted that Burne-Jones was greatly inspired by *The Broad Stone of Honour* by Kenelm Henry Digby (1800-1880), which was a highly influential book on the subject of the revival of chivalric code first published in 1822.¹⁷⁷ Although born of noble birth, Digby loathed materialism believing that the 'unbridled desire to acquire and spend,' with which the building of follies, acquisition of art and antiquities associated eighteenth-century gentlemen with luxurious excess, was morally wrong.¹⁷⁸ In *The Broad Stone of Honour* Digby advocated a revival and updating of medieval chivalric codes prescribed in medieval conduct manuals, such as *The Book of The Ordre of Chyualry*, first published in English c.1480 by William Caxton (c.1415-1492).¹⁷⁹ Caxton's book was a version of *Libre Del Orde De Cavalleria* (*The Book of The Order of Chivalry*, produced in c.1311) by Ramon Llull (c.1232-1315), which would only be fully translated into English for the first time in 1845 by G. Dennis, just over twenty years after the publication of Digby's book.¹⁸⁰ Produced by a former knight, Llull's book of chivalry stipulated that there were ten

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-30.

¹⁷⁷ Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, 56-57.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 57 and 65; John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 63.

¹⁷⁹ William Caxton, Alfred T.P. Byles (ed.), *The Book of The Ordre of Chivalry*, Oxford and New York, 1971 (first published 1926).

¹⁸⁰ Llull's *Libre Del Orde De Cavalleri* is known to have been translated into Catalan, French, Scots and English. It also seems likely that a Latin version existed. William Caxton, Alfred T.P. Byles (ed.), *The Book of The Ordre of Chivalry*, Introduction, xi.

duties of knighthood. According to Lull, a knight's task was to 'defend the faith; protect one's country; ensure the upholding of justice; exercise body and soul in tournaments; maintain the social order of others and self; be brave because courage and spirituality are better than bodily strength; the protection of the weak including woman and children; to be loyal to his master; punish thieves and act honourably with humility.'¹⁸¹ Rather than pursuing a life of luxury, in line with Lull, Digby suggested that nineteenth-century gentlemen should believe and trust in God, be generous, honourable, independent, truthful, loyal to friends and leaders, hardy, have contempt for luxury, be courteous, modest, possess humility and have respect for women.¹⁸²

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century the ethos of chivalric conduct, muscular Christianity and imperial masculinity were increasingly conflated in order to construct an ideal masculinity, which allowed the chivalrous knight (embodied by images of Saint George) to become an exemplary signifier for strong, stoic, manhood. As a result stories, poems, songs and images featuring knights engaged in chivalric conduct can often be found in newspapers and magazines, such as the *Boy's Own Paper*, as a way to imbue boys and young men with the values of an exemplary masculinity based on chivalric values of strength, protection and patriotism. This is exemplified by images such as *The Prize of The Tournament* (Fig. 16) published in the *Boy's Own Paper Annual* of 1912-13 and the paper's general alignment with chivalry, which is signified by the regular incorporation of its own initials into logos of chivalric scenes (Fig. 17). Moreover, Allen Frantzen has pointed out that

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 24-43.

¹⁸² Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, 61-62.

chivalric masculinity is also found alluded to in nineteenth-century paintings, for example *The Miracle of The Merciful Knight* (Fig. 18) of 1863 by Burne-Jones (who it is said kept all five volumes of *The Broad Stone of Honour* by his bedside).¹⁸³ Burne-Jones' watercolour is said to be based on the story of Saint Giovanni Gualberto, a Florentine man of arms, whose story is told in *The Broad Stone of Honour*.¹⁸⁴ 'After he forgave an enemy whom he could have killed, Giovanni then stopped to pray at a wayside shrine.'¹⁸⁵ In Burne-Jones' painting an amour-clad knight passively lays his sword on the ground and bends forward to receive a kiss from a post-crucifixion Christ. The laying of the sword on the ground can be interpreted as connoting notions of the cessation of killing, thereby arguably suggesting that good will always win and triumph over evil in a similar way to the dragon-slaying of Saint George. Moreover, the use of a post-crucifixion Christ, complete with nails in his feet and stigmata on his hands, suggests the idea of self-sacrificial masculinity acting in the service of good conduct and God. However, the presence of a sword in Burne-Jones' painting serves as a reminder to beholders that fighting wars and killing, when necessary to defend king and country, was also a function of chivalric knights. Frantzen, who has traced the relationship between chivalry, sacrifice and the First World War, has argued that, in line with Burne-Jones' painting, within the parameters of traditional chivalric code, sacrifice had three distinct positions.¹⁸⁶ The first, sacrificial, attempted to justify killing on the basis that the taking

¹⁸³ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, London, 2 Volumes, 1904, Vol. 2, 56. Also see Mark Girouard, *The Return To Camelot*, 63-64.

¹⁸⁴ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice and The Great War*, Chicago and London, 2004, 130-133.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 132.

¹⁸⁶ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 3. In 'Chivalry and its Place in History,' F.J.C. Hearnshaw has suggested that there are four definitions of chivalry: first, a body of horsemen or knights; second, representing knighthood as a rank or order; third, 'a tenure of service whereby the tenant is bound to perform some noble or military office unto the lord;' fourth, a term used to denote the 'whole

of a life was vengeance for the loss of another, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence.¹⁸⁷ Second, anti-sacrifice opposed the taking of a life and tried to bring violence to an end.¹⁸⁸ Finally, Frantzen has proposed that chivalry validated self-sacrifice, which conflated prowess and purity, thereby blurring the lines of distinction between sacrifice and anti-sacrifice.¹⁸⁹

In the years immediately preceding the First World War, self-sacrifice had also been exemplified in Britain by the actions of the polar explorer Captain Lawrence Oates (1880-1912) who, fearing his ill-health would compromise the survival of his companions, walked into a blizzard to his death during the failed South Pole expedition led by Captain Robert Scott (1868-1912). The story of the heroic death in 1912 of Captain Oates and his fellow polar explorers continued to be a popular theme in newspapers and magazines for long time after the explorers' demise, thereby upholding further the virtues of chivalric self-sacrifice. Demonstrating this point, promoting concepts of chivalric sacrifice, the 1913-14 annual of the *Boy's Own Paper* reproduced a painting on the subject of Oates' death entitled *A Very Gallant Gentleman* of 1913 by John Charles Dollman (Fig. 19), which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1914.¹⁹⁰ Frequent allusions to chivalry and chivalric conduct in examples of fine art, such as the work of Burne-Jones and Dollman, in the period preceding the war therefore

knightly system of themes during the middle-ages with its peculiar religious, moral, and social codes and customs.' F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Chivalry and its Place in History,' Edgar Prestage (ed.), *Chivalry: A Series of Studies to Illustrate Its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence*, London, 1928, 1-33, 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *A Very Gallant Gentleman* by John Charles Dollman reproduced in *Boy's Own Paper Annual*, 1913-14, Vol. 36, opposite page 641.

provided a precedent which could be drawn upon by artists, such as De Morgan, to construct meanings and values for war. Moreover, in line with Malešević's observations concerning war propaganda, research for this thesis suggests that the regular conflation of chivalry with masculine prowess in a variety of cultural forms in Britain in the pre-war period ensured that all three of Frantzen's sacrificial positions of chivalry were, by the commencement of war, well established and culturally-ingrained. Consequently, in addition to providing artists with an established model to follow, it was also very easy for pro-war propaganda, ranging from newspaper texts to pro-enlistment and war bonds advertisements, including the image published on the front cover of *Modern Life* of 22 August 1914 (Fig. 20), to use awareness of the idea of chivalric sacrifice to legitimize war. Revealing the frequency with which allusions to chivalric sacrifice are found in wartime narratives William Inge (1860-1954), Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, for example, in a speech given on 5 April 1915, published in *The Times*, observed 'the spirit of the martyr patriot was everywhere near.'¹⁹¹ Furthermore commenting on the war in the 1914-15 annual, evoking chivalric sacrifice, the Editor of the *Boy's Own Paper* wrote:

I want every *Boy's Own Paper* reader to understand the real causes that lie behind the present crisis, and in understanding them he will come to a consciousness of patriotism that is founded on the highest and purest principles - on reverence, unselfishness and honour.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ William Inge, Easter Sermon, *The Times*, 5 April 1915, cited in Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime*, 25.

¹⁹² Anonymous, Editor's Page, *Boy's Own Paper Annual*, London, Vol. 37, 1914-15, 41.

Following a similar theme one services recruitment poster of 1915 (Fig. 21), bearing the wording ‘*Britain Needs You At Once,*’ clearly linked the patriotic protection of Britain with chivalry by featuring the image of Saint George. Even cards sent to boy scouts from servicemen on the battle front (Fig. 22), with whom boys had been encouraged to correspond, employed similar rhetoric petitioning the recipient to ‘go forth, prepared to give Himself that England still may live!’¹⁹³ Chivalric rhetoric is also evident in the speeches of secular leaders, including politician David Lloyd George (1863-1945) who, in a speech given to a non-conformist audience at the London City Temple on 10 November 1914, attempted to justify Britain’s involvement in the war by stating:

There are men who maintain that war is not justifiable under any conditions [...] I am afraid that I shall never be able to attain in this world quite to that altitude of idealism [...] I never read a saying of the Master’s which would condemn a man for striking a blow for right, justice, or the protection of the weak.¹⁹⁴

Additionally, during the war, in order to maintain its national and international reputation, it was very important for Britain to communicate to its allies and enemies alike that it was a strong nation and powerful imperial ruler. In line with the parameters of imperial masculinity one way to achieve this was to demonstrate that its men were, like the uniformed male figure in *The Crusaders* of 1918 (Fig. 23) by Edmund Blair Leighton (1852-1922), fit, strong and willing to fight. Moreover, the influence of the ethos of imperial masculinity within British society meant that, as Michelle Rosaldo has

¹⁹³ *For England*, card, file 87/33/1, A.W. Wyatt, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 16 June 2010.

¹⁹⁴ David Lloyd George cited in John Grigg, *Lloyd George: From Peace to War, 1912-1916*, London, 1985, 184.

argued, ‘for a boy to become an adult, he must prove himself – his masculinity – among his peers.’¹⁹⁵ In wartime there was arguably, no better way to publicly confirm an individual’s manliness than for them to enlist voluntarily into the armed forces; acceptance into which was only guaranteed to the fittest men and youths.¹⁹⁶ This was an ethos which Blair Leighton, as a former member of the public school system (through attendance of University College School), like many Britons, would have understood as a result of its inculcation from an early age.¹⁹⁷ Exemplifying this point, the compositional arrangement of *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) can, therefore, be understood to allude to the chivalric function of manly protection of women and nation by the deliberate placing of the male figure next to a female figure of smaller stature alongside the tomb of a medieval knight. In addition the placing of a seemingly physically fit male figure alongside a female figure of smaller stature in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) can also be viewed as implying that only the fittest and bravest men succeeded in attracting women. Consequently, Blair Leighton’s painting can be interpreted as alluding to the conflation of masculine physical prowess, sexual attraction and success with the opposite sex which, as noted by Fuller, was additionally used in official and unofficial propaganda to induce male enlistment. Demonstrating this point the image entitled ‘None But The Brave Deserve The Fair,’ which was published on the front cover of *Modern Life* of 12 September 1914 (Fig. 24), for example, featured a female figure choosing a soldier over a civilian.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, capitalizing also on the link between masculine sexual prowess

¹⁹⁵ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 35, note 31, citing Michelle Z. Rosaldo, ‘Women, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview,’ L. Lamphere and M.Z. Rosaldo (eds.), *Woman, Culture and Society*, Stamford, 1974, 28.

¹⁹⁶ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, 172-173.

¹⁹⁷ Anonymous, ‘Edmund Blair Leighton Obituary,’ *The Times*, London, Issue 43128, col. F, 5 September 1922, 7.

¹⁹⁸ ‘None But The Brave Deserve The Fair,’ *Modern Life*, London, 12 September 1914, No. 71,

and patriotic protection, the services recruitment poster *Men of Britain! Will You Stand This?* of c.1914 (Fig. 25) evoked the national outrage and fear that was caused by German naval raids on Scarborough in December 1914 in order to encourage men to enlist by specifically informing readers that the enemy had killed and injured several hundred women and children.

During the initial months of war the event that, arguably, had the profoundest effect on the morale of the British population was the sack of Belgium by the invading German army. As the inscription of ‘Belgium after nineteen-hundred years of Christianity’ accompanying the entry in the Edith Grove exhibition catalogue for *The Red Cross* by De Morgan (undated, Fig. 26) implied, civilians were indeed well aware of the plight of the Belgian nation.¹⁹⁹ In common with most members of the British public, De Morgan was most likely to have been made aware of alleged atrocities committed against the Belgian population and its property by the German army because of the photographs and reports which were published in newspapers and magazines. Up until the end of 1914, the country’s destruction and influx of Belgian refugees to Britain ensured that Belgium was a constantly predominant theme in both newspapers and magazines. As a result, firsthand accounts of conditions by refugees and the often xenophobic nature of reporting in publications served to heighten public awareness of the effects that an enemy invasion might have on the British home front. Whilst fears of an enemy invasion were initially fostered by the news of the plight of Belgian civilians, they were greatly consolidated on the 16 December 1914 when, as noted, German naval raids against the towns of

front cover.

¹⁹⁹ Exhibit number 1, Evelyn De Morgan, *Catalogue of An Exhibition of Pictures*.

Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool resulted in the injury or death of British citizens, including many women and children.²⁰⁰ Like the sack of Belgium, these events received much press coverage. On this basis, combined allusions to fears of enemy invasion, suggested by the perilous placing of the female figure, alongside oblique references to the chivalrous legend of Saint George, which can be interpreted as being constructed by *S.O.S* (Fig. 6), can be understood to highlight public awareness of the threat to national security. Furthermore, indirect references to the chivalric conduct of Saint George and the apparent helplessness of the female figure in *S.O.S*. (Fig. 6) can also be seen as alluding to the equation of masculine strength and military prowess with chivalric sacrifice in pro-war propaganda, which was done in order to induce male enlistment by enforcing the idea that the war was a righteously justified act of male protection.

In addition to making oblique references to the legend of Saint George, England's patron saint, the island location of the single female figure in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can be seen to provide a further indication that the painting alluded specifically to Britain and the protection of its population. Like the triangular shape of the Union flag worn by the little girl in *The British Empire* (Fig. 10) and the costal setting of the figures in *1914* (Fig. 9), the island location of *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can be understood to act to signal that the work specifically alluded to Britain, which during the war was, according to a tongue-in-cheek observation in *Home Chat* magazine in February 1916, a 'women-ridden island surrounded by German U-boats.'²⁰¹ Furthermore, conflation of the British Isles, women and the chivalric legend of Saint George also enabled De Morgan's painting to highlight

²⁰⁰ Anonymous, 'Death Roll of The German Raid,' *The Times*, London, Issue 40729, col. F, Friday 18 December 1914, 9.

²⁰¹ Anonymous, *Home Chat*, London, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 1092, 19 February 1916, 308.

that allusions to chivalric sacrifice used to induce men into enlistment in war propaganda strengthened further ‘the sense that women [like land] were property, as well as symbols of national victory.’²⁰² Therefore, rather than representing one individual woman, the figure in De Morgan’s painting can be understood to symbolize not only the British nation (as noted often represented symbolically in the form of Britannia), but also the disproportionately large ratio of women to men in Britain during wartime, thereby enforcing notions of the home front as a predominantly feminine zone.

1.2.2 Women as Symbols of Peace

Carol P. MacCormack has observed that ‘because metaphor is based upon the polysemic and open nature of words it has great potential for [...] contradiction’ thus meaning ‘can be shaped or extended through metaphor.’²⁰³ MacCormack’s observations find resonance in artists’ symbolization of the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference by the use of human figures in visual imagery, not least paintings like *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6), which can be understood to have resulted in oscillation between sign and referent. This made it possible for a single artwork to be interpreted as constructing polysemous meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity. Exemplifying the foregoing contention, multiple meanings and values can be identified as being constructed by *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6). In addition to alluding to the way in which war propaganda used concepts of chivalric sacrifice and sexual difference to induce male enlistment,

²⁰² Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L-R. Higonnet, ‘The Double Helix,’ Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret Collins Weitz, (eds.), *Behind The Lines*, 31-47, 37.

²⁰³ Carol P. MacCormack, ‘Nature, Culture and Gender: A Critique,’ Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (eds.), *Nature, Culture and Gender*, Cambridge, New York and Victoria, 1992 (first published 1980), 9.

viewed in relation to the contexts of the so-called ‘sex war’ that was waged in the immediate pre-war period by Suffragists, the plight of the female figure in *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6) can also be understood to signal that the helpless or powerless status of women in relation to war was not simply down to feminine lack of physical strength. This allows the painting to be interpreted as indicating that the powerless position of women was additionally the result of the way in which British society was structured to promote masculine authority, thereby revealing De Morgan’s egalitarian worldview.²⁰⁴ As noted, the survey of magazines undertaken in the course of research for this thesis has revealed that there was only limited encouragement, and some resistance, to increased employment and education opportunities for women in the period immediately preceding the war. Furthermore disenfranchisement prohibited women from having any influence upon decisions made by the British government, including the latter’s declaration of war against Germany. Moreover, magazines reveal that what little progress had been achieved was, through the political need to justify conflict, promote male enlistment and support the war effort in general, reversed almost overnight with the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914. Initially at least, this meant that women were both expected, and had few options other than, to assume wartime roles that were ancillary to men. On 15 August 1914 *The Queen*, evoking patriotic rhetoric, called upon ‘the thousands of healthy men and women who are morally free and physically fit to help their country’ in wartime.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ I understand the combination of De Morgan’s pacifism and egalitarianism to mean that she had a willingness to promote equal rights for all individuals and to oppose war and the use of force and violence in whatever form, be it ‘physical, psychological or moral.’ I believe that this is why she particularly chose to address the inequalities caused by war in her paintings, Richenda M. Roberts, *Pacifism and Egalitarianism: Evelyn De Morgan’s Responses to War*. Also see Gail Chester and Andrew Rigby (eds.), *Articles of Peace*, 1. Margaret Glover, *Images of Peace in Britain*, 7, note 20, citing departmental brochure, The Department of Peace Studies, The University of Bradford, 1991, 3.

²⁰⁵ Anonymous, *The Queen*, London, Vol. CXXXVI, No. 3529, 15 August 1914, 287.

Nevertheless, the way in which men and women were expected to help in the war effort, as an editorial in the same edition made clear, was, initially at least, most definitely dictated by binary premise pertaining to male and female roles. Commenting on the role of women, the magazine informed its readers:

The feminine mind in an emergency like the present turns instinctively to the idea that nursing the sick and wounded is the first duty of [a]woman, irrespective of whether she is fitted for it or not [...] Women must not, through thoughtlessness, rush to take work which has been laid down by the breadwinner who responded to the call to arms, as long as there is another breadwinner able to step in to earn the right to work.²⁰⁶

The seemingly ineffectual or passive roles assigned to women at the start of the war, prescribed in *The Queen* and alluded to in *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6) are also supported by the way in which masculinity and femininity have been inscribed in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23). In addition to the healthy and youthful appearance of the uniformed male figure implying masculine prowess, the garment of the female figure in Blair Leighton's painting can be said to endorse long-held concepts of femininity. The dress worn by the female figure in the painting is similar to clothing found in the women's fashion features of magazines like *Home Chat* (Fig. 27). The close similarity of the dress worn by the female figure in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) to contemporary fashionable clothing, can, therefore, be seen not only to have helped to confirm claims of Blair Leighton's 'careful study of costume [...] combined with accuracy of detail,' mentioned in his obituary in *The Times*, it also

²⁰⁶ Anonymous, *ibid*, 282.

encouraged the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference by placing emphasis on the femininity of the female figure through association with the actions of shopping and dress making, which were considered predominately feminine.²⁰⁷ As a result, the dress of the female figure in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) allowed femininity to be constructed in a way which supported traditional concepts of sexual difference, indicating that, on commencement of war at least, women were expected to provide support to men through ancillary roles more generally associated with the domestic sphere. The ancillary roles that women were expected to provide, for example, included the encouragement of male enlistment, making clothing for servicemen, providing food parcels, nursing the wounded, waiting for news and grieving for the dead. Whereas, like the chivalric knight embedded within British culture as a symbol of masculine prowess, the key role of men in war, as the physical stature and military uniform of the male figure in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) implied, was to enlist to fight in order to patriotically protect nation and loved ones.

Expectations at the start of the war that women should not take male jobs and had ancillary roles to perform, based primarily on culturally-ingrained premise about the capabilities of their sex, are also evident alongside fears of an enemy invasion in the content of a letter addressed to a Miss D. Hall of Edgbaston, Birmingham. In reply to Miss Hall's offer to play her part in the war effort, the letter, from local Recruiting Officer No. 3, dated 18 November 1914, stated:

²⁰⁷ Anonymous, Blair Leighton Obituary, *The Times*, Issue 43128, col, F, 5 September 1922, 7.

I am in receipt of your letter of the 17th inst: and regret to inform you that unfortunately there are no arrangements being made for women to train for Home Defence, nor as far as I know are there likely to be.

If you wish to assist, I would suggest you should persuade any man you know who is eligible, to do his duty by enlisting at once, if all women would act as Recruiting Sergeants in this manner no doubt we should soon obtain all the men required and there would be no fear of invasion of the Country.²⁰⁸

The letter to Miss Hall, the imagery of paintings such as *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) and the commentary in magazines like *The Queen*, all suggest that at the beginning of the war mothers, daughters, sisters, sweethearts and wives were actively encouraged to support the war effort through both official and unofficial pro-war narratives that repeated the endorsement of binary premise relating to masculinity and femininity in a number of diverse forms. Magazines, including *The Queen*, *Home Chat* and *The People's Friend*, for example, promoted female support of the war effort through home front activities such as the provision of patterns to make clothing, which could be sent out to the battle front, whilst at the same time grocery stores placed advertisements in the same and other publications for food parcels that families could buy and send to servicemen.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Letter to Miss D. Hall, Edgbaston, Birmingham, dated 18 November 1914, reference No: 261, Women's Suffrage papers, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery Collection, Birmingham, UK, accession number: 1996E2.041, accessed 19 November 2009. This letter is contained in a folder alongside letters and papers concerning Nellie Hall a supporter of women's suffrage who was imprisoned and force-fed in 1913-14 for her activities. As I can find no member of the Hall family in Edgbaston with the initial 'D,' Miss D. Hall could well be a typing error and the letter may well have been sent to Miss E. Hall. 'E' standing for Emmeline, Nellie's proper name.

²⁰⁹ Knitting pattern for the 'double trench sock,' for example, which was published in *The Queen*,

Despite many official and unofficial sources apparently upholding the polarization of male and female wartime roles at the commencement of the First World War, in common with *S.O.S* (Fig. 6), the way in which masculinity and femininity is inscribed in paintings, such as *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) by Ethel Walker, can also be understood to indicate that the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference could, paradoxically, be appropriated by artists to challenge the negative impact of both war and long-held concepts of binary premise concerning male and female roles within British society. Lying in the foreground of Walker's painting are a number of nude male figures, whose bodies are placed on top of each other, some face down and others lying prostrate on their backs. The lifeless disposition of these figures suggests that they most likely represent the dead. In the foreground, surrounding the male figures, there are additionally three nude female figures. On each side of the painting, stretching out their arms into poses that suggest incredulity, relating perhaps to disbelief or sorrowful resignation, two female figures have respectively been identified as symbolizing 'The Mother of the Race and The Earth covering the dead.'²¹⁰ Between these two figures a centrally placed third female figure places one hand on the bare back of one of the prostrate males, whilst her other hand is raised in a gesture suggesting halt. Along with the date of the painting, the apparently healthy and youthful stature of the bodies of the

Vol. CXXXVII, No. 3551, 16 January 1915, second sheet, un-paginated.

²¹⁰ According to the entry in the New English Art Club catalogue, summer 1917, *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) contained 'five forces, Hate, Life, Death, Destiny, the World's Sorrow. The two figures on the left and right completing an arabesque symbolize (1) Mother of the Race, (2) The Earth covering the Dead.' Cited in Martin Butlin; Mary Chamot and Dennis Farr (eds.), *The Modern British Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, Tate Gallery Catalogues, Vol. 2, Artists M-Z, London and Norwich, 1965 (first published 1964), 756.

male figures and deeply shocked demeanours of the three female figures suggests strongly that Walker's painting alluded to the circumstances of the First World War.

Additionally in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11), almost immediately behind the central female figure is a clothed, kneeling figure with one arm reaching out. Encircling the head of this figure is a ray of pale pigment that is suggestive of a halo, thereby implying that the figure can be understood to most likely represent Christ, whose crucifixion the prophecy in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (53:1-8) foretold was an act of self-sacrifice to save mankind, through the story of the *Man of Sorrows*:

But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was bruised* for our iniquities [...] is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth [...] he was cut off the land of the living: for transgression of my people he was stricken.²¹¹

As Laura Brandon has argued, the self-sacrifice of Christ through crucifixion, to save mankind, provided an exemplary symbol that could be appropriated to allude to the sacrificial nature of war.²¹² This made representations of Christ crucified or indirect allusions to the crucifixion a recurring theme in many cultural forms engaging with the war, not least paintings like *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11). For this reason artists' appropriation of Christian iconography, and especially that pertaining to the crucifixion,

²¹¹ Isaiah (53:1-8), *Old Testament*, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 740.

²¹² Laura Brandon, *Art and War*, London and New York, 2007, 46-48.

to symbolize the changing values assigned to sacrifice during the First World War will be explored further in chapter two.

In the meantime, in addition to pointing to the sacrificial nature of the war, the actions of additional male figures in Walker's painting, their relationship to each other and positioning within the overall schematic design of the artwork, also act to assign the aggressive pursuit of war to men. Placed immediately behind the figure of Christ, face half hidden by the rays of his halo, another male figure, with eyes closed, takes-up a kneeling position which is reminiscent of that assumed by individuals about to be beheaded. Looming directly above both the kneeling figure and Christ, is another male figure with Devil's horns protruding from his head. Face contorted in a manner suggesting rage, this figure swings both arms back in a gesture implying that he is about to make a physical assault on Christ, the kneeling male figure or perhaps both. Standing to either side of this figure are two additional male figures, each carrying a sharp dagger-like weapon. The threatening stances assumed by all three figures and the weapons carried enables them to specifically associate men with acts of aggression. This theme is continued in the tumultuous scene of writhing bodies in the painting's background, which is set against a setting sun, signalling that time (or more specifically perhaps the lifetime of someone) is at or coming to an end. With the exception of two or three, apparently extraneous, female figures, the background of *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) is comprised of a combination of clothed and nude male figures caught up in a bitter battle of physical struggle. Articulating aggression, totally engrossed in battle, bodies merge together in the painting's background to the extent that individual figures are no longer

distinguishable, thereby anticipating the ever increasing dehumanizing impact of increased industrial warfare during the First World War. In Walker's painting the effects of war are additionally suggested by the nudity of many of the male figures. During her periods of study at the Slade Walker, in common with other students, would have been instilled with the value of copying examples of Renaissance drawings and prints, like *The Battle of The Nudes* of c.1465-75 (Fig. 28) by Antonio del Pollaiuolo (c.1429-98), in which nude male figures are shown brandishing weapons of a very similar appearance to those held by the two male figures in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11).²¹³ In Renaissance artistic conventions representations of the male nude could be used to signify lack of virtue.²¹⁴ As a result the nudity of the male figures in Walker's painting can be understood to function to imply that, rather than being a justified act of protection, the sacrificial nature of the First World War meant that conflict had no virtuous or redeeming qualities. Moreover, without clothing to differentiate them, the male figures in Walker's painting are rendered nothing more than specimens of masculinity, thereby denying the identification of individuals. Therefore, the nudity of the male figures can also be understood to symbolize that during the First World War hasty battlefield burials often robbed combatants of their identity, whilst also denying friends and family on the home front a body to grieve or bury.

As noted, during the First World War the absence of men through fighting and death meant that the majority of mourners on the home front were likely to have been women. In *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) mourning as a primarily female role is implied by the

²¹³ Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between The Wars*, 144.

²¹⁴ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 49-50. See also Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between The Wars*, 155.

distressed and nude demeanour of the three female figures in the painting's foreground. Drawing again upon Renaissance archetypes, the nudity of the bodies of the three figures can, therefore, be understood as connoting a lack of worldly possessions in order to symbolize the 'trials and difficulties of life' caused by war. This allows the figures to allude to the resultant emotional and material deprivations on the home front, including bereavement and poverty, the latter of which the death of servicemen often enforced upon loved ones.²¹⁵ Nicole Loraux has argued in *Mothers in Mourning*, that women have come to be assigned the mantle of chief mourners within western culture through the alignment of femininity with mourning in textual narratives.²¹⁶ The New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, have, for example, inspired the role of women as chief mourners in Christian iconography pertaining to the crucifixion and resurrection, such as images of the Virgin Mary as *Mater Dolorosa*.²¹⁷ In *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) Walker has apparently drawn upon the role of Mary as chief mourner by the presence of another centrally placed figure who looks in the direction of Christ. Although of indeterminate sex, the slanted position of the shawl-covered head and the pained facial expression of the figure can be understood to have been appropriated from Christian iconography relating to the crucifixion; specifically Pietàs representing the Virgin as *Mater Dolorosa* mourning for Christ her son. This suggests that the figure is indeed Christ's mother Mary, whose presence can be interpreted as having a two-fold

²¹⁵ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 49-50.

²¹⁶ Nicole Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning, With The Essay 'Of Amnesty and Its Opposition,'* translated by Corrine Pache, Ithaca and London, 1998, (first published 1990), 1-7 and 63.

²¹⁷ Women are associated with mourning in the following chapters of the New Testament Gospels in relation to the crucifixion: Matthew (27:55-56) and (27:6-39); Mark (15:40); Luke (23:27) and (23:49) John (19:25-26). In relation to visiting Christ's tomb prior to and during to the resurrection: Matthew (28:1); Mark (16:1) and (16:9-17); Luke (24:10-11) and John (20:1-17). New Testament, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 38-9, 62-63, 101-102 and 130-131.

function. Firstly, allusions to Christian iconography relating to the crucifixion can be seen to signal the sacrificial nature of the war. Secondly, in combination with the nudity of the other female figures in the painting (which reveals their breasts, upon which an infant might suckle), allusions to the motherhood of Mary in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) can be understood to make evident the reproductive and nurturing roles of women. This can be interpreted as allowing the painting to allude to the reciprocal link between war and child-birth, which seemingly provided an innate reason for women being assigned purely passive roles in relation to war. As a result the way in which masculinity and femininity are inscribed in painting can be understood to support the polarization of men and women in relation to war.

Commenting on Walker's use of female figures, Justine Kenyon has argued that the artist 'nurtured an artistic, creative ego and vision to be a 'Great Artist' that was based on a model 'born out of a patriarchal ideology of creativity and greatness, incorporating the concept of an, active (male), subject/artist holding the position of power and control through his representation of a passive, object/women.'²¹⁸ As a result, in her desire to assume the mantle of 'Great Artist,' Walker's 'elongated [female] bodies are presented as objects to be looked upon without the discomfort of a confronting stare back into the viewer's gaze,' thereby suggesting that 'she failed to intuit many of the power relations that underlie the representation of women.'²¹⁹ Although many are nude and appear to be passively unchallenging, the female bodies represented in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) do not act as a spectacle of flesh for the benefit of the beholder (whom Kenyon seems to

²¹⁸ Justine Kenyon, 'Ethel Walker (1861-1951): In Pursuit of Heaven,' *Women's Art Magazine*, London, No. 47, July/August 1992, 17-19, 19.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

suggest is assumed to be male). Instead, the way in which the viewer's gaze is seemingly directed methodically through the painting can be interpreted as a mechanism used to align femininity with pacifism. Consequently the handling of sexual difference in Walker's painting can be understood to have much in common with suffrage imagery and text, thereby linking Walker's handling of war with ongoing debates about women's rights. Writing to her friend Grace English in April 1939, complaining about the lack of serious critical response to her work, Walker noted:

Because I am a woman I have to be patronized it seems with a sea of futilities and adjectives. For when the press see nice pictures they don't even enjoy them, nor even write as if they were interested. But as I don't and never have painted for them it matters nothing to me what they think or don't think and so it does not depress me as stupidity usually does when I meet it.²²⁰

The content of Walker's letter suggests that she would have understood fully both the power relations affecting the representation of women and the enormity of the task that female artists faced in order to overcome sexual discrimination in a profession which was still very much dominated by men. Furthermore, given the high profile reporting of the women's suffrage campaign in the immediate pre-war period, and the way in which femininity was entreated to assume only ancillary roles to men in wartime in newspapers and magazines, Walker would also have been only too aware that disenfranchisement, prevailing social structuring and the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual

²²⁰ Ethel Walker, letter to Grace English, 17 April 1939, Grace English File, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 716/1-53, 46, accessed 24 August 2011.

difference all engendered discrimination against women. Commenting on the symbolic potential of the human form, Lisa Tickner has argued, in *The Spectacle of Women*, that although often used to personify socially-vaunted concepts, such as liberty, justice and truth, the female figure was in many ways an unsuitable symbol for use in the promotion of the Suffragists' cause.²²¹ According to Tickner, like the use of both male and female figures to symbolize the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, the female figure made an unsatisfactory symbol for use in Suffrage propaganda because 'some sort of oscillation will still go on between sign and referent (Womanhood and women as it were).'²²² The result of such oscillation, arguably, being endorsement of concepts of femininity, such as perceived physical and mental weakness, which were used to discriminate against women, and refuted by Suffragists.²²³ Nevertheless, as examples of paintings such as *1914* (Fig. 9) indicate, one exception to this rule was that in western artistic convention the concept of peace was also often personified by female figures. With peace personified by the female figure any oscillation between sign and referent worked only to enforce that under the parameters of the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference women, because of their potential as mothers, were assumed to be innately opposed to war, making woman and peace synonymous with each other, as the article in *The Graphic* had implied. Demonstrating that the link between women and pacifism could be used to support the Suffragists' campaign, on 1 September 1914 an article entitled 'Protest Against The War' in *Votes for Women*, the official paper of the WSPU, described a female-led anti-war demonstration on 4 August 1914 in the following terms:

²²¹ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 209.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

Never before had such a disaster threatened the world: never before had the conscious, organised, articulate women of all classes and parties and of several nations met to make, on behalf womanhood and childhood and the home, a protest against the time-honoured methods of brutal force by which men – regardless of half the race – have seen fit to settle their national disputes. It was a protest [...] of the mother who takes thought for the future happiness of her children against the destructiveness of a brief, insensate rage.²²⁴

Although the main suffrage groups, including the previously militant WSPU, had agreed to suspend hostilities against the British government for the duration of the war in the hope of gaining the vote, the emphasis that is placed on war being the way in which men *not* women had chosen to settle national disputes in the foregoing article can be understood to align femininity with pacifism.²²⁵ The intention of this was to gender war as purely masculine in order to reveal that, denied the right to vote, women in Britain actually had no official way of influencing the governmental decision to declare war on Germany. Therefore, without the vote, like the apparently helplessly ineffectual female figure in *S.O.S.* (Fig. 6), British women were not only powerless to defend themselves but also unable to prevent the First World War. This meant that responsibility for the conflict and all the subsequent negative repercussions it caused could indeed be viewed as exclusively masculine. The link between women and peace thereby provided

²²⁴ Cited in Angela Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain*, 53, note 5, citing Sybil Oldfield (ed.), *International Woman Suffrage: Jus Suffragii 1913-1920*, Vols. 1-4, London, 2003, 160 [Oldfield 1:208].

²²⁵ Angela Smith, *Suffrage Discourse In Britain*, 1.

Suffragists with an ideal mechanism to attack the way in which British society discriminated against women whilst promoting male authority. In *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11), after initially alighting on the prostrate male figure in the central foreground, the beholder's eye is drawn to follow an imaginary diagonal line that reaches across the entire compositional length of the painting. Extending from the prostrate male figure in the foreground to the hand of the central female figure resting on the former's back, the diagonal line continues through the second hand of the female, which is raised in a halting gesture. Passing, finally, via one of the two male figures equipped with sharp draggers the line eventually disappears at a vanishing point within the battle scene in the painting's background. The imaginary line can be understood to function to make evident that the death of the male figures in the painting's foreground is directly linked to the ferocious scene of men fighting in the background. This can be seen as compounding the association of violence with men in line with long-held concepts of the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference. However, in the process of traversing the painting, the line also directs the viewer's gaze towards the bare breasts of the central female figure, thereby emphasizing her potential role as a mother. Combining allusions to motherhood, which arguably determined wartime roles, with a hand gesture that suggested a plea for the cessation of war, the compositional structure of *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11), like the *Votes for Women* article, can be interpreted as not only making womanhood symbolic of passivity, but also women synonymous with pacifism.

Previous studies of Ethel Walker's oeuvre, including those by Katy Deepwell, Mary Sorrell, Justin Kenyon, Mary Chamot and Brian Pearce, have concentrated on exploring

her work in public collections, such as the Tate Britain, which consist almost exclusively either of portraits of both women and men or large-scale decorative capriccios generally featuring female figures.²²⁶ The result of such selective focus has been the creation of the false impression that *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) was the only painting produced by Walker to engage with the First World War, therefore suggesting that the artist had little interest in representing war. Walker actually produced other paintings that engaged with the circumstances of the First World War from the home front perspective, for example *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) of 1917 (until 2008 held in a private collection), which features wounded soldiers dressed in ‘hospital blues’ uniforms, who clearly outnumber both women and other men present in the work.²²⁷ Whilst the meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity constructed in *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) will be explored in greater depth in chapter two, it is pertinent to note that the way in which masculinity is inscribed in the painting can be understood to allude to the sacrificial nature of war. This is achieved through the representation of servicemen who have been injured in battle and their juxtaposition with other able-bodied servicemen dressed in military khaki, female nurses and other civilians. However, the representation of so many injured men juxtaposed with able-bodied women also has the effect of not only unconventionally associating masculinity with weakness, but suggesting feminine vitality. As a result *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) can be understood as promoting the temporary destabilization of the traditional balance of

²²⁶ Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between The Wars*; Mary Sorrell, ‘Dame Ethel Walker, A.R.A.,’ *Apollo, The Magazine of The Arts For Connoisseurs and Collectors*, London, Vol. 45, January to June 1947, 119-121; Justine Kenyon, ‘Ethel Walker (1861-1951): In Pursuit of Heaven’; Mary Chamot, ‘Ethel Walker,’ *Apollo: A Journal of The Arts*, London, Vol. XIII, January to June 1931, 307-308 and Brian Louis Pearce, *Dame Ethel Walker: An Essay in Reassessment*, Exeter, 1997.

²²⁷ Injured men wearing similar uniforms are also found in *The Doctor: I*, which is part of the *Acts of Mercy* cycle of four paintings of 1916-20, produced by the artist Frederick Cayley Robinson (1862-1927), which are now in the Wellcome Collection, London.

power relations between men and women which was brought about by the circumstances of war. Therefore, the way in which sexual difference is inscribed in *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) can be seen to suggest further that there was indeed a relationship between Walker's views on prevailing levels of sexual inequality and her engagement with the circumstances of war.

As noted, in both *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) and *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) notions of the sacrificial nature of war are enforced strongly, thereby suggesting that Walker disapproved of the negative effects of the war. This can be seen as an indication that Walker was perhaps fearful or even ideologically opposed to the conflict. In an interview with the *Manchester Guardian* on 29 April 1940 Walker was asked if 'the type of picture she would be painting would be influenced in any way by' the conditions of the Second World War.²²⁸ As her reply Walker gave the curt answer 'No: I hate war.'²²⁹ Walker's reply can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, her definite 'no' suggests that she was simply not interested in war as a subject, thereby giving further endorsement to the argument that her paintings engaging with the First World War were produced simply because the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference provided an ideal way to protest about discrimination against women. Secondly, Walker's reply implied that certainly by the time of the Second World War she had a well-developed dislike of war. This suggests that her view was based on either her experience of the events of the First World War or inspired by a long-held ideological conviction. Although, on its own Walker's comment to the *Manchester Guardian* is too ambiguous to provide

²²⁸ Anonymous, 'Our London Correspondence -The New Woman A.R.A.,' *Manchester Guardian*, Manchester, No. 29,203, Monday 29 April 1940, 4.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

definitive confirmation that she held a pacifist worldview, living in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea and exhibiting with the New English Art Club (NEAC), she was, nevertheless, very well placed to have encountered and taken inspiration from artists who were closely associated with pacifism. Walker could well have encountered individuals, like Mary Sargent Florence (1857-1954) and Evelyn De Morgan, whose symbolic approach to representing concerns such as pacifism and egalitarianism, along with Walker's apparent engagement with similar issues, suggests that certain artists were mostly likely well aware that the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference could be appropriated as a mechanism to convey protest against war and discrimination aimed at women. This gives support to the contention of this thesis that an ongoing exchange of ideas took place between artists about using concepts of sexual difference to construct protest. Through her membership of NEAC, Walker is likely to have encountered the worldview of fellow member Sargent Florence, another former student of the Slade and active peace campaigner, who along with C.K. Ogden, in 1915, published a pamphlet entitled *Militarism Versus Feminism*, which aligned women with peace in a very similar way to that implied by the use of concepts of sexual difference in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11).²³⁰ Furthermore, from 1911 onwards Walker lived near De Morgan, who had a home in Church Street, Chelsea.²³¹ Before the war De Morgan had produced a number of paintings, which it has been argued revealed her pacifist worldview.²³² These works included *The Poor Man Who Saved The City* of 1901 (Fig. 30), which was produced in

²³⁰ Katy Deepwell, *Women Artists Between The Wars*, 153 and C.K. Ogden and Mary Sargent Florence, *Militarism Versus Feminism*, London, 1915.

²³¹ Brian Louis Pearce, *Dame Ethel Walker An Essay in Reassessment*, 10-11 and De Morgan archive, De Morgan Centre, London, accessed 24 July 2007.

²³² Judy Oberhausen, 'A Horror of War,' 75- 92, 79-80; Richenda M. Roberts, *Pacifism and Egalitarianism: Evelyn De Morgan's Responses to War*, 23-25.

response to the Second Anglo Boer War and was exhibited widely in the years immediately preceding the First World War.²³³ In the right foreground of the painting a *Bible* is shown open to reveal the pacifist message that peaceful and diplomatic resolution of conflicts, although arguably morally right, are often thwarted by ignorance and jingoism, which has been appropriated from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes (9: 14-18):

*There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good.*²³⁴

In De Morgan's painting, to the left of the *Bible* a lone male figure represents the 'poor man' whose negotiations have prevented war and saved the city. To the right of the painting a bag of money symbolizes the material wealth of the solitary figure. Nevertheless, the figure is still 'poor' or worthy of the beholder's pity because the moral goodness of his actions have gone unacknowledged by the citizens whose city he has saved, who have abandoned him – their saviour - outside the walls of the city. Whereas

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Ecclesiastes (9: 14-18), Old Testament, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 687.

in contrast the citizens themselves are shown in the painting's background within the city walls rejoicing at their reprieve from war. De Morgan's use of the city walls to divide the picture in two halves (thus separating the 'poor man' from the citizens to indicate that he has been ignored by those his actions have saved) has been interpreted, in my own previous study of the artist's work, as revealing her condemnation of Britain's failure to heed calls by pacifists for the use of arbitration to prevent the Second Anglo Boer War, which the British government deemed to be a domestic dispute that did not require outside intervention.²³⁵ Although not featuring a woman as its protagonist, extracts from the same biblical story were also used in pre-war women's suffrage imagery. Line eighteen of chapter nine of Ecclesiastes is, for example, reproduced on the *Cambridge Alumnae* banner (Fig. 31) which was created for use at the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) procession of 13 June 1908 by Mary Lowndes (1856-1929), a founding member of the Artists' Suffrage League.²³⁶ Indicating further the possible existence of a cross-fertilization of ideas between like-minded individuals and its influence upon the way in which sexual difference was inscribed in certain paintings engaging with the First World War, during the 1880s Lowndes had studied art privately under the direction of artist and designer Henry Holiday (1839-1927).²³⁷ In addition to

²³⁵ Richenda M. Roberts, *Pacifism and Egalitarianism: Evelyn De Morgan's Responses to War*, 23-25. Shortly before the commencement of the Second Anglo-Boer War the combined efforts of the international peace movement had organized the first Hague Conference, which lasted from 18 May to 29 July 1899. The primary outcome of this conference was the establishment of the Hague Court where disputes between nations could be peacefully settled by arbitration rather than warfare. By 1914 the Hague Court had been responsible for the peaceful settlement of fourteen potential international conflicts. The Second Anglo-Boer War was not one of them. A.C.F. Beales, *The History of Peace: A Short Account of The Organised Movements for International Peace*, London, 1931, 233-237.

²³⁶ Formed in January 1907, the Artists' Suffrage League was the first suffrage society of professional women and was responsible for producing much of the visual propaganda used by the NUWSS to promote the Suffragists' cause. Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 16.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, Appendix 2, 246.

being a supporter of women's suffrage, Holiday was also a close friend of both Evelyn and William De Morgan.²³⁸

Additionally suggesting further the existence of a commonality in approach towards producing artworks with irenic or other protest intentions, which can be understood to have been adopted by a number of like-minded artists, in *Our Lady of Peace* of c.1902 by De Morgan (Fig. 32) concepts of sexual difference in relation to war are handled in a very similar way to *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11). Drawing upon the way in which the metaphorization of war and sexual difference polarized masculinity and femininity, *Our Lady of Peace* (Fig. 32) was created in De Morgan's studio in Florence as a response to the Second Anglo Boer, but was only exhibited for the first time in the spring of 1916 after being transferred to Britain when the threat of war caused the artist to abandon her Italian home in 1914.²³⁹ In the foreground of De Morgan's painting the link between men and aggression in war is signified by an armour-clad male figure, whose appearance is very similar to that of the chivalric medieval knight used to symbolize masculine patriotic prowess in many cultural forms before and during the First World War. Caught in the act of kneeling to pray in a church, perhaps for victory or safe deliverance in battle,

²³⁸ Within the De Morgan archive there are a number of letters sent and received between both the De Morgans, Henry Holiday and his wife Catherine (Kate), which date from the period just before and during the First World War; including many that reveal pacifist sentiments. Letters purchased by the De Morgan Foundation as 'The Property of a Gentlemen,' lots 490-508, Sotheby's, 24 March 1970, De Morgan Archive, De Morgan Foundation, London, accessed 24 July 2007.

²³⁹ The final number of the date painted on *Our Lady of Peace* (Fig. 32) is illegible. Therefore in line with other undated paintings the date has been based on the work's compositional similarities to other examples produced by De Morgan between 1890 and 1910. There is a note in the De Morgan Archive confirming that *Our Lady of Peace* (Fig. 32) was one of a number of paintings transferred from Florence to London in 1914 when the threat of war forced the De Morgans to abandon Italy. De Morgan Archive, De Morgan Foundation, London, accessed 3 August 2011. Exhibit 3, Evelyn De Morgan, *Catalogue of An Exhibition of Pictures*.

the male figure has been distracted by a vision of the Virgin Mary, identified as such by the halo above her head, whose maternal status as the mother of Christ, in common with that of a similar figure in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11), has a dual function. Firstly, the maternal status of Mary alluded to the sacrifice of her son Christ and through it to the sacrificial nature of war. Secondly, surrounded by Cherubs and a rainbow representing salvation, as the mother of Christ, Mary symbolized the role of motherhood, which seemingly set women in opposition to war and made femininity synonymous with pacifism. Peace and women are additionally linked by the swathing of Mary in olive branches, an attribute of peace in artistic convention. Playing on the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, confronting *male* war with *female* peace, De Morgan's painting juxtaposed notions of the perceived virtuous morality of women in relation to war, as implied in the *Votes for Women* article, with masculine aggression in wartime, signified by a knight in battle armour. The effect of this was to polarize masculinity and femininity in relation to war in a way which can be understood to have communicated prevailing pacifist beliefs' that morality lay not in fighting a justified war but in total abstention from violence of any kind.²⁴⁰

Providing further insight into Walker's view on war, a press handout issued when *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) was exhibited by Wildenstein in 1936 stated that the painting was 'started [...] within a week of the outbreak of war in 1914. At a time when most people thought the war would be a matter of a few weeks, she was inspired by a foreboding that it would last for years.'²⁴¹ The foregoing catalogue entry indicates that *The Zone of Hate*

²⁴⁰ Gail Chester and Andrew Rigby (eds.), *Articles of Peace*, 1.

²⁴¹ Martin Bultin; Mary Chamot and Dennis Farr (eds), *The Modern British Paintings, Drawings and*

(Fig. 11) was apparently begun in a time before the devastating effects of ever-increasing industrialized warfare had been fully realized. This suggests that, unlike like *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29), which was clearly created after the massive male injury and death had become apparent, *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) was unlikely to have been inspired by actual wartime events which might have changed the artist's worldview. The early date of *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) therefore supports the idea that, even if its creator was not a committed pacifist like Sargent Florence and De Morgan, the painting might well have been inspired by both a cross-fertilization of ideas amongst artists and Walker's own feelings of fear and revulsion at the prospect of war.

Fearful trepidation of war was a feeling which Walker would have shared with many Britons, not just pacifists. Prior to the First World War, within the living memory of much of the population, the British nation's experience of war had been little more than one of policing its imperial colonies, with risk to life and limb affecting only regular servicemen and their dependents. This meant that, rather than being seen as a cleanser of societal ills, the outbreak of war in August 1914 was greeted by many people with fear.²⁴² This is exemplified by the typed recollections of Mrs Purbrook, which are now within the collection of the IWM:

I selfishly prayed that my dear children might never know the horror of war, as indeed I did not, for it had never touched me or mine intimately. The Boer War

Sculpture, 756.

²⁴² Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 9-39.

was the only one in which England had been engaged in my recollection and I had known no one who took a share in it.²⁴³

However, the First World War was different. The ever-increasing need to induce more men to voluntarily-enlist meant that women were urged, for the good of the nation, to ignore their own fears and lend support to the male enlistment programme. As a result, evoking the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, popular publications aimed specifically at girls and young women, such as the *Girl's Own Paper*, encouraged female participation in the promotion of male enlistment by suggesting that:

Women will forgive almost anything in a man except cowardice and treason [...] not only is the feeling instinctive, but it comes to her through long years of human evolution [...] With hearts full but tranquil souls, women can send forth their sons, their husbands, their sweethearts, their protectors, to danger or to death – to anything saving halting and dishonour. A great Admiral put it neatly when he said ‘victory was won by the woman behind the man behind the gun.’²⁴⁴

Similar sentiments are also found communicated in the services recruitment poster *Women of Britain Say - GO!* of 1915 (Fig. 33), which uses a combination of image and text to evoke the nexus between war and sexual difference in order to induce male enlistment. In addition, as is evident from the way in which sexual difference is found inscribed in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23), the cover of *Modern Life* (Fig. 24) and the title of

²⁴³ File Mrs Purbrook, 86/53A, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 16 June 2010.

²⁴⁴ Anonymous, ‘Women and Patriotism,’ *Girl's Own Paper Annual*, London, 1914-15, 36.

the popular music hall song *I'll Make A Man Out of You*, the sexual power that a woman could potentially exert over a man was also singled out as a *weapon* that women could be persuaded to employ to induce enlistment.²⁴⁵ To this end, on 30 August 1914 Admiral Charles Penrose Fitzgerald succeeded in persuading thirty women from Folkestone to hand out white feathers to men of military service age not in uniform. The purpose of this action, which soon spread beyond Folkestone, was to induce enlistment through shame by enforcing the premise that manliness, in line with chivalric conduct, was not only defined through physical and psychological strength but equally by an individual's display of loyalty to loved ones and patriotism.²⁴⁶ On this basis, the handing out of white feathers informed men 'deaf or indifferent to their country's need' for services recruits that 'there is a danger awaiting them far more terrible than any thing they can meet in battle.'²⁴⁷ The 'danger' that men were predicated to face, which was worse than injury or death on the battlefield, was being publically humiliated and branded as unpatriotic cowards for non-enlistment by the receipt of a white feather. Although soon discredited by the massive death toll and the erroneous giving of feathers to men who were injured or in exempt professions, the initial effectiveness of handing out feathers to promote enlistment can be found in a number of firsthand accounts recorded by the BBC in the 1960s, which are now in the archives of the IWM, London. This collection includes the testimony of H. Symonds who recalled how, despite being seventeen and underage, he was persuaded to enlist by being handed a white feather by a young ginger-haired woman in Hyde Park, London:

²⁴⁵ Nicoletta Gullace, 'White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and Memory in The Great War,' *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Twentieth-Century British Studies, April, 1997, 178-206, 193.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 178-206.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

So when ginger gently tucked a white duck feather into my button-hole I went off to the recruiting office and, putting two years on my age, joined up [...] When some three or four days later in uniform I again stood and listened to ‘Ginger’ she recognized me and in front of the crowd around her stand she came up to me and asked for the return of her feather. Amidst mixed cheering and booing I handed it to her. She had tears in her eyes as she kissed me and said “God Bless.”²⁴⁸

Symond’s comments exemplify the deeply ingrained nature of social stratification based upon sexual difference within British society in a number of ways. Firstly, by demonstrating the extent to which the handing out of white feathers can be understood as being a distinctly feminine activity in the encouragement of male enlistment. Secondly, the clarity of Symond’s recall of events so many years after the war’s end can be seen to convey how deeply masculine pride was piqued by the threat of public humiliation by women.

To conclude, having examined how sexual difference was constructed in a variety of cultural forms, ranging from newspapers and magazines to paintings, in the years immediately preceding and at the commencement of the First World War, this thesis has shown that the demarcation of wartime roles in general and the creation and reception of fine art in terms of concepts of sexual difference can be understood as being influenced significantly by two factors. Firstly, the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual

²⁴⁸ H. Symonds to BBC, 18 May 1964, Imperial War Museum, BBC/GW, Vol. SNE-SYM, folio 427-28, accessed 17 June 2008.

difference in general within most human societies, under the parameters of which species survival meant that the feminine role of motherhood provided a seemingly innate reason for the exclusion of women from combat roles. As noted herein, the prohibition of women from fighting during the First World War meant that femininity could be understood as being synonymous with peace, thereby making it possible for roles of combat and protection to be viewed as being purely masculine. This made it easy for war and sexual difference to be viewed as reciprocal definers of each other. Moreover, within British society the frequent personification, over two thousand years, of the British nation by the female figure of Britannia also particularly helped to enforce the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference. Often depicted in diaphanous robes, which can be understood to have made evident her frail, female, body, Britannia functioned to remind beholders that British sovereignty required constant protection. The effect of this was to enforce notions that women and property could be viewed similarly as objects of masculine protection, thereby endorsing the male protective role. Secondly, the demarcation of war by sexual difference was additionally influenced greatly by the traditional stratification of British society, which was structured fundamentally on the basis of binary premise in relation to male and female roles. This study has shown that such premise was perpetuated in the immediate pre-war period through the sustained indoctrination of men, women, boys and girls from all social classes in a variety of ways, ranging from espousal in dominant narratives such as newspaper articles to the pedagogical action of families and other social groups or institutions, for example the public and state school systems. Revealing how masculinity was constituted in newspaper and magazines, this thesis has shown that boys and men were imbued with the

ethos of imperial masculinity, which advocated that success in private and public life could be achieved through fitness in body and strength of mind. Meanwhile, interest in medieval revivalism throughout much of the nineteenth century meant that by the outbreak of the First World War manliness was additionally increasingly measured in terms of chivalric code that advocated self-sacrifice and the patriotic protection of nation and loved ones, which was frequently visualized in Britain in the form of images of Saint George, England's patron saint. In contrast, within British society during the same period, despite a slight increase in female rights relating to the home and opportunities for women in the workplace, research for this study has shown that in many cultural forms women were frequently defined not only as physically and mentally weak, but also commercially and politically effete, thereby implying that femininity could be viewed as being diametrically opposed to masculinity.

On the outbreak of the First World War the culturally-ingrained nature of the structuring of British society by binary premise concerning male and female roles, and the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general, therefore made it, initially at least, very easy for pro-war propaganda to justify war and promote male enlistment as an act of masculine patriotic protection. To this end in the early months of the war concepts of masculine sexual difference, in the form of either direct communication of the ethos of imperial masculinity or indirectly through the guise of chivalric imagery and rhetoric, were used in both official and unofficial pro-war propaganda to justify war by indicating that the primary function of men was to demonstrate their masculine physical fitness and patriotism through voluntary-enlistment. Whereas, again in line with pre-war values,

within similar dominant narratives, such as magazine articles and enlistment posters, including *Women of Britain Say - GO!* (Fig. 33), the primary wartime actions of women and girls were frequently prescribed as being the inducement of male enlistment and the provision of activities that were ancillary to the roles of men. Additionally, using examples of paintings such as *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11), it has been demonstrated herein that the culturally-ingrained nature of binary premise pertaining to masculinity and femininity within pre-war British society also made it possible for certain artists, for example Walker and De Morgan, to allude to the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in their work in order to deliberately construct protest against both war in general and the discriminatory nature of the traditional structuring of British society.

The frequency with which binary premise relating to men and women was initially used to assign wartime roles and respond to war in all cultural forms, therefore suggests that by the outbreak of the First World War cultural traditions within British society pertaining the polarization of masculine and feminine positions were so deeply ingrained that sexual difference was indeed seen as the most obvious mechanism of engagement with the conflict. Nevertheless, as noted, concepts of sexual difference are not static. By as early as the spring of 1915, the presence of many injured or permanently disabled men coupled with an increase in female employment on the home front functioned to imply male weakness alongside greater female authority, thereby temporarily destabilizing pre-war values of sexual difference. Amongst combatants and civilians alike, the war's destabilizing effects upon concepts of sexual difference stimulated the circulation of radically altered meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity. In the two

chapters that follow it will be shown that engagement with the home front perspective meant that, as objects on public display, many paintings using sexual difference as a mechanism to engage with the First World War almost inevitably had the potential to make evident to beholders the destabilizing impact of the conflict on traditional social values. Consequently paintings engaging with the home front perspective had the potential to be interpreted as promoting altered constructions of masculinity and femininity that were radically different to pre-war values within British society, which were not only reinstated in the immediate post-war period, but also provided the paradigm upon which the canonical values for British First World War art were based.

Chapter Two
Destabilizing the ‘Tropic Balance:’ The Effect of Constructions of Masculinity and Femininity in Paintings Engaging with Wartime Life on the British Home Front.²⁴⁹

David Summers has argued that the ‘practical, pedagogical language of art must be assumed to be a central point at which the values of a society at large come to bear on making [...] and shap[ing] it[s interpretation] in specific ways.’²⁵⁰ Supporting Summers’ argument, pre-war stratification of British society based on sexual difference, which resulted in the initial rigid polarization of masculine and feminine wartime roles, inevitably meant that the experience of war, and therefore interpretation of engagement with the same in paintings, had the potential to be defined by gender. Exemplifying the influence of pre-war values concerning the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, early in the war, in December 1914, the Christmas edition of *The Graphic* published a souvenir print of *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34), a painting that had been specially commissioned from the artist James Clark (1853-1934).²⁵¹ Indicating the painting’s early date of production, in the foreground of *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) a young British soldier, denoted as such by the uniform worn, lies dead; his lifeless body slumped against the foot of Christ’s cross, a small trickle of blood running down the side of his face from a bullet hole in his left temple. Evoking the link between the establishment of manliness and self-sacrifice, so actively used to induce hubris in men to coerce them into voluntarily-enlistment, the text of an advertisement for the print

²⁴⁹ Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (eds.), *Behind the Lines*, 5.

²⁵⁰ David Summers, ‘Form,’ Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics and The Problem of Art-Historical Description,’ *Critical Inquiry*, Chicago, Vol. 15, No. 2, winter 1989, 372-406, 398.

²⁵¹ Anonymous, *The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, London, Vol. LXC, No. 2374a, December 1914, 23.

published in the 21 November edition of *The Graphic* informed readers that the work represented ‘sleeping his last sleep [...] a gallant young soldier sacrificed at the altar of duty to country [...], in the history of nations nothing more glorious has ever been witnessed than this Great Sacrifice.’²⁵² In line with sentiments expressed in the advertisement, Clark’s painting was initially received as a call-to-arms, whereby the death of the soldier depicted was understood as being exemplary of the regretful, but necessary, self-sacrifice of voluntarily-enlisted men in the name of patriotic protection. Revealing both initial public ignorance of the unprecedented levels of war-related injury and death, and the effectiveness of state propaganda at hiding the same, by August 1915, in addition to *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) receiving royal patronage, through the purchase of the original painting and subsequent distribution of a number of copies in oil to various public institutions by Queens Mary (1867-1953) and Alexandra (1844-1925), *The Graphic* boasted that it had received over 15,000 letters of support for the print of Clark’s painting and the pro-war ethos it seemingly promoted.²⁵³ Exemplifying the spirit with which the painting was initially received, a letter from Henry C. Shelley published in *The Graphic* on 4 December 1915 noted:

The Great Sacrifice marks a notable departure in war pictures. Perhaps too many of them have emphasised the mere valour of war: this goes to the root of the

²⁵² Advertisement, *The Graphic*, Vol. LXC, No. 2370, 21 November 1914, iii.

²⁵³ In January 1915 the original of *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) was exhibited at the *War Relief* Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, under the title of *Duty*. The painting was purchased by Queen Mary who subsequently gave it to St. Mildred’s Church, Whippingham, Isle of Wight, where it hangs today in the Battenberg Chapel. Anonymous, *War Relief Exhibition*, catalogue, Royal Academy of Art, London (7 January to 27 February 1915), No. 376, 23. Peter Harrington, ‘*The Great Sacrifice*, The First World War’s Most Graphic Painting,’ *This England*, Cheltenham, autumn 1994, 14-15. Anonymous, *The Graphic*, Vol. XCII, No. 2386, Saturday 21 August 1915, insert iii.

matter. It breathes a message of consolation for the bereaved; but it also proclaims that the humblest private in the ranks is a sharer in the world's redemption.²⁵⁴

Although largely supporting the claims made by *The Graphic*, written a year and half into the duration of the war, reference to *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) providing 'a message of consolation for the bereaved' in Shelley's letter also revealed increasing awareness of the unprecedented levels of war-related sacrifice. This suggests that the extolling of selfless, masculine, heroism in pro-war propaganda and paintings like *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) could no longer 'camouflage' the unprecedented injury and death toll. Supporting the foregoing argument, in 1917, army chaplain Geoffrey Gordon, who was at the time serving on the Western Front, contrasted initial positive reactions to Clark's painting with the reality of battlefield events in a bitter critique of the effects of war. Commenting on *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) Gordon wrote:

You remember the picture of the Great Sacrifice, which at one time was seen in every shop window. A young lad lies on the ground. A tiny bullet hole shows in his temple, and from it flows the faintest streak of blood. Over him hangs the shadowy figure of the Crucified[...] Like the young lad in the picture, the man whom I saw die had a bullet wound in the temple, but there the likeness ceased. Here was no calm death, but a ghastly mess of blood and brains in the mud, on

²⁵⁴ Extract from letter by Henry C. Shelley, *The Graphic*, 4 December 1915, cited in Peter Harrington, 'The Great Sacrifice, The First World War's Most Graphic Painting,' 15.

his face and in the surrounding trench; and in the stark horror of the moment I could not see the Crucified at all.²⁵⁵

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, in addition to wartime circumstances rendering the representation of war simply as an act of masculine valour and strength no longer tenable, from the summer of 1916 onwards, how the war was represented in all cultural forms was influenced significantly by the additional amendment to DORA. As noted, this amendment made it illegal to produce visual imagery, including artworks, which might cause disaffection or prejudice services' enlistment. In common with much of the British public, most artists living on the home front would have been well aware of changes in DORA legislation, because updates were regularly published in wide-circulation newspapers and magazines, for example *The Times* and *The Queen*. Removed from public display on the grounds that 'pictures of dead bodies undermined civilian morale,' *Paths of Glory* of 1917 (Fig. 35) by Richard Nevinson demonstrated that the scope of the amendment to DORA made it illegal to represent directly, as *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) had done, the bodies of dead allied servicemen.²⁵⁶ For servicemen and civilians located on or close to the battle front the cause of the unprecedented levels of injury and death would have been plainly evident, not only as a result of the increasingly sophisticated military weaponry being used, but also from the destruction to property and land by the same. As images such as the print entitled *That Cursed Wood* of c.1917 (Fig. 36), also by Nevinson, indicated, rather than anachronistically representing war as an act of masculine bravura in the vein of

²⁵⁵ Rev. Geoffrey Gordon and Rev. T.E. Pym, *Papers From Picardy by Two Chaplains*, London, 1917, 175-176.

²⁵⁶ Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and The Great War*, 52.

traditional battle paintings, given the unprecedented circumstances of the war, the depiction of weapons, damaged land and property could be used far more effectively to allude indirectly to the sacrificial nature of the war without contravening DORA, whilst at the same time celebrating the selfless heroism of men pitted against increasingly industrialized weaponry and hostile weather conditions. In contrast in Britain, where there had been very few civilian deaths directly attributable to war and the landscape had been far less profoundly changed, both the legislation of DORA and the absence of men, either through fighting or the British government's decision not to repatriate the corpses of war-dead, significantly influenced the way in which artists could, and did, engage with the subject of war from the home front perspective. Circumstances of war on the British home front meant that perhaps the most obvious impact of the conflict on daily life which could be tangibly represented or indirectly alluded to in paintings was the ever increasing numbers of injured or permanently disabled men who had been sent home. These were men whose presence was made even more conspicuous by the distinctive 'hospital blues' uniforms that were issued to the wounded, and which can be found depicted in a variety of visual culture engaging with the war, not least paintings of the period including *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* by Ethel Walker (Fig. 29).

Additionally, as noted, by the spring of 1915 the prolonged duration of war and significant levels of male injury and death meant that on the battle front there was a need for more men and additional supplies of ammunition and weaponry. A combination of a requirement for more weaponry, ammunition and men meant that, rather than being discouraged, women were instead either actively encouraged to take jobs left vacant by

enlisted men or asked to work in munitions factories. Demonstrating that sexual difference is always in a perpetual state of renegotiation, the meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity that were generated by representations of incapacitated men juxtaposed with able-bodied working women, ranging in diversity from the jovial photograph published in *The War Budget* of 18 January 1917 (Fig. 37) to paintings including *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), could be interpreted as constructing masculinity as *weak* and femininity as *strong*. The effect of this was two-fold. Firstly, it implied that the circumstances of war had indeed destabilized pre-war constructions of sexual difference, thereby temporarily altering long-held perceptions of gendered power relations within British society. Secondly, altered meanings and values, that could be interpreted by the way in which masculinity and femininity was often constructed in cultural forms (not least paintings which were exhibited publically), helped to associate the home front with feminine authority.

Commenting on the effects of war, Adrian Gregory has noted that, although throughout the war a majority of Britons retained the view that a war commenced must be seen through to the end and won, the unprecedented scale of injury and death of combatants and resultant emotional and material home front deprivations, ranging from bereavement to enforced poverty, engendered increasing disaffection and fatigue with war amongst combatants and civilians alike.²⁵⁷ Shared disillusionment with the war can be interpreted as suggesting the existence of a degree of unity between home and battle fronts. Conversely, however, research concerned with how gendered identities were constituted during wartime, including that by Nicollella Gullace and Susan Grayzel, whose work I

²⁵⁷ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 112-151.

have particularly drawn upon in this section of the thesis, has argued that female support for the war effort, irrespective of its nature, ranging from flawed pro-enlistment activities such as the handing out of white feathers to well-intended employment in munitions factories, arguably made women to some extent complicit in the massive injury and death toll of servicemen.²⁵⁸ As noted, this meant that during wartime women could be understood to have occupied two positions, either as potential victims in need of male protection in line with tradition or as agents in part responsible for so much suffering through their support of the war effort. Therefore, either way, women could be seen as being implicated in the massive injury and death toll of men. As a result, female figures in paintings, which had been considered as being symbolic of peace at the commencement of war, additionally, like the womanhood their use connoted, could also be interpreted by beholders as symbols for sacrifice and death. This study therefore contends that a direct consequence of this was that many paintings engaging with aspects of home front life featuring female figures could be viewed as making evident feminine complicity in war-related injury and death, thereby signalling the abnormality of wartime.

Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Eric Leed has observed that, despite the promotion of female employment as being helpful to the war effort in newspapers, magazines and imagery such as pro-war posters, the apparent increase in female authority also inspired feelings of anger amongst combatants.²⁵⁹ Interpreting increased feminine authority on the home front as a sign that civilians, especially women,

²⁵⁸ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, 86-156 and Nicoletta Gullace, 'White Feathers and Wounded Men,' 205.

²⁵⁹ Eric Leed, *No Man's Land*, 199-204.

were profiting from war, many male combatants were angry because they felt that there was an unequal divide in the experience of war between those who risked their lives fighting in battle, who were exclusively male, and those who remained at home who were in the majority female.²⁶⁰ Such a divide is exemplified by the difference in reactions to the effects of war by civilians and combatants. On the home front growing fatigue amongst civilians was expressed in terms of disheartened impotency. Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940), Lord Mayor of Birmingham, for example, wrote to his sister in July 1916 to say he that was ‘rather depressed’ because he had to write so many letters of condolence.²⁶¹ As noted, in contrast to civilians, many servicemen reacted with both anger and aggression; the latter being not just directed towards the enemy, but also non-combatants from allied countries.²⁶² The animosity of despondent servicemen directed towards non-combatants took many forms including the apportionment of blame for war on women and isolated cases of violent acts committed against civilians.²⁶³ Consequently, as an extract from the diary of Otto Braun, a student volunteer killed in 1918, succinctly noted, some combatants could be seen as being ‘furious with the stay-at-homes, in fact furious with everything at home.’²⁶⁴ Disenchantment with the war, such as that implied by Chamberlain and Braun, meant that by the second half of the conflict concepts of chivalric sacrifice were no longer viewed in positive terms. Consequently, as Samuel Hynes has observed, rather being understood as symbolizing masculine patriotic prowess, the self-sacrifice of voluntarily-enlisted servicemen became increasingly

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, Vol.1, Aldershot and Burlington, 2000, 143-5.

²⁶² Eric Leed, *No Man's Land*, 199-204.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 198, note 8 citing Otto Braun in *Diary*, Julie Braun (ed.), London, 1924, 171.

viewed as the primary symbol of ‘the myth of the war,’ connoting instead the ‘betrayed idealism [...and] bitterness’ of men who had been coerced by pro-war propaganda to enlist voluntarily.²⁶⁵ Indicating that civilians, especially women, were aware that their attempts to support the war effort, and provide for their families in the absence or incapacity of men, were in some cases being misinterpreted, the disgruntled claims of servicemen, such as Otto Braun, that people on the home front were oblivious to their ‘sacrifices’ were repudiated in articles published on the home front. Such sentiments are, for example, expressed in the article ‘Where Tommy Makes a Mistake,’ which was written by Katie Kenealy for *Home Chat* magazine on 19 February 1916. Not only did Kenealy make clear that in the circumstances of war the home front population suffered too, albeit differently, she also highlighted civilian awareness of the invidious position of servicemen. Opening her article Kenealy wrote: ‘Not so very long ago, [... I read] in my morning newspaper ‘Business is as usual; amusements are as usual; everything is as usual and Tommy doesn’t think it fair.’²⁶⁶ After listing how families and shoppers in the street mention men at the ‘front’ all the time, and noting her own feelings of guilt over purchasing a new hat, Kenealy then detailed the admiring looks that two disabled ex-servicemen received from people in a cinema:

Nearly every girl in the place was with somebody in khaki or naval uniforms. There were two fine-looking young fellows in mufti just in front of me; and I was wondering if so many uniforms did not make such slackers feel ashamed of themselves. But when they got up to go, I discovered that each had lost a leg!

²⁶⁵ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 439-440.

²⁶⁶ Katie Kenealy, ‘Where Tommy Makes a Mistake,’ *Home Chat*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 1092, 19 February 1916, 316-318.

You should have seen the admiring looks they received from everybody, and heard the murmur of sympathy which went around after they had gone.²⁶⁷

Concluding her article Kenealy noted: ‘I don’t believe there is a word of truth in the statement I saw in the newspaper. As a matter of fact most of us eat, sleep and breathe war! IF ANYBODY TELLS YOU WE ARE “AS USUAL,” TOMMY DEAR, YOU JUST WAIT TILL YOU COME HOME ON LEAVE AND JUDGE FOR YOURSELF!’²⁶⁸

As the foregoing article implied, the sacrificial nature of the war was not restricted to the battle front. Civilians on the home front were also affected adversely by the circumstances of war in a number of different ways. Workers in munitions factories were, because of the nature of the type of work undertaken, exposed to danger and death from explosions and poisoning. On 11 August 1917 *The Times*, for example, provided a death-roll, similar to that of servicemen printed in the daily newspapers, of the names of thirteen women killed through breathing-in poisonous fumes following an explosion at an armaments factory in Barking.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, individuals employed in munitions factories filling shells with Trinitrotoluene (TNT), who were in the majority women, risked contracting toxic jaundice, whereby their skin, hair and teeth became yellow as a result of handling the explosive. Severe cases of toxic jaundice through TNT poisoning resulted in death, of which there were around fifty a year between 1915 and 1917 in the

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Anonymous, *The Times*, Issue 41554, col A, 11 August 1917, 3.

British munitions industry.²⁷⁰ As a result, after 1916, in order to prevent recruitment problems within munitions factories, the reporting of death from contact with TNT was censored in newspapers and medical articles by a further amendment to DORA.²⁷¹

Additionally, as mentioned, the non-repatriation of corpses denied families and loved ones bodies to mourn over or bury. Judith Butler has argued that ‘if a life is not grievable [or able to be grieved] it is not quite a life[...] It is already the unburied, if not the unburiable.’²⁷² On this basis, the lack of bodies to grieve over can be interpreted as causing much distress by disrupting long-held conventions of mourning on the home front. Moreover, in addition to preventing the funereal rights of both the living and the dead, death, injury and permanent disablement of servicemen resulted in additional hardships on the home front such as poverty caused by the demise or incapacity of the main financial provider.

As noted, in printed media, the ever increasing sacrificial nature of the war was also made evident by the large roll-calls of dead and wounded men which were printed daily in national newspapers, such as those found in the *Daily Mail* and the *Sunday Times*. Whilst seeming to continue endorsement of the ethos of imperial masculinity, through celebrating the selfless heroism of servicemen, such rolls-calls by their very presence, frequency and size made evident the extent of the sacrificial nature of the war. Furthermore, the gender-specific nature of such lists also helped to imply that sacrifice,

²⁷⁰ Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 125.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London and New York, 2006 (first published 2004), 34.

in terms of injury and death at least, was predominately male, thereby giving support to notions of a divide in experience of war between the feminine home and the masculine battle fronts. Responding to changing meanings and values that were assigned to the concept of sacrifice in all its permutations, a number of home front based artists, including John Charles Dollman and Joseph Southall, re-appropriated masculine-specific iconography, such as Christian iconography pertaining to the crucifixion of Christ and the classical legend of Narcissus from *Metamorphosis* by Ovid, in order to symbolize the sacrificial nature of the war. However, because their concentration was again on male suffering alone, allusions to the hubris of men who had been coerced by pro-war propaganda into voluntary enlistment in paintings, like *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* of 1915 by Southall (Fig. 38), also helped to enforce notions of the divisive effects of war by suggesting that the experience of war was indeed demarcated by both geography and gender. The effect of this was that publically exhibited paintings like Southall's fresco could be interpreted as making evident the destabilizing impact of war in a way which might be viewed as supporting the claims made by disenchanted servicemen that civilians, and particularly women, on the home front had forsaken them.

In addition to having to experience bereavement and home front deprivations, women in Britain also faced sexual discrimination as a result of the impact of the introduction of section 40d of DORA, which was interpreted by supporters of feminine welfare, such as Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960), as discriminating against women on the basis of their potential behaviour through allusions to feminine sexual and moral weakness.²⁷³

²⁷³ Ken Weller, *Don't Be a Solider!: The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918*, London and New York, 1985, 39-41 and Angela K. Smith, *Suffrage Discourse*, 41.

Introduced by the British government in an alleged attempt to maintain morale on the battle front and prevent infiltration by female enemy spies, section 40d of DORA effectively condemned many married women to house-arrest by imposing curfews on the wives of servicemen, which were to be enforced by the police.²⁷⁴ In addition to being under virtual house-arrest for large parts of their time, a married woman found to have committed any misdemeanour covered by the scope of DORA was to have their separation allowance stopped.²⁷⁵ Moreover, section 40d had the effect of implying that all women, not just prostitutes, were potentially carriers of sexually transmitted diseases when it stated that ‘no woman suffering from venereal disease shall have sexual intercourse with any member of His Majesty’s Forces, or solicit or invite any member to have sexual intercourse with her.’²⁷⁶ Nevertheless, alleged female complicity in war-related injury and death, along with the conflation of women with property as objects of national victory in so much early pro-war propaganda, again meant that artists’ attempts to symbolize the discriminating effects of section 40d of DORA, through the use of female figures, paradoxically, often unwittingly worked to endorse discrimination against women by additionally suggesting the unnatural circumstances of war in relation to pre-war values of sexual difference.

Comprised of three sections, this chapter will examine how paintings engaging with daily life on the British home front constructed meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity in a way which made evident the destabilizing abnormality of wartime,

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Angela K. Smith, *Suffrage Discourse*, 41.

²⁷⁶ Defence of The Realm Act, section 40d. Cited in Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990*, London and New York, 1999, 279-80.

thereby helping to shape interpretation. Section one will explore how a selection of paintings engaging with the repatriation of injured or disabled servicemen to the home front constructed sexual difference in a way which could be seen as promoting the destabilization of the pre-war concepts of masculinity and femininity. As noted, this was often achieved by the juxtaposition of injured or permanently disabled servicemen with apparently able-bodied civilians; in particular women who were assuming greater responsibilities in private and public life. The second section of the chapter will evaluate the ways in which paintings alluding to the sacrificial nature of war from the home front perspective, through artist's reliance upon the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference, constructed meanings and values which could be interpreted as supporting claims made by servicemen that they had become 'the ultimate victims of both politicians and civilians.'²⁷⁷ Finally, because much polysemy pertaining to wartime constructions of sexual difference was the result of oscillation between sign and referent in relation to the status of women, the third section of the chapter will explore concepts of femininity created by the use of female figures and allusions to feminine wartime roles in paintings engaging with the home front perspective. The chapter will conclude that, because sexual difference is arguably always in a perpetual state of renegotiation, reliance upon the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference as a mechanism for interpreting the destabilizing circumstances of war meant that many paintings engaging with the home front perspective could be interpreted as constructing radically altered meanings and values for masculinity and femininity to those prevalent in the immediate pre-war period. It will be argued that the identification of such altered values for men and women meant that many paintings could, therefore, be seen as

²⁷⁷ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, 13.

actually playing an active role in contributing to the destabilization of pre-war concepts of sexual difference. Altered concepts of sexual difference constructed in paintings, for example, had the potential to promote notions of increased female authority, thereby helping to foster the idea that women were profiting at the expense of men, especially servicemen. Notions that women were profiting from war at the expense of enlisted men consequently facilitated the generation of ideas of a gender-based divide between home and battle fronts during wartime. As noted, this thesis contends that, as a result, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, paintings engaging with the war from the home front perspective became quickly disregarded as uncanonical, because the way in which sexual difference was inscribed in a number of examples could be viewed as failing to uphold dominant standards promoting masculine authority within British society, upon which the canon of British First World War art was based.

2.1 Challenging Binary Tradition: Injured Men

The focal point of *The Creditors* by Dollman (Fig. 3) is five figures seated on a bench in Hyde Park, London, during the First World War.²⁷⁸ Four of the figures represent British servicemen, denoted as such by the type of uniforms worn, all of whom are seemingly afflicted by various injuries. Although not bearing any obvious evidence of wounding or injury, such as slings or bandages, the male figure seated on the left holds a walking stick suggesting that he is unsteady on his feet, perhaps as a result of an injury or permanent disablement caused by war. The next male figure, with one arm in a sling, holds a cigarette in the hand of his other arm; whilst the third male figure, dressed in the military

²⁷⁸ According to family records, the location of the painting is Hyde Park in London, email from Guy Dollman, Great Nephew of John Charles Dollman, to Richenda Roberts, 6 January 2010.

kilt of a Scottish regiment, sits with his regimental cap placed over a bandage covering both his head and one eye. The fourth male figure, seated on the bench in the right foreground, possesses a leg in plaster and two wooden crutches to support his body. In addition, the implied physical injuries of the four male figures in Dollman's painting can be understood to suggest the 'invisible,' but no less injurious, psychological damage, such as shell shock, that also affected many servicemen.²⁷⁹ Seated between the first and second male figures is a young female figure representing a nurse, again denoted as such by the uniform worn. In contrast to the physical injuries of the male figures, the female figure is apparently fit in body. Whilst the depiction of both male and female figures in work-related uniforms can be understood to imply that Dollman's painting might simply celebrate the work of men and women serving their country during the war, the disproportionately high number of injured masculine figures in the artwork can be seen to function to place greater emphasis on the male subjects, thereby suggesting that men, and in particular servicemen, are the primary focus. The injured demeanour of the male figures allowed the painting to allude to the massive injury and death toll. Furthermore, the men's injuries can also be interpreted as suggesting that it was servicemen who were most likely to suffer war-related injuries, disablement and death, thereby implying that injury and death during the First World War was a predominantly masculine experience. Moreover, the strength of emphasis placed upon the wounded male figures can be understood to have the effect of turning their injuries into indexical signs that pointed to the bravery and selfless conduct of servicemen, which was not only demonstrated by masculine injury or death but also, before the advent of conscription in the spring of 1916, by voluntary-enlistment. Therefore, as its title implied, *The Creditors* (Fig. 3) can

²⁷⁹ Joanna Burke, *Dismembering The Male*, 109.

be understood as being a celebration of masculine courage and self-sacrifice in order to convey the indebtedness felt by large sections of the British public towards servicemen for their courageous, selfless, protection of the nation. Demonstrating the strength of public feeling, sentiments extolling servicemen for their wartime efforts were succinctly expressed in a letter from Eva Isaacs, Marchioness Reading, to her husband, dated 7 February 1917, which noted:

A blind officer was there too: poor chap it makes one's heart ache to see him, I feel as if I was personally in his debt for life. After all it was for me, and all of us at home, that he lost his sight, poor fellow. I feel much the same to all the wounded I see [...] toward anyone in khaki, they seem to have a tremendous hold on me, nothing one can do is enough for them and one can never repay them!²⁸⁰

Between 1880 and 1888 Dollman had been principle draughtsman for *The Graphic*, a publication which had been set up, in 1869, with the specific purpose of communicating national and international news through both text and image in equal measure.²⁸¹ The paper had, for example, before reproductions of paintings and drawings were superseded by photography as the primary illustrative or documentary medium, published many illustrational prints, commissioned from artists, commemorating significant events such as those of the Second Anglo Boer War.²⁸² As the artist's great nephew, Walter Dollman,

²⁸⁰ Eva Isaacs, Letter to her husband in the papers of Eva Isaacs, Marchioness of Reading, 7 February 1917, Imperial War Museum, London, PP/MCR/376, Con Shelf, Catalogue 23117, 10 Volumes, Vol. 4, 676, consulted, 7 November 2009.

²⁸¹ Email from Walter Dollman, great nephew of John Charles Dollman, 18 January 2010, citing K.G. Saur, *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, Munich, 2001, 346.

²⁸² Discussed in Ryno Greenwall, *Artists and Illustrators of The Anglo-Boer War*, Vlaeberg, 1992, Introduction.

has observed, working for *The Graphic* is likely to have instilled in Dollman a strong appreciation for the importance of representing aspects of the war as an event of international magnitude; hence his decision to engage with the war from the British home front perspective, where he was based.²⁸³ In common with other civilians on the British home front, Dollman is likely to have been well aware of injured and disabled men from firsthand experience and regular illustrated reports in newspapers and magazines. The artist would, for example, mostly likely have seen photographs similar to that of a group of injured servicemen and nurses playing cards together, which was published in *The War Budget* of 1 March 1917 (Fig. 39).

The strength of focus placed upon alluding to the heroism and sacrifice of British servicemen in Dollman's paintings therefore appeared to render the female figure as merely an adjunct to the males. This had the effect of suggesting that the former was present only to enforce masculine heroism by functioning as a signifier for the role of nursing, which was not only considered ancillary to fighting, but also more closely associated with women on the basis of binary premise relating to male and female roles, whereby a woman's potential to be a mother made her apparently innately better suited to nursing and caring for the sick than a man. Consequently, Dollman's painting seemingly gave endorsement to the gendering of wartime roles on the basis of pre-war values. Demonstrating the strength of the residual legacy of a cannon favouring both modernist practice and the perspective of the male serviceman at the battle front, as mentioned, dismissing *The Creditors* (Fig. 3) as nothing more than a 'Victorian genre' painting,

²⁸³ Suggested in an email from Walter Dollman, 6 January 2010. Walter Dollman is himself studying for a PhD at the University of Adelaide, Australia, on aspects of social realism in Dollman's paintings.

Jonathan Black, in this PhD thesis, '*Neither Beasts, Nor Gods, But Men*,' has noted that 'the nurse in the painting has to perform no more strenuous tasks beyond lighting cigarettes and pipes, and soothing her patients with innocuous conversation.'²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis suggest another quite different interpretation can be made of the presence of the female figure in Dollman's work. Although seemingly insignificant, in light of the destabilizing effects of the First World War upon concepts of sexual difference, the inclusion of the female figure in *The Creditors* (Fig. 3) can actually be understood to have had a very important function in how the overall composition of Dollman's painting might have been interpreted in relation to the contexts of the war. In the painting, shown holding a cigarette with the hand of his uninjured arm, the second male figure has leant towards the female figure in a gesture indicating that he is waiting for her to light his cigarette with the match that she holds in one of her hands, which has just been lit against the side of the matchbox held in the other hand. The interaction of these two figures, as a result of the lighting of the cigarette, suggests that there is perhaps a flirtatious dimension to the relationship between the man and woman represented. As a result, Dollman's painting can be understood to allude to the use of sexual attraction as a mechanism to coerce men into voluntary enlistment, thereby drawing attention to notions of female complicity in the injury and death of servicemen like the man with the cigarette. Moreover, the seemingly innocuous action of lighting a cigarette also communicated that the male figure, because of his injuries, was unable to light his own cigarette. Consequently, in line with Black's observations, the action of the female figure lighting the cigarette might be seen as enforcing traditional perceptions of sexual difference through its apparent allusions to ancillary roles to men, such as nursing, which

²⁸⁴ Jonathan Black, *Neither Beasts, Nor Gods, But Men*, 126.

were more often than not ascribed to women. Paradoxically, however, the predicament of the male figure, and that of the other three male figures (implied by their injured conditions), also functions to highlight the destabilizing impact of war by making evident that on the British home front there was a highly visible presence of large numbers of men with injuries or permanent disabilities; all of whom were to some degree reliant on other people for support. As Joanna Bourke has pointed out, men who had been injured or permanently disabled, as a result of battle front combat, frequently had to stringently pursue official departments for compensation, which, once secured, was often slow to be paid.²⁸⁵ This meant that men affected often found themselves in positions of reliance upon other people not only for practical help in their pursuit of everyday tasks, but also for financial support. In the painting, the vulnerable position of injured and disabled men is not just suggested by the male figures' demeanour, it is also indicated by the power of choice that is bestowed on the female figure, who has been given the decision of allowing or denying the male figure a cigarette simply by lighting one or not. As a result, rather than simply celebrating the selfless heroism of voluntarily-enlisted men fighting to protect nation and loved ones, the freedom of being able to choose whether or not to light the cigarette, which is given to the female figure, can be seen to have enforced notions of masculine dependency and feminine authority. Consequently the way in which sexual difference has been inscribed in Dollman's painting can also be interpreted as suggesting the endorsement of the destabilizing effects of war upon the traditional stratification of British society.

²⁸⁵ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, 62-70.

Similar sentiments are also implied by the handling of subject and compositional structure of *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) by Walker. Depicting daily life on the British home front in wartime, in the central foreground of *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) a number of injured servicemen, dressed in hospital blues uniforms, with various physical injuries, are shown having just disembarked from a pleasure boat, which is moored on the river Thames.²⁸⁶ Surrounding the servicemen on all sides, implying that the wounded men are the focal point of the painting, are women, children and other able-bodied servicemen dressed in khaki-coloured military uniforms. In common with *The Creditors* (Fig. 3) the focus placed on the injured men in Walker's painting can be understood as extolling the heroism of serviceman, thereby alluding to the feelings of gratitude that were felt by much of the British population towards servicemen for their apparent, selfless, protection of the nation. Nevertheless, the presence of so many injured or disabled men in *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) might also have functioned to indicate that the war had destabilized pre-war concepts of sexual difference. Rather than associating men with capable virile strength, in line with the ethos of imperial masculinity and much pro-war propaganda, the leisurely and genteel activity of being passengers on a Thames pleasure cruise, enforced by the title of Walker's painting, could be interpreted as implying that the circumstances of war in which the men had sustained their injuries were about as far removed from pleasurable leisure activities as could be possibly conceived. Compounding the situation further, the surrounding of wounded men, dressed in conspicuous hospital uniforms, by able-bodied figures functioned to place even more focus on the formers' helpless incapacity. The effect of this implies

²⁸⁶ This location has been suggested by David Cohen, the art dealer who sold the painting to National Army Museum, Chelsea, London, in 2008, Richenda Roberts telephone conversation with David Cohen, 11 August 2011.

spectacle rather simply than edifying heroic actions. This enables the observation of wounded servicemen by the civilians and other able-bodied military comrades (along with that of subsequent beholders of the painting) to assume a similar role to that of members of the public observing participants in a freak show, the latter being reliant upon the curiosity and pity of people for their income. As a result, like *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), the compositional arrangement of *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) can be seen as encouraging polysemous meanings and values for masculinity, ranging from the staunchly heroic to the pitifully weak. On one hand, the wounded men in the work can be viewed as being symbolic of masculine heroism in the face of terrible battle front conditions. However, on the other hand, suggestions of masculine weakness, implied by so many wounded men placed alongside able-bodied women in Walker's painting, additionally can be understood to also enforce ideas of masculine weakness and feminine authority. Consequently Walker's painting could be interpreted as encouraging a reversal in pre-war concepts of sexual difference, which was also propagated by other examples of fine art showing women employed doing jobs that had been traditionally undertaken by men, such as the print *Acetylene Welder* of 1917 by Nevinson (Fig. 40), which features two female welders.

A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This c.1916 by Charles Sims (Fig. 41) can also be interpreted as constructing sexual difference in a way which helped to promote the destabilization of pre-war concepts of masculinity and femininity. Commissioned by the Medici Society, most likely to be reproduced in the form of a greetings card that could be exchanged between servicemen and their families, Sims' painting was exhibited at the

Royal Academy of Arts in 1916.²⁸⁷ Sims had personal experience of war-related bereavement, albeit indirectly. In November 1914 his eldest son John, who had enlisted voluntarily as a cadet, had been killed.²⁸⁸ Aged just sixteen, John Sims had joined the British Navy as a junior member of the crew of HMS Bulwark, which exploded, most likely as the result of a freak accident involving the explosion of an internal magazine, whilst moored at Sheerness on 26 November 1914.²⁸⁹ According to *The Times* the explosion killed ‘between 700 and 800 of the crew.’²⁹⁰ In his biography, Sims’ other son Alan has suggested that this tragic event had a profound effect upon his father, particularly in relation to way in which he responded to the effects of the First World War in his paintings.²⁹¹ Moreover, Cecilia Holmes, in her biographical doctoral thesis *A Bright Memory to Remain*, has argued that Sims’ experiences of war can be understood as being a contributing factor towards his ‘search for a refuge from reality,’ which arguably achieved realization in the ‘total retreat from corporeality towards the abstract depiction of the soul’ that can be identified in the paintings he produced in the decade preceding his death, which was recorded as being the result of suicide.²⁹²

In the central foreground of *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41) a male figure leans lifelessly against a cross. Looking downwards, the figure appears to be oblivious to the scene of five other figures who are seated around him. To the figure’s

²⁸⁷ Sims was paid £100 by the Medici Society, anonymous, note (undated), Sims’ Archive, University of Northumbria, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, accessed 6 October 2010.

²⁸⁸ Alan Sims, *Picture Making*, 119.

²⁸⁹ H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain*, 145, note 2 citing *The Times*, 27 November 1914, which states that HMS Bulwark most likely exploded by accident as a result of ‘an internal magazine explosion,’ 9 and 28 November 1914, which notes John Sims as being one of six naval cadets killed, 5.

²⁹⁰ Anonymous, ‘HMS Bulwark,’ *The Times*, Issue 40709, col G, Friday 27 November 1914, 9.

²⁹¹ Alan Sims, *Picture Making*, 119.

²⁹² H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain*, 24.

left a female figure is seated on a wall. On this figure's lap is seated an infant, whilst to her left a young masculine figure crouches down to whisper in her ear. To the right, seated on the same wall as the female figure, are two elderly figures, one male and one female. Noting that the central male figure in Sims' painting had been appropriated from Christian iconography pertaining to the crucifixion of Christ, a familiar trope adopted by artists to allude to the sacrifice of servicemen, a review published in 1917 in *The Connoisseur* also suggested who the five additional figures might be and what their collective presence might symbolize:

The artist has adapted a conventional crucifixion arrangement favoured by old masters to modern conditions. A wounded soldier takes the place of the central figure[...] His arms stretched behind him over a broad horizontal bar, which depends from the upright, and with it forms a cross, while grouped [...] just behind him are his father, mother, wife and two children representative of humanity at large.²⁹³

In addition to appropriating Christian iconography as a sign of masculine sacrifice, the bandaged head and distinct hospital blues uniform made even more evident that the central male figure in the painting was, like the men in *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29) and *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), an injured serviceman. As a result, in addition to representing generations of the man's family and 'humanity at large,' the ages and genders of the additional five figures in the painting can be understood to symbolize

²⁹³ C. Reginald Grundy, *The Connoisseur An Illustrated Magazine for Collectors*, London, Vol. 48, May to August 1917, 110.

vulnerable sections of British society which servicemen, like the central male figure, had been urged to protect by their voluntarily-enlistment into the armed services.²⁹⁴ As noted *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41) was commissioned by the Medici Society, most likely for reproduction in the form of a greetings card to help boost morale by uniting home and battle fronts.²⁹⁵ With this in mind, the demeanour and location of the central male figure can be seen to have a unifying aim by alluding that the massive injury and death toll of heroic servicemen was sustained in the protection of nation and loved ones. Consequently, like Eva Isaacs' comments and *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), Sims' painting can be understood to celebrate the heroism of dead, wounded and active servicemen along with civilian indebtedness for the actions of such men. This allowed the painting to fulfil its morale boosting task as a greetings card. Additionally, indebtedness towards servicemen is also suggested further in a number of other ways in Sims' work. In the painting the central male figure is shown not actually nailed to the cross upon which he leans, thereby suggesting that, if he was able, and felt so inclined to do so, he was free to walk away. This demonstration of freedom of choice signalled that, before the advent of conscription, like Christ, British servicemen had selflessly placed their own lives at risk as a result of voluntary-enlistment. Furthermore, the self-sacrificial nature of male enlistment is additionally enforced by the title of the painting, which formed an integral part of its overall schema. In text form, located at the bottom of the painting, the title was taken from the New Testament gospel of St. John (15:13). In its

²⁹⁴ Cecilia Holmes, has suggested that the individual facial features of the figures in *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41) are drawn from those of members of Sims' own family. H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain*, 167.

²⁹⁵ An example of a similar type of card that carries the same message is contained in the papers of Private No: 2172, E.W. Squire of 13th London Regiment British Expeditionary Force, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 7 November 2009.

entirety the New Testament passage that Sims chose to appropriate states: ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’²⁹⁶

Like *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), however, the way in which sexual difference is inscribed in Sims’ painting can be understood as not simply functioning to celebrate masculine self-sacrifice and heroism. Instead, the way in which sexual difference is inscribed can also be interpreted as making evident the destabilizing effects of war upon long-held concepts of masculinity and femininity, thereby bringing into question the meanings and values for war that its wide circulation in the form of a card actually succeeded in disseminating. In *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41), the open space in which all the figures have been placed is suggestive of the central focal or meeting point of an English town or village, for example a town square or village green. These were (and still are) locations within both urban and rural communities where official and unofficial monuments celebrating heroic deeds or memorials to the dead were often situated. The communal location can therefore be seen to imply a sense of unity between home and battle fronts. However, the placing of the central male figure alongside a group of figures representing vulnerable sections of British society, arguably, also allowed Sims’ painting to suggest that as a direct result of supporting the war (or being coerced by propaganda into lending support) all sections of British society (both combatants and civilians) must bear equal responsibility and suffer the consequences of the sacrifices caused by the conflict. To this end, engagement with society’s sacrifice, through the image of the wounded central male figure, in *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41) can therefore be seen to suggest that a key result of support for the war was the death and

²⁹⁶ John (15:13), *New Testament*, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 124.

disability of servicemen. As noted, an effect of the massive injury and death toll was that many more women, like the young adult female figure shown in Sims' painting, had to assume greater authority by taking on the role of head of the household. However, the increase in female responsibilities also helped to temporarily destabilize pre-war values of masculinity and femininity by suggesting greater feminine authority. Consequently, it can be argued that in addition to celebrating the heroism of men, Sims' painting, paradoxically, indirectly also promoted notions of increased feminine authority.

Additionally, the presence of children in Sims' painting can also be understood to signal the sacrificial nature of the war. As Geoffrey Gorer has pointed out, in *Death, Grief and Mourning*, within British society older children were often expected to assume greater authority within the family in the event of the death of a parent, which frequently took the form of increased financial responsibility as well as emotional support.²⁹⁷ Therefore the inclusion of two children in Sims' painting can be understood to indicate that the sacrifice society must bear for war also extended to children, who not only suffered financial hardship and bereavement, but additionally lost their childhood and youth through being forced to prematurely assume adult roles. As the example of H. Symonds who enlisted after being given a white feather demonstrated, the premature assumption of adult roles by young men included enlistment for military service by under-age men, thereby compounding further the cycle of sacrifice.

The cruciform-like pose of the central male figure and the emphasis that it placed upon extolling the selfless conduct of servicemen in Sims' painting can be understood to have

²⁹⁷ Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*, London, 1965, 4-5.

also enabled the work to reveal the sacrificial nature of the war on both home and battle fronts by alluding to the inhuman treatment of voluntarily-enlisted servicemen and their families as a result of Field Punishment No.1. This was a highly unpopular form of castigation that was meted-out by the British army to its own men. Joanna Bourke has noted that during the First World War Field Punishment No.1 was perhaps the most controversial military response to soldiers accused of malingering.²⁹⁸ Although Field Punishment No.1 had many variants, accounts from witnesses have suggested that in all cases the methods used to discipline men under the punishment resembled crucifixion, stopping short only of the actual nailing of a man's hands and feet. According to Bourke, Field Punishment No.1 'consisted of lashing a man to a gun-wheel by his wrists and ankles [in a cruciform shape] for an hour at a time in the morning and in the evening.'²⁹⁹ In addition, a firsthand account by a recipient of Field Punishment No.1, published in the *Woman's Dreadnought* of 6 January 1917, suggested that the nature of the punishment involved men being hung from either wooden stocks or beams with their feet held astride by iron rings and their hands tied above their heads.³⁰⁰ The same source also described another variant of the punishment whereby some men had actually been hung tied to a wooden crucifix.³⁰¹ Soldiers who were subjected to the punishment were also humiliatingly left to hang 'in full view of the French people for two hours each day.'³⁰² This suggests that the demeanour of men suffering Field Punishment No.1 might well have been very similar to that of the central male figure in Sims' painting. Additionally,

²⁹⁸ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, 99.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ A Soldier Who Has Done Some, 'A Soldier's Story of Crucifixion,' *The Woman's Dreadnought*, London, Vol. III, No. 41, Saturday 6 January 1917, front page.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*

an article from *The Times* of 6 August 1916 noted that servicemen had their pay and separation allowance, the latter of which was normally paid to their wives, withheld during the period of their field punishment, thereby also enforcing financial hardship on loved ones on the home front.³⁰³ As a result, although the War Office had decreed that the punishment should not cause physical injury or leave a permanent mark, Field Punishment No.1 was nevertheless viewed as being humiliating and cruel.³⁰⁴ This made the punishment highly unpopular and looked upon with dread by both combatants and civilians, by whom it was understood to be unjust treatment. As the article in the *Woman's Dreadnought* pointed out, owing to both voluntary-enlistment and conscription, the British armed forces, for the entire duration of the First World War, were made up of a majority of men who would have been unlikely to have intentionally enlisted for military service in peacetime. Moreover, the voluntarily nature of much enlistment during the First World War made many British servicemen feel that they deserved better treatment, because they had 'forfeited good positions, home, and practically everything they possess, and [volunteered to go] to France to do their bit.'³⁰⁵ This was a view that was also shared by many civilians, which led to calls for the abolishment of field punishments in the British press. *The Times* article of 6 August 1916, for example, noted that, whilst it was 'not proposed to make any alteration in the law on field punishment,' the level of public disapproval meant that the punishment of 'Driver Graham' had apparently been lifted after condemnation was voiced publicly in

³⁰³ Anonymous, *The Times*, London, Issue 41241, col C, Wednesday 6 August 1916, 3.

³⁰⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, 99.

³⁰⁵ A Soldier Who Has Done Some, *The Woman's Dreadnought*, London, Vol. III, No. 41, Saturday 6 January 1917, front page.

the newspaper.³⁰⁶ Confirming that the use of Field Punishment No.1 was considered by many combatants as inappropriate for armed forces mostly made-up of volunteers and conscripts, thereby enforcing further the self-sacrificial nature of enlistment during the First World War alluded to in Sims' painting, are the recollections of soldier Ernest Sheard. Commenting on the use of Field Punishment No.1, Sheard wrote that the punishment had:

turned our minds against the British Army, as we had not enlisted for our own benefit, we were all civilians, who had never entertained the idea of being soldiers before the war started, and to see men strapped to the wheels for hours was nothing less than cruelty, and to be on view of all passer by's [sic] was not pleasant.³⁰⁷

The injustice felt about Field Punishment No.1, communicated by servicemen and ideologically diverse sections of the British press, ranging from the socialist *Woman's Dreadnought* to the rightwing *The Times*, is also evident in personal complaints from civilians that were sent directly to the British government. For example, a letter dated 8 January 1917, sent to the Home Office by Miss Fanny C. Grieve, who wrote and asked:

Why should our brave men who are laying down their lives for others be subjected to such wrong and wicked punishment? We are trying to fight Militarism in Germany and are in danger ourselves of the same evil. How can

³⁰⁶ Anonymous, *The Times*, London, Issue 41241, col C, Wednesday 6 August 1916, 3.

³⁰⁷ Ernest Sheard, *Manuscript Memoirs*, Vol. I, 51, Imperial War Museum, London, P285, consulted, 17 March 2010.

people endure that their loved ones should not only be in danger of death, or maiming by the enemy, but also be in danger of suffering such cruel wrong from the hands of their own fellow countrymen?³⁰⁸

Given the widespread level of public outrage directed at Field Punishment No.1 it is highly likely that Sims was well aware of the nature of the punishment and opposition to it. Symbolizing together both self-sacrifice and disillusionment with war through the juxtaposition of an unresponsive male figure, draped listlessly on a cross, with figures representing vulnerable family dependants, *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41) can be interpreted as having a double function. Firstly the painting can be understood to signal that the sacrificial nature of the war, and more specifically the effects of Field Punishment No.1, not only resulted in the humiliation, injury and death of combatants, but also the suffering of families and other dependants on the home front. Secondly, evoking sentiments of worthlessness, the demeanour and location of the central male figure in the painting communicated the outrage felt by combatants and civilians alike at the unsavoury punishments that were meted-out to British servicemen, the majority of whom (like Sims' own son) had 'sacrificed' themselves for king and country through voluntary-enlistment. As a result Sims' painting revealed not only the negative effects of linking war with chivalric sacrifice and the establishment of manliness in general, but also the widespread unpopularity of a specifically gendered wartime experience.

³⁰⁸ Fanny C. Grieve, letter to the Home Office (passed to the War Office), 8 January 1917, Public Record Office, Kew, London, WO32/5460, accessed 11 August 2009.

Like *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29), Sims' painting constructed masculinity in two extremes ranging from heroic to pathetically weak. This meant that, despite perhaps alluding to the selfless heroism of voluntarily-enlisted men who had been injured and killed, the listless demeanour of the central male figure also implied masculine weakness or redundancy. At a time when Britain seemed to be dominated by self-reliant women and feminine authority, the effect of this was to arguably give a degree of validation to claims made by disgruntled servicemen, like Braun, that there existed an invisible divide in both experience and empathy between home and battle fronts. Not only did this make the successful function of *A Greater Love Hath No Man Than This* (Fig. 41) as the design for a card intended for boosting morale on both home and battle fronts highly questionable, it also arguably rendered Sims' painting liable to being deemed antithetical to reinstated pre-war concepts of sexual difference and the canon of British First World War art, which was based upon similar values.

2.2 How the Signification of Masculine Sacrifice in Paintings Functioned to Help Enforce a Gender-based Divide in Wartime Experience

The Crusaders (Fig. 23), mentioned earlier, features a uniformed male figure standing alongside a female figure in a church. Standing as close together as possible, looking into each other's eyes, the two figures hold hands. The intimacy of the figures suggests their close personal relationship, indicating they are perhaps lovers or newly-weds, who have married in haste because the male figure has to depart for the battle front. Linking arms with the male figure, the female figure rests her other hand on the tomb of a medieval knight. This action creates a link between femininity, death and servicemen,

thereby allowing the painting to symbolize that the enlistment of men to protect nation and loved ones (which were often conflated together in form of female figures in war propaganda) increasingly resulted in injury and death. Consequently, the link established between femininity and the death of servicemen in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) also functioned to imply female complicity in the male injury and death toll through supporting enlistment or employment in the munitions industry. Therefore, revealing its late date of production (in 1918) and the changing status of sacrifice, rather than extolling chivalry as an exemplar of masculine prowess in order to promote enlistment, the way in which masculinity and femininity have been inscribed in *The Crusaders* (Fig. 23) can be understood to indicate that for a great many combatants and non-combatants alike, chivalric sacrifice, in all its permutations, was no longer viewed as a positive concept. Similar sentiments were expressed in the text of an advertisement for Black Knight fabric dyes (Fig. 42). Published on 30 March 1918 in *The Queen* the advertisement informed potential consumers:

The Black Knight Comes in Aid of British Ladyes – comes in the interest of every woman who buys or wears coloured apparel of knitted silk, whether natural or artificial. You know how often your Sports Coats, your Scarves, your Stockings disappoint you because their colour goes. And in these days there is no redress – you are told that war-time dyeing is without guarantee.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ Advertisement for 'Black Knight Dyeing,' published in *The Queen*, Vol. CXLIII, No. 3718, 30 March 1918, second sheet, un-paginated.

Confirming changing values assigned to the concept of sacrifice, the flippant references to links between death and chivalric behaviour towards women in the Black Knight advertisement facetiously implied that, as the war progressed, allusions to chivalric code and self-sacrifice, used so frequently in war-propaganda, were increasingly viewed as hollow and worthless, making chivalry both the object of distaste and ridicule.

Adopting a similarly critical stance, concepts of sexual difference are also used as a mechanism to allude to the increasing sacrificial nature of the war in *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38).³¹⁰ In the foreground of Southall's fresco a female figure clothed in a yellow-coloured dress, which is complimented by a large fur stole, has paused to purchase, from a female street vendor, a bunch of white flowers. Reaching over the curb of the pavement, which seems to cut diagonally through the centre of the fresco, dividing it into two distinct halves, the flower seller hands the female figure her purchase. The purchase of flowers, non-essential items, suggests that the female purchaser has disposable income to spend as she wishes. Moreover, the same figure's likely wealth is enforced further by the quality and type of clothes that she is shown wearing, which, in contrast to the 'home-made' looking, drab, brown-coloured skirt and shawl of the flower seller, are similar in appearance to fashionable clothes of the kind found in editorial features and advertisements in magazines such as *The Queen*. Immediately in front of the fashionably-dressed female figure stands a small girl, who is also well-dressed in a winter coat, which too is trimmed with fur. Holding a skipping

³¹⁰ *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38), was publically unveiled, in its present location in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, on 7 June 1916, in the presence of the city Mayor Neville Chamberlain. George Breeze, *Joseph Southall 1861-1944 Artist-Craftsman*, 90-91.

rope in one hand, the child reaches towards the flower seller's basket in a gesture mimicking that of the female figure purchasing the flowers. Additionally, standing on the pavement behind and to the right of the adult female are four more well-dressed figures, two female and two male, the latter wearing business suits, thereby suggesting that the figures might represent wealthy British industrialists and their wives. Meanwhile, standing on the left hand side of the central divide, next to the flower seller, a young boy, also dressed in unostentatious clothing, looks in the direction of a horse-drawn wagon which is being driven by a male figure. Underneath all the figures, at the bottom of the painting, Southall has placed the title of his work. This has the superficial effect of suggesting that the subject of the fresco is simply the pursuit of daily life on one of the main commercial thoroughfares in the city of Birmingham in the springtime of 1914. However, the differences in the quality of the clothing worn can be interpreted to signal that the figures on the right of the fresco represent people of middle-class social status and those on the left working-class. Therefore, the division of *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38), into two distinct halves of wealthy middle-class figures on the right and working-class figures on the left, can be understood to signal that the theme of the painting may not simply be everyday life in the immediate pre-war period.

Margaret Glover has argued that rather than being 'an idealized memory' of pre-war peacetime, *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38) can be understood to symbolize its creator's personal belief system.³¹¹ Southall was born in Nottingham on 23 August 1861. When he was two years old his father died; wishing to be near her own

³¹¹ Margaret Glover, *Images of Peace in Britain*, 222.

family, who were wealthy Quakers, the artist's mother moved with her young family to Birmingham.³¹² Influenced by his maternal family, Southall adopted the Quaker faith.³¹³ Quaker support for social reform and pacifism strongly informed both Southall's upbringing and adult worldview.³¹⁴ A supporter of the Independent Labour Party since its formation in 1893, by the Scottish Miner James Keir Hardie (1856-1915), in 1916 the artist became chairman of the party's Birmingham City branch, retaining the post until 1931.³¹⁵ Furthermore, an active supporter of pacifism, at the time of painting *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38), Southall was chairman of the Birmingham Auxiliary of the Peace Society, which on the outbreak of the First World War had published a pamphlet addressed *To The Friends of Peace* that stated 'we wish to send a word of greeting and encouragement to those who Stand for Peace even in this dark and terrible time.'³¹⁶ Revealing Southall's support of socialism, the division of *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38) into two halves demarcated by social class can, therefore, be understood to allude to the social inequity caused by the British class system. As a result, the uniting action of the two female figures (one working-class and the other middle-class) reaching across the class and wealth divide, implied in the painting by the exchange of the bunch of flowers, functioned to give support to Socialists' calls for a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Whilst it is possible to make such an interpretation of *Corporation Street Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38), the painting can also be understood to rely upon the First World

³¹² *Ibid*, 200-201.

³¹³ *Ibid*, 201.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, 212.

³¹⁶ Cited in *ibid*, 205.

War's destabilizing impact upon traditional values of sexual difference in order to convey its creator's irenic intentions. The date of March 1914, which is included within the title of Southall's painting, functions to inform beholders that the time of year represented is spring. On this basis it can be understood that the flowers that are being sold by the seller in Southall's painting are most likely to be the blooms of spring-flowering plants, such as Daffodils and Tulips. The Latin name for the Daffodil is *Narcissus*, which is also the name of the beautiful youth in *Metamorphoses* by Ovid. According to Ovid's story, Narcissus, having fallen in love with his own image, which was reflected in a pool of water, wasted away leaving no body to bury.³¹⁷ Ovid's story also indicated that left behind in the place of Narcissus' body was a flower with 'white petals clustered round a cup of gold,' which was just like the flowers that are being exchanged between the two women in Southall's painting.³¹⁸ As Ovid's story made clear, Narcissus' untimely demise was down to vanity and hubris. The way in which enlistment campaigns exploited masculine pride, by enforcing the link between war and the establishment of manliness, meant that voluntary-enlistment during the First World War also had clearly hubristic dimensions. Therefore, like Narcissus, the vanity of servicemen can be understood to have made them, not only in part responsible for their own injury and death, but also for the resultant bereavement and deprivations suffered by loved ones on the home front. Furthermore, owing to the non-repatriation of the dead and the destruction of bodies by shells, like the missing body of Narcissus, the bereaved on the British home front had no servicemen's bodies to mourn over or bury. The number of analogies that can be drawn between the myth of Narcissus and servicemen

³¹⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Translation by A.D. Melville, 61-66.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

during the First World War, therefore, suggests that the bunch of white flowers, which are being sold in Southall's painting, are Narcissi, the presence of which help to suggest the sacrificial nature of the war. Consequently, Southall's fresco can be understood to allude to the myth of Narcissus in a way which suggests that it was official armed-forces recruitment campaigns that were largely responsible for wartime sacrifice by encouraging servicemen's hubristic voluntary enlistment, which often resulted in death. This suggests that the representation of a Birmingham street in peacetime, in which men of military age are actually present, rather than conspicuous by their absence, alongside allusions to the myth of Narcissus, can be understood as contrasting peacetime with negative effects of war in order to put forward the pacifist belief that all wars are indefensible.

Additionally, however, the purchase and exclusive handling of the Narcissi by female figures, and the mimicking of this action by a female child, can be understood to suggest that at least some women had disposable incomes to spend on non-essential items, thereby alluding to increased feminine wealth during wartime, which had a two-fold effect. Firstly, allusions to increased female wealth in Southall's work can be understood to signal female complicity in the injury and death of servicemen by reminding beholders that women working in the munitions industry made weapons that maimed and killed. Secondly, the purchase of flowers indicated that, as the recipients of money, the female relatives of industrialists making money from the manufacture of armaments and other 'war profiteers,' were also indirectly implicated in the massive injury and death toll. The effect of this can be seen as helping to foster notions of both increased feminine authority

and a gender-based division in war experience between home and battle fronts. Therefore, playing upon the war's impact upon concepts of sexual difference, Southall's fresco made evident that war was indefensible, not just because of the massive injury and death toll it produced, but also as a result of the divisive effects wrought upon society.

A similar result is achieved by *Anno Domini 1917* of 1917 by John Charles Dollman (Fig. 43), which juxtaposes Christian iconography pertaining to Christ's crucifixion with the snow-bound Flanders landscape as a mechanism to allude to the sacrificial nature of the war. In the foreground of Dollman's painting a solitary male figure wearing a long purple robe stands with his back turned to the beholder.³¹⁹ On the figure's head is a crown of thorns. Both the purple robe and crown of thorns are attributes that the New Testament gospels of Saints Mark and John describe as being placed upon the body of Christ by his tormentors during the crucifixion, thereby implying that the figure in the painting most likely represents Christ.³²⁰ This allows the work to symbolize the self-sacrifice of servicemen through allusions to the crucifixion. Indicating further that allusions to the crucifixion in Dollman's painting signalled the sacrificial nature of the war, the figure of Christ is represented overseeing a snow-bound landscape that would have been barren were it not for the presence of a number of wooden crosses marking battlefield graves, which are rendered in a dark-coloured pigment making them stand out against the pale snowy background. Like most civilians, Dollman would have become

³¹⁹ Perhaps reflecting the increasing disenchantment with war, the titles 'Anno Domini 1917' or 'AD 1917' feature in other artworks, for example a work by Paul Nash. Frank Rutter, *Art In My Time*, 173.

³²⁰ New Testament, Mark (15:17), John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 61 and John (19:2), 129, *ibid.*

familiar with the appearance of crude wooden crosses used to mark battlefield graves and the inhospitable weather conditions faced by servicemen on the Western Front from the publication of photographs of the same in newspapers and magazines, for example the photograph published in *The Graphic* on 14 October 1916 (Fig. 44). Consequently the presence of crosses in paintings like *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43) and *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1) can be understood to have had a revelatory (rather than concealing) function to act as signifiers for both dead servicemen and the absence of their bodies. Whilst the crosses pointed to the existence of a human body that would be buried under them, their presence acted also as a reminder that during the First World War bodies could be totally absent and graves might contain unidentified dead, owing to hasty burials and the destruction, beyond recognition, of many bodies as a result of industrialized warfare. Allyson Booth has pointed out that the high levels of men listed as ‘missing in action,’ whose bodies were most likely blown apart beyond recognition by shells, meant that the corpses of some war dead were unlikely ever to be recovered, let alone be identified and returned to their families had repatriation been permitted.³²¹ Commenting on the devastating effects of shells, an anonymous French observer noted, during the battle of Verdun on 21 February 1916, that ‘shells disinter the bodies, then reinter them, chop them to pieces, play with them as a cat plays with a mouse.’³²² Furthermore, as Michael Roper has suggested, although letters were subject to censorship, servicemen were still able to communicate to their families and other civilians on the home front the extent of the potential dangers that they faced.³²³ This is exemplified by a letter sent from Captain

³²¹ Allyson Booth, ‘Figuring the Absent Corpse,’ 69.

³²² Anonymous French observer, 21 February 1916, cited in Peter Vansittart, *Voices from The Great War*, London, 1981, 95.

³²³ The letters of rank-and-file servicemen were censored by their own platoon commander. Officers

Norman Taylor to his father on 18 May 1916, which stated ‘I am sorry to say I had a gun knocked out the other day – a shell burst and blew it to bits. It took us half an hour to find and collect the unfortunate sentry.’³²⁴ As Taylor’s letter indicated, even if their own loved one was not directly involved, reports sent home from the battle front often brought little reassurance to families. As a result, the signification of the absence of men by crosses in paintings such as *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43) and *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1) can be seen as alluding additionally to the feelings of fear experienced by civilians, who were stuck on the home front waiting for news of loved ones at the battle front. Thus the use of crosses in the painting actually has a treble significance. Firstly, the crosses pointed to absent bodies in general. Secondly, they highlighted the dehumanizing effects of the war by signifying the ‘real’ absence of men missing in action, whose bodies were untraceable because their destruction by shells had caused them to disintegrate into unidentifiable fragments of body parts. Thirdly, the crosses also signified the invidious position of families on the home front who could only wait in the uncertain hope of good news about loved ones on the battlefield. Additionally, Jacques Derrida has suggested that meaning is constructed by the play of ‘position and relationship (that is, by *difference*).’³²⁵ ‘Difference produces what it forbids, making possible the very thing that it makes impossible.’³²⁶ Supporting Derrida’s suggestion, the absence of servicemen and the signification of their bodies by crosses in paintings engaging with the home front perspective can also, therefore, be understood to have functioned as a mechanism by

enjoyed the privilege of self-censorship. Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 57-65.

³²⁴ Letter from Captain Norman Taylor, 18 May 1916, papers of Captain Norman Taylor, Imperial War Museum, London, 90/28/11, accessed 7 November 2009.

³²⁵ Michèle Barrett, ‘The Concept of Difference,’ 33.

Also see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* discussed in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, translation by Barbara Johnson, London, 1981 (first published 1972), vii –xvi.

³²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, xii, citing Rousseau, *Confessions*, translation by M.J. Cohen, London, 1954, 143.

which the presence of absent dead servicemen could be recuperated or restored. On this basis, whilst the absence of servicemen in paintings, like *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43), communicated the sacrificial nature of war, the presence of crosses in such works also provided symbolic burial and grieving rites, the real equivalents of which were prohibited by war.

Additionally, however, in common with the way in which masculinity is inscribed in other paintings, such as *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29), the compositional arrangement of *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43) suggested that further meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity could be articulated. In addition to being inspired by Christian iconography and images of the war-torn Flanders' landscape, the lone figure in Dollman's painting bears a strong resemblance to the figure of Christ in the painting *The Light of The World* of 1851-3 (Fig. 45) by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910).³²⁷ Although the original version of Hunt's painting had been produced over sixty years prior to the commencement of the First World War, the work had received a good deal of public exposure within Britain in the years immediately preceding the conflict.³²⁸ By 1914 there were in existence three finished oil versions of *The Light of The World*. The original within the collection of Keble College, Oxford (Fig. 45); a second version dating from c.1855-6, which had been acquired by Manchester City Art Gallery in 1912; finally the last to be produced and largest version of the painting, which was created by the artist in 1900 for St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and had been assigned the date 1851-1900.³²⁹

³²⁷ I am grateful to David Hemsoll and Dr Michael Snape, both from the University of Birmingham, for pointing out the similarities between the images of Christ in the two paintings.

³²⁸ Jeremy Maas, *Holman Hunt and The Light of The World*, London and Berkeley, 1984, 15.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, images of Hunt's painting had additionally been widely disseminated in the form of ephemera such as cards commemorating Easter (Fig. 46). Hunt took inspiration for *The Light of The World* (Fig. 44) from a passage in the New Testament book of Revelation (3:20) that states: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'³³⁰ Commenting on *The Light of The World* (Fig. 45) in 1905, Hunt noted that the reason that the door at which Christ knocked in his painting deliberately had no handle was so the work could signify 'the obstinately shut mind.'³³¹ Showing Christ holding a lamp representing the word of God knocking at a door without a handle, Hunt's painting communicated that anyone could commune with Christ if they were prepared to open their hearts and mind to him – Christ was (is) always there. In contrast the figure representing Christ in *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43) has turned his back on the beholder and is looking instead in the direction of the vast snow-covered wilderness that is filled only with graves. In Christian iconography pertaining to the crucifixion, Christ is often shown wearing a crown of thorns like that worn on the head of both the figures in *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43) and *The Light of The World* (Fig. 45). However, as noted in chapter one, in addition to being a well known attribute of the crucifixion in general, the crown of thorns has been (and still is) used specifically in Christian iconography to identify Christ as the *Man of Sorrows* who, according to the prophecy in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (53:1-8), was 'despised and rejected of men.'³³² Therefore, by presenting an image of Christ, with his back to the beholder, which can be understood to

³³⁰ *Ibid.* Also see Revelation (3:20), *New Testament*, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 274.

³³¹ William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, London, Vol. 1, 1905, 350.

³³² Isaiah (53:1-8), *Old Testament*, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 740.

allude to the story of the *Man of Sorrows*, Dollman's painting implied the sacrificial nature of the war by indicating that through pursuing such a bloody conflict society had rejected the redeeming implications of Christ's sacrifice espoused in biblical texts such as Revelation (3:20) and Hunt's painting. This allowed the compositional structure of Dollman's painting to additionally suggest that, through the non-repatriation of corpses of war-dead, British society had forsaken servicemen who had risked their lives protecting the nation. As a result *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43), can be understood as helping to strengthen notions of a divide between home and battle fronts by implying that, denied the basic last rite of a burial in their homeland, all that was left to dead servicemen was the redemption of their souls made possible by the crucifixion, which is symbolized in the painting by the figure of Christ. On this basis, the lone figure, shown walking towards the crosses of dead men's graves, in Dollman's painting can be understood as acting to indicate that, unlike British society, Christ had not forsaken servicemen. Therefore, the changing position of sacrifice together with the destabilization of pre-war values of sexual difference meant that, rather than uniting home and battle fronts in the face of so much sacrifice, *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43) by Dollman could well have been interpreted as encouraging the crystallization of beliefs held by many disillusioned servicemen that they were the ultimate, forsaken, victims of both the British state and civilians.

2.3 Engendering the Construction of Ambiguous Concepts of Femininity: The Use of Female Figures in Paintings Engaging with the Home Front Perspective

In March 1918, delivering the opening speech at Richard Nevinson's exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in London, Lord Beaverbrook, at the time Government Propaganda Minister, noted that 'art as an instrument of [war] propaganda had proved to be most effective.'³³³ Beaverbrook's comments were most likely directed at the fitness for purpose of works included in the exhibition, for example *Road from Arras to Bapaume* of 1917 (Fig. 47), which Nevinson had agreed could be reproduced for propaganda purposes in return for being allowed to visit the Western Front under the aegis of the Official War Artists Scheme.³³⁴ Unlike earlier examples engaging with the war, such as the Futurist inspired *Returning To The Trenches* of 1915 (Fig. 48), the subjects chosen and the artist's apparent move towards increasing naturalism, meant that, with the notable exception of *Paths of Glory* (Fig. 35) which was also exhibited, the majority of works that Nevinson had created for reproduction by the Official War Artists Scheme can be understood to construct meanings and values for the conflict which were largely uncontroversial.³³⁵ As a result it can be argued that such artworks were ideally suited for

³³³ Lord Beaverbrook, cited in Anonymous, 'War Paintings,' *Daily Mail*, London, 2 March 1918, 4.

³³⁴ C.R.W. Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 95. Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and The Great War*, 178-199.

³³⁵ *Paths of Glory* (Fig. 35) did cause controversy. In November 1917 the painting was recommended to the War Office for censorship by the military censor, Lieutenant-Colonel A.N. Lee, because its composition featured the dead bodies of British servicemen, and might, therefore, 'undermine civilian morale.' In reaction to Lee's recommendation, when the painting was first exhibited in March 1918 at the Leicester Galleries, Nevinson hung the work with the word 'censored' placed across its centre covering the dead bodies. The artist was duly summoned to the War Office and informed that not only had he breached DORA regulations by depicting dead servicemen, he had additionally contravened the Act by using the word 'censored,' which was apparently also forbidden. Following his meeting at the War Office Nevinson 'withdrew the painting from' public display. Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 198 and Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and The Great War*, 50-64.

their intended purpose as state propaganda because, whilst empathetically conveying the harsh realities of servicemen's experiences on the Western Front, they did little to inspire insurrection. Conversely, however, war from the home front perspective can be interpreted as being constructed far less innocuously by the way in which femininity has been inscribed in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5), another exhibit in Nevinson's show, which alluded to the contentious issue of war profiteering. Constructing the British home front as a zone of female authority, the inscription of femininity in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) could only have subsequently served, after the war, as a useful piece of visual propaganda of the abnormality of war, which could be appropriated to justify the reinstatement of the traditional stratification of British society. In *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) two female figures stand against a background of a city street at night in wartime, denoted as such by the way in which the figures, cars and shops in the painting's background are illuminated by an unnatural blue-coloured light that is being emitted from the triangular-shaped rays of anti-enemy searchlights. The two female figures have been dressed in fashionable clothing of the kind advertised in magazines placing great emphasis upon the social aspirations of readers, such as *The Queen*. Shown in profile facing the right side of the painting, the female figure on the right has been dressed extravagantly in a fashionable green-coloured evening coat, which features a fancy, pale-coloured, lace collar. The lace collar on the coat has been accentuated by a red or coral-coloured brooch which matches, in colour at least, the figure's earring. Additionally the figure wears a large navy-blue hat with a central v-shaped design composed of a red colour that compliments the jewellery worn. Facing towards the beholder's gaze, in a way which invites eye contact, the female figure on the left is dressed in a heavy red-

coloured winter coat that has a fine fur collar, which has been rendered in dark brown or black pigment thereby suggesting luxury, for example the dark fur of either an American mink or muskrat. These were species of animals prized, and farmed commercially, for their fur that was (and still is) used in the manufacture of either whole items of clothing, such as coats, or trimmings for garments.³³⁶ Moreover, the survey of magazines undertaken for this thesis has indicated that fur coats and fur trimmings to garments were in 1917, the year in which Nevinson's painting was produced, considered to be 'cherished adornments.'³³⁷ As a result fur was promoted as a highly desirable fashionable product in a large numbers of advertisements within women's magazines, for example *Home Chat* on 24 February 1917.³³⁸ The inclusion of the fur of an animal commercially farmed often only to meet the demands of vanity in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) can be interpreted as implying that the means by which the two female figures had acquired the wealth to buy such items of luxury lacked ethical integrity. Consequently, rather than simply implying good taste or social status, the opulence of the clothing and accessories worn by the two figures implied a spectacle of profligate excess at a time of austerity. This allowed the painting to suggest that the figures represented individuals who were profiting from war, for example as the wives, daughters or mistresses of industrialists who were making money profiting from war, female munitions workers perceived by many people to be earning high wages, or prostitutes living near to the battle fronts earning a living more directly from the conflict.³³⁹

³³⁶ Ernest Thompson Seaton, *Life Histories of Northern Animals: An Account of The Mammals of Manitoba*, New York, 1910, 896-897.

³³⁷ Advertisement feature in *Home Chat*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 1145, 24 February 1917, 295.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Michael J.K. Walsh, *C.R.W. Nevinson: This Cult of Violence*, 173.

Nevinson certainly did not have to look very far for inspiration for the theme of *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5). Adrian Gregory has observed that profits generated by the demand for goods such as munitions and an increase in the price of foodstuffs, blamed on shortages caused by the war, meant that by 1917 profiteering had become not only ‘a central concept in the discourse of the war,’ but also ‘a widespread term of abuse’ directed towards successful individuals, for example women wearing expensive clothing and companies, such as those making munitions, who either appeared to be or were undoubtedly benefitting financially from the war.³⁴⁰ Supporting Gregory’s observation, on 4 October 1917 an article in *The Times* noted ‘that the country is ready for stern and resolute opposition to any further attempts to exploit war [...] on the part of the “profiteers.”’³⁴¹ Further down the page, the same article added ‘let us not forget that they [profiteers and exploiters of labour] have set up all the glaring injustices which make it so much harder for the patriotic to bear the war’s burdens of sacrifice.’³⁴² In addition to what can be understood as a tactless display of excessive wealth, implied by the expensive clothing of the two female figures, public distaste for war profiteering is also suggested in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) by Nevinson’s handling of line and pigment. Nevinson’s economy of line and the chiaroscuro-effect of contrasting dark and light tones achieved with pigment, used to reproduce the effect of searchlights hitting the facial features of the two female figures, has operated to render the made-up faces of the women mask-like to the point of making their appearance grotesque. To this end, as an article in the *Westminster Gazette* noted, the way in which femininity has been inscribed

³⁴⁰ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 139.

³⁴¹ Anonymous, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, ‘Industrial Ferment: The Case Against The War “Profiteers,”’ Issue 41600, col.B, 4 October 1917, 6.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) has the effect of implying that the figures in the painting represented ‘clearly coarse and repulsive young women.’³⁴³ Therefore, playing on the common association of femininity with beauty, representing two grotesque-looking female figures, Nevinson’s painting functions to inspire beholders with feelings of revulsion.

Whilst public distaste at the tactless ‘injustice’ of war profiteering provides an indication as to what might have inspired the production of Nevinson’s painting, it does not explain why the artist decided to symbolize war profiteers using two female figures. At the same exhibition Nevinson also exhibited *He Gained A Fortune But He Gave His Son* of 1918 (Fig. 49), in which war profiteering is again symbolized, but instead by an ageing, solitary, male figure. Most likely symbolizing a businessman made rich by the proceeds of manufacturing munitions, the well-dressed, portly, male figure is seated surrounded by fine paintings and furnishings, including a fireplace with a marble surround and a bell fixed to the wall to summon domestic staff. Consequently, the figure’s demeanour and location, in a similar way to the clothing of the female figures in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5), can be seen as operating to suggest conspicuous wealth. Nevertheless, unlike the two female figures, the gross excess of wealth, which the male figure has apparently acquired through war profiteering, has been mitigated by the suggestion that it was munitions (the figure’s likely trade and source of wealth) that have also caused the death of his own son, alluded to in the work’s title. In the painting the war profiteer’s own ‘absent’ son is symbolized by the photograph of a young male figure in military clothing, which is

³⁴³ O.R.D., ‘More War Pictures by Mr Nevinson,’ *The Westminster Gazette*, London, Vol. LI, No. 7716, Wednesday 13 March 1918, 2.

located on the mantelpiece of the fire. Moreover, rather than simply alluding to the paradox that the source of his wealth had killed his own son, the photograph of the figure's son also served as a permanent reminder to the 'war profiteer' that, as a result of his profiteering, he had no future legacy, because he no longer had a son and heir to perpetuate his family name and pass his, ill-acquired, wealth onto.

In his preface to the Leicester Galleries exhibition, Nevinson claimed to be able arbitrarily to paint 'without any prejudice.'³⁴⁴ The diversity with which sexual difference is inscribed to symbolize profiteers in his two paintings suggested otherwise, thereby allowing the treatment of the female figures in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) to imply that only feminine war profiteering was without mitigation. Although he was personally deemed medically unfit for military service, whilst working earlier in the war's duration for the Quaker Friends' Ambulance Service, the Red Cross and the Royal Army Medical Corps, Nevinson had developed a strong degree of empathy for servicemen as a result of having witnessed firsthand battle front conditions and the terrible injuries sustained by combatants.³⁴⁵ Nevinson's personal experience of war suggests that, like disheartened servicemen, he might well have interpreted the apparent increase in feminine authority on the home front, caused by the presence of injured servicemen and greater female employment in support of the war effort, as an indication that it was women in particular who were profiting from war.

³⁴⁴ Richard Nevinson, preface to the catalogue of his Leicester Galleries Exhibition, March 1918, reproduced in C.R.W. Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 108.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 70-83.

At the start of the First World War employment prospects for women were much bleaker than they had been in the preceding peacetime. The effect of wartime cut-backs had enforced a general fall in consumption, leading to a significant rise in unemployment in all trades, but especially those associated with women, and the working-class in particular, such as textile manufacture and domestic service.³⁴⁶ Furthermore, although some limited increase in demand for skilled clerical work was experienced, overall take-up of female employment was low because women had in the initial months of the war's duration been discouraged from taking jobs left vacant by enlisted men. However, as noted, by early 1915 the situation changed rapidly. The higher than anticipated loss of life and resultant expanded male enlistment programme coupled with enlarged demand for munitions supplies created home front labour shortages. What followed was an abandonment of early wartime propaganda discouraging women to take work. On 17 March 1915 the Women's War Register was set up to identify all women available for work. This action was quickly supplemented by a female recruitment drive led by Emmeline Pankhurst of the WSPU in collaboration with David Lloyd George (then Chancellor of the Exchequer and by the summer of 1915 Minister for Munitions), which sought to actively encourage women to seek employment.³⁴⁷ Within a year of the war's commencement employment of women had risen by 400,000.³⁴⁸ As a result, until late 1917 when a surplus of certain goods such as armaments meant that women were once

³⁴⁶ Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 29-30.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 56.

³⁴⁸ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and The First World War*, 27.

Additionally, Gail Braybon has pointed out, as was the case with men serving on the battle front, the employment of women was also subject to division by class and age. Young working-class women tended to make up the majority of female employees on factory shop-floors, whilst the supervision of female employees was often given to older women from middle and upper-class backgrounds. Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in The First World War: The British Experience*, London, 1981, 11.

again encouraged to surrender their jobs in favour of male workers, newspapers and magazines regularly provided articles promoting the wartime employment of women. Nevertheless, as had been the case in the pre-war period, whilst seeming to promote female employment, many articles also stressed the temporary (for the duration of the war only) nature of such work, thereby demonstrating the fragile position of altered gender distinctions. The ambiguous way in which encouragement of expansion in female employment was treated (often being found on the same pages alongside apparent enforcement of traditional binary notions of male and female roles) in publications can be understood as contributing to levels of ambiguity surrounding the status of masculinity and femininity. Female employment is, for example, treated in such a way in a *Home Chat* article of 22 January 1916. Commenting on the employment of female bus conductors on equal pay as men the article observed:

At first there was opposition from men's unions. But when it was discovered that girls are only being engaged for the duration of the war, and that they were being paid the same rate as the men, the situation became much more pleasant [...] Of course, a woman conductor isn't quite as good as a man, in many ways she hasn't the same endurance, for one thing. But in lots of ways she's actually BETTER! For instance, you'd *never* find woman letting anyone old climb painfully onto a car without offering a hand.³⁴⁹

Demonstrating the ambiguous position of femininity during wartime the *Home Chat* article made evident the instability of constructions of sexual difference. On the one

³⁴⁹ Anonymous, 'Fares Please!', *Home Chat*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 1088, 22 January 1916, 131-133.

hand, the article presented the wartime roles of women as being beneficial to industrial relations by implying that increased employment of women arguably provided an opportunity for the improvement of employment terms and conditions for both masculinity and femininity. On the other hand, the article's emphasis on the usefulness of female workers can be understood to have been an attempt to address the existence of instances of discrimination against women workers by men unwilling to accept them as equals. Masculine opposition to the increase in female employees is exemplified by the reaction of male trade unionists. Opposition to female employment by trade unions representing men can, like the initial gendering of wartime roles, be understood as being a direct consequence of the way in which British society had been stratified by sexual difference in the immediate pre-war period. The effect of which was the promotion of male authority. One outcome of the promotion of masculine authority had been that men had received consistently higher wages than women.³⁵⁰ The increased need for female employment during wartime, therefore, lead to fears amongst the leaders of male trade unions that any disparity in wages between men and women would drive down male wage rates or might even ultimately deprive 'more expensive' men of jobs. For women the positive outcome of this was that, in order to maintain pay levels for men, male trade unionists were much more inclined than they had been in peacetime to join together with representatives from female trade unions, such as Mary Macarthur of the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW), in demands for equal pay.³⁵¹ The effect of combined canvassing by representatives from both male and female trade unions was that female employees were granted the same minimum wage levels as their male

³⁵⁰ Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 28-36.

³⁵¹ Leading female trade unions were the NFWW and the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), *Ibid.*

counterparts under the Treasury agreement of May 1915, which made clear that, irrespective of gender, ‘the rates paid shall be the usual rate of the district for this class of work.’³⁵² Nevertheless, whilst some degree of parity in employment status might have been achieved there remained a significant level of masculine opposition to the increased employment of women, with instances of male workers viewing their female colleagues as an inferior encumbrance. This is exemplified by an extract of minutes from *The Workers Committee*, which suggested that in some workplaces male colleagues treated women ‘with amused contempt as passengers for the war.’³⁵³ Furthermore, initially at least, masculine contempt for female colleagues enabled female employment in support of the war effort to be viewed with a similar degree of flippancy as the militant activities of Suffragists had been in the immediate pre-war period. This encouraged the publication of comical imagery that jovially disseminated ambiguity by encouraging and belittling expanded female employment at the same time. For example, an image published in *The Passing Show* of 1 May 1915 (Fig. 50), which was accompanied by a rhyme acknowledging the war’s effects upon masculine and feminine roles:

O woman, in our hours of ease, [u]ncertain coy and hard to please[.] When asked to do man’s work, we vow, [y]ou used to pucker up your brow. In war time it is different, dear; [y]ou’ll build, sell papers, and you’ll clear [t]he pillar-box, serve coals and bread – in fact where navvies fear to tread.³⁵⁴

³⁵² *Ibid*, 33, note 28, citing G.D.H. Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, 1923; J. Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards’ Movement*, 1973.

³⁵³ *Ibid*, 67, note 48, citing J.T. Murphy, *The Workers Committee*, 1917, 17-18.

³⁵⁴ ‘No.7 – For Men Must Fight, and Women Must – Work,’ *The Passing Show*, London, 1 May 1915, 12-13.

In addition to helping to foster gender-based animosity on the home front, through the rapid alteration of the working terms and conditions of many male workers, the speed with which wartime events brought about changes in the roles of men and women, destabilizing pre-war concepts of masculinity and femininity, had also come to the attention of servicemen on the battle front. Indicating that servicemen too were aware that wartime circumstances had altered masculine and feminine positions, in a letter, dated 30 May 1915, sent to his wife only two and a half months after the setting up of the Women's War Register, Private Henry Thwaites (killed at the Somme on 1 July 1916) wrote:

What I ear [sic] in the papers that all the women is doing mens work so when I come home I will have to stop at home and mind the baby, and do the washing while you go to work that will be all right [sic] wont [sic] it but it is a good job we can find the women to do it as we want all the men we can get and the more we get the sooner the war will be over do we want a lot more men!³⁵⁵

Although good-natured and jovial in its assessment, the allusions to male redundancy and reversals of gendered roles in Thwaites' letter revealed that the presence of increasingly self-reliant women, undertaking a wide variety of jobs, had not gone unnoticed on the battle front. This indicated how easy it might have been for disillusioned servicemen, like Otto Braun, to interpret female employment as evidence that women on the home front were indeed flourishing at the expense of the 'self-sacrifice' of voluntarily-enlisted men.

³⁵⁵ Letter dated 30 May 1915, from Private Thwaites, Private Henry Joshua Thwaites file, Imperial War Museum, London, 87/33/1, accessed 7 November 2009.

Allan Frantzen has noted that during the First World War both the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference and the ethos of imperial masculinity enabled masculine complicity in war-related injury and death to be mitigated through interpretation as an act of self-sacrificial, patriotism - a right-of-passage towards establishing an individual's manliness.³⁵⁶ Not only is Frantzen's suggestion borne out by the reverential respect for injured or permanently disabled servicemen that is implied by the way in which masculinity is inscribed in paintings such as *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), it also finds support in the title, gendering of subject and compositional arrangement of *He Gained A Fortune But He Gave His Son* (Fig. 49), which invited the beholder to accept that the death of a son through combat provided a degree of mitigation for the war profiting of the single masculine figure present in the painting. In contrast, with the exception of nursing the wounded, the legacy of reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference also meant that little precedent existed for the active participation of women in war. Indeed, the opposite was the case. The way in which women and nation were frequently conflated together as symbols of victory to provide *raison d'être* for enlistment in much propaganda functioned to imply that female support for the war helped to increase the injury and death rate, thereby providing limited potential for feminine absolution from blame. This is made only too evident by the way in which femininity is inscribed in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5). In Nevinson's painting, whilst the figure on the right is shown wearing a seemingly innocuous, triangular-shaped, blue hat, the figure on the left wears a hat decorated with an elaborate, centrally-placed, white feather. The white feather worn on the hat of the left female figure in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) allows the painting to allude to the practice of handing-out white feathers to

³⁵⁶ Allan Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 3.

shame men into voluntary enlistment, which, as noted, was understood as a female activity. As the war progressed, the practice of handing-out white feathers to coerce men into voluntary enlistment was increasingly understood as being an act of dangerous war-mongering and a sign of female complicity in masculine injury and death. In addition to attracting harsh public criticism because of the levels of injury and death, the distribution of white feathers, as mentioned, also became increasingly discredited because of mistakes that had been made, whereby feathers had been handed-out erroneously to men who were either wounded, permanently disabled, on leave from the battle front or in exempt professions. One such recipient was amputee, disabled soldier, P.C.S. Vince who in the 1960s recalled, in an interview recorded by the BBC, his own experience of being given a white feather by a woman. Vince, who was accosted by the woman brandishing the white feather whilst he was wearing civilian clothing, travelling on a tram in Brixton on 24 April 1917, stated: ‘Having on my overcoat and my stump covered up, I did no more but stand up on my good leg and put my stump into her face, and her reaction was awful and she did no more than flew off the tram.’³⁵⁷ As Nicoletta Gullace has observed, mistakes made handing-out feathers coupled with the increased loss of life meant that by the latter part of the war the giving of white feathers had become a symbol of supreme feminine naivety.³⁵⁸ This allowed white feathers to be viewed as ‘the guilty emblem of women’s complicity’ in the promotion of war.³⁵⁹ Therefore in its allusions to the handing-out of white feathers *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) can be understood to indicate that

³⁵⁷ P.C.S. Vince to BBC, 18 May 1964, Imperial War Museum, BBC/GW, Vol. UDA-VOS, folio 199, accessed 17 June 2008.

³⁵⁸ Nicoletta Gullace, ‘White Feathers and Wounded Men,’ 205.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

feminine support for enlistment, albeit often induced by propaganda, made women complicit in the massive male injury and death toll.

In addition to the flawed activity of distributing white feathers, the production of weapons of mass destruction by women working in the munitions industry also served to imply that femininity could be considered complicit in the loss of life. This was a position that was remorsefully acknowledged by female munitions workers themselves, and was made evident in a letter produced by one female armaments worker:

The fact that I am using my life's energy to destroy human souls gets on my nerves. Yet on the other hand, I am doing what I can to bring this horrible affair to an end. But once this war is over never in creation will I do the same thing again.³⁶⁰

Moreover, commenting on public opinion about employees in the munitions industry, Mary Brough-Robertson, another former munitions worker, observed:

Munitions workers were just about the lowest form of life in the eyes of the general public. We were supposed to make a great deal of money, and as other people didn't make so much they called us all sorts of things, even shouted

³⁶⁰ Alexandria Filling Factory File, Imperial War Museum, London, IWM.MUN 28, accessed 16 December 2009.

things after us. If they knew what you were, they had all sorts of nasty things to say to you.³⁶¹

Furthermore, alluding to the health risks faced by employees manufacturing munitions, the article ‘Why So Many Girls Broke Down!’ published in *Home Chat* on 10 March 1917, noted:

It was not the actual work that proved the greatest strain on the workers it was the conditions under which the work was done. [Many] remained silent because they felt it was their duty to accept the discomfort without grumbling, just as it is the duty of a soldier to put up with hardships in the trenches.³⁶²

The foregoing accounts indicate that, whilst some individuals might have been slightly better-off financially, many women found the experience of working in the munitions industry highly unpleasant. In addition to risking their own health and lives, women also had to wrestle with their consciences over the indirect role they played in the injury and death toll. Furthermore, as the account of Mary Brough-Robertson indicates, British women who undertook employment in the manufacture of munitions to support both the war effort and their own families were on occasions treated as if they were profiting no less immorally from war than businesses selling rationed goods at grossly inflated prices or industrialists making fortunes from the sale of armaments. This allowed seemingly

³⁶¹ Mary Brough-Robertson, cited in Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of The Great War*, London, 2003 (first published 2002), 171.

³⁶² Anonymous, ‘Why So Many Girls Broke Down!’ By A Contributor Who is Behind the Scenes in a Munitions Factory, *Home Chat*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 1147, 10 March 1917, 371.

greater female authority during wartime to be understood as having anti-social or immoral dimensions. Demonstrating this point in a similar vein to the use of female figures in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5), the article ‘The Real Danger’ of March 1915, noted that:

Woman’s sordid desires have been the cause of all the misery of the world, from the sweating of employees to procure her wealth to the torture of animals to procure her adornment [...] Woman is striving to win political and economic power and strength with the greater fierceness.³⁶³

Drawing upon prevailing beliefs that female munitions workers earned high wages and the wives, daughters and mistresses of rich industrialists profited from the war at the expense of servicemen, *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) can be understood to encourage the generation of negative opinions towards women. Moreover, C.K. Doherty has argued additionally that, albeit subtly, the three most predominant colours of red, white and blue that feature in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) are also those found in the Union flag, thereby indentifying the work specifically with Britain.³⁶⁴ According to Doherty, this allowed Nevinson’s painting to imply that ‘patriotism and profiteering advance[d] hand-in-hand,’ thus indicating that it was in the personal interest of war profiteers that the war be continued.³⁶⁵ Developing Doherty’s argument a stage further, I propose that allusions to the Union flag in Nevinson’s painting do not simply indicate that the vested interest of

³⁶³ W.H.S., ‘The Real Danger,’ *The Mermaid*, Birmingham, Vol. II, No. 4, March 1915, 118-120.

³⁶⁴ C.E. Doherty, *Nash, Nevinson and Roberts at War*, 265.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

personal gain made profiteers the enemies of every Briton suffering the effects of war. Additionally, in *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) the presence of two female figures, whose faces have been highlighted by an anti-enemy searchlight, thereby suggesting that they have perhaps been caught doing something criminal, wearing colours which could be specifically associated with Britain, more particularly enabled Nevinson's painting to imply that the greatest beneficiaries of war profiteering were British women. This allowed the public display of the painting to help foster sexual discrimination, of the kind noted in the article from *Home Chat* and *The Workers Committee* report, by implying that the home front was a zone where feminine authority threatened to usurp that of masculinity.

The way in which sexual difference was constructed by the use of line, space and colour in a number of abstract paintings by Helen Saunders, who was a key exhibitor at the Vorticist group exhibition held at the Doré Galleries in June 1915, provides an indication that concepts of female complicity in the injury and death toll along with the assignment of the home front as a zone of feminine authority could also be inspired by abstraction. Focussing on artists' engagement with the employment of women in the First World War, Jane Beckett has observed that *Abstract Multicoloured Design* of 1915 by Saunders (Fig. 51) features 'architectural forms [that] pierce and fragment the body.'³⁶⁶ Arguing that the 'interplay of body and machinery, a familiar trope in avant-garde war writing' can be 'inflected [...] onto the female body,' Beckett has proposed that the handling of colour, line and space in Saunders' painting can be interpreted as alluding to the experiences of women working in munitions factories, the trade that experienced the

³⁶⁶ Jane Beckett, '(Is)Land Narratives,' 211.

largest influx of additional female labour.³⁶⁷ As noted in the introduction to this chapter, workers in munitions factories, through the nature of the type of work undertaken, were exposed themselves to danger and death from explosions and poisoning. Whilst censorship by DORA largely succeeded in concealing the deaths of munitions workers as a result of explosions, the characteristic yellow colour of skin, hair and teeth, symptomatic of toxic jaundice, caused by contact with TNT was much more difficult to remove or conceal. Mrs M. Hall, a former munitions worker noted, for example, that it was ‘quite a twelve-month after we left the factory that the whole of the yellow came from our bodies. Washing wouldn’t do anything – it only made it worse.’³⁶⁸ The long period of time that it took to recover from toxic jaundice meant that workers filling shells with TNT, like maimed servicemen, had their wartime experiences ‘written upon’ their bodies.³⁶⁹ As a result, the yellow colour of the skin, hair and teeth of an individual suffering from toxic jaundice became to their contemporaries a sign that indicated the former’s employment. This resulted in female employees of munitions factories being referred to as ‘canaries,’ because their yellow appearance reminded beholders of the colour of the feathers of pet canary birds.³⁷⁰ Beckett has suggested that the prominence of yellow pigment in *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51) alluded specifically to the role of women in ‘the manufacture and filling of shells,’ thereby indicating that Saunders used the colour yellow to symbolize femininity and female roles in wartime through its well known association with the skin discolouration of munitions

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Also see Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 48, Appendix 2.2, Index of Trend in Female Employment July 1914–November 1918.

³⁶⁸ Mrs. M. Hall cited in Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War*, 68.

³⁶⁹ Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 15.

³⁷⁰ Jane Beckett, ‘(Is)Land Narratives,’ 211.

workers.³⁷¹ Supporting the foregoing argument, working for the Censor's Department in the War Records Office in London during the war, Saunders could well have been inspired by seeing reports of cases of TNT poisoning that detailed symptoms.³⁷² Furthermore, based in the large, urban, environment of London, Saunders is most likely to have encountered women from munitions factories, such as those employed at Woolwich Arsenal (the largest munitions production site in Britain), with yellow hair, skin and teeth suggesting that they were suffering from toxic jaundice as a result of their jobs.

Whilst Beckett's argument is to some extent compelling it does not explore fully why Saunders might have chosen to use gender-specific colour, nor does it examine how the meanings and values for war and femininity that can be interpreted as being constructed in *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51) might have contributed to the subsequent writing-out of her artworks from most art-historical discourses on the war. Simultaneous to the production of *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51) Saunders also produced two other watercolours - *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) and *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* both of 1915 (Fig. 53). Saunders' prevalent use of yellow and khaki pigment as the predominant colour in each of the paintings respectively, in common with her use of yellow in *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51), can be understood to have readily signified to beholders sharing similar experiences of the war certain gendered wartime tasks and the experiences of certain individuals or groups. In line with Beckett's argument, the predominant colours of yellow and blue in *Abstract*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in The First Machine Age*, Vol. 2 'Synthesis and Decline,' London, 1976, XXIII.

Composition In Blue and Yellow (Fig. 52), which even found resonance in the work's title, can be interpreted as symbolizing female munitions workers and the British nation, which was often conflated with women in war-propaganda. On this basis, the yellow pigment used in Saunders' work signifies the skins of female workers, while the blue pigment in the painting can be understood to suggest the colour of the sea surrounding the island of Britain. Whereas, first chosen as the predominant colour for British army uniforms in 1897, khaki had by the period of the First World War become well established as a generic name for all clothing worn by British soldiers.³⁷³ Therefore, the prevalence of the colour khaki in *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* (Fig. 53) can be interpreted as symbolizing the masculine bodies of serviceman. In common with other female artists, like Ethel Walker, working in a profession that was dominated by men, Saunders was likely to have been well aware of the negative effects on women of the pre-war stratification of British society, which promoted masculine authority. Additionally, the artist would probably have observed the destabilizing effects that the circumstances of war had on traditional concepts of sexual difference. Furthermore, she was most likely also well aware that such destabilization inspired discrimination against women in Britain. Lisa Tickner has argued that 'the battle of the sexes (for pro- and antifeminists, especially men) and the exploration of a modern self-determined identity (particularly for women),' can be understood as being manifest in 'modern subject matter' and modernist practice.³⁷⁴ Whilst it can be argued that Saunders' relatively young age (compared to that of many home front-based artists) might have made her perhaps more receptive to

³⁷³ Byron Farwell, *Armies of The Raj: From Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1847*, London, 1990 (first published 1989), 75-77.

³⁷⁴ Lisa Tickner, 'Men's Work? Masculinity and Modernism,' Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (eds.) *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, Hanover and London, 1994, 42-82, 44.

modernist practice, the foregoing observation by Tickner, that modernism could be used to assert identity, also suggests an additional reason for the artist's preference for abstraction. On this basis, given the apparent levels of animosity towards women, especially munitions workers, Saunders might well have deliberately combined abstraction with gender-specific colours in order to allude to male and female wartime roles with the aim of suggesting a sense of unity between home and battle fronts, which was forged by the use and manufacture of munitions. To this end, the desired outcome of the public display of her paintings was, therefore, perhaps the establishment of a positive image for femininity during wartime, which was similar to that constructed for masculinity by much war propaganda. Supporting the foregoing argument, concepts of a commonality between home and battle fronts created by munitions work were exploited to maximise munitions production, for example in pro-war propaganda such as the imagery and text of a contemporaneous recruitment poster for women munitions workers entitled *On Her Their Lives Depend* of c.1916 (Fig. 54). Moreover, at Woolwich Arsenal, Lillian Barker, Female Labour Supervisor, was said to have informed women: 'If you leave 200 fuse-rings incomplete [...] they delay 200 fuses. 200 fuses delay 200 shells from being sent out to the front. Think what 200 shells might mean to Tommy in a tight corner!'³⁷⁵ Although intended to inspire women to assemble as many shells as quickly and accurately as possible, Barker's comments also gave an indication that on the battle front shells, made by female employees, killed people, thereby highlighting that work in munitions factories made women arguably complicit in the massive injury and death toll. Meanwhile the use of weapons that maimed and killed also implicated men.

³⁷⁵ Lillian Barker, cited in Barbara McLaren, *Women of The War*, London, New York and Toronto, 1917, 11.

As a result, the way in which line has been used to pierce and cut across voids of space in *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) and *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* (Fig. 53), what Beckett calls ‘architectural forms [that] pierce and fragment the body,’ can be understood as an allusion to bodies damaged by industrialized weaponry.³⁷⁶ Therefore together the two paintings can be understood to perhaps indicate that in supporting the war effort, through encouraging enlistment, the manufacture and use of munitions, all Britons, irrespective of their sex, not only risked their own lives, but were also inevitably to some extent equally complicit in the injury and death of other people. In the case of men, the use of khaki and the jagged edges of the abstract forms in *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* (Fig. 53) acted to symbolize the aggressive and destructive nature of combat that caused so much injury and death. Likewise, similar jagged-edged forms and the colour yellow in *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) not only alluded to the risk of illness and death from toxic jaundice or explosions, to which employees working within the munitions industry were exposed, but also that the products made in armaments factories maimed and killed people.

Although the use of gender-specific colour and jagged-edged abstract forms are compositional elements that can be understood as uniting thematically both *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* (Fig. 53) and *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52), such a thesis is tenuous because the former was apparently exhibited at the Vorticist Exhibition in June 1915 whilst the latter, which was produced in the same year, was not, thereby making it seem unlikely that the two paintings were ever created to be a

³⁷⁶ Jane Beckett, ‘(Is)Land Narratives,’ 211.

complimentary pair intended to be exhibited together.³⁷⁷ Hung together as a pair the compositional schema of *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) and *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* (Fig. 53) can be interpreted as complimenting each other in a way that suggests a shared unity between home and battle fronts. However, if, as seems more likely, Saunders' paintings were never intended to be displayed together, then the use of gender-specific colours in each, conflated with the aggressive use of line, could only have functioned to allow women and men to be associated respectively with aggression. As noted, whilst the concept of chivalric sacrifice seemingly provided men with absolution from blame for the massive injury and death toll, the dual wartime position of women, as both objects of protection and agents of injury and death, provided little reprieve for British women. On this basis, the prevalence of the colour yellow in both *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) and *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51), which had the potential to bring to mind the bodies of female munitions workers suffering from toxic jaundice as a result of the filling of shells, could be interpreted as allowing Saunders' two paintings to symbolize feminine complicity in war-related injury and death. The effect of this was to make evident the destabilizing abnormality of wartime. Consequently, the way in which femininity was inscribed through the use of the colour yellow in both *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) and *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51) can be seen to provide a cogent explanation for the subsequent writing-out of Saunders' responses to war compared to that of male members of the Vorticist group. Not least the work of *de facto* leader Percy Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), whose dehumanized images

³⁷⁷ It is likely that 'drawing' (b) *Black and Khaki* by Saunders (whose name is spelt incorrectly in the catalogue as 'Sanders') is *Vorticist Composition, Black and Khaki* (Fig. 53), Anonymous, *Vorticist Exhibition Catalogue*, Doré Galleries, London (opened 10 June 1915), Harlesden, 1915.

of 'stick-men' placed in undulating, war-torn, landscapes, in paintings such as *A Battery Shelled* of 1918-19 (Fig. 55), succeeded in constructing war in a way which managed to endorse notions of the great debt owed by British society to servicemen. This allowed Lewis' work to uphold the traditional stratification of British society, which promoted masculine authority. Whereas, in contrast, allusions to feminine complicity in the injury and death of servicemen that could be interpreted as being constructed by the use of line, space and colour in *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52) and *Abstract Multicoloured Design* (Fig. 51) can be seen to imply a challenge to traditional values, which inspired the parameters of the canon for British First World War art.

As mentioned, in addition to suffering hardship, bereavement and instances of workplace discrimination, all women on the home front were also placed in the invidious position of being deemed as potential carriers of sexually transmitted diseases by the wide-reaching and punitive powers of section 40d of DORA. Questioning the need for section 40d of DORA, and thereby confirming its discriminatory nature against women, statistical data about venereal disease amongst British servicemen has indicated that during the First World War cases of sexually transmitted diseases actually fell below pre-war levels. In 1916 there were, for example, thirty-seven cases of venereal disease per thousand men.³⁷⁸ This figure was much less than the sixty-one cases per thousand in 1911.³⁷⁹

As noted, updates of DORA were regularly provided in wide-circulation newspapers and magazines, for example *The Times* and *The Queen*. This meant that much of the home

³⁷⁸ Leslie Hall, *Hidden Anxieties: Male Sexuality 1900-1950*, Cambridge, 1991, 37.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

front population would have been highly likely to have been well aware of section 40d; not least female artists like Evelyn De Morgan who was concerned with women's rights. Possessing an egalitarian worldview, De Morgan is also likely to have noted with keen interest both the act's discriminatory nature and the strenuous opposition to it that was presented by supporters of women's rights, such as Harriet Newcomb, Honorary Secretary of the British Dominions Women Citizen's Union and Sylvia Pankhurst, which resulted in the setting up in 1918 of a government committee to consider the repeal of section 40d.³⁸⁰ In 'Insults to Soldiers' Wives and Mothers,' published in *The Woman's Dreadnought* on 14 November 1914, Pankhurst complained of 'the monstrous injustice of erecting a special code of conduct and morals to be forcibly rivitted upon soldiers' wives.'³⁸¹ In the same article she proceeded to challenge the premise of masculine superior strength of character by commenting that:

we must protest very specially also against the proposal to place these our country women under the supervision of the police. The police force is a body of men at least as fallible as these women whom it is proposed that they should supervise and control.³⁸²

In addition to alluding to the traditional stratification of British society, which promoted masculine authority and rendered women helpless to prevent war through

³⁸⁰ Harriet Newcombe, letter, dated 22 October 1918, protesting about the British government's failure to repeal section 40d of DORA sent to J.I. Macpherson, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War, contained in the file of papers on dealing with Regulation 40d of the Defence of The Realm Act by the Committee of Home Affairs, WO 32/474 C420406, National Archives, Kew, accessed 11 August 2009.

³⁸¹ Sylvia Pankhurst 'Insults to Soldiers' Wives and Mothers,' *The Woman's Dreadnought*, London, No. 35, 14 November 1914, 138.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

disenfranchisement, the vulnerable position of the single female figure placed on small island in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) by De Morgan presents femininity as threatened in a way which could also be interpreted as alluding to the discriminatory effects of section 40d of DORA.³⁸³ Shown with arms outstretched, the pose of the single female figure in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can be understood to mimic that of Christ crucified. Therefore in line with Sylvia Pankhurst's claim, the painting can be interpreted as suggesting that, like Christ, the majority of British women were innocent and therefore unfairly discriminated against by section 40d of DORA. Continuing this theme, the island location and perilous plight of the female figure in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can be interpreted as implying that the liberty of British women was under threat. Whilst this allows De Morgan's painting to allude to the threat posed to Britain by the enemy, it also enables the work to indicate that the women of Britain were also being threatened by discrimination that was the result of legislation issued by their own country's government. Moreover, in addition to simply being seen as alluding the impact of section 40d of DORA, the perilous state of the female figure in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can also be viewed as a deliberate attempt by De Morgan to focus attention on other instances of sexual discrimination against women, which were stimulated by a variety of cultural forms, ranging from newspapers and magazines to paintings like *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5). On this basis the powerless demeanour of the female figure in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can be understood as implying that, contrary to the claims of disillusioned servicemen, most British women were not benefitting from war. Therefore, rather than promoting a gender-based divide in wartime experience the way in

³⁸³ Lending support to the suggestion that the theme of *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) is indeed the rescuing of women from a number of perceived dangers or threats is the caption 'Save, O Save!', which was placed alongside the entry for the painting in the exhibition catalogue for Edith Grove of 1916. Exhibit No. 12, Evelyn De Morgan, *Catalogue of An Exhibition of Pictures*.

which sexual difference is inscribed in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) can be understood to enforce the idea that, like servicemen, civilians, and in particular women, *did* bear the sacrifice of war. Not only did this have the effect of refuting the claims of a divide between home and battle fronts, it also revealed De Morgan's egalitarian worldview. Nevertheless, in *S.O.S*. (Fig. 6) De Morgan's use of a lone, defenceless, female figure, surrounded on a small island by the threat of evil (symbolized by sea monsters and dragons), can also be interpreted as alluding to the legend of Saint George, a well known symbol of masculine chivalrous protection. As noted, as the war progressed, and events inspired increasing disillusionment, rather than simply being interpreted as a symbol of masculine patriotism, chivalry (as symbolized by medieval knights and Saint George) was increasingly viewed by many people with sardonic distaste as being a manifestation of the 'debased and deadly immorality,' which was in no small way responsible for so much death.³⁸⁴ Consequently, although most likely unintentional given De Morgan's egalitarian worldview, allusions to the legend of Saint George in *S.O.S*. (Fig. 6) might also be interpreted as pointing to the way in which much pro-war propaganda cast women as symbols of national victory, making femininity the *raison d'être* for male enlistment, thus allowing the painting to implicate femininity in the massive war-related injury and death toll. By implicating women in the injury and death toll, the way in which sexual difference was inscribed in *S.O.S* (Fig. 6) not only suggested the abnormality of wartime, but might also have unwittingly helped to inspire further discrimination against women.

³⁸⁴ F.J.C. Hearnshaw, 'Chivalry and its Place in History,' 31.

In conclusion, binary premise pertaining to male and female roles within pre-war British society meant that femininity was often interpreted as being synonymous with pacifism, whilst physical strength, aggression and heroic bravery in war were understood to be desired masculine attributes. However, the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War destabilized long-held constructions of masculinity and femininity. This made it very difficult for pre-war values to continue to be upheld in all cultural forms, ranging from dominant narratives in newspapers to paintings. Altered concepts of sexual difference caused by the effects of war meant that rather than just being understood as celebrating masculine heroism in the face of the terrible adversity of war, the presence of injured men juxtaposed with able-bodied women in paintings, like *The Creditors* (Fig. 3), could additionally be interpreted as promoting a reversal of pre-war values by suggesting masculine weakness alongside feminine authority. As mentioned, public awareness of increased feminine authority functioned to engender claims amongst disillusioned combatants that civilians, especially women, were profiting from war at the expense of servicemen. This helped to foster notions of a gender and geographical divide in wartime experience between the predominately feminine home front on the British Isles and the exclusively masculine battle fronts abroad. As a result, paintings engaging with the home front, which seemingly suggested greater femininity authority, could well have been interpreted as actually helping to promote the destabilizing impact of war on British society.

Additionally, as this study has demonstrated, the dual position of women as objects of masculine protection and agents of injury and death, which was caused by the juncture of

cultural traditions with circumstances of war, resulted in the circulation, on both the home and battle fronts, of the concept that British women were also complicit in the injury and death of servicemen. Public awareness that women might be in some way complicit in the male injury and death toll helped to compound further divisions between the feminine home and masculine battle fronts. This made it very easy for the use of female figures, and even the colour yellow, which was associated with feminine employment in the munitions industry, in paintings, including *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5) and *Abstract Composition In Blue and Yellow* (Fig. 52), to be interpreted as making evident the abnormality of wartime by bringing to mind the link between women, injury and death.

Altered concepts of sexual difference during wartime therefore meant that many paintings that were exhibited publically on the home front had the potential to suggest meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity that could be interpreted as promoting the breaking-down of the traditional order of British society. Whilst in some cases the generation of such altered concepts of sexual difference in paintings was most likely the unintentional result of oscillation between sign and referent, it has also been shown herein that the destabilizing effects of the First World War upon long-held concepts of sexual difference can be understood to have provided artists with an opportunity to publically protest against the conflict and its devastating impact. This is exemplified by the way in which sexual difference is inscribed with the seemingly apparent purpose of deliberately playing upon the war's impact on pre-war values of sexual difference for irenic and other protest aims in paintings, such as *Corporation*

Street Birmingham In March 1914 (Fig. 38), which were commissioned either for public display or wide-circulation in print form.

Therefore, with the reinstatement of pre-war concepts of sexual difference in the immediate aftermath of war, whether intentional or not, seeming endorsement of the war's destabilizing impact in many paintings responding to daily life on the home front could well have resulted in such works being viewed as uncanonical when compared to artworks representing the wartime perspective of male combatants. The latter being examples of fine art engaging with the war that could, in most cases, be interpreted as largely upholding traditional values of sexual difference within British society, upon which the canon of First World War art was established.

Chapter Three
Concepts of Sexual Difference and the Construction of Death and Bereavement in
Paintings Responding to the Home Front Perspective.

Evelyn De Morgan has prominently placed in the foreground of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) four female figures, all dressed in dishevelled clothing. To left of the painting is an elderly female figure with grey hair which falls to one side of her veiled head. With arms out-stretched the figure looks upwards to a rainbow of salvation in the sky, which encircles an apparition of colourfully dressed male and female figures who are dancing. Second left, a young female figure with red hair sits on the ground. Looking downwards as if in sorrow the figure is seemingly oblivious to the lively and joyous scene taking place in the sky. Standing, a third figure is shown reaching out to the sky as if trying to become part of the vision or event taking place. Additionally, the actions of a fourth young female figure, with red hair, who is located in the right foreground of the work, function to suggest that the event in the sky in the background of the painting, might well be a vision or a wishful daydream. To this end, with hands held high in a gesture that can be interpreted as implying resignation or surrender, the figure closes her eyes as if in dreamy contemplation, thereby rendering her oblivious to engagement with beholders of the painting, in whose direction she faces. The dramatic poses and appearance of the four figures in the foreground of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) can be understood to suggest that their behaviour and demeanour has been prompted by an emotionally overwhelming event, for example the circumstances of the First World War.

Additionally, providing a further indication that the work's theme is the war from the home front perspective, there are no male figures in the foreground of *The Mourners*

(Fig. 7). In common with similar approaches found in other paintings, such as *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43), this absence can be understood as an allusion to men fighting abroad and the absence of dead servicemen's bodies through non-repatriation and destruction by shells. Moreover, Eric Hopkins has observed the unprecedented death toll meant that, throughout all the countries involved in the war, there were very few individuals who by 1918 had not 'suffered the loss of a father, son, a brother, a cousin or uncle.'³⁸⁵ Therefore, as Hopkins observation makes clear, adherence to the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference meant that death and bereavement during wartime was also demarcated largely by gender. Consequently, the absence of male figures in the foreground of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) can additionally be understood to imply that the activity of mourning, in which the four female figures are most likely engaged, can be interpreted as predominantly involving women.

As noted in chapter one, Nicole Loraux has argued that mourning has become firmly embedded in western culture as a feminine activity through textual narratives from ancient Greece onwards.³⁸⁶ Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, for example, describing a mother grieving the death of her only son, states 'with her moans [she] will sing together with me over my sorrows?'³⁸⁷ Furthermore, as mentioned, the Virgin Mary is assigned the role of chief mourner to Christ in the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Women are also identified with mourning in act 4, scene 4 of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, where the Duchess of York, Queen Margaret and Queen

³⁸⁵ Eric Hopkins, *A Social History of The English Working Classes, 1815-1945*, London, 1979, 212.

³⁸⁶ Nicole Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, 1-7 and 63.

³⁸⁷ Euripides, *Phoenician Women*, 15:17-18, cited in Nicole Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, 63.

Elisabeth all mourn for their respective sons.³⁸⁸ Suggesting that femininity was already very well associated with mourning within British culture, during the First World War female subjects dominate accounts of bereavement on the home front, thereby confirming Carol Acton's argument that bereavement and mourning can indeed also be viewed as being 'prescribed as part of the larger gendered constructions of wartime roles for men and women.'³⁸⁹ The much cited *Testament of Youth* and *Chronicle of Youth* by Vera Brittain, for example, both detail the grief and mourning of the author and the mother of her fiancé Roland Leighton, following the latter's death on the battle front.³⁹⁰ Furthermore, as Michael Roper has noted, in the years preceding the First World War 'women in late Victorian and Edwardian society were seen as having a special role in relation to death.'³⁹¹ In all sectors of society responsibility for the practical arrangements of dealing with death, ranging from the laying out of bodies, raising of funeral funds to the organizing of wakes, 'almost always fell to women.'³⁹² Additionally, women, especially ones from middle and upper-middle-class social backgrounds, 'were expected to withdraw from public engagements, [with] widows wearing drab silk crape for up to two years, mothers for a year.'³⁹³ It is this aspect of the link between women, mourning and death that is apparently represented in *Death and The Bride* (Fig. 56) of 1895 by Thomas Cooper Gotch, which the artist deemed suitable for subsequent re-exhibition in

³⁸⁸ William Shakespeare, W.J. Craig (ed.) *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Oxford, London, New York and Toronto, 1949 (first published 1905), 623-629.

³⁸⁹ Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime*, 1 and 7.

³⁹⁰ Vera Brittain, Alan Bishop and Terry Smart (eds.), *Chronicle of Youth: Vera Brittain's War Diaries, 1913-1917*, London, 1982, 378-405. Also see Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925*, London, 1960 (first published 1933).

³⁹¹ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 2009, 218.

³⁹² Patricia Jalland, *Death in The Victorian Family*, Oxford, 1996, 211.

³⁹³ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 218. Also see Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*, 1-9.

1918 at the Royal Academy of Arts *War and Peace* exhibition.³⁹⁴ Moreover, research undertaken for this thesis indicates that during the war, in addition to being part of British cultural convention, the assignment of the role of mourning to women was greatly encouraged by a combination of the influence of the ethos of imperial masculinity and the particular contexts of the conflict. As noted in chapter one, within the parameters of imperial masculinity it was expected that men should show strength of character and emotional restraint in all matters. This made it very difficult for men to mourn overtly in public. The culturally-embedded nature of the ethos of imperial masculinity thus provides a plausible explanation as to why, during the war, few examples of contemporaneous imagery, irrespective of cultural form, were created representing men as mourners. Supporting the foregoing, research for this thesis has been unable to identify a single example of a painting or any other form of fine art produced on the British home front during the war that directly represents men undertaking the role of mourning. In contrast, there are a plethora of examples of visual imagery (including many of the paintings that are discussed in the following chapter) produced during the war, which clearly assign the role of mourning to women. In addition to cultural convention assigning mourning to women, as noted, this imbalance can be explained by the way in which bereavement was actually experienced on the home front, where the assignment of wartime roles on the basis of gender and circumstances of the war resulted in a disproportionately large female population. This meant that the majority of mourners on the home front in wartime were, or at least appeared more obviously to be, female. At the same time fighting abroad and the non-repatriation of the dead made men

³⁹⁴ Entry No: 384, Anonymous, *War and Peace: Royal British Colonial Artists, Including Pictures Lent and Painted for The Commonwealth of Australia and The Royal Academy of Art*, exhibition catalogue (Royal Academy of Arts), London, 1918, 38.

conspicuous by their absence. These aspects of the war's effects are recalled by Margery Allingham as part of a retrospective account of her experiences on the British home front during the First World War. Allingham recalled that:

I was ten years old in 1914, and very vivid impressions received at that age never alter [...] War simply meant death to me [...] It was not ordinary dying, either, nor even death in more horrible forms, but final death, empty and away somewhere. I had a sudden recollection of women and old people all in black [...] standing about in the village reading enormous causality lists [...] a boy on a bike with not one telegram spelling tragedy but sometimes two or three at a time.³⁹⁵

The specific assignment of mourning to 'women and old people all in black' by Allingham indicates that, whilst war did mean death to children like herself, mourning was also at the time seen as being a role primarily associated with adults. Allingham's observations find support in visual imagery produced during the war, which focuses predominantly on the vulnerability of children, alluding to them as bearing society's sacrifice by being economic and emotional victims, rather than presenting them specifically as mourners or, like men, conspicuous by their absence. The vulnerability of children and their dependence on society (especially their own families) is, for example, implied in *One of Our Mates* (Fig. 57) by Amy K. Browning, published in the *Woman's*

³⁹⁵ Margery Allingham, *The Oaken Heart*, London, 1987 (first published 1941), 20-21.

Dreadnought of Christmas 1915, in which two small children cling tightly to a female, possibly maternal, figure.³⁹⁶

The invidious positions of both servicemen on the battle front and families waiting tensely on the home front for news are also alluded to in the landscape of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7). In the painting the landscape surrounding the figures is a wasteland consisting only of rocks and pools of red-coloured pigment suggesting a liquid. Describing events during the apocalypse, the New Testament book of Revelation (8:8) states that ‘a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea and the third part of the sea became blood.’³⁹⁷ Furthermore, in the introduction to Canto XIV from *The Divine Comedy* book of ‘Inferno’ by Dante, Virgil informs the Pilgrim that the ‘source of the river of boiling blood’ is the Old Man of Crete, ‘whose tears are the source of all the rivers in Hell.’³⁹⁸ De Morgan’s frequent use of both secular and religious textual sources as inspiration for her work, coupled with apparent allusions to Revelation in her painting *S.O.S* (Fig. 6), allows the red-coloured pigment in *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) to be viewed as indicating that the location in which the figures are placed is itself apocalyptic or one associated with a hellish event, such as the war. In a not too dissimilar way the imagery of *We Are Making A New World* of c.1917-18, (Fig. 58) by Paul Nash (1898-1946) presents the Flanders’ landscape where the Western Front battlefields were located as an apocalyptic or hellish landscape, thereby enforcing the negative effects of war through allusions to the carnage that took place there. Revealing the artist’s empirical experience of the battle front, the

³⁹⁶ Anonymous, *Woman’s Dreadnought*, Christmas Supplement, 1915, 389.

³⁹⁷ Revelation (8:8), New Testament, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 277.

³⁹⁸ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, Vol. 1, ‘Inferno,’ translated by Mark Musa, London, 1984 (first published 1971), 196.

way in which Nash represented the Flanders' landscape indicated that after battle the place consisted of little more than undulating raised furrows of mud, broken, defoliated, trees and water-filled shell holes in which the blood of dead servicemen mingled with stagnant water. Unlike Nash, who had witnessed the conditions on the Western Front, but in common with most civilians on the British home front, De Morgan was most likely made aware of the appearance of the Flanders' landscape in photographs published in wide-circulation newspapers and magazines, such as the front cover of the *Daily Mail* of 14 December 1914 (Fig. 59). Furthermore, although she did not have any immediate relatives in the armed services, De Morgan was likely to have been aware of the appearance of the Western Front from descriptions of it given either directly by servicemen or in letters sent home by men to their families.³⁹⁹ In a letter sent to his family, Private Warwick Squire (killed in the spring of 1915), for example, sarcastically described Flanders as being 'a really cheerful country; what isn't under water is thick, slushy, mud[...] We stand in mud, sleep in mud, also eat mud, wear mud, in fact spend our lives in the mud.'⁴⁰⁰ Through the combination of barren, uneven, wasteland and the pools of red-coloured pigment functioning as a proxy for blood-shed in war, *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) can be understood to construct the events of the First World War as a negative experience, by highlighting the conditions on the Western Front battlefields in which men, who had families at home waiting anxiously for news, were expected to operate, and where many died.

³⁹⁹ Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling, *William De Morgan and His Wife*, 371-3.

⁴⁰⁰ E.W. Squire, letter 14 January 1915, Papers of Private No: 2172, E.W. Squire of 13th London Regiment British Expeditionary Force, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 7 November 2009.

Additionally, the presence of female figures and absence of male figures in the foreground of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) can also be understood to signal notions of feminine complicity in war-related injury and death. To this end, the way in which death is assigned to masculinity and mourning to femininity in the painting can be understood to remind beholders, who shared similar cultural backgrounds, that the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general, along with traditional social values within Britain, not only allowed women to be assigned the roles of chief mourners, but were also partly responsible for making femininity complicit in the massive injury and death by assigning combat roles only to men. As noted, the exclusive assignment of combat to men had the effect of casting women as objects of masculine protection, thereby creating a link between femininity, the injury and death of servicemen. Moreover, the link between women and the injury and death of servicemen was further enforced during wartime by female involvement in the handing out of white feathers to shame men into voluntary enlistment and the manufacture of weapons. As argued in chapter two, in addition to signalling involvement in the injury and death toll, female employment in the manufacture of munitions and other roles traditionally undertaken by men, such as bus driving, meant that women also had the potential to be seen as obtaining financial gain from war. Consequently, it can be argued that the meeting of traditional values of sexual difference with allusions to the impact of wartime events within De Morgan's painting can be understood to have functioned to destabilize pre-war concepts of masculinity and femininity. This arguably allowed the presence of female mourners in the painting to not only signify the traditional feminine role of mourning, but also to be seen to endorse claims made by disillusioned servicemen, and

some male civilians, that women were profiting from war at the expense of men. Therefore, with the return to social stratification based upon the promotion of masculine authority in the immediate post-war period, it is highly likely that the way in which sexual difference was inscribed in *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) resulted in the subsequent disregarding of De Morgan's work as uncanonical.

Additionally, Carol Acton has pointed out that 'the representation of a mother's grief over the body of her son' can be viewed as a commonly recurring theme in written accounts of twentieth-century wars.⁴⁰¹ During the First World War, the high profile of motherhood in both official and unofficial textual narratives and visual imagery, especially concerning the relationship of adult servicemen to their mothers, does much to support Acton's argument. In common with all other women and girls, mothers were actively encouraged by both official and unofficial pro-war propaganda to support male enlistment. Therefore, in patriotically supporting the war effort by encouraging enlistment many mothers were arguably complicit in the deaths of their own sons. The premature death of young men, caused by war, meant that many mothers unexpectedly outlived their offspring, thereby altering normal expectations concerning the order of mortality within families. Not only did this reversal serve to make evident the devastating impact of war, it also helped to place emphasis on the special position of mothers. Exemplifying the elevated status of motherhood during the war, whilst at the same time also alluding to the complicity of mothers in the death of their own offspring, 'Mothers of Heroes,' a letter, sent by Anglo-Saxon, to the editor of *The Times* on 13 July 1915, noted:

⁴⁰¹ Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime*, 2.

The present war is prolific of instances of [...] Military Medals, [...], awarded to officers and men who have died gloriously or fallen mortally wounded in the act of winning them, who consequently have never lived to wear the decorations they had won. In such instances only it is for consideration whether – with a view to doing honour to the memory of the dead hero – his mother might not be permitted to wear (as a brooch or otherwise) the decoration or medal thus posthumously awarded to the gallant son she had given to her country. It is not suggested that any other relative except the hero's mother (without whom he could not have been born) should be entitled to this unique privilege.⁴⁰²

Additionally, commenting on the link between femininity, motherhood and death, Elisabeth Bronfen has pointed out that 'the mother's gift of birth is also the gift of death because [...w]oman functions as a privileged trope for [...] unity and loss [...] the pleasure of the body and its decay.'⁴⁰³ As a result the act of child-birth, which establishes the mother-child-bond, can also be understood as the instigator of the process of life to towards death, thereby making all mothers complicit in the death of their own children. Demonstrating that such analogies were indeed understood and employed during the First World War, drawing upon the uniquely feminine role of motherhood, the article 'The Real Danger' noted that 'Woman, alas! was responsible for our birth. This she made the excuse for beginning to devour us.'⁴⁰⁴ Consequently, although motherhood was

⁴⁰² Anglo-Saxon, 'Mothers of Heroes,' *The Times*, London, 13 July 1915, Issue 40905, col C, 7.

⁴⁰³ Elisabeth Bronfen, Elizabeth Wright (ed.), *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, Oxford, 1996 (first published 1992), 56.

⁴⁰⁴ W.H.S., 'The Real Danger,' 118-120.

traditionally seen as innately aligning women with peace, the link between mothers and death meant that paintings alluding to maternal bereavement on the home front could also suggest feminine involvement in the massive injury and death toll.

Additionally, Edgar Morin has argued that ‘the two fundamental apotropaic myths invoked to defend against death are those of the resurrection and immortality of the soul.’⁴⁰⁵ As mentioned, during the First World War the unprecedented injury and death toll inspired a marked increase in the practice of Spiritualism, used as a way to cope with bereavement. Confirming this increase, research for this thesis has identified that a significant number of paintings not only allude to the practice of Spiritualism, but also demarcate it in terms of sexual difference in line with other forms of mourning. Demonstrating the foregoing contention, the joyous scene of dancing and merriment, surrounded by a swirling rainbow of salvation, in the background of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) can be understood to represent a vision of the afterlife, in which the souls of the dead are seen to continue to exist. Therefore, the representation of a group of emotionally excited female figures, set in a landscape alluding to the appearance of Western Front battlefields, in the foreground and the joyous vision of the afterlife in the background of De Morgan’s painting can be interpreted as suggesting that, owing to the destruction and non-repatriation of bodies, all that remained for the bereaved families on the home front was either happy memories of past life or belief in a reunion with deceased loved ones through the practice of Spiritualism.

⁴⁰⁵ Edgar Morin, *L’Homme Et La Mort*, Paris, 1970, cited in Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death Femininity and The Aesthetic*, Manchester, 1996 (first published 1992), note 51, 92.

As objects on display in public places, such as art galleries, paintings had the potential to create and direct meanings and values for the war. This meant artists' reliance upon convention and circumstances of war pertaining to concepts of sexual difference to negotiate war-related death and bereavement, like other aspects of the war treated in a similar way, had the potential to play a major role in engendering meanings and values for the war, masculinity and femininity. Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be to explore the interpretive implications of potential meanings and values constructed by paintings using sexual difference as a mechanism to engage with death and bereavement from the home front perspective. The chapter is comprised of three sections. Section one examines how, under the unprecedented circumstances of war, artists' reliance upon cultural conventions pertaining the gendering of mourning as feminine also produced radically different meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity to those of the preceding peacetime, thereby again revealing the abnormality of wartime. This will be done in order to demonstrate the impact of such practice, not only on the generation and dissemination of meanings for the war, but its affect upon the canonical and cultural values assigned to paintings engaging with the home front perspective. Section two of the chapter, will expand the theme of women as chief mourners to explore how altered concepts of femininity were also constructed in paintings by allusions to mothers and the culturally-vaunted position of motherhood during wartime. Finally, as noted, a number of paintings can be interpreted as engaging with death and bereavement from the home front perspective by conflating sexual difference with Spiritualism. Section three of the chapter will examine this approach, not only in terms of it being understood as a novel form of artistic practice in relation to representing war, but also on the basis of the

influence of cultural convention, which again meant that Spiritualism, in common with other activities associated with death and bereavement, was, in many paintings, demarcated as a gendered activity.

3.1 Absent Men and Women as Chief Mourners

In *Ignoto* by De Morgan (undated, Fig. 60), against the backdrop of a barren and war-torn landscape, two female figures loosely link arms over the grave of an unknown body, identified as such by the word *ignoto* (translated from Latin into English as *the unknown*), which is inscribed on a crude wooden cross similar to the kind used in battlefield burials.⁴⁰⁶ In common with *The Mourners* (Fig. 7), the compositional arrangement of *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) contains only female figures. As a result the absence of male figures and allusions to convention linking women with mourning can be seen to function to suggest the experience of death and bereavement from the home front perspective during the First World War.

Although created before non-repatriated war-dead were officially recognized by symbolic tombs commemorating unknown soldiers fallen in the First World War, such as the Tomb of The Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, the identification of the occupant of the grave in *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) as unknown, like the absence of men in other paintings, functions to communicate that the destruction of bodies by shells, and to a lesser extent the effects of hasty burials, literally rendered bodies unidentifiable, thereby

⁴⁰⁶ It has been suggested, by De Morgan's sister, that the two female figures in *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) allegorize the nations of Britain and France. Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling, *Pictures and Statuary by Evelyn De Morgan at Old Battersea House*, London, 1953, 20.

not only robbing the bereaved of bodies to mourn and bury, but also dead individuals of their identity.⁴⁰⁷ This meant that, in addition to being denied a body to bury, large numbers of relatives of dead servicemen on the home front were prevented from discovering once-and-for-all what had actually happened to their loved ones. Moreover, even if families or friends did receive official notification, sent in the form of a telegram, that their relative or loved one was dead, the hasty and haphazard manner of battle front burials caused incidences where people were forced to spend years writing to the Imperial War Graves Commission in an attempt to try to locate the final burial places of their deceased loved ones. The invidious position in which bereaved families and friends were placed is exemplified by the case of Private Warwick Squire. Within the collection of papers about Squire held by the IWM is a series of correspondence from his father and later his sister, stretching from the time of Squire's death on 12 March 1915 to the 1960s, trying to discover the actual location of his grave.⁴⁰⁸

Additionally in the foreground of *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) a red-coloured lily bearing three flowers is planted on the grave. In her biography of the artist, De Morgan's sister Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling described this as a 'red flower of love.'⁴⁰⁹ However, as Elise Lawton Smith has noted in *Evelyn Picking De Morgan and The Allegorical Body*, in Christian iconography white lilies allude to the purity of the Virgin Mary.⁴¹⁰ This

⁴⁰⁷ Owing to De Morgan's death on 2 May 1919 it seems likely that the creation of *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) pre-dates much of the planning for the Tomb of The Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. Richenda M. Roberts, *Pacifism and Egalitarianism: Evelyn De Morgan's Responses to War*, note 43, 13. Also see Catherine Gordon (ed.), *Evelyn De Morgan Oil Paintings*, London, 1996, 9-27.

⁴⁰⁸ Papers of Private No: 2172, E.W. Squire of 13th London Regiment British Expeditionary Force, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 7 November 2009.

⁴⁰⁹ Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling, *Pictures and Statuary by Evelyn De Morgan at Old Battersea House*, 20.

⁴¹⁰ Elise Lawton Smith, *Evelyn Pickering De Morgan and The Allegorical Body*, Cranbury and London,

suggests that, rather than signifying love, as Stirling argued, the function of the red-coloured lily in the painting is to represent the sully of the white lily of purity by blood. Consequently, the lily alternatively becomes a signifier for the spilling of blood through war, thereby enforcing the idea that the painting's subject engages with the unprecedented levels of bloodshed during the First World War. The presence of female figures and absence of male ones, alongside an unidentified grave and blood-sullied flower, commonly associated with purity, therefore, suggest that the imagery of *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) highlights the negative effects of war, in particular the high death levels and the problems this raised concerning the non-repatriation and identification of bodies. Furthermore, the sully of a white flower commonly used to symbolize the purity of the Virgin Mary in Christian iconography can also be viewed as connoting that there is nothing pure about war, thereby allowing *Ignoto* (Fig. 60), like other works by the artist, to reveal De Morgan's pacifist worldview. Nevertheless, although perhaps not intended, the very absence of male figures and presence of female ones in *Ignoto* (Fig. 60), also served to assign injury and death in war to men, thereby once again suggesting a difference in experience between home and battle fronts on the basis of gender.

Convention assigning mourning to women, war-related death and bereavement are also conflated in the original version of *Youth Mourning* of 1916 by George Clausen (Fig. 61). In common with the extant version (Fig. 1), located in the centre foreground of the painting is a young, nude, female figure. With hands covering her face, as if convulsed by distress or pain, the figure crouches on the ground in a bent-double way which, as mentioned, bears a close resemblance to the position assumed by a foetus in its mother's

womb. Immediately behind the figure, in a flat, barren-looking landscape, are three crosses which are similar in appearance to ones used to mark battlefield burials (Fig. 62). In the distance a whole field of identical crosses can be seen. In common with *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) and *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) there are no male figures included in Clausen's painting. However the crosses that are present in the painting, like those in *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43), can be seen to function as a sign for both dead servicemen and the absence of their bodies. This suggests that war-related death and bereavement was indeed all or part of the theme of *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 61). Moreover, indicating further that Clausen's painting engages with the massive masculine death toll and related bereavement experienced on the British home, the landscape in which the crosses and figure are set is very similar to that found in the foreground of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7), which it has been argued herein was inspired by images or firsthand accounts of Western Front battlefields in Flanders.

It is, however, the nudity of the single female figure which allows Clausen's painting to construct a plurality of meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity. The bent-double or foetal pose of the female figure in the painting reveals as little as possible of her feminine body. This has the effect of implying concealment rather than spectacle. As a result, the figure's tight pose repels penetration by the voyeuristic gaze, thereby suggesting that, rather than being produced as a display of female flesh for the beholder's pleasure, the nude female body represented in Clausen's painting clearly has other functions. The figure's nudity is, nevertheless, an essential compositional element of Clausen's painting, because it enables the body of the female figure to both allude to the

masculine death toll and signify the bereaved. As noted, within western iconography a long tradition has been established whereby abstract concepts, such as truth, are allegorized by nude or semi-draped female figures. In addition, commenting on the allegorical use of the nude in Christian art, George Ferguson identified that ‘four clearly defined, symbolic types of nudity’ can be found in Renaissance artworks.⁴¹¹ The types of nudity are: *Nuditas Temporalis*, which communicates a lack of worldly possessions that was the result of either the ‘trials and difficulties of life, which causes a man to live in poverty,’ or a surrendering of worldly materialism ‘in order to serve God completely.’⁴¹² Secondly, *Nuditas Naturalis*, taking reference from the New Testament First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy 1 (6:7) stating: ‘For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we carry nothing out.’⁴¹³ Nudity used to allegorize *Nuditas Naturalis* is, therefore, employed to allude to the natural state in which mankind is born and arguably dies. Thirdly, there is the concept of *Nuditas Virtualis* whereby nudity is used to imply purity or innocence that is virtuous or without sin.⁴¹⁴ Finally, *Nuditas Criminalis*, the opposite of *Nuditas Virtualis*, which alludes to ‘lust, vanity and the absence of all virtues.’⁴¹⁵ Clausen’s belief that much could be learnt from close reference to the artistic conventions of the Renaissance can be found communicated in the records of his lectures to students that were given whilst he was Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy schools.⁴¹⁶ The artist’s interest in Renaissance artistic conventions can be understood to

⁴¹¹ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 49-50.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ Timothy 1 (6:7), New Testament, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 237.

⁴¹⁴ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 49-50.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ George Clausen, *Royal Academy Lectures on Painting: Sixteen Lectures Delivered to The Students of The Royal Academy of Arts*, London, 1913, 1-32, 161-239 and 323-367. Clausen’s lectures were delivered between 1906 and 1913.

provide a plausible explanation as to why he apparently chose to employ a multiplicity of allegorical meanings assigned to the nude during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in a painting which alluded to the effects of a twentieth-century war. Moreover, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, in the winter of 1929, the revised (extant) version of *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 1) entered the collection of the IWM. In a letter written on 15 December 1929, at the time of the painting's accession into the museum's collection, Charles Aitken of the National Gallery, London, wrote to Ernest Blaikley, Keeper of Pictures at the museum, to say he believed that 'it [*Youth Mourning*] was inspired by the death in the war of his [Clausen's] daughter's fiancé.'⁴¹⁷ Aitken's observation about Clausen's painting can be understood to provide a further indication as to the reason behind the inclusion of allusions to Renaissance art conventions in both versions of *Youth Mourning* (Figs. 1 and 61). To this end, as an allegory of truth (or *Nuditatis Virtualis*), the nude female figure in Clausen's painting can be understood to function in a way which suggested that, in pursuit of victory, the true realities of war were the negative effects of sacrifice. In both versions of the painting the absence of servicemen is signified by the presence of crosses signifying dead or missing men, whereas communication of the piteous plight of the bereaved on the home front is symbolized by the female figure as an allegory of both *Nuditatis Temporalis* and *Nuditatis Naturalis*. This allows the figure's nudity to allude to the effects of war from the home front perspective by suggesting the trials and tribulations suffered by non-combatants, like Clausen's own daughter. These were people who, most likely through no intentional fault of their own, were adversely affected by the war in a number of ways, ranging from the loss of income, homes and

⁴¹⁷ Charles Aitken, letter to Ernest Blaikley, dated 15 December 1929, Clausen George file, ART/WA1/223, correspondence 23 March 1918 – February 1936, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 16 June 2010.

possessions to being affected by the impact of multiple instances of war-related injury, death and subsequent bereavement. All of which it was not unusual, during the war, to be suffered by a single family. Moreover, the withdrawn or tightly coiled pose of the female figure in Clausen's painting can be understood as an acknowledgement that the war also changed mourning rituals away from prolonged periods of wearing black associated with overt public displays of grief, which had been convention in the pre-war period, towards private internal sorrow. Geoffrey Goer has argued that this happened during the war because:

The holocaust of young men had created such an army of widows; it was no longer socially realistic for them all to act as though their emotional and sexual life were over for good, which was the underlying message of [...] ritual mourning. And with the underlying message, the ritual went into the discard.

There was also almost certainly, a question of public morale; one should not show the face of grief to the boys home on leave from the trenches.⁴¹⁸

Additionally, the female figure in Clausen's painting can also be understood to allegorize the concept of *Nuditas Criminalis* in two ways. Firstly, the nude, bent-double appearance of the figure in Clausen's painting can be understood to allude visually to the crippling feelings of guilt and remorse that were most likely felt by all the bereaved (which were expressed in the writing of female munitions workers) on the realization that their patriotic, but hubristic, support for enlistment and employment in armaments factories made civilians complicit in war-related death. Secondly, paradoxically, the

⁴¹⁸ Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief and Mourning*, 6.

bent-double (as if with guilt) pose of the female figure in *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 61) also helped implicate femininity in the injury and death toll by suggesting that women had perhaps done something to feel guilty about, such as profiteering from war.

3.2 The Umbilical Link: Servicemen, Mothers and Motherhood

In addition, to alluding to female complicity in the injury and death toll, allegorizing *Nuditas Naturalis* the female figure in *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 61) can also be understood to symbolize the natural or nude state in which all humans are born. Therefore, like the use of nude feminine bodies in *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11) by Ethel Walker, both the nudity and youthful stature of the female figure in Clausen's painting can be seen to allude specifically to the maternal body, and through it to child-birth, which is further suggested by the likeness of the figure's pose to the shape of a foetus in a mother's womb. On this basis *Youth Mourning* (Fig. 61) can be understood to engage with the misery felt by all individuals bereaved by war, and more especially perhaps mothers, the majority of whom in normal circumstances would not have expected to outlive their own sons. As a result, allusions to the reversal of the naturally anticipated order of death in the painting enforced further the abnormal circumstances of war. Furthermore, because 'the maternal body in being a source of mortal life is also inevitably a source of death,' paradoxically, allusions to motherhood in Clausen's painting, in the face of female support for enlistment and work in munitions factories, also allowed the female figure to suggest notions of the complicity of women in war-related death.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁹ Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate: A Marian Narrative of Women's Salvation*, London and New York, 2002 (first published 1999), 103.

In the years immediately preceding the war and throughout its duration, despite the need for additional labour, both official and unofficial narratives, in line with pre-war values of sexual difference, presented motherhood and child-rearing as the desired and most essential female role. Demonstrating this point, just before the war, in *The Mother and Social Reform*, published in 1913, Anna Martin of the NUWSS, suggested that ‘the rearing of child crop is, confessedly, the most vital to the nation of all its industries.’⁴²⁰ During the war, the *Woman’s Dreadnought* also frequently published images of mothers and children in support of reports highlighting the vulnerability of women left to support dependants alone as a result of male enlistment, injury or death, for example, that published in the Christmas 1915 edition of the paper (Fig. 57). Furthermore, in 1918, perhaps anticipating a return to pre-war social stratification on victory, an official report of the Women’s Employment Committee, produced for the Ministry of Reconstruction, recommended that in future women should be exempt from certain professions seen as injurious to health, such as fur-pulling, rag-picking and gut-scraping, because:

the primary function of women in the state must be regarded, it is not enough to interfere with her service in bearing children, and the care of infant life and health, but she must be safeguarded as home-maker for the nation.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Anna Martin, *The Mother and Social Reform*, London, 1913, 7.

⁴²¹ ‘Report of The Hills Committee,’ *The Report of The Women’s Employment Committee for The Ministry of Reconstruction*, PP, xiv, 1918, Cd 9239, 60, cited in Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, note, 54, 41.

In relation to war in general, Joshua Goldstein has observed that ‘for young men in combat, their mothers often epitomize the nurturing feminine [domestic home] sphere that stands in contrast with war.’⁴²² During the First World War Goldstein’s observation finds support in letters exchanged between the home and battle fronts. As the example of Private Squire, mentioned earlier, has indicated, letter writing formed a key function in communication between home and battle fronts during the war, providing a vital link between servicemen and their loved ones. Furthermore, the collection of the IWM indicates that, during the war, letters sent between unmarried men and their mothers ‘outnumber[ed] those to any other family member or combination of family members,’ thereby suggesting that the relationship between mothers and their enlisted sons can indeed be interpreted as having a special status.⁴²³

Commenting on the special role of motherhood in relation to war, psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion has suggested, in his *War Memoirs*, that the strength of the bond formed between mothers and their children during the latter’s infancy is responsible for instances where men, who were subject to the traumatic stress of battle front conditions, apparently regressed to a state of child-like fear.⁴²⁴ In this psychological state the adult man displays signs of longing for the maternal comfort he had once received as an infant.⁴²⁵ Supporting his argument, Bion recalling his own experiences on the Western Front in his memoirs, noted that ‘[t]he strain had a very curious effect; I felt that all anxiety had become too much; I felt just like a small child that has had a tearful day and wants to be

⁴²² Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 309.

⁴²³ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 59.

⁴²⁴ Wilfred R. Bion, Francesca Bion (ed.), *War Memoirs 1917-19*, London, 1997, 122.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

put to bed by its mother.⁴²⁶ Bion's interpretation of the profound impact of the mother-child-bond (forged in infancy) provides a plausible explanation as to why firsthand accounts of encounters with dying servicemen often recalled men who were close to death calling out for their mothers. In an interview for the BBC programme *The Last Tommy* in 2003, war veteran Harry Patch (1898-2009), for example, recalled encountering a mortally-wounded British serviceman at Pilckem Ridge in 1917. Recalling the man's final living moments, Patch told the BBC 'I was with him in the last seconds of his life [...] And when that fellah died, he said just one word: "Mother".'⁴²⁷ Referring to his time working as an ambulance driver on the Western Front, Richard Nevinson noted that 'the sound of those broken men crying for their mothers is something I shall always have in my ears.'⁴²⁸ The status of mothers and motherhood during the war, therefore, provided a poignant source of subject matter that artists could call upon in order to construct meanings and values for the conflict, placing particular emphasis on the home front perspective.

In addition to mothers being understood as having a vital role to play in the process of communication between servicemen and their families at home, articles in the press, such as Ernest Barker's 'Mothers and Sons In War Time,' published in *The Times* on 24 March 1915, also drew attention to the sacrificial nature of the war by conflating circumstances of war with motherhood. Commenting on the death of servicemen Barker noted:

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Harry Patch, *The Last Tommy*, BBC, 2003, cited in Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle*, 2.

⁴²⁸ C.R.W. Nevinson, *Paint and Prejudice*, 96.

In these last few days the cord has been loosened, and the bowl has been broken, for hundreds of English boys. Golden lads, in the flower and prime of youth, have come to dust. [...] Their [servicemen's] graves will be renowned, and their names will be held in remembrance. But in hundreds of English homes [...] mothers sit to-day, remembering the sons who fed at their breasts and slept in their arms; happy if, in the watches of night, some flow of tears may slacken the tense strings of the heart and lull the busy iteration of memory in the aching brain.⁴²⁹

Barker began his article by paraphrasing the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes (12:6-7), which informs readers:

Or ever the silver cord be loosened, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.⁴³⁰

Implying engagement with the relationship between the mother-child-bond and death, the 'cord' referred to by Barker can be understood to be the umbilical cord, which intrinsically linked mother and child, joining their bodies as one, only to be cut to at the moment of the latter's birth, thereby allowing the navel to not only symbolize 'the

⁴²⁹ Ernest Barker, *Mothers and Sons In War Time and Other Pieces* (reprinted from *The Times*, 24 March 1915), London, 1917, 3.

⁴³⁰ Ecclesiastes (12:6), Old Testament, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 688.

irreducible mark of our birth [but also] our guaranteed death.’⁴³¹ In Barker’s article the cord has been loosened. This can be viewed as a metaphor used to indicate that the process of life towards its ultimate conclusion of death, instigated by the cutting of the umbilical cord at birth, although most likely unwittingly, was hastened prematurely by the complicity of mothers in supporting their sons’ enlistment. This was an invidious position which was remorsefully acknowledged in ‘A Mother and War,’ a poem by Dorothea Hollins that was published in the *Labour Leader* on 11 November 1915, which asked the question ‘was it for this [death through war] I nursed thee at my breast my little precious son?’⁴³²

Providing an indication that some artists deliberately used the link between motherhood and the death of their offspring as a mechanism of protest against the war is the print *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* of 1915 (Fig. 63), by Joseph Southall, an illustration for Robert Outhwaite’s anti-war publication *The Ghosts of The Slain*, which had an obvious irenic function.⁴³³ Although not a painting, Southall’s print is worth inclusion within the examination of this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, in common with other paintings examined, the print relies upon a combination of prevailing wartime circumstances and the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference to construct meanings and values for war. Secondly, the way in which masculinity and femininity are inscribed in the print suggests that, like De Morgan, Southall was well aware of the destabilizing effects of war on traditional concepts of sexual difference and

⁴³¹ Carol Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 150.

⁴³² Dorothea Hollins, ‘A Mother and War,’ *Labour Leader*, Manchester, 11 November 1915, 4.

⁴³³ Robert L. Outhwaite, *The Ghosts of The Slain*, Manchester, 1915.

used such circumstances to his ideological advantage.⁴³⁴ As a result Southall's print can be seen to encourage further the contention of this thesis that there was a good deal of cross-fertilization of ideas amongst like-minded artists concerning the use of sexual difference to form a scathing critique of war.

Set against the background of a war-torn city, in the left foreground of the print, stands a half-draped female figure, her arm outstretched, pointing accusatorily towards a group of three male figures who are located in the right foreground. From left to right, the first of the three male figures is dressed as an admiral. The second masculine figure wears a dog collar and crucifix associated with the clerical profession. The third male figure is dressed in tailored clothing and a top hat, which suggest that he possesses middle or upper-class status. Consequently, the attire of the three male figures allows them to become proxies for Britain's religious and secular ruling elite. The facial features of the male figures are rendered indistinct, thereby indicating that the work does not represent any known individuals. However, given the artist's worldview, it seems likely that the kind of people that Southall's print was intended to allude to included members of the clergy like William Inge, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, businessman, for example Viscount Northcliffe (Alfred Harmsworth, 1865-1922) owner of the rightwing *Daily Mail* and politicians such as David Lloyd George. In the early years of the war Inge, Northcliff and Lloyd George had all resorted to the use of chivalric rhetoric, pro-war

⁴³⁴ It seems likely that De Morgan and Southall knew each other. Southall illustrated a story by Vernon Lee, a close friend of De Morgan. Vernon Lee, 'The Rival Molochs: circa B.C. 2000,' *Labour Leader*, 16 December 1915, 11. Additionally, Southall was also a founder member of the Society of Painters in Tempera along with Spencer-Stanhope. John Christian (ed.), *The Last Romantics, The Romantic Tradition in Britain: Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, exhibition catalogue (Barbican Art Gallery), London, 1998 (first published 1989), 79-104.

narratives and power-broking, thereby making them all, to a greater or lesser degree, complicit in Britain's involvement in the war and the subsequent sacrifices. Malvern Van Wyk Smith has noted, in *Drummer Hodge*, that there was a prevailing belief held by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century supporters of pacifism, such as Southall, that the pursuit of business and political interests (driven by the ethos of imperial masculinity) rendered Britain's ruling elite truly responsible for war.⁴³⁵ Exemplifying the potential for oscillation between sign and referent, the demeanour of the female figure in Southall's print allows her to not only signify womanhood in general, but also drawing upon the Renaissance concept of *Nuditas Virtualis*, to allegorize the concept of virtuous truth. Therefore, engaging with the belief that Britain's ruling elite were responsible for war, the function of the female figure in Southall's print can be understood to be to point to the massive injury and death toll, which was, arguably, the horrific truth of war, camouflaged behind pro-war rhetoric. With arm pointing firmly in the direction of the three male figures signifying Britain's ruling elite, the female figure in Southall's print communicates that the dead demanded by women (alluded to the print's title; an integral part of its compositional design) are the bodies of their children, who were victims of war. These were not necessarily small children who were suffering as a result of preventable home front depravations, but also servicemen, coerced into enlistment by the pro-war rhetoric supported by religious and secular leaders, whose dead bodies were not being repatriated. Furthermore, in order to enforce this idea, two of the three male figures are blind-folded. A recurring theme in Southall's set of prints for *The Ghosts of The Slain*, this can be understood as another device employed to highlight that Britain's secular and religious leaders were to blame for war,

⁴³⁵ Malvern Van Wyk Smith, *Drummer Hodge*, 120-154.

because they were either oblivious to the negative effects of their actions on society or turned a blind eye to them. However, the blind-folding of the male figures in *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* (Fig. 63) can also be understood to allude to the blind-folds worn by people about to be killed by execution. This allows Southall's print to construct, and thereby communicate, a critique of the punishment of execution (or the threat of the same) that awaited servicemen for desertion. As Bourke has observed, rather than being an act of wilful insubordination, desertion during the First World War was in many cases the result of mental instability caused by exposure to the experience of terrible battle front conditions.⁴³⁶ Moreover, although perhaps not done intentionally for a pacifist publication, the blind-folds worn by the male figure as proxies of Britain's ruling elite have the effect of connoting that similar punishment, to that meted-out for both desertion and criminal acts amongst servicemen, should be given to individuals involved in starting, profiting from and prolonging war. This allows the print to suggest that such actions, in the face of the ever increasing injury and death toll, could be viewed as perhaps no less a 'crime' against British society than the behaviour of the enemy.

In order to make clear that it is responsibility for the sacrificial nature of the war, caused by promotion and perpetuation of the conflict, for which Britain's religious and secular leaders are being held accountable, to the left of the female figure in *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* (Fig. 63) lies the body of a young adult male figure. Drawing upon the nexus between warfare, manliness and chivalric self-sacrifice established in services recruitment campaigns, this figure can be understood as a signifier for the men who had

⁴³⁶ During the First World War, within the British armed forces 3,808 death sentences were passed for desertion, only approximately eleven percent were ever actually carried out, Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering The Male*, 94.

lost their lives through being coerced by war-propaganda and peer pressure into voluntary-enlistment. Having a similar function, to the right of the female figure, laid on the ground next to a smashed china bowl, is the nude figure of a male infant whose arms form a pose implying the figure lies prostrate as a result of death. The combination of infancy and death connoted by the male infant invites analogies to the New Testament stories of *The Slaughter of The Innocents* and *The Flight Into Egypt*; in which Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt in order to evade the threat to Jesus' life because of a decree, made by King Herod, ordering all male children under the age of two years to be slaughtered.⁴³⁷ Allusions to the story of *The Slaughter of The Innocents* in the subject matter of Southall's print can, therefore, be understood to allude to the killing of Britain's sons as a consequence of the negative results of state recruitment campaigns linking warfare, chivalry and manliness, which induced men to enlist voluntarily to some extent ignorant of the devastating effects of increasingly industrialized warfare on bodies, civilization and culture. An active supporter of socialism, as well as pacifism, Southall was also very much against increased industrialization. At a conference on *Pacifist Philosophy of Life*, held on 8 and 9 July 1915, he expressed his contempt for mechanization in all forms, his belief of its effects on humanity, and its relationship to the devastation caused by war, by informing listeners that:

Workers have become slaves to the machine. In modern times it is has consequently become impossible for the workman to express himself in his

⁴³⁷ Matthew (2:13-23), New Testament, John McFarlane (ed.), *The Practical and Devotional Family Bible*, 4. Suggesting that *The Slaughter of The Innocents* provided artists with a subject through which to convey their abhorrence of the needless killing of so many men, whose ignorance of the effects of industrialized war and desire to 'do the right thing' led them to voluntarily enlist, is the existence of print on the same theme of 1914 by Eric Gill (1882-1940).

work. His toil has become unspeakably monotonous and the work produced has naturally borne the impress of his despair [...] The supreme task for the social reformer is to give back the workman joy in his work. There is no real reason why it should not be done, if only we would abandon our desire to rule and exploit one another. And here we are brought at once to see that our commercial and industrial system has been animated largely by the same spirit as that of the military system. It has moreover very greatly facilitated the work of the war mongers.⁴³⁸

Allusions to the stories of *The Flight Into Egypt* and *The Slaughter of The Innocents*, which communicate parents' concerns for the safety of their children, in Southall's print can also be seen to imply that individuals killed in wartime were cared for and mourned by their families. This allows the female figure in the print to be interpreted as not just a bereaved mother, but also a proxy for everyone, both male and female, who had suffered war-related bereavement. The effect of this is to signal that civilians, like combatants, were not immune to the effects of war, thereby making clear that war was indeed an all-encompassing social crisis.

Additionally, the half-draped way in which the female figure is represented in Southall's print reveals her bare breasts, therefore, in common with other artworks such as *The Zone of Hate* (Fig. 11), the work can also be seen to allude to the exclusively feminine role of motherhood, which in relation to the contexts of the war encouraged polysemy.

⁴³⁸ Joseph Southall, 'Art and Peace,' Anonymous, *Towards Ultimate Harmony, Report of Conference on Pacifist Philosophy of Life* (Caxton Hall, London, 8 and 9 July 1915), The League of Peace and Freedom, London, 1915, 67-73.

Consequently, rather than simply evoking the seemingly innate link between women and peace, allusions to motherhood can be understood to enable the work to allude to the link between child-birth and death, made constantly evident by the navel. As a result, the presence of the female 'mother' figure in *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* (Fig. 63) can not only be seen to signal the misery of bereavement, but also to suggest the remorse felt by so many people, especially mothers, on the realization that they had been, in some way, complicit in the demise of their own loved ones, either through supporting enlistment or employment in the munitions industry. The paradox that the mother's gift of life is also the instigator of the passage of life towards death is additionally suggested by the combination of the prostrate infant and broken bowl in *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* (Fig. 63) which, like 'Mothers and Sons in War Time' by Ernest Barker, can be understood as an allusion to Ecclesiastes (12:6-7). Consequently, Southall's appropriation of a broken bowl and allusions to death (signified by the infant) from Ecclesiastes can be understood to again signal the damage done to society by war, which caused the death, injury or disablement of servicemen. As noted, on the British home front a major outcome of the incapacity and death of men was that an increasing number of women, especially those from the middle-class, had to seek employment to support their families. However, public awareness of expanded female employment also fostered notions of increased feminine authority, which helped to destabilize pre-war concepts of sexual difference and encourage ideas of a gender-based divide between home and battle fronts. Therefore, exploiting the ambiguous wartime position of femininity in combination with the negative impact of services recruitment campaigns espousing the ethos of chivalric sacrifice, Southall's print can be seen to engage with the instability of

constructions of sexual difference during the war in order to encourage the breaking-down of beliefs, common at the conflict's commencement, that war was justified in the cause of patriotic protection. In doing so the print not only conveyed its fitness for purposes as an illustration for an anti-war publication, but also Southall's pacifist beliefs.

The culturally-vaunted status of mothers during the First World War is additionally suggested by *Clio and The Children* by Charles Sims (Fig. 4), which can be understood to engage with the experience of bereavement from the British home front perspective in a way that also revealed the destabilizing effects of the circumstances of war on long-held concepts of sexual difference. In the right of *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) an adult female figure, dressed in white clothing of a loose-fitting classical style and a matching veil, sits on a stone bench. With head resting on one arm, the figure bends forward in the direction of a scroll, bearing patches of red-coloured pigment, which is placed upon her lap. Facing the female figure, are a group of nine male and female children, who sit, stand or lie on the ground. Suggesting that Sims' painting alluded to the contexts of the First World War, and specifically war-related death and bereavement, is the location of the adult female figure. The bench on which the female figure is seated bears a strong resemblance to a stone sarcophagus or tomb. As a result the bench functions as a sign for the empty tomb or grave of Christ, which can be seen as a signifier for the empty graves that should have been occupied by non-repatriated dead servicemen. Additionally, the red-streaked scroll resting on the figure's lap has a dual function in relation to connoting war-related death and bereavement. Firstly, in common with the example of the blood-red lily in *Ignoto* (Fig. 60) by De Morgan, the use of red pigment can be seen

as being representative of blood spilled in war. Secondly, the scroll itself, although much too large in size, also acts as a signifier for the official telegram received by family members informing them of their relative's death as a consequence of war.

In common with contemporaneous paintings by De Morgan and Clausen, the total absence of adult male figures in *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) implies engagement with the death of servicemen in foreign lands, the non-repatriation of their bodies and the impact of DORA regulations. However, unlike the work of De Morgan and Clausen, the landscape in which the figures are located in Sims' painting can be described as an English meadow at the height of summer. Indeed, featuring lush green grass and full foliage on the trees, the landscape has been identified as being the South Downs near Sims' home in Sussex.⁴³⁹ The geographical location of the landscape in Sims' painting acts to suggest both the distance of the battle fronts from Britain and also the figures' proximity to the South Downs. This helps to confirm that the work's subject is more particularly the British home front. Furthermore, allusions to Britain's distance from the battlefields, allows Sims' painting to suggest that separation and waiting for news were key concerns on the home front amongst relatives, who had little or no option but to wait for news of loved ones. In common with cultural conventions and wartime contexts assigning mourning primarily to women, the experience of waiting for news on the home front is found expressed in terms of being an essentially female experience by Vera Brittain, who wrote to Rolland Leighton, whilst he was stationed on the Western Front, on 30 August 1915, stating:

⁴³⁹ Alan Sims, *Picture Making*, 119.

‘The Woman’s Part,’ She must watch and wait in a long agony of uncertainty, not knowing the hour of her mourning, but knowing that already it may have struck. The very moment she sends her dearest out to war is the very moment of death.⁴⁴⁰

The action of waiting for news on the British home front for loved ones away fighting, assignment of mourning to women and the culturally-vaunted status of mothers are also conflated in *Mothers of Heroes* of c.1916 (Fig. 64) by Sir William Russell Flint (1880-1969). In Russell Flint’s painting a group of female figures stand or sit on a cliff top, all staring intently out to sea. The figures’ ages range from the young to the elderly, thereby suggesting that they act as proxies for the mothers and grandmothers of servicemen or their wives - the mothers of such men’s children. Moreover, the youthfulness of some the figures can also be understood to enforce the sacrificial nature of war by suggesting that many voluntarily-enlisted servicemen were, like sixteen-years-old John Sims who was killed in 1914, merely youths who were the same age or not much older than boys still at school. The placing of the group of female figures on a cliff top, staring out to sea, has the effect of implying that they are waiting for news from a long distance away. Consequently the positioning of the figures highlights both Britain’s island status and distance from battlefield locations during the First World War, thereby indicating that it is from the war’s battle fronts overseas that the female figures expect to hear news.

In common with the work of De Morgan and Clausen, Russell Flint’s painting features exclusively adult female figures. The absence of male figures and presence of females

⁴⁴⁰ Vera Brittain cited in Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime*, 28.

can, therefore, again be viewed as pointing to the absence of men through enlistment and the non-repatriation of dead servicemen's bodies. Additionally, in *Mothers of Heroes* (Fig. 64) the lack of male figures serves to enforce the idea that the female figures are waiting to hear news about absent servicemen far away from home. This can be interpreted as having a two-fold effect. Firstly allusions to distance can be seen to endorse the segregation of war zones by associating the home front with femininity and the far off battle fronts with masculine heroism. Secondly, the suggestion of the distance that news had to travel in Russell Flint's painting can, therefore, be understood as enforcing the sense of tense uncertainty felt by civilians waiting for information on loved ones, which is also conveyed by the organizational structure, actions and clothing of the figures in the work. In the foreground of Russell Flint's painting a middle-aged figure presses a handkerchief to her chest, implying that she is tearfully anxious, perhaps for news of a loved one. Immediately behind this figure a younger figure clutches the side of her face as if reacting to the receipt of shocking news or in a display of anxiety through lack of information. The tension connoted by these two figures is further enforced by the intense concentration of the whole group of figures as they stare intently towards the sea. In addition, at least five of the female figures in *Mothers of Heroes* (Fig. 64) appear to be wearing dark-coloured clothing and veils. This was clothing that was associated with traditional mourning rituals that were prevalent in pre-war Britain, thereby suggesting that some of the figures had already received news of their loved ones' demise and as a result had assumed mourning attire. Consequently, Russell Flint's painting can be interpreted as additionally highlighting that families, like that of Private Squire mentioned in section one of this chapter, did not just want to hear news about the

fate of their loved ones fighting abroad, they were also anxious to know the circumstances of the death of those men who had been already confirmed dead and to locate the final burial places of friends and relatives.

In common with the location of *Mothers of Heroes* (Fig. 64), Sims' choice of the South Downs has the effect of indicating that *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) specifically engages with both the anxious period of waiting for news and the experience of bereavement much more from the perspective of people, like his own family, on the British home front. Moreover, by constructing meanings and values for death and bereavement in a way which implied experience from the home front perspective, again in common with Russell Flint's work, Sims' painting can also be understood as encouraging the polarization of home and battle fronts into opposite zones of femininity and masculinity respectively.

Additionally, biographical data on the artist not only enforces the notion that Sims' painting alludes to experiences of war from the British home front perspective in general, it also suggests that the work had an autobiographical function. Sims began *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) in 1913 as his diploma picture for the Royal Academy of Arts, under the title of *The Muse and The Children*, at which stage the subject of the painting was an allegory of Clio the classical Muse of History reading to a group of attentive children in a meadow.⁴⁴¹ However, it has been claimed that Sims felt compelled to change the content of his painting and rename it in order to communicate the grief of losing a loved one through war, which, as noted, he had personally experienced in November 1914 with the

⁴⁴¹ H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain*, 145-148.

death of his eldest son John. It has been observed by Sims' son Alan that, overcome by grief, before finally sending *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) to the Royal Academy in 1916, the artist 'blotted out her scroll [the document placed on the lap of the female figure] with blood.'⁴⁴² As Cecilia Holmes has observed, the application of red-coloured pigment, which is suggestive of blood, to the scroll has the effect of dramatically turning imagery that began as a celebration of 'the continuity of history and learning with hope for the future' into despairing condemnation of the negative effects of war.⁴⁴³

In addition to altering *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) by the addition of red-coloured pigment to allude to bloodshed through war, Sims also signified both his personal grief and that of all war-bereaved by repainting the adult female figure in 'an attitude of despair.'⁴⁴⁴ Looking downward at the blood-splattered scroll, the repainted figure appears to be so preoccupied with her own thoughts that she no longer has any inclination to engage with the children to whom she was originally intended to read. This has the effect of totally disengaging the two halves of the painting from each other, thereby arguably destroying any relevance that the female figure and the children have to each other and, with it, the work's coherence. Evidence that the alteration of the female figure makes it difficult to extract cogent meanings from Sims' painting, without prior knowledge of the relationship of its creation to the artist's biography, is found in critical responses to the work when it was first exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1916. Whilst stating

⁴⁴² Alan Sims, *Picture Making*, 119. Although Alan Sims describes his father as dramatically blotting Clio's scroll 'with blood,' the Royal Academy of Arts have confirmed that the 'blood' shown in the painting is not real, it is actually red-coloured pigment. Email communication from Andrew Potter, Research Assistant at the Royal Academy of Arts, to Richenda Roberts, 21 January 2010.

⁴⁴³ H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain*, 148.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 147.

that the depiction of ‘a group of children in a pleasant landscape is charming,’ the critic from *The Times*, for example, noted that the adult female figure was ‘merely irrelevant’ and ‘injures the picture.’⁴⁴⁵ Furthermore, Reginald Grundy, writing for *The Connoisseur*, described the female figure as a ‘blemish to an otherwise fine picture.’⁴⁴⁶ Although the alteration made by Sims to the female figure can be viewed as an obstacle to the coherence of his composition, the figure’s disengagement with the children actually helps to enforce that she acts as a proxy for the bereaved during the war, because it can be understood as corresponding with changes that took place in mourning rituals during the war. Changes, away from overt public displays of sorrow towards private internal grief, which took place during the war, meant that the bereaved could well have appeared, like the female figure in Sims’ painting, aloof to the world around them, isolated from family, friends and society as a result of their private preoccupation with grief. Moreover, in rendering the female figure disengaged from the children, the discontinuity in the compositional structure of Sims’ painting also enforces prevailing notions that mourning, as well as being viewed as a primarily feminine preoccupation, was also predominantly seen as an adult concern.

Whilst the female figure’s disengagement with the children enforces her isolation it does not prevent the age of the figure and those of the children from suggesting that the former is the mother of the latter. Identifying allusions to motherhood in the painting a review published in a Leeds newspaper on Saturday 27 May 1916 observed:

⁴⁴⁵ Anonymous, *The Times*, Issue 41154, column A, 29 April 1916, 6.

⁴⁴⁶ C. Reginald Grundy, *The Connoisseur: An Illustrated Magazine For Collectors*, London, Vol. 45, May-August 1916, 123.

Clio herself [...] becomes the kind, anxious mother [...] her mind, her feelings, her imagination are centred in the future of the children. Every kind mother is another Clio [...] fulfilling the perpetual function of maternity which keeps our human world, despite the worst of wars, ever a going concern, ever renewing its youth, ever passing towards a future [...] By this war Clio and her innocent young folk are threatened by losses and hindrances. What they will be in body, mind and character, their circumstances, the economies and social changes which they will enjoy, must depend largely upon our doing.⁴⁴⁷

Identification of the adult female figure in Sims' painting with motherhood allows the figure to become a signifier for both the maternal and bereaved status of Sims' wife, Agnes. According to Holmes, the reaction of Agnes Sims to the death of her son John was to 'develop an interest in Theosophy and attend[...] séance gatherings.'⁴⁴⁸ This indicates that Agnes Sims was, like her husband, struggling to cope with the sudden, premature, demise of her son and had turned to Spiritualism in an attempt to overcome her grief. As a result she was, like many contemporaneous bereaved, attempting to deny the terminal power of death by pursuing an interest in the possibilities of the existence of an afterlife that was seemingly promised by the practice of Spiritualism. Furthermore, by presenting a grief stricken female figure alongside a group of children, allusions to the mother-child-bond in Sims' painting also pointed to the bereavement of mothers in

⁴⁴⁷ Anonymous, press cutting from a Leeds newspaper, Saturday 27 May 1916, item No. 1013 held in the Sims' Archive, The University of Northumbria, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, accessed 6 October 2010.

⁴⁴⁸ H. Cecilia Holmes, *A Bright Memory to Remain*, 145.

general, thereby endorsing the special emphasis that was placed on motherhood during the war.

Judith Butler has argued that within the process of reiteration of concepts of sexual difference ‘gaps and fissures are opened up as to the constitutive instabilities in such constructions,’ thereby creating ambiguity and through it additional meaning.⁴⁴⁹ Consequently Sims’ reliance upon convention assigning mourning primarily to women and the special emphasis placed on the mother-child-bond during the war can be understood to have a dual function. Firstly, to allude to the plight of the bereaved, who were often mothers or other women. Secondly, like similar allusions in *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* (Fig. 63), to reveal the dual position of unity and loss occupied by women, whereby the joyous act of giving-birth can also be seen as the instigation of the passage of life towards ultimately death. This allows allusions to motherhood in *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) to additionally be understood as pointing to the largely unwitting complicity of women, especially mothers, in the war-related death of their loved ones through patriotic support of the war effort. In Sims’ painting the link between femininity, motherhood, war-related death and bereavement is established also by the white clothing of the adult female figure, which has a number of diverse functions. White was not a colour normally associated with mourning within the Christian-dominated British culture of the time. As a result, in addition to perhaps being a residual sign of the adult female figure’s original function as the classical muse of history, Sims’ use of white, like the figure’s downcast demeanour, can be understood as alluding to the move away from lavish public displays of mourning associated with the wearing of black,

⁴⁴⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 10.

favoured before and during the early part of the war, towards private grief fostered by the massive death toll. Moreover, the female figure's white clothing also acts as a signifier for the purity of the Virgin Mary, because the colour white is often used in Christian iconography to signify the status of the Virgin Mary in images of the Immaculate Conception.⁴⁵⁰ This allows analogies to be made between Sims' painting and Marian imagery. The assignment of the role of chief mourner to Mary in Christian iconography therefore allows allusions to Marian imagery in Sims' painting to imply that during the war a mother's bereavement assumed a position of primacy over that of other family members. Furthermore, as noted, an unusually high number of mothers, like Agnes Sims, unnaturally outlived their offspring. This aspect of the effects of war can be understood to be additionally connoted by allusions to the Virgin Mary, who was also predeceased by her son.

Whilst allusions to Marian imagery in Sims' painting can be viewed as communicating the seemingly culturally-vaunted position of mothers during the war, they can also be viewed as having the potential to connote the absolution of all women (not just mothers) from alleged complicity in war-related death. In her re-assessment of early Catholic texts concerning Eve and the Virgin Mary, Tina Beattie has argued that because Mary is viewed as virtuous and therefore without sin, she functions as 'a sign of the restoration of women to Eve's condition of original goodness before the fall' in Genesis (3:1-24).⁴⁵¹ According to Beattie's interpretation, Mary can be seen as 'functioning as an exemplar of

⁴⁵⁰ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 152.

⁴⁵¹ Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 59.

an ideal or transcendent concept of femininity.⁴⁵² This is ‘frequently expressed as an exultant celebration of women’s liberation from the oppressive consequences of the fall, so that Eve and all [...] women are caught up and transformed in Mary’s joy.’⁴⁵³ Beattie’s interpretation, therefore, allows for the combination of allusions to motherhood and the purity of the Virgin Mary in *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4) to be viewed as connoting the pure innocence of mothers whose support for the war effort included encouraging their sons to enlist largely ignorant of the devastating effects of increasingly industrialized weaponry used in battle. As a result, in a similar way that promotion of chivalric conduct and self-sacrifice employed in pro-war propaganda and paintings, such as *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34), arguably provided absolution for servicemen from blame for war-related death, allusions to the Virgin Mary, understood as a redeemer of sin, allows Sims’ painting to connote the innocence of all women, not just mothers, who had believed that supporting the war effort was right. On this basis Sims’ painting can be seen to imply that, like servicemen, most, if not all, women should be absolved from complicity in war-related death. Nevertheless, as contended herein, the gaps and fissures in traditional concepts of sexual difference, which were temporarily opened-up by the circumstances of war, meant that allusions to Marian imagery which might have allowed Sims’ painting to provide a positive wartime status for women have been largely negated by rigid adherence to an art cannon upholding masculine authority.

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, 58.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*.

3.3 The Linking of Sexual Difference and Spiritualism in Attempts to Go Beyond Death

In the foreground of *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) of c.1914 by John Charles Dollman a female figure is depicted seated on horseback. Composed of varying tones of grey and white pigment, the ethereal transparency of the figure stands out in contrast to the solid appearance of the bodies of the massed ranks of figures representing cavalry men and their horses, which are lined-up to either side of the work, and are given solidity by the use of opaque pigment in a variety of tones, predominantly of blue, brown and green. Whilst the pale and insubstantial appearance of the female figure might suggest that Dollman's painting is unfinished, a similar handling of an apparition of stags in *The Conversion of Saint Hubert* (undated, Fig. 66) by the same artist implies strongly that the stark contrast of the female figure against the figures of men and horses in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) was done deliberately to signify a lack of temporal materiality, which could be associated with a spiritual apparition. This suggests that the female figure in the painting represents an apparition that was perhaps 'witnessed' by the massed ranks of cavalry men present, who are denoted as being from the allied armies during the First World War by the flags carried. The flags shown are those from the countries of the triple entente of Britain, France and Russia, which are displayed alongside a tattered example of the flag of war-torn Belgium. With one hand the female figure raises a sword and in the other she holds a set of scales. In possession of such iconographic attributes, with an unearthly appearance, this figure can be thought of as an apparition of the Spirit of Justice personified, who is shown leading the allied armies into battle during the First World War. Functioning as the Spirit of Justice personified,

placed at the head of the allied armies, the female figure can be seen to act to signify that during the war not only was justice on the side of the allies, but also that the troops who are shown entering battle did so imbued with the spirit that war is righteously justified. As a result, Dollman's painting can be understood to legitimize the war as an act of masculine patriotic protection very much in line with the way in which it was justified in much pro-war enlistment propaganda.

Allusions to an apparition of the Spirit of Justice, placed alongside allied troops in battle, in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) can, therefore, be seen to imply endorsement of Britain's involvement in the First World War as an act of patriotic bravura. Furthermore, because such ideological intentions are easy to interpret they help to confirm the date of the painting's production to the first few months of the war. This was a time before the full enormity of the catastrophic consequences of the conflict had been fully recognized. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, as the duration of the war progressed, meanings and values for the conflict increasingly came to be measured by both civilians and combatants in terms of the unprecedented levels of injury, death and sacrifice experienced. As a result, levels of combatant injury, death and resultant home front sacrifices, therefore, rendered the constructing of war as an act of patriotic bravura in any cultural form increasingly untenable. This made Dollman's use of an apparition of the Spirit of Justice to signify the endorsement of war, like similar sentiments suggested by *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34) by James Clark, an outmoded anomaly.

As noted in the introduction to the chapter, during the First World War and in the immediate post-war period there was a marked increase in reports of Spiritualism or alleged communications with spirits of the dead, especially with individuals killed as a result of the conflict. Found in a variety of forms, ranging from verbal and written contact via mediums to apparent manifestations of ephemeral corporeal forms in photographs and artworks including a number of paintings, in line with Edgar Morin's suggestion about the power of apotropaic myths, the one common denominator that apparently united all permutations of spirit communication during the First World War was the desire to construct meanings and values in order to address the sacrificial nature of the conflict. Furthermore, although the visualization of Spiritualism during the war was approached in a diverse number of ways by artists, research for this thesis indicates that with the exception of one example - *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* by De Morgan (undated, Fig. 67), in contrast to Dollman's work, in all paintings produced later in the war's duration female figures represent the living and male figures the dead. Not only does this indicate the increasingly sacrificial nature of the war, it also suggests that, in line with other aspects of the experience of death and bereavement from the home front perspective, Spiritualism was increasingly viewed as an activity that was largely demarcated by gender.

A survey undertaken, as research for the present study, of relevant periodicals and books published during the war, such as *Occult Review*, *Light*, *Psychical Phenomena* and *The War* by Hereward Carrington and *Raymond or Life and Death* by Sir Oliver Lodge, has revealed that communication with spirits was given a number of different appellations,

including ‘Spiritualism,’ ‘research into psychical phenomena’ and ‘encounters with the supernatural.’⁴⁵⁴ However, given the apparent similar function – to negotiate and cope with the sacrificial nature of the war - that seemingly lay behind all reported instances, the word Spiritualism, which Jay Winter has pointed out refers to both a system of secular belief and religious practice based on the ability of the living to communicate with the dead, seems to be the most appropriate term to best account for the *raison d’être* behind all accounts of alleged spirit communication reported during the First World War.⁴⁵⁵ As a result, the term Spiritualism, is used in this thesis to describe and refer to all permutations of spirit communication related to the war.

Previous research and secondary literature on the subject of Spiritualism during the First World War, such as the chapter ‘Spiritualism and The Lost Generation’ in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* by Winter and briefer inclusions in books by military and social historians, such as David Cannadine, Ruth Brandon and Janet Oppenheim, has tended to focus both on the plethora of textual accounts produced during the war, which purport to record firsthand instances of Spiritualism, or alleged spirit manifestations in photography.⁴⁵⁶ With regard to research and literature concerned with visual responses to the link between the First World War and Spiritualism, Andreas Fischer has suggested,

⁴⁵⁴ *Occult Review*, London; the *Light*, London; Hereward Carrington, *Psychical Phenomena and The War*, London, 1919 (first published 1918); Oliver Lodge, *Raymond or Life and Death, With Examples of The Evidence for Survival of Memory and Affection After Death*, London, 1916.

⁴⁵⁵ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 54-55.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 54-77; David Cannadine, ‘War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain,’ Joachim Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in The Social History of Death*, London, 1981, 187-242, 227-235; Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for The Occult in The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London, 1983, 190-243; Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*, Cambridge and New York, 1985, 371-397

in *The Perfect Medium*, that the period extending roughly from the final quarter of the nineteenth century up until the end of the war was the time when spirit photography, which made claims to provide documentary proof of the afterlife in the form of ‘photographs’ of deceased spirits, was at its most prevalent in Britain.⁴⁵⁷ This provides some degree of explanation as to why spirit photography is the only form of visual culture alluding to Spiritualism produced during the war which has so far received any significant amount of scholarly scrutiny. Spirit photography is the subject of not only *The Perfect Medium*, but also a number of other articles and books, including ‘Where Are The Dead? Spiritualism, Photography and The Great War’ by Robert Dixon, *Ghosts in Photographs* by Fred Gettings and *Photography and Spirit* by John Harvey.⁴⁵⁸ Despite devoting a whole chapter to the relationship between art and all forms of the spiritual ranging for the religious and occult to the psychological, Harvey makes no mention of artists’ use of allusions to Spiritualism as a mechanism to engage with war, including the not insignificant number of paintings produced during the First World War. Nevertheless the similar insubstantial and corporeal appearance that was apparently assumed by spirit manifestations in photographs, for example those produced by a British Medium known only as Mr Reeves of 1872 (Fig. 68), suggests that there existed a good deal of cross-fertilization between spirit photography and the way in which the practice of Spiritualism

⁴⁵⁷ Andreas Fischer, “‘A Photographer of Marvels,’” Fredrick Hudson and The Beginnings of Spirit Photography in Europe’ and “‘The Most Disreputable Camera in The World:’” Spirit Photography in The United Kingdom in The Early Twentieth Century,’ Pierre Appraxine, Denis Canguilhem, Clément Chéroux, Andreas Fischer and Sophie Schmit (eds.) *The Perfect Medium: Photography and The Occult*, exhibition catalogue (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 27 September to 21 December 2005), New Haven and London, 2005; 28-43 and 72-78.

⁴⁵⁸ Robert Dixon, ‘Where Are The Dead? Spiritualism, Photography and The Great War,’ *History of Photography*, Abingdon, Vol. 28, No.1, spring 2004, 247-260; Fred Gettings, *Ghosts in Photographs*, Montreal, 1978 and John Harvey, *Photography and Spirit*, London, 2007.

was approached in paintings, such as *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65), which requires exploration.

Additionally, as Alex Owen has suggested, from the nineteenth century onwards the claims of scientific research not only increasingly brought into question the creationist foundations upon which traditional religious beliefs were based, it also provided greater insight into the workings of the human mind.⁴⁵⁹ As a result, auras of light represented by pale tones of pigment, ranging from the palest greyish-white to yellow, traditionally reversed for theophany in western art, were additionally appropriated by artists, often alongside corporeal forms ranging from complete bodies to just disembodied heads, as a way of symbolizing all incantations of the spiritual. Such artistic responses have been explored in a significant number of books and articles, not least *Phantoms of The Imagination* by Abraham Marie Hammacher, *Exploring The Invisible* by Lynn Gamwell, *The Haunted Gallery* by Lynda Nead and the essay 'Theosophy and Abstraction in The Victorian Era' by David Stewart.⁴⁶⁰ However, in common with Harvey, none of the forgoing texts have made reference to any paintings using allusions to Spiritualism in order to engage with war. Mention is made by Lois Drawmer, Judy Oberhausen and Elise Lawton Smith of the link between war-related death, bereavement and Spiritualism during the First World War which can be identified in the paintings of Evelyn De

⁴⁵⁹ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*, London, 1989, 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Abraham Marie Hammacher, *Phantoms of The Imagination: Fantasy in Art and Literature from Blake to Dali*, New York, 1981; Lynn Gamwell, *Exploring The Invisible: Art, Science and The Spiritual*, Princeton and Oxford, 2002; Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900*, New Haven and London, 2007; David Stewart, 'Theosophy and Abstraction in The Victorian Era: The Paintings of G.F. Watts,' *Apollo Magazine*, London, Vol. 137, No. 373, March 1993, 298-302.

Morgan, but only with regard to the artist's personal worldview.⁴⁶¹ Indeed, research for this thesis indicates that, to date there has been no comprehensive survey undertaken to examine, as a whole body of works, with a common theme, the significant number of paintings produced in Britain during the period of the First World War that treat the practice of Spiritualism - done to negotiate the effects of war-related death, bereavement and coping with the same - as an activity demarcated by gender. Furthermore, in line with earlier scholarship, research for this study has also been unable to establish the existence of any significant precedent in British or western art practice before the First World War for the employment, by so many artists, of allusions to Spiritualism as a way to engage with war. As a result the adoption of such artistic practice by a number of British artists engaging with war from the home front perspective can be understood as innovative in the creation of meanings and values for war in visual culture. It is, therefore, a key function of this section on Spiritualism to address the omission of this body of artworks from previous scholarship.

Commencing with Dollman's early example, drawing on Morin's proposal, the focus of this final section of the chapter, on the construction of death and bereavement in paintings engaging with the home front perspective, will be to explore the variety of approaches adopted by artists to visually represent the practice of Spiritualism as a way

⁴⁶¹ Lois Drawmer, *The Impact of Science and Spiritualism on the Works of Evelyn De Morgan, 1870-1919*; Judy Oberhausen, 'Evelyn Pickering De Morgan and Spiritualism: An Interpretative Link,' *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, No. 3, spring 1994, 1-19, 'Evelyn De Morgan and Spiritualism,' Catherine Gordon (ed.) *Evelyn De Morgan Oil Paintings*, 33-52 and 'Sisters in Spirit: Alice Kipling Fleming, Evelyn De Morgan and 19th-Century Spiritualism,' *The British Art Journal*, London, Vol. IX, No. 2, autumn 2008, 38-42; Elise, Lawton Smith, *Evelyn Pickering De Morgan and The Allegorical Body*.

of negotiating meanings and values for war. This will be done in order to demonstrate that the practice of demarcating Spiritualism by gender was again largely a result of the juncture between British cultural tradition and the unprecedented circumstances of war. Unlike the ambiguous position, located somewhere between deception and documentary evidence, occupied by spirit photography (the exact compositional methods and medium properties of which were, during the war, still being contested), obvious indexical signs of human artifice such as brush marks made it impossible for it be claimed that paintings lacked mortal intervention. Therefore, unlike spirit photography, it could not be claimed that paintings unequivocally provided evidential proof an afterlife. Nevertheless, this thesis will argue that, as objects on public view, paintings using concepts of sexual difference to allude to Spiritualism on the home front had the potential to either endorse or deny the practice as an attempt to provide succour for bereavement, whilst at the same time also promoting altered concepts of war, masculinity and femininity. As a result, whether done intentionally or not, the affiliation of Spiritualism with concepts of sexual difference in many paintings again made evident the abnormality of wartime, thereby compounding the association of such works with the destabilizing effects of the war upon British society, which canonical values for British First World War art were, arguably, designed to hide.

Despite implying a different ideological agenda to later paintings, allusions to war-related Spiritualism in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) were still, nevertheless, also rendered in a way which linked war with constructions of sexual difference. Following western artistic convention, whereby concepts such as justice or truth were often personified in female

human form, Dollman included a female figure in the painting as a personification of the Spirit of Justice. Consequently, because the only female figure shown in the painting is the personification of a concept, no women can be considered as being tangibly present on the battlefield in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65). The absence of women on the battlefield in Dollman's painting thereby helped to enforce notions of the segregation of battle and home fronts into gender-segregated zones. Moreover, the way in which masculinity is inscribed in Dollman's painting can also be understood as endorsing the ethos of imperial masculinity, which conflated the establishment of manliness with physical and mental fitness alongside stoic courage and patriotism. In *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) participation in war is constructed as an act of masculine patriotic bravura in a number of ways. As symbols of nations, the flags of allied countries present in the painting help to highlight that voluntary-enlistment into the armed services provided an exemplary way to confirm an individual's manliness through demonstrating their patriotism to their country. Meanwhile, in contrast to the solidly robust handling of the bodies of the men and horses, the insubstantial rendering of the figure of Justice, in addition to referencing her status as an apparition, also has the effect of suggesting the frail weakness of women compared to that of men. The effect of this can be seen as positioning masculinity and femininity in opposition to each other. Therefore, the way in which masculinity is inscribed in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) can be understood to endorse the ethos of imperial masculinity. Moreover in implying support of the same, and in line with much official and unofficial pro-enlistment propaganda, it can be seen also to uphold the polarization of male and female roles in relation to war. As a result, Dollman's painting can be understood as a visual call-to-arms, which was very much in line with constructions of sexual difference

that were prevalent during the years immediately preceding the commencement of the First World War and in the early months of the conflict.

David Cannadine has observed that by the beginning of the First World War the pervasive inculcation of men and boys with the ethos of imperial masculinity had been so effective that it 'had produced a code of living so robust and patriotic in its demands that it could be represented as reaching its perfection in [...] dying.'⁴⁶² Furthermore, as noted, within recent memory Britain's involvement in war had been restricted to short-lived conflicts which amounted to little more than incidents of colonial policing in places far away from home, where the numbers of men injured and killed had not been significantly high. Therefore, in August 1914 few people, initially at least, had any real reason to believe that the present conflict into which Britain had entered would not be the same. Confirming the existence of such beliefs, recalling the early period of the war in his memoirs, Sir Oswald Mosley noted that 'our one great fear was that the war would be over before we got there.'⁴⁶³ In line with Cannadine's observation, Mosley's comments suggested that a combination of the influence of the ethos of imperial masculinity and recent experience of war meant that in Britain at the start of the First World War the prospect of war-related death was not looked upon with any serious degree of trepidation, nor were war-dead seen as tragic figures to be pitied.⁴⁶⁴ Such presupposition and a very high profile pro-war propaganda campaign, which played on masculine vanity through concepts of sexual difference, by suggesting that it was manly to fight to protect nation and loved ones, explains 'the extraordinary enthusiasm with which men of all classes

⁴⁶² David Cannadine, 'War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain,' 196.

⁴⁶³ Sir Oswald Mosley, *My Life*, London, 1968, 44.

⁴⁶⁴ David Cannadine, 'War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain,' 196-7.

volunteered' initially for battle.⁴⁶⁵ Along with initial ignorance of the effects of increasingly industrialized weaponry, the social conditioning of men and recent experience of war in Britain provides a reason why, in the first few months of the war, in all cultural forms, ranging from short stories such as *The Bowmen* by journalist Arthur Machen to visual responses including Dollman's painting, references to Spiritualism can be understood as a patriotic call-to-arms of men, rather than as a way of coping with premature death, which it later became.⁴⁶⁶

Interest in Spiritualism had begun to gain ascendance in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century with the importation of the beliefs of the Spiritualist movement from the United States of America.⁴⁶⁷ The origin of many Spiritualist views of heaven and concepts of an afterlife can be found in the writings of visionary Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), who claimed that he had been given the opportunity 'to see what heaven is like.'⁴⁶⁸ According to Swedenborg the continuation of social relationships, including the love between a man and woman, was fundamental to both heavenly life and the further development or evolution of the soul after death.⁴⁶⁹ As Alex Owen has argued, at a time when science, such as Darwin's theories of evolution published in *On The Origin of The Species* of 1859, appeared to be providing evidence to challenge traditional Christian creationist beliefs, Spiritualism 'presented a rational and materialist explanation of the

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid* 196.

⁴⁶⁶ Arthur Machen, 'The Bowmen,' *The Evening News*, London, No. 10.264, Tuesday 29 September 1914, 3.

⁴⁶⁷ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*, 19.

⁴⁶⁸ Swedenborg's doctrines were espoused in his book *Heaven and Hell*, Bernhard Lang and Colleen McDannell, *Heaven A History*, New Haven and London, 1988, 181.

⁴⁶⁹ Swedenborg's anthropocentric view of heaven challenged prevailing theocentric views promoted by 'protestant and catholic reformers.' In his version of heaven 'concepts of purgatory or sleeping in the grave until the general resurrection [were] either denied or minimised.' *Ibid*, 183-184.

spirit's survival [and evolution] without injuring the concept of Devine intervention.'⁴⁷⁰ This meant that, although challenged by sceptics and a number of practitioners being revealed as charlatans, the intermediary position of Spiritualism, which seemingly offered common ground between science and religion, along with the promise of reunion with loved ones in an afterlife, enabled the practice to gain both a limited level of legitimacy and a not insignificant following. Before the war this resulted in Spiritualism being pursued on many levels ranging from an amusing parlour game played mainly by the middle-classes, adoption as a religious belief system, to being the object of quasi-scientific research carried out by organizations such as the Society for Psychical Research. The latter being an organization, set up in 1882, which was concerned with providing definitive confirmation or denial of the existence of all instances of the supernatural, including those that were alleged to have been the result of participation in the practice of Spiritualism.⁴⁷¹

The rapid increase in injury and death meant that by as early as the autumn of 1914 it became evident that the First World War would not be the same as other recent conflicts in which Britain had been involved. Winter has noted that the 'emotional mood' created by such unprecedented levels of death and injury, along with a lingering interest in Spiritualism, made it rather easy for troubled minds to interpret references to apparitions used for pro-enlistment propaganda purposes, such those in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) and *The Bowmen*, as being records of actual events.⁴⁷² In the absence of any meaningful accounts of how the allusions to Spiritualism in Dollman's painting were received, the

⁴⁷⁰ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*, 23.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 54 and 68.

way in which the circumstances of war created a propitious climate for the transition of Spiritualism from instrument of propaganda to a mechanism used to obtain succour for bereavement is perhaps best exemplified by a survey of public reactions to the fictional story *The Bowmen* by Arthur Machen. Like *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65), *The Bowmen* used allusions to Spiritualism to construct Britain's involvement in the First World War as a positive act of patriotic, masculine, protection. Furthermore, also in common with Dollman's painting, first published on 29 September 1914 in *The Evening News*, *The Bowmen* was created early in the duration of the war before the sacrificial nature of the conflict had been fully realized by many people.⁴⁷³ Machen's story told of an apparition that had appeared to allied troops on the battlefield. Summoned by a soldier's calling on the chivalric pride and patriotism of England's patron saint – Saint George, an apparition of a group of medieval bowmen from the Battle of Agincourt had apparently helped the allied forces in Flanders to defend against the enemy during the battle of Mons (22-26 August 1914).⁴⁷⁴ Mons was the first major military engagement of the First World War at which many British casualties were suffered.⁴⁷⁵ According to Machen the simple function of his story was propagandist - to support the war effort and sustain the morale of servicemen at the battle front by implying that, imbued with the same kind of chivalric spirit as that of Saint George, perhaps the greatest symbol of English patriotism, like the bowmen at Agincourt, British servicemen and their allies during the war could achieve a great victory over the enemy.⁴⁷⁶ However, when *The Bowmen* was first published it was not made clear that the story was merely propagandist fiction. Therefore, in line with

⁴⁷³ Arthur Machen, 'The Bowmen,' *The Evening News*, 3.

⁴⁷⁴ Arthur Machen, *The Bowmen and Other Legends of The War*, London, 1915, 5-27.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Winter's observation, a combination of collective public shock at the unprecedented circumstances of the First World War, along with pre-existing interest in Spiritualism, enabled word to spread erroneously that Machen's story was a factual account.⁴⁷⁷ In reply to an enquiry as to the source of his story from the editor of the *Occult Review*, Machen found it necessary to write that *The Bowmen* 'had no foundation in fact of any kind or sort.'⁴⁷⁸ After enduring eleven months of ever increasing speculation and hyperbole, in August 1915 Machen re-published *The Bowmen* in book form adding an introduction that made clear the story was fiction.⁴⁷⁹ Irrespective of Machen's attempts, reflecting both the effects of the war and the power of apotropaic myths, in a period of just under a year between the initial newspaper publication of *The Bowmen* and its subsequent release in book form, a number of claims were made that the apparition at Mons actually took place. On 28 June 1915, for example, *Light*, a publication which was associated with the Society for Psychical Research, published an account of the Mons vision given by Phyllis Campbell. According to Campbell, who refused to be precise as to her sources, the allied troops at Mons had been aided not by medieval bowmen but instead by apparitions of Saint George, Saint Michael and Joan of Arc.⁴⁸⁰ Demonstrating also the extent to which Machen's story and its subsequent hyperbolic embellishments had captured public imagination, the painting *Vision of St. George Over The Battlefield* of 1915 by John Hassall (Fig. 69), for example, features two British servicemen confronted with an apparition of England's patron saint standing in No

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-27.

⁴⁸⁰ Phyllis Campbell, 'Mons Vision,' *Light*, London, Vol. XXXV, No. 1807, 28 June 1915, 413. Also see Machen's response to Campbell's claims published in a postscript at the end of *The Bowmen* (book version), 81-86.

Man's Land on the Western Front. Moreover, compounding the situation even further, on 3 July 1915, Bishop Weldon, Dean of Manchester Cathedral, responded to stories of the Mons apparition, in a way which seemingly endorsed the practice of Spiritualism on the grounds of its potential therapeutic value. To this end Weldon noted:

In the agony of warfare it is only too likely that men may see visions, not the less significant to them, perhaps, because they are spiritual and not objectively real [...] But the world is so full of mystery, there are some things in heaven and earth as yet undiscovered [...] that it would be as unscientific as it is irreligious to close the eyes and hearts against the possibility of angelic ministries at the critical hours of human life.⁴⁸¹

Many other reported cases of war-related Spiritualism also seemed to encourage the practice as a way of coping with death and bereavement caused by war, for example that claimed in the best-selling book *Raymond* by Sir Oliver Lodge, a respected scientist and, at the time of the book's publication, the first Principal of the University of Birmingham.⁴⁸² Lodge's book claimed to provide evidence of the author's 'reunion' with his deceased son who was killed on the Western Front at Ypres on 14 September 1915.⁴⁸³ As Winter has argued, cases of apparently successful Spiritualism presented a glimmer of hope to many people on the home front who, like the women depicted in *The Mothers of Heroes* (Fig. 64), were anxiously waiting for news of loved ones on the battle front,

⁴⁸¹ Anonymous, Bishop Weldon, 'The Angels of Mons,' *Light*, No. 1799, Vol. XXXV, 3 July 1915, 318.

⁴⁸² Anonymous, 'Retirement of Sir Oliver Lodge,' *The Times*, London, Issue 42036, col C, Friday 28 February 1919, 7.

⁴⁸³ Oliver Lodge, *Raymond*, Introduction.

thereby functioning as a positive form of respite, if not total reassurance, from constant worry.⁴⁸⁴

Nevertheless, as noted, Spiritualism was not without detractors or sceptics. These included members of the Society for Psychical Research and Dr Charles Mercier (1852-1919), a lecturer on insanity in London, who criticised Lodge for encouraging the wartime ‘epidemic of the occult’ by publishing *Raymond*.⁴⁸⁵ In addition, enforcing the link between the increase in Spiritualism and the non-repatriation of servicemen’s bodies, prominent Anglican Viscount Halifax observed that Spiritualism concerning dead loved ones killed as a result of war, recounted in books such as *Raymond*, was ‘the Nemesis which comes from our neglect of the dead.’⁴⁸⁶

Similar meanings and values can be interpreted in *The Awakening* of 1915 (Fig. 70) by John Charlton (1849-1917) who, like Dollman, had before the war worked for a number of illustrated weekly newspapers including *The Graphic*.⁴⁸⁷ Prior to the commencement of the First World War, Charlton had produced a large number of battle paintings and illustrations of British military excursions including the Egyptian campaign of 1882 and the Second Anglo Boer War, all of which, similar to *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65), constructed war as an act of patriotic masculine bravura, for example *Routed! Boers Retreating* of c.1900 (Fig. 71). In a similar way to the compositional arrangement of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7), Charlton’s painting is divided into two distinct halves by a swirling

⁴⁸⁴ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 54.

⁴⁸⁵ Charles A. Mercier, *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge*, London, 1917, 4-10.

⁴⁸⁶ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, 54. Viscount Halifax, ‘*Raymond*:’ *Some Criticisms*, London, 1917, 7, 11, 12, 39, 41, cited in *Ibid*, note 42, 63.

⁴⁸⁷ Ryno Greenwall, *Artists and Illustrators of The Anglo-Boer War*, 119.

cloud of dark pigment, thereby indicating that the events taking place in the painting might well be a spiritual vision. In the foreground of *The Awakening* (Fig. 70) stands a female figure wearing a torn garment, which covers only the lower half of her body, leaving exposed her bare breasts. Clutching her forehead with her right arm, with her mouth open as if astounded, the figure appears to be horrified by the scene around her. Surrounding the figure on all sides, reaching out pulling at her left arm or trying to drag her down by her garments are a number of figures that can best be described as an apparition of spirits of the dead, who are denoted as such by the way in which they are composed of grey and blue pigments, which makes them resemble rotting corpses in various stages of decay and dismemberment. Recalling, retrospectively, the dead on the battle front during the First World War, in his autobiography of 1972, Stuart Cloete noted:

Burial was impossible [...] Now there were hundreds, thousands not merely ours, but Germans as well. The sun swelled up the dead with gas and often turned them blue, almost navy blue. Then when the gas escaped from their bodies, they dried up like mummies and were frozen in their death positions [...] There were sitting bodies, kneeling bodies, bodies in almost every position.⁴⁸⁸

Very much in line with Cloete's description, in addition to being in a state of putrefying decomposition, a number of the figures in Charlton's painting are dressed in German military uniforms. Furthermore, other figures either brandish weapons, such as rifles and bayonets associated with warfare, or wear bandages suggesting injury, perhaps in battle,

⁴⁸⁸ Stuart Cloete, *A Victorian Son: An Autobiography, 1897-1912*, Vol.1, London, 1972, 252 and 235-7.

thereby implying strongly that the dead were indeed servicemen who had either been killed outright or died as a result of their injuries during the First World War. If the condition of the dead in Charlton's painting was not convincing enough, alluding further to the sacrificial nature of the war and public shock at the same, another bare-breasted female figure holding a baby close to her chest in the right of the painting reaches out to grab the arm of the first female figure. This second female figure and her baby can be understood to act as proxies for Belgian civilians killed or maimed as a result of the German invasion in the autumn of 1914, which was reported by British newspapers in a highly xenophobic way. Exemplifying this point, an article published in *The Times* on 28 August 1914 told of an incident in which a German soldier had allegedly chopped the arms off a baby which was clinging to its mother.⁴⁸⁹

In addition to being surrounded by an apparition of dead servicemen and civilians, the central female figure turns to face a second apparition, located in the work's background. The second apparition, which is surrounded by a rainbow of salvation, contains a number of female personifications. To the far left of the painting stands the nation of France personified by a female figure wearing a red Phrygian cap, emblem both of the French Revolution and Republic.⁴⁹⁰ Next to France stands the figure of Britannia, who is identified by her familiar iconographic attribute of the helmet of war. These two figures and perhaps a third unidentifiable female figure in the right background of *The Awakening* (Fig. 70) suggest that what is being personified is the triple entente of France, Britain and Russia, who formed the core of the allied forces for much of the First World

⁴⁸⁹ Anonymous, *The Times*, London, Issue 40618, col. G, 28 August 1914, 7.

⁴⁹⁰ Albert Mathiez, *Les Origines Des Cultes Révolutionnaires, 1789–1792*, Paris, 1904, 34.

War before the Russian Revolution in 1917. In front of the national personifications stands the figure of Justice who, like the similar figure in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65), can be identified by her usual iconographic attributes of a sword and set of scales. Moreover, at the feet of the figures of symbolizing justice and the triple entente nations are a number of additional female figures who either raise their arms or grab the garments of the personifications in a way which suggests that they are victims of war, who like much of the Belgian population, looked to the allied forces for help and protection. On this basis, in common with Dollman's painting, the placing of female personifications of the triple entente nations alongside a figure symbolizing justice, can be understood to suggest that war was not only justified as an act of protection, but that justice was on the side of the allied armies. Nevertheless, unlike *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65), revealing its later date of production, *The Awakening* (Fig. 70) can also be seen to suggest the destabilizing effects of war. To this end, the female figure in the painting's foreground additionally bears a close resemblance to the bare-breasted female personification of liberty in *July 28: Liberty Leading The People* of 1830 (Fig. 72) by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863). This suggests that the concept of liberty may also be personified by a female figure in Charlton's work. Looking on passively, the national personifications in the painting's background appear woefully impotent to protect, not only the figure allegorizing liberty, who looks towards them whilst she struggles to be free from the dead, but all the other figures who are entreating them to help. Therefore, rather than functioning to endorse war as a positive act of masculine, patriotic, bravura, signifying that the unprecedented injury and death toll of war had irretrievably altered meanings and values for war, the conflation of Spiritualism with female personifications in *The Awakening* (Fig. 70) can

be understood to signal the sacrificial nature of the war. As a result the compositional arrangement of Charlton's painting can be interpreted as suggesting that, rather than ensuring national liberty, the true results of patriotic defence of nation and loved ones, so often conflated in enlistment propaganda, were actually the injury and death of British servicemen; a significant number of whom felt that they had been abandoned by civilians on the home front. The claims of abandonment made by disillusioned servicemen are, arguably, also alluded to in Charlton's painting by the way in which the female personification of liberty seems very keen to escape from the dead, who are, in a majority, male combatants. Moreover, the conflation of women with nations as objects of masculine protection in much pro-war propaganda, meant that the use of seemingly helpless female personifications in *The Awakening* (Fig. 70) also functions to encourage the promotion of concepts of feminine complicity in war-related death and injury, thereby allowing the painting to suggest the horrifically destabilizing effects of war upon the traditional stratification of British society.

The compositional handling of *The Awakening* (Fig. 70) suggests a growing horror of the devastating effects of the war. Increasing awareness of the sacrificial nature of war, demonstrated by the high numbers of injured and dead servicemen, allowed 'successful' cases of Spiritualism, such as that allegedly detailed in *Raymond*, to stimulate public awareness that Spiritualism had the potential to offer solace to those people who had been bereaved. Increasing public interest in Spiritualism, along with the ingraining of the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference within British culture, therefore, provides a cogent reason why, as noted, from as early as 1915 onwards, rather than being

used to promote war, in similar way to *The Awakening* (Fig. 70), a significant number of paintings produced on the British home front, demarcated the practice of Spiritualism by gender as a mechanism to negotiate war-related death, bereavement and coping with the same.

Relying upon the demarcation of Spiritualism by gender, *Remembrance* of 1917 (Fig. 8) by Charles Sims can also be interpreted as constructing sexual difference in a way which confirmed claims of disunity between home and battle fronts. The compositional arrangement of Sims' painting is made-up of six figures, four female and two male, set in a landscape. In the left foreground of the painting two young female figures, both dressed in light-coloured clothing, stand back-to-back holding hands as if supporting each other in a show of unity, perhaps against some shared adversity such as bereavement. Seated on a wooden structure next to the two standing figures is an elderly female figure. This figure wears a garment composed of dark-coloured pigment, which is sharply contrasted against the light coloured shawl worn around her shoulders. Both the dark-coloured garment and a brooch, similar in appearance to examples of mourning jewellery often containing a lock of hair of a deceased loved one, which is worn on the garment close to the figure's neck, denote that the elderly female figure has assumed traditional mourning attire.⁴⁹¹ Sitting down and holding the hand of the elderly female figure as if comforting her is another young female figure, who also wears light-coloured clothing. The pale colour of the pigment in which the clothing worn by the three younger female figures is rendered suggests that, if the figures were in mourning too, like many of their

⁴⁹¹ Patricia Jalland, *Death in The Victorian Family*, 211.

contemporaries, they had abandoned traditional attire in response to altered practices as a result of the war. Therefore, in line with both convention and changed practices caused by the circumstances of the First World War, the clothing and demeanour of the four female figures in Sims' painting functions to assign mourning to women. This suggests that the work was most likely intended to allude in some way to war-related death and bereavement.

Meanwhile, traversing the centre of Sims' painting, separating the work into two-halves, in a similar way to the compositional arrangement of *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4), is a wide strip of grassy landscape which is entirely empty of figures. Separated from the female figures, by the grassy strip, on the right hand side of the painting, almost unrecognisable, because the thin application of pale pigment renders them almost transparent, two young male figures seemingly emerge into the air from a group of trees. The insubstantial rendering of the two male figures is very similar to the way in which the spiritual apparition is handled in *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65). Therefore, the handling of the two male figures, along with their segregation into what can be interpreted as an exclusively masculine zone on the right hand side of the central grassy void, suggests strongly that Sims' painting can be understood as representing an apparition of the spirits of dead servicemen killed whilst serving on the masculine zone of the battle front.

Additionally, one of the two young female figures, who are standing, glances across the grassy central band of the painting in the direction of the apparition of male figures. This action, which forms a link between the mourning female figures on the left of the work

and the apparition of male figures on the right, can be understood as uniting the two halves of the painting, thereby allowing the construction of a single cohesive meaning. On this basis Sims' painting can, therefore, be understood to endorse the therapeutic use of Spiritualism by people, such as his own wife, to cope with war-related death and bereavement. Interpreting *Remembrance* (Fig. 8) in a very similar way, a review in the *Manchester Guardian* of 18 May 1917 noted that the painting showed 'ladies listening [...] to a message from spiritual figures.'⁴⁹² Nevertheless, in spite of apparently endorsing Spiritualism, the compositional arrangement of *Remembrance* (Fig. 8) also had the potential to generate conflicting meanings and values, thereby revealing the ambiguous position of Spiritualism, concepts of sexual difference, home and battle front unity. On 14 May 1917 a review in the *Scotsman* observed that, rather than appearing to be a unified composition, the painting contained 'two extraneous spectral figures.'⁴⁹³ This observation seemingly implied that the male figures were somehow superfluous, thereby indicating that the compositional arrangement of Sims' painting, in a similar way to that of *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4), did not function as a single cohesive whole. The lack of unity noted by the reviewer in the *Scotsman* has been caused by the arrangement of figures in relation to the landscape in *Remembrance* (Fig. 8). To this end, the placing of figures at the extreme margins of the painting can be seen to indicate that the empty swathe of grass in the work's centre has no function other than to signify the separation of the female and male figures into two distinct zones of femininity and

⁴⁹² Anonymous, Review of the 1917 spring/summer exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Engravers, held in London, *Manchester Guardian*, Manchester, 18 May 1917, page unknown, contained in press cuttings file of International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Engravers, 738/7, Tate Archive, Tate Gallery, London, accessed 18 August 2010.

⁴⁹³ Anonymous, press cutting from *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh and Glasgow, 14 May 1917, page unknown, *ibid.*

masculinity. Not only does the separation of the figures, arguably, destroy the work's compositional unity, it can be seen as endorsing claims of gender-based divide between home and battle fronts. Furthermore, the empty strip of landscape dividing the painting in two can be understood additionally to signify not just separate war zones demarcated by gender, but also the rupture in communication and empathy between the home and battle fronts, which, as noted, was both claimed and refuted in equal measure by servicemen and civilians. Compounding further the situation, like the adult female in *Clio and The Children* (Fig. 4), all the female figures in *Remembrance* (Fig. 8) appear so completely consumed by grief that they are totally oblivious to their surroundings. Therefore, rather than being understood as an action that unites the compositional arrangement, the apparently disengaged behaviour of all the female figures, along with the half-hearted glance by one of them at the apparition of men, can be alternatively understood as alluding to the total pessimism felt by the bereaved, such as Sims' own family. As a result *Remembrance* (Fig. 8) can be interpreted as constructing war as a purely negative event. Moreover, instead of implying that war-related sacrifice and death on both home and battle fronts might be united through the practice of Spiritualism, the disconnection suggested by the compositional arrangement of Sims' painting also seemingly questions the uniting value of Spiritualism, thereby underscoring that whilst the practice did increase notably during the war period it did so in the face of continued scepticism. Consequently the compositional arrangement of *Remembrance* (Fig. 8) can be understood as revealing the ambiguous positions during the war of Spiritualism, home and battle front unity.

Similar meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity are constructed by a number of paintings produced by Evelyn De Morgan. As noted, in addition to simply alluding to death and bereavement caused by war, the stark contrast of a group of dishevelled looking female mourners, set in a landscape alluding to the appearance of Western Front battlefields, juxtaposed with a joyous vision in *The Mourners* (Fig. 7), can be understood as an allusion to Spiritualist notions of a heavenly afterlife. This allows the painting to allude to the sacrificial nature of the war from the home front perspective by implying that all that was left for bereaved relatives, with no bodies to mourn or bury, was belief in the potential therapeutic solace that Spiritualism offered. In addition to being a pacifist, De Morgan was very familiar with Spiritualism and appears to have taken a keen interest in its practice. The artist's mother-in-law, Sophia De Morgan, had been a leading member of the Spiritualist movement in the mid-nineteenth century and had published a popular book, *From Matter To Spirit* of 1863, which was largely responsible for the adaptation of Swedenborgian philosophy in relation to Spiritualist beliefs.⁴⁹⁴ Moreover, compelling evidence that De Morgan herself had a keen interest in Spiritualism can be found in the claim that she and her husband William regularly attended meetings of the Society for Psychical Research in the company of their close friend Violet Padget (better known by her masculine *nom-de-plume* of Vernon Lee).⁴⁹⁵ Furthermore, Mrs Stirling, the artist's sister, claimed that in 1909 Evelyn and William De Morgan published anonymously a book entitled *The Result of An Experiment*, which purported to contain transcriptions of messages from spirits of deceased individuals

⁴⁹⁴ C.D. (Sophia E. De Morgan), *From Matter To Spirit: The Result of Ten Years Experience in Spirit Manifestations Intended As A Guide for Enquirers*, London, 1863. Also see Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*, 21.

⁴⁹⁵ Vernon Lee, Irene Cooper Willis (ed.), *The Letters of Vernon Lee*, London, 1937, 176.

dictated to the authors - 'a lady and her husband' - during automatic writing sessions.⁴⁹⁶ According to its preface, *The Result of An Experiment* was published anonymously because of fear of public scepticism and ridicule about Spiritualism, thereby implying that the De Morgans were unprepared to be challenged publically about their involvement with the practice.⁴⁹⁷ The De Morgans' reluctance to be identified reveals the tenuous level of public acceptance of Spiritualism in the immediate pre-war period; a time before the unprecedented events of the First World War had inspired a greater level of interest and perhaps partly legitimized the practice, thereby helping to confirm Morin's argument about the power of apotropaic myths in times of extreme emotional stress, such as war. In *The Result of An Experiment* it is recorded that a spirit dictated to the authors that:

Earth life is dull and cold, grey, and the spirit is cramped in the prison of clay, but outside the sun of the spirit-spheres shines, and the glory and light of heaven is a great reality. Look up and trust in the light. Death is the portal of Life, and your friend now passing through the valley of shadow will rise glorious and full of light in the spheres.⁴⁹⁸

Very similar sentiments are suggested by the deliberate arrangement of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) into two distinct zones of a hellish, god-forsaken, earth in the foreground juxtaposed with a joyous 'afterlife' in the background. The division of the painting can

⁴⁹⁶ Anonymous, *The Result of An Experiment*, London, 1909, preface xi; Anna Maria Wilhelmina Stirling, *The Merry Wives of Battersea and Gossip of Three Centuries*, London, 1956, 149.

⁴⁹⁷ Anonymous, *The Result of An Experiment*, preface xi.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 59.

therefore be seen as functioning to imply that the misery of the war-torn mortal world, full of bereavement, could be greatly alleviated by acceptance of the belief that the souls of the deceased continued to 'live' and develop further in the peaceful paradise of the afterlife in line with Spiritualists' belief. Consequently, as noted, the contrast of the mood of sorrowful resignation in the foreground of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) compared to the joyous scene of dancing and merriment in the background can be seen to act to suggest that death might be overcome, not only through recollections of a happy past life, but also by possession of belief in a reunion with deceased loved ones through the practise of Spiritualism. This, arguably, allows *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) to be seen to endorse Spiritualism. Nevertheless, De Morgan appears to have been uneasy about being seen to publically affirm the practice. On this basis, rather than implying that 'encounters' with spirits actually took place, De Morgan's painting can be seen to use Spiritualism as a culturally-familiar mechanism in order to make evident the terrible effects of war. Additionally, however, in common with paintings by Charles Sims, the division of *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) into two distinct halves of life and afterlife also had the potential to be viewed as signalling the divide between home and battle fronts where mourning and death were respectively gendered as feminine and masculine.

Allusions to Spiritualism can also be identified in *Pro Patria Mori* (undated, Fig. 73) by De Morgan. In the left foreground of the painting a female figure, dressed in blue-coloured robes, with her head covered in a veil of mourning, alludes to convention and circumstances of war which assigned mourning primarily to women in order to act as a signifier for all war-related bereaved. This figure kneels to embrace a crudely made

wooden cross that, like other examples found in paintings, functions as a sign for the absent bodies of dead and missing servicemen. In addition, nailed on the cross is a plank of wood carrying the words ‘pro patria mori.’⁴⁹⁹ This phrase originated in Horace’s *Odes* as ‘*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori,*’ translated from Latin into English as ‘sweet it is and honourable to die for one’s native land.’⁵⁰⁰ The use of the phrase ‘pro patria mori’ in responses to the First World War could be understood, like the subject of *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) by Dollman, as an endorsement of support for the war and a call-to-arms through emphasis of the link between the establishment of manliness and chivalric patriotism, which was employed in so much pro-war enlistment propaganda. However, given the pacifist sentiments that are clearly detectable in so many of the artist’s paintings, De Morgan’s use of the phrase ‘pro patria mori’ for such purposes seems highly unlikely, thereby suggesting that its presence in the painting was for another quite different function.

In *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) above the figure on the left is another figure of indeterminate sex. Wearing a shroud-like garment composed of pale-blue pigment this figure appears to float in the sky. Not only is the insubstantial composition of the latter figure very similar to that of the personification of the concept of justice in *The*

⁴⁹⁹ The presence of the phrase is not clear in the colour photograph of the painting. It is much more evident on the black-and-white photograph of the work see (Fig. 73).

⁵⁰⁰ Horace, *Odes*, iii, 2.13, Horace, *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, translation by David West, Oxford, 2000 (first published 1997), 78. Over the last century, in relation to the First World War, part of this phrase has become synonymous of Wilfred Owen’s anti-war poem *Dulce Et Decorum Est*. Nevertheless, Owen’s poem was unlikely to have been the source of influence for De Morgan’s painting because it was not published until after the end of the war and not before 2 May 1919 when she died. Instead both the phrases used by De Morgan and Owen can also be found in poetry produced about the Second Anglo Boer War. For example James Rhoades ‘Dulce et Decorum Est,’ *Daily News*, 1 November 1899 and T.W.H. Crossland, ‘Slain,’ *Outlook*, 11 November 1899, cited in Malvern Van Wyk Smith, *Drummer Hodge*, 54 and 113.

Reckoning (Fig. 65), it is also very similar to purported images of spirit manifestations found in contemporaneous spirit photography, such as those taken by Mr Reeves (Fig. 68). This suggests strongly that the composition of the figure in the painting implies that a spiritual apparition was being represented. Meanwhile, in the centre of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) another apparition of a figure, dressed in a red-coloured robe, represents an angel who grasps the former figure by the waist as they both ascend skywards. Rather than adhering to western iconographic tradition, in which angels are generally rendered as either male or androgynous figures, the folds of the fabric of the red-coloured garment worn by the angelic apparition function to suggest the shape of breasts, thereby signalling that the figure is female.⁵⁰¹ According to Swedenborg, angels were spiritual beings whose duty it was to teach spirits ‘how to discover their higher [more developed] natures.’⁵⁰² It is this tutelary or nurturing role that the angel appears to assume in the painting in order to confirm that the other figure, held tight by her arm, is indeed an apparition of the spirit of someone who is dead, perhaps a serviceman killed in the war. Additionally the presence of an angel, dressed in red-coloured robes, suggestive perhaps of blood-stained bandages and clothing, alongside a crude cross associated with hasty wartime burials, also helps to further imply that the deceased spirit, who appears in the apparition on the left of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73), is indeed that of a dead serviceman. Therefore, in a way which is about as subtle as the brazen ‘images’ of the dead in spirit photography, the combination of an apparition of a dead serviceman and a female angel floating together above a crudely made battlefield cross enables the painting to engage

⁵⁰¹ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 46.

⁵⁰² Bernhard Lang and Colleen McDannell, *Heaven A History*, 188.

critically with the war's effects through allusions to the practice of Spiritualism as a way of coping with war-related death and bereavement.

As the case of Private Squire exemplified, even if the bodies of servicemen had been found and identified, bereaved families received little information about the death and burial of their loved ones. All relatives were officially given was a telegram informing them of the date and location of death, if known.⁵⁰³ Often the only way bereaved families on the home front could find out further information about the nature and circumstances of their loved one's demise was from letters sent by serving comrades or senior officers. However, as the case of Private Squire (where two people provided different accounts of the soldier's final hours to his family) highlights, such information and correspondence often gave little comfort to families because it was in many instances at best misleading and at worst conflicting.⁵⁰⁴ Moreover in the case of men listed as 'missing' there was even less consolation for families and friends, because often no firm confirmation of the exact status of loved ones could be provided.⁵⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Allyson Booth has pointed out that on the home front the lack of information about the battle conditions in which men were injured and died, whilst causing much distress, arguably provided some limited form of protection from the harsh realities of the war.⁵⁰⁶ However, Eric Leed has argued that, whilst providing a degree of protection to civilians, ignorance about the exact nature of conditions on the battle fronts also helped to compound further feelings amongst

⁵⁰³ Allyson Booth, 'Figuring The Absent Corpse,' 71.

⁵⁰⁴ Lance Corporal Noel Gate, letter dated, 17 March 1915 and Major K.Y. Stafford, letter, dated 25 March 1915, Papers of Private No: 2172, E.W. Squire, Imperial War Museum, London, accessed 7 November 2009.

⁵⁰⁵ Allyson Booth, 'Figuring The Absent Corpse,' 71.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 69.

combatants that there was a lack of comprehension between home and battle fronts.⁵⁰⁷ Both the lack of information given to bereaved friends and relatives and Leed's argument find support in the compositional arrangement of De Morgan's painting. On the right hand side of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) a third female figure, dressed in white clothing, stretches both arms diagonally across the centre of the painting almost managing to reach the apparition of the deceased spirit held aloft by the angel. Reaching out, mirroring the gesture of the third female figure, the deceased spirit appears to attempt to reach her. The failure of the living and dead figures to actually touch each other in *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) allows the painting to indicate that the practice of Spiritualism, whilst increasing in popularity, still retained an ambiguous position. Moreover, the failure of the living female figure to reach the figure representing the spirit of a deceased serviceman in *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) also suggested a breakdown in communication between the female home and male battle fronts. Consequently, the failure of the figures to meet, along with the femininity of the two 'mourners' and the angel, allowed the painting to construct sexual difference in a way which suggested the segregation of war by gender, thereby highlighting the divisive effects of conflict on British society.

Another indicator that De Morgan's painting was produced as a critique about the sacrificial nature of the war can be identified in her use of the phrase 'pro patria mori.' In her essay 'A Horror of War' Judy Oberhausen noted that it is significant that De Morgan deliberately omitted the first part of the Horatian *Ode*, which conveys the glory

⁵⁰⁷ Eric Leed, *No Man's Land*, 199-204.

and propriety of dying for one's country rather than just death.⁵⁰⁸ By shortening the phrase, thereby referencing only the link between war and death, De Morgan's painting can be understood to promote a key ideology which was universally shared by all supporters of pacifism as a political force in the early twentieth century. This was that all wars, because of the death and depravation they cause, were indefensible.⁵⁰⁹ Therefore, the inclusion of a sign that simply says to 'to die for one's country' as an integral part of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73), alongside allusions to division in national unity and attempts to cheat death through Spiritualism, can be understood to function to enforce the negative impact of the First World War. As a result, the painting's subject can be interpreted as encouraging disillusionment with the war by indicating that there is nothing sweet about the conflict. Therefore, the prospect of heroically 'dying for one's county,' which as the war progressed seemed increasingly likely, had become devalued. Moreover, the painting can also be interpreted as suggesting that the self-sacrifice of 'dying for one's country,' rather than heroically helping to protect the British nation and loved ones, actually brought nothing but misery to all affected, thereby indicating that for many people, not just pacifists, the idea of war as an acceptable act of patriotic bravura had largely disappeared.

Additionally, the juncture of the destabilizing effects of war with notoriously capricious concepts of sexual difference also meant that the compositional schema of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) had the potential to foster notions of feminine complicity in the war-related injury and death toll. As noted, within *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) the three female

⁵⁰⁸ Judy Oberhausen, 'A Horror of War,' Catherine Gordon (ed.) *Evelyn De Morgan Oil Paintings*, 75-92, 85.

⁵⁰⁹ Gail Chester and Andrew Rigby (eds.), *Articles of Peace*, 1.

figures present are dressed respectively in clothing which is coloured red, white and blue. Therefore, in common with *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5), the three predominant colours within De Morgan's painting can be understood to be same as the ones that are found in the Union flag of the British nation. Consequently the presence of three apparently living female figures, wearing colours associated with Britain's national flag, alongside one dead male figure and a sign saying 'to die for one's country,' in De Morgan's painting can also be seen to have drawn particular attention to the supposed complicity of British women in the massive injury and death toll. This suggests that in Britain, where masculine authority was largely understood as being culturally-vaunted, the compositional schema of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) could well have been viewed negatively, thereby largely nullifying the likely irenic intentions behind the painting's creation and public display.

As mentioned, there also appears to be a link between the compositional arrangement of *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) and so-called spirit photography, such as the photographs taken by Mr Reeves (Fig. 68). Pierre Apraxine and Sophie Schmit have pointed out that from as early as the 1860s onwards both the mimetic qualities and mechanical production process of spirit photography had the potential to persuade individuals unfamiliar with how the process of producing early photos could be manipulated by human intervention (and perhaps believers in Spiritualism) that the value of such images lay in their ability to provide 'evidence' of the existence of some form of 'survival' after death.⁵¹⁰ However, Andreas Fischer has noted, in early twentieth-century Britain, it was conversely possession of the very same compositional characteristics that invited scepticism and

⁵¹⁰ Pierre Apraxine and Sophie Schmit, 'Photography and The Occult,' *The Perfect Medium*, 13.

challenges to the authenticity of spirit photography.⁵¹¹ To this end, individuals and organizations, including Harry Price an investigator for the Society for Psychical Research and the *Daily Mail*, deliberately set out to reveal fakery through the exposure of a number of high profile spirit photographers as charlatans who tampered with photographic plates and took advantage of double exposure.⁵¹² In 1909, the same year in which *The Result of An Experiment* was published, following close examination of a number of photographs, the *Daily Mail*, for example, ‘unambiguously concluded’ that images of spirits found in the work of leading spirit photographer William Hope ‘were fakes.’⁵¹³ In her reluctance to be identified as the co-author of *The Result of An Experiment*, De Morgan had demonstrated an apparent fear of being exposed as a fraud in relation to her involvement with Spiritualism. This suggests that, in common with allusions to Spiritualism in *The Mourners* (Fig. 7), it seems very unlikely that the likeness of the composition of the apparition in *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) to images purporting to be of spirits in photography was done to imply that the painting’s subject recorded an actual incident of Spiritualism. Moreover, De Morgan worked with oil paint, a medium which clearly revealed obvious signs of human artifice such as brush marks. Therefore, as noted, in common with all works composed of mediums used by artists to manually paint or draw, an oil painting like *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73) could never be understood to provide ‘documentary’ evidence of ‘the dead as though they were alive’ in the vein of claims made by practitioners of spirit photography.⁵¹⁴ Instead, as argued herein, the adoption of compositional similarities to spirit photography found in paintings

⁵¹¹ Andrea Fischer, “‘The Most Disreputable Camera in The World,’” *ibid*, 72.

⁵¹² *Ibid*.

⁵¹³ John Harvey, *Photography and Spirit*, 156.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, 52-53.

alluding to Spiritualism during the war, like *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73), appears to have allowed the latter, in the vein of war propaganda drawing upon the ethos of imperial masculinity, to establish a visual point of reference to engage with death and bereavement on the home front which was familiar to a contemporaneous audience.

The extent of cross-fertilization between visual references to war-related Spiritualism, such as that found in paintings and photographs, is perhaps best exemplified by a study of the relationship of the similarities between the compositional arrangement of *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) and *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67), two paintings also by De Morgan, to a very specific form of spirit photography and photographic portraiture. In the centre of *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) stands an apparition of a female figure representing the Angel of Death, who is denoted as such by the use of black pigment for her wings and garments; a colour associated traditionally with mourning within British culture. Surrounding the angelic apparition to either side, appearing as if part of the pattern of the garments worn, is another apparition of the disembodied heads of young men. In the background of the painting, lying prostrate in a valley, are more male figures dressed in military clothing associated with classical antiquity. Meanwhile scattered around on the ground are discarded weapons, such as shields and spears, which are also associated with hand-to-hand combat from a similar historical period. Functioning to signify the sacrificial nature of the First World War through difference, allusions to hand-to-hand combatant from an earlier historical period in *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) can be understood as being present to highlight the destructive effects of pitting men against mechanized weaponry during the conflict,

thereby revealing the truly devastating impact of modern warfare. Moreover, De Morgan's use of an archaic battlefield scene as background for the painting can be also understood as a way of overcoming both the censorship imposed by DORA regulations and her own personal lack of firsthand experience of the battle front. Nevertheless, both the ancient location and the absence of female figures, except for the Angel of Death, can be additionally interpreted as helping to endorse long-held concepts that war was gendered as masculine. Consequently De Morgan's adherence to the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference meant that *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74), like many other paintings, could be seen as promoting notions that combat in war was an exclusively masculine role, thereby encouraging ideas of separate zones of wartime experience demarcated by gender. Additionally, like the angel in *Pro Patria Mori* (Fig. 73), the Angel of Death in *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) clearly has breasts indicating that the figure is definitely feminine. Therefore, although most likely again unintentional given De Morgan's egalitarian worldview, the presence of a female angel in *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) helps to symbolize the link between femininity and death, thereby allowing the painting to also allude to feminine complicity in the massive wartime injury and death toll.

In contrast, despite possessing a very similar compositional arrangement to that of the *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74), as noted in the introduction of this section, *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67) is the only painting, identified by research for this thesis, in which the practice of Spiritualism during the war is not demarcated by gender. *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67) features at its centre an apparition of a

benevolent angel, denoted as such by the pale-coloured robes worn and the surrounding rainbow signalling salvation. The angel is shown piping to an apparition of a group of disembodied heads of both men and women, who are apparently condemned to the fires of hell in the painting's foreground. Assuming the role of spiritual tutor, and thereby alluding to Swedenborgian doctrine, the angelic apparition pipes to the dead entreating them to develop spiritually so that they can rise out of hell towards heaven and salvation. As a result it can be argued that De Morgan's painting seemingly gives endorsement to Spiritualists' beliefs. However, this seems unlikely given De Morgan's apparent fear of being revealed as a charlatan. Instead the location of men and women together in hell within *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67), when interpreted in relation to the contexts of the First World War and De Morgan's pacifist worldview, can be understood to signify that as a result of supporting war everyone was implicated in the injury and death toll, and suffered equally as a consequence. By implicating equally men and women, *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67) can be interpreted as neither promoting feminine authority nor celebrating masculine heroism. Consequently, it can be argued that, in common with other works, failure to promote positively the wartime perspectives of male combatants meant that *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67) may well have been seen as being antithetical to established canonical values for British First World War art.

In De Morgan's two paintings apparitions of spirits of the dead are shown simply as disembodied heads. Spanning a period from the middle of the nineteenth century, throughout the duration of the First World War, extending into the years immediately

after the conflict's end, there are a number of examples of spirit photographs that feature images of disembodied heads, which are very similar to those found in De Morgan's paintings. There are, for example, very close compositional similarities between De Morgan's two paintings and the photograph apparently produced on Armistice Day 11 November 1924 by Ada Deane (Fig. 75), which engaged with the effects of the First World War by allegedly featuring an apparition of the disembodied heads of dead servicemen. John Harvey has argued that photographs purporting to contain images of spirits should not be viewed as innovative.⁵¹⁵ According to Harvey, the production of so-called spirit photography should instead be viewed as a creative process that appropriated and adapted conventions of representing aspects of the spiritual already used by artists.⁵¹⁶ To this end, he has pointed out that the way in which the disembodied heads are manifest in Deane's photograph is very similar in composition to mid-nineteenth-century working-class, Protestant, visual culture, for example the photographic portrait of *74 Famous Men of The Welsh Pulpit* (Fig. 76) of 1850-80s by Thomas Jones.⁵¹⁷ Furthermore, the specific use of disembodied heads in Deane's photograph is also very similar to certain types of roll-honours of men killed during the First World War (Fig. 77), which were placed in churches and other communal locations and comprised of portrait photographs of the deceased mounted together in groups to form a picture.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, created eight years after De Morgan's two paintings were exhibited, Deane's photograph bears an even more obvious compositional resemblance to both *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) and *An*

⁵¹⁵ John Harvey, *Photography and Spirit*, 52-53.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵¹⁸ Catherine Moriarty, "‘Though in a Picture Only:’ Portrait Photography and The Commemoration of The First World War," Gail Braybon (ed.), *Evidence History and The Great War: Historians and The Impact of 1914-18*, Oxford and New York, 2003, 30-47, 34-36.

Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell (Fig. 67).⁵¹⁹ The later date of production of Deane's photographs, therefore, suggests that it may not have been artists, including De Morgan, who appropriated images found in spirit photography as a point of reference through which to negotiate meanings and values for war-related death and bereavement. Indeed the reverse could well have been the case. 'Producers' of so-called spirit photographs might well have taken inspiration from fine art, such as paintings by De Morgan, thereby suggesting the innovative novelty of the latter. Supporting this argument, research undertaken for this thesis has, as noted, been unable to establish any significant precedent in western artistic conventions, before the First World War, for the conflation of sexual difference with Spiritualism as a way to create meanings and values for war. This suggests that such artistic practice cannot just be understood as a specific sign of the unprecedented effects on the British home front of the massive death toll during the First World War, it can also be interpreted as an innovation in the representation of war in visual culture.

To conclude, traditional customs and the specific contexts of war once again made sexual difference an irresistibly compelling mechanism which could be used by artists to construct culturally-familiar values for the effects of war-related death and bereavement in Britain during the First World War. However, as noted, the effects of war radically altered concepts of sexual difference, thereby allowing women to occupy a dual position as either, in line with tradition, passive objects of male protection or, as a result of the

⁵¹⁹ *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74) and *An Angel Piping To The Souls In Hell* (Fig. 67) were exhibits 7 and 13 respectively at the exhibition held by De Morgan in aid of the Red Cross at her studio in Edith Grove, Fulham, in the spring of 1916. Evelyn De Morgan, *Catalogue of An Exhibition of Pictures*.

impact of war, active agents responsible in part for the massive injury and death toll. Consequently the absence of male figures and presence of female figures, alongside allusions to death and motherhood, meant that many paintings engaging with the home front perspective, such as *Youth Mourning* (Figs. 1 and 61) and *The Mourners* (Fig. 7), could be viewed not only as signalling the experience of death and bereavement in wartime Britain, but also as helping to raise awareness of both increased feminine authority and female complicity in the massive injury and death toll. This means that paintings using sexual difference to respond to death and bereavement on the home front could additionally be interpreted as promoting the breaking-down of the traditional stratification of British society based on promoting masculine authority. Moreover, as section three of this chapter has revealed, the foregoing situation has been compounded further by artists' conflation of sexual difference with the practice of Spiritualism in many paintings. As the example of *The Reckoning* (Fig. 65) has indicated, in line with pre-war concepts of sexual difference, in the early months of the war allusions to Spiritualism in many cultural forms, including paintings, were most likely intended to function as a call-to-arms designed to support enlistment. However, as the war progressed, the unprecedented injury and death toll rendered the use of allusions to Spiritualism as a call-to-arms untenable. Instead inspired by the increase in Spiritualism during the war as a way to obtain succour for bereavement, artists increasingly conflated allusions to the practice with concepts of sexual difference as an additional trajectory to engage with the experience of death and bereavement on the home front. Indeed, having examined the relationship between paintings and spirit photography, it has been argued herein, that the conflation of sexual difference with Spiritualism in artworks produced by

artists responding to wartime events on the home front can be viewed as providing not only an additional way of representing war, but also a novel one. Nevertheless, whilst artists' adoption of such practice can be understood as being both innovative and highly specific to the circumstances of the First World War, in common with other approaches adopted to generate meanings and values for death and bereavement, paintings conflating sexual difference with Spiritualism can also be understood to suggest the destabilizing effects of the war on British society. To this end, compositional arrangements, such as swathes of empty landscapes separating apparently live female figures in the mortal world from dead male figures in the afterlife, found in paintings such as *Remembrance* (Fig. 8), could be viewed as segregating femininity and masculinity into separate wartime domains. As a result such artworks could be seen to imply that there was a rupture in British society between the 'feminine' home front and the 'masculine' battle front. The division of paintings into gendered zones might, therefore, be interpreted as upholding claims of inequality in wartime experience made by disillusioned servicemen, which helped to promote disunity. Consequently, in common with other examples, the use of sexual difference to engage with death and bereavement from the home front perspective meant that many paintings not only brought to mind the destabilizing impact of war, but additionally had the potential to suggest radically alternative values of sexual difference that could be interpreted as being inconsistent with both cultural traditions and canonical values for British First World War art, which were based upon promoting masculine authority.

Conclusion

This thesis has shown that the writing-out of art history of many paintings engaging with the British home front perspective during the First World War can be attributed largely to sexual discrimination motivated by three factors. Firstly, the pervasive influence of cultural traditions pertaining to binary premise concerning male and female roles within the matrices of British society, which promoted masculine strength and authority alongside feminine passivity and weakness. As argued herein, this meant that the experience of war was largely defined in terms of sexual difference. Secondly, the capricious nature of constructions of sexual difference in combination with the unprecedented circumstances of war, which temporarily destabilized long-held concepts of masculinity and femininity within British society. This meant that many paintings employing allusions to sexual difference as a mechanism to engage with war could be viewed as suggesting masculine weakness and increased feminine authority. As a result such artworks can be seen as suggesting a reversal of pre-war values, thereby making evident the abnormality of wartime. Thirdly, the desire to achieve a semblance of normality and the need to reintegrate large numbers of disillusioned ex-servicemen back into British society in the immediate post-war period. This resulted in the reinstatement of pre-war values based on the polarization of male and female roles with a two-fold effect. The strength of emphasis placed on the 'normality' of pre-war values functioned to signal a halt to the destabilizing effects of the war, thereby allowing concepts of increased feminine authority, which had been temporarily caused by the presence of injured men and increased numbers of women in employment on the home front during

wartime, to be largely nullified. Therefore, it can be argued that the process of returning to peacetime and demobilization reinstated men to their pre-war positions of authority, whilst at the same time thrusting large numbers of women out of work.⁵²⁰ Additionally, as noted, the eminence of the ordeal of the fallen serviceman, endorsed not only in dominant narratives, ranging from state papers to literature and poetry, but also by the way in which war has been constructed in almost every example of fine art within the collection of the IWM, functioned to signify the superiority of both dead servicemen and survivors of the battle front over that of civilians. This had the effect of suggesting the elevated status of artworks representing the wartime experiences of male combatants on the battle front. Therefore, partiality shown towards the wartime experiences of male combatants, done to smooth the transition from war to peace, meant that many paintings (and other examples of fine art) engaging with the home front, which could be interpreted as not promoting the traditional stratification of British home front, fell outside of the accepted canonical standards of British First World War art. Consequently the findings of this thesis attest that sexual discrimination caused by the stratification of British society in the early twentieth-century on the basis of binary premise in relation to male and female roles, which has been largely upheld by the structuring of both the academic discipline of art history and canonical values for British First World War art on the basis of sexual difference, has indeed been central to the writing-out of British art responding to the home front perspective.

In order to reach the foregoing conclusion, the first task of the present study was to establish and examine the culturally-ingrained nature of both the reciprocal

⁵²⁰ Susan Grayzel, *Women and The First World War*, 106-107.

metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general and binary premise in relation to masculinity and femininity within British society just before and on commencement of the First World War. Firstly, this study established that the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference meant that the exclusively feminine role of motherhood for a long time in Britain (including the First World War period) was viewed as absolving women from combat roles, thereby also suggesting the alignment of women with peace. Secondly, it has been revealed herein that men, women, boys and girls from all social backgrounds were indoctrinated by dominant narratives espousing binary premise relating to male and female roles within society. Research into prevailing social contexts and cultural customs has shown that before, during and immediately after the First World War masculine prowess was measured by an individual's ability to succeed in the social, commercial and political atmosphere of the world's largest empire. This was measured, not just in terms of social standing, but also on the basis of physical and mental fortitude, which formed the basis for the ethos of imperial masculinity.⁵²¹ The ethos of imperial masculinity had been fostered throughout the nineteenth century by a number of cultural influences, including supporters of muscular Christianity and the public and state school systems. Indeed, it has been demonstrated herein that, by the early twentieth century, such was the level of indoctrination of the ethos of imperial masculinity, dominant narratives were able to advocate that the 'ideal' woman must be, or at least appear to be, passive and prepared, if necessary, to subordinate her needs to those of a man, in order to support and promote social stratification based upon the eminence of strong masculine authority. Confirming this assertion further, the survey of newspapers and magazines,

⁵²¹ Michael Roper, 'Between Manliness and Masculinity,' 347.

published between January 1912 and August 1914, examined in this study, has also revealed the ambiguous way in which the activities of the women's suffrage movement were treated in pre-war British society. Often addressed in terms of condescending pity or absurdity in many publications, the treatment of the actions of supporters of women's suffrage helps to confirm the culturally-ingrained nature of binary premise pertaining to masculinity and femininity within British society by demonstrating that any deviation or challenge to such deeply entrenched tradition, for example calls for female enfranchisement, were, like many paintings responding the home front perspective, treated largely as being 'abnormal' and responded to with contempt and ridicule in equal measure.

Using examples of images and texts, such as the picture of the medieval knight from the *Boy's Own Paper* (Fig. 16), this thesis has also shown that social stratification on the basis of sexual difference was frequently enforced by the equation of manliness with chivalric sacrifice. This was inspired by increased interest during the nineteenth century in medieval revival. Indeed such was the level of inculcation that by the commencement of the First World War masculine prowess had become inextricably linked with chivalric conduct, which was particularly symbolized in visual culture by images of Saint George, England's patron saint. This meant that on the outbreak of war chivalry and chivalric behaviour were understood as being symbolic of masculine prowess and self-sacrifice in the service of patriotic protection of nation and loved ones. Therefore, as the enlistment poster *Britain Needs You At Once* (Fig. 21) has indicated, binary premise relating to

masculinity and femininity in the form of the concept of chivalric sacrifice was used by much pro-war propaganda to induce men to enlist voluntarily.

Examining the frequent personification of culturally-vaunted concepts, such as justice and peace, nations and cities, by female figures, this study has also shown that traditional western iconographic conventions seemingly lent endorsement to both the stratification of British society by gender and the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general. In particular this thesis has argued that although armed with token attributes of war, dressed in diaphanous robes, without any body armour, the female figure of Britannia, often used to personify the British nation, would actually be defenceless. On this basis instead of suggesting the powerful strength of the British nation, at the time the centre of the world's largest empire, the figure of Britannia arguably implied weakness more readily associated with femininity. Nevertheless, this thesis has contended that in the years immediately preceding the First World War the identification in dominant narratives of femininity as passively weak, along with the impact of various colonial insurgencies such as the Second Anglo Boer War, enabled the apparently defenceless state of Britannia to signify that, whilst very powerful, the British Empire also needed constant protection. Consequently the seemingly helpless state of the female figure of Britannia actually helped to inspire notions of the need for masculine patriotic protection of nation and loved ones. This allowed women and the British Empire to be viewed in similar terms as objects of protection and prizes in victory. The effect of this was to create a precedent which could be effectively used by pro-war propaganda, such as the poster *Men of Britain! Will You Stand This?* (Fig. 25), to conflate

the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference with the ethos of imperial masculinity in order to coerce men to enlist by emphasising that voluntary-enlistment was the ideal way for an individual to demonstrate their manly patriotism.

Having confirmed that binary premise concerning masculine and feminine roles within pre-war British society was indeed well and truly culturally-ingrained by the outbreak of the First World War, in chapter two this study went on to examine how wartime roles and experiences were interpreted in relation to prevailing concepts of sexual difference. Consequently it has been argued that, not only did constructions of sexual difference inspire artists' engagement with the circumstances of the First World War, more importantly such concepts also helped to shape the way in which fine art was received within the contexts of the destabilizing impact of the conflict. Although, at the onset of war, in line with cultural tradition, women were legally prevented from combat roles and discouraged from taking jobs left vacant by voluntarily-enlisted men, this study has shown that by as early as the spring of 1915 the sacrificial nature of the war quickly brought about a temporary, but radical, alteration in pre-war concepts of masculinity and femininity. Firstly, the repatriation of injured or permanently disabled servicemen back to Britain functioned to associate masculinity with weakness. Secondly, the absence of men from the British labour market and the need for extra supplies of munitions meant that women, instead of being discouraged, were actively encouraged to seek employment. Whilst providing many women with an opportunity to support their families and themselves during wartime, increased female employment on the home front also suggested greater feminine authority. Therefore, as a consequence, the

representation of injured men juxtaposed with able-bodied women in paintings, including *The Creditors* (Fig. 3) and *Return From A Pleasure Cruise* (Fig. 29), instead of simply celebrating the selfless heroism of servicemen, could also be interpreted as encouraging notions of increased feminine authority compared to peacetime. As a result such paintings had the potential to be viewed as promoting a reversal in the pre-war tropic balance of sexual difference, thereby not only making evident the abnormality of wartime, but also suggesting a challenge to dominant narratives in the immediate post-war period, which supported the promotion of masculine authority, especially the culturally-vaunted status of the ex-serviceman.

Moving on to investigate the changing meanings and values assigned to concepts of chivalric sacrifice, this thesis has shown that, rather than continuing to be understood as the primary signifier of masculine patriotic prowess, as suggested by the way in which masculinity is inscribed in early paintings like *The Great Sacrifice* (Fig. 34), the massive injury and death toll led to chivalry conversely becoming a symbol of the pitiful 'sacrifice' of injured and dead servicemen. Having been hubristically coerced to voluntarily-enlist by war-propaganda playing on concepts of masculine patriotic prowess, many servicemen felt disillusioned, betrayed and forsaken by the society that had sent them to war by enforcing the conflated ethos of chivalric sacrifice and imperial masculinity. The sacrificial nature of the war and the feelings of disillusioned men, therefore, helped to foster the myth of the war, whereby many servicemen felt bitter that their selfless efforts had not been duly appreciated and acknowledged by both the British government and civilians. In light of such alleged grievances, altered concepts of

masculinity and femininity caused by war encouraged notions of a divide in both experience and zones of war between the exclusively masculine battle fronts and the seemingly predominantly feminine home front. Engaging with the changing status of chivalric sacrifice, this thesis has demonstrated that the destabilizing effects of the war combined with the capricious nature of constructions of sexual difference functioned to heighten the possibility of oscillation between sign and referent. This meant, like other artworks, paintings alluding to chivalric sacrifice had the potential to generate polysemous meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity, which affected their interpretation. Consequently allusions to chivalric sacrifice, and the enforcement of the dreadful ordeal of male combatants, suggested in paintings such as *Anno Domini 1917* (Fig. 43), rather than simply celebrating masculine heroism, could be interpreted also as encouraging divisions between civilians and combatants by reminding beholders of the differences between home and battle front experiences of war, which were, according to embittered servicemen, far too great.

In addition, examining how femininity is inscribed in examples of paintings, such as *Corporation Street In Birmingham In March 1914* (Fig. 38) and *War Profiteers* (Fig. 5), this thesis has argued that the war's destabilizing effects upon traditional concepts of sexual difference also informed how artists' use of female figures was received within the contexts of prevailing concepts of war, masculinity and femininity. To this end, this thesis has argued that, although synonymous with peace within western culture and iconographic tradition, altered concepts of sexual difference during wartime meant that the use of female figures in paintings engaging with the war also functioned to signify

feminine involvement in actions such as the handing-out of white feathers to shame men into voluntary enlistment and the manufacture of munitions, which maimed and killed. The effect of this was that many paintings featuring female figures also had the potential to suggest a link between femininity and the massive injury and death toll, thereby ‘unnaturally’ assigning aggression to women, which made evident the abnormality of wartime.

Demonstrating the impact of the unstable nature of gender identity, this study has additionally indicated that, paradoxically, the exclusively feminine role of motherhood and the alignment of femininity with peace, also provided a number of artists, for example De Morgan, in paintings such as *S.O.S* (Fig. 6), with a mechanism which could be used to make a protest against not only the war, but also instances of sexual discrimination against women, which were caused by both the conflict and the traditional stratification of British society. Exploring the use of sexual difference in paintings as a form of protest, aimed at inspiring either social and political reform or for irenic purposes, this study has revealed the existence of a very similar narrative constructed in the work of artists, for example *The Zone of Hate* by Walker (Fig. 11), *Womanhood Demands Her Dead* by Southall (Fig. 63) and *Ignoto* by De Morgan (Fig. 60). This can be interpreted as suggesting two things. Firstly, it can be seen as an indication that many artists were to some extent aware of the capricious nature of constructions of gender and used it to their advantage to disseminate protest through the public display of their works. Moreover, this thesis has demonstrated that public awareness of the reciprocal metaphorization of war and sexual difference in general, along with the culturally-

ingrained nature of binary premise relating to male and female roles within pre-war British society, meant that artists could indeed use concepts of sexual difference to convey their protests against war and sexual discrimination in a way that was much more likely to have been understood by a contemporaneous audience than the seemingly aloof concept of ‘positive peace,’ which was adopted by artists associated with the Bloomsbury Group and the Omega Workshops.⁵²² Secondly, close similarities in the use of sexual difference in certain paintings suggests the potential existence of a cross-fertilization of ideas being exchanged between a network of artists or like-minded individuals, which in order to be fully explored requires further research outside of the main scope of this thesis. Furthermore, artists’ use of concepts of sexual difference as a mechanism of protest suggests that a good degree of artistic freedom of expression was still being exercised in spite of wartime constraints mentioned in chapter two, for example the legislation of DORA. Therefore, by revealing artists’ use of sexual difference as a *weapon* of protest, this thesis suggests that, rather than being viewed as staid and impotent responses, the demonstrations of artistic freedom found in paintings engaging with home front circumstances meant that such works can be understood to have made only too evident the devastating impact of the war upon British society. Additionally, by demonstrating that certain artists deliberately chose to make evident the impact of war from the home front perspective, through artworks that were intended for public display, the findings of this thesis have also helped to dispel the so-call myth of the war and ideas of a divide between zones of war by indicating that many, if not all, people on the home front, as a result of being neither aloof nor immune, did understand

⁵²² Grace Brockington, *Above The Battlefield: Modernism and The Peace Movement*, 2.

that war was an all-encompassing social crisis that devastated the lives of both combatants and civilians.

Augmenting the findings of chapters one and two, within chapter three of this study it has been shown that cultural customs along with circumstances of war meant that on the British home front the experience of war-related and death and bereavement was also largely demarcated in terms of sexual difference. As a result, death was often defined in paintings as masculine and signified by make-shift crosses marking battlefield graves, which acted to suggest hasty battlefield burials or missing bodies of non-repatriated dead servicemen. In contrast, drawing on cultural customs and western iconographic practice, especially Christian iconography relating to role of the Virgin Mary as chief mourner for her son Christ, which found additional resonance in the culturally-vaunted status of mothers during the First World War, mourners were represented largely by female figures. Whilst such artistic practice did, arguably, convey how death and bereavement were experienced on the home front, the presence of female mourners alongside allusions to dead men in paintings additionally meant that such artistic practice once again could be interpreted as encouraging notions of feminine complicity in war-related death and the idea of a geographical and gender-based divide in wartime experiences.

Demonstrating further the plurality of artists' responses to the First World War, in the final section of chapter three, this thesis expanded its investigation concerning the visualization of wartime experiences of death and bereavement to encompass a comprehensive study of the significant number of British paintings that engage with the

practice of Spiritualism. Consequently, this thesis has shown that in many paintings engaging with Spiritualism mourners are also, almost without exception, represented by female figures shown 'beholding' male figures. The latter frequently being either composed of sparsely applied pale pigment or simply represented by disembodied heads, thereby suggesting spirits of the dead. Therefore the way in which sexual difference was inscribed in many paintings alluding to Spiritualism again assigned life to women and death to men, thereby suggesting that the practice was also an activity which can be understood as being demarcated largely by gender. Examining the use of male and female figures, in works such as *The Mourners* (Fig. 7) and *Remembrance* (Fig. 8), this thesis has concluded that, whilst being highly specific responses to the First World War, where the unprecedented injury and death toll made belief in apotropaic myths almost irresistible, paintings alluding to Spiritualism have also been written-out of art-historical discourses, because of the way in which sexual difference was inscribed. To this end, this study has shown that the juxtaposition of live female and dead male figures in paintings reinforced the abnormality of war by again suggesting increased feminine authority and female complicity in male death. Moreover, by examining the apparent compositional similarities between so-called spirit photography and paintings engaging with Spiritualism during the war, this thesis has shown that, in addition to drawing upon nineteenth-century Protestant visual culture, the use of disembodied heads in alleged photographs of spirits of war-dead produced in the immediate post-war period may also have been inspired by very similar compositional arrangements in paintings produced during wartime, for example *The Field of The Slain* (Fig. 74), which conflated sexual difference and Spiritualism. As a result, this study has argued that, whilst drawing on

certain compositional arrangements used in early photography and other examples of visual culture, the conflation of sexual difference with allusions to Spiritualism in paintings, which research indicates had little precedent in earlier examples of fine art, can be understood as providing a novel approach towards engaging with the effects of war. In reaching this conclusion, this present study has, therefore, expanded both the existing canon of British fine art responding to the First World War, and perhaps also that of war art in general, by revealing the combination of sexual difference and Spiritualism as an additional trajectory taken by artists to engage with the effects of war. This again suggests that aspects of home front responses to the First World War were just as novel, if not more so, than approaches to the unprecedented circumstances of war produced by artists who used modernist practice to engage with battle front events.

In summary, investigating the impact of the juncture of wartime circumstances and notoriously capricious concepts of sexual difference in directing meaning and values for war, masculinity and femininity constructed by paintings, the present study has expanded the existing canon of British art engaging with First World War in a number of ways. This study has indicated the potential for further research by suggesting the possibility of a deliberate cross-fertilization of ideas about representing the war amongst like-minded artists for protest aims. Furthermore, through recuperation of many paintings which have been for a long time 'lost' to art-historical discourses, this thesis has demonstrated that whilst 'material disruptions,' such as the effects of DORA and the imposition luxury good tax, suggested by Fox, might have resulted in slightly fewer examples of fine art being created, a not insignificant number of paintings engaging with home front

perspective were nevertheless still produced.⁵²³ Moreover, as argued, within this body of works, which has been largely overlooked, sexual difference is a recurring theme used as a mechanism to generate meanings and values for war. This suggests that a profound factor in influencing the writing-out of many home front responses to the war was indeed the interpretation of the manifest and latent meanings and values for war, masculinity and femininity in relation to canonical values for British First World War art, which were based upon concepts of sexual difference. As noted, this is a situation that has been compounded further by the stratification of much previous art-historical scholarship also on the basis of sexual difference. Additionally, engaging with Brockington's concept of 'positive peace,' revealing artists' apparent deliberate use of the destabilizing effects of war upon concepts of sexual difference as a mechanism of protest, the findings of this thesis have demonstrated that fine art responding to the home front perspective was neither staid or irrelevant. Indeed the variety of reactions to the First World War that are identifiable in paintings (and other examples of fine art) engaging with the home front perspective can be understood to provide invaluable evidence of how artworks can be used to construct and disseminate highly diverse meanings and values for war. Augmenting the foregoing argument further is the conflation of Spiritualism with concepts of sexual difference in many paintings responding to death and bereavement from the home front perspective, which can be viewed as being novel. This again suggests that the revelation of the destabilizing effects of the First World War, made evident by the use of sexual difference in paintings responding to home front conditions, can be understood as providing equally rigorous and essential perspectives of the war to those suggested by artworks, featuring images of industrialized weaponry and weather-

⁵²³ James Fox, *Business Unusual*, 19-20.

ravaged landscapes, which engaged with the experiences of male combatants on the battle front. Consequently the findings of this study suggest that responses to war from the home front perspective deserve a much higher profile in art-historical studies of the war than previously granted. Moreover, in seeking to look beyond the myth of the war and at alternative perspectives, other than that of the male combatant on the battlefield, in addition to augmenting the art-historical field of study, the findings of this thesis concur with, and provide a contribution to, the much wider field of scholarship encompassing the work of feminists, social and military historians, which seeks to deconstruct the myth of the war, for example the research of Hynes, Gregory and Grayzel mentioned herein.⁵²⁴

Finally, it is hoped that the overriding outcome of the findings of this thesis has been to demonstrate that any rules or principles, not least canonical standards for British First World War art, which are established on the basis of positive sexual discrimination will inevitably lead to the exclusion and silencing of individuals or groups whose perspectives are not being favoured. Whereas, as this study has shown, an expanded canon of British First World War art, which does not seek to deliberately exclude any perspective and embraces the dynamic nature of gender identity, makes it possible for the destabilizing effects of war upon long-held concepts of sexual difference, suggested by much art responding to the home front perspective, to be seen as a sign of the utter devastation that went right to the very societal core of all the countries involved. Nevertheless, this important additional facet of discourse has for a long time been largely obscured because of the hierarchical structuring of much previous art-historical scholarship on the basis of

⁵²⁴ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined*; Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* and Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*.

sexual difference in general and more particularly the rigid adherence of scholars of British First World War art to canonical standards, which were designed to promote masculine authority. Had the war, in contrast, been treated from the start as an all-encompassing social crisis, whereby alterations to traditional concepts of sexual difference were viewed simply as confirmation of the effects of war, and not as evidence of a potential threat to social order, then perhaps the false dichotomies of standards, which inspired the establishment of the canon for First World War art in Britain might have been avoided. This study therefore concludes that in order to redress the distortion of the canon of British art and art-historical scholarship on the subject, paintings and other examples of fine art engaging with the home front perspective of the First World War should no longer be viewed as ‘art of a second order.’⁵²⁵ Instead British art responding to the impact of the war from the standpoint of the home front should be examined thoroughly by art historians for the important insights that the production and reception of such works can provide about the ways in which artworks are used to construct meanings and values in periods of great social crisis.

⁵²⁵ Kenneth Silver, *Esprit De Corps*, 30.

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