

**‘Engendering Race: Jamaica, Masculinity and the
Great War’**

Richard William Peter Smith

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of PhD.**

Awarded by the University of North London

September 2000

Contents

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----|
| Abstract | | ii |
| Acknowledgements | | iv |
| Abbreviations | | vi |
| List of Plates | | vii |
| Introduction | | 1 |
| 1 | Masculinity, Race & War in the British Empire: An Overview | 13 |
| 2 | “only ... a poor account of himself” Degeneration & Male Hysteria – White Masculine Vulnerability in the Great War | 49 |
| 3 | “The cannon’s summoning roar” Jamaica & the Outbreak of War | 92 |
| 4 | “On Them the Laurels Will Fall” Jamaican Volunteers & the Imperial Military Order | 136 |
| 5 | “Neither Women nor Coloured Troops” The Deployment of Black Jamaican Soldiers in Europe & the Middle East | 179 |
| 6 | “their splendid physical proportions” White Masculine Uncertainty & the Objectification of Black Servicemen | 222 |
| 7 | “Heaven grant you strength to fight the battle for your race” Military Sacrifice & the Demand for Post-War Equality | 263 |
| Epilogue | ‘Jamaica’s Welfare First’: The Great War & the Rise of Nationalism to the 1930s | 311 |
| Appendix | Contingent statistics | 327 |
| Bibliography | | 328 |

Abstract

This study places the experiences of black Jamaican volunteers in the Great War in the context of challenges to white masculinity presented by the conflict. Elaine Showalter's discussion of "male hysteria" is developed to show that the prevalence of shell shock brought into question constructs of black masculinity. The doubts raised by male hysteria intersected with renewed fears of racial degeneration with implications for both military undertakings and Imperial hegemony. These twin anxieties informed the policies and attitudes that attempted to exclude Jamaican volunteers from the masculine realm of war.

Historically, black people have been associated with physical strength, sensuality and emotional vitality. When mapped onto the bodies of black Jamaican volunteers, these constructs clashed dramatically with the psychologically and physically impaired white British soldier. Within certain constraints, black servicemen provided a revitalised image of masculinity. This had the potential to further destabilise the racial order and contributed to the anti-black feeling that developed in the metropole from the middle years of the war.

The war served as an impetus to the rise of nationalism and popular discontent throughout the British Empire. This study emphasises the masculine discourse within which nationalist aspirations were framed. Black Jamaicans were subject to many contradictory messages as to the part they should play in the war. The construction of black people as irrational and lacking in self-control meant that they were not regarded as desirable military material. However, in order to maintain cohesion

within the Empire, potential black volunteers were encouraged to take a role in the war effort that would be rewarded by post-war reforms. Furthermore, many of the white elite in Jamaica saw the war as a means to encourage the black population into manly endeavour and industry.

Stereotypes of black irrationality, combined with a desire to protect the white masculine hegemony of the Empire project, served to generally exclude Jamaican volunteers from the ultimate arena of masculinity – the front line. Nevertheless, these men maintained an attachment to the language of military sacrifice. Images of military valour continued to captivate black soldiers in the pursuit of national, racial and masculine identity. This, in turn, reinforced the essentially masculine nature of the Jamaican nationalist cause.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to my partner, Jeanette, and our two children, Eva and Leo. Balancing family life with study and paid employment is not easy for any of those involved. In the last few months, as I moved towards completing this project, Jeanette has taken on additional childcare and has had to cope with a partner increasingly preoccupied with research and writing. I hope this thesis proves to be a fitting tribute to her support over the last four years. It is also fitting to acknowledge the moral and practical support given by our friend Sharon Cheal at this time. Colleagues in the Media and Communications Department at Goldsmiths College have provided much-needed moral support. I am particularly grateful to Christine Geraghty for accommodating my request for additional leave in the last weeks of writing-up.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Jean Stubbs for her assiduous criticism of my work and for pushing me over the last hurdles to completion. Clem Seecharan read the manuscript in its final stages. Since my undergraduate days, Clem has remained a source of encouragement to me – not only in terms of his own vigorous approach to academic work, but in the infective enthusiasm which he passes on to all his students. I am particularly appreciative of the support given to me over the past two years by Professor Catherine Hall. In our many meetings, Catherine's acute critical insight has, without fail, filled me with renewed enthusiasm and given me faith in my ability to complete the thesis. Professor Steve Smith, who presented the MA unit, 'Gender, War and Revolution', at the University of Essex, helped to reawaken my longstanding interest in the Great War and provided me with a significant starting point for this study.

My thanks go to Howard Bloch, who provided material relating to the black community in East London. Roy Izzard pointed out some key references and gave me access to his copies of wartime British newspapers. John Hopkins and Pat Barker gave insight into the treatment and attitudes towards the psychological effects of the war. I am grateful to Brian Dyde for lending me his many copies of the *Zuoave* and

the war diary of Charles Ogilvie. Jane Lee, who completed an undergraduate dissertation on Jamaica and the Great War, kindly pointed out a copy of Captain Cipriani's war memoir in the TUC collection at UNL. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to work for Professor Winston James which gave me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge of Jamaica in the early twentieth century.

The staff at the Public Record Office, Imperial War Museum, National Army Museum, Newspaper Library and the British Library, have, as ever, provided an efficient and dedicated service. My local public libraries, in Newham and Waltham Forest, have proved to be invaluable resources for my secondary readings. Terry Barringer, archivist of the Royal Commonwealth Society collection, University of Cambridge, showed great interest in my work and kindly supplied me with copies of several important articles and photographs of the Jamaica War Memorial ceremony. Dr. M. Rogers of the East Riding of Yorkshire Record Office kindly supplied me with court papers relating to the trial of Ernest Nembhard.

Finally, I am grateful to the British Academy and the American Studies Fund of the University of North London for providing financial support for this thesis.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|--|
| BWIR | British West Indies Regiment |
| CinC | Comander-in-Chief |
| Cmdt. | Commandant |
| CO | Colonial Office |
| DAG | Deputy Adjutant General |
| DC | <i>Daily Chronicle</i> |
| DG | <i>Daily Gleaner</i> |
| EEF | Egyptian Expeditionary Force |
| FP | Field Punishment |
| GHQ | General Headquarters |
| GOC | General Officer Commanding |
| ICS | Institute of Commonwealth Studies |
| IHL | Imprisonment with hard labour |
| IWM | Imperial War Museum |
| <i>JCH</i> | <i>Journal of Caribbean History</i> |
| JFL | Jamaica Federation of labour |
| JIM | Jamaica Infantry Militia |
| JIM | Jamaica Infantry Militia |
| JMA | Jamaica Militia Artillery |
| <i>JSAHR</i> | <i>Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research</i> |
| <i>JT</i> | <i>Jamaica Times</i> |
| JTLA | Jamaica Times Literary Army |
| JWC | Jamaica War Contingent |
| LMS | London Missionary Society |
| NAM | National Army Museum |
| NSFU | National Sailors' & Firemen's Union |
| RFC | Royal Flying Corps |
| SSC | Secretary of State for the Colonies |
| UNIA | Universal Negro Improvement Association |
| USS | Under Secretary of State |
| USSCO | Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office |
| WD | War Diary |
| WIC Ctte. | West Indian Contingent Committee |
| <i>WICC</i> | <i>West India Committee Circular</i> |
| WIR | West India Regiment |
| WO | War Office |

List of Plates

(Following page 178)

- Plate 1** The condition of white masculinity in 1918. The extreme youth and slight build of many recruits is highlighted on this parade at the Etaples Base Camp in 1918. Etaples served as the reception centre for reinforcements for France.
- Plate 2** Private S. R. Stewart, a former Jamaican constable, pictured with two soldiers reported to be shell shock cases. All three men wear hospital uniforms.
- Plate 3** A case of shell shock.
- Plate 4** Male Hysteria in the tropics? - Lieutenant Leonard Ottley, Staff Officer Local Forces, Jamaica.
- Plate 5** Private George Halls – cured by ‘Phosferine a proven remedy for ... hysteria’.
- Plate 6** A Jamaican volunteer in Whitehall who ‘could not express his admiration in words’.
- Plate 7** Jamaica airman, W. “Robbie” Clarke.
- Plate 8** Alonzo Nathan, a hero of his own imagination? With a white comrade.
- Plates 9/10** Dedication of the Jamaica War Memorial, 1922.

Introduction

The Great War has long provided a fascination for me. In my early teens, I made countless visits, at evenings and weekends, to the main public library and either browsed or read many of the books it contained on the war. Some twenty-five years later, I cannot, with absolute certainty, pin down precisely what captivated me at that time. I know that I found the standard military histories, with their accounts of formations, generals and strategies, the least riveting. But the volumes that captured the personal experiences and the human cost of the war have left a more lasting impression. These influenced me to read some of the war poets and, later, the novelists of the war such as Frederic Manning, A. P. Herbert, Patrick MacGill and Richard Aldington, all of whom provide an insight into the anxieties facing British manhood at the time.¹ At a personal level, the war nightmares of my maternal grandfather, Evan Thomas Pendleton, haunted him until his premature death shortly after my birth. From an isolated farming community in North Wales, “Ev” volunteered in his late teens, serving first in the Army Service Corps before being assigned to a Welsh battery of the Royal Field Artillery in Flanders. Described to me by my mother, my grandfather’s trauma provided substance to my childhood imaginings of war.

The impact and cost of the Great War is still etched in our collective minds, perhaps even more so than the far more destructive and global Second War. The output and consumption of scholarly and non-academic studies of the period shows no sign of

¹ Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero*, London, 1929; A.P. Herbert, *The Secret Battle*, Oxford, 1982 [1919]; Patrick MacGill, *The Great Push: An Episode of the Great War*, London, 1984 [1916]; Frederic Manning, *Her Privates We*, London, 1986 [1929].

letting up. Oral historians and TV production companies race to capture the final utterances of a handful of surviving veterans. The campaign to achieve retrospective pardons for the British and Empire servicemen who were executed during the war shows no sign of slackening. Visit the Public Record Office on any day and you will overhear people of all backgrounds enthusiastically researching the background of their forbears' wartime exploits or whereabouts.

What drives this continued interest, at both a personal and collective level, is search for meaning, or at least a chance to set the record straight. We are often overwhelmed in our quest. The staggering loss of over ten million lives – nearly one million from Britain and the Empire alone, for example, is beyond individual comprehension. Despite the reckless sacrifice by the military elites of the men in their command, surely something can be salvaged for posterity? The family historian will perhaps unearth a personal act of heroism, or run to ground a yellowed photograph or postcards to those back home. An academic study, however, needs to tease out some broader significance of the war. One that nevertheless remembers that war is not just about nations and their armies, but myriad individual experiences.

I had no idea that my more recent interest in Caribbean history, triggered by C. L. R. James' essays *At the Rendezvous of Victory*,² would lead me back to the war once more. My original thesis proposal was a gender analysis of Jamaican nationalist discourse from its early origins in the late nineteenth century to independence in 1962. This rapidly proved to be an unmanageable timespan. I decided, instead, to focus on the interwar period to include the return of Jamaican war veterans and the

outbreak of nationalist unrest in the years immediately before the Second World War.

I diligently threw myself into the source material relating to Jamaica during the war. As I did so, I became increasingly aware of the significance of black Jamaican volunteers when viewed from the perspective of the trials of white masculinity, both on the Western Front and in the Empire. At this historical moment, the twin lenses of race and gender could be brought to bear on both the Jamaican view of the war and to elaborate on existing studies of white masculinity during the war.

Two issues are of key significance here. First, were the doubts around white masculine performance already in evidence prior to the war, but which were brought into focus by the extreme demands placed on British manhood on the absolute testing-ground of masculinity – the battlefield. An influential starting point for this study was Elaine Showalter’s discussion of “male hysteria”, contemporarily referred to as “shell shock”, during the Great War. Unable to cope with the stresses imposed by modern warfare many men broke down and found themselves unable to live up to the masculine expectations of the time. Their behaviour and symptoms closely resembled the female patients with which the medical profession had associated hysterical behaviour since the early nineteenth century. Both men and women exhibiting hysterical symptoms are regarded by Showalter as engaged in “mute

² London, 1984.

protest” at the arbitrary gendered standards imposed by society, which brought the categories themselves into question.³

There is a significant silence in Showalter’s analysis. The benchmarks of white masculinity were not produced only within its own immediate frame of reference or in opposition to feminine expectation. They were also established in relation and opposition to the gendered images of the subject races of Empire. The presence of these alternative masculine images potentially threatened to disrupt the hegemonic grip of white metropolitan masculinity, rather than serving exclusively as a competitor for white women.

The second, and related, issue that gripped metropolitan society was the fear of racial degeneration. This had become an increasing preoccupation since the mid-nineteenth century and was most evident during the military campaigns undertaken in the name of Empire. Scholars have placed these anxieties against Britain’s ability to maintain her Imperial mission. However, the assumption is that degeneration was a preoccupation of metropolitan domestic policy and politics,⁴ rather than a metaphor for the potential disruption of the racial categories and hegemonic power of Empire. These parallel metropolitan uncertainties became increasingly intertwined during the

³ Elaine Showalter, ‘Male Hysteria: W. H. R. Rivers and the Lessons of Shell Shock’ in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1800-1980*, London: Virago, 1987, 167-194.

⁴ See for example Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918*, Cambridge, 1989; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship Between the Classes in Victorian Society*, London, 1984; Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism & Motherhood’, *History Workshop Journal*, 5, 1978; Richard A. Soloway, *Degeneracy & Degeneration: Eugenics & the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain*, Chapel Hill, 1990. Perhaps the most emphatic on this point is G. R. Searle in his study of eugenicism in the early twentieth century. Despite acknowledging that eugenicist discussions and publications were littered with references to the future of the race, he concludes that ‘[t]he main interest of the eugenicists was probably that of determining

war years underlining how Imperial constructs of race and gender formed part of the same discursive universe. Combined they were to form the backdrop for the attempts to exclude or limit the entrance of Jamaican volunteers into the masculine realm of war.

The First World War has, since the early days following the war, been seen as a major impetus on the rise of nationalism and popular discontent in the British Empire. The war affected each colony in diverse ways. Even economic hardship caused by wartime shortages and the demand for military raw materials was not felt universally. Irish agriculture, for example, received a boost during the war years. Compulsory drafting into the carrier corps was a major grievance in East Africa. The terms and conditions of military labour and the impact of the war on the peasantry were keenly felt in Egypt. Indian nationalists were disappointed that their declarations of loyalty and support for recruitment had not led to any concession towards self-government. England's adversity proved, ultimately, to be nationalist Ireland's opportunity.⁵

In Jamaica, economic hardship was the main contributor to popular unrest and led to several outbreaks of discontent during the second half of the war period, long before the return of disillusioned war veterans. However, to date, attention has converged, as elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean, on the impact of Jamaica's black former servicemen. The central assertion is that the veterans played a significant part in the

the racial composition of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom' (G. R. Searle, *Eugenics & Politics in Britain, 1900-1914*, Leyden, 1976, 39).

development of anti-colonial movements from 1918 onwards after experiencing discrimination and exposure to radical ideas during their war service.⁶

Laura Tabili's groundbreaking study on the link between Imperialism and racial antagonism in Britain has discussed the impact of the war on demands for citizenship. She argues that, 'the war simultaneously strengthened troops' bond with the monarch and conferred a sense of entitlement that was ultimately subversive of the imperial order'.⁷ Tabili, like other scholars who have discussed the impact of the Great War on colonial subjects, conflates the term black to incorporate all non-white combatants, whether Chinese and Indian or African and West Indian.⁸ She therefore overlooks significant distinctions in the deployment and representation of the various groups of non-white servicemen, which led to considerable variation in their experiences and post-war vision. Nevertheless, Tabili's general conclusions capture the mood and outlook of many veterans, not only those who settled in Britain, but those who returned to their homelands.

Even though war experience was negative and disillusioning in many ways, it became part of the collective legacy of British colonized people, marshaled to support interwar demands. Appropriating the language of imperial unity, British justice and fair play, and the reciprocal obligations of military service and patriotism, colonial subjects pressed the central government to reconcile their demands with the rhetoric of empire'.⁹

⁵ For an early, but excellent, overview which also draws some comparisons with the French Empire see Rudolf von Albertini, 'The Impact of Two World Wars on the Decline of Colonialism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4:1, 1969, 17-35.

⁶ W. F. Elkins, 'A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: The Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy', *Science & Society*, 33:2, Spring 1970, 99-105. This brief, but seminal, article forms the basis of most subsequent studies of the impact of the Great War on Caribbean self-determination. In general, its chief conclusions and some minor inaccuracies have been repeated without the incorporation of new analysis or material.

⁷ Laura Tabili, *"We Ask For British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain*, Ithaca, 1994, 18-9.

⁸ See for example Philippa Levine, 'Battle Colors: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldierly in World War I', *Journal of Women's History*, 8:4, 1998, 104-130.

⁹ Tabili, 28.

What Tabili omits, however, is an explicit acknowledgement of the masculine discourse within which these aspirations were framed. Colonial servicemen, including Jamaicans, demanded but were generally denied full participation in the masculine military arena. This, in turn was intrinsically linked to two other masculine enterprises – the British Empire and the nation. This study will explore the attachment to the language of military sacrifice, or, more accurately, discourses of exclusion from this arena, which contributed to the branding of Jamaican nationalist discourse with a heavy masculinist imprint.

The contest for inclusion within the iconography of masculine sacrifice continues in the post-independence period. Over the last two years, a fund has been established to enable the construction of memorial gates at Hyde Park to commemorate the fallen from India, Africa and the Caribbean in the two world wars. Pre-war Jamaican society had been more preoccupied with race and class identities. Once black volunteers entered the military, these pre-existing identities interacted with the concerns that emerged from the gendered battlefield. Not only were differing roles demarcated for men and women in the war effort, but distinctions were drawn between different groups of men based on race, class and sexuality.

As Joane Nagel has discussed, in her over-view of masculinity and the development of the nation state, it is necessary to explain the continued attempts to exclude black men, as well as women and homosexuals from military institutions.

This unseemly, sometimes hysterical resistance ... makes more sense when it is understood that these men are not only defending tradition but are defending a particular racial, gendered and sexual conception of self: a white, male, heterosexual notion of masculine identity loaded with all the burdens and privileges that go along with hegemonic masculinity.¹⁰

That Nagel was inspired to address this issue in the context of current debates shows that the historical treatment of black personnel within the military bears a continuing legacy. The continuing discrimination experienced by black and Asian men in the British forces today may be explained, in part at least, by the historic treatment of colonial volunteers in the Great War.¹¹

While addressing the particular wartime experiences of Jamaican servicemen, this study also aims to trace a far wider significance of the presence of black soldiers in the world conflict. The experience of black Jamaicans serves as a case study from which some wider inferences may be drawn for the other West Indian territories and the Empire as a whole. To explain the undoubted discrimination suffered by black and brown Jamaican volunteers it is necessary to address developments that were taking place in metropolitan society.

Drawing on theoretical and conceptual secondary sources, Chapter One gives an overview of the construction of masculinity, particularly within the military and Imperial enterprise. The chapter will identify the lens through which the experiences

¹⁰ Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity & Nationalism: Gender & Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 21:2, 1998, 258.

¹¹ The Ministry of Defence and the Commission for Racial Equality entered into a partnership agreement in March 1998 to address the issue of poor recruitment and retention levels of black and Asian servicemen. Ethnic minority recruitment to the services remains at around 2%, compared to a 5% presence in the population as a whole. This is despite a high-profile CRE investigation into the Household Cavalry, which was seen as a bastion of racism, and which has recently conducted its own campaign to attract black recruits, including a recruitment drive on the streets of Brixton. MOD Press Release No. 264, 10.2.1999. The *Guardian*, 11.11.1998, 8, 20.7.1999, 12.

and impact of Jamaican volunteers may be interpreted. The historical specificity and fluid nature of racialised and gendered discourses will be emphasised. The post-emancipation development of gender identities within Jamaican society has received little scholarly attention, particularly in relation to the arrival of Indian indentured labour. The chapter therefore includes an overview of this aspect of Jamaican society to identify the place black Jamaican soldiers occupied within hegemonic codes of Imperial masculinity.

Re-interpreting both secondary and primary accounts, Chapter Two discusses the dual threat to the idealised model of white masculinity – racial degeneration and “male hysteria” – the metropolitan and Imperial apprehension, which informed the treatment of non-white Jamaican volunteers. It was within the context of these anxieties that pre-existing and specific discourses of race and gender were mobilised to contain the potential threat to the Imperial order posed by black masculinity.

Chapter Three analyses the response to the outbreak of war in Jamaica. Given the dearth of scholarly secondary material covering this period of Jamaican history, much of the analysis in the chapter is based on unused primary sources. These indicate that the war was presented as a spur to manful industry by the white elite that had depicted men as slothful and reluctant to engage in productive effort. While examining the attitudes of the emergent nationalist movement, the chapter will discuss the extent to which a personal affiliation to the British monarch and the promise of post-war reward encouraged support for the war effort. These factors

must be weighed against the minority strand in nationalist opinion, which regarded the war as sign of an immanent collapse of Empire and white civilisation.

Chapter Four discusses the historic deployment of black soldiers in the British army and shows how discourses of race and masculinity placed a question mark over martial capacity of black men to exclude them from front-line duties. However, it is also necessary to see these attitudes in relation to the attempts to construct a vision of Imperial unity to underpin the war effort. The ambivalent language of Imperial unity was a significant factor in persuading black Jamaicans to volunteer as they were often addressed in open-ended terms that suggested racial inclusiveness. This chapter will also discuss how official inconsistency and a mixed response to the idea of black troops, at both official and popular level, meant that routes into the military for black volunteers were never entirely closed. Furthermore, the belief held by the nascent nationalist movement that a masculine blood sacrifice would raise Jamaica's standing in the community of nations gave added impetus to non-white recruitment. Much of the source material for this chapter and the following chapter has either not appeared in academic research before, or has been subject to fresh interpretation.

Chapter Five unpicks the response of black soldiers to their inferior place within the military hierarchy. Discourses of military masculinity, which stressed the need for rationality and self-control, were deployed to exclude black soldiers from the front line. These constructs were further underpinned by the effective racialisation of white men who were deemed to fall short of the demands of military service. Despite these circumstances, it is important to uncover the extent to which images of military

valour continued to tantalise black soldiers in the pursuit of national, racial and masculine identity.

Combining secondary theoretical works and little- or unused primary sources, Chapter Six examines the historical association of black people with physical strength and sensual and emotional vitality. Contrasting these constructs with the imagery of the mentally or physically wounded British Tommy, this chapter discusses the extent to which black servicemen provided a revitalised image of masculinity. Illustrating how a preoccupation with black physicality threatened to disrupt white masculine hegemony sheds an important light on wartime and post-war racial unrest in the metropole. Chapter Six will also determine, however, the extent to which racial stereotypes served to contain and objectify black servicemen.

Chapter Seven returns to the discrimination and obstacles faced by black Jamaican volunteers to trace the development of nationalist feeling among demobilised veterans using many unexplored primary materials. The demands of the ex-servicemen and the limited programme of resettlement planned by the colonial authorities are situated in the continuing adherence of the men to discourses of masculine military sacrifice. The discussion will examine how these aspirations and calls for recognition were incorporated into the wider nationalist movement to underpin demands for citizenship rights, either within the Empire or an independent Jamaica.

Throughout, this study will show how the period of the Great War provides a window into the inter-related construction of both black and white masculine identities. Furthermore, that the war provided a masculine rhetoric and imagery that was subject to appropriation, contestation and reinterpretation, which held long-term consequences for the Imperial order.

1

Masculinity, Race & War in the British Empire: An Overview

The Great War represented a key moment in the engendering of race. Nevertheless, it is vital to see the specific discourses that emerged during the war years in regard to race and gender as part of a broader historical process. Ascribed racial characteristics and racial difference were already articulated in gendered terms within colonial and Imperial discourses to delineate departures from white masculine ideals. To set the war in this broader context, it is necessary to review scholarship that has developed an understanding of gendered racial discourses and constructs within the Empire project. An understanding of the centrality of masculinity to the Empire project is essential if the significance of the threat to white masculinity posed by the presence of black troops in the Great War is to be unravelled. Equally, it is necessary to explore the development of racialised masculine identities within Jamaican society. To what extent were they a reaction to the legacy of slavery and the plantation system and to what degree were they a reflection of the mores of these societies? Theories that explain gender and racial dynamics in the metropole and in the wider Empire may inform our understanding of the Jamaican situation. However, it is also necessary to reach an understanding of the specific gender, race and class dynamics that evolved in Jamaica under slavery and the plantation system and to place them within the broader context of the British Empire.

This chapter will also draw upon key themes from some of the most influential studies of the war from the last twenty years or so. Drawing upon and developing existing models may not only assist an understanding of the way the war experience became significant within Jamaican nationalist narratives, but will highlight the space for a thorough exploration of the engendering of race during the war within the context of the British Empire. It will also be necessary to draw upon more general studies of masculinity to inform the theoretical perspective from which to explore the experience of Jamaican volunteers of the Great War. As well as using these perspectives to analyse attitudes in the Colonial Office and the War Office it is also necessary to establish a framework in which to discuss the representation of Jamaican servicemen in relation to the constructs of white masculinity that were played out during the war years.

The Construction of Masculinity

Constructs of masculinity are underpinned by the assumption that a man is made and not merely born. Rather, a person of the male sex earns the right to take on the mantle of manhood by passing through a series of tests or rituals. David Gilmore describes masculinity 'as an artificial state, a challenge to be overcome, a prize to be won by fierce struggle'.¹ The rejection of boyhood and ties to the mother demand active entry into manhood which simultaneously marks difference from the feminine.

¹ David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*. New Haven, 1990, 17.

Manhood is often perceived to be attained through sequential rites of passage.² But, further to the stepping stones to full manhood, masculinity is always in process, a state of flux bringing in its train the constant possibility that one's ascribed masculinity may be called into question. A man who feels compelled to live up to predominant masculine attributes is duty-bound to prove his masculine qualities, signalling a continual emphasis on action and performance in contrast to ideals of feminine passivity. The process of masculinity always offers, therefore, the potential for doubt and uncertainty. However, to the outside world, a man may feel under pressure to present the qualities of stoicism and certainty. This was particularly so within the constructs of masculinity that came to characterise the Empire era. In contrast, a woman's sex is not as likely to be called into question. Instead, reputation may be more significant. A woman might be deemed not to have behaved in a way becoming of a woman.³ There are, of course, exceptions to this generalisation. Women who transgress gender-role boundaries may be derided as men or unwomanly. Slave women in the Caribbean were routinely perceived as lacking femininity in order to justify both sexual exploitation and cruel conditions in the field.⁴

The centrality of performance to masculinity and its inherent instability and fluidity underlines the need to look at the specific codes of masculinity operating at given historical moments. While male dominance has persisted, its articulation has constantly evolved to meet the needs of the institutions which uphold this condition.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.* 11-12.

To this end, masculinity is asserted as a positive quality. Within the hegemony of masculinity, its opposites are constructed as inferior. As Connell reminds us, this antagonistic relationship between masculinity and femininity is a relatively recent concept. Before the eighteenth century “woman” was regarded as a less complex and incomplete version of man, rather than his binary opposite.⁵ More significantly, as Norman Vance has shown, in the modern era, masculinity has frequently been defined in relation to attributes that fall short of full manhood. Man is not constructed solely in opposition to woman but in a relational process which also involves the articulation of power between men. Vance’s exposition also illustrates how the gendered discourses of the metropole increasingly came to reflect the concerns of Empire. Not only did they demarcate power between men at home, they justified white colonial mastery by implicitly feminising, infantilising and dehumanising colonial subjects.

“Manliness” has almost always been a good quality, the opposite of childishness and sometimes of beastliness, counter not so much to womanliness as to effeminacy. It brings with it connotations of physical and moral courage and strength and vigorous maturity. But since man is a complex and contrary being the precise qualities appropriate to a man as opposed to a child, or a beast, or an effeminate person have been much discussed. In consequence the term “manliness” trails after it a motley collection of camp-followers, additional nuances of meaning generated by context and reflecting what might seem in a given time and place to be specially appropriate to the dignity of a man. The manly man may be patriotic, generous, broad-minded, decent, chivalrous and free-spirited by turns.⁶

⁴ Janet Henshall Momsen ‘Gender Roles in Caribbean Agricultural Labour’ in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*. London, 1993, 216.

⁵ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, Cambridge, 1995, 68.

⁶ Norman Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideals of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought*, Cambridge, 1985, 8.

Joan Scott makes this more explicit – not only is gender ‘a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes’ but also ‘a primary way of signifying relationships of power’.⁷ Rulers have legitimised their hold on power through gendered discourses that characterised power and strength as masculine and weakness and otherness as feminine. At a subjective level, men may attempt to link masculine ideals to their own experiences and desires. Historically, this has given rise to a degree of hegemonic acceptance – a process in which men seek to reap the trickle-down benefits of masculine power – even where their actual performance has fallen well short of the ideal. On the other hand the discomfiture that men may have felt, either collectively or individually, at their own performance or desires in relation to dominant ideals of manhood, has led to conflicting and competing images of masculinity, most evident in the arenas of race and sexuality.⁸

Underlining the relational nature of masculine identities, Mrinalini Sinha, in her study of gender identities under the Raj, has argued that the Empire was a constant frame of reference for white masculinity. The masculinity of Empire cannot be seen merely a continuation of the post-enlightenment masculine project. Sinha places the concerns of Empire at centre stage when analysing the formation of white masculine identities. Her central theme is that masculine identities in the metropole and colonies were mutually constituted. Pre-existing masculine identities within subject societies became interwoven with both popular and anthropological Imperial misconceptions and prejudices in gendered discourses of dominator and dominated that emerged. Sinha argues for what she describes as a “global social analytic” of the

⁷ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York, 1988, 42.

fluid, historically specific, interactive dynamics between the demands of Empire and social concerns at home at the point where race, class, gender and sexuality intersect.⁹

Masculinity and Empire.

i) The Body

It is paramount to underline the historical specificity of masculine identities and to see masculinity as an articulation of power, rather than an expression of essential biological character. However, the centrality of performance within masculine identities means that it is also necessary to recognise that the body remains intrinsically linked to masculine ideals, even when these appear to shift towards mental capacity and temperament. This is particularly so in the context of this study. The military body became the territory on which the desires and ideals of nation and Empire were mapped out. It symbolised the capacity of these joint enterprises to maintain power, chiefly in relation to the bodies which it had labelled “inferior” and which it wished to continue to subordinate.

Disciplining the natural body became a metaphor for the mastery of the subject races. The concerns which were focussed around it were a barometer of Imperial self-confidence. As Connell points out ‘[t]he constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be

⁸ Michael Roper and John Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, London, 1991, 9-10, 13, 15.

⁹ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester, 1995, 1-2, 8-11.

sustained'.¹⁰ This is perhaps no more so than in the context of war where ideals of masculinity and the male body undertake the ultimate test. Ideals of masculinity may be undermined as the wayward body develops a separate trajectory that falls short of the ideal. This tendency of the body to intervene into gendered discourses shows that the corporeal body still has significance that cannot be reduced to mere ciphers or emblems. Equally, the body is vulnerable to historical processes, rather than determining them, thereby exposing the flaws of essentialism and biological determinism. At this point, dominant ideals of masculinity are potentially open to reassertion, redefinition or rejection.¹¹ Imperial confidence was dented by events such as the Indian Mutiny, Crimean War, Morant Bay Rebellion and later the Boer War. Fears were expressed for the future of the Empire, the fitness of the English to govern and to field an army. Each of these events heralded concerns about the physical ability of the British to contain the subject races which in turn dictated more physical and authoritarian models of masculinity.

Sport became the medium in which the body was trained, not only to meet the rigours of Empire, but also to serve as a symbolic justification of British rule. Through sport, it was believed, the fine-honing, conditioning and stamina of the male body could be most successfully achieved. In turn, this would lead improved faculties of self-restraint, skill and team-spirit. Athleticism and the team approach, a culture which dominated the public schools from the 1860s, replaced individuality with conformity, placing the individual at the disposal of the Empire. In this anti-

¹⁰ Connell, 54.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 54-5, 61, 64, 71-2.

intellectual climate, doggedness and an ability to stay the course were deemed more important than individual thought.

Paradoxically, within the ideals of sporting masculinity, it was expected that certain apparently male urges, such as the submission to sexual impulse, be channelled to the greater good through discipline and self-control. In some ways this diverged with contemporary scientific concepts of natural selection and its earlier variants, such as “the great chain of being”, that were frequently enlisted to justify white colonial and Imperial domination. The legitimacy of white rule rested not only on claims of *biological* superiority but on the alleged superior *character* of the white male which purportedly enabled him to control natural impulses and engage in more industrious and uplifting activity. In other words, constructs of predominant white masculinity in the age of Empire required the merging of constructs of rational and biological preordination.¹²

ii) Empire & Domesticity

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the demands for manpower to service the military and Imperial administration reached a peak. The masculine codes of Empire evolved to demand that a man reject not only ties to the mother but all association with metropolitan domesticity and to establish an active and independent role in the service of the Empire. This process was assisted by changes in gender dynamics in the metropole. Disillusionment with family life and limited disruption to the patriarchal order of family life combined with the demands of Imperialism to bring

about what has been termed “the flight from domesticity” – the seeking of a less-restricted lifestyle in the far-flung corners of the Empire. The increasing favour of scientific explanation and tendency to look for parallels in the natural world placed woman the nurturer at the centre of domestic life. To some extent this displaced the traditional authority of the *pater familias* which was simultaneously undermined by increasing emphasis on child welfare. The cult of domesticity that emerged placed pressure on men to look further afield to establish their status. Increasingly, men were relieved of domestic chores and child-raising whereas previously they had enjoyed a closer involvement with these spheres of family life.

Male authority on the domestic front was further undermined from the 1880s by the emergence of the “New Woman”. The New Woman cut a more independent figure, broke social conventions and moved, particularly among the middle-classes, into male spheres of employment, rejecting the purely domestic obligations that had been the lot of the previous generation. Women became less dependent on men for their status and financial support, a situation reflected to some extent in legislative changes such as the Married Women’s Property Acts.¹³ This period also witnessed, to some extent, the undermining of sexual double-standards and constraints upon what was deemed a predatory and untamed male sexuality. Feminist and moral campaigns resulted in the restriction of brothels and outlawed child prostitution. Social purity movements were concerned that the sexual energies of both sexes be channelled into what were believed to be more constructive and profitable pursuits.

¹² Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire*, London, 1997, 13-20.

¹³ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, New Haven, 1999, 149-151, 160.

Attempts were made to steer men away from the homosocial environment of the club and pub back into the domestic sphere where they would once more come under the improving influence of women, a movement aimed primarily at the respectable working-classes and upward.¹⁴

As women's aspirations tested the rigid boundaries of the private and public realms, many men were beginning to see marriage as constraining and inhibiting with its reduced scope for patriarchal status. Among the middle and upper classes, women's limited power over domestic rituals – high-tea and polite conversation in the drawing room – was deemed unmanly. In contrast to these uncertainties at home the Empire provided positive attractions. Whereas previously bachelorhood brought one's masculinity into question, the Empire was now epitomised by the independent, resourceful male free from the constraints of domesticity. Sacrifice and devotion to duty replaced domesticity as the major tie. The Empire, now expanding rapidly, was no longer the escape-valve for the less conventional, but provided an alternative to the cosy and less adventurous domestic world. In other words, there was a considerable tension between the demands of Empire and the metropolitan concern in the latter nineteenth century to curtail men's apparent excesses. Equally, service overseas was also an opportunity to make good for those who lacked financial backing or family connections. While heroic, unattached figures such as Kitchener and Baden Powell remained clearly in the minority, Tosh points out that many men aspired to this state of affairs by immersing themselves in the adventure fiction of the

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 156.

era, even if rather ironically this had the effect of tying them closer to their hearth-sides.¹⁵

iii) The Frontiers of Empire

The relationship between constructs of masculinity in the Empire and at home are increasingly apparent by the last decades of the nineteenth century. While ideals of white masculinity may have been symbolic in terms of Empire rule, they also reflected anxieties closer to home. Not only were these anxieties centred around providing enough fit Englishmen to police and administer the Empire, but there was increasing concern around what can be regarded as England's internal frontiers – the threat posed to good order and the racial stock by the inhabitants of the urban slums. Indeed, rural England almost became the new frontier for the testing of manhood as much as any outpost of the Empire. Joseph Bristow has discussed these concerns in relation to boys literature of the period. He shows that boys and young men, particularly from the working classes, were targeted by charitable and welfare bodies and organisations such as the Boy Scouts for physical and moral improvement. This reflected the eugenicist view that an extended and well-organised childhood would ensure the raising of the race from that of base brutality. From the 1870s, camps in the countryside had been a central feature of organisations such as Barnado's as an antidote to poor urban conditions and sinister influences. There were also media campaigns to finance the sending of urban children to rural retreats.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 172-6

The Boy Scout movement highlighted the preoccupation with moral and physical improvement. Patriotism could be rekindled through the re-discovery of wild and rural parts of England as well as the more practical purpose of injecting vigour into the race. Backwoodsmanship and an ability to deal with the raw environment marked out the scout as a youth who could not only survive the elements but who would be of service to the Empire, particularly in the policing of the subject races. His engagement in constant useful work would serve as a reminder of racial superiority. The scout movement served as a bolster to national confidence and attempted to overcome anxieties about the future of Empire and English masculinity.¹⁶

The Frontier marked out a central contradiction of the ideals of Empire masculinity. The demands of Empire created a masculinity characterised by industry, stoicism and denial of the self. Men were expected to distance themselves from the feminised domestic setting and expression of feelings. In the long run this created a climate in which men were taught to fear women and emotional attachment, a situation which was compounded by the changes in metropolitan gender relations. For some men, fear of women's changing status and the fear of long-term commitment to a domestic setting, where they commanded less authority, created a desire to escape. The frontier of India and Africa provided the route, where racial hierarchy more-or-less guaranteed superior status in contrast to the uncertainties at home.

As Ronald Hyam has shown, the frontiers of Empire, provided not only the testing ground for white masculinity, but simultaneously released men from some of the

¹⁶ Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, London, 1991, 172-183.

pressures of Victorian society. Race and gender discourses constructed colonial subjects, both male and female, as at once threatening and alluring. A focus for projected fantasy, free of course, of the protective mantle of chivalric distance with which “respectable” Victorian women were treated; ripe therefore as the object of real or imagined sexual adventure.¹⁷ Hyam’s analysis provides only a partial picture. The internal frontiers of Empire – the forbidden quarters of the metropolitan slums – also provided an outlet for the middle and upper-class Victorian men to throw off the wrappings of “respectability”. Hyam caricatures male sexuality as an uncontrollable urge and makes no allowance for the agency of colonial subjects, both men and women, in their relationships with white administrators and military men. Furthermore, the pressures of devotion to duty, even in the more remote regions of Empire, allowed less opportunity for sexual gratification than Hyam suggests. Bachelordom and sexual and emotional detachment were as likely to be the lot of the colonial adventurer.¹⁸

While aware of the exploitative nature of many of the sexual encounters and the sexualised constructs of Empire, both at home and abroad, we must also acknowledge that the hypocrisy of the late-Victorian Empire indicated a deep dissatisfaction with white masculine ideals. Potentially, even though the subjects of Empire tended to become a focus of white sexual anxiety and double-standard, there was also the potential for some white men to see colonial masculinities as more attractive. This would become evident in some portrayals of black Jamaican soldiers in the Great War. The nuances of the Imperial project opened the possibility that

¹⁷ Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience*, Manchester, 1990, 1-2. 127-33.

some subject races could be portrayed as possessing manly characteristics that may be admired, or even aspired to, by their white rulers. Members of the so-called “martial races” – Sikhs or Pathans for example – were admired for their military traditions, which could then be deployed in the service of the Raj. Elements of subject masculinity could even be used to inject fresh vigour into the Imperial project.¹⁹

Masculinity and War.

The outbreak of war provided an alternative focus for the frontier mentality. As Michael Adams has shown, the war, at least in its early stages was seen as an attractive alternative to “civic claustrophobia” – the encumbrances of the industrial age – work and domesticity, fear of marriage and a stultifying mundane existence. The war was seen as an opportunity for a more tangible experience, a sense of common purpose and a break with the constraints of modern materialism, reflected in the pastoral preoccupations of the early war poets.²⁰

The Western Front, which provides the lasting image of the Great War, was the sphere of combat experienced by the majority of British troops. Both sides rapidly became locked in a static deadlock, characterised by trenches, barbed wire entanglements, machine guns and heavy artillery, which Eric Leed has argued

¹⁸ Tosh, 173-6.

¹⁹ See in this context C. J. W-L Wee ‘Christian Manliness and National Identity: The Problematic Construction of a Racially Pure Nation’ in Donald E. Hall (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge, 1994.

²⁰ Michael C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War 1*, Bloomington, 1990, 73-5; Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War 1*, Cambridge, 1979, 35-6.

represented the apotheosis of technology and eventually came to symbolise the alienation and loss of direction of the modern age. The body stood as a central symbol of industrialisation and progress. Throughout the nineteenth century within metropolitan belief systems biology began to displace religion as the predominant explanation of gender roles, and so the condition of masculinity was presented as a consequence of the primeval state. The body came to be constructed as a machine that acted to preserve man's preordained dominance, leading in turn to the desire to drill or fine-tune the body to this end. The body became the focus and object of collective and individual discipline. This partly reflected the demands of industrial society through the regulation of waking, sleeping and physical effort. The Great War represented the full realisation of this process. The machine as external object – gun and tank – was a reflection of the soldier's own internal self-regulation, or machine-like behaviour; his discipline, self-control and, paradoxically, his subordination.²¹ But while the body-as-machine represented rationality and industry, its shortcomings potentially raised questions about the state of Empire masculinity. Prior to the war, the process of collective self-doubt was already in train – middle and upper-class men were finding it impossible to live up to the ideals of the period as evident in the attempts to escape into the fictions or frontiers of Empire. But the war itself would place a significant question-mark over the ideals of white masculinity.

In its early stages, the war could be depicted as an extension of the Empire spirit, an escape from humdrum urban life and a spur to manhood. As it dragged on, the war

²¹ Connell, 45-50, 54, 63; Leed, 55-6, 61-3, 121-2, 150-1.

began to contradict the white masculine values of rationality, progress and civilisation that were also central to the Empire project. Fussell speaks of the irony of war – the cruel joke that was played on English society. Many people had come to believe in the onward march of progress and sensed that European society had reached a point of near-perfection. This was to become a central genre in the literature and popular discourses that emerged from the war era.²² War represented a discontinuity with the certainties of the past. Even today, historians of the Great War have struggled to construct ‘an understandable continuity with earlier British history and to imply that the war makes sense in a traditional way’.²³ We are drawn to focus on particular battles, which in reality were part of a continuous stalemate, in some vain attempt to link them with the glorious battles of Empire, rather than the sorry debacles which they have in reality become in the popular imagination.

The chaos and uncertainty which threatened to disrupt the old order also symbolised the complete emergence of the modern world.²⁴ As Fussell has shown there was a craving for a more certain era. The war poets mourned an imagined lost pastoral paradise, a view encouraged by the unusually warm summer of 1914. As Fussell puts it, ‘Out of the world of summer, 1914, marched a unique generation. It believed in Progress and Art and in no way doubted the benignity even of technology. The word *machine* was not yet invariably coupled with the word *gun*’.²⁵

²² Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford, 1977, 8.

²³ *ibid.*, 9.

²⁴ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: the Experience of Modernity*, London, 1983, 15.

²⁵ Fussell, 24.

The strength of this perception of the war is evident in some of the most recent general studies. Rekindling the memory of the “Lost Generation”, John Keegan is scathing of demographers who have argued that the losses of the Great War were swiftly made good and that for most people ‘the war was but a passage in their lives, an interruption of normality to which society rapidly returned as soon as the guns fell silent’.²⁶ Keegan believes that the war was ‘a tragic and unnecessary conflict ... [which] damaged civilisation, the rational and liberal civilisation of the European enlightenment, permanently for the worse and through the damage done, world civilisation also’.²⁷ Keegan’s stance is conditioned by a nostalgia for a more stable world, free of totalitarianism and socialism whose rise he traces to the after-effects of the war. The conservative historian can still look to the pre-war period as a time when one knew what it meant to be British and to be a man and the threatening images of black and rival masculinities appeared more confinable.

In the collective mentality, the pre-war period still persists as a golden age of certainty. Gender roles are seen as more clearly defined and heroic images of masculinity remained intact. More importantly, the British Empire appeared unassailable and confident, a situation that started to be undermined by the war with the rise of nationalist movements throughout the Empire.²⁸ It must be emphasised that such feelings are evoked by the nostalgia for an imagined past. Neither gender relations nor the permanence of Empire were looked upon without anxiety in the pre-war era. To this must be added metropolitan concerns such as the emergence of New

²⁶ John Keegan, *The First World War*, London, 1998, 7.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 3, 8.

²⁸ See also Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, London, 1998, 21-3, 26, 30 for similar views on the commonality of European culture, the break-up of Empire and the rise of Communism.

Unionism and anxieties relating to homosexuality that were prevalent by the late nineteenth century.

The tendency to see the Great War as a major departure – a descent into barbarism, contamination and chaos – has led to a focus on what was dramatically different about the war, its alienation from normal experience. While it is important to recognise these disruptions and discontinuities, particularly in constructs of masculinity and discourses of Empire and race, it is also necessary to see this within the broader historical pattern of constantly renegotiated gender and racial hierarchies. The experiences of the war intensified, rather than initiated, gender and racial categories already in process. While the war made demands on men unequalled in civilian life, for example, in many ways this served to bring into sharper focus pre-existing shortcomings and contradictions within white masculine standards. As Susan Grayzel has concluded in her study of the role of women in wartime, there were considerable continuities in debates around motherhood and sexuality from the pre-war years. '[T]he war did not shatter gender relations and identities in such ways that they needed to be reconstructed in the postwar period. Rather, such "reconstruction" was a constant and ongoing process from the first day of the war'.²⁹

The military undertaking of the First World War combined the masculine characteristics of rationality and industry to develop bureaucratic military organisation and advance in technological destruction. But while Empire masculinity

²⁹ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain & France During the First World War*, Chapel Hill, 1999, 244.

betrayed a certain internal ambivalence, the contradictions of the masculine ideal became most evident during the war. Most obviously, the extreme violence that was a necessary part of military masculinity was clearly at odds with the more liberal elements of English masculine rationality. Liberal Britain, despite the commitment of Empire, was hostile to the idea of a large standing army filled by conscripts or to the extension of quasi-military training in organisations such as the Boy Scouts. Furthermore, masculine rationality and violence threatened to combine and undermine the ideals of manliness of which they were an integral part. The soldier was forever in danger of losing all notion of civilised behaviour or of cracking up under the strain of constant physical threat. The rationalised military bureaucracy tended to remove all notion of the individual and to cause the soldier to lose his sense of masculine autonomy.

In these circumstances, as Connell has pointed out, the military resort to very strict codes of masculinity to keep in place what he terms 'the fragile cohesion of modern armed forces'.³⁰ Domestic ties were replaced with those to the institution in order to break with the feminising influence of the mother. But here again the demands of military life could run dangerously close to contradicting masculine ideals. Men were required to undertake domestic tasks for themselves that in civilian life might have been the role of women. Armies needed to establish bonds between men to cultivate esprit de corps – the backbone of morale and discipline. But these bonds needed to be strictly policed to ensure that they did not develop beyond acceptable

³⁰ Connell, 73.

boundaries. There was always the danger that soldiers would seek the comfort of other men in place of the bonds of family and partner that had been left behind.³¹

As Christopher Gittings has shown, military masculinity also departs from one of the central tenets of masculinity in civil life – that a man is made through a series of tests. In the military disciplinary culture of “Break ‘em, make ‘em”, not only is manhood a test to be undergone, it is a process in which something is destroyed. Military discipline attempts to obliterate the “feminine” qualities of compassion and emotion to a level unthinkable in civil life. Soldiers who have not passed the test of military manhood are frequently referred to as girls – a practice already present to a lesser extent in sporting culture.³² The military demanded many qualities already present in the masculine ideals of civilian life, such as stoicism and self-control. The process of breaking men in to mould them to the needs of military, however, represented a qualitative difference with norms of civilian life. As Eric Leed has shown, the soldier was in a paradoxical position. To function efficiently he had to transcend the norms of the group, throwing away some of the standards of society in order to “defend” it. Society in general is actually fearful of the soldier, although it may extol the masculine values associated with soldiering. Thus the soldier may become marginalised finding himself in “No man's land” on his return to civilian life also.³³

³¹ Rutherford, 15; Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, London, 1996, 133-137.

³² Christopher Gittings, ‘Introduction’ Christopher E. Gittings (ed.), *Imperialism and Gender: Constructions of Masculinity*, Hebden Bridge, 1996, 4.

³³ Leed, 13-5.

Processes of masculinity within the military differ qualitatively from civilian modes. However, the battlefield was still held up as the ultimate test of the essential masculine qualities of strength, courage, stamina, stoicism and self-control for all men which prevail in civil life also. Scholars such as Showalter and Gilbert have focused on the potential threat to masculinity posed by the experience of the First World War as men found themselves more unable than ever to live up to the masculine demands made upon them and were emasculated by the conditions of trench warfare and military bureaucracy.³⁴ In contrast other studies have suggested that far from marking the end of the masculine enlightenment project, the experience of the First World War in some ways represented its pinnacle; the opportunity for men to experience acute self-realisation and awareness. Niall Ferguson asks the central question – why did soldiers carry on fighting? He argues mutiny and desertion was relatively rare and were usually a response to poor rations, ill-treatment or transfer, rather than a point-blank refusal to engage in orchestrated violence. He stresses that loyalty to one's unit and comrades, which fell within the masculine ideal of *esprit de corps* was significant in persuading soldiers to stay and fight. Ultimately, however, he resorts to a masculine essentialism declaring that the Great War was the ultimate and unique test of manhood. Men underwent an experience in which the preoccupation with killing and the possibility of one's own death transcended all others. This he contends was also true of the few women who gained front-line experience. Paraphrasing Martin van Creveld, Ferguson continues: "War alone presents man with the opportunity of employing all his faculties, putting everything at risk, and testing his ultimate worth against an opponent as strong as

³⁴ Sandra M. Gilbert 'Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women and the Great War' in M. R.

himself”.³⁵ According to this theory, on the battlefield men start to blot out all considerations other than survival – the thought of killing before being killed. The acute sensory tuning demanded and caused by battlefield conditions gave the soldier a unique sense of self and realised many key masculine impulses – “clarity, energy and freedom”.³⁶

The Citizen Volunteer & Nationhood

These values are often embodied in the characters that occupy the heroic epic narratives that formed the mythology of the British Empire. “Tradition” can be seen as the process in which the narratives of the nation’s “great men” come to be accepted as true, laying the foundations for allegiance and service to the state and nation.³⁷ But while the deeds of “great men” were privileged, the promise of immortality also had to be held out to the lesser man to persuade him that his obligation to serve the nation – the duty of male citizenship – would be rewarded. George Mosse has traced the ideal of the volunteer soldier-citizen to the French Revolution. Volunteers were linked with the identity and interests of the nation, as opposed to being a servant of the state. Literary output glossed over the reality of war and embellished the myth of the soldier-hero within the national iconography.

Soldiering had previously been regarded as a dishonourable profession which recruited mercenaries, the rural and urban poor and criminals. The stereotypical

Higonnet & Jane Jenson (eds.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and Two World Wars*, New Haven, 1987.

³⁵ Ferguson, 360.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 361. Joanna Bourke has argued that killing and violence, as well as being central to military masculinity, were actually enjoyed by men on the front-line (Joanne Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare*, London, 1999).

citizen-volunteer, however, was an educated and respectable idealist, who fought and died defending not only national integrity, but national ideals. The discourses of the national volunteer movements in Europe linked military authority with the pursuit of freedom and, furthermore, military manliness was presented as removing the shackles of civil life from the free-born, independent male. The tradition crossed the English Channel after the involvement of Byron and other English volunteers in the Greek War of Independence. Although Byron, like Rupert Brooke nearly a hundred years later, died of disease, rather than in the throes of battle, he was subsequently immortalised both as a fallen hero and within the national canon; death served to sanctify the volunteer. In the process, the masculine self-sacrifice of the volunteer came to be associated not only with the nation but with a noble cause.³⁷ By contrast, conscripts, who in the case of the British Army came to comprise over half of the five million enlisted, suffered a degree of stigma and invisibility.³⁸ Volunteering was a public gesture of active masculinity and commitment to the national project, whereas '[t]he conscript was the passive subject of a bureaucratic hand'.⁴⁰

When the subject races of Empire came forward as volunteers in the Great War, in many cases they were aspiring to the model of the citizen volunteer, hopeful that wartime sacrifice would confer improved standing. Martial narratives linking male sacrifice to citizenship and national interests and ideals are not unique to European societies. As Mimi Sheller has shown in the case of Haiti, martial roles and

³⁷ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, London, 1994, 1, 11-2, 13-5.

³⁸ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford, 1990, 15-32.

³⁹ Ilana R. Bet-El, 'Men & Soldiers: British Conscripts, Concepts of Masculinity, & the Great War' in Billie Melman (ed.), *Borderlines: Genders & Identities in War & Peace, 1870-1930*, London, 1998, 74.

narratives arose out of a need to protect the integrity of the newly-independent state and to ensure the 'elevation of the black man out of the depths of slavery into his rightful place as father, leader, and protector of his people'.⁴¹ Ultimately however,

the republican veneration of arms-bearing males in a brotherhood of manly civic duty – along with a devaluation of women's work and social contributions – helped to create an authoritarian and statist political system that privileged military elites and significantly undermined the radical democratic premises of the Haitian Revolution.⁴²

Not only did the revolution draw on the tradition of male armsbearing citizen form the American and French Revolutions but Haitian nationalist discourse could also draw on the Africa-orientated warrior figures of Boukman and Makandal.⁴³

Marilyn Lake has argued that the soldier-citizen achieved symbolic procreative power through his sacrifice for the nation. In her study of Australian national identity, Lake shows how military sacrifice as part of the Empire war effort may be appropriated within the narrative of an aspirant nation. Women were called upon to sacrifice their sons to the war

but their collective death would bring forth immortal life, the birth of a nation. Though women might breed a population, giving birth to babies, only men, it seemed, could give birth to the political entity, the imperishable community, of the nation. In determining the meaning of men's deeds, women's procreative capacities were at once appropriated and denied. Men's deeds – their Landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 – were rendered simultaneously sacred and seminal. "A nation was born on that day of death".⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 76.

⁴¹ Mimi Sheller, 'Sword-Bearing Citizens: Militarism and Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Haiti, *Plantation Societies in the Americas*, 4:2/3, 1997, 241.

⁴² *ibid.*, 234.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 242.

⁴⁴ Marilyn Lake, 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation - Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts', *Gender & History*, 43, 1992, 305-322, 306.

The privileging of male military sacrifice reflects the gendered constitution of the nation. While the essence of a nation may be symbolised as a woman, particularly in its subject state, but as the active forger of its own identity and history, the national is almost always male.⁴⁵

In the Australian case, the title “ex-serviceman” carried with it a high level of prestige. Employment, housing, land and welfare benefits were targeted at the returning veterans as the benefits of citizenship were linked directly to the military legacy, despite the outwardly civil nature of Australian society. Australians had not been the only participants in the Gallipoli landings and the landings had ended in ignominious defeat. But as Lake shows it was not the outcome that was significant but that ‘southern manhood was put to a supreme test and did not fail. [Australia] had leapt from the cradle of her nationhood into the front rank of the bravest of the brave’.⁴⁶

National movements in the colonies continued to accept and articulate their demands and aspirations through established meaning. Laura Tabili has argued, that while British Imperialism deployed the martial race model to meet the demands of the war effort, black and Indian servicemen manipulated British notions of justice to support claims for post-war rewards.⁴⁷ There was clearly the potential for the early Jamaican nationalist movement to appropriate discourses of armsbearing to lay claim to citizenship and nationhood. There was certainly an acceptance of these values in

⁴⁵ Anne McClintock, “‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Nationalism, Gender, and Race’ in Geoff Eley & Ronald Grigor Suny, *Becoming National: A Reader*, New York, 1996, 261, 263.

⁴⁶ Lake, 307.

⁴⁷ Tabili, 19, 28.

black Jamaicans who came forward as volunteers to defend the British Empire. But, as a sense of Jamaican national identity began to emerge, it was the ex-servicemen's exclusion from both the material and symbolic rewards of military manhood that became a key issue in nationalist agitation; the *non-commemoration* of male sacrifice that became a significant component of the nationalist narrative. In the Australian case due to the presence of shared cultural links with the coloniser, masculinity became the territory in which not only to claim the rewards of military sacrifice, but to assert national sovereignty. In nationalist narratives the Australian male citizen came to be personified by the Bushman – a vigorously independent, super-masculine figure.⁴⁸ While masculine identity and sacrifice were still significant in Jamaican nationalist discourse, race interacted with gender, and interceded to deny black troops the citizenship rights that may otherwise have been granted to them.

Lesser forms of sacrifice were not disregarded within heroic narratives or by the popular imagination. The wounded or dismembered soldier became a cult figure in Britain in the early years of the war until displaced by public boredom and revulsion. Attitudes to dismemberment also show that the physical scars of war were not always regarded as emasculating. Unlike mental impairment, the loss of a limb was seen as proof of manhood and valour. Women rushed to marry or care for disabled soldiers – from the eugenicists point of view the wounded hero was still usually of sound breeding stock – and men were shamed into enlisting. Whereas, the disabled civilian had been portrayed as a passive, weakened, feminised individual, the wounded soldier could still be portrayed as possessing a manly character, having

⁴⁸ Lake, 312-3.

proved himself in the fray. The position of those injured or deformed in civilian life worsened in the war as attention focused on the disabled veteran. The congenitally deformed were turned out of homes to make way for wounded soldiers. Despite the temporary kudos that could accrue to the wounded veteran, however, many men greatly feared disfiguration, a source of anxiety and neurosis.⁴⁹

Masculinity, Race and War.

If war provided such a testing moment for individual men within discourses of masculinity and Empire, then it also provided a test for the nation itself. In the Great War, Britain was faced with the challenge not only to defeat the foreign foe but to justify the claims to racial and masculine superiority with which it had endeavoured to keep the subject races of Empire in check. The task was to maintain a delicate balance by ensuring that the support of the colonies was enlisted without indicating that colonial subjects would assume equality within the Empire. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Britain had been increasingly anxious about its ability to maintain an army composed of sufficiently fit young men to maintain its position as a leading global power. These doubts were first raised at the time of the Crimean War. By the time of the Boer War, 1899-1902 they reached fever pitch as volunteer recruits were rejected at the rate of sixty per cent in key industrial areas. The major concern was that the urban expansion of Britain, in which the towns were being populated at the expense of the countryside was leading to the degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon race. Where once the army had relied on sturdy rural lads for the majority of its recruits, it was increasingly being offered the narrow-chested and flat-footed offspring of the urban slums. While these anxieties have received much

⁴⁹ Bourke, *Dismembering*, 49-60, 73-5.

academic attention, what remains to be addressed is the degree to which the non-white races could provide an alternative and more positive paradigm of masculinity.

This is particularly significant for as Harding has shown, in his study of the portrayal of native Americans, racialised constructs of the “Primitive races” could mean that non-whites could become a focus of white desire. Harding argues that constructs of “primitive” masculinity often charted the rise to hero status through a series of “bloody deeds”. Honour accrues to those who were able to kill their enemies. They were stereotyped as hunters, warriors and “magnificent men on constant parade”. The “savage” male was perceived as unencumbered by the worldly cares of European civilisation, such as banks and taxes and to this list we could add the threat of racial degeneration and effeminacy posed by urbanisation and “soft” modern living. Harding goes on to suggest that through artistic representation, literary or visual the white viewer ‘can both preserve his white man’s feeling of superiority *and* project his own suppressed (or repressed) conception of manhood onto “the savage”’.⁵⁰

As Kobena Mercer has shown the subject of a visual image can be reduced to a beautiful object – ‘the aesthetic ideal’.⁵¹ The relationship between the passive object and active subject (the looker) represents a power relationship, ‘the fact that both subject and object of the look are male sets up a tension between “active” and “passive” and this *frisson* of (homo)sexual sameness transfers erotic investment in

⁵⁰ Brian Harding, ‘White Medicine; Red Manhood: George Catlin’s North American Indians’ in Gittings (ed.), 27-29.

⁵¹ Kobena Mercer & Isaac Julien ‘Race, Sexual Politics and Black Masculinity: A Dossier’ in Chapman & Rutherford, 144.

the power of the look, the desire to master the other, to the site of racial difference ... the masculinity of male subjects might be undermined when they are the objects of the gaze, to-be-looked-at by others'.⁵² Nevertheless, the non-white male could be everything the white man had to struggle to be. Whereas Victorian ideals of rational masculinity had cast the allegedly unrestrained black male in a feminine light, the stifling reality of masculine containment that would perhaps reach its peak in the war could itself be felt as feminising. Furthermore, the idealised representation of non-whites as more "natural" and uncomplicated – a recurring theme in the racial discourses of Empire⁵³ – further increased the potential attractiveness and even superiority of non-whites in the apparent chaos and disorder of the war. Through their involvement in the Great War black men could threaten to break from the fixity of the visual and literary representations in which they were normally contained within the Imperial gaze. Despite their numerical insignificance in the field and as supply troops black Jamaican soldiers would carry an enormous symbolic burden – the focus of displaced anxiety about the future of white masculinity.

Masculinity and Jamaican Society.

War was the primary testing ground of masculine ideals. The experience of the Great War, in turn, reflected and perhaps laid bare the regulation of the body demanded by industrial capital and Imperial masculinity. If this was so in the case of the metropole, then in the case of Jamaica, where the figure of the independent male was defined by the hard physical toil undertaken on the post-emancipation plantation, the centrality of the body to masculinity was equally significant. For all male manual

⁵² *ibid.*

workers, physical labour is a means of survival and a lever to assert superiority over women, through the demarcation of heavy work as male. The male body may be regarded as an economic asset, but one which was devalued with the passage of time. Each man's claim to masculinity hung on a knife-edge, vulnerable to the whims of the labour market and to the inevitability of physical decay.⁵⁴ The images of black Jamaican masculinity that emerged from slavery and the post-emancipation peasant and plantation economies are a case in point.

Plantation monoculture and peasant agriculture formed the mainstay of the Jamaican economy. Black men became increasingly associated with the gruelling labour of the plantation or peasant smallholding, the latter in itself a significant symbol of independent masculinity in the Jamaican context. This was in contrast to the pre-emancipation years where slave women increasingly came to form a significant proportion of field labour.⁵⁵ From the perspective of dominant white ideals of masculinity, black Jamaicans were seen as reliant on brawn rather than brain. A significant minority of black, brown and light-skinned Jamaicans, however, carved out niches as skilled artisans, landowners, teachers and public servants. In the process they laid claim to the rational components of masculinity that were regarded as the preserve of white men. While it is possible to speak in broad terms of black and white masculinities, it is also important to be aware that a whole spectrum of masculine identities were possible linked to the interaction of race and class.

⁵³ George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, Wisconsin, 1985, 33.

⁵⁴ Connell, 64.

⁵⁵ On the role of slave women on the plantation see Lucille Mathurin-Mair, 'Women Field Workers in Jamaica During Slavery' in Shobhita Jain & Rhoda Reddock, *Women Plantation Workers: International Experiences*, Oxford, 1998.

Within Jamaican society, masculine male identities were partly framed by the demands of the plantation and the stifling of peasant initiative by the colonial authorities. Images of black masculinity was forged in relation to the struggle the black peasant communities and the emerging black plantation working-class waged against the white ruling class. But there was also a degree of hegemonic acceptance of dominant codes of masculinity. This may have been greatest among the brown and light-skinned men who had achieved some social, economic and occupational status. However, the majority black male population, if they were unable to overthrow the plantation regime, could still hold key advantages over black women if they were receptive to certain white gender values, particularly in the realm of work.

In the post emancipation period a masculinisation of the workforce took place in Jamaica. Women, who during slavery had come to predominate field labour, returned to the domestic sphere, whereas black men came to command the wage labour that was available on the plantation and the heavier tasks in the peasant communities. This shift in gender roles is encompassed in the term “family strategies” favoured by scholars such as Brereton.⁵⁶ While women’s domestic labour included work on the family plot or smallholding and a role in marketing surplus produce, the term family strategy masks the inherent hierarchical nature of the return to domesticity. Indeed, Brereton concedes that the withdrawal of women from estate labour, after

⁵⁶ Bridget Brereton, ‘Family Strategies, Gender and the Shift to Wage Labour in the British Caribbean, in Bridget Brereton & Kevin A. Yelvington, *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition: Essays on Postemancipation Social & Cultural History*, Mona, 1999, 99

emancipation in 1838, was most noticeable where Baptist influence enforced a hegemonic acceptance of the male authority, particularly in the family.⁵⁷

In black communities it became taboo for women to undertake certain heavy tasks, even where they owned their own plots. Men negotiated advantageous deals in which they undertook to do heavy work for otherwise independent women, thereby legitimising female enterprise.⁵⁸ Black masculinity became increasingly preoccupied with physical prowess allowing men to dominate the better-paid heavy labour on the plantations. Although this in part reflected the desire of women to disassociate themselves from the slave labour of the past, in Sidney Mintz's words, black males were able to 'define themselves *economically* as men'.⁵⁹ This interpretation, by assuming that identity is asserted primarily on the basis of individual autonomy and economic independence, reflects a belief in the hegemonic effect of white masculine identities and excludes alternative black collective identities. However, it does point to the possibility that, for men, visibility in both the peasant and plantation economies was powerful proof of personhood with the memory of slavery still intact. Whereas under slavery it could be argued that a male slave was emasculated in that his body tended to be his master's rather than his own asset, in the post-emancipation period it was possible to derive greater, but not total, control from one's economic output. The monopolisation of heavy plantation labour and also skilled trades (the latter a legacy of slavery) gave men potential advantages in the acquisition of land and in wielding authority in the domestic environment.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 102-5.

⁵⁸ Erna Brodber, 'Afro-Jamaican Women at the Turn of the Century', *Social and Economic Studies*, 35, 1986, *passim*.

⁵⁹ Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, New York, 1989, 155 (emphasis in original)

The redefined masculinity of black men did not mean that women were totally marginalised in the economy or retreated to the private sphere. As Gad Heuman has shown, women were often in the forefront of political protests such as the Morant Bay Rebellion. However, it seems that rather than taking leadership positions, women tended to encourage their menfolk to more bold activity. In other words, black women expected their menfolk to behave like men.⁶⁰

What emerged from the post-emancipation period was what may be described as an over-masculinised image of the black man, which held sway, not only in the minds of the plantocracy, but increasingly within black communities themselves. As Lord Olivier reported to the Sanderson Commission, the black labourer ‘will do digging, forking and trenching – heavy work which requires *physical strength and skill*; but he is averse to what he regards as *old slave labour*, or as *women’s labour*; he is averse to the hoeing of grass, clearing and trashing of canes and so on’.⁶¹ Black men were insolubly linked to hard physical, rural labour, bringing with it images of highly developed musculature at a time when in the metropole increasing attention was being paid to the perceived degeneration of the white race linked to rampant urbanisation. Such images would serve to reawaken anxieties around the sexual rapacity of the African male that had been a primary preoccupation in the slave era.

⁶⁰ Gad Heuman, ‘Post-Emancipation Protest in Jamaica: the Morant Bay Rebellion’ in Mary Turner (ed.) *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas*, London, 1995, 263-4.

⁶¹ *Report of the Committee on Emigration From India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates* (Sanderson Commission). (Cd. 5193), 255 (my emphasis).

Despite its negligible demographic impact, the introduction of Indian indentureship into Jamaica significantly underscored images of black masculinity in Jamaica.⁶² Black masculinity came to be defined, not only in terms of its relationship with the plantation and in *opposition* to white masculine ideals, but also in *relation* to images of Indian masculinity. Some of these images and constructs arrived in advance of the arrival of Indian indentured labour, while others developed out of the place that Indian indentured labour was to occupy within the Jamaican economy. Concerns around the allegedly inferior physique of the Indian labourer confirmed the stereotype of black physical prowess, while cultural images tended to place the Indian midway between the European and African in racial terms. Black Jamaican men seem to have subscribed to hegemonic depictions of the Indian population in order to confirm their place in the economic hierarchy.

Images of Indian docility and servility inherited from the Raj served to buttress black masculinity in Jamaica. Indian labour assumed a feminised role in the Jamaican economy. Indians carried out the “water work” and “dirty work” that black men refused.⁶³ However, racialised constructs of mental capability and the tendency, in the metropole, to employ women on more intricate work, meant that Indians were employed on ‘any delicate work ... such as pruning cocoa, and pruning bananas, ... work that [could not] be safely left to the ordinary negro labourer’.⁶⁴ However, the relatively small Indian element in the labour force meant that it did not become

⁶² The 1911 Jamaican census showed that Indian indentured labourers and their descendants formed 2.1% of the population (Ken Post, *Arise Ye Starvelings: The Jamaica Labour Rebellion of 1938 and Its Aftermath*, The Hague, 1978, 41).

⁶³ Sanderson Cm. (Cd. 5193), 325.

⁶⁴ Sanderson Cm. (Cd. 5193), 96.

widely dispersed to carry out heavier tasks on the plantation,⁶⁵ as in Trinidad or British Guiana, making the stereotype of Indian effeminacy easier to sustain in Jamaica.

Due to the lasting connection between black men and plantation labour, constructs of black masculinity were over-masculine in the physical realm. But, in relation to colonial domination and ideals of white rationality, black Jamaican men were feminised – a process in which gender was mediated through racial concerns. These paradoxical strands became increasingly significant during the Great War. Although white masculine standards relied to an extent on images of physical prowess, especially as Imperial domination reached its peak, this was mediated through a rational component precisely to differentiate the white middle and upper-class men who serviced the Empire from the colonial and working-class subjects over whom they wished to justify their rule. Although enlightenment thinking constructed reason and science in opposition to nature and emotion, at the height of the Imperial project, white masculine ideals were a complex merging of mind and body. Rationality was seen as essential to exert mastery over the body, to stem its “natural” impulses and to bring it to physical perfection through scientific drill.⁶⁶ The racial preconceptions of Empire denied such possibilities in black men and would effectively exclude them from the front line where self-control was regarded as prerequisite for the fighting man. Instead, combined with the association of black men with physical labour, such prejudices would be used to relegate black troops to the role of military labour. Simultaneously, the preoccupation with black physicality, combined with the fear of

⁶⁵ Verene Shepherd, *Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica 1845-1950*, Leeds,

white masculine frailty exposed by the war, could serve to increase the anxiety felt by white Imperialism towards the black subject races.

1994, 57-9.

⁶⁶ Connell, 49-50.

2

“only ... a poor account of himself” Degeneration & Male Hysteria – White Masculine Vulnerability in the Great War

To place the experiences of black Jamaican soldiers in context it is necessary to examine the self-doubt of Empire rekindled during the war. The fresh uncertainties that rose from the mire of trench warfare threatened to destabilise metropolitan self-assurance and images of Imperial masculine competence. A heightened sense of racial self-doubt among the colonial and military establishment could lead to the increasing characterisation of non-white people, in this case black men, as a threat to racial privilege and the interests of white masculinity. The precarious nature of white masculinity, raised by the persistent images of white men who fell short of its standards, could potentially instil increased confidence among black soldiers. The influence of the eugenicists had decreased in the approach to war, but the movement had nevertheless provided a pessimistic language in which to describe the condition of white masculinity. This discourse informed policies that would prevent the full and equal participation of black volunteers in the war effort and the containment of black men in both civil and military settings.

Two key factors threatened to destabilise white masculine ideals and paved the way for constructs of black masculinity to evolve more positively and simultaneously to appear more threatening. First, were the pre-existing discourses concerned with the

apparent racial degeneration of the metropolitan population. These had started to emerge at the time of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, but they increasingly focused on the condition of the urban poor in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.¹ The debate reached its climax in the wake of the Boer War. Spurred in part by the ideas of the eugenicist movement, but equally by social philanthropists, feminists and the early proponents of welfarism, degeneration continued to be a preoccupation throughout and in the wake of the Great War. Pick concurs with Stedman Jones that the concerns around degeneration found less favour during the war years. They argue that the war economy and military service temporarily eroded the numbers of the casual urban poor that had become the focus of reformist and official anxiety.² However, this analysis seriously limits the discussion to the state of the metropolitan economy and fails to place the theme of degeneration in the broader context of Empire, which is a central concern of this study. The fear of degeneration remained at the forefront of the official mind, although the locus shifted. The urban poor may have been removed from the streets to an extent, but they posed a new official headache when they entered the services as volunteers or conscripts.

A second factor that began to undermine constructs of white masculinity was evident by the early stages of the war itself. The increasing prevalence of “shell shock” and other conditions, now regarded as combat stress, post-traumatic stress disorder or battle fatigue, contradicted the central tenets of the masculine ideal – self-discipline, rationality and stoicism. In Jamaica itself, the potential frailties of the white

¹ Pick, 1989, 189-96 & Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship Between the Classes in Victorian Society* (Harmondsworth, 1984).

² Pick, 202.

masculine ideal was evident in press articles and advertisements. To an extent, the epidemic of war neurosis, shifted the focus away from the preoccupation with degeneration, particularly due to its manifestation across class divides. However, in practice, medical theories of degeneration continued to inform attitudes towards shell-shock, which is evident in the post-war official enquiry. Only through a detailed analysis of these two preoccupations, that operated independently or in tandem, can the significance of the treatment meted out to and the policies towards black Jamaican volunteers be fully appreciated.

Racial Degeneration

i) The Corrupting Fruits of Industry & Empire

The Boer War recruitment crisis, and the flurry of official reports that followed in its wake, are typically seen as the major factor behind the growing concern that the British nation would fail to maintain its grip on the Empire. However, there was also a feeling abroad that the fruits of Empire and industry had encouraged complacency, lethargy and a moral enervation that could only give rise to a mentally and physically enfeebled population incapable of steering the Empire in a purposeful direction. This mood was given voice in the writings of the populist journalist Arnold White who complained that national efficiency had been undermined by graft, corruption and the pursuit of sinecures. Honest hard work on the other hand was poorly rewarded. In White's opinion, public life was dominated by men of dubious or indifferent quality, motivated by personal greed, rather than the desire to gain the respect of their fellows and to serve the state. The body politic had departed from the characteristics of masculine virtue in which the 'ambition to be distinguished from the crowd, by fame,

not notoriety ... is the instinct of a manly and active nature'. He continued, 'To render good service to the State is a privilege that does not come to many people, and therefore the materialisation of national gratitude ... is a reward more highly prized than money or ease'.³

White was concerned that lavish living had softened men and taken the edge off their capacity for leadership and initiative. Equally, he believed, their fundamental role as progenitors of, and providers for, the future generations of the servants of Empire was increasingly open to question, as men forsook their ties with the family unit, not in the line of duty, but in pursuit of pleasure. White saw the family, not only as the seed-bed of the police and administrators of Empire, but as a key symbol of its hierarchy and authority.

The unit of strong nations is the family ... Things that stunt, belittle, or ridicule domestic life are bad for the nation ... Turkey is what it is, mainly because the harem replaces family life in the upper or wealthier classes. The note by which bad smart society may be recognised is its contempt for family life – its loathing for domesticity. Home is hell. The restaurant is better. Luxury and over-feeding seven days a week kill desire for aught else but feeding and luxury. Plays and music-halls, restaurant-dining, eternal card-playing, and the race-course produce satiety; and satiety of the senses is the tomb of honour.⁴

Lavish living and the rejection of family life had, White argued, conspired to undermine national "stamina", and was reflected in the political world where he perceived a notable loss of manly resolve. 'Infirmity of purpose, dread of responsibility, nephritic irritability, neurotic petulance, and mental lethargy are physical symptoms betrayed by several members of the cabinet'.⁵ White likewise

³ Arnold White, *Efficiency and Empire*, London, 1901, 55.

⁴ White, 83-4.

⁵ *ibid.*, 108.

articulated the commonly-held belief that urbanisation had undermined national vigour and produced sickly men. Hinting at the emerging concern with the ability of the nation to fill the ranks of the army he proposed that the 'effect [of industrialisation] on the stamina of our people, and especially on the efficiency of our defenders, is sufficiently interesting to all who consider the rapid physical improvement of rival nations under a system of general conscription and protected agriculture'.⁶ More significantly, in the context of this study, Charles Kingsley had remarked as early as 1871 that the black peasantry in the West Indies appeared of more robust physique than the 'short and stunted figures' of the urban poor.⁷

White was also at the forefront of campaigns against Eastern European Jewish immigration. Opponents of this migration, whose campaigns culminated in the passing of the 1905 Aliens Act, believed that the migrants, who settled in the East End of London from the 1880s, would undermine metropolitan manhood in two ways. Firstly, the presence of Russian Jews, caricatured as sickly and uncivilised threatened to undermine the racial stock. Secondly, and paradoxically in relation to the first concern, Jewish migrants were portrayed as better able to withstand the poor conditions of the urban slums due to their alleged aspiration to a "lower standard of comfort". Anti-Semites believed the unmanliness of the Jewish migrant was evident in his willingness to allow his wife to enter employment, his reluctance to undertake heavy manual labour and their lack of trade union organisation. Hostility to

⁶ *ibid.*, 96-7.

⁷ Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class & the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Leicester, 1978, 155.

London's Jewish population resulted in the first overtly anti-immigrant organisation, the British Brothers League, who were prominent in East End elections between 1900 and 1908.⁸

ii) The Boer War and the Committee on Physical Deterioration

Concerns around the national malaise in political life and alien immigration were brought into sharp focus when it appeared that the British Army was having difficulty obtaining suitable young men to defeat the Boers. In 1899, it was estimated that around forty per cent of recruits were found unfit within two years of service. When this figure was added to outright rejections at the recruiting stage, the figure was closer to sixty per cent. Other statistics were advanced to prove the declining stature and general health of recruits, particularly from the industrial towns. Significantly, the men from the urban areas were virtually classified as a new race – the “New Town Type”. They were differentiated from the idealised Anglo-Saxon type who since the mid-nineteenth century had been presented as the dynamic force behind the growing British domination of the globe.⁹ This also reflected the concern that the racial stock in the urban areas had been “contaminated” not only by Eastern European Jews, but by the earlier waves of Irish immigration.

⁸ David Feldman. ‘The Importance of Being English: Jewish Immigration & the Decay of Liberal England, in David Feldman & Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Metropolis London: Histories & Representations since 1800*, London, 1989, 57, 59, 72-3; Christopher T. Husbands, ‘East End Racism 1900-1980: Geographical Continuities in Vigilantist & Extreme Right-wing Political Behaviour, *London Journal*, 8:1, 1982, 7-12.

⁹ Soloway, 41; Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1860*, London, 1982, 42.

The racialisation of the lower orders, particularly those on the fringes of urban society, had taken hold in the mid-nineteenth century. Through the interpretations of Darwinian theory and phrenology that were assiduously applied to the races of the Empire, the urban dispossessed were regularly presented with a more simian appearance. They were held to have coarser, heavier features and darker complexions – facial characteristics that were linked to low intelligence, vice or a predisposition to crime.¹⁰ As Yeo has shown, from the 1850s onwards the body served as a metaphor for class status, reflecting simultaneously mental and physical capacity. The urban poor were represented as marked by their occupations and the squalid environment that they inhabited. ‘Observers not only pictured the very poor as living near excrement but actually as excrement ... add[ing] this new representation of the poor as body refuse to the existing view of the urban poor as particularly prone to physical disease and other forms of disorder’.¹¹

Social Darwinism reflected entrepreneurial discourse in its insistence that organic life was a process of competitive selection – ‘national survival depended on the “dominant fertility of its fittest stocks”’.¹² As science accommodated hegemonic views of political and Imperial power, there was a shift away from metaphors associated with the processes of the lower body towards a preoccupation with the governing capacities of the head. These discourses placed greater emphasis on mental processes. Well-being was increasingly determined by the head's capacity to regulate bodily action – hence the increasing concern with “feeble-mindedness” and

¹⁰ Lorimer, 204-5, 210.

¹¹ Eileen Yeo, *Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender & Class*, London, 1996, 186.

¹² *ibid.*, 191.

mental deficiency. Inferior mental capacity was perceived as leading to immorality and criminality, establishing a link, for example, between feeble-mindedness and prostitution, and led to campaigns to limit the reproductive capacity of people placed in these categories.¹³ These processes provided a bulwark to Anglo-Saxon idealism by arbitrarily “othering” those of the metropolitan populace who fell short of its arbitrary standards. Simultaneously, however, an immanent threat to racial purity and national efficiency was constructed.

Concerns about the future masculine competence of the race were heightened as the army failed to ensure a prompt and positive conclusion in the war with the Boers. In the wake of the war, after much prevarication, the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration was appointed to establish the validity of the claims that the race was on the decline. Of course, the existence of such a committee was of itself sufficient to spread further doubt. Indeed, the remit of the Committee was designed to allay public fears as much as to ascertain the extent of the apparent decline in the health of the urban population. Witnesses to the committee presented diverse views covering all spectrums of an increasingly heated debate. Would the alleged declining physical and moral state of the present generations be passed on as a hereditary taint, damning the race to ultimate extinction or was the situation remediable? Or, would processes of natural selection intervene to weed out the sickliest specimens? This uncertainty was reflected in the terminology used, both within scientific debate and popular discussion. *Deterioration* was the favoured term used by those who believed that environmental factors and, perhaps more significantly, purported immoral

¹³ *ibid.*, 192-3.

practices and ignorance, were to blame for declining health and physique. However, reformers of this school believed that the situation could be remedied through improvements in housing, employment and education, particularly of prospective mothers, and if the young were encouraged to participate in a regimen of disciplined physical exercise. On the other hand, those favouring theories of *degeneration* believed that the racial strain was permanently weakened by such conditions and practices, as well being threatened through inter-breeding with the residuum. The term “deterioration” was chosen by the Committee to sound a more optimistic note. In reality, however, “deterioration” and “degeneration” were used interchangeably, a situation complicated by the fact that even within the eugenicist camp there was considerable divergence of opinion on the issue.¹⁴

The Commission’s report, published in July 1904, was extremely doubtful that the race had been undermined by hereditary taint. Instead, the major finding was that most children were born healthy. It was only when they became exposed to poor environment, poor food and the social evils of drink and ignorance that their health and physique deteriorated. Significantly, confounding those who craved an imagined pastoral golden age, the Commission found that the health of those in the urban slums was often no worse than that enjoyed by the rural labouring poor. As Soloway has argued, the incomplete, and often contradictory view of the processes of heredity, strengthened the influence of progressive Liberals and Fabians who believed that tackling environmental factors was the answer to the nations ills. This marked a shift in attention from the stigmatised individual to the diseased body of

¹⁴ Soloway 43-5.

society. The report gave rise to a series of interventionist measures, that would be headed by educated professionals. Most significant were the moves to provide medical care and a sound diet for schoolchildren and the development of the emergent Mothercraft movement, which aimed to inculcate sound domestic and nurturing skills among working-class women.¹⁵

However, what the eugenicists did provide was a fatalistic discourse that had a greater provenance than their direct impact on government policy, as shown in the passing of the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913.¹⁶ This discourse fuelled the sense of cynicism, despondency and engrained pessimism, often the result of class prejudice, that held, whatever the evidence to the contrary, that the state of the race was approaching a condition of decline from which it would not recover. This feeling was rapidly rekindled by the experiences of the Great War. Captain J. C. Dunn, remarking on the condition of the infantry during the Battle of the Somme, stated

The average physique was good enough, but the total included an astonishing number of men whose narrow and misshapen chests, and other deformities or defects, unfitted them to stay the more exacting requirements of service in the field ... Route marching, not routine tours of trench duty, made recurring casualties of these men.¹⁷

When a new classification system was introduced for army medical examinations in 1917, over forty-one per cent of men examined were not regarded as sufficiently fit to see service either in the home garrisons or overseas. Ten per cent of men were rejected outright. By this stage in the war, manpower was at a premium and these

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 45-7, 140; Yeo, 216-223.

¹⁶ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics & Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, London, 1989, 136.

¹⁷ Captain J. C. Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew, 1914-1919*, London, 1939, 245 quoted in Bet-El, 85. Dunn also gave evidence to the official post-war enquiry into shell shock.

figures mask the regularity in which official guidelines were overlooked by medical staff under pressure to fill quotas.¹⁸

iii) Degeneracy and the Margins of Empire

While many were preoccupied with the threat of racial contamination from within, there was also the apprehension that the race would be undermined by the subjects of Empire that British masculinity was struggling to contain. These fears exposed the dialectic of Imperialism – the metropole could be acted upon and changed by its own project, the Empire. Culture (if not civilisation) was not a one-way process – the mores of the subject races were just as likely to rub off on their white rulers as vice versa.

At the heart of these anxieties was the construction of the recesses of Empire, particularly the tropics, as potential sources of debilitation and depravity. The tropics, particularly West Africa, had been regarded as a source of superabundance and potential great wealth, a view that, from the European perspective, reached a grim realisation in the shape of the transatlantic slave trade. But these regions were also associated with the steady toll they took of white settlers who lacked resistance to local disease. The more negative view held by Europeans of the tropics was rationalised in the enlightenment thinking that held that northern races were more industrious, both physically and mentally.¹⁹ In the Caribbean context, Haiti came to symbolise the potentially fatal pitfalls for white masculinity of the tropical

¹⁸ J. M. Winter, *The Great War & the British People*, London, 1985, 50-9.

¹⁹ Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas & Action, 1780-1850* (Vol. I), Madison, 1964, 58, 65, 71.

encounter. Not only had thousands of Europeans perished there due to disease and the superior military tactics of the black republic, but Haiti also presented the constant threat of black insurrection and combustibility.²⁰

Even the most exemplary white man who ventured into the tropical outposts was regarded as susceptible to moral and physical enervation. In the late eighteenth century, Dr. Benjamin Mosely, a physician who had practised in the West Indies, argued that émigré whites manifested ‘a promptitude and bias to pleasure, and an alienation from serious thought and deep reflection’.²¹ In other words, white settlers ran the risk of manifesting, to a lesser degree, the inferior moral character and mental capacity that was ascribed to black Africans and other indigenous inhabitants of the tropics. Edward Long, the archetype of the Jamaican planter class, argued that the corrupting influences of the tropics were compounded by the ample opportunities for excess among the planter class. He advocated a regime of regular exercise and the avoidance of “strong passions” if the European was to survive morally and physically intact.²² This view of the tropics was still widespread at the time of the Great War, as evident in the observations of Leonard Richmond Wheeler, a member of the Royal Colonial Society and an officer in the British West Indies Regiment.

In many places the whole community is rotten with malaria venereal disease, or, among the poor, lack of nourishing food; but the worst diseases among them are ignorance and laziness ... People of tropical races are usually inferior to the British and some other white races in Will-power.²³

²⁰ For the toll taken by Haiti on the British military manhood see C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, London, 1980 [1938], 213-4.

²¹ Cited in Curtin, 65.

²² *ibid.*, 79.

²³ L. Richmond Wheeler, *Scouting in the Tropics*, London, 1926, 52-3.

The representation of the margins of Empire as a potential mire for the white man could lead to an ambivalence towards the Imperial project. The writings of Robert Forman Horton, a leading Congregationalist and a chairman of the London Missionary Society in the 1890s, highlighted this apparent disillusionment and unease with the Empire project and even indicated a desire to disengage from it. Horton's work also shows how the boundaries of nation and Empire were constantly being renegotiated. At certain points, the subject races were considered fellow-members of the family of Empire, although of lower standing. At others, any claim that they might have upon Britain and Britishness would be firmly rejected. Horton himself complained that the ideals of Empire had resulted in a distortion of the nation that was now too all-inclusive. In his terms, the Empire was a "pseudo-nation" in which

the overwhelming majority, probably four-fifths are people of a different colour, a different religion, and a different political provenance. Nothing but confusion and degeneration can come from imperialism thus understood; the fifty or sixty millions of white men and Christians will be dragged down and swamped by the three hundred and twenty millions of Mohammedans, Hindoos, and Negroes.²⁴

Horton argued for the racial exclusivity of each nation in the Empire and advocated the development of institutions that reflected indigenous populations but simultaneously placed them firmly within their allotted place in the racial hierarchy of Empire.²⁵ Ironically, despite his strong advocacy of segregation, in common with many of his contemporaries, Horton reverted to familial symbolism to justify this

²⁴ R. F. Horton, *National Ideals and Race-Regeneration*, London, 1912, 18-9. For further details about Horton's life see Albert Peel and Sir John Marriott, *Robert Foreman Horton*, London, 1937.

²⁵ Horton, *National Ideals* ..., 20-3.

stance; 'there are older, middle-aged, adolescent, and baby nations. The Africans ... are the baby nations of the great family [of Empire]'.²⁶

Towards the end of 1913, Horton visited India to report to the LMS on the state of the missionary effort on the sub-continent. This visit served to reinforce his belief in the superiority of European Christian civilisation and of the contaminating and corrupting effects of the tropics. Horton believed that British rule was vindicated by British victory in the Mutiny of 1857, which he attributed to divine intervention. India, he argued, could only be saved by the intercession of Christianity. Hinduism, particularly, was seen to encourage immorality and its apparent acceptance of fate ran contrary to the non-conformist insistence that individual effort had a part to play in one's ultimate destiny.²⁷ To a non-conformist, such as Horton, the idols and lavish ceremonies of Hinduism only served to reinforce a preoccupation with tropical decadence, which nevertheless held an allure, as Horton's complimentary references to the physique of both Indian men and women indicate. After witnessing the worship of the Hindu goddess, Kali, at the Kalighat in Calcutta, Horton counselled,

Our missionary zeal is cooled by the bland assurances that Hinduism is a religion on the same plane as Christianity, and we deprecate interference with a system which for India is as salutary as Christianity is for us. But this rose-water theory cannot survive a visit to Kalighat. Though I should be sorry indeed to visit that haunt of demons and lust again, I am thankful that I saw it; for it has sealed my purpose never to rest or be satisfied until these attractive and winning peoples of India have set Christ in the place of Siva and Kali, and learnt from His lips the truth: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God".²⁸

²⁶ *ibid.*, 64.

²⁷ Robert Forman Horton, *Three Months in India*, London, 1913, 98-202.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 83-4. In Hinduism, Kali (from the Sanskrit "black") is a devouring, destructive goddess, a face of Devi, the supreme goddess, who otherwise presents a persona of tranquillity. Kali is depicted as a hideous, black-faced hag smeared with blood, with bared teeth and protruding tongue. She is

These margins of Empire edged ever closer. As the nineteenth century progressed it became harder to disconnect the Imperial trade upon which Britain depended from the subject peoples who were the source of this wealth. By the turn of the century, in the seaports that formed what Jonathan Schneer has termed the “nexus of Empire”²⁹, there were already the first indications that the Empire was coming home. Sailors, travellers, clergymen, professionals, intellectuals and students from every corner of the Imperial domain were planting the seeds of the multi-racial communities that would form a central motif of metropolitan life in the second half of the twentieth century. For many, who already viewed the docks as a source of danger, this served to compound the fears around racial degeneration, criminality and disorder. Edwin Pugh, the Fabian commentator and realist writer, epitomised the anti-Chinese feeling that had reached fever pitch by the early years of the Great War.

[The] Chinese crimp thrives and flourishes [in the docks]. You will find under his roof men of many races and shades of colour. Occasionally you will find a white man – or rather a man who once was white, but who has rapidly sunk to the level of the lowest type of Asiatic alike as to his morals and the hue of his filthy hide.³⁰

The Differential Birthrate and the Dysgenics of War

The fear that Britain might be numerically swamped, both by her enemies in Europe and by the multiplying subject races of Empire, proved to be the most enduring theme in the debates around racial degeneration. The over-riding concern was that

naked except for a necklace of skulls and belt of severed hands. Goats are sacrificed to her daily at her temples.

²⁹ Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, New Haven, 1999, 39.

³⁰ This passage originally appeared as part of Pugh’s portrait of the Chinese in London in *City of the World*, London, 1915, 354-65) and was reproduced in the *Umpire*, 17.9.1916, 6. Edwin Pugh was a biographer of Charles Dickens and wrote a large number of often melodramatic novels relating to East End working-class life. He joined the Fabian Society and contributed regular articles to the literary and political periodical, *New Age*, on social and economic issues.

the potentially reproductive men and women of the “better classes” were forgoing large families by the increased use of contraception in pursuit of greater freedom and material benefit. As a result, most eugenicists argued, the quality of the race was deteriorating as the allegedly inherently inferior members of the lower orders continued to reproduce at higher levels.³¹ Reports and articles on the issue of the national birth-rate had started to appear before the Great War. But as casualties mounted, the matter took on a renewed urgency. Increasingly the war, rather than proving the might of the nation, was increasingly seen to aggravate the problem of racial degeneration. More paradoxically, it was also held to reverse the process of natural selection commonly interpreted as “survival of the fittest”. Men perceived as the cream of the population were being decimated on the front-line, while their racial inferiors were likely to be rejected by the medical boards. The war also served to compound concern about the higher rate of male infant mortality. This was described as “male infanticide” which suggested some kind of conspiracy rather than acknowledging the vulnerability of the male sex in the pre-natal stages and early infancy. Some commentators alleged that the level of male infant mortality had actually increased after the outset of the war.³²

In 1911, the National Council for Public Morals issued its first manifesto. The Council’s primary aims were to address the issue of the differential birthrate and the purported degeneration of the race. The signatories

³¹ See, for example, Ethel M. Elderton, *Report on the English Birthrate*, London, 1914. Pt. 1 England North of the Humber. Eugenics Laboratory Memoirs XIX & XX, 232-236.

³² Evidence of Dr. C. W. Saleeby in *The Declining Birth-Rate: Its Causes and Effects*, London: Chapman & Hall, 1916 (The Report of the National Birth-Rate Commission established by the NCPM - for the Promotion of Race Regeneration - Spiritual, Moral and Physical) , 415-7.

desire[d] to express ... alarm at the low and degrading views of the racial instinct which are becoming widely circulated ... not only because they offend against the highest ideas of morality and religion, but also because they ... imperil our very life as a nation.³³

The NCPM reflected the increasing preoccupation of Social Darwinism with those members of the lower orders who were deemed to be of questionable intellect. The Council and argued that

neglect of the incurably feeble-minded ... reinforce[d] the ranks of degradation and shame. These cases must receive permanent care apart from the community, that they and posterity may be protected.³⁴

These views were widely circulated among the upper strata of society as evident in the list of supporters of the manifesto. Several bishops and peers, representatives of the non-conformist clergy, Florence Booth of the Salvation Army, socialists such as Ramsay MacDonald and Beatrice Webb, and leading eugenicists such as Caleb Saleeby and Sir John Gorst were among the signatories. Once the war had started the Council busied itself with various crusades such as the alleged threat to public decency posed by the growth of the cinema and the moral welfare of servicemen. But its most significant campaign was the establishment of a National Birth-Rate Commission “for the Promotion of Race Regeneration – Spiritual, Moral and Physical”. The published remarks of the chief witnesses give ample testimony that selfishness and the desire for material excess were perceived as much of a problem as the threat posed by the lower orders. Dr. J. W. Ballantyne argued that excessive meat consumption, alcoholism and venereal disease were responsible in part for the declining birthrate, but that the family planning practiced by the better classes was a

³³ *The Times*, 31.5.1911, 5.

³⁴ *ibid.*

greater evil. Ballantyne urged that people from this background should forego material comfort for the greater good of the nation and called for

[t]he gradual building up of a spirit of self-sacrifice or *rational* foresight which shall make it possible for parents of the good classes (good intellectually and morally as well as physically) to have again the larger families ... The extra baby must be weighed against the motor car, and must be recognized as of more immediate and future value than the car or any other thing not absolutely essential to well-being although conducive to comfort.³⁵

James Marchant, Secretary of the National Birth-Rate Commission was more scathing. In a regular column in the populist weekly organ of Empire, the *Umpire*, he conducted a diatribe against those who adhered to the practice of raising a smaller family. Adopting an evangelising capitalistic rhetoric, Marchant claimed that not only did smaller families threaten the race numerically, but the attendant family environment was not conducive to the maintenance of racial dynamism.

Theoretically, it would seem that fewer mouths to fill would mean more bread for each, a better chance of growth, fuller development and richer fruit. But fewer does not necessarily mean better. In business it means more often than not less capital; and the limitations of choice does not increase trade. It is to be feared that this limitation of children looks more like lack of physical stamina, of the weakening of the moral fibre, of an impoverished sense of social responsibility, of the death of the spirit of self-sacrifice, than deep-seated foresight for the quality of the children to be. Fewer children may mean more pampered children. The struggle for existence amongst a large family more often tends to the production of stronger manhood and finer womanhood than the greater care of a smaller family would do.³⁶

More generally, symbolism of maternity was evoked to encourage the return of larger families among the better classes. In the words of J. W. Ballantyne

³⁵ *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 166.

³⁶ *Umpire* 26.11.1916, 7.

‘Motherhood and parenthood must be exulted’.³⁷ Ethel Elderton, who had published another report on the birth-rate question during the opening weeks of the war, attacked the use of contraception and abortion by the middle and artisan class and the propagandists of feminism who had campaigned to liberate women from the burden of childbirth.³⁸ Motherhood was elevated to new heights by the British state and reformers alike and stood as a central symbol of Empire. The feminine ideal of motherhood in the service of the state took precedence over that of dutiful wife. The ideal mother selflessly devoted herself to the care of her offspring and waited on the word of the increasing army of middle-class professionals who were presented as the ultimate authority on childcare. The failure of individual women to submit to the role defined for them by nature would surely lead to the collapse of Britain’s global domain.³⁹

It is not only that any fall in the birthrate has endless importance for Great Britain as the *mother* of greater nations, but ... the present fall is harmfully differential; any such differential fall means racial degeneration. We do not assert that to have checked the propagandism of prevention in 1877 would have been possible ... There was much force behind it, both economic and semi-moral in character ... [However,] Many of us can see now that if the movement continues unchecked for another forty years, it means national disaster, complete and irremediable, not only for this country but for Britain across four seas’.⁴⁰

Elderton advocated measures to ensure that children would again be considered to have economic value, which she believed would check the declining birthrate and reinvigorate the race. But such policies were to be specifically targeted ‘not to every child, but to the well-born child. That principle once accepted, the social duty of fit parents to produce the fit child becomes reasonably easy to inculcate, and capable of

³⁷ *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 166.

³⁸ Elderton, 232-236.

³⁹ Davin, 12-14.

being given again a religious significance'.⁴¹ Demanding simultaneously a revival of public life Elderton demanded 'a leader who will convince the workers both with head and with the hand that, however costly, the well-born child is now as it was in the past the basis of national greatness and the price of empire'.⁴²

The demand that the middle- and upper-classes reproduce at higher levels was something of an ironic *volte face*. As the pioneering sexologist and eugenicist, Havelock Ellis, pointed out, the masculine ideal of "self control" had previously been at the core of efforts to cut birthrate 'to ensure that no children shall be brought into the world who cannot be properly cared for'.⁴³ Many eugenicists now feared that such "self-control" was now being practised with a little too much enthusiasm by the very classes that were expected to provide the administrators and military officers that formed the driving force of the Empire project. Ellis on the other hand believed that the creed of self-control had percolated down to all classes. He was more concerned that the enlightenment values often used as a justification of white domination – rationality, reason and individual freedom – should not be compromised by the need to maintain the racial stock.

It is part of our problem to consider how best we may reconcile the claims of the race with the claims of individual freedom ... the development of the sense of personal responsibility is implied in the growth of our civilisation ... It is in the developed individual conscience guided by a new sense of responsibility and informed by a new knowledge, that any regeneration of the race must be rooted'.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Elderton, 237 (my emphasis).

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 238.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Havelock Ellis, *The Problem of Race-Regeneration*, London, 1911, 60.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 64-5.

Nevertheless, from the eugenicist perspective the war demanded that the issue be addressed with even more urgency. The “Dysgenics of War”, a term coined by Caleb Saleeby in his evidence to the National Birth-Rate Commission, meant that the “pick of our men” rushed to volunteer and almost certain death or injury on the battlefield, leaving the poorer specimens to reproduce. To redress a situation Saleeby proposed that measures should be taken to make it easier for soldiers to marry before leaving for the front or while on leave. Increased separation allowances for soldiers would encourage the rearing of children, he argued, even if the fathers were subsequently killed.⁴⁵ Other eugenicists went to more macabre lengths and suggested that women should rush to marry even the most severely wounded and maimed veterans as they were still capable of passing on their noble “germ-plasm”.⁴⁶

Rather than war being seen as a demonstration of the nation’s masculine prowess, some eugenicists argued that war contributed to a process of feminisation. As the fittest men were killed off, the process of natural selection would be reversed. Drawing on evidence from the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian wars, Havelock Ellis suggested that war would lead to reductions in height and an increase in hereditary conditions.⁴⁷ However, he was quick to distance himself from the effeminate taint of pacifism, presenting war as a necessary evil in which the national character developed in peacetime would ameliorate any lasting damage to the racial stock.

[O]nce war presents itself as a terrible necessity even the most peaceable men are equal to the task ... The qualities that count in peace are the qualities that count in war, and the high-spirited man who throws himself bravely into the dangerous adventures of

⁴⁵ *Declining Birth-Rate*, 415. See also Havelock Ellis, *Essays in Wartime*, London, 1916, 28-9, 33.

⁴⁶ Soloway, 144-5.

⁴⁷ Ellis, *Essays*, 36.

peace is fully the equal of the hero of the battlefield, and himself prepared to become that hero.⁴⁸

Despite the anxieties that war-time recruitment practices would accelerate the process of racial degeneration, the military authorities continued to aspire to the model English hero. Ideally, a young man who had attended public school, who had a penchant for vigorous sporting activity, rather than thoughtful introspection or too much intellectual activity, and who displayed the qualities of stoicism, rationality, team-spirit and self-discipline. Discourses of class meant that most high-ranking officers regarded the vast majority of soldiers as unimaginative and of low intelligence. As Fussell has argued this was the major factor behind the appalling losses on the Western Front and the use of the infantry as cannon-fodder. Senior officers remained firmly convinced that mass frontal assaults at walking pace in broad daylight were all the average Tommy was capable of. The use of more subtle means of attack, such as advancing behind an artillery barrage or making effective use of cover, were almost entirely ruled out.⁴⁹

Eugenicist Discourse & Army Medical Practice

Where the vocabulary of the eugenicists did surface in the military, rather than working to spare the lives of the “pick” of the men, it tended to be deployed against men considered to be of poor stock who were either rejected outright or relieved of front-line duties. In extreme cases, as Oram has shown, eugenicist discourses served

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 38-9.

⁴⁹ Fussell, 13.

to justify the weeding out of undesirables through the imposition of the death penalty.⁵⁰

A survey of army medical records provides ample proof of eugenicist-inspired prejudice as well as illustrating the tendency of contemporary science to associate mental capacity and character with facial features and head shape. Although the scientific popularity of phrenology had waned by the 1830s and 1840s, it left its mark. Features of the human skull were interpreted as reflecting the inner organisation of the brain, its capacity to reason and to dictate behaviour. Army doctors were concerned to demarcate the degenerate-type from the white masculine ideal which embodied stoicism and self-control, often in relation to drink and sexual activity, above all in terms of rationality. Departure from these ideals was regarded as signs of flawed heredity and racial inferiority.

In the process, however, as the following examples show, a reliance on such interpretations and classifications only served to underline the increasing difficulty the metropole was facing in recruiting sufficient numbers of the men regarded as the best racial stock. The reports abound with phrases otherwise reserved for the subject races such as “childish and simple minded”. A medical sheet for a private in the Army Service Corps registered the following comments.

Voluntary attention deficient. Judgement feeble and erroneous. His head and face are asymmetrical. Lobes of ears malformed. Articulation somewhat defective. He is simple and degenerate. In my opinion he is mentally deficient and unfit for any service in the Army.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Gerard Oram, *Worthless Men: Race Eugenics and the Death Penalty in the British Army During the*

Another report into a soldier described as mentally deficient and epileptic shows how excessive alcohol consumption was believed to be an heredity condition, the effects of which could be passed to subsequent generations, even if they refrained from alcohol consumption.

No family history of insanity, epilepsy, neurosis or eccentricity is obtained. Patient states that his father indulges freely in C2 H5 OH [alcohol]. He [patient] denies C2 H5 OH. He states that he has had fits since he was 15 years old.⁵²

The report concluded that alcoholic heredity was to blame for the patient's 'congenital mental deficiency'.⁵³ Significantly, the man had already been discharged from the army after an earlier medical tribunal but had managed to re-enlist. The report concluded that the soldier was 'probably able to look after himself and earn a living under favourable circumstances, but I do not consider that he is likely to stand any undue stress and he is unsuitable for the Army'.⁵⁴

Other cases illustrate the effects of the harsh social and economic conditions of the time but were still replete with terse designations of inferiority. One man, whose recorded age was thirty-three had the 'physical condition ... normal for a man of fifty years of age'. Unable to read and write, with a double squint and with poor co-ordination the examining doctor observed that '[i]n my opinion this man is a feeblemind of degenerate type'.⁵⁵ Not only were the men classed as degenerates believed to be a threat to the efficiency of the army, their very loyalty to the state was brought into question. In the words of E. Mapother, a Medical Superintendent of

First World War, London, 1998.

⁵¹ MH106/2300 No. 312427 W. J. Barnes ASC 3.5.17.

⁵² MH106/2300 No. 20111 H. Beaumont 15 Coy AVC 19.10.1916.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

the Maudsley Neurological Hospital, '[t]he intellectually defective is incapable of enduring patriotism; in fact, of any ideal so abstract as his country'.⁵⁶

Shell Shock & Male Hysteria – the Cracked Image of White Masculinity

i) The Disruption of Race & Gender Categories

Discourses of degeneration and deterioration, and the discussions of the differential birthrate provided sufficient doubts about the state of white masculinity and racial hygiene. But the bewildering array of psychological responses to war manifested by thousands of soldiers brought three central planks of white masculinity – rationality, stoicism and self-control – into question. Most significantly, although a terminology evolved that tended to suggest otherwise, many men who presented themselves for treatment were displaying symptoms of what was then termed “hysteria” a diagnoses usually reserved for women, homosexuals and other men deemed to show signs of effeminacy. Elaine Showalter has vehemently argued, ‘English psychiatry found its categories ... built on an ideology of absolute and natural difference between women and men ... undermined by the evidence of male war neurosis’.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Showalter suggests that the male hysteria of the war years was

a disguised male protest not only against the war but against the concept of “manliness” itself. While epidemic female hysteria in late Victorian England had been a form of protest against a patriarchal society that enforced confinement to a narrowly defined femininity, epidemic male hysteria in World War I was a protest against the politicians, generals, and psychiatrists. The

⁵⁵ MH106/2304 No. 157010 J. Wilkinson 884 Area Labour Coy.

⁵⁶ *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into “Shell-Shock”* (Cmd. 1734), London, 1922, 28.

⁵⁷ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1800-1980*, London, 1987, 167-8.

heightened code of masculinity that dominated in wartime was intolerable to surprisingly large numbers of men.⁵⁸

Given these circumstances there was surely the possibility that the absolute categories between white Englishmen and the subjects of the Empire could also be breached.

Traumatised men presented a bewildering array of psychosomatic symptoms, including involuntary movements, temporary paralysis or catatonia, loss of speech or blindness, or simple mental and nervous exhaustion, all of which could fall under the umbrella term “shell shock”. Other diagnoses may have suggested a physical complaint, when the underlying cause was psychological. Chief among these was Disordered Action of the Heart (DAH) a condition of which it was estimated that only ten per cent of cases had an organic origin. The medical shorthand “NAD” (No Appreciable Disease or No Abnormal Discovery) also appears very frequently in army medical records and may have on occasion been the diagnosis applied to men who presented as psychological cases.

An accurate figure for the number of men who experienced shell shock is particularly hard to establish. Due to the stigma attached to mental illness and total unpreparedness of the army medical services for soldiers suffering psychological disturbance, the official statistics may be viewed as the tip of the iceberg. These show that, around 80,000 men were treated as shell shock cases, of whom about 30,000 were sent back to facilities in Britain. However, Sir John Collie, who was placed in charge of pension arrangements for shell shock cases, believed that

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 172.

200,000 men were discharged on these grounds. Many men may have been too embarrassed to come forward for treatment, while others simply could not be spared on the front line. The scale of psychiatric casualties is also indicated by the massive increase in psychiatric facilities both within the army itself and, as a knock-on effect, within emergent civilian practice which was simultaneously forced to consider reform of the asylum system. By the end of the war there were twenty specialist army hospitals dealing with shell shock cases (from one in 1915), as well as numerous clinics and outpatient facilities.⁵⁹

The vast array of psychosomatic symptoms gave rise to accusations of malingering. The prevalence of malingering itself cast doubt upon the sustainability of white masculine ideals. Malingering, which Bourke defines as the refusal to undertake risks attendant upon the obligations of citizenship, involved a man willingly presenting himself as emasculated in some way by presenting with a mental or physical condition that would either act as an obstacle to enlistment or prevent a further posting to the front for men already mobilised. The authorities became concerned to ensure that every man lived up to the obligations of manhood citizenship. For the privileges they enjoyed, men were expected to render their bodies to more extreme fates than women or children.⁶⁰ Men suspected of malingering were subjected to ruthless treatment, as was testified by a retired senior

⁵⁹ Martin Stone, 'Shellshock and the Psychologists' in W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter & Michael Shepherd (eds.), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, Vol. II, London, 1985, 243, 246-9, 251; David Forsyth 'Functional Nerve Disease and the Shock of Battle: A Study of the So-called Traumatic Neuroses Arising in Connexion with the War', *Lancet*, 25.12.1915, 1400; F. W. Burton-Fanning, 'Neurasthenia in Soldiers of the Home Forces', *Lancet* 16.6.1917, 908-9. For examples of prevalence of NAD cases see hospital register for No. 2 GH Havre MH106/1015-64).

⁶⁰ Bourke, *Dismembering*, 76-8.

medical officer in the pages of the *Lancet* who also revealed the totality of military subordination.

During my 22 years service ... I can recall five cases of men having been brought to hospital suffering from sudden loss of speech due to shock. I found they were all cases of malingering and recovered their voice under an anaesthetic. Ether is the anaesthetic to give, and it is well to keep the patient under it for half an hour, and he will have plenty to say when he recovers.⁶¹

But while on one level the malingerer was rejecting masculine norms on another, he was asserting control over his body, placing it at the centre of his objection to enlistment. Men used various drugs or imbibed substances to mimic medical conditions or neglected minor ailments in the hope that they would become more serious. Some men deliberately had their limbs broken to avoid the draft. Others resorted to even more desperate measures, such as the self-inflicted wound (SIW), which carried with it the risk of both serious injury and punishment.⁶² Significantly, shell shock could be regarded as a mental self-inflicted wound which involved the 'voluntary and avoidable surrender by the soldier of his control over his emotions'.⁶³

ii) The Erosion of Stoicism

The war letters of Raymond Asquith, son of the wartime Liberal Prime Minister, capture the attitudes of the officer class towards the men in their command who were finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the demands of modern warfare. At first, it was possible to suggest that those men displaying a lack of self-control were the questionable types responsible for the general decline of the race. However, in Asquith's writings it is also possible to trace a transition to the view that men of all

⁶¹ Letter from Lt. Col. (late) J. McLaughlin, RAMC, *Lancet*, 22.1.1916, 212.

⁶² Bourke, *Dismembering*, 76-82.

classes and stock could be subject to the condition that became popularly known as “shell shock”. Asquith himself was an officer in the prestigious Grenadier Guards. However, for a time he was attached to the Welch Fusiliers, whom he regarded with some disdain. Speaking of the men’s increasing inability to cope with front-line conditions Asquith states:

The men were absurd and pathetic and made me more than ever glad that I chose a good regiment to fight with. They were little black spectacled dwarfs with no knowledge, no discipline, no experience, no digestion, and a surplus of nerves and vocabulary ... They moaned and coughed and whined and vomited through the long night hours in a way that was truly distressing and paid so little attention to their duties that if they had been grenadiers I should have had to have had half of them shot. If they are a fair sample of K[itchener]’s army the repeated failures of our offensive are easily explained.⁶⁴

A few months later, in May 1916, Asquith complained of the increasing irritability and war-weariness of the officers in his own regiment. However, he was quick to scotch suggestions that they might be falling prey to shell shock and attributed the men’s state of mind to boredom.⁶⁵ A month into the Battle of the Somme, in early August of the same year, Asquith was forced to acknowledge the state of his own nerves. However, he went to some length to distance his own feelings from the general sense of panic that had gripped the men under his command.

This night I was up at the forward end of the trench, rather engrossed in directing the men’s work, when suddenly I found myself surrounded by a mob of terrified figures from the battalion which was holding that part of the line ... [They] gibbered and crouched and held their hands over their eyes and generally conducted themselves as if the end of the world was at hand. It was very alarming; they had seen one of these damned rum jars [trench mortar] coming and I hadn’t ... The explosion was as painful as a sound can be. In the moment immediately preceding it I made up my mind I was dead, and in the moment immediately following I said to myself “I suppose this is shell shock at last, now I shall get home”. But it wasn’t.⁶⁶

⁶³ Chas. S. Myers, *Shell Shock in France 1914-18: Based on a War Diary*, Cambridge, 1940, 38-9.

⁶⁴ To K[atharine]. A[squith], 17.12.1915, John Jolliffe, *Raymond Asquith: Life and Letters*, London, 1980, 227.

⁶⁵ To K. A. 28.5.1916, *ibid.*, 264.

⁶⁶ To K. A. 4.8.1916, *ibid.*, 281.

Shortly before his death in September 1916, Asquith admitted that the noise of gunfire made him feel sick.⁶⁷ Asquith's observations reflect a marked transformation in character. Initially he was full of disdain for men clearly at the end of their tethers who he regarded as of suspect heredity. By the time of his death, he makes a gleeful half-admission that he was suffering from shell shock which he hoped would relieve him of his frontline post. Asquith's upper-class background highlights Stone's observation that the

monolithic theory of hereditary degeneration upon which Victorian psychiatry had based its social and scientific vision was significantly dented as young men of respectable and proven character were reduced to mental wrecks after a few months in the trenches.⁶⁸

From the perspective of the metropolitan elites, not only was the future of the race being undermined by a significant and growing residuum of dubious inheritance, but the very men whom they had previously relied upon to administer and police the Empire were failing to uphold the ideals of English manhood in its hour of greatest need.

iii) Explaining the Problem Away

Many in the army medical services could not come to terms with this new state of affairs and advanced numerous theories and explanations that attempted to disassociate the young manhood of Britain from its apparent failure to live up to masculine expectation. This is clear in the evidence presented to the committee of enquiry to consider the issue of shell shock after the war. Initially, it was held that

⁶⁷ To K. A. 8.9.1916, *ibid.*, 294.

⁶⁸ Stone, 245.

the various conditions associated with shell shock had been brought about by close proximity to bursting shells or passing machine-gun fire. These diagnoses lingered in the public's perception and encouraged some sympathy towards shell shocked veterans. The link with shell fire suggested a physical wound rather than mental instability which carried with it the stigmatic associations of the asylum or workhouse.⁶⁹ However, in his evidence to the committee of enquiry, Sir John Goodwin, the Director-General of the Army Medical Service, argued that the war had exposed the underlying nervous temperament of purportedly lesser men or those who manifested an insufficient quota of discipline, esprit de corps and regimental pride – the exemplars of military masculinity.⁷⁰

The pre-war concern with the degenerating effects of urban life also worked its way into medical interpretation. Men who in civilian life had worked outdoors as miners, shepherds or gamekeepers were seen as less prone to shell shock than artisans or clerks who were deemed more sensitive than the stolid and apparently less-intelligent countryman. Those of artistic temperament were seen as particularly susceptible to nervous instability at the front.⁷¹ In general, the victim of shell shock was regarded as having lost all sense of self-control and discipline, if, indeed, he had not succumbed to outright cowardice. Slackness or outbreaks of petty crime within a unit were seen as the precursors to an increasing incidence of shell shock, which at times was regarded as having the infective qualities of organic disease. Indeed, medics

⁶⁹ GB Army, *Report of the War Office Committee. of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"*, Cmd. 1734, London, 1922, 4-6, Myers, 13; Thomas Salmon, *The Care & Treatment of Mental Diseases & War Neuroses ("Shell Shock") in the British Army*, New York, 1917, 9-10.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 13-4.

⁷¹ *Committee. of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock"*, Evidence of Gen. Lord Horne, 16; Evidence of Lt. Col. E. Hewlett, 18; Evidence of A. F. Hurst, 26.

argued that shell shock cases should be isolated from military general hospitals to prevent the spread of what was regularly seen as a disciplinary, rather than medical condition. Among more intelligent men, the wastage of “nervous capital”, that is, allowing one’s thoughts free rein, rather than living for the hour, were regarded as inevitably leading to the symptoms of shell shock.⁷²

For many soldiers, the front-line experience and military life, rather than offering the much-vaunted opportunity to prove masculine prowess, produced instead feelings of heteronomy – subordination to military discipline and helplessness in the face of mechanised destruction. Some feminist scholars, notably Sandra Gilbert,⁷³ have suggested that this feeling of impotence was compounded by a sense that women were finding new and liberating opportunities in the wartime economy. The very nature of trench warfare, where men were pinned down for weeks, often without glimpsing the enemy and with little opportunity to fire a shot in anger, while subjected to shelling, compounded this feeling. David Forsyth, one of three practitioners of psychoanalysis at the outbreak of the war, underlined the sense of powerlessness in the face of death as a major factor in psychological breakdown.⁷⁴

More significantly, Forsyth also established that many of his subjects began to experience psychological disturbance even before being posted to the front, a fact confirmed by other medics. In one instance, a man was rendered temporarily blind

⁷² *ibid.* Evidence of E. Mapother, Medical Superintendent, Maudsley Neurological Hospital 28, Evidence of Sq. Ldr. Tyrrell 31, 33-4; Myers, 95-6; G. Elliott Smith, ‘Shock & the Soldier’, *Lancet* 15.4.1916, 814.

⁷³ Gilbert 197-8.

⁷⁴ Forsyth 1400.

while still training in England.⁷⁵ The military medical authorities tried to contain and explain the prevalence of shell shock and to limit the damage to the ideals of white masculinity. A terminology developed that distinguished between those who had developed symptoms in the firing line and who were therefore deserving of some public sympathy, and those whose symptoms had arisen away from the front. The latter were clearly to be regarded with more suspicion as either malingerers or of questionable manhood. At first, on medical records “shell shock” was to be appended with “W” – wounded – in those cases that had emerged during action. Other cases were to be appended with “S” – sick. Later, the classifications NYD – not yet diagnosed – (Shell Shock) and NYD (Nervousness) were substituted respectively. By 1 18, however, the problem had become so acute that the term “shell shock” was dropped altogether in France and patients had to be sent for thorough diagnosis in the United Kingdom.⁷⁶

v) Psychoanalysis & the Suggestion of Homosexuality

Some in the medical profession, however, were less concerned about the circumstances in which breakdown had occurred. Forsyth, for example, concluded that the ‘nature and intensity of the trauma are of secondary importance ... attention must be directed to the temperament, the personal psychology, of the individual patients’.⁷⁷ With this in mind, Forsyth went on to use his psychoanalytic methods to probe his patients for possible flaws in masculine character. He insisted that the urge

⁷⁵ Forsyth, 1401; Burton-Fanning, 907.

⁷⁶ Myers, 94-6, 101.

⁷⁷ Forsyth, 1401

to flee in the face of possible death was a strong and ineradicable, protective function, which could be contained 'by a still more powerful effort of will'.⁷⁸

A man with a neurotic disposition, however, did not possess the psychological resources to maintain self-control. Failure to control one's sexual urges was seen as a clear indication of this particular failing of character. Doctors reported nocturnal seminal emissions among some shell shock cases, which they linked to previous episodes of alleged moral impropriety such as the reading of cheap novels. Excessive masturbation was also believed to be a contributing cause.⁷⁹ The followers of psychoanalysis attempted only slightly more sophisticated, but equally judgmental, diagnoses. Forsyth disclosed that a 'patient who had broken down under shell-fire proved on analysis to be a case of unconscious homosexuality with well-marked anal-eroticism. Another patient, similarly invalided, disclosed the features of a case of anxiety-hysteria, together with a strong Oedipus complex'.⁸⁰ Other psychiatrists responded angrily to Forsyth's suggestions. On one level, this was due to the level of hostility towards psychoanalysis regarded as a continental perversion or aberration. Charles Mercier, who had already led a boycott of psychoanalytic papers at the British Medical Association, accused Forsyth of putting 'filthy thoughts' of homosexuality into the minds of his patients where none had existed previously.⁸¹

Despite these fierce rebuttals it is clear that the military authorities believed that men suffering from shell shock, even in front-line situations, were of a more questionable

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ G. Elliott Smith, 815-6; Forsyth, 1400.

⁸⁰ Forsyth, 1402.

character. As such, they were more likely to exhibit preferences that fell short of the ideals of white masculinity. This is illustrated in the case of a white Jamaican officer who was cashiered for homosexuality. Second Lieutenant Ernest Dunn suffered concussion and shrapnel wounds to his left eye at La Basse in August 1916. Although his physical injuries appear to have healed, Dunn was tormented by nightmares and insomnia for which a rest-cure in Jamaica was prescribed. On his return, his general constitution had not improved and neurasthenic symptoms were still evident.

Dunn did not return to his unit, the 3rd Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, until July 1917, nearly a year after his original injuries. Within weeks of his return, Dunn was denounced by a fellow-officer, Second Lieutenant Yates, for mutual sexual acts while the two shared a billet. Dunn fiercely denied that such contact had taken place, both during and in the wake of the case. However, aside from the sexual aspects of the case, it is evident that Dunn was quite open about his need for comfort and emotional support due to his continuing fragile mental condition; a need to which his accuser seems to have initially responded positively. The military authorities seem to have been as much concerned about this display of male vulnerability and affection, and the boundaries of male friendship, as about the alleged instances of sexual contact. While male comradeship and platonic relationships between a younger and older male were highly regarded in the masculine culture of the period, any intimation of sexual contact was deemed cheapening and transgressed the boundaries of masculine self-control. Although

⁸¹ Chas. A. Mercier letter to the *Lancet*, 15.1.1916, 154.

there was insufficient evidence for a courts martial, Dunn was stripped of his commission and dismissed from the army. As a result, he also lost his peace-time position in the Jamaican civil service, despite the fact that he successfully re-enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service shortly after the case. Yates on the other hand had his commission reinstated on the personal intervention of Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War, on the grounds that he had been “led astray”.⁸²

Colonial Office officials felt that Dunn might also have been treated more harshly than Yates because of his Jamaican origins.⁸³ White people who lived or who had served in the tropics had long been regarded as vulnerable not only to physical nervation but moral decline also. It is likely that Dunn was regarded as an obvious instance of the latter by the military authorities who tried him. Indeed, there was a notion captured in some literary representations of Empire, that the further one travelled from England, the more susceptible one became to homosexual urges.⁸⁴

² WO339/39693 medical sheets (Army Form A45) 31.8.1916-26.10.1917, Statements of 2nd Lts. J. Yates & E. W. Dunn, 20.9.1917. Robert Graves, *Goodbye To All That*, London, 1960 [1929], particularly 23, 39, 143 and passim, provides a good example of the nature of male comradeship and Platonism and the attendant attitudes towards homosexuality. The correspondence of Raymond Asquith, in which he details his role defending an officer accused in a similar case, also gives an insight into the attitudes and prejudices of the era. See letters to Lady Diana Manners, 27.8.1916 and K. A. 2 & 12.9.1916, Joliffe, 290, 296. Between 1914 and 1919 22 officers and 270 other ranks were officially charged with committing “indecent” acts (Ferguson, 349).

⁸³ CO137/726//36598 Hewins to J. I. McPherson, MP, USS War, 13.9.1918. On the other hand, there is evidence that considerable resentment was felt when inexperienced officers from the colonial planter class were promoted on account of their privileged background over men from the metropole with greater experience. Robert Graves describes a young and rather feeble officer, “Jamaica”, a planter’s son from that island, who gained his commission on the recommendation of the GOC, Jamaica, but who proved wholly inadequate to the task (Graves, 129-33).

⁸⁴ Joseph Bristow, ‘Passage to E. M. Forster: Race, Homosexuality , and the “Unmanageable Streams” of Empire’ in Gittings, 151-4. As Wayne Cooper has discussed in the case of Walter Jekyll, a mentor of Claude McKay and annotator of Jamaican folk songs, for some, the tropics could indeed provide a haven of sorts from the rigid sexual boundaries of late-Victorian Britain (Wayne F. Cooper, *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance*, Baton Rouge, 1996, 29-32).

Such official prejudice, however, ran alongside contrary efforts to insulate shell shock cases from the potential slights that could be cast on their masculinity and to protect the honourable and heroic image of British manhood. This was becoming increasingly significant as it became clear that members of the officer class were twice as likely to present, or at least be diagnosed, with symptoms of shell shock.⁸⁵ In general, neurasthenia became the favoured term used for men of this background as a way of signifying exhaustion through heroic devotion to duty, rather than mental collapse brought about by the trauma of war. This stance was clear in a retort to Forsyth's claim that many shell-shock cases were examples of latent homosexuality. A correspondent to the *Lancet*, claimed that neurasthenia was most common among the professional classes 'all of whom are trying to perform three days' work in two days'.⁸⁶

The embarrassment at the high level of war neurosis reported among the officer class is evident in the various speculations advanced that attempted to explain the phenomenon away. Lewis Yealland and his colleague E. D. Adrian, notable for their particularly brutal methods of treatment, such as the administration of pinpricks and electrical shocks, argued that the majority of patients were of low intelligence. Indeed, medical records show that the pre-war tendency to link mental illness and mental impairment continued and that a diagnosis of either type would be referred to the "mental ward". A man presenting in a confused or disorientated state with memory loss, or manifesting symptoms such as head tremors, jerking limbs or a

⁸⁵ Stone, 249.

⁸⁶ Letter from "G. P.", *Lancet*, 29.1.1916.

stammer, could be designated “mentally deficient (idiocy)”, especially if he could, in the official jargon, “only give a poor account of himself”.⁸⁷

If judged of higher intelligence a patient might be presented as highly suggestible or as having a dubious family history tainted by insanity. A questionable pedigree – the presence of Jewish ancestry for example – was also deemed responsible for mental instability among officers of higher intelligence.⁸⁸ There were also suggestions that such men had not engaged in sufficient “rough and tumble” in childhood or had not attended public school.⁸⁹ Thomas Salmon, an American observer, on the other hand, believed that men deemed “mental defectives” should not have been recruited in the first place. He argued that such men were not suited to modern warfare and were often subject to ‘episodes of confusion or excitement’⁹⁰ in the front line, which should not have been regarded as true war neurosis or shell shock. To emphasise this distinction, and perhaps to encourage a more sympathetic approach to the psychologically wounded, Salmon stressed that the ‘generally high standard of intelligence among the patients in the “shell shock” hospitals is noticeable’.⁹¹

Hysteria & Empire: The Case of White Jamaica

If the war exposed the frailty of white masculinity at war, then it implied a similar state of affairs in terms of Imperial governance, especially as the standards of military and Empire masculinity ran in tandem. Both strands of the masculine ideal

⁸⁷ MH106/2303 No. 3446 Charles Roake 12 KRRC & No. 327829 George Simpson ASC; MH106/2304 157010 Wilkinson, J 884 Area Labour Company.

⁸⁸ E. D. Adrian & L. R. Yealland, ‘The Treatment of Some Common War Neuroses’, *Lancet* 9.6.1917, 868; Oram, 79, 88.

⁸⁹ Burton-Fanning, 908.

⁹⁰ Salmon, 14

placed a heavy burden upon soldier and colonial functionary alike. This is evident in the example of Lieutenant Leonard Ottley, Staff Officer Local Forces for Jamaica. During his service in Jamaica, Ottley had become a prominent figure. He served as commissioner of the Boy Scouts and delivered lectures on the war and scouting in which he extolled the value of discipline and training 'to bring out all the manly qualities dormant in the individual'.⁹² When war broke out Ottley worked at frenetic pace, organising recruitment meetings, and a training programme for the militia and the mobilisation of the Jamaican war contingents. Unfortunately, these duties proved too much and Ottley suffered a nervous breakdown that received wide public coverage that registered the frailties of white masculinity. The *Zouave*, battalion journal of the 2nd West India Regiment, in its "letter from Jamaica" column, was 'sorry to say Ottley has broken down and is to be invalided home. The boy has had a very trying time since the war and – done good work'.⁹³

Significantly, the symptoms Ottley displayed were very similar to the cases of neurasthenia more often associated with front-line service. His medical notes record neurasthenia and anaemia and show that Ottley was 'subject to headache and nervous twitchings of the hands'. He was also 'jumpy, intolerant of sudden noise, irritable and easily upset'. A medical board reported that Ottley was 'in a condition of nervous instability' and that he was not fit mentally or physically to remain in post. However, the medics could not resist the opportunity to lay part of the blame at the door of the Jamaican climate, reflecting the contemporary tendency to present the

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² DG 5.7.1915, 6 (quote); *Boy Scouts HQ Gazette*, Nov. 1915, 207.

⁹³ *Zouave*, April 1916, 58.

frontiers of Empire as at once enervating and invigorating. A return to the metropole where Ottley could enjoy “country air and quiet rest” was prescribed.⁹⁴

As if to restore this somewhat jaded image of white masculinity, breaking under the strain of both climate and wartime duties, the press rushed to heap praise on Ottley as he left for home when the *Gleaner* eulogised:

As a worker he was a marvel. How he combined the multifarious and responsible duties assigned to him from time to time and duly executed them, has been the surprise of everybody. He did so with splendid courage and determination, never complaining at any time and but with a singleness of purpose. Whatever was assigned to him was considered a call to duty, and it was also a principle with him “to do or die” ... No thought ever of himself. Is it any wonder that he has broken down and has had to seek rest and change?⁹⁵

As a final flourish, reference was made to Ottley’s role in the local scout movement and to the high esteem in which he was held by the boys. Many of whom, it was reported, broke down in tears as “Auld Lang Syne” was played as his ship departed.⁹⁶

The potential vulnerability of military and Empire masculinities also surfaced in advertisements for patent remedies and quack cures that were a regular feature in both the metropolitan and colonial press. For a colony such as Jamaica, that did not witness the return of large numbers of traumatised white troops, these advertisements were perhaps the most visible indication of white masculine anxiety until Jamaican troops went overseas. Most of the advertising campaigns predated the war and initially tended to exploit the fear of the tropical climate or overwork on the

⁹⁴ Proceedings of a Medical Board (Army Form A45) held 3.3.1916 & 27.5.1916.

⁹⁵ 28.4.1916, 3.

administrators of Empire. They played on the insecurity of the white colonial classes that focused on disease and combustibility of the black populace. But by early 1915, many were reflecting and emphasising the depredations of modern warfare in order to prove the efficacy of the product. Advertisements for the tonic, *Sanatogen*, targeted men ‘doing hard mental work in a tropical climate’⁹⁷ and claimed to be ‘the cure for jaded nerves’ and nervous debility.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, an E. Norton of Chancery Lane promised ‘Weak, Tired and Nervous Men’ that he would send a leaflet with information to cure ‘Nervous and Organic Derangements ... in a plain sealed envelope’⁹⁹ – a clear reference to male sexual impotence.

The advertisements were often written in such a way as to encourage the reader to identify the product and hence the condition with those at the cutting edge of the war effort and the Empire project. Another patent tonic, *Phosferine*, which promised to cure, among other ills, “nervous debility”, “mental exhaustion”, “hysteria” and ‘brain-fag’, claimed ‘a world-wide reputation for curing disorders of the nervous system’. A ‘special travel and service note’ recommended the product for ‘men on **active service**, Travellers, Hunters, Explorers, Prospectors, Missionaries etc.’.¹⁰⁰ Advertisements for *Phosferine* appeared regularly in the *Jamaica Times* with enthusiastic, illustrated endorsements by stereotypical characters that may otherwise have inhabited the populist novels of the war effort and Empire. One version captured the traits and personality of the “heroic neurasthenic” in the front-line who

⁹⁶ *ibid.* During his sick leave, Ottley was promoted to captain. He eventually reached the rank of major and worked as adviser in Upper Silesia. He died from a liver abscess and septicaemia in August 1921.

⁹⁷ JT 23.11.14, 29.

⁹⁸ JT 16.1.1915, 22.

⁹⁹ JT 23.1.15, 25.

had previously strained to maintain a masculine composure in a hectic peacetime occupations; a rather ambivalent glimpse of the hero of Empire at home and abroad.

I may say I am a continuous user of Phosferine and find it a great restorative after the nerve-racking atmosphere of the trenches, just as much as in Civil life after a hard day's work. Before enlisting, many a time my business, mostly brain work, would carry me sometimes into the small hours of the morning. At last I was told that I was on the point of a nervous breakdown and was recommended to try Phosferine, which soon brought me back to normal. But again, in the trenches under shell fire the old trouble very soon reasserted itself in the form of violent headaches and neuralgia. Again I tried the old remedy, and the same on the battlefield as in the office, Phospherine put me right.¹⁰¹

An advertisement for *Sensapensa* 'A dependable remedy for nervous debility, impotency, sleeplessness, exhaustion, loss of memory, night emissions, wasting of parts, lost vigour and any form of neurasthenia' claimed to have 'brought happiness, strength, vigour and vital power to thousands of men'. 'Procure a box today and be a new man',¹⁰² the caption exhorted. This range of "symptoms" might appear during war or peacetime and were routinely interpreted by contemporary medics as symptoms of male hysteria, effeminacy and poor self-control. However, they are also significant in that they appear repeatedly in the accounts left by the medical observers of shell shock. The symptoms symbolised the feelings of powerlessness felt by many men in the face of mechanised destruction and military authority which were addressed in an advertisement for "Junora, the wine of Health".

The Shock of Battle is tremendous in these times, the explosions, the shriek of the shell, the uncertainty of the happenings, death reaching a man from miles away sent by a man who cannot see his target to kill another who cannot see his attacker and in many cases does not know what struck him.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ JT 27.11.1915, 19 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² JT 23.1.15, 12.

¹⁰³ DG 10.6.1916, 9..

This advertisement also captured the deep sense of unease felt, not only towards the future of white masculinity but the Empire project as a whole – ‘There are other great shocks such as the ... reported death of Lord Kitchener and his staff’.¹⁰⁴ Although they promised restoration, these advertisements simultaneously hinted at short-comings in the men normally associated with heroic feats that were portrayed as ultimately dependent on a quick cure, rather than a stoic and manly character.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

3

“The cannon’s summoning roar” Jamaica & the Outbreak of War

Jamaica in 1914

Jamaica was dominated by the legacy of plantation slavery. This system had handed down to post-emancipation society the basis for a race and class hierarchy that placed the majority of power in the hands of a small white elite. In the years since 1838, white society had become more stratified as a result of small waves of white migration to the island. French émigrés arrived after fleeing the Haitian Revolution; a trickle of Portuguese indentured migrants came during the 1830s and 1840s. At this time, there were also limited experiments to establish white settlers from Scotland and Germany, who Governor Blake hoped would provide industry and initiative to Jamaican agriculture. Throughout this period, there was a steady stream of whites from the metropole who serviced the colonial bureaucracy and the supervisory, technical and administrative needs of the plantations.

Despite the differences in occupational and ethnic status, reflected in numerous societies and organisations, the white minority formed a distinct ethnic block that wielded privilege over the black and brown population. Imperial power sustained the system of Crown Colony government that excluded the majority of the population, both from the franchise and elected office, by high property qualifications. White

political and economic power stood in inverse relation to the size of the white population, which amounted to less than two per cent by the outbreak of the war.¹

One of the most significant aspects of the white domination of power was the persistence of shadism in Jamaican society. The intermingling of the races had resulted in a wide diversity of skin tone, from the very black, through brown, red and yellow to the near-white, or “pass-for-white”. Whiteness equalled power and prestige and a white skin was, for many non-whites, something to be aspired to. For this reason, petty differences based on skin shade were rife in Jamaican society, a situation exploited by the white elite, who looked more favourably upon the lighter-skinned elements of the population.

The trappings of white society – “culture” – was also something to be aspired to. Indeed, as Patrick Bryan has remarked, ‘the achievement of European culture and education became an end in itself’² for black and brown people who wished to advance their social standing. The presence of a cultured and educated black and brown middle class, was an ambivalent one. From the perspective of the more liberal-minded among the colonial elite, it was proof of the “civilising” effect of the Imperial mission. Simultaneously, it was also proof that the non-white subjects of Empire were capable of equalling the achievements of their colonial masters.

¹ Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People 1880-1902* (Basingstoke, 1991), 67-8; Patrick Bryan, ‘The White Minority in Jamaica at the End of the Nineteenth Century’ in Howard Johnson & Karl Watson (eds.), *The White Minority in the Caribbean*, Kingston, Ian Randle, 1998.

² Bryan, *The Jamaican People* ..., xi.

The basis for the brown middle class had been laid in the slavery era. Often the result of liaisons between slave women and members of the planter class or their white employees, brown people were more likely to be manumitted. As “free-coloureds” they became a small, but significant, element in Jamaican slave society, establishing themselves as landowners that would come to form the “respectable” peasantry. Alternatively, they might become established as tradesmen, an avenue that was also open to the free black element, who had benefited from undertaking skilled positions on the plantation. In the wake of emancipation, and despite the high property qualifications, the brown middle class formed up to one third of the House of Assembly before its dissolution in the wake of the Morant Bay Rebellion.³

Although they have been characterised as occupying a buffer zone between black and white, they were feared by the white elite, due to their ambition, and, increasingly, their superior education. But more significantly, white society dreaded an effective alliance of the brown and black elements – the memory of Haiti was never far below the surface. Some whites doubted the wisdom of recruiting a local militia, which might include brown men, for this very reason.⁴ The ranks of the brown middle class grew throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. To it was added a smaller black component who had achieved success – against the odds – as landowners. The development of colonial education was also a key factor, which saw brown men, and, to a lesser extent, their black counterparts, entering the lower echelons of professions such as the Colonial Civil Service and teaching. Aside from

³ Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor & Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*, Baltimore, 1992, 219.

⁴ Bryan, *The White Minority* ..., 121.

the professions, there was a significant black and brown artisan class, that was most numerous in the building trades and who were to form the first trade union organisations in Jamaica.⁵

At the 1911 census, the black population stood at 630, 200 or seventy-six per cent of the total. The majority subsisted as peasants, tenant farmers and wage-labourers. The peasantry and tenant farmers, clustered on small plots, which by the turn of the century number over 100,000, had been responsible for the diversification of the Jamaican economy. They produced foodstuffs for home consumption and a large proportion of fruit, coffee and ginger exports. Despite this contribution to the Jamaican economy, the small cultivators faced constant pressure from high rents, disproportionate taxation and, from the 1890s, the monopolisation of land by the burgeoning banana industry. Increasingly, the peasantry was forced to supplement their income with employment on public works schemes or the sugar plantations. From the 1880s, the pressures on the peasantry precipitated its decline. As a whole, the agricultural workforce, as a proportion of the Jamaican population, fell at the rate of around four per cent every ten years. At the same time employment opportunities in industry and domestic service remained static. The main alternative for the underemployed peasantry and working class was migration to the Panama Canal Zone, the United States, the Cuban sugar plantations or the fruit plantations of Central America. Indeed, between 1890 and 1920 there was a net emigration of around 120, 000.⁶

⁵ Bryan, *The Jamaican People ...*, 217-233.

⁶ Bryan, *The Jamaican People ...*, 131-151; Post, 41, 106, 133. For studies of the migration experience see Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers in the United Fruit Co. in Costa Rica, 1870-*

The Jamaican economy was unable to provide decent livelihoods for the bulk of the population. But for the white elite, the parlous state of both the economy and the black majority was laid at the door of the latter themselves. This view was summed up in a letter from Canon Purcell Hendrick to the Jamaican press in the second year of the war.

There can be no doubt that the labour problem in Jamaica is becoming a very serious one; indeed, the laziness amongst the lower classes is a curse, and the cause of much of the privation which they themselves have to suffer. Loafers abound in our streets, our prisons overflow with vagrants and thieves, whilst to get a man to come and take honest work and to stick to it is almost impossible.⁷

War as the Antidote to Tropical Enervation

The War and Colonial Offices would later equivocate over the acceptance of war contingents from Jamaica and the other West Indian territories. However, within Jamaica, the arrival of war was seen as an opportunity to stir the population into purposeful, masculine activity. Involvement in the war effort was upheld as a remedy for the lack of human industry that, in the eyes of many white observers, had beset the black population and was assumed to be responsible for the parlous condition of the peasantry and emergent working class. This alleged lassitude was also held to have afflicted white settlers and visitors, the tropical climate and mores sapping the virility and vigour of the purportedly industrious Anglo-Saxon male.

1940, Baton Rouge, 1996; Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama 1850-1914*, Mona, 1984.

⁷ DG 22.6.1916, 4.

Herbert de Lisser, the editor of the *Gleaner*, has been described by Rupert Lewis as “Jamaica’s Kipling”.⁸ He encapsulated the view that the war would prove a source of masculine invigoration to all races and classes in Jamaica. Opening his account of Jamaica’s part in the war, he mused:

Summer has come, and over wide spaces of sunlit country a deep silence broods. In the city and the towns there is but little movement; the mind feels itself occupied sufficiently with the mere exertion of will required to strive against the influence of the *deadening tropical languor*; nothing it would seem could startle this half-torpid community into *full-blooded* life, could awaken it to eager, compelling, *absorbing mental activity*. But in August, 1914, Jamaica was to receive a shock, the reflex of that which startled the world in those thrilling days that are now so far away. And Jamaica was to throw off its languor and its placid calm as sleep flies from the eyes of the soldier when he hears the cannon’s summoning roar.⁹

De Lisser’s musings mirror, in a more subtle form, the position of Thomas Carlyle, who, some sixty years previously, typified metropolitan disillusion with abolitionist optimism and berated the black workforce for not putting its productive potential at the disposal of the planter. The black peasantry had managed, in the first decades after emancipation, to escape the totalising clutches of the plantocracy by the establishment of small-holdings. Consequently, labour tended to be carried out on the plantations on an ad hoc basis. Carlyle, however, caricatured the black peasant as a simple, uncivilised soul who was happy to idle away each day, sustained on the “pumpkin” which apparently grew in abundance on land that was all too freely available.¹⁰

⁸ Rupert Lewis, ‘Garvey’s Perspective on Jamaica’ in Rupert Lewis & Patrick Bryan (eds.), *Garvey: His Work & Impact*, Mona, 1988, 230.

⁹ Herbert G. De Lisser, *Jamaica and the Great War*, Kingston, 1917, 1 (my emphasis).

¹⁰ Holt, 280.

On receiving the news that, war had broken out the Governor issued a Proclamation of Loyalty. This called on all subjects, but especially ex-servicemen and constables, to present themselves for service in defence of Jamaica to local police inspectors. There were also calls for the population to refrain from activities likely to cause “popular excitement”, indicating that the government feared internal unrest, rather than a more remote external threat. The “excitability” of the black population, with its connotations of irrationality and a disruption to the Empire order, had long haunted the colonial administration, particularly since the days of the Morant Bay Rebellion.¹¹

Letters began to appear in the press urging Jamaican men to volunteer. Fitz Ritson, clerk to the Trelawny Parochial Board, wrote to suggest the formation of a local defence force to free regular troops stationed in Jamaica for service overseas. His plan unwittingly anticipated the view of the Colonial Office and the War Office that Jamaicans should be directed primarily to limited local measures and should not presume a role in the wider world conflict. However, while clear in his support for the Empire, Fitz Ritson also stressed his desire to defend Jamaica, ‘our dear country,’¹² signalling a sense of Jamaicaness that was beginning to emerge. Ivanhoe Harry, in a letter to the *Jamaica Times*, was even more categorical in demanding that the manhood of Jamaica should be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for their island: ‘Men of the Island of Jamaica, be not branded as cowards if you are needed

¹¹ JT, 8.8.1914, 8.

¹² DC, 8.8.14, 15

for active service. Be courageous, be firm, be resolute, prepare to defend your country with your life's blood'.¹³

As the Legislative Council met to discuss war-time contingency measures, a *Daily Chronicle* editorial, headlined "The Duty of Jamaicans", demanded action and not flowery words of loyalty to King and Empire. Supporting the formation of a local defence force, the paper believed that: 'It is about the only way in which the manhood of the colony can make really manifest the deep loyalty with which we have always professed to be inspired'.¹⁴ Although appealing to masculine ideals of duty and purposeful activity, the editorial clearly underlined that such ideals should be contained within the subsidiary role of local defence. In reality, the quest for death and glory on the battlefield would elude most Jamaicans who came forward for service at this stage. In its place, was ample opportunity for public pomp and ceremonial, but little else but to watch the coast for the occasional suspicious ship or make bicycle patrols of the island.

In the past, the call to arms to defend Jamaica and the Empire had been aimed at a very specific audience – the respectable, white property owner. However, as in other spheres of Jamaican life, non-whites were not content to sit back and be excluded from full participation in the island polity, especially when exclusion might pour doubt on their manhood. On the 19th August 1914 a recruitment meeting was held for the Jamaican Defence Regiment. Two hundred volunteers attended. Included among

¹³ JT, 12.9.14, 5

¹⁴ DC, 13.8.14

their number were Indians who had seen military service before entering indentureship.¹⁵

The expectation in the metropole was that Jamaica, in common with many other colonies would concentrate on supporting the war effort with raw materials, foodstuffs and finance, in effect continuing in its traditional relationship with the metropole. As in Britain, women were in the forefront of efforts to provide comfort and sustenance to the troops. Consignments of fruit, preserves and cigarettes were regularly provided.¹⁶ In a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, “A. E. B.” suggested that Jamaica’s “loyal daughters” could assist the war effort by collecting medical supplies for the wounded and foregoing luxuries such as “chocolates” and “perfumes”.¹⁷ Like most women involved in wartime charity efforts, A. E. B. seems to have been drawn from the white elite. The majority of blacks would not be faced with such sacrificial dilemmas. Rather, they would find that by the middle years of the war they would be enduring the inflationary pressure on items of general consumption. In addition, they were subject to appeals from the local war charities that emerged. The poet, Raglan Phillips, urged that Jamaicans should ‘sen’ in Postal Order what you did ‘pen’ ‘pon rum’.¹⁸

¹⁵ DC, 24.8.14, 11.

¹⁶ See, for example, CO 137/708/2735 A. Cameron Mais to Colonial Sec. 29.12.1914; CO 137/708/1016 Manning to SSC 7.1.1915; CO 137/708/7081 Manning to SSC 12.2.1915.

¹⁷ DC, 20.8.14, 3.

¹⁸ JT, 12.12.14, 9. Phillips came to Jamaica as a penkeeper in 1871. He became a publisher and later encouraged the Salvation Army to send a mission to Jamaica. During the 1890s, he served the Salvationist cause as a staff officer. Later became a Baptist minister in Clarendon and St. Thomas (*Whos Who in Jamaica, 1919-1920*, 155).

Despite the inferences that Jamaica would be restricted to a auxiliary role in the war effort, it was clear that many Jamaicans were not content to stop at home, minding the home fires. Within constructs of military masculinity, the hearth was the place for women, old men and boys, not men eager to prove their masculine prowess. They were encouraged by the eulogies littering the press to those martyred in the present war and the historic battles of Empire. These, Jamaicans were told were seminal, not only in the establishment of the Empire, but in defining manly ideals and conduct. Tom Redcam's poem, 'To Britain's Nameless Heroes', reprinted in the *Jamaica Times* in September 1914, recalled the glorious feats and defeats of Empire and the unnamed, but immortal dead of the Afghan and Boer War campaigns.

Though ne'er recorded story may speak his humble name,
Undying lives the Glory that crowns the nameless dead

The glorious dead were held up as examples of steadfastness in the face of pain and fear for the new generation of Empire warriors. The dead in question were white British men and the abandonment or control of fear was central to the white masculine ideal. But, as would frequently happen throughout the war, appeals to particular races or racial identities, had the potential to become more generalised and blurred, as Redcam's words illustrate.

From thee our race possessing the nerve that doth not fail,
The will that doth not falter, the heart that doth not quail.¹⁹

These ambivalent odes to military manhood, although aimed specifically at the white male minority in Jamaican society, could also be appropriated by those sections of the non-white population who were intent on throwing themselves behind the war effort.

¹⁹ JT, 12.9.14, 1.

Depicting a Local Threat

The main preoccupation of the white elite during the war years would become internal security. However, to maintain interest in the war effort and to justify wartime restrictions and privations the minimal threat of German invasion had to be played up. The most significant sphere of German influence in the area was Haiti, which hosted a small but extremely influential German community who controlled a sizeable proportion of the economy. Germans had invested in the Haitian railway and tramways and shipped Haitian coffee to Europe. Since 1912 there had been rumours in US circles that Germany intended to use Haiti as a coaling station and even that she intended to establish a protectorate on the island. More significantly, German money had financed the Leconte and Simon revolutions in the years preceding the US intervention of July 1915. When around two hundred Haitians presented themselves for service at the French Legation, they were rebuffed on the grounds that the Haitian leader, Zamor, had enlisted German assistance to pay off public debts, such as outstanding army pay.²⁰

The German presence in Haiti, coupled with the historic fear that Jamaica would be visited by a Haitian-style black revolution, helped to fuel the spy and invasion scares that surfaced in Jamaica from time-to-time. In the early months of the war, a lieutenant in the local defence forces claimed to have spotted an “aeroplane full of Germans ... followed by 2 war balloons” landing at Fellowship. But this mistaken

²⁰ Robert & Nancy Heinel, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1971*, Boston, 1978, 351-3; DC, 31.8.14, 4.

siting turned out to have been the 'Evening Star seen through light cloud'.²¹ The only local concrete encounter with German forces occurred when a German naval tender, the *Bethania*, was captured by H. M. S. *Essex* and escorted her into Kingston harbour in December 1914.²²

A short story contributed to the *Jamaica Times* by the self-styled adventurer and writer, Harry Morgan, attempted to stir up a suitably patriotic spirit in the Jamaican population by playing on the fears of an invasion. Harry Morgan was the pen-name of Frederick Van Nostrand Groves, a journalistic sleight-of-hand that supplanted an uncomfortably Germanic appellation with a pseudonym at once more dashing and associated with Jamaica's colonial past.²³ 'When the Germans Took Jamaica' is of little literary merit. Disregarding its extravagant and rambling style, however, there is a concern to present Britain as guardian of the subject races in the face of German barbarism; a desire to reiterate the imperative of colonial stewardship that would inform official policy in relation to the Jamaican war effort.

'When the Germans Took Jamaica' describes a feminised Jamaica laid waste and violated by a German invasion supported by naval destroyers and aircraft. The chief protagonist and narrator, Sir Horace Meadows, is a white patriarch and ageing frontiersman, replete with bandoleer, who blusteringly protects the honour of his womenfolk from the unwanted sexual attentions of the Germans, as armed resistance collapses and the population flees en masse into the countryside. Even in this dire

²¹ WO95/5446 entry for 16.10.1914.

²² Frank Cundall, *Jamaica's Part in the Great War 1914-1918*, London, 1925, 20-1.

situation, Meadows is the epitome of the stoical, straight-dealing Englishman. He is able to dispatch his nefarious German opponents with a blow from the fist, perhaps anticipating the figure of Captain Hurricane who dealt similarly with “Jerry” in metropolitan boys comics from the 1950s onwards.

Morgan describes the German invaders in terms that might also have been used by anxious whites to describe black insurrection. ‘[T]he Kaiser’s demonical hordes yelling and shrieking in fiendish glee’ after shooting some prisoners ‘ended their orgy by hacking their corpses to pieces with their short sabres’. ²⁴ Fear of German intrigue in the region and black revolt both focused on Haiti, serving to compound white Jamaican fears. That this was uppermost in the author’s mind is clear when Morgan refers to ‘an armed contingent of 2,000 recruited in a neighbouring island ... commanded by German officers, clothed and equipped by the German Government’. ²⁵ Later, the narrator reports that ‘[o]f the Haytians some 1,600 have been captured’. ²⁶

Morgan presents the black population as innocent and childlike. Once subject to the worst depredations of Prussian militarism and without British protection, Morgan envisages that black Jamaicans will become rapidly enfeebled and reduced to panic: ‘Past our house fled the wild-eyed remnant of the once proud West India Regiment’. ²⁷ White women also require the staying hand of patriarchy. Meadows,

²³ Morgan also published an account of his travels in Cuba and Florida, *Odd Leaves From an Adventurer’s Log*, Kingston, 1916.

²⁴ JT 7.11.1914, 28.

²⁵ JT 14.11.1914, 4.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 29.

²⁷ JT, 7.11.1914, 28

having girded his loins for the fight by loading his ‘army Colts’ and strapping on ‘a well-filled cartridge belt’, barricades his home before going ‘to comfort and allay the fears of [his wife and daughter] who were by now sobbing piteously’.²⁸ The temporary defeat of British rule sees the white population reduced to a rabble alongside the black, highlighting the uncertainty surrounding ideals of self-control and rationality: ‘Up Slipe Road they came, dense mobs of terrified people, black and white alike wringing their hands and wailing piteously’.²⁹ Ultimately an enormous earthquake comes to the rescue of Jamaica, suggesting that when its arms fail, divine forces will intercede on behalf the Empire.

Although the *Jamaica Times* clearly stated that ‘When the Germans Took Jamaica’ was a work of fiction, some readers thought otherwise.³⁰ Letters appeared mocking their timidity and nervous dispositions. The population was expected to steel itself for conflict in a manful way without giving way to feelings of anxiety and doubt. As a correspondent, “Not Frightened”, declared:

If people of vibratory [sic] tendencies see the enemy pouncing down upon them in every wind that blows, and in every descriptive exciting engagement, they should conceal such with themselves, and not intrude on others of sterner stuff.³¹

Loyalty to Empire and the Limits of Black Nationalism

That the press coverage of the war, both fictional and otherwise, quickly percolated to the mass of the population who did not have direct access to newspapers is evident in the large number of rural labourers and peasants who came forward as volunteers.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 25.

²⁹ JT 7.11.1914, 28.

³⁰ JT, 14.11.1914, 15.

³¹ JT, 5.12.14, 29.

By late 1915, when the War Office finally accepted proposals for war contingents from the West Indian territories, patriotic demonstrations and recruitment meetings were being staged even in the more isolated districts. But there were a number of obstacles awaiting those who wished to translate their knowledge of events on the world stage into a positive show of support for the Empire cause. The view that Jamaica should only play a subsidiary role in the conflict was compounded by the fact that many whites in positions of authority believed that black Jamaicans would make poor soldiers. This stance was justified by racial ideologies that characterised black people as lacking appropriate levels of self-discipline and intelligence. As will become apparent, however, there were significant numbers of non-whites who wished to come forward. Not only did they want to disprove the disparaging innuendoes regarding their masculine military potential, but they also demonstrated a very clear attachment to the Empire project and the British crown.

Immediately after the war, a Colonial Office official remarked that the majority of Jamaicans had no sense of attachment to Britain or the Empire other than an abstract loyalty to the sovereign.³² However, it was this very attachment to the monarch and the lofty principles of Empire which sustained the Jamaican contribution to the war effort. The complex history of Jamaica – the memory of slavery and the dynamics of race, class and gender – has raised a number of paradoxes. Perhaps one of the most significant was the loyalty extended by many black peasants and workers, as well as black and brown members of the middle-class, to the person of the British monarch. During the struggle for the abolition of slavery, the monarch was seen as a source of

³² CO137/732/46378 CO Minute 19.8.1919.

higher authority to appeal to over the heads of the local plantocracy and metropolitan officialdom. The leader of the 1831 revolt, Sam Sharpe, did not attempt to suppress rumours that William IV had granted emancipation – “the free paper”. Instead, he used the rumour as a device to suggest that it was only the Jamaican plantocracy who stood between the slaves and their freedom.³³

The view that the monarch might intercede on behalf of the Jamaican masses and prevail upon the colonial authorities to act in its interests was very much in evidence in the petitions and memorials presented in the aftermath of the war. It is therefore possible to see how the concept of loyalty to King and Empire resulted in support for economic contributions and local recruitment to the war effort. There was also a genuine affection for Britain and ideals of liberal democracy, promoted within the mission of Empire, that was capable of sustaining a significant level of support from Jamaican black subjects. The Colonial Office felt its way uncertainly over the issue of the recruitment of black and “coloured” soldiers, often due to War Office inconsistencies. However, expressions of loyalty from blacks and “coloureds” were ultimately sufficient to force the CO to support, if rather half-heartedly, the establishment of the British West Indies Regiment.

Dying for the cause of King and Empire assumed a deep significance for volunteers who aspired to what were perceived as the more progressive values of Empire. This sacrifice would be used to underpin demands for post-war rewards in the shape of economic and political reforms. The symbol of Empire and progress served as a

³³ Richard Hart, *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery*, vol. II, Mona, 1985, 245-6, 255; Mary Turner, *Slaves*

yardstick by which black radicals measured their demands for equal treatment and articulated a desire to uplift the black race.³⁴ As such, loyalty to this set of principles could transcend an attachment to the territory of Jamaica. Furthermore, the symbols of Empire remained open to numerous interpretations by individuals, communities or organisations who moulded them to their own ends.

Loyalty to the values of Empire could also act as a buffer against local discrimination and racism. Sir Etienne Dupuch, who became the editor and proprietor of the *Bahamas Tribune*, recalled an incident during his service with the British West Indies Regiment which illustrates this point. Dupuch witnessed a Sikh sergeant being roughly treated by a white private because of his race. However, the Sikh deflected the racism and simultaneously belittled the white soldier, remarking “It is not for these that we fight ... It is for the grand British ideal”.³⁵ Some Jamaican soldiers may have adopted a similar approach and have continued to maintain an enthusiasm for the ideals of Empire, despite being subject to racism. Individuals responded in myriad ways to racism. Dupuch himself encountered an Indian deserter whose experiences in the army and of India under the Raj had sharpened his nationalist attitudes.³⁶

During the early stages of the war there were also manifestations of a specific loyalty to the island of Jamaica, rather than its colonial and planter apparatus. When fears of

& *Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834*, Urbana, 1982, 153-4.

³⁴ Patrick Bryan, ‘Black Perspectives in Late 19th Century Jamaica: The Case of Theophilus E. S. Scholes’ in Lewis & Bryan (eds.), 51-2; Tabili, 28-9.

³⁵ Sir Etienne Dupuch, *A Salute to Friend and Foe: My Battles, Sieges and Fortunes*, (Nassau, 1982), 54

³⁶ *ibid.*, 54-5.

invasion arose, although in reality these fears were unlikely to be realised, Jamaicans of all colours expressed their willingness to defend their island home from “Prussian barbarity”. A specifically Jamaican contribution to the allied cause began to develop that reflected a growing Jamaican national consciousness, evident in cultural expression. Bandsman W. D. Myrie of the 2 West India Regiment, to give one example, in a poem ‘Jamaica’, sang ‘... of the land I Love,/Jamaica the home of my birth,/ ... wherever I wander, for thee/My love is abiding and strong’.³⁷

Although cast within the heroic imagery of white masculinity, black Jamaica could point to her past contribution and sacrifices in earlier wars, recollected in historical articles in newspapers, which relived the conquest of Spanish Jamaica and the defeat of eighteenth-century French ambition.³⁸ Delivering the address at the first reading of the Volunteer Defence Force Bill, in August 1914, the Governor asserted:

Jamaica will loyally and patriotically assume her part in maintaining the integrity of our Empire and will comport herself as gallantly today as she has done in the past. History relates that in days gone by this island has resolutely defended her shores and has taken no small part in the wars of the past.³⁹

Frank Cundall, author of the official Jamaican history of the war, would recall how the arrival of the captured *Bethania* into Kingston harbour revived the memory of Rodney’s triumphant entry into the port with captured French ships in 1782.⁴⁰

The contribution made by Jamaicans in the West India Regiment in the Imperial conquest of Africa was also highlighted. At a meeting in Gayle, in the parish of St.

³⁷ The *Zouave*, May 1916, 89.

³⁸ See for example, ‘How Jamaica Followed the Flag’ by T. H. MacDermott (Tom Redcam) which appeared in as a series in the JT 5.6.1915, 7 & 12.6.1915, 6-7.

³⁹ DC, 14.8.14, 9

Mary and St. Thomas, Adam Roxburgh JP recalled how ‘the officers who fought with the West India Regiment in the Ashantee war and at other battle fields, have bore testimony to the courage, the bravery and endurance of the Jamaica soldiers’.⁴¹ New windows of the island’s garrison church, to replace those lost in the 1907 earthquake, were dedicated in early 1915. Two windows represented the soldier aints, St. Oswald and St. George; a third, Joshua, a symbol of service to country and sovereign and a fourth, Gideon, who had saved Israel from the Midionites. In his sermon, the Archbishop of Jamaica, also recalled the role played by the WIR in the suppression of the Ashante kingdom between 1873 and 1874. The war was likened to a holy war for the overthrow of ‘savage misrule and wrong’.⁴²

Here black Jamaicans were linked to the Empire mission, in a process that differentiated them from “heathen” Africans. The view that black Africans were uncivilised, was a view that permeated Jamaican society. The missionary zeal that consumed some black Jamaican Baptists led them to carry the Christian gospel to West Africa in the hope of “civilising” their benighted African brothers. Jamaicans helped lay the foundations for the Gold Coast Presbyterian Church as early as the 1840s, and the pre-eminent Jamaican thinker, Dr. T. E. S. Scholes, served as a missionary in the Congo during the 1880s.⁴³ Many black and brown Jamaicans may therefore have believed that they would be received as equals into the ranks of the war effort. Indeed, elsewhere, parallels were drawn between the vanquished African foe and the German aggressor. The poet, Tom Redcam, for example, referred to

⁴⁰ Cundall, 20-1.

⁴¹ DG, 20.10.1915, 11.

⁴² JT, 23.1.15, 17.

England's enemies as "Hate's dark-rolling millions".⁴⁴ Affirming Jamaica's will to fight, another poet, C. C. Percy, went further. He presented the Kaiser as a "naygar", a dialect insult that implied a person was a "good-for-nothing" or an "uncivilised" African.⁴⁵

The colonial regime also relied on the loyalty of black Jamaicans serving as professional soldiers within the West India Regiment to maintain internal order. From 1906, Jamaica served as the only depot for the regiment, whose two surviving battalions alternated garrison duty in Sierra Leone. Classed as a "native" regiment, the men received poorer pay and conditions compared with other British army units. However, they enjoyed a certain degree of status within Jamaican society and the benefits of a regular income. In their striking Zouave-style uniforms – tight blue waist-coats and red pantaloons – men of the regiment enjoyed the attentions of the women of Kingston, as well as the admiration of many men in their off-duty hours.⁴⁶

Writing in the *Zouave*, the regimental magazine of the 2nd WIR, at the outbreak of the war, Lance Corporal James Grocer articulated the intense loyalty that had made

⁴³ Bryan, 'Black Perspectives ...', 50.

⁴⁴ JT, 12.9.14, 1.

⁴⁵ 'Dat War and de Kaysah', JT, 26.12.14, 11; Frederic G. Cassidy, *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica*, London, 1961, 157. In the metropole there were strong associations made between Germans and blackness. The *East Ham Echo* commenting on appeals against conscription made by Russians and Poles, reported that 'The names of some of them were scanned rather suspiciously. Schwarz, or Schwarte, and Stein, for instance, have a German flavour ... "Schwarz" is of course pure German, meaning "black"; and we feel sorry for a Russian or Pole who has to bear that appellation of the Hun. He should get rid of it. It is allied to our "swart" and also to the Latin "sordidus", meaning filthy, which all Huns are, body and soul' (12.10.1917, 1).

⁴⁶ See Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of The West India Regiments of the British Army*, (St. Johns, Antigua, 1997), 245-6 and Bryan, *The Jamaican People ...*, 270 for rivalry between police and soldiers.

the regiment so dependable in the past. In an article entitled “What is the Union Jack”, Grocer suggested that the flag was the personification of the Empire,

the vial that contains the glorious essence of Civilization, it is the engine that is dragging to-day the train of blessing to mankind [sic] the wide world over, irrespective of Class or Creed. It was, and is, and ever will be the attitude of the Union Jack to remove from Mankind the screen of despotism and tyranny which envelopes the poisoned and suffocating air, the regions that produce only the fruits of despair and death bringing in an atmosphere of hope and prosperity.⁴⁷

At the heart of Grocer’s sentiments was a deep faith in the “civilising” and progressive mission of the Empire, whose purpose was to inculcate in the subject races the worth of individual industry and cultural progress. Grocer had read *Self Help* by Samuel Smiles, the populist proponent of Victorian enlightened self-enterprise. Smiles stressed that “manly character” depended on the “honest and upright performance of individual duty” as the antidote to “individual idleness, selfishness and vice”.⁴⁸

Also crucial at this time was the image of the Empire throwing a protective arm around its subjects in the face of German barbarism. Grover accepted the image of the Empire as a guarantor of “Emancipation” and “Freedom”, a poignant symbol for a former slave colony that helped to perpetuate the myth that Britain had set the slaves free. Also significant, in the context of Jamaican society, was Grover’s assertion that the proudest boast of the Empire was not its military achievements, but the inviolable rights of the individual. Quoting Pitt the Elder, Grover stated ‘that the humblest peasant in his cottage may bid defiance to any of the Forces of the Crown’.

⁴⁷ *Zouave*, August 1914, 138.

Linking these values to the recent outbreak of war and implicitly urging Jamaicans to be satisfied with an auxiliary role within the Empire's military project, Grocer declared that 'Love, Liberty and Loyalty, are the trumpets that call us today to extend our powers, however feeble, to a gigantic cause, better known as a righteous war'. It was to be specifically left to 'the men whose memory *England* delights to honour'⁴⁹ to carry the standard of Empire in the ensuing conflict.

The image of Britain and the Empire as the emancipator of slaves and the guardian of freedom was propagated at recruitment meetings for the Jamaica contingents. At a meeting in St. Mary and St. Thomas in October 1915, Brigadier-General Blackden, commander of the troops in Jamaica, argued that the war was a fight for liberty. Were the men of Jamaica going 'to sit down and be slaves?'.⁵⁰ The impact of magical statements such as these should not be underestimated. In post-emancipation society, economic independence and the personal autonomy associated with it were fundamental in defining black masculinity. Attempts by the colonial authorities to limit black peasant initiative had always been fiercely resisted. Subordination to the dictates of the plantation economy – the loss of land and the imposition of poor wages were viewed as deeply emasculating.

The involvement of the slaves in the emancipation struggle was overlooked and the freedoms allegedly enjoyed by Jamaicans were presented as the result of English benevolence and enlightened thinking. Now, ironically, the Jamaican masses were

⁴⁸ 'The Will & the Way' *Zouave*, November, 1914, 170-1; Samuel Smiles, *Self Help* quoted in Bet-El, 79.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 139

suddenly being encouraged to take a more active role – to recognise the manly responsibilities incumbent in defending the liberties apparently bestowed upon them from on high. At another meeting, in Kingston, Blackden raged: ‘What are we fighting for? Liberty ... Are we to say that [we] will shirk our duty? Are we to say that the liberty of the British Empire is the liberty to sit down and do nothing?’. At the same meeting, Governor Manning urged all fit and able-bodied men of Jamaica to join the colours. He reassured his audience that they would reach England before the war was over and that they would certainly get a chance to take part in what was sure to be a lengthy struggle. Manning presented the spectre of a Prussian victory which would replace the ‘benign rule of the Empire’, which drew the response from the crowd that this would mean slavery. He asked volunteers to come forward and show their gratitude for what the Empire had done for them in the past.⁵¹

Significantly, the Governor added that those coming forward would find honour among their fellow men. This statement contains the *gendered connotation* that volunteers would prove their worth as men, but, furthermore, in the context of Jamaican society, black and brown volunteers would also feel that they were proving the worth of the non-white races. The following poem by Sydney Moxsy is quoted in full. It encapsulates the recruitment appeals that preyed on fear of the reintroduction of slavery and presented England as the guardian of the rights of black men. Black men were urged to enter the hallowed portals of a fraternity of Empire in which each man could prove his masculine qualities.

⁵⁰ DG, 20.10.1915, 14.

⁵¹ DG 12.10.1915, 13.

Strike Brothers strike! a blow for England's sake,
Brave hearts that blow shall even stronger make,
When England calls what British heart would shirk?
She only calls in need for Empire's work.
Colonial hearts in loyalty must stir,
Face danger, death face all for sake of her.
They rush to aid her and for England stand,
No distance chills the love for Motherland

No outward shade can dim the pluck within,
Brave hearts may beat beneath a coloured skin,
Who fear no death so long their land be free;
The land they love, the Land of Liberty.
No danger daunts who would his country aid,
He'll fight for Country, home, for Wife and Maid.
What do you think, proud Sons of Liberty,
Your Land enslaved could you then happy be?
However much you hate such cruel strife,
Yet Death is better than dishonoured Life.
So die, if needs but try your land to save,
No craven life can equal patriot's grave.
Think not with fear of Death's untimely shroud,
But act like men of whom your land is proud.
Defend that land, don't seek alone renown,
Brave duty done is Life's immortal crown.
Fling off all selfish ties and "play the man",
your country serve and do the best you can.
He is no man who sneaks with some pretence
To shirk his duty in his land's defence.

That land is doomed which breeds a coward race,
Who money seek, but never dare to face
Their Country's foes; who fain at home would hide,
When need arises they should stem the tide,
That threats their land o'erwhelm, sweep all away,
Or make them slaves beneath a foreign sway.⁵²

Marcus Garvey's UNIA, established on the eve of the war, moved rapidly to assert loyalty to the King and Empire, omitting any direct reference to the local Jamaican or metropolitan government. It is clear from the following resolution that Garvey and his associates, at this stage, believed that the British Empire had played a progressive role and that black people should aspire to a similar place in history. This was understandable within the confines of an education system and society dominated by British Imperial values. The educated Jamaican generally had a better understanding

⁵² 'The Motherland's Call' by Sidney Moxsy, DG, 29.11.1915,14.

and appreciation of metropolitan history and culture than of the history of Jamaica. This is well-illustrated in the articles by James Grocer that appeared in the *Zouave*. They display a grounding in English political and military history, the plays of Shakespeare, as well as the self-help literature of Samuel Smiles.⁵³ The UNIA resolution affirmed that

we the members of the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League ... being mindful of the great protecting and civilizing influence of the English nation and people ... and their justice to all men, and especially to their Negro Subjects scattered all over the world, hereby beg to express our loyalty and devotion to His Majesty the King, and Empire ... We sincerely pray for the success of British Arms on the battlefields of Europe and Africa, and at Sea, in crushing the "common Foe", the enemy of peace and further civilization . . . God Save the King: Long live the King and Empire.⁵⁴

In a letter accompanying the resolution, Garvey averred that 'Our love for, and devotion to, His Majesty and the Empire, stands unrivalled and from the depths of our hearts we pray for the crowning victory of the British soldiers now at War'. A few months later, in an article contributed to the *Jamaica Times*, Garvey underlined his determination to raise blacks to the status of whites. Significantly, this included the teaching of Christianity to non-Christians in Africa.⁵⁵ Garvey would have been familiar with the numerous atrocities allegedly perpetrated by the Germans, who were depicted as "barbarous" and anti-Christian in metropolitan articles reprinted extensively in the Jamaican press. He would therefore have been particularly concerned as to the fate of Africans subject to or threatened with German rule. This may have further encouraged him to support the devil he knew against the "common

⁵³ Lance Corporal James Grocer, 'What is the Union Jack' & 'The Will & the Way'.

⁵⁴ CO137/705 Marcus Garvey, UNI and Conservation Ass. & African Communities League to RT. Hon. Lewis Harcourt, MP, SSC 16/9/1914 - Resolution passed by Ass. GM at Collegiate Hall, Kgn. 15/9/1914.

Foe". Darnley, the Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, was sufficiently impressed by Garvey's loyalty to remark that 'I blush to think that I once suggested to Marcus Garvey that he should go the workhouse'.⁵⁶

It is hardly surprising then, that Governor Manning could state that 'I can confidently assert that there is no more loyal Colony than that of Jamaica ... [Jamaicans] are genuinely unanimous in their support of the Empire and of the Mother Country'.⁵⁷ White interests in the colonies fell over backwards in asserting their loyalty to the Empire, even if this glossed over local antagonisms and if the fine words tended to be more forthcoming than hard cash. The local militias were hardly up to preventing any determined attack from enemy forces. More significantly, a plantation society, such as Jamaica, was heavily dependent on the protection of the British Navy if its goods were to reach their destinations.

Garvey's statements of loyalty also have to be seen in the broader context. As it reported the outbreak of war, the Jamaican press was also giving coverage to events in Ireland. It was able to report that the constitutional Irish Nationalist, John Redmond, had made a statement of loyalty and had promised to suspend Home Rule agitation for the duration of the war.⁵⁸ This was in the hope that post-war concessions would be forthcoming. Likewise, Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Volunteers, offered the military services of his men as a strategy against Home

⁵⁵ JT, 16.1.1915, 23

⁵⁶ CO137/705 Minute 26/10/1914.

⁵⁷ Gov. Manning to Lewis Harcourt MP, SSC 20/10/1914.

⁵⁸ Foster, 471-476 footnote consequences.

Rule.⁵⁹ In India, Gandhi gave unconditional support to British recruitment efforts, refusing in the process to demand reforms in exchange for his loyalty.⁶⁰ Thus, “respectable” local patriotism could sit comfortably with support for the war effort. In the case of Jamaica, the press felt that agitation for reform could be sensibly channelled. When the Jamaica League, a newly-formed body of black, “coloured” and white, cultural nationalists, celebrated Emancipation Day with exhibitions and talks, they were endorsed as a ‘patriotic and intelligent celebration of a day that should never be forgotten by any Jamaican black white or brown’.⁶¹ An “intelligent celebration” was obviously preferable to the white elite than a more lively marking of the occasion which might have lead to “popular excitement” or even unrest.⁶²

A War Against Barbarism, or the “End of the Age”?

The myth of German barbarism was central to the promotion of Jamaica’s war effort and her loyalty to the Empire. Grim warnings abounded regarding the fate that would befall the subject races if they did not flock to the Empire standard, or, more commonly, stand aside while the Empire fought the cause of progress and civilisation on their behalf. As in Britain, a wave of anti-German paranoia erupted. Spies and suspect enemy ships were frequently reported. Sigismund Bruhn, a

⁵⁹ JT, 8.8.14, 14.

⁶⁰ von Albertini, 19.

⁶¹ JT, 8.8.14, 14.

⁶² The Jamaica League held a conference on 3.8.14 to outline aims and objectives, under the initiative of Astley Clerk, a white Jamaican poet and owner of a music shop. However, although Clerk laid out some of the early proposals for the League it was the black Jamaican, C. A. Wilson, who took the leading role in its inauguration. The League stood for the ‘promotion of patriotic sentiment and mutual interest and the encouragement of individual and co-operative efforts for the intellectual, social and economic improvement of Jamaicans’ Perhaps somewhat portentously, the organisers believed that ‘Great changes are looming and the hour of co-operative effort has struck [and asked] Will you not help us to usher in the brighter day?’ (JT, 1.8.1914, 11/18. See also DC, 25.8.14, 6; JT, 8.8.14, 9 & 17.10.1914, 15).

shopkeeper, was arrested as an alleged German spy. Although he was able to prove that he was in fact a US citizen, he was swiftly deported upon his release.⁶³

Despite the presentation of the Germans as a nation of barbarians, the colonial elite could not allow a situation to develop whereby criticism of Germany would lead to criticism of the white races in general. The sentiment was often expressed in the press that the German population themselves were victims of the aberration of “Prussianism”, which had departed from the distinctly amateurish traditions of British masculinity and had encouraged the war by its single-minded aggression. ‘Prussianism’ was stereotypically ruthless, inflexible, militaristic and hostile to individualism and clearly to blame for the atrocities allegedly perpetrated on civilians in France and Belgium – ‘Him burn ’tore, house an church too, man, woman, pickney all’.⁶⁴

The evils of Prussianism were evident in an article published in the *Zouave* entitled ‘The German Military Muddle’. The purported shortcomings of the German army were linked to the eradication of English masculine values by the application of Prussian military discipline. Critical of a military training that instilled total obedience and knowledge of military science, the writer argued the best soldier ‘is he who knows how to “muddle through” and how to “carry on” when in a tight place, without waiting for instructions’. German training ‘eradicate[d] individualism’ and resulted in ‘iron-bound automatism’. Discipline alone was not sufficient. The

⁶³ DC, 15.8.14, 2; 25.8.14, 3; 28.8.14, 11 could footnote nos. of Germans interned, shootings etc.

officer 'is in exactly the same position as the father who has launched his son upon the battle of life. He must rely upon the past training of his son, certainly, but above all upon his 'individuality, courage, and devotion'.⁶⁵ Englishness might stand at the pinnacle of civilisation, but the uncorrupted German, although portrayed as simpler and more rustic was not far below. An article in the *Jamaica Times* stated that '[t]he German as a man is an excellent fellow, home-loving, industrious and kindly, if a bit coarse'.⁶⁶

Of course, a complete distancing from things German was not possible. It was common currency that Kaiser Wilhelm was Queen Victoria's grandson, a fact not ignored by Jamaican poet, Raglan Phillips, in his poem 'Victoria First Gran-Pickney'. However, he was keen to underline that Wilhelm had taken the wrong road due to his poor understanding of Christian principles. Phillips warned that although Jamaican millennial religion had faith there would be heaven on earth, the Kaiser would ensure that there was hell on earth. 'Millennial people does preach dare is no hell,/But him will mek fe him own, whichin will do as well'.⁶⁷ The war, therefore, could be presented as a struggle in defence of civilisation, moreover, a battle between good and evil. The tendency within Jamaican society to explain current events through Biblical allusion lent itself well to this explanation of the war. Anticipating the reality of modern warfare Tom Redcam could write 'Draws on the

⁶⁴ 'Victoria First Gran-Pickney: How Him Turn Out Bad' by Raglan Phillips, JT, 12.12.1914, 9. The Prussian stereotype was extended to British officers who were regarded as too autocratic. A.P. Herbert (128-9) refers to "men of blood and iron" who were 'a bit Prussian'.

⁶⁵ *The Zouave*, Aug. 1914, 121.

⁶⁶ JT, 5.9.14, 14.

⁶⁷ JT, 12.12.1914, 9.

day of trial, of sudden, fierce, affright,/The mailed ranks pass onward to
Armageddon's fight'.⁶⁸

An undercurrent in Jamaican nationalism placed greater emphasis on Biblical reinterpretation. Despite the attempts to obscure the role of Britain in the current crisis, the war indeed came to apply a question-mark over white claims to racial superiority and was seen as a portentous event signalling the collapse of western civilisation. This position was well-established even before hostilities commenced and certainly while the politicians and military men still talked in terms of a war over by Christmas. Indeed, well before the two sides had become engaged in the static warfare that paved the way for the Western Front to be represented, in many literary accounts, as an apocalyptic hell.

It is important to understand that there were also other voices against the war in Jamaica, even if they might appear *isolated and often contradictory*. This reflected the non-conformist element in Jamaican society, that, unlike the majority in the Anglican clergy, used Biblical interpretation to condemn rather than justify war. In November 1914, John Bunting wrote to the *Jamaica Times* arguing that the neutral nations should make petitions for peace which 'might ameliorate cruel feeling and bring about a better understanding and stop this wild butchery of souls'.⁶⁹ In March 1915, a correspondent signed simply "A Christian" quoted from Corinthians I, 6-7, to urge people in combatant and non-combatant countries alike to speak out against the war. Ministers of all denominations should call for an end to the war. The

⁶⁸ JT, 12.9.14, 1.

Jamaica Times felt obliged to respond with the usual epithets that formed the stock response to conscientious objectors both in the colony and the metropole. How would “A Christian” respond if he found someone burgling his home or if his own women folk were threatened.⁷⁰ The white Jamaican poet, Albinia Mackay, in ‘War’, contrasted patriotic ideals with the reality of broken homes and men, and grieving women. But she ultimately found justification for the continuance of the war by pointing to “German aggression”.⁷¹

Frederick Charles Tomlinson developed the most sophisticated and consistent critique of white civilisation and colonial power. He counterpoised a non-violent, rational *black* perspective against the irrationality of white civilisation on the wane, manifested by colonial oppression and now engulfed by world war. Tomlinson’s writing is cryptic and couched in Biblical metaphor. At times, he is preoccupied with his personal battles with publishers and colonial officials and agencies. His pamphlet, *The End of the Age*, charts his struggle with Chatto and Windus to publish his manuscript *A Study in White* (later re-titled *The Rainbow Book*) since 1904, when it was turned down for publication. In 1903, Tomlinson had published *The Helions*, a novel satirising race and class attitudes in Jamaica. Tomlinson suggested that the injustices meted out to himself reflected the injustices experienced by the black population in general. These in turn were reflected in symbolic episodes on the world stage, in which the promise of divine retribution was always present. The opening of his mail by colonial officials under war time legislation and in earlier grievances was

⁶⁹ JT, 28.11.1914, 4.

⁷⁰ JT, 13.3.1915, 4.

⁷¹ JT, 14.12.14, 37.

represented by the sinking of the *Lusitania*.⁷² Ultimately, Tomlinson believed such interventions would lead to the eventual demise of the “mailed fist” of the colonial regime in Jamaica and the triumph of the peace-loving and rational black man.

Although believing that violent upheaval in Europe might ultimately benefit the black majority in Jamaica by the destruction of British power, Tomlinson’s position was essentially non-violent. In contrast to colonial ideologies, he typified non-white Jamaicans as literate, intelligent and, above all, rational, in stark contrast to the irrationality inherent in violent conflict and colonial representations of an “excitable” black Jamaican populace. In *A Study in White*, Tomlinson had argued that the rise of Japan would ultimately undermine European domination, a prediction given added weight by her defeat of Russia in 1905.⁷³ Events such as the Ulster crisis, led Tomlinson to believe that world problems were being resolved by force of arms, rather than by logical discussion. In his correspondence with the Jamaican Governor, Tomlinson argued that the Home Rule crisis reflected the increase in world tension, with those of a military persuasion taking the initiative. Tomlinson believed the pen – reason – would ultimately triumph. But in correspondence with the Governor’s private secretary, in late July 1914, Tomlinson stated that “The “mailed fist” has taken advantage of the Situation in Ireland to inaugurate the War of the World. Observe the anthesis [sic] of the Literary to the Military’.⁷⁴ Closer to home,

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Frederick C Tomlinson, *The End of the Age*, Kingston, 1915, 4.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 7.

Tomlinson saw the appointment of Major Bryan as Jamaican Colonial Secretary, in place of Mr. P. C. Cork, as an indication of the increasing power of the military.⁷⁵

Taking inspiration from the Book of Daniel, Tomlinson presented the warring nations of Europe as the fourth and final beast in Daniel's apocalyptic vision. The oppressed of the world would be delivered into a New Age that promised justice and plenty. The European powers seemed unable to stop the conflagration as it would mean admitting the flaws in their rule. 'If the Nations of Europe once realised their JOINT LOSS through the wholesale slaughter of themselves, they would stop it – and stop it instantly. But they would have proved in so doing, The End of the Age on the other side. The “Beast” in fact, would have given way to the “Lamb” that is where the shoe pinches'.⁷⁶ Tomlinson recognised that colonialism and imperialism had always been heavily dependent on armed force in order to establish dominion – a reality glossed over by the discourses of the Imperial mission. Any withdrawal from such a position would be tantamount to an acknowledgement of the true nature of Empire.

Tomlinson's use of the Book of Daniel was not new. In 1903, J. Edmestone Barnes, a Jamaican writer and engineer, sought in Daniel and Ezekiel 'prophetic forecasts touching the economy and destiny of nations'.⁷⁷ He was prompted, in part, by the 'the recent exposure of [the] unpreparedness and physical weakness [of Britain] in the late Boer War to establish its paramount authority over a handful of uneducated

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 15. For a straightforward analysis of Daniel see John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*, Tring: Lion, 1987, 195-201.

farmers’.⁷⁸ He reached the conclusion that by 1910 the Empire would face a tremendous struggle against the combined forces of Russia, Germany and France. Like, Tomlinson, Barnes was of the opinion that war was inevitable given the increasingly belligerent stance of the European powers. But he differed from Tomlinson in that he believed the Empire could survive the struggle for “the final supremacy of nations” through the collective efforts its subjects. This was conditional on the adoption of two key policies. Firstly, the policy of Free Trade should be reviewed so that colonial industry might be protected and developed. Secondly, the equality of all races within the Empire should be accepted. Here, Barnes drew particular attention to the plight of black South Africans, comparing their lot to the early Christians persecuted by the Romans.⁷⁹

The Beacon of Indian & African Troops on the Western Front

Tomlinson had suggested that the rise of Japan indicated that white military hegemony was on the wane. However, for many Jamaicans it was the early involvement of Indian and French African soldiers which bolstered racial pride in the absence of a Jamaican presence at the front and which also encouraged local volunteers. When news reached Jamaica of the fighting capability of these troops, the dependency of the Empire on its subject races was revealed. The use of non-white regiments in the European conflict had its origins in France’s fears that her birthrate was falling rapidly behind that of Germany, which could only spell defeat in the event of renewed hostilities.

⁷⁷ J. Edmestone Barnes, *The Signs of the Times: Touching on the Final Supremacy of Nations*, London, 1903, 12. I am grateful to Professor Winston James for drawing my attention to this work.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, preface.

The solution to this problem was the recruitment of troops from West Africa that was seen as a source of infinite “reservoirs of men”. This was a radical departure from the policy that African soldiers should not be allowed the opportunity to face a white enemy in Europe. Those advocating the wholesale deployment of French West Africans constructed a series of subjective categories to determine which racial groups should be the primary recruiting source. The ideal African soldier was drawn from a people defined as culturally advanced but that was perceived to retain a primitive “warrior instinct”. This, it was argued, would make the West African regiments ideal “shock troops”. The French eventually deployed over 140,000 troops from Senegal, Mali and North Africa. These troops were to prove particularly dependable after the near-collapse of the French army in 1917.⁸⁰ In the early stages of the war, the Jamaican press spoke favourably of the French African contingents. ‘Singing’ North African Zouaves were said to be ‘boiling with impatience to get to grips with the foe’.⁸¹ The deployment of French Algerians and tales of their “gallant fighting” resulted in demands for the deployment of the West India Regiment in Europe.⁸²

In September 1914, the *Jamaica Times* reported a statement by the Marquis of Crewe in the House of Lords. The Marquis asserted that the pride of the Indian Army would be dented if her “fine Indian troops” were denied a chance to be deployed in areas

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, *passim*.

⁸⁰ Joe Lunn, “‘Les Races Guerrieres’: Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34: 4, 1999, 517-536.

⁸¹ DC, 26.8.14, 5.

⁸² WICC, No. 416 8.9.14, 414.

where black French troops had already made their mark.⁸³ Faith in the Indian soldier had its origins in the martial races ideology which had taken hold since the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The lighter-skinned northern Indian races, particularly those that practised racial endogamy, were presented as the most dependable troops, free of the enervating forces of miscegenation and tropical languor of the South. This also helped to restore the pride of the white officers of the north Indian regiments who, ironically, had proven less reliable than those from the south during the Mutiny.⁸⁴

Of course, there was another reason for the deployment of Indian soldiers – the rapid destruction of the regular army in the first few months of the war. The Jamaican press spoke glowingly of the Indian troops. ‘Great Britain will throw her splendid Indian troops against the German forces’, reported the *Daily Chronicle*.⁸⁵ Soon after, Indian troops were rumoured to have “smashed” crack Prussian units.⁸⁶ The *Jamaica Times* even went as far as to declare that ‘It seems to us almost a slur on our Indian troops to praise their success in the fighting in France as if it were a thing to be surprised at’.⁸⁷ The article continued that Indians were far superior to the Germans and the equal of any other European people. Despite these expectations, Indian troops did not perform particularly well in France. Although climatic reasons were often blamed, Omissi has shown that sickness rates were on a par with those of white

⁸³ JT, 5.9.1914, 6.

⁸⁴ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: the Indian Army, 1860-1940*, London: Macmillan, 1994, 12-9.

⁸⁵ DC, 31.8.14, 1.

⁸⁶ JT, 12.9.14, 20.

⁸⁷ JT, 31.10.1914, 15.

soldiers. Instead, he posits that the morale of Indian troops was affected by disproportionately high casualty rates.⁸⁸

Clearly, Jamaicans felt a particular affinity with non-whites taking up the Empire cause. There was also a recognition that they would need particular support and may face racism and discrimination, despite the perceived justice of the Empire's case. A Jamaican, who signed himself simply 'A Loyal Subject of the West Indies Island (jamaica)' [sic] sent a donation of \$5 (£1) to Lord Kitchener 'for my brothers black and indian [sic] troop who are at the front fighting to defend our majesty's Empire'.⁸⁹ This was at a time when a labourer in Jamaica received around 1/6 for a days work and the *Jamaica Times* had recently established a Shilling War Fund. The donation created a quandary for the War and Colonial Offices because they had not created a framework of support for black and Indian soldiers.⁹⁰

The involvement of Indian soldiers in the war effort may have been a more subtle factor in the desire of some Jamaican blacks to volunteer. Since indentureship, Indians were assigned a feminised role within the Jamaican labour force. Post-emancipation, the planters still considered Africans most suited to the heaviest, most physically exhausting tasks, constructing a highly masculine identity. Indians were regarded as more submissive and less muscular and carried out the "water work" and "dirty work" that Africans refused. They were also assigned duties that Africans were believed too clumsy to handle. Considering these gendered constructs of race, it

⁸⁸ Omissi, 116-7.

⁸⁹ CO137/706 A Loyal Subject of the West Indies Island (jamaica) [sic] to Lord Kitchener 14/9/1914.

⁹⁰ CO 137/706 Minute.

is possible that some black Jamaicans may have felt a strong pressure to present themselves for war service. A visible black Jamaican presence could underline the pre-eminence of black masculine status vis-à-vis feminised constructs of the Jamaican Indian population.

Citizenship, Armsbearing and the Frontier Mentality in Jamaica

In Jamaica, as in many frontier and settler societies the right to take up arms was closely linked to the defence of property and racial privilege. Since the beginning of European settlement, the white rulers of Jamaica had depended on free and enslaved blacks to provide a component in the policing and suppression of the black majority. The black constabulary and the West India Regiment provided a much greater insurance against disorder than the largely white militias, whose chief qualification was their whiteness, rather than military effectiveness.

However, the right to bear arms to defend property and political privileges was fiercely defended by the white elite. From the late seventeenth century, it was thought that a ratio of one white to every ten blacks was essential to keep the latter in check. At this time, white immigrants to Jamaica were granted thirty acres of land on the condition that they served in the militia. This is highlighted by Cundall in his history of the Jamaican war effort, illustrating that the association of armsbearing and citizenship was still alive in the colonial mentality.⁹¹

⁹¹Cundall, 15.

The 1879 Militia Law (amended in 1887 and 1891) raised the Jamaica Militia Artillery and Jamaica Infantry Militia. Proposals for the reorganisation of the Jamaican militia forces during 1886 came amid fears that the Sudanese wars would either reduce or remove the British garrison on the island. Membership was restricted to men over eighteen with a minimum income of £30, an annual income tax payment of at least £2, or property with a value of £50. Men wishing to join the mounted units had to provide their own horse. Although, like the franchise laws, this effectively squeezed out the majority of the black and brown population, some, with significant property, successfully enlisted. This caused consternation among elements of the white population who not only feared that arms and training were available to non-whites, but recognised that their dominance of society could be threatened by black and brown self-advancement. The elected members of the Legislative Council attempted to oppose the Militia Bill of 1891 using fiscal arguments as an excuse. However, the Colonial Office believed that the *class* alignments of the black and brown middle class would ensure their loyalty in the event of unrest.⁹²

The JIM was disbanded in 1906 under the initiative of the metropolitan government, who believed that any threat to Jamaican security could be met by regular forces. The JIM was maintained as the St. Andrew Rifle Corps by public donation, again indicating local white fears and an assertion of the white right to self-defence. At the outbreak of war the Rifle Corps was renamed the Kingston Infantry Volunteers and was called to active service from 27.9.14.⁹³

⁹² Bryan, 78-80.

The simmering level of unrest in Jamaican society, most recently, the disturbances linked to the tramcar boycott of 1912, were an ever-present reminder of the need for white vigilance. Any arming of the majority of the black population, either for home defence or service overseas, indicated a potential incorporation into Jamaican citizenship, as well as posing a potential threat to the colonial regime. The link between citizenship and armsbearing was also made by black nationalists. Louis Meikle, a Jamaican member of the Trinidad-based West Indian Confederation Committee, laid out the aims of the organisation in August 1914 in a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*. Alongside proposals such as the holding of referendum on confederation, the establishment of a national insurance scheme and free education was the policy 'To suppress insurrections and repel invasion'.⁹⁴

In the early stages of the war, the concern with vigilance and preparedness, ever-present in the frontier mentality came to the fore. Although it was never made explicit, we can be sure that summons to arms were primarily intended for white ears. Such calls reiterated the tradition of white armsbearing and referred to other situations where armed vigilance was required to protect the rights of privileged minorities. Furthermore, they expressed the ongoing anxieties of the white minority, rather than addressing the minimal threat posed by Germany to British rule in Jamaica. A letter from "Patriot" suggested that arms training should be compulsory and complained that lack of training meant that Jamaica would be left in a state of unreadiness. "Patriot" pointed to the example of Ulster, where the presence of Carson's Ulster Volunteers had meant that a body of men could be rapidly mobilised.

⁹³ JT, 10.10.14, p. 4; Cundall, 18.

Ironically, the UVF had taken up arms illegally in opposition to Home Rule, but the inference in “Patriot’s” letter was plain; as well as providing a body of men in defence of the state, this body of men had a legitimate right to defend its rights of citizenship by force of arms. In some ways then “Patriot” was unwittingly drawing some parallels between the UVF and the private militia in Jamaica.⁹⁵ Further underlining the historical link between property and armsbearing, the Jamaican Government offered to remit property taxes on those volunteering for military service. Again, this suggests that patriotic appeals to military service were directed at the white population who owned a disproportionate share of the land.⁹⁶

Although discourses of citizenship and armsbearing were primarily addressed to a white audience, existing black units, which in reality provided the backbone of internal security, could also be addressed within the language of the frontier. Major Edward Dixon, who had been elected as the member for St. Andrews in August, led suggestions that the West India Regiment should be deployed in Europe. There were local fears of invasion and internal unrest that imposed limitations upon these demands, but it was argued that recruitment of a local volunteer force would overcome such anxieties. Dixon compared the WIR, with its training and experience, favourably to raw recruits in England ‘who [had] declined to train themselves in time of peace’.⁹⁷ In other words, the well-prepared frontiersman, whether black or white, stood at the cutting edge of Empire masculinity when compared to the image of a more pampered, “soft” masculinity in the metropole.

⁹⁴ DC, 21.8.14, 3.

⁹⁵ DC, 5.8.14, 7.

⁹⁶ Cundall, 24.

The scout encapsulated the ideals of the frontiersman. A self-reliant figure, ever ready to ward off threats to the Empire. A few years before the war saw the inception of the Boy Scout movement in Jamaica in which such ideals were impressed upon the younger members of colonial society. Photographic evidence indicates that the Boy Scouts attracted recruits from all races in Jamaica. But it is hard to discern class composition without further detailed research. It would be easy to dismiss the significance of the scout movement, were it not for the regular presence of Boy Scouts on recruiting parades and events in the Empire calendar. Scouts were also used as messengers and lookouts in the early stages of the war.

Leading figures in the Jamaican organisation, perhaps anticipating non-conformist objections, attempted to stress that the movement was not aimed at preparing boys for a military career. Instead, they highlighted the intention to instil fresh vigour and discipline into a purportedly, slothful and work-shy tropical populace. The movement taught the errors of 'loafing ... a besetting sin, especially in the warmer climates'. Boys were encouraged 'to be self-reliant, to be good comrades, to learn to obey, to tackle hard jobs and do them without grumbling'. The Archbishop of Jamaica was less reticent on the quasi-military aspects of the movement. He argued that 'the movement availed itself of a boy's natural love for the idea of soldiering, without imbuing them with the spirit of militarism'.⁹⁸ This remark may have been made for the benefit of the officers of a visiting German ship who attended this meeting in 1912; militarism of course being a major flaw of the Prussian character.

⁹⁷ JT, 5.9.14, 13/15.

Any whiff of militarism was linked to the preoccupation with internal defence, rather than an external threat. “Mongoose” who wrote ‘Boy Scout Notes’ for the *Jamaica Times*, suggested that on reaching the upper-age-limit of eighteen, former scouts should be

enlist[ed] ... straight away into a civilian police force ... this would be a great advantage to the community ... in times of trouble ... [to have] young men who have received such a splendid character training ... Their service would be extremely useful during strikes, riots and the like ... the Boy Scout Police would be able to carry out the duties of the community while the ordinary worker is striking.⁹⁹

Other youth organisations in Jamaica encouraged the ideals of Empire in quasi-military fashion, indicating just how deeply such values were embedded. The *Jamaica Times*, a keen promoter of literary nationalism under the editorship of T. H. Macdermott (Tom Redcam), attempted to instil ideals of Empire citizenship through the club for young and aspiring writers, the Jamaica Times Literary Army. Its overt aims were ‘To encourage the love of literature ... To develop the talent of young Jamaica [and to] encourage the practise of kindness to others and the humane treatment of all dumb creatures’. But as its name suggests, the JTLA encouraged discipline and loyalty through the adoption of a militaristic rhetoric. Members were soldiers and could achieve ranks of Corporal or Sergeant. “Sergeant” Victor McPherson was a prize-winner in an essay competition entitled “Ideals”. He wrote:

Boys and girls, remember that Jamaica expects us to do our duty ... to be true and loyal citizens ... the Jamaica Times Army expects her soldiers to be dutiful, persevering and true ... As British subjects we are to be true to our King and our Country.

However the young writer also appeared to allude to the exclusion of blacks and “coloureds” from positions of power and reflected a more inclusive vision of Empire.

⁹⁸ JT 9.3.12, 15

‘[T]rue citizens never try to shut out one who is trying to get in a high position. They always like to help them in getting to the goal’.¹⁰⁰

Whenever colonial power came under threat, the JTTLA column was mobilised in its defence to remind the “young soldiers” of their duties. The column, headed by “Uncle Marcus”, reinforced appeals to Empire loyalty by donning the cloak of familial authority. During the tramcar boycott of 1912, Governor Olivier was treated roughly when he went to the aid of some constables who had been surrounded by a crowd. The JTTLA column for that week was headed ‘Our Soldiers Salute The Governor and Cheer his Brave Deed. Trumpet Call – “Be Patriots”. “Uncle Marcus”, addressing his “nieces and nephews” went on, ‘Are you not proud of him? Is he not worthy of your loyalty and love? Our Army teaches us patriotism, and here is another link in our loyalty to Great Britain, to the country that could produce such a man, such a hero as our Governor, Sir Sydney Olivier’.

⁹⁹ JT 4.5.1912, 5

¹⁰⁰ JT 9.3.12, 6.

4

“On Them the Laurels Will Fall” Jamaican Volunteers & the Imperial Military Order

All sections of Jamaican society were caught up in a wave of pro-Empire feeling at the outbreak of war. This response cut across rigid boundaries of pigmentation and class. Jamaicans were encouraged to believe that they were a potential target for German attack which, if successful, would plunge the island into miseries only previously experienced under slavery. The continued guardianship of the British Empire offered the sole salvation. A minority believed that nothing was to be gained by giving assistance to the Mother Country. The outbreak of war symbolised the beginning of the end for colonial rule and heralded a new era in which the non-white races, not only in Jamaica, but throughout the globe would come into their own. Among the majority of Jamaicans, however, the desire to assist the Empire in her hour of need resulted in collective and individual efforts to provide military personnel.

The urge to volunteer or to encourage others to do so was motivated by a number of considerations. On an individual level the war presented itself as an opportunity for adventure, an escape from personal troubles and not least an opportunity to earn a stable, if humble income. In the nascent nationalist and Garveyite movements, there was a sense that a collective Empire effort that transcended boundaries of race and

class promised a more egalitarian vision of Empire once the war had ended. Among this section there was also the beginnings of a clear pride in things Jamaican and the feeling that a specifically Jamaican contribution to the war effort would give Jamaica greater prominence on the world stage. The colonial ruling class and the metropolitan government were more keen that Jamaica would make her contribution felt by fulfilling her traditional role as a supplier of raw materials, primary products and labour power.

Despite the pressing need for fresh manpower, the enthusiasm of non-white Jamaicans presented a dilemma for the colonial and metropolitan military authorities. The refusal of military assistance from Jamaica and the other West Indian colonies could not be rejected out of hand for fear of creating disaffection when the Empire could least afford internal instability. Furthermore, demonstrations of loyalty needed to be encouraged if the output of the British colonies was to match wartime demands. However, the authorities did not wish to see mass recruitment in the West Indies that might undermine the rigid class and race hierarchies of the Empire or call ideals of white military masculinity into question.

Within Jamaica, despite almost universal support for King and Empire, class and race tensions dogged her contributions to the war effort. The white elite, often less than enthusiastic volunteers themselves, was resistant to any policies that might challenge their hegemony. Most obviously, they were reluctant to see arms placed in the hands of black men. As in other areas of Jamaican life, the attempt of anyone without an apparently pure European pedigree to occupy positions of status was

fiercely resisted. Furthermore, petty antagonisms among the non-white population would further undermine the possibility of a united contribution to the war effort as sections of the lighter-skinned population sought to find ways of shoring up their own precarious privileges.

The Historical Deployment of Black Soldiers

To place the issues surrounding the raising of Jamaican contingents in context it is necessary to trace the role that non-white men had played in the British armed forces before the Great War. As David Killingray has outlined, black men were a visible presence in the British Army from the seventeenth century. They took part in British expeditions, filled garrisons in the Caribbean, and were used heavily during the American War of Independence, both as troops and in auxiliary roles. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the presence of black soldiers, that is men of African and Caribbean origin, is less evident, outside of the West India Regiment which had initially been recruited from slaves during the War of Independence.¹

Of course, the Empire maintained a sizeable indigenous army in India, but this was increasingly an autonomous entity as the process of Indianisation gained momentum. In the metropole, however, there was increasing concern to maintain the appearance of racial homogeneity, the heavy reliance on Irish, Scots and Welsh regiments notwithstanding. This was particularly the case after the Indian Mutiny that severely dented British military prestige and white masculine self-assurance. Official

anxieties were raised around the possible presence in the ranks of men with mixed Indian and European ancestry. This was seen as a potentially fatal flaw. Non-whites were caricatured as unreliable and potentially traitorous, but more significantly as falling short of British standards of heroism, military elan and steadfastness. As discussed in the previous chapter, there were exceptions to this generalisation. Martial race theories had asserted that some of the Northern Indian peoples possessed soldier-like qualities.

As the century progressed, African peoples such as the Zulus and Hausas were also deemed to possess a “natural” fighting spirit. But their military capability could only be fully realised under the tutelage of white military masculinity. Closer to home, both the Scots and the Irish were invested with the necessary military mettle, although again from the perspective of English military commentators this was explained as a quality of a perceived Celtic temperament, rather than gained through the application of discipline and training.²

Such theories developed through a combination of pragmatism, interpretations of indigenous traditions and an element of genuine respect. It was difficult to decry the fighting capability of a race that had proved a stiff opponent and who then often went on to perform a strategic role within the Imperial military machine. In the case of Jamaica, the WIR was used as the armed wing of the colonial power. The First and

¹ For comprehensive studies of the WIR see Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: the British West India Regiments, 1795-1815*, New Haven, 1979; Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The Story of the West India Regiment of the British Army*, St. Johns, 1997.

² David Killingray, ‘All the King’s Men?: Blacks in the British Army in the First World War, 1914-1918’ in Rainer Lotz & Ian Pegg (eds.), *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780-*

Sixth battalions, for example, were largely responsible for suppressing the Morant Bay Rebellion with the use of brutal force and military efficiency, a fact that earned them the distrust and resentment of many Jamaicans.³

Nevertheless, the ideal of white military masculinity, epitomised by stoicism, self-control and the ability to “muddle through” whatever the odds, continued to hold sway. The latter quality emphasised the tradition of amateurism that still lingered in the British Army, despite the general movement towards a professionalism instilled through vigorous drill and repression of the emotions. It reflected the fact that positions of power and authority were still held by men who occupied their positions due to their place in the family lineage, rather than their ability as soldiers. The “muddle through” tradition could also be used to emphasise the alleged superior tenacity of the British Army and to present it as an organisation more tolerant of individuality and less authoritarian than the Prussian military machine. More significantly, it helped to bolster national confidence against military setbacks that could be characterised as heroic defeats, rather than failures.

Whatever concessions to non-white races were encompassed within martial race theory, white predominance could never be brought into question. As the nineteenth century progressed this situation became ever more evident as the model of white military masculinity which upheld the ideals of self-control and rationality became more entrenched. Wherever non-white units were raised in the Empire, they were led

1950, Crawley, 1986, 166-9; Buckley 226-7; Phil Vasili, ‘Walter Tull, 1888-1918: Soldier, Footballer, Black’, *Race & Class*, 38: 2, 61-2.

³ Dyde, 179-80.

by white officers. Non-whites were only able to rise to the rank of NCO in the “native regiments” as they came to be designated. The one exception to this was the Indian Army where, Indians of noble birth gained access to commissions, often of a ceremonial nature. However, within individual battalions, the number of Indian officers actually declined in relation to their white counterparts in the approach to the war. By 1914, each unit contained matching numbers of white and Indian officers, reflecting the feeling of the military establishment that units officered solely by Indians were incapable of acting cohesively in the front line.⁴

It was vital that the fighting prowess of any white man could not be seen to be challenged. During the Boer War, the idea that a contingent might be raised in Trinidad was ridiculed. Black members of the WIR were barred from guarding Boer prisoners on Bermuda, despite the fact that they were already posted there on a tour of duty. However, much to the chagrin of the authorities, other members of the regiment encountered Boer prisoners while the WIR was stationed on St. Helena.⁵ Despite the official rhetoric that the Boer War was to be strictly a “white man’s war”, an outlook that meant Indian soldiers were only limited to the role of stretcher-bearers, both sides in the conflict did deploy armed black auxiliaries when it became expedient. The British, for example, used black units to guard the chains of blockhouses that formed a central prong of the strategy to defeat Boer guerrillas.⁶

⁴ Omissi, 159-62.

⁵ C. L. R. James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, Nelson, 1932, 22; Dyde 243, 248-9.

⁶ Emanuel Lee, *To the Bitter End: A Photographic History of the Boer War 1899-1902*, London, 1985, 200, 202-3.

Increasingly, the black soldier came to be seen as either an exotic exhibit – an object of curiosity, to be wheeled out for ceremonial duties to preserve the illusion of Imperial unity, or as a reserve of brute force to do the fetching and carrying for the whites engaged in the firing line. By-and-large, black soldiers were portrayed with insufficient character to perform the duties of a fighting man. By the time of the Great War, black soldiers were subject to a popular racism that was not necessarily overtly hostile to their presence. Rather, they could equally be presented in patronising and belittling terms. These expressions of racism drew on the strand of racial ideology that tended to present the subject races as childlike, ineffectual and as objects of endearment in order to bolster white military masculinity and the self-importance of the Imperial mission. A British soldier described the black African troops deployed by the French in terms that evoked an image of the black man as entertainer, intellectual inferior and poor soldier.

The niggers are hopeless ... Their slow thought-out movements – such as lighting a pipe, for example – often suggest a monkey to me almost as much as a man. And yet I am curiously fond of them. Wag your head towards them as you go by, and you win the richest smile in the world, white teeth, thick lips, black eyes, all combine in the most bewitching production. They do not bear pain like the brave French boys.⁷

Even white commentators who championed the contribution of black soldiers could not resist underlining what they saw as a distinct reluctance, or even inability, of the men to buckle down to the rigid ideals of self-discipline and subordination to superior authority that was central to the maintenance of military masculinity. Alfred Horner, a padre attached to the ninth battalion of the BWIR, frequently remarked on the soldierly qualities of the men he ministered to. Horner was swift to praise the

⁷ Quoted in Bourke, *Dismembering ...*, 149.

physical fitness of the BWIR men and believed that most of them contained the “Right Stuff” – the raw material from which a soldier could be fashioned.⁸ However, his acknowledgement of these qualities was constantly contradicted by his equally insistent complaint that the West Indian recruit could never be fully bound by military discipline. Horner’s observations reflected the long-established prejudice that cast black men living in the tropics as lacking the manly desire to strive towards profitable and self-disciplined enterprise. Horner lamented that

[t]o the West Indian boy, whose life is cast in an easy mould, who works according to his own sweet will, whose wants are few and easily satisfied, the “beginning of discipline” was not easy. As long as soldiering meant bands and uniform and a certain element of wild heroism all was well; but when it meant smartness, neatness and, above all, punctuality – a thing the West Indian knows but slightly – and again, not “answering back” for he loves to argue, it was not so well. There was “too much of rules” – as it was put.⁹

At the root of this suggestions was the belief that physical prowess was only one factor in the ideal of military masculinity. Physical courage and strength alone were not sufficient. A rigid code of moral strength was also deemed a requirement to resist vice, poor morale and ill-discipline. It was clearly not disputed that black soldiers possessed the right physical qualities to make fine soldiers. This would have been particularly hard to deny given the centrality of black labour to the plantation system. Therefore, attempts to construct black men as poor soldiers tended to rest on stereotypes of moral and mental incapacity.

⁸ Alfred Egbert Horner, *From the Islands of the Sea: Glimpses of a West Indian Battalion in France*, Nassau, 1919, 5-6.

⁹ Horner, 7.

From the outset of the war, Colonial Office and War Office Officials were confronted with a dilemma in relation to the acceptance of black volunteers. Black men, not only from Jamaica, but throughout the Empire, came forward to offer their services. Some were already resident in the United Kingdom, particularly those from a seafaring background. Others made their way to the metropole at their own expense, in sufficient numbers for concerns to be voiced that recruitment to the Jamaican contingents would be detrimentally affected. Aware of the situation the Kingston City Council passed a resolution, forwarded to the Governor, demanding that all Jamaican volunteers who were “physically qualified” should have their passages paid by the Jamaican Government.¹⁰ In the Legislative Council, H. A. L. Simpson, at this time Honorary President of the Jamaica League and Mayor of Kingston, put down a motion requesting that the Parochial Boards pay the fares of those travelling to the UK to enlist.¹¹

For white Jamaicans, enlistment on arrival in England was unproblematic. Even after the establishment of the British West Indies Regiment, in November 1915, many still chose this path, a place in a regular army unit carrying more prestige than a commission with the BWIR. However, for non-whites, the situation proved more complex. The insistence on “physically qualified” in the City Council resolution suggesting that local examinations could be used to dissuade volunteers who were not of obvious European pedigree. Black volunteers arriving in Britain were to be confronted with official inconsistency, accompanied by frequent rejection and

¹⁰ DG 5.10.1915, 8; JT 23.11.14, 24.

¹¹ JT 24.10.1914, 15. H. A. L. Simpson, solicitor and politician. A member of the Legislative Council from 1911 and mayor of Kingston, 1912-1916.

occasional acceptance. This situation was not fully resolved for the duration of the war, despite the increasing demand for recruits after the near-obliteration of the standing army early in the war.

British Policy Towards Black Volunteers

i) Nationality & Military law

The Royal Navy continued to employ men from all corners of the Empire, particularly as stokers and firemen. The *Gleaner* carried a picture captioned ‘Sons of Jamaica in Britain’s Royal Navy’, featuring three black sailors who served on HMS *Bristol*.¹² But the issue of black recruitment was more contentious in the army. Civil and military law was apparently contradictory in relation to the acceptance of black recruits. The Manual of Military Law of 1914 effectively constituted, although without clarity, “any negro or person of colour” as an alien. Aliens were barred from holding rank higher than NCO and their entry was restricted to ensure that they did not comprise more than one in fifty of the ranks. While serving, a black man so enlisted was ‘entitled to all the privileges of a natural-born British subject’.¹³

However, the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of the same year was clear that ‘Any person born within His Majesty’s dominions and allegiance’ was already in effect a ‘natural born British subject’.¹⁴ That this was interpreted as such is evident in a case heard during the war in East London. A landlord tried to evict a family, which included a black man, from a house in Tidal Basin, an area with a significant black population linked to the shipping industry. Rejecting the landlord’s

¹² DG 9.7.1915, 6.

¹³ *Manual of Military Law*, London, 1914, 471.

¹⁴ *British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act*, 1914, 33.

application, the magistrate stated ‘A black man had as much right as anybody else to live in England, providing that he was a British subject’.¹⁵ At this stage nationality, legislation was in its infancy. Before the war, the concern had been to stem the flow of migrants from Eastern Europe, rather than the Empire. This situation was to change – *alien* was to become a deeply contested term. Its meaning, which increasingly came to signify non-white, reflected the on-going anxieties around national identity and access to citizenship rights and employment that erupted in the post war era.

The military regulations perhaps anticipated this crisis. There was recognition that a black man having giving his loyal service, and perhaps life, to the Crown was entitled certain benefits and rights in return, an issue at the core of discourses of armsbearing and masculinity. This was made explicit in an article by “Fusilier” in the *United Empire* in 1916.

The sons of the West Indies are worthy of the beautiful islands and the fighting ancestry from which they come. They are prepared to bear their portion of the burden of Empire, and to endure sacrifices for the ideals for which our armies are fighting, thus proving that they are entitled to greater recognition than ever before as a component part of our great Empire.¹⁶

By restricting the entry of black men into the army, military law clearly attempted to stem, even if unconsciously, a broader connection between military service and citizenship rights for the non-white races of the Empire. The vagaries of the regulations on the issue meant that recruitment of individual black men continued throughout the war on an ad hoc basis. But more significantly, this disjuncture in both legislation and interpretation, would open the door for post-war nationalist

¹⁵ *Stratford Express* 14.7.1917, 7.

agitation to contest attempts to narrow the definitions of Empire service and hence citizenship.

ii) Constructs of Black Military Mettle

On August 28th 1914, less than one month after the outbreak of the war, it was decided that Indian troops would be deployed in Europe. However, on the same day, tentative enquiries from the Colonial Office as to the desirability of West Indian contingents were met in the negative. Instead, it was asserted that the West Indian colonies would be of far more value to the war effort in their traditional function of supplying primary products to the industrial centres of the Mother Country. This was despite the ready availability of men, including the many thousands of West Indians who were now living in destitution, in Panama, and awaiting repatriation to their homes. In addition to supplying vital raw materials such as foodstuffs, logwood and cotton the West Indian colonies were expected to make heavy financial contributions to the war effort. Jamaica was scheduled to pay £60, 000 per annum for forty years after the end of the war to help reduce the War Debt.¹⁷

From the perspective of many white military men, black soldiers lacked sufficient self-discipline and rationality to be an effective force on the modern battlefield. Their presence would also lead to barbarity and the erosion of the idealised chivalrous “fair play” of war that remained part of the white masculine heroic ideal. Such ideals persisted, despite the reality of trench warfare which effectively precluded the opportunity of dashing hand-to-hand combat between equals. As Joanna Bourke

¹⁶ “Fusilier”, ‘The British West Indies Regiment’, *United Empire*, VII, 1916, 29.

outlines, although the opportunity for hand-to-hand combat had departed from this theatre of war creative renditions and personal recollections of the war remained preoccupied with such encounters. In the post-war era, heroic narrative became one of the only ways of reconciling the tragic waste of human life. This explains the lasting allure of T. E. Lawrence's accounts of the desert war, one of the few theatres of combat where hand-to-hand encounters and chivalric codes of conduct pertained.¹⁸

In reality, white European soldiers engaged in behaviour that was associated in the Imperial mind with those races beyond the Pale of Empire. Charles Edmonds was appalled when his previously urbane sergeant, Coke, laughed at grotesquely mangled corpses and collected the teeth of dead Germans. Such trophy-hunting, which ranged from the personal effects of the dead to body parts, was seen as "proof" of martial virility – a tally of killing power – across the racial spectrum.¹⁹ But in order to ward off these discomfiting rituals of military manhood, British soldiers tended to play down the atrocities committed by white troops, regardless of affiliation, and displaced the responsibility for war's degeneration onto black soldiers.

Robert Graves recalled that '[t]he presence of semi-civilized coloured troops in Europe was, from the German point of view, we knew, one of the chief Allied

¹⁷ Joseph, 96, 111; DC, 6.8.1914, 9; *Jamaica War Contribution* (Cd. 8695), London, 1917.

¹⁸ Bourke, 51-5; Bet-El, 89; Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*, London, 1998, 76-80.

¹⁹ Charles Edmonds, *A Subaltern's War*, New York, 1930, 46-7, 53-5, 63; Bourke, *An Intimate History ...*, 37-43.

atrocities. We sympathized'.²⁰ He regales the reader with wild tales of a French North African soldier bringing back a German head and demanding jam at the headquarters mess, and repeats an account detailing the slaughter of retreating Germans by a black French regiment heard from a French civilian – 'ces animaux leur ont arrache les oreilles et les ont mises a la poche!'²¹ ['Finally, these animals ripped their ears off and put them in their pockets']. Each side in the conflict claimed that the black soldiers under their guardianship performed better than those employed by their opponent. Lettow-Vorbeck, the German commander in East Africa, praised the fighting qualities of his askaris, who were in turn defined as "coastal apes" by the British.²²

Graves' sympathy with the German point of view was not merely a reflection of his own German ancestry. Graves also gives some insight into the attitudes of the British officer class on the place that the Germans occupied in the racial hierarchy in relation to other races. These attitudes, that were encountered by the Jamaican soldier when he arrived in Europe, were conditioned by a complex interplay of ethnicity, culture and religion rather than a strict polarisation between black and white. Graves and his fellow officers determined a racial hierarchy that was based on

²⁰ Graves, 155. There were claims that the German army offered 400 marks for the capture of live black soldiers in the early stages of the war. A German veteran, quoted in the *New York Times*, stated that 'throughout the war German soldiers lived in great fear, and even terror, of the negroes' *New York Times* 26.1.19, 1. For German attitudes to Senegalese occupation troops in the aftermath of the war see Annabelle Melzer, 'Spectacles & Sexualities: The "Mise-en-Scene" of the "Tirailleur Senegalais" on the Western Front, 1914-1920', in Melman (ed.), 228-231.

²¹ Graves, 155.

²² Lettow-Vorbeck boasted, 'I believe it was the transparency of our aims, the love of our Fatherland, the strong sense of duty and the spirit of self-sacrifice which animated each of our few Europeans and communicated themselves, consciously or unconsciously, to our brave black soldiers that gave our operations that impetus which they possessed to the end'. Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* London, 1920, 325-6; *The Zouave*, Jan. 1915, 8.

ascribed standards of hygiene – cleanliness, of course, being next to godliness; in descending order these were

English and German Protestant; Northern Irish, Welsh, and Canadians; Irish and German Catholics; Scots, with certain higher-ranking exceptions; Mohammedan Indians; Algerians; Portuguese; Belgians; French ... We put the Belgians and French there for spite; they could not have been dirtier than the Algerians and the Portuguese.²³

Accounts such as Graves', which allege barbarity and racial inferiority, not only attempted to deflect the audience's attention from similar behaviour by white troops, but were a smokescreen to mask fears that a good performance by black and Indian troops against the Germans might undermine white claims to racial superiority or give confidence to anti-colonial movements. When discussing the deployment of black soldiers against the French in Africa, earlier in the century, Brigadier-General Sir James Willcocks had warned,

It is always judicious ... never to give the black man an idea that you seek his assistance against other white men ... [W]ith our soldiers ... we always spoke as if all they would have to do would be to fight the other black soldiers and avoided reference to their white commanders ... First must come the white man to what ever race he may belong.²⁴

iii) Official & Individual Inconsistency

The attitude and racial sensitivities of recruiting officers, as well as official prevarication, played no small part in the outcome when individual black soldiers attempted to enlist. Racial discourse, particularly as they related to black military competence and statute, were open to myriad interpretations. Thus black and brown Jamaicans met with varying degrees of success in joining regular army units. Some

²³ Graves, 152.

²⁴ Quoted in Dyde, 243.

successfully enlisted in the Army Service Corps, presumably because of the regiment's auxiliary, rather than front-line role. A number of men did serve in other regiments before transferring to the British West Indies Regiment when it was established.²⁵

One man, James Slim, whose army papers describe him as black, even enlisted in the prestigious Coldstream Guards before he was discharged under instructions from the War Office. As his conduct was good and no mention was made of a medical condition, it must be presumed that this was because of his colour. The *Jamaica Times* reported that Slim had served with the French Foreign Legion prior to enlisting in the British Army, although his army papers make no mention of this.²⁶ Another Jamaican, Egbert Watson, who described himself as a 'coloured West Indian from Jamaica' served in the Royal Garrison Artillery before being discharged on medical grounds after eighteen months' service.²⁷ Several newspapers carried pictures of an unnamed black Jamaican who had joined the Staffordshire regiment and who was to be seen joking with men of the Household Cavalry in Whitehall.²⁸

Other black men travelling to Britain to enlist were less successful. In 1915, at West Ham Police Court, whose jurisdiction included much of the Port of London, nine men from Barbados were charged with stowing away on the S. S. *Danube* with the intention of volunteering. Local police enquiries, however, found that they were

²⁵ See CO318/339/6828 & /28543; CO318/340/32243 & /46561 for example lists of Jamaicans enlisting in England.

²⁶ WO364/3753; JT 3.4.1915, 1.

²⁷ WO364/4505; CO137/724/111885. Gunner E. Watson RGA to Secretary Dominion War Committee. CO 12/10/1917.

likely to be rejected because of their colour. Their obvious enthusiasm for the Empire cause did not make them immune from the disparaging remarks of the magistrate, a Mr. Gillespie, who suggested that they had been stowed away “[i]n a dark corner” and that they had come “to enlist in the Black Guards”, clearly a racialised play on the term blackguard.²⁹ Despite these slurs the men insisted that they would not be returned to Barbados – ‘They had come to fight, and they were going to fight’.³⁰ The men were subsequently discharged. A group of three Jamaican stowaways, including a sixteen and a fourteen-year old, who arrived with the same intention, in May 1917, were treated more harshly. Although they had worked hard on board ship after discovery, all three were sentenced to seven days’ imprisonment.³¹

Black men of professional status who sought commissions in the army were equally likely to be rejected, highlighting the precarious position of the black middle-classes, especially after they had travelled beyond the West Indies. A degree of “respectability” in a black or brown man did not have the same insulatory qualities as it might have done in some Jamaican settings. The Jamaican government veterinary officer, G. O. Rushdie-Gray was sent to England with the official blessing of Governor Manning and six weeks’ paid leave, after official intimations that he would be accepted. Rushdie-Gray had also served as a vet to the West India Regiment.³² Despite these credentials he was refused a commission in the Army Veterinary Corps. The Colonial Office and War Office tried to assuage Rushdie-

²⁸ *Daily Sketch*, 7.3.1916 cutting in ICS/WIC/2/BWIR Album of Press Cuttings (hereafter BWIR Album); *Illustrated Western Weekly News*, 11.3.1916, 27.

²⁹ *Stratford Express*, 19.5.1915, 3.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 29.5.1915, 2.

³¹ *Stratford Express*, 12.5.1917, 3; West Ham Police Court Register of Charges 1917, 101, entry for 3.5.1917.

Gray by offers of civil veterinary employment and, more eagerly, agreed to pay his return passage if he so wished. But the insult was compounded by the suggestion that if Rushdie-Gray had been of a lighter shade, he may well have been accepted.³³ Recruitment policy evidently varied according to the eye and sensibilities of individual officials, as the following minute illustrates.

Mr G called today, he is presentable, but black ... I am surprised at the Gov. recommending a black man without previously informing us of his colour. I have spoken to the Veterinary Dept. of WO and understand that there is no absolute bar against coloured men for commissions in the Vet. Corps, but that they did not expect Mr G to be the colour he is!³⁴

The inconsistencies of official policy are well-illustrated by the fact that two brown-skinned Jamaicans were able to enlist in the Royal Flying Corps. A former solicitor's clerk who was sent to enlist by his employer, Sgt. L. McIntosh, became an aerial observer. After being wounded in a plane crash in 1916, he was reported to have become a flying instructor. McIntosh was pictured in the company of Flight Sergeant W. "Pobbie" Clarke in the *Gleaner*. Clarke was to regale the readers of the *Gleaner* with his heroic exploits as an aerial photographer at Ypres, where he was shot down and seriously wounded. Clarke particularly seemed to have taken to the culture of military life, as evident in his fluency of understated military slang: Bombs were "pills", wounds were "packets" and aerial battles, "scraps".³⁵

The success of Clarke and McIntosh in enlisting in the RFC was particularly significant. The war in the air, in contrast to the Western Front, became an arena in

³² CO137/715/20904 Manning to Bonar Law SSC 15.4.1916; *Zouave* Nov. 1914, 181.

³³ CO137/715/20904 CO Minute 15.5.1916.

³⁴ CO137/715/20904 CO Minute 3.5.1916.

which the rituals of personal engagement and heroic endeavour, myths central to the image of white military masculinity, were more easily maintained. In the air, unlike the ground war, technological advance had aided, rather than stifled this process. Air duels could be fought, portrayed as equal contests between individual pilots, above and away from the field of battle where technology, together with tactics, had otherwise conspired to rob the combatants of such illusions.³⁶ Before enlisting in the Royal Field Artillery, Norman Manley, later to become Jamaica's Prime Minister, attempted to get into the RFC, which he saw as the last "gallant" and "sporting" area of modern warfare, but he was barred by the cost of attending flying school.³⁷

The inconsistencies of the official position are well-illustrated in the documents that trace policies towards the recruitment of black British subjects resident in the United States. Many of these men were of West Indian origin and as individual soldiers' papers bear testimony, some black Jamaicans did gain entrance to British regiments after enlisting in the States. Jamaicans enlisting in the United States were exposed to the fervent support for the Allied cause advocated by W. E. B. Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Involvement in the war was enthusiastically presented as an opportunity for racial advance and essential to prevent the restoration of slavery in the event of a German victory. This position was prominent in the pages of the NAACP paper, the *Crisis* which produced a special soldiers' edition in June 1918. The editorial was couched in terms that appealed to the potential black volunteer in terms of masculine sacrifice and duty and

³⁵ DG 14.6.1916, 4; 8.5.1916, 10; 19.1.1917, 9; 7.9.1917, 4.

³⁶ Bourke, *An Intimate History* ...,

³⁷ 'The Autobiography of Norman Washington Manley', *Jamaica Journal*, 7:1/2, 6.

not only to his racial sympathies. It demanded, ‘do you know what to the Negro people means the German Military Machine?’ and responded,

It means ... slavery chains for our wives , sweethearts, mothers, fathers and children, more galling and hopeless than those of ante bellum days in the United States, – more hurtful because we have reached the heights of a half-century of well-being and awakening ... Let us keep our eyes ... on the star of our aspirations for racial betterment; let us play the game square and to the limit.³⁸

The black volunteer was promised rich reward for his sacrifice, not only in terms of an improvement in the position of the black population in the United States, but for subject peoples the world over.

This war is an End and, also, a beginning. Never again will darker people of the world occupy just the place they have before. Out of this war will rise, soon or late, an independent China; self-governing India, and Egypt with representative institutions; an Africa for the Africans ... Out of this war will, rise, too, an American Negro, with the right to vote, and the right to work and the right to live without insult. These things may not and will not come at once; but they are written in the stars, and the firststep toward them is victory for the armies of the Allies.³⁹

The recruitment of black Britons, who were subjected to positive encouragement such as this, presented an increasingly awkward situation for the British military authorities after the entry of the United States into the war. Men rejected outright on the grounds of race by British representatives in the US could possibly be conscripted in black units of the US army. This had the potential to cause resentment and ill-feeling, that the metropolitan and US authorities alike feared could be exploited by black activists in the States and the Caribbean.⁴⁰

The British military mission in the US under General White was given the task of enlisting “men of colour” as part of its brief. However, no firm guidelines were laid

³⁸ The *Crisis*, 16:2, June 1918, 59.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 60.

down. It was never decided, for example, whether recruits should be posted to Canadian units. As a result, those coming forward were initially turned down. In June 1917, it was agreed that recruits could be accepted on the understanding that they would eventually form a self-contained unit of battalion strength that could be kept up to full establishment by ongoing recruitment.⁴¹ General White appealed to the War Office for clarification so that the equivocal recruitment policy did not become a contentious political issue. That White was concerned with matters of political expediency rather than a direct desire to accept black recruits is indicated by the overtly racist remarks contained in a telegram that he sent to the War Office in February 1918. White headed the telegram “Wooly [sic] headed niggers”. He pointed out that as the military mission was unable to post black recruits to “white units”, ‘[t]hese ‘ niggers” must therefore go to native units’.⁴²

In June 1918, the War Office finally agreed that the recruitment of black volunteers to regular British units could proceed, a decision limited to black men resident in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. This was on the strict understanding that recruits agreed to eat normal British rations, to receive the same pay as other British soldiers and that they could understand and speak English. The policy encompassed men of black, East Indian and mixed descent.⁴³ However, any drafts sent from the US could not contain more than ten per cent of black recruits. This would have resulted in a large number of black volunteers being rejected. Having

⁴⁰ WO32/4765 Ministry of National Service to Secretary WO 20.3.1918; Grindle, CO to USS, FO 22.3.1918

⁴¹ WO32/4765 'Enlistment of Men of Colour' (Copy) enclosed with Ministry of National Service to Sec. WO 20.3.1918.

⁴² WO32/4765 General White, New York to WO (copy of Secret telegram) 19.2.1918.

been rejected by the British they would henceforth be exempted from US military service under the Anglo-US Military Service Convention. To avoid this embarrassing situation, the War Office agreed to accept a larger number of black soldiers into the Army Service Corps as Horse and Motor Drivers.⁴⁴

It is clear that the British were embarrassed by and wished to restrict the entry of black recruits into the army as a whole. Restricting the entry of black men to regular army units to those resident in the United States and the metropole meant that the numbers deployed in a combatant role could be safely contained. The War Office explicitly stated that the measures agreed for the United States should not be extended to cover US colonies or protectorates that were home to large numbers of West Indian migrants.⁴⁵ The British representative in Havana issued a press notice to state that the measures would 'exclude specifically Jamaicans and other coloured British subjects'.⁴⁶ The War Office also hastily moved to dispel any idea that black volunteers in Jamaica itself would also have the opportunity to apply for units other than the BWIR in order to have a greater chance of front-line duty. The Secretary to the Army Council responding to enquiries from the Colonial Office tersely stated

I am to say that the intention of the Army Council was, and is, to provide a place in the combatant arms of the British Army for British subjects of colour resident in Great Britain and the United States and also for the better class British subject of colour or half caste resident in the Colonies for whom no appropriate combatant unit exists in the colony in which he resides. It was not, and is not, the intention of the Army Council to accept for units of the British Army natives of unmixed blood from Colonies for whose

⁴³ CO323/781/28914 WO to USS, CO, 13.6.1918; CO323/781/30020 WO to USS, FO, June 1918; CO323/781/31081 WO to USS, CO, 24.6.1918; CO323/782/41475 WO to USS, CO, 24.8.1918.

⁴⁴ WO32/4765 WO to Gen. White 17.6.1918 (copy telegram); Gen. White to WO 26.6.1918 (copy telegram); WO to Gen. White 27.6.1918 (copy telegram).

⁴⁵ WO32/4765 Cubitt, Sec. AC to USS, FO 3.7.1918.

⁴⁶ WO32/4765 Leech (Minister Havana) to FO 21.6.1918 (copy telegram).

reception specially raised labour battalions have been formed, such as the West Indian and Mauritius Labour Battalions; or any British subjects, being natives and resident in Colonies which maintain appropriate combatant units such as ... Jamaica.⁴⁷

iv) Advocates of Black Recruitment

There were, however, those who were keen to advocate the greater deployment of black soldiers. Shortly before the war, an article in *The Zouave*, magazine of the Second Battalion, West India Regiment, stressed the capability and efficiency of the unit. This was in response to the increasingly restricted duties of the regiment, whose two surviving battalions carried out alternating tours of duty in Jamaica and Sierra Leone. The article suggested that the WIR should extend its duties to territories such as Bermuda and Mauritius, thereby freeing up white battalions.

From a financial point of view, we have also the advantage over our European brothers. We do the same work, we undergo the same tests for proficiency in musketry and signalling, our Non-Commissioned Officers pass the same educational tests, and all, for about two-thirds of the pay of the white Corps. We are never at a loss when our European Non-Commissioned Officers go on leave. Their places are always filled during their absence by native Non-Commissioned Officers in such important positions as Pay-Sergeants, Bandmaster, Quartermaster-Sergeant, Sergeant-Drummer etc. and they always do their work in a thoroughly efficient manner, indeed we could not carry on unless they could do so.⁴⁸

Previously, the battalion journal had reported the involvement of WIR troops in the Jamaican earthquake of 1907. The writer was keen to point out that the supreme tests of manhood were not limited to the battlefield.

Much is required of the soldier in warfare – it is not too much to write that no more was ever required in respect of valour than that shown by the Battalion ... when Kingston ... was devastated by an earthquake and a fire occurring so suddenly and so unexpectedly that they may well have tried the courage of the bravest ... never for an instant of this tragic occasion did the

⁴⁷ CO323/782/41475 WO to USS, CO, 24.8.1918.

⁴⁸ *Zouave*, August 1911, 114.

Battalion falter in its duty – never once was there the slightest inclination to panic or a sign of confusion'.⁴⁹

The article quoted a tribute by Mr. Hamar Greenwood, an MP who was visiting Jamaica at the time: 'Our Native Soldiers in Jamaica so worthily upheld the best records of the Soldiers of the King whatever colour they might be or in whatever climate they might serve'.⁵⁰ When the first detachments of the BWIR arrived in Britain, an article in *The War Budget* remarked that 'Their civilisation is on a much higher plane than that of the Kaiser and his hordes'.⁵¹

By the second year of the war, when it was becoming clear that the pool of volunteers was beginning to dry up and conscription was being considered in the metropole, the issue of black recruitment received greater attention. There was some public support, arising from a variety of motives, for the recruitment of black men, resident in the UK and elsewhere in the Empire. The National Sailor's and Fireman's Union (a forerunner of the NUS) engaged in regular racist outbursts against Chinese seafarers, whom it regarded as a threat to conditions and wage levels, as well as potentially traitorous. In the "Yellow Peril" campaign, which emerged in 1908, the union employed a language which reflected the increasing concern with racial contamination and degeneration in the metropole. By the turn of the century this had focused increasingly on the seafaring subjects of Empire who abounded in the major ports.

⁴⁹ *Zouave*, January, 1911, 1)

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ BWIR Album, *War Budget*, 28.10.1915.

Despite this campaign, the union did make some tentative attempts to support its black members. The complex racialised politics that dominated the NSFU and its descendants meant that black seamen were often compared favourably to those of Asiatic origins.⁵² This was due to their insistence on maintaining the same wage levels as their white counterparts and until the post-war years the NSFU, more often than not, regarded such men as fellow British citizens. The union was at the forefront of wartime recruiting campaigns within the trade union movement and particular initiatives were aimed directly at the black membership, many of whom were based in the South Wales ports. These men were residents of long-standing in the locality or from elsewhere in the Empire whose search for seafaring employment had brought them to the sailor's hostels that littered the back streets of Cardiff and other ports. In a letter to the *South Wales Daily Post*, which was reprinted in the union journal, a union official, George Gunning, complained that large numbers of unemployed black seamen of "fine physique" were keen to enlist but had been turned down.⁵³

The official reason given was that the shipping companies wished to retain a pool of labour as many white seamen had volunteered. The length of time many black men had been unemployed and the complaints that cheap Chinese labour was being used in their stead suggested to Gunning that '[t]he ship-owners seem to ... be trying to starve the coloured seamen into submission, using... all the pressure they can bring to keep them from serving their country against German militarism'. He went on:

These men bitterly complained because they were not allowed to join either the Army or Navy. They cannot understand why, and said that they were British born, proud of the freedom they get under the old flag, and also realising that if anything unforeseen

⁵² Tabili, 86-93.

⁵³ *The Seaman*, 19.11.1915, 5

should happen, if we should be beaten, that they would lose the same liberties as we should, and this without being given a chance to defend themselves. I think there is a good deal of logic in their argument. We should raise a strong coloured battalion of good fighting mettle, and thousands more to follow, only give them the chance ... I think it would be a brighter victory to crush this horrible militarism with our glorious voluntary system, and we can do it cheap by giving the millions of British subjects who are to-day debarred from enlistment this one and only chance of showing their patriotism for the flag that gives them freedom.⁵⁴

In its efforts to assist the recruitment process, the NSFU in South Wales even went as far as to compile a list of black men of British nationality who were prepared to join the forces. The union believed that a 'battalion of coloured men' was then being formed and that 'coloured men at present training in various centres will be brought together'.⁵ This is most likely a reference to the BWIR whose first battalion had just arrived in England. Although most men were recruited in the Caribbean, West Indians, already resident in the UK, also joined the regiment. Eventually, the BWIR would become a catchall for non-white recruits from India, South Africa and Sri Lanka whom recruiting officers did not wish to reject outright on grounds of race.

From 1916 onwards black men living in Britain began to be the object of hostile press coverage. Articles began to appear that were fixated with issues of race and sexuality, particularly the attention white English women and girls were receiving from black men. There was some feeling that this issue could be resolved if black men on the streets of the industrial cities, who had come to work in the munitions industries, were encouraged to enlist in the forces. In Manchester, the press stirred up a campaign to oppose the use of black men in munitions factories, chiefly on the grounds that they would come into contact with white women. A correspondent to

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

the *Daily Dispatch*, “Father of Four Girls” urged, “Compel some of us older men to go into the munitions factories before allowing this danger to exist. The place for many of these young fellows is in the army”.⁵⁶

The Raising of the Jamaican Contingents

i) A Jamaican Effort

While the debates continued in the metropole as to the desirability of deploying black soldiers, either as individuals in regular units or in black regiments, initiatives in Jamaica, and elsewhere in the British West Indies, would bring the issue to a head. In Jamaica the flurry of official proclamations and resolutions proffering loyalty, as well as extensive press coverage of the war in Europe, resulted in the desire for a specifically Jamaican contribution to the war effort. The press gave extensive coverage to letters and articles in this vein. A correspondent to the *Daily Chronicle*, “West Indian”, remarked that in the past men had come forward in droves to represent Jamaica at Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and at the coronations of her successors. “West Indian” went on to issue a challenge. Would these same numbers still be willing to come forward for the real test of manhood to form a war contingent of at least a thousand men?⁵⁷ The announcement, at the end of August 1914, that no contingents from the West Indies were to be accepted was greeted with disappointment. Potential recruits were instead encouraged to be content with

⁵⁵ The *Seaman* 22.10.1915, 6. The court trying the nine Barbadian stowaways had earlier heard that ‘a Major Lucas was forming a coloured battalion at Cardiff’ (*Stratford Express*, 29.5.1915, 2).

⁵⁶ *Daily Dispatch*, 8.8.1917, 3.

⁵⁷ DC 25.8.14, 2.

protecting the island from internal and outside threats.⁵⁸ The frustration felt by potential volunteers was expressed by a Barbadian who wrote to the West India Committee: 'We have put up sugar and money for the various subscriptions, but that won't win our battles. It's lives we desire to give as it's for the Empire that the Motherland is fighting, and it is only fair to give these colonies the opportunity of showing the true spirit of patriotism that they have always evinced in the past'.⁵⁹ Although the attachment to the Mother Country was perhaps strongest in Barbados, it is likely that these sentiments would have been shared by frustrated recruits in Jamaica. The central theme was that some kind of male blood sacrifice must be made, not only for England but for the Empire as a whole and one that would clearly identify the origins of the men who made that sacrifice. Despite the obvious desire of Jamaicans to enlist, it was not until May 1915 that the War Office conceded to the demand. Prior to the formation of the BWIR by the King's Proclamation in October 1915 the War Office merely stipulated that the men be passed fit before embarkation, that the Jamaican Government pay their passage and that they be enlisted for the duration of the war only in infantry regiments.⁶⁰

An editorial in the *Daily Gleaner* underlined the sense that a Jamaican component to the war effort would elevate the place of Jamaica on the world stage. It was vital that Jamaica should make a contribution even if the war ended before the contingent was fully trained. 'It would never do for practically the whole Empire to be represented ... Jamaica standing out as the exception. We do not wish to feel ashamed of ourselves.

⁵⁸ WICC, No. 419 20.10.14, 481.

⁵⁹ WICC, No. 421 17.11.14.

We do not desire the finger of scorn to be pointed at us ... [The contingent] will have the fine moral consciousness of having offered to do their duty ... and Jamaica will share that feeling'.⁶¹ More significantly, the article suggested that her involvement in the war effort would raise Jamaica's position in Empire in 'the century of Imperial organisation'.⁶²

In Jamaica itself, some were sceptical of the impact a Jamaican contribution to the war effort could make. Hector Josephs, a black barrister and a founding member of the Jamaica League, complained of a spirit abroad in some quarters that sneered at the possibility of a Jamaican contribution. A joke was circulating for example that the enemy would flee as soon as Jamaica had taken the field.⁶³ To answer these sneer Josephs urged Jamaicans of all colours to go forward as volunteers and demanded that they be accorded appropriate respect when they did so. Josephs employed language that set the act of volunteering within the framework of masculine duty, not only to Empire, but as an extension of manful domestic responsibility. He urged women not to hold their men back and to allow them to live up to this sacred task which would be duly rewarded.

The battle is for the existence of Empire and liberty, for the homes and hearths that are so dear ... Now the strong opinion of women is a great force; and most far-reaching in the influence of that opinion when they show due honour to, and appreciation of, those who are doing their part at home and abroad and also the value at which they estimate those who shirk.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ CO137/712 WO to Sec. State, CO 19/5/1915.

⁶¹ DG, 1.10.1915, 8.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ DG 14.10.1915, 8. Josephs was educated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he won the law prize in 1892. He was called to the bar in 1896. He was Acting Attorney General in Jamaica between 1914 and 1919 and later served in this position in British Guiana.

ii) The King's Appeal & the Illusion of Racial Inclusivity

Popular declarations of loyalty to the Empire among the Jamaican masses rested on a feeling of affinity to the person of the monarch. Proclamations from the throne were received with greater reverence than other official statements. The bulk of the population tended to lend them greater weight and placed great faith in them. In late October 1915, as the flow of volunteers in the metropole started to flag, George V made "The King's Appeal for Men" throughout the Empire that appeared to override the racial considerations of the colonial government and War Office. Significantly, the previous April, the King had intervened to ensure the acceptance of West Indian contingents by challenging the War Minister, Kitchener, about continued War Office rebuttals. The "Appeal" itself was made only days before the formation of the BWIR by Royal Proclamation⁶⁵ and mirrored the apparent racial inclusiveness extended to the subjects of Empire suggested in the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act.

At this moment in the struggle between my people and a highly organised enemy who has transgressed the Law of Nations and changed the ordinance that binds civilized Europe together, I appeal to you.

I rejoice in my empire's efforts, and feel pride in the voluntary response from my Subjects all over the world who have sacrificed home, fortune and life itself, in order that another many not inherit the free Empire which their ancestors and mine have built.

I ask you to make good these Sacrifices.

The end is not in sight. More men and yet more are wanted to keep my Armies in the Field, and through them to secure victory and enduring Peace.

In ancient days the darkest moment had ever produced in men of our race the sternest resolve.

I ask you, men of all classes, to come forward voluntarily and take your share in the fight.

⁶⁴ DG 14.10.1915, 13.

⁶⁵ C. L. Joseph, 'The British West Indies Regiment 1914-1918' JCH, 2, 1971, 98-9; 'Fusilier', 27.

In freely responding to my appeal, you will be giving your support to our brothers who, for long months, have nobly upheld Britain's past traditions, and the glory of her Arms.⁶⁶

The "Appeal" was received in Jamaica on 23rd October and was read out in all churches on Sunday 31st.⁶⁷ It prompted a rash of statements and poems in a similar vein that could be read as reinforcing the message that all races of the Empire enjoyed equality in the fight against "the Hun". The poet, Tom Redcam, who for the duration of the war penned almost weekly stanzas for the Jamaican press, captured the mood in his verse, 'Gentlemen, the King'.

List to the words of the King!
List to the summons they bring!
Patriots, stand up for the right,
Buckle your armour for fight! ...

"Sons of the Empire, rise,
Sever your most sacred ties;
For a greater is here,
'Tis our country's most dear,
And her call let no stalwart despise.

Heedless of race, rank, or creed,
Heedless of glory or meed [recognition/reward],
Mindful of Duty alone,
Thousands before you have gone.⁶⁸

Another poem, "The Appeal" by Rose de Lisser, was directed at "my brothers" and "you women" of Jamaica. Familial language tended to strengthen suggestions of racial inclusivity, even if within discourses of Empire references to family also carried implicit messages of race, class and gender hierarchy. De Lisser suggested that the failure to follow the King's urging was unmanly. 'God knows it is bitter to part;/ But your manhood shall never be lowered,/ No fear must be now in your

⁶⁶ *The Times*, 25.10.1915, 7.

⁶⁷ DG 25.10.1915, 8; 26.10.1915, 13.

heart'. The women of Jamaica were to urge their men to the front for 'It is better to know they are fighting,/ For that which is dearest and best;/ Than to see them home playing the coward,/ In a languorous ease and rest'. However, de Lisser's apparently universal message was undermined by her request that 'Aside put your golf-stick and ball;/ let the racquet be quiet, while onward/ You go to you Country's call'.⁶⁹

The apparently universal language of the King's Appeal resonated across the class and race divisions of Jamaican society. The veteran trade unionist and former Garveyite W. G. Hinchcliffe, articulated the dream of a racially inclusive Empire brought about by the exigencies of a universal war. He urged Jamaicans to go forward and assume the masculine mantle of volunteer, before they fell under the more dubious category of conscript.

We need no seer to tell us, nor any divine to inspire us with the fact that the time is now on us when brothers will be compelled to know each other as brother without thinking of race, nationality, colour, class, or complexion. Therefore, those who are not yet standing on the road platform of humanity, and are shirking the duty which the Empire demands of them, they need not be argued with, for the mandate will soon come down from the Throne. We cannot indulge in any arguments just now about "class" and "colour", "spade" and "shovel" ... Yet the subject is one that has been causing innumerable troubles, and troubles which this universal war at the end will decide in favour of the British people and the African race. So it is just as well for the European, the middle man and the African, all join hands and hearts together to strike the necessary death blow to Germanism, bearing in mind "United we stand, divided we fall".⁷⁰

Once black volunteers had been formerly recruited, in many instances, the authorities in the metropole sought to preserve the inclusive vision of Empire. This is

⁶⁸ Rev. J. W. Graham & Tom Redcam, *Round the Blue Light*, Kingston, 1918, 5.

⁶⁹ DG 26.10.1915, 6. Hinchcliffe was a founder and official of the Artisans' Union in 1899. He had also travelled to Panama in the 1890s and had established a literary society there. He was involved in the UNIA and spoke at its anniversary celebrations in 1915 before splitting with Garvey in unclear circumstances in December 1915 (Robert A. Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey & Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Vol. I), Berkeley, 1983, 46, 148-9, 170-1).

highlighted in a court case that occurred shortly after the first West Indian contingents arrived. Lawrence Bristow Graham appeared at Lewes Police Court and was charged with making remarks likely to jeopardise recruiting to His Majesty's forces. In a Hotel taproom in Seaford, Graham demanded of two privates in the British West Indies Regiment why they had enlisted for one shilling a day. Ministers such as Churchill, Asquith and Lloyd George were receiving £15,000 per year he pointed out. Graham had continued: 'Look at your King, he's a German, and so are all the rest of the family, why don't you lay down your arms and do no fighting'.⁷¹ Graham was reported to have accosted other black soldiers in the street and suggested that white men should be left to fight their own battles. The West Indians were fools to fight for the Empire. Graham was sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour. The local press, applauded the sentence and accused Graham of belittling the patriotism of BWIR who find themselves away from home in strange country and climate.

iii) "Respectability" & Its Connotation for Race

Despite the apparent broad-based nature of the local appeals for volunteers, it is clear that those in charge of recruitment, as well as many white, black and "coloured" supporters of the war contingents, were keen to ensure that only the more "respectable" elements of Jamaica's population would go forward to represent the island. In order to preserve the veneer of racial unity and equality under the Empire, rather than appear to be discriminating against Jamaicans of darker skin, frequent references were made to the desirability of attracting the "right sort of man" to the

⁷⁰ DG 27.5.1916, 4.

colours. At a recruitment rally in October 1915, Brigadier-General Blackden argued that '[T]he men of the Contingent were going to fight against the Germans, people of great scientific ideas – people who had discovered the latest methods of warfare. Therefore they wanted the best and most intelligent men'. Often it was 'an undersized, ragged, barefooted set of fellows, who came forward probably to get a meal'.⁷² A few days earlier, Blackden had insisted:

We do want to see Jamaica represented by its most intelligent people, because although there is plenty of room for the muscle that drives the bayonet home, there is still more room for the brain that can use the complicated weapons of modern warfare.⁷³

This last point would have had particular resonance in a society where the use of muscle power was clearly linked to a racially demarcated section of the population, to mark social exclusion on racial lines.

Increasingly, it would seem that such appeals were ignored. Whether motivated out of a desire to serve the sovereign or to feed their families, it became clear that the poorest elements of Jamaican society furnished the largest numbers of recruits. For the white elite, Jamaica represented a safe haven from the compulsion of the Military Service Laws in the metropole. In November 1915 a correspondent to the *Gleaner*, with the pseudonym "Arma Virumque Cano",⁷⁴ complained that the higher class men were not enlisting. He argued that now that the BWIR had been formed they no longer have an excuse to hold back. The regiment required officers familiar with the West Indian personality. Therefore those men travelling straight to UK for a

⁷¹ *Newhaven Chronicle*, 18.11.15, n.p.

⁷² DG, 20.10.1915, 14.

⁷³ DG, 12.10.1915, 13.

⁷⁴ 'I speak of Arms and the Man' – a reference to the heroic tradition of ancient Rome as encapsulated by Virgil in the *Aeneid*.

commission in white regular units should now be debarred. Those who still failed to volunteer should be shamed into doing so by the publication of their names and photographs in the *Gleaner* Christmas edition. The writer continued: 'I ... appeal to those men who are still sitting on the fence to come forward and "play the Game"'. If the working man can respond to the call of duty, surely men of education and social standing can come forward and follow their lead'.⁷⁵

Men involved in the fledgling nationalist movement were not slow to capitalise on the failure of the white elite to put themselves forward for service. W. G. Hinchcliffe, while supporting the war effort and the defeat of Germany, believed that conscription would be necessary in Jamaica before the end of the war. His words vividly portray the ambivalent sensibilities of the black and "coloured" Jamaican nationalist middle class:

Jamaica has not yet been truly represented to the British people ... and it will not be so until the more desirable class of men will go forth. Personally, I ... feel proud of the class of men that have already gone forth ... from huts obscure, and from "the bush" ... While I am equally dissatisfied to know that they, and only they, have gone to be the historical representatives of this loyal and ancient mixed colony, I am glad to know that notwithstanding, that on them the laurels will fall, which must eventually, lift the standard of the African race, and cause oppression into oblivion to fall.⁷⁶

Hinchcliffe clearly expected that military sacrifice would win not only improvements in citizenship rights in the Jamaican context, but would raise the status of black Africans in general. At this stage he reflected the view abroad among many nationalists that the benefits of war service would automatically ensue and that the colonial power would at once recognise such service.

⁷⁵ DG 20.11.1915, 6.

⁷⁶ DG, 12.5.1916, 10.

The middle and upper strata of Jamaican society appeared increasingly reluctant to come forward in support of the war effort. However, there continued to be an insistence, both official and among the public opinion articulated through newspaper correspondence, that Jamaica could only be properly represented by the prominence of the formally educated and more respectable elements in the contingents. Brigadier-General Blackden's circular stipulating the criteria for enlistment in the contingents suggested that skilled men be given a certificate stating their talents that might be of use to the military. However, he was clear to underline:

It is important for the good name of Jamaica that these certificates should be sparingly given, and only to really skilled men who have been examined by someone qualified to judge ... Preference should be given to unmarried men between 20 and 30 years of age who are in a position to feed and clothe themselves until embarkation.⁷⁷

The implication was that only such men were fit to reap the full rewards of military sacrifice in the shape of improved citizenship rights. In some cases this stance sought to encompass what might be termed the respectable working class – the artisan or skilled workman. Someone who had some capacity to earn a reasonable living outside the economic vagaries of the plantation economy that affected most directly on the majority of the labouring poor. It was anticipated therefore that military be a privilege rather than a duty that reflected one's current standing in Jamaican society. A letter to the *Gleaner* from "Civis" [Citizen] was concerned that the "better class of men" who had the potential to make NCOs had held back as they had not received sufficient assurances from recruiting officers that they would achieve the status they had held in civilian life.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ DG 31.5.1915, 13.

⁷⁸ DG 17.5.1916, 10.

The failure of upper class whites to volunteer locally or to travel directly to the metropole in pursuit of more illustrious commissions was a major source of embarrassment. The press regularly carried articles encouraging these men to step into the breach. There was a suggestion that along with privilege came certain responsibilities. The failure to them carried the threat that black and lighter-skinned men might step into the breach. An editorial in the *Gleaner* in November 1915 demanded:

what are we to say of the young men in this country who, with no dependants are living a life of ease while the peasants come forward in their hundred to serve their sovereign. Has position no obligations? Has it ceased to be the duty of Gentlemen to lead where danger lies?⁷⁹

A few days later, the paper underlined the view that only with white officers could the Jamaican contingent realise its full potential stating, ‘unless we can obtain from Jamaica the officers and non-commissioned officers now needed, we can never feel that Jamaica as a whole has done as well as she might’.⁸⁰

However, members of the white elite were often reluctant to come forward and translate their privileged position in wider Jamaica society into a parallel role within the war effort. Harold Castle, in a letter published shortly after the *Gleaner* editorial, insisted that it was only the white elite who could fully realise the potential of the black rank and file. In so doing, he attempted to appeal to the ethos of athleticism instilled in the public school system which, since the last quarter of the nineteenth

⁷⁹ DG 27.11.1915, 8.

⁸⁰ DG 4.12.1915, 8.

century, had served as a primary motivating force behind Imperial and military effort:

[I]t is up to you, young sportsman of Jamaica, to officer the men of Jamaica who are willing to fight for humanity and freedom. Never let it be said that the men who can play cricket, football, polo and tennis, and race, hung back when the greatest of all games, the fight for freedom and Empire was going on. Remember the true sportsman makes the ideal leader of men; he knows his team and they will back him through thick and thin ... What keeps you back? Are you ashamed to go with the Jamaicans? If that be so, let me tell you that the men of this country will make history. They have all the best attributes of a first class fighting man, and when trained thoroughly, will, as our General told us, "be a credit to the Empire".⁸¹

Castle later went on to suggest that a special Jamaican brigade, along the lines of the public school battalions in the metropole, should be raised to encourage men from the middle and upper classes to enlist.⁸²

iv) Appeals to Respectability and the Non-white Middle Class

Such appeals, although usually targeted at the white upper echelons of Jamaican society were open to slightly differing interpretation by the light and brown-skinned middle class audience. References to education and respectability were clearly vain attempts to imply white without opening up the sores of this pigmentation-obsessed society to general view. However, many in the non-white middle-classes can be safely said to have exceeded the white middle and upper classes in both. It was by reference to their achievements in these areas that men from the light and brown-skinned middle class laid claim to a greater share in the privileges of Jamaican society. During the war, in contrast to its aftermath, battles over the exclusion on the basis of race were most keenly contested between light and brown-skinned middle

⁸¹ DG 6.12.1915, 11.

⁸² DG 19.5.1916, 4.

class and their white counterparts. While the denial of military office and privilege was most polarised between the black rank-and-file and the white officer class, the obsession with skin pigmentation and racial heredity was most evident when lighter-skinned men attempted to gain access to commissions and professional positions in the military hierarchy.

In contrast to the black rank-and-file, who once passed as fit were deemed to possess the necessary physical characteristics to make soldiers, men of mixed lineage that might include African, European, Indian or Chinese seem at times to have been viewed as less than effective in terms of their physique and mentality. This reflected popular interpretations of those scientific racial theories which saw racial mixing or “miscegenation” as threatening the degeneration of the white Northern European races. Before the Jamaican contingents were formally established, the authorities in Jamaica were concerned that rejection might ensue when men ‘who are not of pure European descent but are slightly coloured’,⁸³ tried to enlist or gain commissions in the metropole. It was not only whites who travelled to England in order to enlist in units that could not be associated with their Jamaican origins. When rejection did occur Jamaicans, having paid their own passage and possibly having given up employment back home, could find themselves penniless in the UK and unable to pay their return fare. Such men usually presented themselves at the Colonial Office to seek assistance. Abram G. Kirkwood travelled to England to enlist, even though he had been passed as fit for the Jamaican War Contingent, which, ironically he decided not to join due to ‘the mixed class of men enlisted’. Kirkwood’s attitude was

⁸³ CO137/709/19437 Governor Jamaica to SSC 26/4/1915.

not unique. Towards the end of the war, Governor Probyn backed a suggestion by the Barbados Recruiting Committee that a special regiment of “the better class of coloured men” be established. These men, it was argued, were reluctant to enlist in the BWIR, as they did not wish to serve alongside the black labourers and artisans who made up the bulk of the ranks.⁸⁴ A Colonial Office official reported that he had subsequently been rejected as unfit at more than one recruiting depot in England. He continued in a tone that suggested the a man of “dubious” ancestry was potentially effeminate: ‘I am not sure that he is unmixed European though he said his father was a Scotsman and his mother Canadian ... he is a rather depressed melancholy person, delicate looking and respectably dressed’.⁸⁵

Back in Jamaica, as has been mentioned, the authorities were having difficulty persuading sufficient numbers of whites to come forward to undertake commissions in the BWIR. The Colonial Office reported that there would be ‘difficulty in finding men qualified for commissions ... if the Governor’s selection is restricted to those of unmixed European blood’.⁸⁶ This was also an admission that racial purity was largely illusory in a society with a small white population with a long-legacy of sexual exploitation and negotiated relationships between black and white. Nevertheless, William Manning, the Jamaican Governor, conceded the reality of racial inheritance in Jamaica, but simultaneously tried to maintain the illusion that it was otherwise. Writing to the Secretary of State, he stated ‘There are a certain number of young men, among applicants for commissions with the Jamaica

⁸⁴ CO137/726/42533 Hutson to Barbados Recruiting Cttee. 4.5.1918 (enclosed in Probyn to Long 31.7.1918).

⁸⁵ CO137/713 CO Minute 8/9/1915.

contingent, who are not of pure European descent but who otherwise are qualified for commissions. I should like to have the discretion to recommend *certain of them* for commissions with the Jamaica contingent provided that *only those whose colour is not pronounced should be selected*'.⁸⁷

However, the military were adamant that the conditions of the Manual of Military Law should be strictly adhered to. The Army Council stated that they were 'averse to any officers being appointed to commissions in the Jamaica Contingent who are not of unmixed European blood ... [any] deficiency will be supplied from the trained and partially trained officers in this country'.⁸⁸ Correspondents to the *Gleaner* were swift to point out the injustice and folly of the War Office ruling. It was argued that non-whites could reach the rank of major in the Indian Army and that local officers would be better placed to understand and motivate the black rank-and-file. Local recruitment would also be assisted if men felt that they had the chance of a commission at a later date.⁸⁹ However, an editorial of the same day, pointing to the fact that some non-whites had managed to secure commissions despite the regulations, argued that in the long-term the regulations would be eroded by default. More significantly, it was stated that those who did not accept their assigned place, under the rigid racial hierarchies that pertained in Jamaica and the Empire at large, were in reality shirkers: 'any young man with no real hindrance to enlistment is disgraced if he does not enlist'.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ CO137/711/54861 CO Minute 27.11.1915.

⁸⁷ CO137/711/54861 Manning to SSC 26.11.1915 (my emphasis).

⁸⁸ CO318/336/57697 Cubitt, WO to USSCO 14.12.1915.

The ambiguous position of the Jamaican middle classes, of all colours, was further complicated by class interests and liberal political ideals. This was highlighted in the opposition to the Military Service Bill which was passed in April 1917. Significantly, only Jamaica and New Zealand alone of all the colonies introduced measures for conscription. In the case of Jamaica, there were always sufficient volunteers to meet the demands of the colony's undertakings to the War Office. The latter's frequent prevarication on shipping arrangements and manpower requirements also meant that the efficacy of the law never had to be tested. For example, in August 1917, only a matter of months after the law had been passed, the War Office announced that it was suspending West Indian recruitment until the following spring⁹¹

Nevertheless, the bill was opposed on several grounds. A public meeting, in early April passed a resolution detailing the major grievances. Firstly, it was argued, the number of volunteers had equalled the Jamaican government's expectations. Secondly, literacy qualifications and over-zealous medical examinations had, until recently reviewed, excluded excessive numbers. Thirdly, insufficient provision had been made for 'middle class' dependants and disabled veterans. Fourthly, the bill 'ignore[d] the right of conscientious objectors'.⁹² Somewhat disingenuously, the supporters of the resolution, who counted among their number several members of the Legislative Council, including the leading black member Alexander Dixon,

⁸⁹ DG 3.12.1915, 4 Letter from Roy B.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 8.

⁹¹ Joseph, 111-2.

⁹² CO137/721/20876 Governors dispatch 15/6/1917.

added that passing the Bill 'would be a blot on the loyalty of the people of this island'.⁹³

While wishing to declare their allegiance to the Empire, this element of Jamaican society was reluctant to volunteer unless properly compensated. It could be argued that they would rather those members of the lower classes who had been rejected in the past would go in their stead. Simultaneously, they wished to present a liberal and progressive image in terms of the rights of conscientious objectors and in their demand for decent treatment of returning veterans.

⁹³ *ibid.*



plate 1



plate 2



plate 3



plate 4



PRIVATE GEORGE HALLS
Scalforth Highlanders
British Expeditionary Force

"I may say I am a continuous user of Phosferine and find it a great restorative after the nerve-racking atmosphere of the trenches, just as much as in Civil life after a hard day's work. Before enlisting, many a time my business, mostly brain work, would carry me sometimes into the small hours of the morning. At last I was told that I was on the point of a nervous breakdown and was recommended to try Phosferine, which soon brought me to normal. But again, in the trenches under shell fire, the old trouble very soon reasserted itself in the form of violent headaches and neuralgia. Again I tried the old remedy, and the same on the battlefield as in the office, Phosferine put me right. I shall have no hesitation in the future of recommending Phosferine to all the sufferers I meet somewhere in France."

This war-worn soldier has proved, in the actual battle zone, that Phosferine gives immediate relief and freedom from the severe exhaustion and steady loss of nerve force which occurs when under constant shell fire. Phosferine generates the vital energy to overcome the dulling of the senses, the numbing of the faculties, caused by the tremendous cannonade—in a word, Phosferine means recovery!

When you require the Best Tonic Medicine, see that you get

PHOSFERINE

A PROVEN REMEDY FOR

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Nervous Debility | Neuralgia | Lazitude | Backache |
| Influenza | Maternity Weakness | Neuritis | Rheumatism |
| Indigestion | Premature Decay | Faintness | Headache |
| Impressiveness | Mental Exhaustion | Brain Fog | Hysteria |
| Exhaustion | Loss of Appetite | Anæmia | Sciatica |

Phosferine has a world-wide repute for curing disorders of the nervous system—cure completely and speedily, and at less cost than any other preparation.

SPECIAL TRAVEL AND SERVICE NOTE

The Tablet form of Phosferine is particularly convenient for men on active service. Travellers, Hunters, Explorers, Prospectors, Missionaries, etc. It can be used any time, anywhere, in accurate doses, as no water is needed.

The 2/9 tube is small enough to carry in the pocket, contains 90 doses, or nearly four times the 1/1½ size. Anyone affected by unhealthy localities or climatic conditions, will be the better for Phosferine—always put a tube of tablets in your outfit.

PROPRIETORS: ASHTON & PARSONS, LTD., LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, ENGLAND.

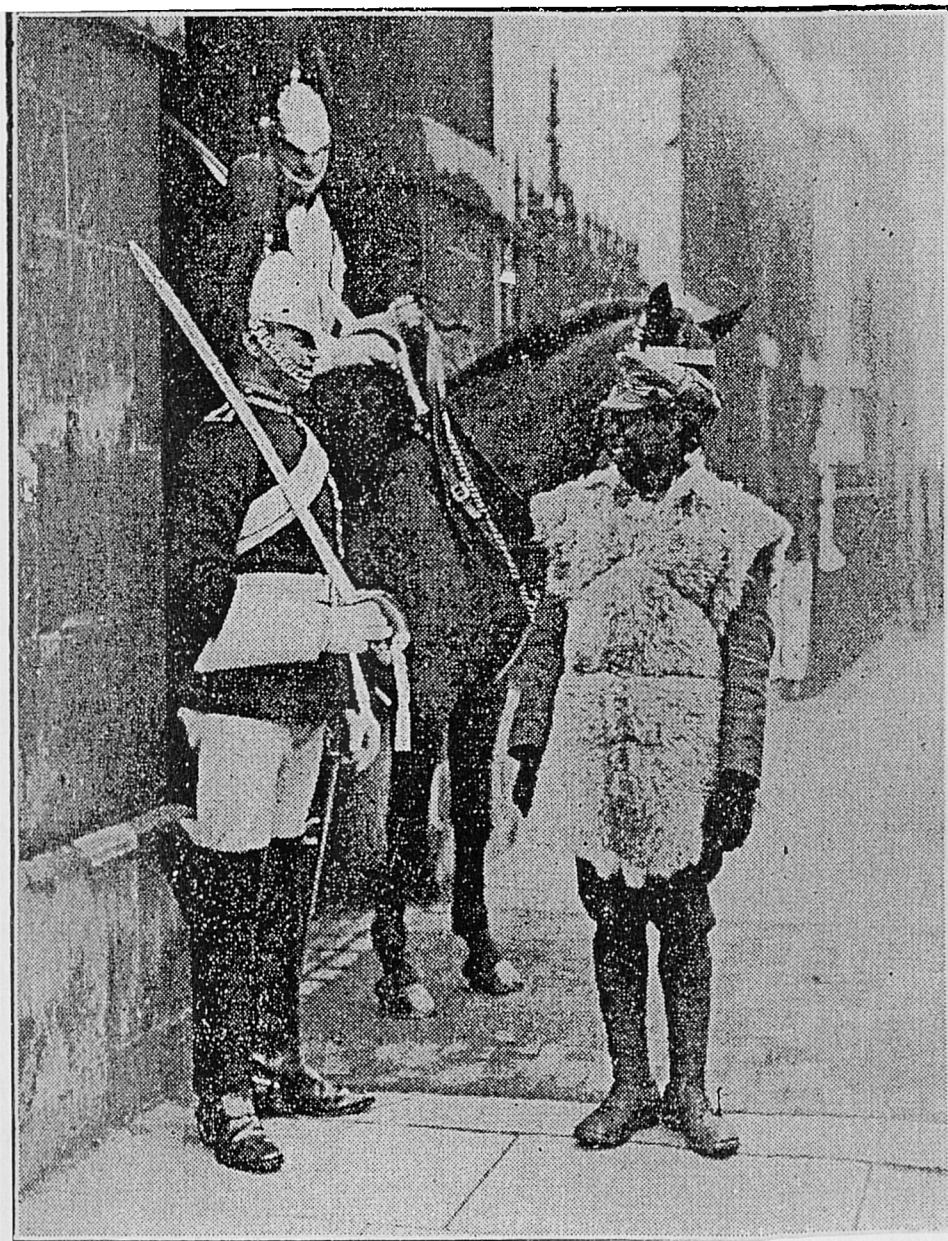


plate 6



plate 7



plate 8

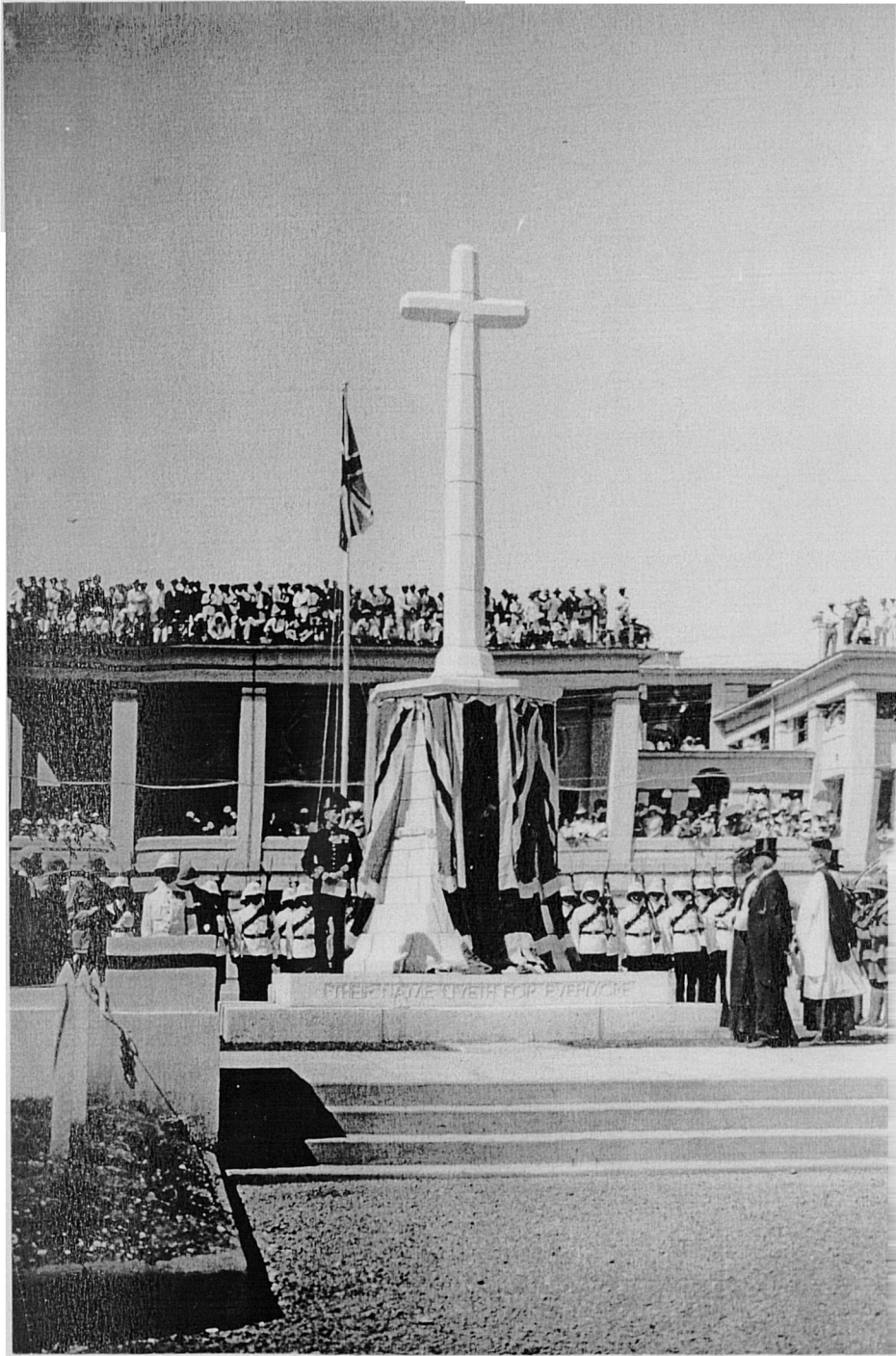


Plate 9

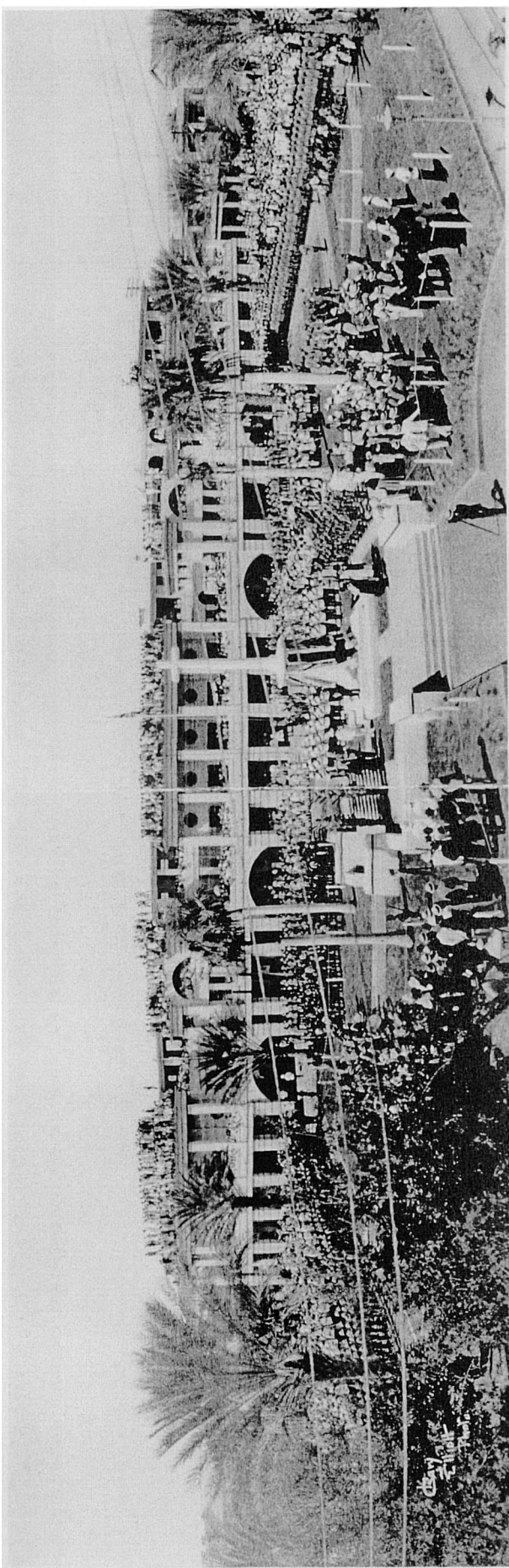


Plate 10

5

“Neither Women nor Coloured Troops” The Deployment of Black Jamaican Soldiers in Europe & the Middle East

Between May and October 1915 negotiations between the Colonial Office and the War Office established the terms upon which the contingents from Jamaica and the other West Indian territories would be accepted. After vigorous War Office opposition to the idea of a black West Indian contribution, it was finally acknowledged that continued rejection would only lead to resentment, and possibly discontent, in the colonies. The British West Indies Regiment was formally established as an infantry unit by a Royal Proclamation which appeared in the *London Gazette* of 26th October 1915. Pay was set at standard British Army rates, while separation allowances for dependants were laid down at the lower level already applied to the West India Regiment on the grounds that the standard of living was lower in the colonies. By April 1916, three service battalions were assembled and, after training at Seaford Camp in Sussex, they were posted to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. In all, Jamaica would provide 303 of the 397 officers and 9977 of the 15204 other ranks (76.3 and 65.6 per cent respectively) for the eleven battalions of the BWIR. The next largest contingent came from Trinidad and Tobago, which sent forty officers and 1438 other ranks (around ten per cent in each category).¹ As was already the case in the West India Regiment, all the

¹ Joseph, 100-104, 124.

commissioned officers – second Lieutenant and above – were to be white. Non-whites were restricted to non-commissioned rank – that is up to sergeant-major.

As the first Jamaican War Contingent set sail for England on the 9th November 1915 the local press proudly trumpeted the immanent arrival of Jamaica on the world stage. An event made possible in its eyes by the sacrifice and devotion to duty of her men of all races:

young, virile, bubbling over with life, proud soldiers of that Empire on which the sun never sets ... writing possibly the most glorious page in the long, and chequered story of this isle ... It was Our Day, Jamaica's Day ... Jamaica, as Jamaica was now in the war'.²

To underline the point, frequent reference was made to a perceived physical and moral improvement, and even an elevated social status, in the men of the contingent. Military training was held to have removed slouches and the downward gaze of social inferiority and deference. Townsmen could boast that they possessed the same conditioned physique of their peers from the countryside.³ In other words, the men of the contingent were seen at this point to be matching the ideals of masculinity held so dear in the metropole and through the act of volunteering had laid claim to an element of equality. The men would have been filled with optimism, expectation and not a little apprehension. They were at the centre of the public gaze in Jamaica, which combined with a feeling of military camaraderie and sense of purpose, would have bolstered feelings of racial pride.

This early optimism was to be swiftly dashed. Once away from the shores of Jamaica the majority of the men would be faced by a military apparatus whose central

² DG 10.11.1915 1.

traditions and structures were preoccupied with maintaining strict obedience and perpetuating the class-bound social order. This was maintained by constant attempts to remind each individual soldier of the place he occupied within the military hierarchy. There was also a tendency to dehumanise and erase the traces of individuality that might undermine loyalty to the collective unit. Under such circumstances there was no room for policies that might encourage any lasting feelings of racial self-confidence, which in turn might lead to the questioning of white colonial rule and alleged military superiority. However, the subsequent deployment of the volunteers from the Jamaican contingents, as well as the professional black soldiers of the West India Regiment, must be seen in the context of the preoccupations of the military authorities in relation to the fighting quality of white volunteers and conscripts. The presence of black soldiers had the potential to place such anxieties into even starker relief and policies emerged that were designed to preserve the racial order.

Discipline

The experiences of the Jamaican volunteers at the hands of the metropolitan military authorities were compounded by the hierarchy within the BWIR. Many of the officers were members of the West Indian planter class. The most senior commanders were professional soldiers from the WIR nearing retirement who also had a first-hand knowledge of the racial hierarchy in Jamaica. Where this was not the case, officers were assigned from other British Army regiments or from among the

³ *ibid.*, 3.

least capable applicants for temporary commissions in the New Army.⁴ These men had even less knowledge of the black rank and file than their counterparts from the white West Indian elite, who could at least claim some passing acquaintance with the black Jamaican. A former black NCO with the WIR complained in correspondence with his white officer that the practice of sending officers from England was ‘not a help to British prestige; for it takes many Europeans more than a year to read a “Black man”, and fully three or four years to understand his “pigeon” English’.⁵

Despite Elliott’s complaints, it seems that in reality the black soldier fared no better at the hands of white Jamaican officers. Dupuch highlights the example of Captain George Dawson of the 4th British West Indies Regiment who was the epitome of the Jamaican planter class. Dawson ordered his men to collect material to make him a dugout while they lived in tents that were exposed to shells which resulted in the refusal of the men to co-operate. He assumed a more paternalistic relationship with Dupuch who he recruited as his aide-de-camp.⁶ Another white Jamaican officer, Colonel Willis of the 9BWIR had a reputation for extreme brutality. In one incident, Willis stamped on a soldier’s frost-bitten leg after he had refused to get on his feet, telling a sergeant nearby to write home: “I’m turning Jesus Christ out here. I’m making the lame walk”.⁷

Colonel Wood Hill, commander of the 1BWIR, who had consistently advocated the deployment of the regiment in the front line and had frequently intervened to prevent

⁴ James, 27.

⁵ CSM George D. Elliott to V. C. Green 24.12.1923. See also letter of 4.1.1926.

⁶ Dupuch, 56-8.

⁷ *ibid.*, 78

acts of racial discrimination, was not immune from the use of excessive force.

Cipriani described Wood Hill, who was nick-named “Conky Bill”, as:

an autocrat of the first water and out to get his own way at any cost on all subjects. In many cases his viewpoint was so extreme and ridiculous as to almost verge on the maniacal. He was insolent, overbearing and offensive to his officers, senior as well as junior, and in most cases unjust and absurdly despotic to his men’.⁸

In one incident, Wood Hill came close to being cashiered for striking a sergeant under his command.

Flogging had been outlawed in the army in 1881 under the Caldwell reforms. Individual officers, however, continued to regard it as an appropriate form of discipline, particularly when dealing with “native” troops, an attitude that would have been bound to rekindle the memory of slavery in Jamaica. The *Gleaner* reported the case of Lieutenant Eric Larnder of the WIR who was reprimanded for striking a private soldier, James Riley, with a stick. Larnder had been challenged by Riley when the private was on patrol. The lieutenant countered by accusing Riley of sitting down at his post. A sergeant was ordered to administer six strokes. Larnder himself administered two further blows as he complained that the sergeant had not struck hard enough. Ironically, after administering this humiliating treatment, Larnder tried to appeal to some perverse code of masculine honour. He argued in his defence that he had been trying to preserve the soldier’s dignity and manhood by carrying out the punishment himself, rather than reporting Riley to a superior officer.⁹ This reflected a culture within white Jamaican society, present since the

⁸ Cipriani, 51.

⁹ DG, 9.6.1916, 2 & 12.6.1916, 6.

early days of slavery, that blacks were answerable to the personal and paternalistic authority of a white man outside the normal bounds of the law.

Although black Jamaican soldiers were officially protected from the physical abuse meted out by their officers, the army still retained another routine punishment which, like flogging, could have resurrected the collective memory of slavery. Field punishment number one, commonly known as “crucifixion”, gained a notoriety throughout the British Army during the war, and several campaigns sought to abolish it. A memo from Lloyd George to the French War Ministry detailed the extent of its provisions and, ironically, went to some length to show that sufficient safeguards were in place to protect the soldier. “FP No. 1” could be applied for up to 90 days. Lord George’s memo illustrates why the continued use of the punishment may have provoked particularly strong feelings among black soldiers, who had enlisted in a war that was presented as a struggle against slavery. A soldier could

be kept in irons, i.e. fetters or handcuffs, or both fetters and handcuffs; and may be secured so as to prevent his escape ... When in irons he may be attached for a period or periods not exceeding two hours in any one day to a fixed object, but he must not be so attached during more than three out of any four consecutive days, nor during more than twenty-one days in all ... Stumps or ropes may be used for the purpose of these rules in lieu of irons ... He may be subjected to the like labour, employment and restraint and dealt with in like manner as if he were under a sentence of imprisonment with hard labour.¹⁰

In the military prisoners compound at Taranto, Dupuch saw men sentenced to “FP No. 1” being beaten with sticks, although this was in breach of official guidelines which, ironically, stipulated that no injury should be inflicted on the prisoner. Dupuch was able to intervene in some cases to get the sentence reduced to the less

severe “FP No. 2”, which nevertheless involved loss of pay, daily fatigue duty and a diet of water and biscuit.¹¹

It was the refusal of the men of the BWIR to buckle to white authority on a day-to-day basis that resulted in the harshest treatment. This is illustrated in the case of Private Hubert Clarke of Jamaica who was executed for an assault committed while he was being held, along with other men of the 2BWIR, in the field punishment compound at Kantara, Egypt. Clarke was found guilty of wounding a military policeman who had arrested him for jeering and mimicking a passing white cavalry officer. Recommending a death sentence, the local commander, Colonel Lloyd stated

A severe lesson is needed with regard to the repeated instances of insubordination committed by prisoners of the BWI Regiment in the FP Compound at Kantara ... [Soldiers of the regiment] have repeatedly committed acts of insubordination, the punishment for which has been unduly light, and in some instances, offences beyond the powers of a commanding officer have been dealt with summarily. No disciplinary lesson has been taught to insubordinate soldiers in the case of earlier offences – and the result appears to be total disregard for authority¹²

Stigmatised as “Native” Troops

The West India Regiment had proven itself in countless encounters since the American War of Independence. Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, however, it had not been used against a white enemy, its main actions having taken place against the Ashantee Kingdom in 1873-4 and in Sierra Leone from the 1850s to 1890s.¹³ While used to ruthless effect against local African armies or native askaris under French leadership, in many respects the treatment of the West India Regiment

¹⁰ WO32/5460 Lloyd George to French War Ministry 21.11.1916.

¹¹ Dupuch, 78-9; Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War*, Harmondsworth, 1979, 43.

¹² WO71/595.

presaged that meted out later on to the volunteers of the BWIR. Opportunities for front-line experience, and its attendant promise of glory, were rare. Perhaps, it could be argued, that the almost continual failure to deploy black soldiers in front-line situations meant that the promise of glory came to be that more potent and alluring because of its very elusiveness.

In common with black troops throughout the Empire, the WIR were assigned the role of “native troops”. When their services could be dispensed with on the front-line, they were reduced to fetching-and-carrying for white troops or assigned the duties of labour battalions. When stationed in Jamaica during the late nineteenth century the WIR were regularly used on fatigues to load and unload the kit of white soldiers leaving the island or arriving on tours of duty. The term “native troops” or “native labour” brought with it suggestions that the men to whom it was applied were most definitely not of front-line calibre, who at best were fit only to serve in an auxiliary and demeaning role, excluded from the full rewards of military service. It was a term that proved impossible to erase from the minds of the military establishment and was compounded further by the general contempt that existed in the British Army for any man, regardless of race, who was employed in a labouring role.

Throughout the Great War there was a complete failure to exploit the lengthy experience gained by the WIR in the West African “bush-fighting” campaigns of the latter nineteenth century. The regiment was never deployed at battalion strength in the African theatres of war in which such engagements continued to predominate.

¹³ Dyde, *passim*.

After a brief spell of active duty in Cameroon, the First Battalion was sent back to Jamaica for the duration of the war. However, it is important to point out that the colonial authorities were keen to retain troops in Jamaica in the case of internal unrest. As we have seen, the WIR had proved a dependable force during the Morant Bay Rebellion. As wartime stringencies took hold, levels of unrest in the island rose. When it was proposed that the 1WIR be deployed in the event of any Mexican or German incursion into Belize, it was stipulated 'that a portion of the contingent of the British West Indies Regiment in training at Jamaica is utilized for guard duties and held available to *maintain internal order*'.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Second Battalion, which took the place of the First in West Africa, saw little active service and were deployed chiefly as lines of communication forces in West and East Africa. Shortly before the close of the war, the 2WIR arrived in Palestine to guard Turkish prisoners.¹⁵

The volunteers of the early Jamaican contingents were treated with a similar lack of commitment to deploy them in the firing-line. But the general reluctance to deploy black men in a combative role was compounded by official blunders and poor treatment. At Seaford Camp, and for a short period in early 1916 at Wivnoe Camp, Plymouth, it became apparent that the squalid conditions in which the BWIR men were housed were responsible for high levels of sickness and infirmity. It was dampness, rather than cold, that resulted in outbreaks of pneumonia. Conditions in

¹⁴ WO106/868 Suggested Cablegrams in the event of German/Mexican incursion into Belize (n.d., but probably late 3/1917 (my emphasis).

¹⁵ Dyde, 247-8, 253, 260-1.

Seaford camp became so bad that the local hospitals were filled to overflowing. However, the situation would not improve for the duration of the war. In whatever climate they were located, whether apparently “suitable” or otherwise, disease took a far higher toll than enemy action. For the regiment as a whole 178 men were killed or died of wounds; 697 were wounded and 1071 died of disease.¹⁶

In early 1918, Ernest Price, the head of the Baptist Theological College in Kingston, complained to Governor Manning about the poor treatment sick and wounded West Indian soldiers were receiving in France. An army chaplain had informed him that the hospitals were unheated, the food poor and that German prisoners were kept in comparative luxury.¹⁷ Throughout the war the men in France and elsewhere were regularly treated in the “native hospitals” which provided substandard facilities for the labourers recruited from South Africa, China, Fiji and Egypt.¹⁸

Not only were the men stationed in France regularly subjected to inferior medical treatment, they were also barred from facilities enjoyed by other British soldiers. *Estaminets* were rough cafes run by French civilians which provided the Tommy just out of the line with a little relief from the regular, indigestible diet of “bully beef” and biscuits. The Estaminet Order was introduced to restrict Chinese and African labourers from contact with the French civilian population. In general, these men were kept in highly segregated conditions more akin to prisoner of war camps, despite the essential role they played in maintaining supplies to the front line. This

¹⁶ Lt. Col. Wood Hill, *A Few Notes on the History of the British West Indies Regiment*, 2; *Zouave*, February 1916, 18-9; WICC 539, 29.5.1919, 128.

¹⁷ CO137/725/10196, Ernest Price to Manning 10.1.1918.

reflected the desire among the military and Imperial elite to police the activities of non-white soldiers or workers and white women. As Levine as shown, the libidinous desires of both, were separately and together seen as a threat to the order of Empire. They had the potential to destabilise hierarchies of race and class and to undermine ideals of family and nation that were the main spur to military service among British soldiers. With these concerns in mind, the provisions of the Estaminet Order were informally extended to the BWIR, even though it was classed as a British infantry unit.¹⁹

Governor Manning supported calls that the Secretary of State for the Colonies should be asked to investigate the claims that the BWIR were provided with substandard medical facilities. However, he appears to have been motivated by a desire to disprove the claims, rather than to take them seriously. In common with many colonial and military officials he attempted to blame the black soldiers' inability to cope with the climate for the high death rate from disease. More significantly, complainants were presented as unsoldierly: 'I have seen not a few cases which upon investigation have been proved to be unfounded and the work of men who are not always good soldiers. Hardship there must be, but the good soldier takes such uncomplainingly'.²⁰

Poor camp conditions and frequent sickness would obviously have an impact on the training and efficiency of the BWIR. Concern about this issue was voiced by Captain

¹⁸ Wood Hill, 10-11; WO95/495 entries for Feb. 1918.

H. C. V. Porter, a WIR officer attached to the BWIR, while the regiment was based at the Seaford camp. The lack of training meant that the first and second battalions of the BWIR lost an early opportunity to be deployed against Bedouin in the Western Desert. After pressure from Lt. Col. Wood Hill, the commanding officer, it was henceforth decided that later contingents should be dispatched directly to Alexandria in Egypt which was deemed a more suitable climate.²¹

The issue of climate was to surface regularly in debates concerning the deployment of the men of the BWIR. This served as a convenient pretext to avoid deploying members of the contingents against white soldiers and to ignore allegations that the men received poorer accommodation and facilities than white soldiers. In the science of race, climate served as a central plank to explain racial difference and to justify claims of racial and cultural inferiority. The tropics were portrayed as hostile to human endeavour and progress, while the colder European climes were presumed to encourage industry and cultural advance. But to preserve the ideal of Anglo-Saxon racial hegemony and exclusivity, each racial group was purported as best suited to its own environment, a condition that would be undermined by mixed-race unions or by migration to less-favourable conditions.²²

When deployed in France, the issue of climate, particularly in winter, could be used to suggest that black soldiers were militarily impaired which served to underpin their

¹⁹ Denis Winter, 152-3; Gerard Oram, *Worthless Men: Race, Eugenics and the Death Penalty in the British Army During the First World War*, London, 1998, 108-9; Levine, *passim*.; Minutes of the WICC (General Purposes Cttee.) 18.1.18, 4.3.18, 11.4.18.

²⁰ CO137/725/10196, Manning to Price 15.1.1918.

²¹ Wood Hill, 2; *Zouave*, February 1916, 18-9.

²² Stepan, 40-3.

deployment as labourers, away from the more exposed conditions of the trenches. Deployment in the Middle East, which was seen as a more suitable climate for black soldiers, conveniently coincided with the fact that the opposing Turkish army was not white and it was therefore less problematic for black soldiers to be engaged against it. Likewise, in the East African campaigns, the second battalion of the WIR and a small detachment of the BWIR found themselves against native *askaris* recruited by the Germans.

The WIR had always been demarcated for inferior treatment through the formal designation of “native troops”, despite the pivotal role they had played in the late nineteenth century Imperial domination of West Africa. However, the men of the BWIR were promised that they would be treated as regular British infantry regiments and with the same benefits that accrued to front-line units. Nevertheless, throughout the war period it is evident that military policy and the attitudes of individual officers regularly overlooked these guarantees, preferring instead to informally regard the BWIR as subject to the same conditions as the WIR. The situation was brought into stark relief during the demobilisation period. Men of the BWIR, who had seen active front-line service in Palestine, were relocated to Italy for transshipment and dispersal in the Caribbean and placed under the command of a South African, Brigadier-General Carey Barnard.

Barnard insisted on describing the BWIR in all official orders as “coloured natives”, despite the obvious offence it caused in the regimental orderly rooms. As a result, and in common with other units so designated, the men were denied access to the YMCA and cinema. When sick they were treated in the inferior “native hospitals” as

had often been the case for the labour battalions serving in France. They were also barred from visiting the local town except on certain days between four and eight p.m. and with the proviso that they had been vaccinated within the last twelve months. Rather than being seen as comrades-in-arms, under these circumstances, the men of the BWIR were regarded as potential sources of contagion and a threat to the British military operation.²³

Perhaps the most blatant example of official prejudice was the exclusion of the BWIR from the pay increase granted to other regular units by Army Order Number One of 1918. The Order increased the pay of a private soldier by fifty per cent, from one shilling to one and sixpence per day. In April 1918 the War Office ruled that the regiment was not eligible, for like the WIR they were “native troops”. Officers of the regiment immediately wrote to the War Office appealing against the decision, reminding the department that, at its inception, the BWIR had been specifically granted the same pay as other British Army infantry units.²⁴ The matter was also taken up the West Indian Contingents Committee, an organisation set up under the auspices of the West India Committee to act as advocates for and to cater for the welfare of the BWIR regiment. The War Office tried to evade the issue by stating that the increase in pay only applied to units with a depot in the United Kingdom. For the BWIR this was no longer the case as the regiment had relocated to Egypt for

²³ CO318/353/6843 Cipriani to Col. Sec. 27.11.1919, Base Routine Orders by Brig. Gen. C. D. V. Carey Barnard, Cmdt. Taranto, 17.7.19.

²⁴ Army Order AO1/1918; WO95/4377 entries for 17 & 22.4.1918.

“climatic” reasons. However, the WICC was able to point out that this had not prevented the conditions of the order being extended to white South African troops.²⁵

Even officials in the Colonial Office were forced to protest, partly because the department was not consulted on the issue by the War Office. A memorandum by H. T. Allen, a Confidential Clerk in the Colonial Office, conceded that the lower separation allowances and pensions paid to men in the West Indies were perhaps fair, given the lower rates of wages and standards of living pertaining there. He went on to argue, however, that ‘[t]he economic argument has ... no substance as regards the pay of a soldier on active service. His monetary reward ... is purely nominal, having regard to the value of his services and the dangers and discomforts of his occupation’. Allen pointed out that the cost of equalising the pay of all colonial troops at around £500,000 would be equal to two hours of war expenditure. Allen was arguing that sacrifice in the name of Mother Country should be recognised without regard to racial distinction and that soldiers of all races were entitled to be fairly and justly rewarded and their efforts fully recognised. He also refuted the suggestion that men in labour units should be paid at a lesser rate, pointing out that there was no difference in pay between white labour battalions and front line troops. More significantly he feared that resentment, leading to unrest, would result, particularly in Jamaica.²⁶ The two West Indian regiments were later excluded from the War Bonus granted under Army Order 17 of 1919. It was not until April 1919

²⁵ CO318/347/63228 WICC to Rt. Hon. Walter Long, SSCO, 30.12.1918.

²⁶ CO318/348/5991 HTA[llen], CO Memo “Pay of the British West Indies Regiment 30.1.1919. Allen was literally correct when he stated that the pay of the British soldier was purely nominal. Compared to Dominion (Canadian) troops, the Tommy received a pittance. The former were regularly referred to as “fuckin’ five bobbers” as they received five shillings per day in compared to the British soldiers one in 1917. A simple meal in an *estaminet* cost the equivalent of one shilling (Ferguson, 343, Denis Winter, 153).

after continued appeals to the War Office and considerable unrest, particularly in the BWIR that the increase and bonus were authorised to the regiment.²⁷

Fifteen Jamaicans, including Sergeant M. Halliburton, who had recently won the Military Medal, were among the forty-one signatories to a petition drawn up by NCOs serving with the BWIR in Palestine. The petition demanded that army pay increases be also accorded to the BWIR, that their loyal wartime service be fully recognised and that the slight cast upon the West Indies be lifted.

The majority of the men of the British West Indies Regiment are taxpayers ... and loyal subjects of His Majesty, and we feel that this discrimination is not only an insult to us who have volunteered to fight for the Empire but also an insult to the West Indies ... We would like it to be understood that the motive of this memorandum is not so much to get the pecuniary benefits from which we have been denied, as to bring before his Excellency that we are alive to the fact that as West Indians we have been unfairly discriminated against.²⁸

It is important to underline the continued personal loyalty to the King felt by many members of the regiment despite their ill-treatment. Anger tended to be directed at local commanders who were seen to be obstructing the wishes of the sovereign. Such a stance was understandable given the involvement of George V in the establishment of the regiment and the Jamaican reception of his “Appeal” in October 1915. The view of many BWIR men was epitomised in a “soldiers’ yarn” that bemoaned the parlous state of the regiment meat ration ““Look Yah Sah ... King George send a half a cow today fe de battalion and dis is all dem gie me fe meat rachine””.²⁹

²⁷ Army Order AO331/1919; WO95/4377 WD DAG, GHQ, EEF entry for 23.4.1919; WO95/4465 WD 5BWIR Alexandria District, EEF entry for 5.3.1919.

²⁸ CO318/348/16801 Petition of NCOs of 1/2BWIR enclosed with Barbados Govs. Dispatch 27 of 13.2.1919 & 20991 Copy received by Gov. St. Lucia via Hon. W. V. Degazon.

²⁹ JT 9.7.1921, 2.

Although the War Bonus was also granted to the WIR, its more embedded designation as a “native” unit meant that only the NCOs were awarded the general pay increase of 1917. For the duration of the war, the stigmatised label – “native” regiment – became a festering grievance, but was also mobilised to support claims for preferential treatment on the grounds of class and pigmentation. Some elements in the BWIR refused any association with the WIR, to support their claims for treatment on a par with other army units and to ward off the designation “native” regiment. The process was underpinned by an insistence on the “respectable” and citizen volunteer origins of the BWIR.

“King George Steam Engine”

The demarcation of black men as “native” troops, and the presence of discourses that questioned the ability of black men to meet the masculine demands of modern soldiering were key factors in ensuring that the majority of the Jamaican men who enlisted in the BWIR were employed in a labouring capacity. For most of 1916 and 1917 the majority of the BWIR battalions were stationed in France and Belgium. The main burden of the work consisted of unloading ammunition trains at shell dumps and servicing the artillery batteries with ammunition, a hazardous job that involved the risk of crush injuries and accidental detonation as well as enemy shelling. The men were also engaged in road building, railway construction, concrete mixing and trench-digging. Many British officers remarked on the efficiency of the men employed in this fashion, who referred to themselves as “King George Steam Engine”.³⁰ This calling again underlined the sense of personal affiliation to the

³⁰ Ramson, 47.

monarch felt by many West Indian volunteers. The War Diary of the 6th battalion notes that on one occasion sixty men unloaded 375 tons of ammunition in under two hours. Reverend Ramose, a padre attached to the 9th battalion, reflected that even members of the white Jamaican elite were forced to reappraise their earlier prejudices.

The best comment on the work our men have done, and are capable of doing, is perhaps that made in my hearing by an officer, a Jamaican himself and afflicted in former days apparently, with the strange disease so common in the Island, viz. the habit of running down and disparaging anything Jamaican: he said "I used to think that it could really be no good at all, no real help to the war I mean, getting these fellows over here, but, I tell you what, I have jolly well changed my mind!"³¹

From early 1918, several of the battalions were stationed at Taranto in Italy, a major logistical centre for the British forces in the Italian campaign. Here, the men were even further removed from the front-line, carrying out the work of stevedores – loading and unloading ships, coaling the supply ships and carrying out general fatigue duties at the base camp. It was these latter duties that were to provide the breaking point and final disillusion for many of the BWIR men.³²

Categorised as labour battalions, the BWIR men stationed in France and Belgium were in reality regularly in the line of fire, although not being in a position to fire shots in anger themselves. Although, as Horner, relates some of the men did on occasions get the opportunity to fire artillery pieces.³³ The battalion war diaries show that the men were regularly in exposed positions and suffered casualties as a

³¹ *ibid.*, 35.

³² WO95/338 WD 3BWIR *passim*.; WO95/495 WD 6BWIR entry for 2.7.1918; Blackadder, 40; WO95/4262 WD 7BWIR 7.1.1918; Ramson, 33-7.

³³ Horner, 32.

consequence. In these circumstances men of the battalions did receive medals for acts of gallantry. For example, men of the sixth Jamaican War Contingent who went on to form the fourth battalion BWIR, were honoured for extinguishing fires in a blazing ammunition dump.³⁴ On one occasion C Company of the battalion had to lay water pipes between first and second line trenches where they were subject to shell-fire and infantry attack without weapons for self-defence.³⁵ Letters from Jamaican servicemen to the press indicate that, although not considered as front-line troops, the men eagerly took up the euphemistic banter which came to characterise the apparently stoical, but often cynical British Tommy. One such letter, from J. E. R. Stevens, a white sergeant in the JWC, referred to shells as “Iron Rations” and “Souvenirs”. He recounted an incident in which several members of the regiment were killed or wounded when a parade ground was shelled: ‘One fellow who evidently got a direct hit had his head blown off his shoulders, and another had his legs off, so you see, it’s not all beer and skittles, in this corner of the world’.³⁶ Eighteen out of twenty-four bandsmen were killed in this incident.³⁷ However, this was not sufficient in the long term to overcome the feeling that the men had been denied the opportunity to reach the pinnacle of masculine military endeavour on the front line. Neither did it substantially alter the low regard with which the men were generally held by the War Office and Army Council.

The extent to which men were exposed to danger or at least felt themselves endangered can be gauged by a court martial report of a young Jamaican, Albert

³⁴ WO95/409 entry for 7.12.1917.

³⁵ Dupuch, 71-2.

³⁶ DG 10.9.1917, 3.

Morris, who was executed for desertion in September 1917. Morris clearly had symptoms of battle fatigue or “shell shock”. Morris had jumped from a lorry heading for a gun battery about 3500 yards from the front line North East of Ypres. He was arrested when he reported to a rest camp with no ticket of leave. Morris, who had already deserted on a previous occasion, stated that ‘I am troubled with my head and cannot stand the sound of the guns. I reported to the Dr. and he gave me no medicine or anything’.³⁷ Significantly, no medical officer was called as a witness or asked to attend court. Albert Morris, relying instead on the testimony of two character witnesses who both confirmed that he had been a willing worker, had above average intelligence and had given no cause for trouble.³⁸ The war diary of the sixth battalion from which Morris was drawn, which was raised in Jamaica between November 1916 to March 1917, shows that throughout the period leading up to his desertion, heavy casualties had been suffered.³⁹ Horner reports that the camps outside Ypres were all in full range of the German guns: ‘a full range of Boche “heavies” comes our way, making the day and night alike a terror to all’.⁴⁰

What lay behind the attempts to deny black men entry to front-line situations, or to mask the fact that they did in fact come regularly under fire, was a desire to ensure that the West Indian troops did not pose a threat to the increasingly fragile image of white military masculinity. As a result, they were subject to policies that in many ways perpetuated the racial division of labour on the plantations, but more

³⁷ Ramson, 37.

³⁸ WO71/594 Defence statement by Albert Morris.

³⁹ WO71/594 Army Form B 122 & Evidence of Lt. L. R. Andrews; 14422 Sgt. Goldson; 7453 Cpl. J. Russell; 6325 Sgt. Simpson 2DLI; Capt. Russell).

⁴⁰ WO95/495 WD 6BWIR entries for July & August 1917.

⁴¹ Horner, 28.

significantly attempted to bar them from the most prestigious military duties by bringing black masculinity into question.

As such, black men were not deemed capable of competently carrying out skilled tasks. When proposals were put forward that men of the BWIR might replace men of the Royal Engineers to free them for front-line duties, a War Office official responded that the use of 'coloured men would ... be most dangerous to the efficiency ... of the armies in France'.⁴² To underline the point, a memo from the Army Council stated that, 'In any question of substitution it is essential that the difference between skilled and unskilled labour should be borne in mind'.⁴³

Any suggestion that black men might somehow replace whites was firmly checked at the highest level. A memo from Sir Douglas Haig, the Commander-in-Chief in France, referred to the BWIR as "supplementary" troops, even when it was quite clear that operations could not continue without them. The Army Council acknowledged that for every man in the firing-line three more were required in support, to provide supplies and other ancillary services. Soldiers on the ground reckoned that the ratio was as high as fourteen to one. The BWIR were a significant part of this infrastructure. Siege batteries, for example, could not maintain continuous fire without the efforts of BWIR ammunition carriers.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the military authorities claimed that black troops were not in the main line of fire. The BWIR troops were reported carrying supplies from the Ammunition Parks to the

⁴² WO32/5094 WO Minute AAG to AG 23/1/1917.

⁴³ WO32/5094 Memorandum from Military Members of the Army Council 6/2/1917 to CinC, British Armies in France.

“Dumps” established in the fighting area, whence they were carried by Ammunition Columns up to the firing line. To underline the official denial regarding the involvement of black soldiers on the front line, the War Office referred to an earlier decision not to use black soldiers for ambulance work. Reaffirming the belief that blacks were only suited to unskilled labour and bringing into question their masculine qualities, the Head of the War Office stated: ‘Neither women nor coloured troops could be used in Field Ambulances or convoys to replace the medical personnel. Strength, coolness and courage, in addition to technical training, are required’.⁴⁵ Despite this official proscription, Joe Clough, a black Jamaican who settled in England in 1906, became an ambulance driver in France for much of the war.⁴⁶

The implication was clear: Black troops were deemed to have insufficient self-control and intelligence to cope with the rigours of front-line service. If they broke under strain of these conditions this was only to be expected in the eyes of the military authorities. The white men who did likewise were regarded as an aberration. They were not regarded as true white men or “Britishers”, they were a race apart – degenerate, irrational and worthless. The case of Albert Morris is an extreme example of what might happen if a black soldier fell into the hands of the courts martial, rather than being directed for medical treatment. Other black soldiers did undergo treatment for psychiatric manifestations of battle stress. Although the records indicate that they received broadly the same treatment as the large numbers

⁴⁴ WO32/5094 C in C, British Armies in France to WO 4/3/1917. Denis Winter, 236.

⁴⁵ WO32/5094 Minute DG to AG 22/1/1917.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914*, London, 1998, 49.

of white soldiers experiencing similar conditions, there was an implicit racial significance to the diagnoses made. The pervading attitude of military officialdom was that the necessary qualities of self-control and rationality were lacking in all black men. Private L. Jones of the 4BWIR was admitted to Number 2 General Hospital, at Le Havre and was diagnosed as suffering from acute mania. He was reported to be

Talking continuously and incoherently ... the general trend of his talk was partly religious and partly voicing his delusions of persecution ... He is unduly emotional and he readily weeps. He is confused mentally and he can give practically no account of himself ... He is rambling and inconsequent in his conversation in a childish and simple minded way.⁴⁷

Eustace Shaw, of the same battalion, was admitted to hospital after attempting to murder a white Company Sergeant Major attached to the regiment in July 1918. There are no explicit references to Shaw's race or colour in the medical reports, which also indicate that he was reasonably well-treated while in hospital. However, records do report that he had become 'depressed and anxious under constant air-raids'.⁴⁸ On admittance to hospital he was reported to be 'noisy and violent, threatening',⁴⁹ and apparently suffering from hallucinations. To the army medical services this was proof of black irrationality and lack of self-control. Later statements from the hospital were glad to report that Shaw was 'cheerful and has insight into his previous state of depression. He has now been free from depression, delusion and hallucinations for several weeks and is usefully employed'.⁵⁰ But the medical staff doubted whether he would cope with a return to duty. 'He would

⁴⁷ MH106/2302 L. Jones 4878 4BWIR Medical Case Sheets October 1917.

⁴⁸ WO364/3655 Army Form B 179A

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

relapse under stress of further military service'.⁵¹ Shaw was subsequently discharged from the Nottinghamshire County War Hospital in January 1919. However, in spite of the marked improvement in his condition, was held at Broadmoor until a passage was arranged for him back to Jamaica in early 1920 on a ship that contained separate accommodation for "coloured personnel"⁵².

"Useless Men" and the Stigma of the Labour Battalions

The assumed designation, "King George Steam Engine", perhaps lent an element of status to an otherwise lowly place in the military hierarchy for the men of the BWIR. But it could not mask the deep-seated stigma associated with the label "labour battalion". Within the military establishment there was a tendency to view the labour units as the place for all men who were deemed of low intellect or poor physique and who were not regarded as front-line material.⁵³ It was necessary, from the point of view of the war effort, to make the optimum use of men so defined. It was also essential that they should not besmirch the idealised image of British manhood on the front-line. As such, men of this calibre needed to be contained in the labour battalions. This stance, which was informed by the ongoing concern around the purported dysgenics of war and the fear of racial degeneration, became more embedded with the introduction of conscription. With mounting casualties, recruiting officers made sure that no human raw material went to waste. *Denis Winter* cites the

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*, CO137/735 WO to USS, CO 17/12/1919

⁵³ J. M. Winter, 54.

example of an infantryman who had a foot blown off being reassigned to the labour corps on his “recovery”.⁵⁴

Among some sections of the military, deployment to the labour battalions was also regarded as a punishment for the failure to show sufficient combative spirit. Commanding officers clearly felt that there was sufficient stigma attached to the labour battalions to discourage soldiers from disgracing themselves on the battlefield. Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. Sladen, commanding officer of a battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment submitted a report to a courts martial investigating the failure of his men to withstand a small-scale German attack in July 1916. Sladen complained of the “utterly useless men” who failed to their use rifles and bayonets. This, he argued, was responsible for unnecessary casualties. Sladen believed that the men were scared of face-to-face contact with enemy, but more significantly were of poor physique and low stamina.

As punishment it was recommended that a hundred of the men involved be deployed on labour duties unloading ships. Eventually, one hundred and thirty were posted on permanent fatigues. Some elements in the command disapproved of this measure, believing that this would encourage similar behaviour from any man who desired a safer posting. It was suggested instead that the disgraced men should be distributed among the other battalions of the regiment. Isolating the individuals involved would dilute the spirit of despair, in the course of transfer, they might experience suitable disapprobation from fellow-soldiers. Countermanding this order, Lieutenant-Colonel

⁵⁴ Denis Winter, 194, 197.

Sladen was adamant that the men should not be allowed to stay with fighting units.

They were to be retained as labourers for,

these men are degenerates – a source of danger to their comrades, their battalion and the Brigade and this will not be lessened by distribution to Warwickshire Bns. They should be replaced by drafts. This will not be a dangerous precedent as the stigma (the transfer) will be a deterrent.⁵⁵

Within the codes of military masculinity, disarming a soldier or group of men formed part of a ritual humiliation process. The handing over of weapons was most obviously a mark of defeat by a vanquished opponent who henceforth placed himself at the mercy of his captor. Within some traditions, a man placed himself forever in the debt of his captor, losing a public sense of self-hood and becoming a non-person.⁵⁶ Being disarmed, or denied the opportunity to bear arms in the first place, emphasised publicly that a man had failed to meet the obligations, status and rights linked to armsbearing. Shortly after the Royal Warwicks were disciplined, a Court of Enquiry was established to enquire into the failure of a party of the Border Regiment to carry out an attack. The men, who had lost all their officers and five hundred comrades during the opening days of the Somme offensive, had started to report sick when notice was given of the impending assault. Some men who actually took part in the failed attack did not pick up their ammunition supplies. Major-General Gough, commander of the Fifth army, railed: 'It is inconceivable how men who pledged themselves to fight and uphold the honour of the country could degrade themselves in such a manner and show an utter want of manly spirit and courage which at least is expected of every soldier and every Britisher'. He ordered that the men be paraded

⁵⁵ RAMC446/18 memorandum '1/5th Royal Warwick Regiment'.

⁵⁶ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery & Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982) is instructive in this regard.

unarmed in front of their brigade and told that they have disgraced themselves and their battalion.⁵⁷

Among the men of the BWIR there emerged a keen desire to shed the designation of labour battalion and to insist that their capacity to carry the mantle of military manhood was not brought into question. When detailing the assigning of his men to road-mending and construction duties Horner stressed: 'do not think, though, for a single second that we had become mere labourers and had lost either our military style or military bearing'.⁵⁸ The men still saluted, which for him was a significant symbol of their incorporation into the military and Empire masculine traditions.

[T]he click of the "Present" given by the British Guard in response to the "Eyes Right!" of the B. W. I. is more than a mere exchange of compliments – it is a recognition that in the "War of Wars" our own coloured lads earned the right of entry into that fraternity which was displayed by our Empire in arms against German tyranny'.⁵⁹

Underpinning Horner's stance was the sense that the men were volunteers. They were heirs to the masculine military tradition, originating in revolutionary France and Haiti, in which men gave up their lives freely in pursuit of ideals. It is significant that the volunteers of the BWIR had started to arrive in the metropole when the moral compulsion of the Derby Scheme was being applied, before the introduction of conscription in March 1916.⁶⁰ There was a sense that they had been incorporated into the enterprise with a sense of purpose, as opposed to men who were dragooned into

⁵⁷ RAMC 446/18 'Extract from proceedings of a Court of Enquiry into failure of a party of 11th Border Regt. ... to carry out an attack, on 10th July 1916'.

⁵⁸ Horner, 39.

⁵⁹ Horner, 3.

⁶⁰ Bet-El, 83. Under the scheme introduced by the Minister of War, Lord Derby, men were canvassed in their homes regarding their willingness to enlist.

the ranks against their free will or took up arms for mercenary motives. Horner saw that the men demanded this be acknowledged in insistence on equitable treatment.

[T]he West Indian boy is generally fond of his officer and will do any mortal thing for him. Sometimes he understands and rather admires discipline, but it must be just and fair. He is always conscious of the fact that he is a free soldier, no conscript and no mere labourer.⁶¹

Discourses around the ideal of the aspirant citizen-volunteer were played out in the rivalry that existed between the BWIR and the WIR. Tensions between the two regiments may have been exposed when the WIR was called out to suppress riots involving the Jamaica War Contingent at Kingston Races, in June 1916, and Port Royal in May 1917.⁶² This served to underline the role of the West India Regiment as an internal police force, rather than adherents to a just cause. In East Africa, the regular soldiers of the WIR taunted the volunteers of the BWIR by calling the rank and file “recruits” and the officers “civilians”.⁶³

However, the inter-regimental rivalry reached its climax when attempts were made to incorporate the BWIR detachment serving in East Africa with the second battalion of the WIR. The men of the BWIR wished to spurn the title “native” troops, with its attendant significance in terms of reduced status and conditions, that could be more clearly applied to them if they were merged with the WIR. But more significantly, they wished to assert their self-perceived status as the “better class” of man the recruiting authorities had demanded, in contrast to the men of the WIR who tended to be lower-class black men conscripted by poverty. The lower status of the men in

⁶¹ Horner, 63.

⁶² WO95/5446 WD GOC Jamaica entries for 5-6.6.1916 & 16.5.1917.

⁶³ Cipriani, 57.

the WIR was confirmed when it was announced the regiment was prepared to recruit men rejected from the BWIR on account of illiteracy.⁶⁴ The “better class” of man in the BWIR could also claim the status of freeborn volunteer, whereas the WIR was tainted by its origins as a slave regiment. As such the men of the BWIR may well have felt that they were more entitled to claim the reward of full citizenship in exchange for military service.

The merger between the two units was proposed in March 1918. By early April the idea had been abandoned. The officer commanding the troops in East Africa complained to the War Office that

[i]f it is carried out serious trouble will result involving riot and probable murder ... Some disorder has already been threatened ... [The] feeling [is] so general that it is impossible to fix responsibility on individuals. The units [are] well behaved in other respects.⁶⁵

In a series of memos to his Base Commandant at Dar es Salaam, Captain Martinez, the officer in charge of the BWIR contingent, outlined the case of the men against the proposed merger. ‘The WIR is classified as a 2nd Class Colonial Force, while the BWIR was originally classed as a service unit and later on as an overseas contingent’.⁶⁶ He went on:

The men of the B.W.I. Regt. are in the main volunteers from a somewhat higher social class than those of the W. I. Regt. The Colonial authorities ... were aware of this, and to stimulate recruiting an entirely new regiment was raised.⁶⁷

The class and race tensions between the two regiments were compounded by the fact that the WIR was composed mainly of Jamaicans, whereas the BWIR was more representative of the West Indies as a whole. As a result there was some further

⁶⁴ DG 26.11.1915, 10.

⁶⁵ CO318/347/17779 GOC, East Africa [Smuts] to WO, 9.4.1918.

⁶⁶ Cipriani, 55.

reluctance by the non-Jamaicans in the BWIR to be merged with an almost entirely Jamaican force. Martinez concluded that the men felt that the BWIR and not the WIR was the official representative of the West Indian colonies in the war effort.⁶⁸

“at the point of our bayonet” – The Cachet of Front-line Experience

On the rare occasions when West Indian troops were deployed in the front line they performed as well as any other units in the British Army. The perception among the military establishment that they lacked the idealised white masculine characteristics of stoicism, discipline and determination believed essential in combat, were exposed as patently untrue. Given that the men from the West Indian contingents had to overcome official prejudice in addition to the “enemy”, it is evident that they collectively possessed such characteristics in abundance and were extremely well-motivated. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel Wood Hill, commander of the 1BWIR: ‘It was fortunate for the manhood of the West Indies that two battalions of the British West Indies Regiment were able to participate in the fighting in Palestine and to prove to the world at large that the West Indies possess soldier-like qualities’.⁶⁹ More significantly, when men from the WIR and BWIR did participate in armed encounters, these were always at close quarters and often involved hand-to-hand fighting. In the African and Middle-Eastern theatres, the local geography and the smaller-scale of the opposing armies resulted in a greater prevalence of small-scale skirmishes and greater mobility of the troops. This helped to sustain the mythology of heroic combat, which on the battlegrounds of the Western Front were

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 57.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Wood Hill, 5.

much harder to perpetuate.⁷⁰ These specific circumstances provided the nationalist discourses of the post-war decades with tangible heroic and chivalric images to underpin demands that military sacrifice and duty be appropriately rewarded, in the shape of wider citizenship rights and economic opportunities in Jamaica.

Men from Jamaica were first involved in front-line combat in Cameroon. A machine gun detachment from the 2WIR was involved in a skirmish at Wum-Biagas, in the Cameroons in October 1915. The battalion magazine reported that 'the machine gun Section ... was subjected to a very heavy fire ... the discipline and morale of the rank and file ... was all that could be possibly desired'.⁷¹ During the East African campaign that took place in the German territory of Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania) the bravery of the small detachments of the 2WIR was once more remarked upon. They were involved in fighting in September and October 1917 which culminated in the Battle of Nyangao. This action, fought over two days in mid-October, proved to be the final and most bloody encounter of a cat-and-mouse struggle between the German forces under Lettow-Vorbeck and the British, under the leadership of their South African ally, Smuts. The numbers involved on both sides, around 1500 on the German side and 5000 on the British, were very small in comparison to the major battles of the Western Front, but casualty rates were high. The German forces lost thirty per cent of their strength killed or wounded and the British fifty per cent. Collectively, the men of the 2WIR were praised for courage under fire and their ability to maintain discipline amidst fleeing porters and a section of demoralised men of the Cape Corps. Such was their apparent bravery that it was

⁷⁰ Hynes, 76-80.

reported 'they have had to be reproved ... for exposing themselves un-necessarily'.⁷²

Acting Corporal Ruben Robertson was singled out once more for his steadfastness under fire during the battle, in which he was also wounded. Previously, he had been recommended for the Military Medal, after preventing a group of African porters, so essential to the campaign, from panicking.⁷³

In the Palestine Campaign, the BWIR got its first taste of action in a position known as Umbrella Hill on the Gaza-Beersheba line. In late July 1917, the men of the 1BWIR machine gun section took part in raids upon Turkish trenches. They performed sufficiently well for Allenby, the Commander-in-Chief of the of Egyptian Expeditionary Force, to report the matter as follows to the Jamaican Governor.

I have great pleasure in informing you of the excellent conduct of the Machine Gun Section of the 1st BWIR during two successful raids on the Turkish trenches. All ranks behaved with great gallantry under heavy rifle fire and shell fire, and contributed in no small measure to the success of the operations.⁷⁴

In September 1918, as the campaign in the Middle East drew to a close, men of the 1st and 2nd BWIR, took part in several attacks on the Turkish lines under heavy artillery fire in the Jordan Valley. This culminated in a bayonet charge in which the Turkish lines were breached, up to one hundred and forty bayoneted, forty prisoners taken and fourteen machine guns captured. Sergeant M.C. Halliburton, Private (Acting Lance Corporal) Sampson and Private Spence, all of Jamaica, received the Military Medal. Private H. Scott also of Jamaica received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for carrying a message for 700 yards while under shell fire.⁷⁵ The

⁷¹ *Zouave*, February 1916, 32.

⁷² WO95/5370 WD 2WIR entries for 6 & 9.11.1917.

⁷³ WO95/5370 WD 2WIR entries for 28.9.1917 & 18.11.1917; Dyde, 257-8.

⁷⁴ Cipriani, 20.

⁷⁵ WO95/4732 WD 1BWIR entries for 19-21.9.1918; *The Times*, 6.12.1918, 8.

commanding officer of the British forces in the area, Chaytor, remarked in a letter to Wood Hill: 'Outside my own Division there are no troops I would rather have with me than the BWI, who have won the highest opinion of all who have been with them during our operations'.⁷⁶ The performance was all the more remarkable for having been carried out in scorching heat and at a point when many of the men were falling prey to pernicious malaria.⁷⁷

The participation of some units of the BWIR in front-line action did create a potential divide in the ranks of the ex-servicemen. Among some veterans, there emerged an attitude that only those who had fought in the front-line could truly be entitled to the full rewards of military service. The use of the bayonet was particularly significant in this respect. Most soldiers of the Great War had little direct hand-to-hand contact with the enemy – only a small percentage of casualties were caused by small arms or bayonet wounds. Nevertheless, the masculine military ideal continued to be centred around the illusory imaginings of chivalrous combat in which each man had the opportunity to test his capacities in a fair and equal struggle. "Bayonet work" featured as a central component of army training out of all proportion to its military efficacy. Not only was the bayonet a symbol of heroic combat, but recruits were led to believe that an enemy would be put to flight by the mere appearance of British soldiers weighing in with cold steel.⁷⁸

An article, that appeared in *The Times* after the war captured the symbolic significance of the weapon. The bayonet was presented as literally the cutting edge

⁷⁶ Chaytor to Wood Hill, 18.10.1918, WO95/4732.

⁷⁷ Cipriani, 34.

⁷⁸ Bourke, *Intimate History* ..., 44-7, 51-5, 58-62.

of the heroic endeavour of Empire. It was a tool of superior civilisation that had proved its worth by winning the war – an extension of the rifle and ‘not merely a spear’.⁷⁹ It was most effective in the hands of the stoical, practical sons of Empire, who could engage the hostile environments at the Imperial frontier and whose character and fighting ability had been formed by manly pursuits, such as boxing, rather than more creative, and therefore more dubious pastimes. Before the war, it was claimed, bayonet training had taken place in the gymnasium rather than the great outdoors which had divorced bayonet technique from the realities of combat. The war had seen a change in emphasis.

Quickness, footwork, a hard punch ... a fine parry ... were identical and vital both to boxing and bayonet training. ... the spirit of attack, of endurance, of self-control ... of refusal to give in – in short the “ethical” side of boxing – was found to be essential in effective bayonet work. Colonel R. B. Campbell, DSO ... was among the earliest to appreciate the changed conditions. [He was a] first-class boxer, a hard athlete, an open-air man, as opposed to a mere gymnast.⁸⁰

Some twenty years after the war, Jamaican veterans submitted statements to the Moyne Commission, set up to enquire into the economic conditions pertaining in the West Indies. Sergeant W. Johnson, in calling for equitable treatment for the ex-servicemen, who by this time often found themselves in the depths of poverty, recalled the importance of the bayonet as a symbol of male heroism that merited just reward:

See and know the existing conditions of the Ex-soldiers who did services for our most Bratanic Majesty King George V and Supreme Lord of Jamaica, of which we dearly has given our lives as a supreme sacrifice for King and country of which we fairly did

⁷⁹ *The Times*, 15.6.1920, 6.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

our duty and, do it well, by returning with Victory on the point of our Bayonet [all sic].⁸¹

However, an attachment to the heroic view of combat persisted causing divisions within the ranks of the BWIR and reflecting in turn a set of racial and class prejudices. When the men were at first excluded from the pay increases stipulated by Army Order No. 1, some elements in the regiment suggested that the pay increase should only be granted to those who had fought on the front line in Palestine and not to those who had served in the labour battalions. A distinction was drawn between the first two battalions of the regiment and the other units. The former, it was alleged had not only experienced hand-to-hand fighting, but were composed of the “better class of man”. The subsequent battalions were purportedly comprised of lower-class labourers, whom, it might be concluded, were not worthy either to fight in the front line or to claim the reward of front-line service.⁸²

The white Jamaican sergeant, J. E. R Stevens, belittled those men of the labour battalions who claimed the status of front-line soldiers, even though he acknowledged that the men were regularly under fire. Stevens mockingly wrote to the *Daily Gleaner*:

I see some idiots are writing home, and talking of being in the trenches, being up to the front line, etc. but that's all rot. We are miles from the trenches; under shell fire of course. But then, the Boche has guns of a range of sixteen to twenty miles. There is not the remotest possibility of us ever going up to the trenches, except those we have made, for protection from shell fire.

Rather ironically however, he continued:

⁸¹ CO950/93 Memoranda from British West Indies Regiment Association, Sgt. W, Johnson to Royal Cm. (n.d.).

⁸² CO28/294 /56561 Challenor Lynch to Colonial Secretary, Barbados, 9.10.1918.

We all had the wind up a bit ... and we lived in dugouts for quite a few days ... I can't imagine a more disagreeable and frightful sound than the shriek of a shell passing nearby. It simply seems to yell with delight at the prospect of hitting you.⁸³

Those with a more realistic view of the war complained that a fixation with such imagery all-too-easily discounted the role of the labour battalions. Another letter from Lieutenant Leonard Mackay, stressed that the work of the BWIR battalions was as dangerous as holding the line and indicated a degree of resentment towards the *Gleaner*, which presented 'infantry work [as] the one essential thing'.⁸⁴

The black men in the labour battalions tried to remove the stigma associated with their duties and to mark out for themselves a more pro-active military role, denied them on the basis of race. Furthermore, they attempted to assert a degree of autonomy through some more intimate contact with the process of war. This desire is well illustrated by Alfred Horner, even though his words simultaneously belittle the black soldier by conveying the image of a child-like black man captivated by the white man's "toys".

There are humorous incidents even amidst the roar of the guns, and one of them is always afforded by the insatiable desire which our lads have to pull the cord which fires the gun. The fact that he is in a peculiar sense the author of the devastating noise which follows seems to create in le soldat noir a certain sense of satisfaction. Our boys will almost promise anything for this privilege, and often amusing bargains are struck with the British gunners. It is the personal element which they desire, the feeling that they themselves are actually striking at the enemy; and when we hear that coloured soldiers in other armies have shown remarkable aptitude in the attack, we, who are in the know, feel certain that the same desire to be personally "in at the thing" animates our own boys too.⁸⁵

⁸³ DG 10.9.17, 3.

⁸⁴ DG 10.9.17, 6.

⁸⁵ Horner, 32.

In common with men of all races, the men of the BWIR whether combatant or non-combatant troops went to great lengths to associate themselves with masculine martial prowess. The *Daily Gleaner* published a photograph and story in October 1915 relating the heroic exploits of a black Jamaican, Alonzo Nathan, who had joined a British regiment. Captioned 'A Native of Falmouth Fought at Chapelle', Nathan was pictured in a studio photograph with a white comrade. The accompanying story relates how the two men had joined up together and had both been wounded during the battle of Neuve Chapelle, Nathan receiving a bayonet wound to the head. They were both reported as recovering in hospital at Aldershot. However, examination of Nathan's army papers show that he enlisted in the Army Service Corps at Aldershot, at the end of August 1915, months after the battle, which had taken place in March 1915, and that prior to this he had been a ship's fireman. Nathan's papers also show that he was still in England in December 1915 when he was examined by a military court for insubordination. Nathan, like many black men in British regiments, later transferred to the BWIR.⁸⁶

Nathan's case illustrates the tendency of many men involved in the conflict, whatever their actual role, to portray their participation as one involving direct and intimate contact with the enemy. This served to slot their own experiences, and in some cases unfulfilled hopes, into the narratives of heroic masculine endeavour and to meet the demands of the civilian audience.⁸⁷ It is significant in this instance that Nathan's "experiences" were drawn from a letter written to his guardian in Jamaica in which he also writes "My career has been from sailor to soldier". Nathan may well

⁸⁶ WO364/2665; DG 11.10.1915, 1.

have embellished his correspondence to meet the expectations of his guardian. The Jamaican press, also, was open to soldiers' tales that dovetailed with the belief that her volunteers would enter the war at centre-stage on a par with their white counterparts.

Death, Nationhood & Empire

Images of heroic deeds and sacrifice occupied a central place in narratives of nationhood. They laid claim to an immortal place for men who had died on behalf of the nation or, as has been illustrated in the case of Australia, whose sacrifice, in pursuit of a wider cause, could be appropriated by an emerging nation. These national discourses still relied on images of sacrifice on the front line, which perpetuated the illusion that men still engaged in chivalric tests of masculinity long after mechanised slaughter rendered such feats obsolete.

Jamaican cultural nationalism had begun to incorporate military sacrifice into its cannon from the first days of the war. The Anglo-Irish poet, H. S. Bunbury, long-resident in Jamaica, suggested that not only would fallen Jamaicans find immortality, but that they were an example for others to follow. They had stepped beyond the male ties of family and home to fulfil that more testing component of manly duty – the defence of the nation and Empire.

... They give without pause, without measure
Their love, their delights and their lives
Surrender, to save us, the treasure
Of children, of mothers, and wives
Their sweetheart, their mothers and wives

Shall we, for our part, be behind them?
Shall we be less ready to give

⁸⁷ Bourke, *Intimate History* ..., 8-10, 33-37.

Our souls? And in sacrifice find them
And, dying eternally live
Immortal in memory live?

... They rest, but their spirit still lights us
It leads us the way we must tread
If noble ambitions incites us
To do and to be as our dead
Our dear and most wonderful dead.⁸⁸

Bunbury limited his promise to those men who came forward to meet the call of the Empire, “over the ocean”. But in another poem, ‘Jamaica Marches On’, by Tom Redcam, later set to music as a marching song for the contingent, military sacrifice was seen to put Jamaica on the map – masculine sacrifice laying the basis for the future Jamaican nation.

Tramp, Tramp, Tramp
We tread the road to Glory,
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp
Jamaica marches on.
Wide through the world we’ll bear our Island story
Tramp, tramp, tramp
Jamaica marches on.
On, on we go,
Up on the road of Glory,
There Honour calls and Duty’s banners fly
On Times great roll we’ll write our Island story
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp
Jamaica marches by.⁸⁹

Legislation introduced by the colonial administration in the course of the war also started to delineate a Jamaican nation. The Jamaican Military Service Act, which, in its central aim of establishing eligibility for military service in anticipation of conscription, also served to designate aliens. This was ostensibly in relation to subject-status within the British Empire, but could also be taken to imply a non-Jamaican.

⁸⁸ H. S. Bunbury, ‘A Chant for Our Contingent’, DG 16.10.1915, 13. The poem follows the tune of ‘My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean’.

⁸⁹ DG 1.5.1916, 11.

The small Chinese community, which was revitalised by migration from 1911,⁹⁰ voiced its concern that the registration of Chinese between 16 and 41 was a step towards conscription. The Military Service Act stipulated a £50 fine or 3 months imprisonment with hard labour for those who failed to register. This clearly represented an attempt by the island legislature to enforce the responsibilities of citizenship upon the menfolk of Jamaica, in advance of their being granted political rights. The Chinese community presented a petition protesting that they had to register under the Act. In response to a Colonial Office enquiry, Governor Manning stated that the 'Chinese in common with persons of other alien nationality, although required to register under the [Military Service] Law, will not be liable to be called upon or required to perform military service'.⁹¹ The alien status of the Chinese persisted. During the 1930s there were frequent references to the allegedly sharp business practises of Chinese shopkeepers who were commonly termed "alien trader" and demands were made that their entry into Jamaica be restricted.⁹²

Incorporation into the brotherhood-in-arms of the Empire was conditional. Cundall, in his Jamaican history of the war, reproduced a glowing eulogy to the combined ranks of Allenby's forces who had crushed the Turks in the Holy Land and which had included the legendary bayonet charge of the BWIR. But such heroism did not dissolve the power relationships of Empire, which dictated an acceptance of subject-status and the prior authority of metropolitan culture and ideals.

⁹⁰ In the 1921 census there were 3696 Chinese recorded (Samuel J. Hurwitz & Edith F. Hurwitz, *Jamaica: A Historical Portrait*, London, 1971, 162).

⁹¹ CO137/724 Summary of Petition dated 7th June 1917 received by the Chinese Minister in London from the Chinese Club in Jamaica (translation); CO137/722 Gov. Manning to Long SSC 29/9/1917.

From all over the Seven Seas the empire's sons came to illustrate the unanimity of all the King's subjects ... English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh divisions of good men and true fought side by side with soldiers of varying Indian races and castes ... our dark-skinned brethren in the West Indies furnished infantry who, when the fierce summer heat made the air in the Jordan Valley like a draught from a furnace, had a bayonet charge which aroused an Anzac brigade to enthusiasm (and Colonial free men can estimate bravery at its true value) ... The communion of the representatives of the Mother and Daughter nations on the stern field of war brought together people with the same ideals, and if there are minor jealousies between them the brotherhood of arms will make the soldiers returning to their homes in all quarters of the globe best missionaries to spread the Imperial idea. Instead of wrecking the British Empire the German-made war should rebuild it on the soundest of foundations – affection, mutual trust, and common interest.⁹³

Speaking of the volunteers who had left Jamaica to fight in the Canadian or British Expeditionary Forces, “Fusilier” boasted that ‘Many of them have been killed or wounded ... welding together the ties of Empire between Imperial and Colonial arms’.⁹⁴ However, bloody sacrifice was never quite the great leveller anticipated in Jamaican martial literature as the contingents were assembled. Alfred Horner could speak, in less lurid terms, of the ‘many happy hours ... spent cementing a friendship with the British Tommy which should bring forth its fruit yet in the great reorganisation of Empire which must take place after the war’.⁹⁵ But, these idealised images were never free from the power relationships that had always underpinned the Imperial mission which Horner betrayed when he projected the feelings of the BWIR men as they landed in the metropole.

[I]t was the awe-inspiring thought, almost incapable of being understood by the non-colonial, that here at last was England, that

⁹² See for example CO950/87 Memorandum from Chinese Residents in Jamaica, 5-6; CO950/944 Serial No. 173 Memorandum from A. G. S. Coombs, JWTU, 15 CO950/945 Serial No. 183 Memorandum of St. George's Citizens' Association, 3.

⁹³ Extract from W. T. Massey, *How Jerusalem Was Won: Being the Record of Allenby's Campaign in Palestine* (London, 1919) quoted in Cundall, 57-8.

⁹⁴ “Fusilier”, 29.

⁹⁵ Horner, 21.

this was their first view of that wonderful “Motherland” of which they had heard and read ever since they had been children, that great mother whose children they were, whose flag they served under, and whose quarrel they had in loyalty made their own’.⁹⁶

Horner maintained the infantilising image in his portrayal of the rousing reception the men received at the quayside and railway stations. In his eyes, the crowds of cheering and curious onlookers were ‘welcoming, as a mighty mother, the offering, however feeble, of her smallest sons ... forg[ing] another priceless link in that golden chain of affection which binds the Empire together’.⁹⁷

Christian symbolism continued to underpin images of military sacrifice, even though the war witnessed increasing secularisation and distaste for official religion. Such symbolism perpetuated the power relationships of Empire to remind black soldiers that they were not equal in death. The image of Christ’s crucifixion could be held up to re’nforce the promise of youthful immortality in the national pantheon. But the example of Christ’s martyrdom also suggested that it was only the “chosen” who could be called, even if the process of volunteering was in fact one of self-selection.⁹⁸

On the battlefield itself, padres serving the BWIR, such as John Luce Ramson,⁹⁹ held aloft the image of “him who made the Great Sacrifice” and referred to death as “the crown of life”.¹⁰⁰ However, Ramson made sure to emphasise that sacrifice and its rewards were bound by hierarchy. Ramson encountered a severely wounded black

⁹⁶ Horner, 12.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁸ Mosse, 74-7.

⁹⁹ Ramson was born in Jamaica in 1870. He served as rector of St. George’s Church, Jamaica, from 1907 until his death in 1944. As Church of England chaplain to the 6BWIR, he served at Ypres, the Somme and Taranto (DG 6.5.44; WO374/56146).

soldier, with a smashed arm and side, 'in too much pain to speak' whose suffering was clear from his 'blanched face and the tight-drawn lips'. Comforting the man, the padre insisted that Christ's "visage was more marred than any man and His form more than the sons of men", an ironic sermon in the face of a hideous injury wreaked by high explosive.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Ramson, 4, 49.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* 22.

6

“their splendid physical proportions” White Masculine Uncertainty & Representations of Black Servicemen

The demands of modern warfare took a steady toll on the idealised images of white masculinity, and indeed threatened to undermine the belief in the superiority of white European civilisation. In these very specific circumstances, the arrival of black soldiers, untested in battle, presented a *potential* model for renewed masculine vigour. These images could co-exist alongside more enduring and far less flattering representations, which were evident, as racial tensions developed in the metropole from the latter stages of the war. Richard Dyer’s study of the black performer and intellectual, Paul Robeson, whose popularity became evident shortly after the Great War, highlights how blackness was regularly taken by the white observer to signify life, vigour and closeness to nature.¹

At previous points in the history of Empire, the projected qualities of a subject race, usually perceived by white colonial observers as simple and essential, rather than acquired and complex, were appropriated to inject fresh energy into the Imperial project. The martial prowess of the North American Indian, the Zulu or Asante warrior, for example, partly inspired the image of the frontiersman and scout. An embodiment of the cutting edge of Empire, scouting was mobilised to assuage fears

¹ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars & Society*, Basingstoke, 1986.

of the enfeeblement of urbanisation at home.² But constructions of the “noble savage” had tended to allow whites to project suppressed instincts and feelings onto the subject races. In so doing, an air of superiority could be maintained. This position became increasingly hard to sustain as white European civilisation descended to the verge of destruction and barbarism.

In the context of the specific and unrealistic demands made of white men during the war, blackness represented unrestrained expression of sexuality, feeling and emotion. These perceived qualities stood in stark contrast to the wan and leaden images of white society typified by emotional and sexual repression and the alienation of industrialisation, which in war-torn metropolitan society had reached its apogee in mechanised warfare and military discipline. Most tellingly, to a white audience, “black [stood] for animal vitality, while white signific[ed] frayed nerves”. It is no surprise that jazz and ragtime, with the apparent qualities of intuition and “natural” creativity, held broad appeal at this time when the European values of civilisation, rationality and intellect were increasingly discredited.³ Dyer is chiefly concerned with the representation of black people in US cinema. However, the points that he makes are also apposite when seen in relation to the wartime erosion of white masculinity epitomised by shell shock. Furthermore, Sigmund Freud made similar observations in *Totem and Taboo*, which was first published in English in 1918. The

² Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*, Toronto, 1993, 8-13.

³ Dyer, 74-6.

so-called primitive races, argued Freud, retained unconscious and spiritual instincts in their daily lives.⁴

The fact that black people themselves had experienced perhaps the most severe alienation in the modernist hell of plantation slavery, was at once recognised and glossed-over by most white observers. For disillusioned white society, images of blackness had the potential to become ‘a repository of all the qualities ... considered lacking in the dominant society’.⁵ However, this idealisation of black people and projection of white desire was contingent on the containment of black people within the place allotted to them by metropolitan society. For black people were perceived as having these qualities in their oppressed condition or within the primeval frame of reference that white observers had constructed for them. White people could apparently identify with the articulation of black feelings of oppression or “natural” expression. However, once black people challenged the circumstances that may have contributed to this creativity, they were perceived as a threat. A challenge, not only to racial hegemony, but to the narrow preconceptions within which whites attempted to contain them.⁶

The investment in the black image of all the repressed and more base instincts of humankind simultaneously constructed a threat that had to be contained. At its most extreme, the naturalistic representation of blackness was human society at its most basic – chaotic and violent, brutish and bestial. This resulted in a preoccupation with black sexuality and physical prowess, and especially its containment, particularly

⁴ Jeffrey C. Stewart, ‘Paul Robeson & the Problem of Modernism’ in David A. Bailey et al, *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, London, 1997, 96.

during a period when white masculine virtues were being brought into question. Due to the historic role of black labour in the capitalist economy, the black body acted as 'a reminder of what the body can do, its vitality, its strength, its sensuousness'.⁷ Again, this was especially significant in the face of mass destruction and shattering physical and mental trauma. But simultaneously the role of the black body (and indeed the role of all physical labour within capitalistic ideology) had to be denied and black people reframed as base and incapable of useful production or of desired result – civilisation.⁸ The Great War provided very specific circumstances in which images of the black body threatened to undermine the pretensions of white masculinity, but in a process in which white society persisted in trying to contain them.

Central to the attempts to contain images of blackness was the reconstitution of discourses that focused on the alleged sexual licentiousness of black men. As Kobena Mercer has shown, *the control of sexuality and sexual appetite were seen as central* to the civilising mission of Imperialism.

[O]ne is civilised at the expense of sexuality, and sexual at the expense of civilisation. If the black, the savage, the nigger, is the absolute Other of civility then it must follow that he is endowed with the most monstrous and terrifying sexual proclivity. If you are a white woman, you are in constant danger of being raped. If you are a man then you can be fucked such that every vestige of morals and civilisation will be drained from you.⁹

On the one hand, attempts to draw on over-sexualised images of black men were an attempt to re-assert the primacy of white civilisation when it was apparently at its

⁵ *ibid.*, 86.

⁶ *ibid.*, 86-8.

⁷ *ibid.*, 139.

⁸ *ibid.*, 89, 98, 111, 139.

nadir. On the other hand, such images could only play havoc with constructs of white masculinity at a time when many white soldiers had been rendered literally impotent by the trauma of war or metaphorically so by their subordination to military discipline and the destruction and inertia of trench warfare. Increasingly such anxieties led to physical violence and calls for the containment and control of black servicemen.

The tendency of some observers to eroticise and objectivise the black soldiers they encountered was another arena in which black masculinity could be apparently controlled and simultaneously appear threatening. Aesthetically appealing images of black masculinity may have provided some relief from the image of the mentally and physically shattered white Tommy. However, these images left by white observers are characterised by a preoccupation with physical prowess. As Mercer has shown, this simultaneously reinforces notions of limited black mental capacity as the image of the muscular black man was moulded to the yearnings and desires of the white looker. By moulding the subject of the gaze was perhaps able to assert a level of control – a vantage point of certainty when elsewhere white masculinity appeared in tatters. Nevertheless, such images still threatened to break out of the narrow field of vision in which they were encapsulated by white observers. The preoccupation with black physicality threatened to overthrow ideals of white superiority on the battlefield and in the symbolic peace-time equivalent, the games arena.¹⁰

⁹ Kobena Mercer & Isaac Julien 'Race, Sexual Politics and Black Masculinity: A Dossier' in Rowena Chapman, & Jonathan Rutherford (eds.), *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity*, London, 1988, 107-8.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 146-7.

The Desire for a Revitalised Vision of Manhood

The masculine pursuit of war often rendered men psychically or literally impotent, through psychological or physical trauma. Women's writing of the period reflects a wish for men, bodily and spiritually whole. Fresh American troops arriving from 1917 were viewed as sexually potent supermen when compared with the jaded war-weary Tommy as Vera Brittain testified when describing her first encounter with United States troops on the march.

They looked larger than ordinary men; their tall, straight figures were in vivid contrast to the undersized armies of pale recruits to which we had grown accustomed ... they seemed, as it were, Tommies in heaven ... I pressed forward with the others to watch the United States entering the war, so god-like, so magnificent, so splendidly unimpaired in comparison with the tired, nerve-wracked men of the British Army.¹¹

As a military nurse, Brittain had direct experience of the shattering consequences of war on the flower of English youth. Faced with family demands and the pressures of nursing, Brittain's fraught mind had become preoccupied with 'dying men, reeking with mud and foul green-stained bandages, shrieking and writhing in a grotesque travesty of manhood'.¹² Her enthusiasm for the fresh American troops can only be described as an eroticised miraculous vision. Brittain witnessed the arrival of the Americans when the British army in Flanders faced being pushed into the sea by the German offensive of March 1918.¹³ Of course, a central component of this vision was the reassuring fact that these particular American soldiers were white and could therefore be convenient substitutes for white British soldiers. Indeed, as Brittain's account shows, American soldiers, dressed as they were in quite similar uniforms could be mistaken for the British Tommy at first sight. This was an uncomfortable

¹¹ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, London, 1979 [1933], 420-1.

¹² *ibid.*, 423.

situation for English masculinity to deal with, and was more evident with the stationing of white GIs in Britain in the next war. However, the racial resonance was not of the same order as similar responses to black servicemen.

The desire for a rekindled image of masculinity was not restricted to women. The padre, Alfred Horner, provides a remarkable insight into the response to black soldiers in France. His account displays a similar response to Brittain. On his arrival in England with his men from the Bahamas and Jamaica, Horner observed great changes with gendered implications, which evoked in him a sense of loss and sadness. 'Khaki, the women workers and alas! the uniform of the wounded, everything, in fact, reminded one constantly and in every way that this was a different England from the one I had left years ago'.¹⁴ Horner's grief for the loss of pre-war certainty was to reinforce his subconscious yearning for restored masculine ideals. In France, Horner and his men witnessed the barren areas recently taken from the Germans, the wrecked tanks and guns and shattered human remains, which also symbolised the fear of racial degeneration.¹⁵ Horner's fellow padre, John Luce Ramson, was also shocked at the ravaged landscape of the Western Front which appeared to him particularly bleak in comparison with the lush Jamaican terrain.¹⁶

Some of the West Indian volunteers worked as stretcher-bearers and like Brittain and her fellow-nurses in the Voluntary Aid Detachments, witnessed the wretched state of white manhood, as Horner recounted:

¹³ As Brittain relates, in these pressing circumstances, many British soldiers reported supernatural visions in which they were apparently aided by long-dead former comrades (*ibid.*, 414-6).

¹⁴ Horner, 12.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 29.

Except in the heroism of the poor wounded lads and the loving devotion of the regimental stretcher-bearers and the M[edical] O[fficer] ... there is nothing to edify. Gone are the cries of victory, gone are the feelings of what may be termed the “joy of battle”; here matted hair, clotted blood, pale blue faces and here and there the silence of the Great Sacrifice reign supreme.¹⁷

It is necessary to understand here that these circumstances, in which the physical and mental vulnerability of white soldiers were exposed, did not automatically imbue black soldiers with a sense of superiority. As Sharon Ouditt has shown, nurses treating the wounded often became so disturbed that they imagined their own disfigurement and dismemberment.¹⁸

Horner may have found the physical effects of war on white masculinity particularly hard to bear. He had received part of his clerical training at St. Paul’s Missionary College, Burgh, a seminary for the Church Missionary Society, before his later posting to the Bahamas. As Mangan has shown, missionary and evangelical activity had developed a distinctly muscular strain. This served to underline its wholesomeness and underpinned the Imperial justification for religious conversion by laying claim to both moral and physical supremacy.¹⁹ The involvement of the sporty Oxbridge missionary gave a confidence to a missionary movement, ‘symbolized not merely [by] social respectability, but also reassuring masculinity’.²⁰ Although Horner earned his Licentiate in Theology at Durham, outside the immediate realm of Oxbridge, he nevertheless fell into the mould of the hearty and ebullient proselytiser. He was later described as being a “man’s man” with a

¹⁶ Ramson, 24-5.

¹⁷ Horner, 33.

¹⁸ Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War*, London, 1994, 38-9.

“military bearing” that reflected not only his service in France but the grooming for a military career undertaken prior to his religious training.²¹ Horner’s background, cast as it was, in the latter phases of muscular Christianity, places in context his appreciative remarks regarding the physique of the Jamaican soldiery, and manifested not only homoerotic desire, but a yearning for spiritual and physical wholesomeness.

Black Soldiers as Objects of Desire

Placing the black soldier as a potential object of desire and as a component of a reinvigorated masculinity was clearly problematic in the context of contemporary racial ideology. The prevalence of shell shock or male hysteria among white servicemen, although shattering the illusion of white masculine self-control, did not simultaneously result in black people being seen as more rational. Black soldiers were still deemed to lack the necessary self-control and discipline to make efficient front line fighters. Rather, the suggestion was that white men who manifested hysterical symptoms had been reduced to the level of black people and, of course, white women.

The more positive evocations of black servicemen, evident during the war, consistently focussed on pre-existing preoccupations with black physicality. Black masculinity continued to be contained within the discourses that associated black people with physical labour. Black people were also presented as untroubled by the

¹⁹ J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*, London, 1998, 169-72.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 172.

²¹ See Horner’s obituary in the *Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter*, 7.11.52, 5.

cares of civilisation and with an innate spirituality, that was perhaps the sole acknowledgement of mental capacity conceded within Imperial racial discourse. This re-articulation of old categories was in some ways reassuring and an indication that not everything had been changed by the war. It was a sign that some markers of racial superiority were still in place; it was a romanticised, backward-looking mindset, rather than the category-disrupting modernist vision more usually associated with the Great War, and which has been described at length by Fussell.²²

The pre-war concern with the detrimental effects of urban life had given renewed vigour to nostalgic romanticism that looked to the past for the “natural”, “innocent” and “unspoilt”. Such desires were raised in the works of the Uranian poets, whose influence was evident in much of the homoerotic writing of the war. There was a preoccupation in this corpus with the Aryan, blond, blue-eyed Adonis which led, on occasion, to poetic reverie upon the German dead.²³ However, in reaction to the pallor created by the environment of the industrial cities, the Uranian poets also painted an idealised image of masculinity whose body bore the signs of a healthy outdoor life. This stood in contrast to the more mainstream views of Victorian society that held aloft a clear white skin as a symbol of purity. A poem attributed to Horatio Forbes Brown mused

Dearer to me is the lad, village born, with sinewy members
Than the fine face of a pale town-bred effeminate youngling.²⁴

²² Fussell, *passim*.

²³ Fussell, 275-281. The Uranian poets, the most notable of whom were Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter, Lord Alfred Douglas and Aleister Crowley, produced literature and art advocating platonic love, and in many cases, more physical relationships, between men and boys. Their output of the war era is preoccupied with the wanton sacrifice of young men at the front.

²⁴ Extract from poem probably by Horatio Forbes Brown quoted in Timothy d'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest*, London, 1970, 108.

There was a strong predilection for the well-built lowly youth engaged in hard physical labour. In his epic poem, 'Towards Democracy', Edward Carpenter, the Uranian and Utopian socialist, spoke of the "thick-wasted hot coarse-fleshed young bricklayer", and "the begrimed stoker".²⁵ Within this framework, the toiling black soldier or seaman was also a potential object of desire, particularly when linked to the existing representations of black people as children of nature. Indeed there was even more scope for the objectification of the black form. As Mercer has shown, black skin has acquired a fetishistic quality in white eyes, representing both toil and sexual exertion.²⁶

When the West Indian contingents were paraded in London, attention was quickly focussed on their physical characteristics. One paper, the *Daily Sketch*, went as far as describing one volunteer as 'A Dusky Lady-killer ... now that he wears the King's khaki'.²⁷ Official reports regularly commented on the "exceptional" or "fine" physique of the men in both the BWIR and the WIR.²⁸ When members of the BWIR were paraded at the Lord Mayor's show in Autumn 1915, the *Standard* referred to them as "big men all".²⁹ A local paper for Seaford, where the men were stationed spoke of the 'Splendid impression' made by the BWIR volunteers: 'Some of them are magnificently proportioned', the *Newhaven Chronicle* reported. A Barbadian, Private Harman, was said to be six foot eight and wished to join the Life Guards. These references to size and physique may have made the newly-arrived West

²⁵ *ibid.*, 22-3.

²⁶ Mercer, 149.

²⁷ *Daily Sketch*, 10.1.1917, BWIR Album.

²⁸ See CO318/344/55651 GHQ, British Armies in France to Secretary, WO 8.11.1917 Services of the Battalions of the BWIR; WO95/5318 WD 2WIR entry for 3.7.1918; WO95/4732 WD 2WIR entry for 24.12.1918.

²⁹ BWIR Album, cutting poss. WICC, n.d.

Indians appear potentially more threatening and imposing and above all different. It is significant in this regard, that British soldiers on the Western Front, who in their day-to-day duties rarely encountered a German, invariably believed that the enemy was of much greater stature than the Tommy. Furthermore, a number of bantam battalions were raised to accommodate men who failed to match the height requirement of 5 feet 3 inches.³⁰

The men of the West Indian contingents were not always regarded as of sound physique. There were complaints that medical examinations in the colonies were not rigorous enough or that “quite young boys” had been enlisted.³¹ When it was suggested that men of the BWIR be converted to a pioneer corps for the Mesopotamia railway, the GOC in Egypt, Archibald Murray, complained that the men were of ‘poor stock ... I do not consider that they stand the heat and hard work of the desert any better than my young and inexperienced territorials’.³² 26, 667 men presented themselves for enlistment in Jamaica. Of these, 13, 940 were rejected as medically unfit. 2, 082 were discharged or died after enlistment, but before the contingents departed for service overseas.³³ This represents a rejection rate of around sixty per cent, a figure similar to the rate in Britain at the time of the Boer War.

Nevertheless, a general picture emerges that, in terms of their physique, black soldiers arriving in Britain were viewed with a mixture of awe and trepidation. It is

³⁰ Fussell, 75-8; J. M. Winter, 32.

³¹ CO318/344/1646 & /3114 Cubitt, WO to USS, CO, 8.1.1917 & 16.1.1917.

³² CO318/339 GOC, Egypt to Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 29.6.1916.

³³ *WWJ*, 247. Enlistments and registrations under the Military Service Act, totalled over 130, 000 (*ibid.*, 244). Therefore, volunteers, including those rejected, numbered around twenty per cent of available manpower in Jamaica.

Alfred Horner's account that we get the clearest indication that black soldiers could be viewed with a homoerotic admiration as the following passage illustrates:

After the "reveille" the men were paraded and if the weather permitted did physical drill. This they rather liked; and indeed, with the splendid physical physique which our men possess generally, it was only natural that they should enjoy it. I have often wished that our men could have worn something different from the ordinary fighting kit of the British soldier. It does hide their splendid physical proportions so ... We held a boxing competition, and several officers ... were absolutely astounded at the fine figure and splendid outlines of our men. They look sometimes a little heavy and ill-built in their heavy kit, but remove that and – well, it makes all the difference.³⁴

Ouditt's reflections on the ambivalence of military uniform for women volunteers provide an insight into Horner's partiality for his men in a semi-clad state. On one hand uniform was a sign that an individual had been subjugated to the demands of the military hierarchy and hence those of industrial society. Uniform could also be a way of keeping the wearers sexuality in check by keeping any suggestion of the sexual to a minimum.³⁵ Horner certainly seems to have recognised how uniform contained the physique and thus part of the sexuality of the black soldier. On the other hand, Ouditt argues '[u]niform had a certain mystique – it was a prize, a symbol of one's coming of age, of having entered the Symbolic Order'³⁶ – the white male universe of rationality and lineality. This may explain the fact that, at least during the early stages of the war men in khaki, including black men, were seen as a source of sexual temptation for women.³⁷ Expressing a wish that the men remove their uniform may have simultaneously been an attempt by Horner to deny the black soldier entry to this order.

³⁴ Horner, 7-8.

³⁵ Ouditt, 17-8.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 18.

³⁷ Angela Woollacott, "'Khaki Fever' and Its control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:2, 1994, 325-347;

Horner's reflections contain echoes of an era when black men might be viewed in such a way at a slave market. The black soldiers are reduced to objects of physical toil and entertainment for white men; the strength of their bodies the result of innate capacity, rather than self-disciplined training. Indeed, Horner's obvious desire to remove their uniforms was an attempt, in his position as the active subject of this image, to return the men to an unencumbered primitive state. That Horner saw the men in this light is indicated by his suggestion that the men had all the attributes of a primeval hunter. During the voyage to the metropole, Horner noted '[t]heir eyes are naturally good, and seldom did a passing vessel or even a somewhat unusual ripple on the water escape their notice'.³⁸ Naked, or in this case probably half-clad, the black soldier could be firmly placed in the position as Other, with attendant connotations of unbridled sexuality and emotional expression, relieved of the obligations *and* rewards that were the mainstay of white masculine civility.

Sparring Black Solders & White Male Anxiety

Horner's attempts to circumscribe the possibilities of black masculinity may have had broader motives. It is significant that his observations on the black soldiers' physique were made after witnessing the men engaged in a boxing bout. That Horner was motivated by both desire *and* an urge to contain his imaginings of black masculinity was a reflection of contemporary discourses of Empire and sporting achievement. The games ethic embodied the purported ideals of English masculinity and the Imperial enterprise – team spirit, fair play, skill and stamina. In turn, sport

Glenford D. Howe, 'Military-Civilian Intercourse, Prostitution and Venereal Disease Among Black

became a metaphor for white racial dominance within the Empire. This was particularly so in the wake of the events such as the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865. A more aggressive Imperial mindset began to supplant the moral leadership of Empire. Rebellion and the threat of competition from other world powers demanded a culture of combativity. Sporting imagery came to embody the ideas of Social Darwinism, as the processes of natural selection were symbolically played out on the sports field.³⁹

But sporting contest was also, therefore, an arena where black men could break out of the ascribed position of racial inferiority by defeating a white opposition. The wider implications of the defeat of a white man by a black opponent were most evident in the world of boxing, just prior to the outbreak of war (official competition was suspended for its duration). In 1911, the contest between the black American boxer, Jack Johnson, and Bombardier Billy Wells was cancelled. The freeholders of Earls Court obtained an injunction prohibiting the fight on their property. A leading non-Conformist, Frederick Meyer, played the race card to add weight to a campaign whose ostensive complaint was boxing's links with gambling. But the broader significance of the protests is evident in the fact that they received the support of leading Imperial figures such as Lords Roberts and Baden Powell.⁴⁰ Anti-fight protestors were particularly concerned that if the white soldier, Wells, was defeated

West Indian Soldiers During World War 1, *JCH*, 31:1 & 2, 1997, 91.

³⁸ Horner, 9.

³⁹ James Walvin, 'Symbols of Moral Superiority: Slavery, Sport and the Changing world Order, 1800-1950' in J. A. Mangan & James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, Manchester, 1987, 242-50.

⁴⁰ Green, 172-8. Green takes the veneer of an anti-gambling campaign at face value, despite presenting this evidence to the contrary.

by the black champion, Johnson, cinematograph copies of the fight would circulate throughout the Empire to the detriment of white Imperial authority.⁴¹

In May 1914, the match at Olympia between “Gunboat” Smith and Sam Longford, the black Nova Scotian, was abandoned after Home Office pressure.⁴² *The Times* summed up the prevailing attitudes of the colonial and metropolitan authorities stating, ‘the chances of a contest of this kind is eagerly read by half-educated natives ... the black man’s victory is hailed as a proof that the hegemony of the white race is approaching the end’.⁴³ The paper feared that the racial unrest that developed in the United States and the West Indies in the wake of Johnson’s world-title victory at Reno Nevada in 1910 would be repeated throughout the Empire. Previously, at the time of the Johnson affair in 1911, the paper had been less hostile to bouts between black and white fighters, which had not been an uncommon occurrence.⁴⁴ However, it would seem that with the impending struggle between the colonial powers, the black man needed to be firmly reminded of his place in the world order.

In the metropole, boxing had evolved as the “Gentle Art” in which the protagonists “boxed” rather than “fought” in order to distance the sport from the older and unrespectable tradition of pugilism. It was desirable that victory be attained by skill, rather than brute force, which increasingly, it was claimed decided the issue, resulting in a rising numbers of defeats being inflicted on British boxers by American

⁴¹ *The Times*, 19.9.1911, 5.

⁴² *ibid.*, 2.5.14, 10.

⁴³ *The Times* 25.5.14, 40.

⁴⁴ For a summary of black boxing in Britain from the late eighteenth century see Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, London, 1984, 227-8, 445-54.

and French opponents.⁴⁵ Commentators urged British boxers to master the techniques of “infighting”, rather than just “standing up to box”. They were pushed to become more aggressive, like their opponents, and, somewhat ironically, to adopt the American method which:

develops the individual’s natural gifts, makes him a fighter from the first, and never sacrifices for the sake of traditional form, or rather formalism, that priceless asset, the punch that comes by nature so much more often than by art.⁴⁶

But it was one thing for a white man to exploit his “natural gifts” and quite another for a black man to do likewise. Reluctant to engage in actual competition with a black opponent, white observers depended on racial stereotypes to contain the threat to white hegemony. These depictions suggested black fighters were naturalistic, raw, un tutored, and often unteachable as highlighted in this extract from the *Zouave*.

There are many men in the battalion, obviously cut out by nature to box, who do not evince as much interest in the sport as one might wish ... in most cases the will was good though the knowledge may be weak ... one may say that the boxing was characterized by hard hitting rather than by technical skill ... As we have said ... with a little instruction some of the men might be easily turned into very first class boxers. They can apparently take a very much more severe punishment than the average European, without the ill effects, though appearances are rather deceptive in this respect ... Most of the blows ... appeared to have enormous force behind them ... but there was a lack of knowledge of the science of hitting which must have materially reduced the force of the blow ... [The men] paid more attention to the spectacular than to the useful part of the art⁴⁷

The restricted opportunity for black soldiers to prove themselves on the battlefield and the increasing anxiety in metropolitan and colonial society regarding mixed race contests was reflected in the regimental sporting arena. Discriminatory policies

⁴⁵ *The Times*, 16.3.14, 14. 17.3.14, 14; 31.3.14, 16; 11.4.14, 13.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 31.3.14, 16.

meant that black soldiers were often excluded from the recreational facilities provided for white soldiers. Most of the sporting activity that the men of the BWIR took part in were inter-battalion football and boxing competitions that did not involve men from white regiments. The chief exception to this was the involvement of the battalions stationed in the Middle East, in cricket competitions and occasionally athletics meetings. According to Captain Cipriani's account, the men performed particularly well, sweeping the board on several occasions.

Often, however, a significant proportion of the teams were white officers. In other words, the teams that were fielded would have often reflected a strong element of the West Indian racial hierarchy in their appearance. Furthermore, the matches were organised under the auspices of the Alexandria Cricket Club and included a significant number of local civilian teams. It would have been easier to pass off a team that included black men as the result of white leadership. Perhaps the most prestigious victory achieved by the men of the BWIR was in a tug-of-war contest against the crew of the crack Italian dreadnought *Duilio* shortly before the end of the war.⁴⁸

Victory for black sportsmen against a white opposition did not automatically disrupt the racial categories of Empire, as Vasili has shown in his study of Walter Tull, the black footballer who achieved admittance to the officer class during the war. For black competitors

winning through sport ... could be seen as, ultimately, a pyrrhic victory ... defined in such a way as to confirm the scientific

⁴⁷ *Zouave* June 1914, 88.

⁴⁸ Cipriani, 70-1; Ogilvie, *A Diary of the Great War*, Kingston, 1919, 41-8, 51-2.

taxonomies of “race”: it was their “animalism”, a sub-human characteristic, that allowed them their physical prowess, possession of which necessarily excluded ownership of civilised cultural traits such as a highly evolved intellect or refined sensitivities.⁴⁹

The Black Soldier as Passive Subject

The objectified images created by white observers of black soldiers exerting themselves in work or recreation were circumscribed by the desire of the looker to contain the threat they simultaneously imagined. However, in some cases, the black subject of the gaze was so contained by concrete circumstances the threat was removed. This powerful vantage point could endow the white observer with an aesthetic appreciation that was more cognisant of the humanity of the black soldier. This is evident in an eyewitness account of the execution of Private Hubert Clarke, a Jamaican volunteer who was found guilty of assaulting two military policemen. The military authorities wished to make an example of Clarke, alleging that insubordination among men of the BWIR had gone largely unpunished. James Johnston Abraham⁵⁰ was the medical officer called upon to oversee Clarke’s execution and to certify death once it had been carried out. He has left an account that is totally at odds with the military reports that characterised Clarke as a threat to the institutions and expectations of military masculinity. On the contrary, according to Abraham’s depiction, Clarke towered, both physically and mentally, above the nervous observers of the execution and the hesitant firing party.

The prisoner was standing close to the wall, a magnificent bronze Hercules, clad in a pair of khaki shorts only, his hands fastened behind his back. The firing-party, men from a Labour Battalion, stood huddled some twenty feet away. Their faces looked white and drawn in the gathering light. I glanced at my little

⁴⁹ Vasili, 60.

⁵⁰ James Johnston Abraham (1876-1963) was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He served as a surgical specialist in Egypt and as Assistant Director of Medical Services for Lines of Communication troops in the EEF between 1917 and 1919. He published medical, autobiographical and fictional works under his own name and the pseudonym, James Harpole.

Quartermaster. His face, usually ruddy, was blanched. I turned towards the A[ssistant] P[rovost] M[arshall]. He was nervously fingering his revolver. We were all in a state of extreme nervous tension. Then I looked at the prisoner. The light was coming up from the East. It glistened on his bronze skin and the whites of his eyes, and I was startled to see there was a look of beatitude on his face. His white teeth sparkled. He was completely at ease.⁵¹

Abraham's vision has an epiphanic quality. The image of the black soldier patiently waiting to die is emblematic of Christ on the cross, but with one important exception: Abraham indicates that Hubert Clarke went to his death without a shred of doubt or pain. The image of Clarke is raised to a privileged, blessed state and chosen, which is reinforced by Abraham's sense that his 'eyes seemed to glow with an inner joy',⁵² as he received the last offices of the Baptist chaplain. The elements of constructed blackness that are more regularly subject to ridicule or disgust – dark skin and prominent teeth and eyes – are viewed more positively. The attention brought to the soldier's glistening skin, still gives the image an eroticised, fetishistic quality – the focus on this singular corporeal element still capable of summoning up or representing the whole. But Abraham's vision, rather than connoting just toil or sexual action, conjures up a heavenly, religious image of lightness and ennoblement, that echoes the homoerotic poem by Leonard Green, *Dream Comrades* (1916), in which Christ is portrayed as a beautiful youth, 'brown-breasted with the kisses of the sun'.⁵³

That Abraham was able to construct this aesthetic image from a position of power is evident in the account. Abraham chose descriptive terms that at once feminised and animalised the condemned man. He was even able to dissuade the man from having

⁵¹ J. Johnston Abraham, *Surgeon's Journey*, London, 1957, 186.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ quoted in d'Arch Smith, 138-9.

his dying wish granted. Nevertheless, despite its gendered and racialised overtones, Abraham's account may still be read as a most moving condemnation of an unjust sentence. Instructed to apply strips of plaster over the prisoner's heart as a target for the firing squad, he continues,

Once I looked up at the man. His eyes were gazing at me *soft as a gazelle's*.
Finally I stepped back and someone produced a handkerchief to blindfold him.
"May I die with my eyes open?" he said in the educated tones so surprising to those who do not know the West Indian negro.
"Better not," I said quietly.
"All right, Doctor," he answered *submissively*; and they slipped it over.
A few seconds later the quick wording of command rang out; then came the volley; and then the great beautiful body crumpled and suddenly fell.⁵⁴

Significantly, Abraham was brought out of his reverie on the homeward journey when he and his companions encounter a scene that firmly restored the racial hierarchy of Empire. 'No one spoke until we passed a gang of coolies putting up wire fencing. That broke the spell'.⁵⁵

There is another aspect to the execution which reinforces the view that Abraham was granted permission to construct this appreciative image of black masculinity from a position that maintained, rather than upended racial hegemony. This was Hubert Clarke's apparent acceptance of his own position. Having remarked on the black soldier's courage, the chaplain told Abraham how he had been with the prisoner almost constantly in the previous week. 'He had repented of his sins, and believed he

⁵⁴ Abraham, 187 (my italics).

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

had been forgiven. He was ready therefore to face his God, “fortified by the rites of Holy Church””.⁵⁶

The Biblical representation of black soldiers was evident in accounts that describe less dramatic situations. As is evident in Abraham’s depiction of Hubert Clarke’s execution there is a strong emphasis on Christian redemption, that somehow through the ministrations and attentions of white civilisation, the black man may be raised from his fallen state. The following account by Susie Joy, a nurse serving in Alexandria, was reprinted in the *Gleaner*, recalls Christ washing the feet of Magdalen, the penitent prostitute.

I am in a ward with some men of the British West Indies Regiment. They are such nice boys, quite black of course, so intelligent, and full of fun ... I have an orderly called Dick ... a big strong boy who is perfectly charming to the blacks who are devoted to him ... he sat down by the bed of a West Indian boy, who is very bad, and bathed the boy's hands in cold water. Then one of my old patients from another ward came in, and fanned the boy for ages ... I do like my *darkies*.⁵⁷

Black Volunteers as Entertainers, Dandies & Exotics

Joy’s account illustrates, that as well as being subjects for Christian and homoerotic contemplation, black soldiers were often simultaneously reduced to objects of entertainment. They were portrayed either as playthings or at play to underline the infantilised position they occupied within the racial hierarchy of Empire. When a detachment of the BWIR paraded in London one newspaper portrayed the men’s

⁵⁶ *ibid.* There are some striking similarities between Abraham’s observations and Henry Bleby’s account of Sam Sharpe in the 1831 Jamaican rebellion, both in terms of the homoerotic emphasis and the reported bearing of the condemned man (See Bleby quoted in Hart, *Slaves ...*, 252, 330).

⁵⁷ DG 10.5.1916, 11.

‘eyes rolling with pleasure at the reception given them’⁵⁸. One colonial newspaper, received in London had a picture captioned ‘Happy Darkies at the Front: No Bad Teeth in That Lot!’.⁵⁹ A photograph in a Liverpool local paper showed some of the men forming a human pyramid and declared “‘Happy West Indians” ... enjoying a trial of strength’.⁶⁰

A more subtle approach was to concede an element of cultural sophistication to the black West Indians placed within strict limits. One account, in order to suggest a unity of purpose within the war effort, said of the West Indian contingents in general, [t]heir civilisation is on a much higher plane than that of the Kaiser and his hordes’ adding, ‘they are soldiers of sterling quality and speak English fluently’.⁶¹ As Glenford Howe has argued, after Franz Fanon, speaking the tongue of the white man was the affront *par excellence* to white notions of racial superiority.⁶² In this case, however, the article was illustrated with pictures of black soldiers sparring and “dancing the rag”, images designed to reassure the reader that the men had not achieved the heights of British cultural achievement.

These kinds of images were more comfortable and non-threatening to a white audience and blunted the more threatening images of black masculinity at this time. Language that assumed an air of familiarity and social nexus towards the black soldier reinforced this stance. Horner frequently uses the term *le soldat noir aimable* (the friendly black soldier) to describe his men. In his autobiography, Claude McKay

⁵⁸ BWIR Album, cutting poss. WICC, n.d.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, *Natal Witness*, 25.1.1916.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, *Liverpool Courier*, 20.11.1915.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, *War Budget*, 28.10.1915.

remembers how a rather well-meaning white woman, Mrs. Newcombe, who ran a club for black soldiers in London, referred to the men as “my coloured boys”.⁶³ Horner reported that the British Tommy found the black soldier most endearing when he was performing. ‘If a canteen full of Tommies can only get our boys singing or dancing they are contented, and many a time and oft the role of society entertainer has fallen upon BWI boys’.⁶⁴ Embellishing one dimension of the caricature sketched by Nurse Susie Joy, Alfred Horner suggested that on the hospital ward the sick or wounded black soldier ‘if he [was] at all civil and obliging, ... [became] the pet and plaything of both inmates and staff’.⁶⁵

Again, the element of comfort and reassurance that the entertaining black soldier provided was ambiguous. On one level, it buttressed a self-satisfied and patronising sense of racial superiority. Alternatively, the image of the black entertainer could provide a suggestion of authenticity, a sense that somehow an essence of humanity had survived the upheavals and horrors of the war. Black soldiers became an emotional repository for white combatants inhibited by the straight-jacket of military masculinity. Indeed, Horner believed that the West Indian had ‘a considerably larger emotional capacity than the English race generally possesses’.⁶⁶

On occasion, the black soldier was able to play on the stereotype of *le soldat noir aimable* by deploying tactics reminiscent of the Quashie figure of slavery days.

⁶² Howe, *West Indians* ..., 89-90.

⁶³ Claude McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, London, 1985, 67; *Negro World* (magazine section) 13.3.1920.

⁶⁴ Horner, 50.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 67.

Brathwaite has described the figure of Quashie, who confounded the planter or overseer by feigning stupidity and clumsiness, as ‘a form of devious protest’.⁶⁷ Horner recalled how this persona was reinvented under the harsh environment of military discipline. A black batman might polish only one of his officer’s boots, leave them out in the rain or crease uniform trousers down the side.

But he does all with such a naive simplicity, coupled with a wondrous self-satisfaction that he is absolutely doing it all in a friendly spirit that, when the explosion of disapprobation has subsided, the officer will have a good hearty laugh at it all’.⁶⁸

While some white imaginings of black soldiery manifested an element of overweening familiarity, others insisted on an exotic quality to maintain racial and cultural difference to impose inferiority in the hierarchy of Empire. This was evident, not only accounts concerned with black West Indian soldiers, but with all non-white soldiers engaged in the war effort. The war artist, Massia Bibikoff, who was given permission to sketch the Indian Expeditionary Force in France described how her “imagination turned eagerly” towards the “Native troops”, whose “child-like enthusiasm crossed with a fighting instinct”, “disciplined and tempered by British civilisation” produced “warrior-like dripping tigers”.⁶⁹

The development of the distinctive uniform of the West India Regiment places this process in historical context in terms of the Jamaican experience. Although the West India Regiment had a long tradition of service to the Empire, ways were still found to demarcate the men as objects of curiosity, rather than acknowledge their standing as professional soldiers. Until 1868, the men had worn uniforms similar to those of the

⁶⁷ Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, Oxford, 1971, 200-201.

⁶⁸ Horner, 47-8.

other line regiments of the British army. But the appearance of French Algerian Zouave troops in the Crimean War had excited many observers, including Queen Victoria, who, as Dyde observes, had ‘an eye for the exotic’.⁷⁰ Ironically, offers to deploy the WIR on active service in this campaign were turned down. When proposals were made to dress “native” regiments in uniforms more suitable to the climates in which they served it was decided, partly to please Victoria, that the men and NCOs of the WIR should adopt a Zouave-style uniform.⁷¹ The new uniform did not reflect the dress-sense of the rest of the West Indian population and was not issued to white officers. This would tend to suggest that the policy was an attempt to categorise the WIR as an exotic and ceremonial element within the British Army. The regiment’s “native” status was simultaneously confirmed, a stigma that dogged both the WIR and the British West Indies Regiment for the duration of Great War.

The Zouave uniform of the WIR was replaced with standard tropical issue in the African campaigns of the Great War. However, there were still many ways to ensure that the image of the exotic black West Indian soldier persisted. When men from the first BWIR contingent paraded in London in late 1915 one newspaper observed

All the civilised warriors of the world seemed to be represented here ... when the West Indians appeared – all huge and mighty men of valour, black as night, with their white teeth flashing, the picture reminded one somewhat of a scene from “Salamambo”.⁷²

This was a reference to the novel by Gustave Flaubert, which inspired the opera of the same name, composed by Ernest Reyer in 1890. The allusion implied that, whatever superficial appearance of civilisation might be evident, the black soldier

⁶⁹ Quoted in Levine, 106.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 149

⁷¹ Dyde, 148-50.

⁷² BWIR Album, cutting poss. WICC, n.d.

was still part of a benighted race that lacked the finer qualities of European civilisation. The backdrop for *Salamambo* is Hamilcar's Carthage. In the words of one critic, 'In *Salamambo* there is no joy, only a savage laughter. Its characters have no sensibility. All Flaubert's creatures here are violent and passionate ... the hero, Matho, is childlike and credulous'.⁷³ However, as well as these representations serving to subordinate the subject races, they also served as a way of projecting and channelling the desires of metropolitan society.⁷⁴

However, the ability of many black servicemen and war workers to visibly excel in and appropriate many white cultural mores muted the process of exoticisation. Where this was evident, the image of the cultured black man was held up to ridicule and exaggerated to a degree which suggested aberration or dissolution, and thereby still insisted on a trace of the exotic. White observers clearly had their racial preconceptions brought into doubt by the ability of the men of the West Indian contingents to speak English and to have a strong grasp of metropolitan history and culture.

A particular fascination was reserved for some of the more basic markers of racial status – dress and hygiene. A British nurse based in Mesopotamia where a small contingent from the 1/2BWIR was posted, remarked of the men that '[s]ome ... were cultured, educated men, more fastidious than many a British soldier with their array

⁷³ F. C. Green 'Introduction' to Gustave Flaubert, *Salamambo* (trans. J. C. Chartres), London, 1931.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of the sexual representation and subordination of the "orient" see Joanna de Groot, "'Sex" and "Race": The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century' in Susan Mendus & Jane Rendell (eds.), *Sexuality & Subordination*, London, 1989.

of toilet articles on their lockers – tooth brushes, sponges, talcum powder, etc.’.⁷⁵ As Anne McClintock has observed,

Victorian cleaning rituals were peddled globally as the God-given sign of Britain’s evolutionary superiority, and soap was invested with magical, fetish powers ... Both the cult of domesticity and the new imperialism found in soap an exemplary mediating form. The emergent middle-class values’ among them ‘the imperial civilising mission (“washing and clothing the savage”).’⁷⁶

But Nurse Thomas’ remarks suggest that where black men were seen to aspire to these values they were portrayed as doing so with more enthusiasm than was deemed appropriate for men. They were perceived to direct insufficient energy to more purposeful and less-domesticated activity. Observations, such as Nurse Thomas’, were more likely to be directed to black men of West Indian origin. Due to the long association of the Caribbean islands with Britain, and the missionary efforts undertaken in the wake of slavery, they were seen as more cultured than their African counterparts. Thomas herself described the African troops who she met in Mesopotamia as ‘wild savages from the Gold Coast or Nigeria’.⁷⁷

This is also evident in the growing number of newspaper reports that were expressing concern at the increasing visibility of the black wartime population. Such accounts were calculated to stir up resentment against well-dressed black men, who stood in stark contrast to wartime frugality and the less-than-inspiring images of the British Tommy. Fearful that such men would prove attractive to white women, the reports insinuated that black war-workers were engaged in rather feminine diversions, rather than placing their shoulders to the wheel of the Empire war effort. Indeed, the dandy,

⁷⁵ IWM 85/39/1Mrs. MAA Thomas unpublished tss., 20. Thomas was born in India and volunteered for nursing service in April 1916 aged 22. She was based at Basra No. 3 British General Hospital, Mesopotamia. Thomas later spent an extended period in West Africa after the war.

whether white or black, was regarded as something of a shirker or draft-dodger.⁷⁶

The populist weekly, the *Empire News* (formerly the *Umpire* and *Empire*), which had become increasingly hostile towards the presence of all non-white subjects of Empire in the metropole, carried an article in this vein, entitled 'Our Black Dandies'.

The black dandy is a familiar figure in our city streets these days. Sambo or Rastus, in the stetson hat, his coat cut squarely at the shoulders as though hanging from a clothes-horse, and wearing bull-nosed boots that reflect Broadway, is gone. To-day the high-price tailor has the patronage of the black men in our midst. The forty-shilling suit (so some of our leading tailors informed an *Empire News* man) is an outrage on the coloured man's taste. Mention a fine, light-grey tweed, a fashionably tinted blue at about ninety shillings, and there is a chance of business. These men are as fastidious as a woman over the cut of clothes, the shape and colour of boots and the mode in hats. The outfitters have to quicken their wits to provide the "real stuff" in underwear and ties, whilst the rubber collar merchants are boycotted. No wonder the feminine eye is charmed. Ask the girl you have seen coquetting with a black dandy what she means by it. You will promptly be told he looks like a gentleman, generous, and no commoner. He must be a student of something or other and his father a landed man who grows most of the world's needs.⁷⁹

The Consequences of White Masculine Anxiety in the Metropole

Despite the various attempts to contain images of black masculinity, by the middle years of the war the issue of race assumed a significance out of all proportion to the number of black servicemen, naval personnel and war-workers who passed through or resided in the metropole. The anxieties of white masculinity were increasingly mapped onto non-white men of all shades. These apprehensions contributed to the official attempts to frustrate the involvement of black Jamaicans and other West

⁷⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender & Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, London, 1995, 207-8.

⁷⁷ Thomas, 20.

⁷⁸ The *Stratford Express* (12.5.1915, 1) carried a letter from a reformed dandy who had succeeded in joining the French Red Cross as an ambulance driver, having been rejected by the army due to a withered arm. 'I made a determined resolution to cast off my tight waist overcoat, patent leather shoes and plush hat in exchange for a more up-to-date style and at last succeeded in getting a whole new suit of clothes more creditable than any I have worn'.

⁷⁹ *Empire News* 2.9.17, 4.

Indians on the front line. They also added to the increasing hostility directed at black men who were employed chiefly in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, as seafarers and war-workers.

The employment of non-white men in the shipping industry continued to be a contentious issue. However, from the Autumn of 1916 the attentions of the trade union movement also became focused on the proposed introduction of black labour in the munitions factories and unskilled reserved occupations, to free whites for the front line. This enmity also extended towards black men from the West Indies and West Africa who had already begun to travel to the metropole to take advantage of the employment opportunities created by the war.⁸⁰ The Triple Alliance of mine, rail and transport workers passed a resolution calling for an end to 'the sinister movement to import coloured labour into this country'. The Alliance expressed 'irrevocable opposition to any and every effort in this direction' and urged 'the whole organised Labour Movement of Great Britain to take steps immediately to stop the movement'.⁸¹

For some leading protagonists in the debate, it was not just a trade union issue regarding cheap imported labour – the manhood, and indeed the viability and honour of the entire nation was being brought into question. Economic explanations, as advanced by Jacqueline Jenkinson, for example, are insufficient. Tellingly, Will Thorne, M.P. for West Ham South and leader of the municipal workers, suggested to

⁸⁰ Tabili, ; Jacqueline Jenkinson, 'The 1919 Riots' in Panikos Panayi (ed.), *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries*, Leicester, 1996, 96; *The Times*, 23.11.1916, 5; 22.12.1916, 5; *The Umpire*, 17.9.1916, 4, 6.

⁸¹ *The Times*, 22.12.1916, 5.

Parliament in November 1916, that '[i]f all whites did their duty there would be no need for blacks'.⁸² It was evident from observations made in Thorne's own constituency that many men in the metropole were simply not fit to "do their duty", either because they had been invalided already, or because of existing poor health. Workers at Mansfield House, a university settlement in Canning Town, part of the dock area of West Ham, reported a steady stream of discharged soldiers. Some had been rejected at the training stage; others had been wounded or had suffered serious disease. If they were fit to work at all, most were only capable of light work.⁸³ The sight of relatively fit black men seeking heavy work in the munitions factories or serving in the military or at sea, could not have provided a starker contrast. This would compound the threat allegedly presented by black men as economic and sexual competitors.

A correspondent in the *Umpire*, expressed astonishment that black men could be found 'mixing with whites, and enjoying the full privileges of the people of England',⁸⁴ and demanded that '[i]n the interests of all concerned, our governing authorities should at once take the necessary steps for the proper control of these men'.⁸⁵ Fear had shifted from an imagined German occupation to "this coloured invasion". The correspondent, who had apparently lived in South Africa, called for the creation of a 'Ministry for Foreign Natives ... "Commissioner for Native Affairs"', to combat the 'increasing disorderliness among blacks in different parts of

⁸² *The Times*, 3.11.1916, 12.

⁸³ *Mansfield House Magazine*, XXIV, 7/8, July/Aug. 1917, 80-1.

⁸⁴ *Umpire* 17.9.16, 6.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

the country'.⁸⁶ Among the suggestions put forward were measures that had already become a feature of the pre-Apartheid state in the Transvaal – segregated public transport, exclusion from public pavements and the prohibition of the sale of alcohol to black people.

At the root of the writer's concern was the fear that black men may prove attractive to white women. Liaisons between black men and white women raised issues about the policing of black *and* female sexuality. In many ways, both were seen to transgress the sexual boundaries of Empire during this period of crisis. As Sonya Rose has argued, total war provided new and unparalleled opportunities for men and women to break with the norms of civil life. This threatened to undermine the values that the nation was imagined to represent, and which were placed at the forefront of discourses of national defence. That women might be engaged in behaviour that suggested enjoyment, rather than public-spirited self-sacrifice, went wholly against discourses of national service.⁸⁷

By the middle years of the Great War black men were 'to be seen knocking about English streets with their tool bags, suggesting that they are employed as artisans'.⁸⁸ However, rather than acknowledge that they had placed themselves at the disposal of the Empire war effort, it was asserted that they had a more sinister motive that threatened the very social fabric of metropolitan society; they were 'loitering ... in

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Levine, 106, 109; Sonya O. Rose, 'Sex Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain' *American Historical Review*, 103:4, 1998, 1148-9, 1164-9.

⁸⁸ *Umpire*, 17.9.16, 6.

search of the opposite sex'.⁸⁹ An article in the *Empire News*, which suggested that the presence of black labour was a necessary evil, unwittingly pointed to this concern.

Remember we need black labour now, and need it badly. We want every hand we can get, every ounce of muscle, every effort, and we cannot afford to quibble about the colour of the skin ... when we get down to the bed-rock of things it is only by the strength of men – actual muscular effort and the sweat of the brow – that we can win this war.⁹⁰

Expressed in these terms, the association of black skin and physical exertion and strength was forcefully underlined, illustrating the potential attraction of black manhood in relation to the war-weary Tommy. Indeed, “A. E.”, the author of the article, had just observed ‘a finely-built, coal-black Hercules, accompanied by his small white wife’.⁹¹ Sights such as this, it was alleged, showed that ‘[t]he war has forced the colour problem into prominence. Where we formerly saw one black in a large city we now see hundreds where we formerly saw one white woman married to a black, or living with him, we now see scores’.⁹² Any reward that accrued to the black war worker was to be enjoyed ‘beneath the sunshine of his native skies’.⁹³ The Mother Country was to be no more than a symbolic homeland – that a black man might be granted the right to reside permanently in the metropole was out of the question.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Empire News* 12.8.17, 2.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

White women, particularly of the lower classes, were believed to be ‘easily tempted by free-handed Negroes earning good money’,⁹⁴ who were simultaneously accused of living in squalor and indulging in alcoholic excess. “A. E.” demanded that women of all classes should be called to account for taking up with black men and policies should be developed to discourage the marriage or cohabiting between black men and white women. Black men should only be allowed to settle if they were accompanied by a spouse of their own race and if they lived in districts barred to white women. The mingling of racial stock was regarded as unnatural and a further threat to the viability of the white races, compounding the eugenicist-inspired panic centred around the dysgenics of war, the ill-effects of industrialisation and the differential birth-rate. For white women sexual relations with black men represented ‘treason to their ... gift of motherhood’,⁹⁵ which should be placed at the disposal of the Empire project.

By 1917, the reaction to the black presence and the association of white women with black men had reached fever pitch. The Manchester-based *Daily Dispatch* carried a number of articles and letters in August of that year with emotive headlines such as ‘The Black Peril’, that reiterated the ‘pronounced weakness’ of black men ‘for associating with white women’.⁹⁶ Parents of young girls were said to be ‘crying out ... that conditions should be returned to normal’,⁹⁷ a sentiment that underscored the desire for a return to the apparently constant categories of peacetime. One correspondent, “Anxious Mother”, articulated the feeling that while the nation’s men

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Daily Dispatch*, 8.8.1917, 3.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

were making the supreme sacrifice its womenfolk should not engage in behaviour that transgressed the boundaries of race, class and gender or that smacked of frivolity and lack of public spirit.⁹⁸

It makes me feel sick to see so many of our white girls walking about with black men. These girls appear to have lost all sense of shame and self-respect. If they have not the sense for themselves then the Government should step in and remove a temptation which is daily becoming more hideous.⁹⁹

The Salvation Army in Manchester even commissioned an investigation 'into the danger attendant upon this coloured invasion'.¹⁰⁰ Of particular concern was the association between black men, alcohol, dancing and the "selling of bodies". A woman social officer for the Salvation Army complained that in a

public-house named the __, in __ street, __, a number of young girls, from 16 years upwards, are night after night consorting with and listening to the persuasions of coloured men. No notice is taken by anyone. Can no one save them? It is heartbreaking ...¹⁰¹

The insinuation was that while many white men were away serving their country at the front, the hordes of Empire had swept in to take full advantage of their unprotected and, as significant, unpoliced, wives and daughters.

Ultimately, however, the black man was presented as more transgressive. While white women could be condemned for failing to ignore the sexual boundaries of Empire, the spectre was also raised that black men would take white women by force. This may explain the involvement of women, not only in campaigns to curtail social and sexual interaction between the races, but in the racial disturbances that

⁹⁸ The anxiety that white women would be seduced by black men while their husbands were at the front was perhaps more evident in France where large numbers of Senegalese troops were stationed. See Melzer, in Melman (ed.), 225-9.

⁹⁹ *Daily Dispatch*, 8.8.1917, 3.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

occurred from in the metropole from 1917. The threat of predatory black masculinity could be presented as an unfortunate side-effect of calls to duty elsewhere. But it also suggested shortcomings in the condition of white masculinity evident in the rate of shell shock cases, medical rejections and appalling physical trauma.

The press reiterated the alleged threat that black men presented to white women. The *Umpire* suggested that in South Africa, '90 per cent of the cases of rape, and other indecent assaults on white women, are committed by the Kaffir', adding '[t]here is generally a gang to way-lay its victim'.¹⁰² The paper also reported the case of a servant girl in Edinburgh, who was apparently abducted by two black men and driven for several miles around the city in a taxicab, before escaping from the moving vehicle.¹⁰³ However, while such images of unrestrained black masculinity hinted at an absence of white masculine guardianship, they also served to restore the racial hierarchies of Empire, which presented black men as lacking any element of self-control or rationality.

This was highlighted in the case of Ernest Nembhard, a black Jamaican who had been recruited to the 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry by the British military mission in New York. Shortly after the war, in February 1919, Nembhard stood accused of indecently assaulting a woman after having been disturbed by her as he wandered in the grounds of Ridgmont Farm, Burstwick, in the East Riding. The local newspaper's headline of the case exclaimed – 'Mad Negro'¹⁰⁴ – and stated that the

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *Umpire* 17.9.16, 6.

¹⁰³ *Umpire* 21.1.17, 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Hull Daily News*, 9.4.1919, 5.

accused had been found unfit to plead. He was subsequently ordered to be detained during His Majesty's pleasure but was returned to Jamaica later in the year.

The rights and wrongs of the actual case aside, the incident encapsulated the racial anxieties that had taken hold during the war years. A black man was disturbed violating both the private and symbolic property of the white man – walking at will in the grounds of the farm and struggling with the farmer's wife, Elizabeth Hawley, when challenged. In this case, white anxieties were partly allayed as Nembhard was apprehended by Farmer Hawley, assisted by several of his labourers and driven in a cart to the local police station, following which he was incarcerated in Rampton asylum. But from the point of view of the court, Nembhard's intentions had been clear. In the struggle, Elizabeth Hawley had 'felt his hand above one of [her] knees' and according to the husband, 'one of the prisoner's trouser buttons ... was unfastened'.¹⁰⁵

A report from Rampton characterised Private Nembhard in terms that were regularly applied to the subject races in general, particularly when they threatened the status quo. He was described as 'dangerous, noisy, destructive and irrational'.¹⁰⁶ Although the report was forced to concede that Nembhard had 'since written coherent letters, is now quiet, well-balanced and apparently rational',¹⁰⁷ he was still deemed too dangerous to be freed.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ East Riding of Yorkshire Record Office, Easter Quarter Sessions, Rex v. Ernest Archibald Nembhard, witness depositions 7.3.1919.

¹⁰⁶ CO137/735 copy of Rampton report enclosed in HO to WO 28.11.1919.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

Racialised sexual anxiety was a prominent feature of the unrest that occurred in several metropolitan cities during and shortly after the war. In July 1917, unrest occurred around the black seamen's lodging-houses in Canning Town, London. Several black seamen were attacked and their homes damaged. Two men and three women were found guilty of assault and damage to property. A black seaman was fined for discharging an unlicensed firearm to scare off the mob.¹⁰⁹ The area had become home to a significant black and Asiatic population linked to maritime trade, some of whom were clearly Jamaican.¹¹⁰ Social and economic conditions were poor and increasing numbers of impoverished, invalided soldiers were being reported. Local whites, both men and women, clearly resented the fact that some local women were associating with the black seamen. Local newspaper headlines pandered to this mood, carrying headlines such as "Baiting Black Men: Girls Infatuation Leads to Trouble" and "In consequence of the infatuation of white girls for black men in the district some of the inhabitants are greatly incensed against the blacks".¹¹¹ That the local authorities also subscribed to this view is evident in the following exchange that occurred in the subsequent court case.

In reply to the Magistrate, Insp. Ashton said the feeling in the neighbourhood was that the blacks were getting a little too big.

The Magistrate: On account of the stupid conduct of the girls in going about with them? – Yes, sir.¹¹²

Racial attacks resumed against black communities in nine seaport towns and cities between January and August 1919. The worst violence occurred during May and

¹⁰⁸ CO137/735 WO to USS, CO 24.9.1919.

¹⁰⁹ *Stratford Express*, 7.7.1917, 6 & 14.7.1917, 7.

¹¹⁰ *Annual Report of the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest*, 1922, 14-17; For more background to the black community in this area see Rozina Visram, 'Kamal A. Chunchie of the Coloured Men's Institute: The Man and the Legend', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 18:1, 1999, 29-48.

¹¹¹ *Stratford Express*, 7.7.1917, 6.

June when there were several fatalities in Cardiff and Liverpool. In both cities, former soldiers of the BWIR were attacked, as well as Yemenis, Somalis and Chinese. Racialised sexual jealousy was an essential element in these outbreaks of violence, as had been the case in East London in 1917. The local and national press constantly reiterated the view that it was the association of black men with white women, “who have no self-respect”, which generated the violence, inflaming the situation with references to pimping and other “nefarious trades”.¹¹³ In April, black seafarers had been attacked in London’s Cable Street. The *Seaman* reported that this was due to ‘the attention paid by coloured men to the waitresses at some of the cafes’, rather than complaining of economic competition.¹¹⁴ In July, a black Jamaican, John Martin, on leave from the Navy, was cleared of discharging a firearm and wounding, following unrest in Limehouse sparked by the association of black men and white women.¹¹⁵

Given that all the areas in which unrest occurred had been host to seamen from all corners of the Empire, affiliations between the races can hardly be regarded as a novelty. A chief cause of the increase in racialised sexual anxiety must have been the relative potency of black masculine imagery, which highlighted the inadequacies of white manhood exposed during wartime. The post-war spectre of unemployment and poverty can only have served to underline the poor outlook for white manhood

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Fryer, 297-311. For further background to the riots see Roy May & Robin Cohen, ‘The Interaction Between Race & Colonialism: A Case Study of the Liverpool Race Riots of 1919’, *Race & Class*, 14:2, 1974, 111-126; Jacqueline Jenkinson, ‘The Glasgow Race Disturbances of 1919’ in Kenneth Lunn (ed.), *Race & Labour in Twentieth-Century Britain*, London, 1985; Neil Evans, ‘The South Wales Riots of 1919’, *Llafur*, 3:1, 1980, 1-24.

¹¹⁴ The *Seaman*, 11.4.1919, 2.

¹¹⁵ The *Times*, 1.7.1919, 4.

epitomised by mental and physical disfigurement and the spectre of racial degeneration.

When further rioting occurred in Canning Town in August 1919, judgements, delivered at consequent court hearings, confirmed the disruption to the racial hierarchy, casting black seamen who had served in the war in a more favourable light than white casual labour. In comparison to the events at Cardiff and Liverpool, these fresh disturbances were on a comparatively small scale. Three Jamaican seamen, were accused of discharging firearms over the heads of an angry white crowd, one being found guilty and fined twenty shillings. Another Jamaican, Thomas Pell, who had been attacked in the Canning Town unrest in 1917, was attacked in the lodging house that he owned and ran. Property and personal effects were damaged. A white man, William Grantham, was sentenced to two months hard labour for assault and criminal damage. His wife, Florence, was bound over for striking a black man on his doorstep in a neighbouring street.

The black seamen, who had served throughout the war, seem to have been regarded as the victims of the white “residuum” which was often depicted in similar terms to the subject races. The main white defendant, Grantham, who had led the attack on the lodging house, was said to have been “behaving like a raving lunatic”. The solicitor defending the black men accused of firearms offences, painted a scene in which a number of local butchers emerged from their premises ‘brandishing choppers and other implements of their trade and threatened to kill the accused’¹¹⁶ who had been forced to fire over the heads of the hostile white crowd in self-defence.

Grantham, who had been stirring up racial antagonism in the area for several weeks, was sentenced to two months in prison. The stipendiary described the attack as unprovoked. In any case, he argued, the victim 'was a British subject and entitled to protection as much as any other of His Majesty's subjects. After the gallantry of our subject races during the war it was a very shabby thing for loafers in the docks to turn upon them'.¹¹⁷ It remained to be seen whether black veterans would have some rights of subjecthood conferred to reward their war service when they returned to the Caribbean.

¹¹⁶ *Stratford Express*, 16.8.1919, 6.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

**“Heaven grant you strength to
fight the battle for your race”
Military Sacrifice & the
Demand for Post-War Equality**

The opportunity for non-white Jamaican volunteers to lay claim to the rewards linked to military service and sacrifice on the front-line was potentially limited by two factors. Firstly, preconceptions of racial capacity, which pre-dated the war, served generally to preclude black soldiers from situations where it was felt their ascribed levels of self-control and intelligence rendered them ineffective as fighting troops. Secondly, the spectre raised by images of vigorous black masculinity against a backdrop of white male hysteria and a deepening sense of racial enervation in the metropole demanded its containment. Again, this was most evident in the exclusion of black men from the front-line. However, the colonial authorities were faced with the threat posed to the colonial order by demobilised veterans who had become angered and emboldened by their experiences, particularly in the mutinies of 1918 and 1919. Others simply expected some recognition and reward for what they perceived to be their masculine wartime sacrifice, regardless of its location.

Despite the limited opportunity for traditional front-line encounters and the vehement protests leading to mutiny by both the BWIR and WIR in regard to their inferior status, veterans returning to Jamaica still bought into the mythology associated with heroic sacrifice. Regardless of the reality of modern warfare, this continued to be

associated in the popular imagination with glorious bayonet charges and fighting at close-quarters. This mythology, actual front-line experiences and the racial discrimination meted out to volunteer and professional soldier alike, was mobilised by elements within the emerging nationalist movement to lay claim to social, political and economic reform that ranged from improvements within the current framework of Empire to the espousal of limited forms of self-determination. Another significant element of returnees were merchant and Royal Naval seamen repatriated from Britain in the wake of the racial violence of 1919 who were embittered and radicalised by their treatment. The colonial government and metropolitan authorities came to play little more than lip-service to the contribution of Jamaicans in the war. Among the veterans themselves and in the wider nationalist movement, the plight of the “ex-serviceman” reckoned as gender-specific hard currency in the early development of Jamaican nationhood.

Elsewhere in the Empire, as Marilyn Lake has shown in the case of Australia, the calling “ex-serviceman” earned employment, housing, land and welfare benefits, as well as immortality in the national pantheon. In Jamaica, *unrewarded* male sacrifice came to hold one of a number of privileged places in nationalist discourse. The key issues of employment, welfare, land and the extension of the franchise, were concerns that predated the war. Nevertheless, right up to the unrest of the mid- to late-1930s, they were regularly linked to unrecognised contribution of Jamaica’s war contingents and the disbanded West India Regiment. To assess the full significance of these developments it is necessary to place them alongside other elements that contributed to the growth of nationalist sentiment in Jamaica – the development of a

distinct sense of Jamaicaness and the increasing level of dissatisfaction evident among all layers of the non-white population during the war years.

The Rising Tide of Discontent in Jamaica

Discourses of common endeavour attempted to contain the class- and race-bound tensions of Jamaican society during the war. However, social upheaval constantly threatened to splinter this paper-thin veneer contrived by both the official mind and in many cases the nascent nationalist movement. The colonial authorities held no illusion that the image of Jamaica's collective war effort could be indefinitely sustained. This is evident in the comments made by Sydney Olivier, the former Jamaican Governor in reply to complaints by Algernon Aspinall of the West Indian Contingent Committee regarding the pension and seniority arrangements for Jamaican police officers who had volunteered for the contingents. Private McPherson of the 2BWIR complained that Jamaican policemen had to resign on enlistment, and, unlike their counterparts in other West Indian territories and Jamaican government servants, that they did not receive the pay of their former occupation while in the army.¹ Olivier presumed that 'the retention of ... constables for service in the Island was more important than their accession to His Majesty's Forces'.² As a result of this complaint and in an attempt to ensure the continuing loyalty of those police who returned to the constabulary after the war, a sum was set aside in the annual estimates to make good any shortfall in pay experienced by Jamaican constables in the BWIR.³

¹ CO137/719Pte. L. U. McPherson 2BWIR to WIC Cttee. 26/9/1916; Inspector General of Police, Jamaica to Pte. L. U. McPherson 26/8/1916.

² CO137/719 Lord Olivier to A. E. Aspinall, WIC Cttee., 13/10/1916.

³ CO137/720 Manning to Walter Long, SSC 17/12/1917.

Although distant from the main theatres of war, the hardships, shortages and price increases linked to the war could only exacerbate social tensions. The government's own estimates suggested that the price of food rose by around thirty-three per cent between 1914 and 1918. A clause in the Military Service Law, introduced in 1917, which anticipated some form of conscription, prevented *fit* labourers, who wished to escape poverty by emigration, from travelling to Cuba, Costa Rica and other territories.⁴ These destinations had increasingly acted as a safety valve for an underdeveloped economy that was unable to sustain anything like full employment. Many Jamaicans felt that this aspect of the Law worked to the advantage of the employers, who were thereby able to take advantage of the resultant increase in surplus labour.⁵

From 1917 onwards, restlessness among the hard-pressed and underemployed workforce rose. Pay increases by some employers quickly led to a domino effect throughout the economy. The vulnerability of the colonial apparatus was perhaps most clearly illustrated when the fire service struck in April 1918. Then, in June, pier labourers loading United Fruit Company ships won a thirty-three per cent increase, matching the huge rise in the cost of living. Dock-workers coaling visiting ships achieved a similar increase despite the attempts of the shipping companies to break the strike by the use of convict labour.

⁴ CO137/722 Blackden to Gov. 10/4/1917. The GOC Jamaica, expressed concern that men worried about the possible introduction of conscription would present themselves as emigrants and in the event of being found fit would take the necessary steps to ensure that they would fail in the event of its implementation. CO137/722 Brig. Gen. L. S. Blackden GOC, Jamaica to Gov. Manning 17/5/1917.

⁵ CO137/727/52922, Attorney General to Acting Colonial Secretary, 16.7.1918.

Fearful that these victories would increase the confidence of other workers, Governor Probyn recommended to Walter Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that strategic groups, such as the railway and sanitary workers, be granted an equivalent increase.⁶ The extent to which the colonial authorities felt unnerved by the increase in industrial unrest, and the relative strength of the workers' organisations in some sectors was underlined in the Governor's decision to establish a Conciliation Board at the end of June 1918. The remit of the Board was to intervene in cases in which employees and employers were unable to reach a settlement.⁷

Such minor concessions only served to increase the vociferousness of the Jamaican workers' claims. Although they had achieved wage increases in the past, the sugar plantation workers at Vere struck the following month. Governor Probyn blamed the agitation of the "criminal element",⁸ but the sugar plantation workers clearly had their eyes on a share of the increase profits that had accrued to the sugar producers during the war.⁹ In the third day of the Vere strike, police fired on a crowd of demonstrators, killing three and wounding twelve. The assistance of the West India Regiment was required to contain the unrest that spread to Bog Walk, St. Catherine and Spanish Town.¹⁰ July 1918 also witnessed increased hostility to the Chinese community in Jamaica, which was accused of profiteering. Shops and businesses

⁶ CO137/726/39474 Probyn to Long, 12.7. 1918.

⁷ CO137/726 /42533 Probyn to Long 31.7.1918.

⁸ CO137/726 /40132 Probyn to Long 22.7.1918.

⁹ West Indian sugar had already started to compete more effectively with beet sugar. European bounties were fortuitously abolished in the early part of the century as the American market, upon which the cane producers had become dependent, removed concessionary tariffs. The slump in sugar beet production brought about by the conflict gave rise to a 500 per cent increase in the price of sugar which helped fund the temporary revival and modernisation of the Jamaican sugar industry. Holt, 365-8.

¹⁰ WO95/5446, WD GOC Jamaica entries for 2-19.7.1918.

were attacked and although perhaps economic in origin, the disturbances served to reinforce a sense of Jamaicanness that was far from inclusive.¹¹

The rise in militant trade union activity continued into 1919, with the return of the veterans immanent. The longshoremen,¹² organised by Bain Alves, who had also led a tobacco workers strike in 1917, struck in April 1919 and were successful in achieving a pay increase. In July 1919, workers on the government railway struck, demanding a thirty-three per cent increase in wages, paid holidays and the provision of sanitary facilities in the workplace. The government was forced to concede their demands. In October 1919, most of the restrictions on trade unions which had been embodied in the master and servant legislation of 1839 were lifted, although unions were not granted legal immunity from damages. Despite this concession, strikes involving, dockworkers, tramcar drivers and even the police continued well into 1920 as workers sought to redress the erosion of earnings that had occurred during the war years.¹³

¹¹ CO137/726 /40132 Probyn to Long 22.7.1918. For a detailed analysis see Howard Johnson, 'The Anti-Chinese Riots of 1918 in Jamaica', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 28:3, 1982, 19-32.

¹² Organised as a local of the American Federation of Labour, the term longshoreman was the preferred term for a dock-worker.

¹³ DG 23.7.1919; Elkins, *Street Preachers* ..., 65-6; Richard Hart, 'Origin & Development of the Working Class in the English-speaking Caribbean Area 1897-1937' in Malcolm Cross & Gad Heuman (eds.), *Labour in the Caribbean*, London, 1988. For early work on this formative period see G. Eaton, 'Trade Union Development in Jamaica' *Caribbean Quarterly*, 8:1/2, 1962.42-53, 69-75; O.W. Phelps 'Rise of the Labour Movement in Jamaica' *Social and Economic Studies*, 9:4, 1969, 417-68.

Unrest in the Contingent Before Embarkation

The Jamaican authorities were to view with trepidation the return of soldiers who had been radicalised by their wartime experiences and broadened horizons. However, even prior to their embarkation it was clear that contingent men were a force to be reckoned with, and despite their nominal loyalty to the Crown, were capable of being swiftly caught up in the class and race conflicts endemic in Jamaican society. The presence of large numbers of contingent men with a regular, if small, income and a certain aggressiveness instilled by military training, generated some resentment from the civilian population which resulted in several outbreaks of unrest. In June 1916 civilians and men of the 4JWC contingent clashed at Kingston racecourse. At the resulting police court hearing, the chair of the bench, S. C Burke, while acknowledging that the soldiers had provoked the incident stated that 'They want to show what they can do and they attack civilians'.¹⁴ Concerned that the men's desire to prove themselves might extend to confrontations with colonial authority, the men were confined to barracks, an order that had to be enforced by the presence of the West India Regiment.¹⁵

A more serious outbreak involving the 5JWC occurred in January 1917. Contingent men smashed shop windows and attacked civilians Kingston's Orange Street. They were attacked in turn by a local gang "the big tree band" who marched in force armed with sticks and bricks.¹⁶ The contingent men succeeding in releasing a comrade from custody and attacked premises where the hard-pressed police had taken shelter.

¹⁴ DG 7.6.1916, 4.

¹⁵ DG 7.6.1916, 13; 8.6.1916, 13.

¹⁶ DG 28.1.17, 3.

Eyewitness accounts were contradictory, but anything between forty and two hundred soldiers may have been involved.

A military Commission of Enquiry believed that at the root of the problem was the ridicule aimed at men of the contingent by civilians egged on by the police. The relative and uninhibited affluence of the contingent men, particularly those who had owned land in the country districts, was resented by many civilians, particularly when this enabled the soldiers to buy the attention of the townswomen.¹⁷ Men of the contingent were regularly regaled with cries of “Him foot not used to boots” or “Him get a clean suit of clothes”.¹⁸ These taunts were generally aimed at rural recruits but also mocked the substandard quality of locally issued equipment. Officers claimed that the source of these comments were the urban dispossessed. Townsfolk of respectable origins, those in effect who showed at least the outward signs of having imbibed the due respect for the colonial hierarchy, were considered innocent of such charges.¹⁹

The Court of Enquiry inadvertently suggested that the contingent men expected the act of volunteering to be recognised and rewarded, which should have signalled to the colonial government that on their return the men’s expectations would be even higher. According to the Enquiry the men of the contingent held themselves to be above the civil law and expected certain privileges, such as free travel. In its official absence many men had taken on their own initiative, as indicated by the number of complaints received from the Tramway Company. However, the Enquiry itself

¹⁷ DG 24.1.1917, 1 & 27.1.17, 6.

¹⁸ DG 2.2.1917, 7 & 3.2.1917, 6.

¹⁹ DG 3.2.1917, 6 & 11.7.1917, 11.

sought to explain away the unrest by suggesting that a number of habitual criminals had found their way into the ranks. These men, it was alleged, sought revenge on the police or used the King's uniform as a front for criminal activity. Such allegations can only have increased the poor regard with which the contingents were said to be held. Not only by the so-called "disrespectable" and "loose" element of Jamaican society, however, but by members of the higher echelons who saw Jamaica, with its system of voluntary enlistment, as a safe backwater in which to sit out the war. As the Report bemoaned

It is common knowledge in Jamaica, in all circles there are men "who prefer their job out here" whose sense of patriotism is dulled by their sense of personal comfort and safety, and who to find an excuse for not joining the contingent, take directly and indirectly every opportunity to run down and discredit it.²⁰

For the colonial authorities, the concern remained that it would be difficult to contain any future unrest in the contingents. Shortly after the events of January 1917 this was spelt out by General Blackden, GOC Jamaica, in a report concerning the prevention of VD among Jamaican recruits. Blackden believed that confinement to barracks was the only foolproof solution to reduce the number cases among the volunteers. However, he argued restricting the troops freedom of movement would lead to increased resentment and disciplinary problems that effectively ruled out such a policy. Blackden concluded: 'confinement would have to be enforced with the whole West India Regiment with butt and bayonet, judging by previous experiences of confinement beyond a day or two'.²¹

²⁰ DG 11.7.1917, 11.

²¹ CO137/720 Copy of a Minute by the GOC Jamaica, Enclosure in Jamaica Confidential Dispatch 16/2/1917.

Mutiny Overseas

As discontent simmered at home from the second half of the war, those Jamaicans posted overseas were starting to react to the low status and exclusion from front-line duties. This discrimination had bedevilled the West Indian contingents from their inception and had started to take the shine off the original enthusiasm shown by the volunteers. The professional black soldiers of the West India Regiment also began to show disquiet with their designation as “native troops”, particularly in relation to pay. It is important to place the response of the Jamaican volunteers and professional soldiers within the context of their experiences of pre-war Jamaica and the further discrimination that they encountered during military service. It is also necessary to be aware of the increasing radicalism that they encountered in both the Middle Eastern and European theatres of war and their exposure to socialist, nationalist and pan-Africanist ideology.

The British West Indies Regiment battalions stationed at Taranto in Italy, were engaged as dock and ordinance labour and also regularly employed on fatigues and sanitary duties. Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs was evident from late 1917. There had been glowing reports of the physical capabilities of the men stationed in France, for example in their ability to shift trainloads of ammunition. However, the men became increasingly frustrated that the more heroic engagements that they had imagined in the recruiting campaigns in Jamaica were not to form part of their war. Morale and motivation slumped and the British command in Italy became so concerned about the consequent poor quality of work carried out by the BWIR labour battalions. A conference was called to discuss the issue in December 1917. The camp

commandant at Taranto reported that the BWIR men 'show[ed] a strong disinclination to work, and [did] not seem to pay much attention to their officers or NCOs'.²²

Extra battalions of the BWIR as well as Italian soldiers and civilians were requested to make good these shortcomings and to assist at the ordinance depots and in the engineering workshops. The British came to rely increasingly on Italian, Sardinian and Maltese labour when some of the BWIR units were transferred to France in the wake of the German Spring offensive of 1918.²³

The Italians, who numbered around 7500, rapidly became unhappy with the conditions that they shared, in part, with the men of the BWIR. Fearing unrest, the British were forced to negotiate with representatives of the Italian, and later Maltese workers, conceding bonuses and overtime payments, including to women working in the ordinance workshops. Clothing allowances and improvements in night and meat rations were also granted. Italian labour was also paid at full rates during enforced idleness due to the difficulty in retaining local labour. Egyptian labourers, also stationed at Taranto, had already struck during the Ramada festival in late 1917 over certain clauses in their contracts.²⁴

Aggrieved by the conditions under which they were forced to work and their inferior status as labour battalion, and either angered or spurred on by the improvements

²² WO95/4255 WD Cmdt. Taranto Base (aka Cimino Camp) entry for 28.12.1917.

²³ WO95/4253 WD Asst. Dir. Labour Italy LOC Dec. 1917 – Feb. 1919 entries for 28.12.1917, 15.1.1918, 28.1.1918, 5.3.1918.

²⁴ WO95/4253 entries for 30.4.1918, 12-3.8.1918; WO95/4256 WD Deputy Asst. Dir. Labour LOC Taranto Aug. 1918-Feb. 1919 entries for 8.9.1918, 17.9.1918, 13.11.1918, 20.11.1918; WO95/4255 WD Cmdt. Taranto Base (aka Cimino Camp) 27/12/1917.

granted to local civilian labour, the men of the BWIR struck. In early December 1918, some weeks after the cessation of hostilities, Lieutenant-Colonel Willis, the commander of the 9th Battalion and whose brutal methods have already been noted, was attacked after he issued an order for the battalion to clean the latrines of the Italian Labour Corps. His tent was surrounded by a number of men, who slashed at it with their bayonets. Although they eventually dispersed quietly, the following day, the 7th December, men of the 9th and 10th battalions refused to work. The men were disarmed, but the unrest spread to other battalions. One man was shot and killed by his sergeant who was later found guilty of “negligently discharging his rifle” and sentenced to four months imprisonment with hard labour.²⁵

Although the mutiny was swiftly brought to an end, the British command in Italy was evidently unnerved. Forty-seven men were found guilty of mutiny and the failure to obey a commanding officer and were sentenced to between three and five years imprisonment with hard labour (IHL), although one man received fourteen. Thirteen of these men were also charged with escaping confinement, showing that there were determined efforts to escape summary military justice. Two men were sentenced for mutiny alone, one of whom, Private Sanches, received a death sentence, later commuted to twenty years imprisonment. A further fifteen men received sentences for disobedience or striking an officer.²⁶ The evidence suggests that around fifty five per cent of the convicted men were Jamaicans, slightly less than their representation

²⁵ WO95/4255 entries for 6-8.12.1918; Cipriani, 65; Dupuch, 78; WO95/4262 WD 7BWIR Italy LOC 1.1918 - 1/1919 entry for 9.1.1919.

²⁶ WO213/27 Register of Field General Courts Martial & Military Courts to 27.2.1919.

in the BWIR as a whole.²⁷ Plans were made for the early repatriation of at least four battalions and the dispersal of the rest to Egypt, Malta, Salonika or France, where it was felt that the presence of greater numbers of white troops might have a deterrent effect. Local Italian units were put on standby and a battalion of the Worcestershire regiment, with half a company of machine gunners attached, was hastily despatched to Taranto. A further battalion with a field gun was held in reserve. The men of the 9th battalion were immediately dispersed among the other battalions in an effort to separate the ringleaders.²⁸

White labour battalions were immediately sent to the area to replace the BWIR men and to cover any shortfall in labour in the event of strikes by Italian dock labourers. The local commander also gave instructions that Italian labour should take over sanitary duties. Etienne Dupuch, however, whose unit arrived from France shortly after the mutiny, claimed that he and his comrades were told to relieve white troops on these tasks.²⁹

The act of mutiny took on added significance when it involved black soldiers. Not only was it challenge to military authority, but it threatened to undermine the racial hierarchy and order of Empire; to reawaken the fears that Britain was losing her grip on the subject races; to rekindle the Imperial nightmare of the Indian Mutiny, Morant Bay and Ishwandala. Most significantly, it threatened to impose by force what the

²⁷ This figure is arrived at by an analysis of a list of twenty-two of the mutineers who were left in Trinidad for onward transport in a military vessel by the transport *Oriana*. CO318/349/69648 Gov. Trinidad to Gov. Jamaica, 3.10.1919.

²⁸ WO33/951/619A Secret Telegram Base Cmdt., Taranto to WO 9.12.1918; 620 Ditto, 10.12.1918; 621 Ditto, 10.12.1918; 625 Inspector Gen. of Communications, Italy to WO 11.12.1918; 630 GOC, Italy to WO 13.12.1918; 631 WO to GHQ, Italy 15.12.1918.

²⁹ WO33/951/635 GHQ, Italy to WO 19.12.1918; WO95/4256 entry for 23.12.1918; Dupuch, 78.

military and colonial authorities had tried to suppress for the duration of the war – the image of black men outperforming white servicemen in the realm of masculine military endeavour.

This is particularly evident in another mutiny involving members of the BWIR that took place on the transport *Orca* which in September 1919 was conveying around 650 demobilised BWIR veterans, including around 270 Jamaicans back to the West Indies. Also on board were black seamen and civilians, numbering around two hundred, repatriated in the wake of the Cardiff riots. Among the BWIR complement were a number of military prisoners, including five men described as “desperate” mutineers. They were guarded by fifty white soldiers. On the voyage, the seamen and civilians, angered by their treatment at the hands of white mobs in the metropole, were joined by some BWIR veterans and made repeated attempts to free the military prisoners, who were eventually placed in irons. One of the attempted rescuers, Private Lashley of Barbados was shot dead by BWIR military police. The prisoners themselves were angered because they had been led to understand that they would be freed from military custody once on board ship. On arrival at Barbados, the prisoners were transferred to HMS *Yarmouth*, as the captain of the *Orca* refused to sail further.³⁰

³⁰ CO318/349/59579 Gov. Barbados to Milner, SSC., 25.9.1919, Hemsley to GOC, Jamaica (nd), Hemsley to GOC, Jamaica 29.9.1919 & Maj. H. W. Hemsley *Memoranda on Voyage of SS Orca* 29.9.1919.

Major Hemsley, the commanding officer of the escort highlighted the anxiety that white soldiers were not capable of containing their black counterparts.

Both NCOs and men were extremely young and totally inexperienced in the handling of convicts. Physically they are quite incapable of dealing with coloured men. In the event of any trouble I should have had to order the escort to open fire at once, which would have caused numerous deaths, as in a hand-to-hand conflict the escort would have been overpowered at once.³¹

Indeed, order was restored largely by the efforts of the black BWIR military police and two “trusties” placed with the military prisoners who dissuaded the majority to remain quiet during the unrest.³² By the end of the war, not only had images of white male stoicism been dented by the prevalence of “male hysteria”, but the eugenicist nightmare of a metropole denuded of its breeding stock by four years of attrition did hold some water. An Australian account indicates the extreme youth of many of the conscripts in the last year of the war, who were plainly regarded as unformed men.

For two days companies of infantry have been passing us on the roads – companies of children, English children; pink faced, round cheeked children, flushed under the weight of their unaccustomed packs, with their steel helmets on the back of their heads and the strap hanging loosely on their round baby chins.³³

In the wake of the Taranto mutiny a short-lived body, the Caribbean League, emerged which has been cited as a milestone in the development of nationalism in the Anglophone Caribbean.³⁴ The League, however, manifested a number of features that illustrated the difficulties of generating mass independence movements, either on a pan-Caribbean level or based within a single territory. The chief aim of the League,

³¹ *ibid.*, Maj. H. W. Hemsley *Memoranda on Voyage of SS Orca*, 29.9.1919.

³² *ibid.*, Report of Maj. H. W. Hemsley, OC Troops, SS *Orca* (copy encl. in dispatch of 3.10.1919) & Maj. H. W. Hemsley to GOC, Jamaica 29.9.1919.

³³ C. E. W. Bean (ed.) *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Sydney, 1921, V, 540, cited in Gloden Dallas & Douglas Gill, *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War I*, London, 1985, 31.

³⁴ Elkins, ‘A Source of Black Nationalism’

‘the Promotion of all matters conducive to the General Welfare of the islands constituting the British West Indies and the British Territories adjacent thereto’,³⁵ does not seem to have unsettled the military authorities, who were passed a report of the opening meeting. However, an informer suggested that at a later meeting some of those present resolved that “that the black man should have freedom and govern himself in the West Indies and that force must be used, and if necessary bloodshed, to attain that object”.³⁶

The League was composed primarily of sergeants, who were divided over whether literature and propaganda should be disseminated among the ranks ‘as they might not understand the objects and get excited’.³⁷ Significantly, with the exception of two men who were acting up, not one of the Taranto mutineers was an NCO, indicating that at this point the men who had formed the Caribbean League shied away from involvement in direct action at this stage. This is graphically illustrated by the fact that on the first day of the mutiny, 180 sergeants of the BWIR signed a petition complaining about the failure to apply the pay increase embodied in Army Order No. 1 to the BWIR.³⁸ Perhaps unwilling to take part in direct action at this stage the NCOs of the BWIR nevertheless took advantage of the growing mood of discontent among the other ranks.

A picture emerges of an organisation whose membership was restricted to those who enjoyed status because of their position in the military hierarchy and who claimed

³⁵ CO318/350/2590 Notes of meeting held at Cimino Camp, Italy, 17.12.1918.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Maj. Maxwell Smith to Maj. Gen. Thullier, GOC, Taranto, 27.12.1918.

³⁷ *ibid.*, Maj. Maxwell Smith (8BWIR) to GOC, Taranto, 3.1.1919.

³⁸ CO28/294/56561 Petition of M. Murphy (3BWIR) and 179 other Sgts. Of the BWIR based in Italy, 6.12.1918.

political leadership on that basis. Furthermore, the NCOs often have earned their military rank based on their standing in civil society that in the case of Jamaica implied skin shade, education, or calling. As non-white men were unable to advance beyond the rank of NCO, it is likely that there was a proportion of men in these ranks who would have enjoyed relatively high status in Jamaican society. In this, they shared the political composition of existing nationalist bodies such as the Jamaica League, which was held up as an appropriate model for the soldiers' organisation to follow.

This last point touches on a second facet of the Caribbean League, which anticipated the difficulty in sustaining a lasting West Indies-wide anti-colonial movement.³⁹ The League manifested a strong Jamaican orientation. The three main posts at the first meeting were taken by Jamaicans – sergeants Brown, Collman and Jones. This clearly had the potential to lead to dissatisfaction and dissent from men of the smaller and less populous territories. Sergeant Pouchet, possibly a Vincentian, was the chief informer providing British military intelligence with details of the League's proceedings. He also actively participated in League meetings and argued against the decision made at the inaugural meeting that the headquarters of the League be based in Jamaica. This, he argued, would militate against one of the stated aims of the League, namely, to campaign in all the West Indian territories.⁴⁰ The importance of island chauvinism should not be underestimated. Two companies of the BWIR, one

³⁹ By this stage, some form of federation had been advocated in a number of quarters. From the official side, Gideon Murray, the governor of St. Vincent, began to promote federation to take advantage of the opening of the Panama Canal. The opening of the Canal also spurred the campaign of Louis Meikle. In his 1919 tour of Jamaica, F. E. M. Hercules resurrected the idea of Federation within his broader campaign for pan-African unity (see DG 11.12.1912, 4; JT 14.12.1912, 38-9; DG 18.7.1919, 3)

⁴⁰ CO318/350/2590 Notes of meeting held at Cimino Camp, Italy, 17.12.1918 & Maj. Maxwell Smith (8BWIR) to GOC, Taranto, 3.1.1919.

composed of men from various islands and the other composed entirely of Jamaicans, served as a detachment in the East African campaign. It was observed that although camped only ten yards apart, there had not been 'the least sign of fraternising between the two companies.'⁴¹

Despite the limitations of the Caribbean League, a distinct racial consciousness emerged from the harsh experiences gained by the BWIR during the war and in the demobilisation period. This is brought home in a poem by Sergeant H. B. Montieth, a former Jamaican teacher, written at the time of the Taranto mutiny:

Lads of the West, with duty done, soon shall we parted be
To different land, perhaps no more each other's face to see,
But still as comrades of the war our efforts we'll unite
To sweep injustice from our land, its social wrongs to right.
Then go on conquering – lift your lives above each trivial thing
To which the meaner breeds of earth so desperately, cling;
And Heaven grant you strength to fight the battle for your race,
To fight and conquer, making earth for man a happier place.⁴²

While the events at Taranto were perhaps the most dramatic sign of dissatisfaction among the men of the West Indian contingents, even men who had gained the distinction of having taken part in frontline action in the Middle East began to respond to official discrimination. The desire of the military authorities in Italy to prevent further outbreaks of unrest meant that demobilisation and repatriation to Jamaica and the other West Indian territories were speeded up. With only limited troop transports available, this had the knock-on effect of delaying the demobilisation of the battalions who remained in Egypt, who had taken part, not only in front-line action, but who had also given longer service. In April 1919, the

⁴¹ Cipriani, 57.

⁴² JT 28.6.1919, 8.

Egyptian High Command reported that there was serious unrest over this delay and demanded that the demobilisation at Taranto, which served as the staging post for all troops returning to the West Indies, be expedited. Otherwise, it was feared, the BWIR battalions in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force would also become mutinous.⁴³

However, given the history of official attitudes to the West Indian troops at Taranto, moving already dissatisfied troops to the base was bound to prove a recipe for further unrest. When the veterans of the Middle Eastern campaigns started to arrive, it rapidly became apparent that they would be subject to the same treatment as the BWIR labour battalions, despite their front-line service. Brigadier-General Carey-Bernard, the South African Base Commander at Taranto had imposed a rigid regime of racial segregation, in terms of both military duties and in the soldiers recreational activities. The conditions imposed on the Middle Eastern veterans of the BWIR are detailed in correspondence from Major J. B. Thursfield and Captain C. L. Roper, two white Jamaican officers, which Captain Cipriani reproduced in his account *Twenty-Five Years After*.

After their front-line service, in which considerable bravery and military acumen had been displayed, the Middle Eastern veterans of the BWIR were given guarantees that they would be accorded the same privileges as their white counterparts. They would not be called upon to carry out work that could demean their newly-acquired status. However, Carey-Bernard announced that he would totally disregard this undertaking, stating that

⁴³ WO33/960 Secret Telegrams 10898 GHQ, Egypt to WO 3.4.1919.

the men were only niggers and ... no such treatment should ever have been promised to them ... they were better fed and treated than any nigger had a right to expect ... he would order them to do whatever work he pleased, and if they objected he would force them to do it.⁴⁴

Carey-Bernard insisted that field punishment be inflicted for all offences, however minor, and removed the power of lower-ranking officers to punish trivial offences, as he believed they were too lenient. The men were forced to undertake fatigue duties for white soldiers in transit and barred from canteens and cinemas. Carey-Bernard insisted that he 'would not allow British soldiers to sit alongside niggers'. To add insult to injury, the designation, "native troops", was re-imposed to deny men of the BWIR access to proper medical facilities, although in terms of pay this stigmatic label had now been erased. The sick and injured languished in the "native hospitals" without sufficient medicines or blankets.⁴⁵ Carey-Bernard's regime severely tested the loyalty of men who had shown themselves capable of upholding the masculine demands of front-line warfare. Consequently, Taranto continued to witness discontent until demobilisation was complete.⁴⁶

The extent of the resentment felt among all black soldiers is highlighted by the fact that some members of the West India Regiment, long seen as an effective police force against insurgency in Jamaica, also mutinied in the approach to demobilisation. In August 1918, the second battalion of the regiment had left East Africa to serve as lines of communication troops in the EEF, guarding Turkish prisoners and forming part of the garrison at Kantara (Qantarah esh Sharqiya or El Kantara) in Egypt, before moving to Ramleh (Ramla) in Palestine. The mutiny in their ranks indicates,

⁴⁴ Cipriani, 62.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 62-5 (quote, 65).

⁴⁶ See for example WO95/4373 WD GHQ EEF General Staff Operations entry for 4.5.1919.

perhaps more so than the BWIR mutiny at Taranto, the impact of the wider discontent which was beginning to seize many elements of the British Army by 1919. Much of this dissatisfaction focused on the slow rate of demobilisation. Among the soldiers of the EEF, the delay in demobilisation had been exacerbated by the nationalist rising in Egypt that necessitated the retention of British forces in the area. The chief sentiment among the rank and file of the British and Colonial forces was that now hostilities were over and the “job had been done”, men should be speedily returned to their civilian occupations. There was a marked reluctance, particularly among Anzac units, to get involved in the internal struggles that had started to beset the Empire or to become embroiled in conflicts elsewhere, chiefly the Allied invasion of Soviet Russia. Within the Middle Eastern command, anger was also expressed at rising local food prices and the activities of profiteers.

Plans were mooted for the formation of a Soldiers Union in Alexandria. The men held that they were only bound by their terms of service for six months after the armistice and threatened to strike with effect from the 11th May 1919. During April 1919, men throughout the EEF refused to attend parades or did so under their own appointed “officers”. The men themselves decided which duties should be undertaken and the Egyptian High Command reported that 3000 troops refused to be deployed on railway duties. Allenby, military governor and GOC, Egypt, expressed great concern that if the men’s demands were not met full-scale mutiny would ensue. This was sure to have a domino effect on French and Italian troops in the

region. It might also encourage the insurrectionist mood gripping Egypt which had its origins in the failed promises and economic demands of Allied occupation.⁴⁷

The subversive mood was evident among many units in the Palestine lines of communication troops serving in the area around Kantara which served as the railhead for the military transport into Palestine and Syria. The railway also served as a conduit for information passed between the various rebellious units. On Easter Monday 1919, around a hundred men of the Rifle Brigade held a meeting after being ordered as reinforcements while resting at a demobilisation camp. An anonymous letter demanded that demobilisation be re-instituted, failing which the men would no longer undertake their duties. The men refused to obey official instructions and instead “fell-in” and paraded under their own leader until they were returned to the demob camp six days later. Official military circulars noted that dress was poor and the saluting of officers almost non-existent and feared a general breakdown in efficiency and discipline.⁴⁸

For the men of the WIR, however, as professional soldiers the burning issue, rather than the slow pace of demobilisation, was the continued discrimination in pay. The WIR had been historically designated as “native” regiment. The BWIR were only classed as such on the whim of individual officers and War Office bureaucrats,

⁴⁷ WO33/960 Secret Telegrams 11017 GHQ, Egypt to WO 28.4.1919; 10983 GHQ, Egypt to WO 22.4.1919; 11043 GHQ, Egypt to WO 3.5.1919; 11115 GOC, Egypt to WO 16.5.1919; 11121 GHQ, Egypt to WO 17.5.1919; 11218 GHQ, Egypt to WO 14.6.1919. Dallas & Gill, particularly pp. 122-130; Lawrence James, *Imperial Warrior: The Life & Times of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby 1861-1936*, London, 1993, 179-196. Andrew Rothstein, *The Soldiers Strikes of 1919*, London, 1985 who addresses the issue with particular attention to the armed intervention in the emergent Soviet state; P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (4th ed.), London, 1991, pp. 254-5, 266-8. The GOC insisted that mobilisation should gather apace, even if this meant that the ratio of white troops in relation to the Indian units stationed in the area fell. The Indian troops themselves were placated by trips to Mecca. WO33/981 Secret Telegrams May 1919 to April 1920 111045 GHQ, Egypt to dir. military Intelligence 3.5.1919; 11115 GOC, Egypt to WO 16.5.1919.

despite the guarantees given at the regiment's inception. The BWIR eventually had its pay levels, with the exception of separation allowances, brought up to the level of other British Army units in April 1919. At this point only the officers and NCOs of the WIR were granted the same increase. The meanness of the War Office decision in this regard is underlined by the fact that by this stage in the war the rank and file of the 2WIR had dwindled to around 275. Simmering discontent was already evident by Christmas 1918 when the officers of the regiment complained that although the men were well-presented and physically fit 'there was rather a tendency to "noise in the ranks"'.⁴⁹

The battalion war diary records that on 9th May 1919, by which time the men were stationed in Ludd, Palestine,⁵⁰ the Officer commanding the troops in the sector, Major-General Hoskins, addressed the men 'regarding the grievances about the pay question'.⁵¹ A white unit in the area, the Devonshire Regiment, was put on standby in case of possible disturbances. Some of the men were evidently unimpressed for three days later thirty-two privates mutinied. As is often the case, the details retained in the official sources are very sketchy and research to date has not unearthed additional material. What is clear, however, is that officers of the battalion were sufficiently panicked to impose severe sentences of five or seven years penal servitude on those convicted, although these were subsequently reduced to one or two years by Hoskins. The mutineers were dispatched to a military prison and arrangements were made to repatriate the remaining men by early July. On 15th May, it was announced that all

⁴⁸ WO95/4732 WD 19 Gar. BNB. Rifle Brigade PLC entries for 29.4.1919 & 16.5.1919; WO95/4696 WD 3rd (Lahore) Div. EEF WD Adj. and BMG 4/1918 - 1/1920 Routine Orders 30/5/1919.

⁴⁹ WO95/4732 WD WIR 8/1918 - 6/1919 Palestine LOC entry for 24/12/1918.

⁵⁰ Also Lod or Lydia, the final resting place of St. George.

the men of the WIR should be granted the pay rates applicable to other serving men, although this was only backdated to the beginning of the month.⁵²

Pay levels continued to cause dissatisfaction long after the war had ended. The fact that the BWIR had been awarded increases in pay before the long-serving men of the West India Regiment rankled. Furthermore, by late 1919, when both battalions were by now stationed in Jamaica, the men got wind of proposals to consolidate daily pay and bonuses into a plain daily rate which would have resulted in a significant loss in earnings. The officer commanding the troops in Jamaica reported the receipt of anonymous letters threatening mutiny and warning of “impending storms” and suggested that ‘the fact that these letters have been so numerous indicates at least a considerable discontent exists’. The GOC feared that a reduction in pay would lead to indiscipline which might encourage the civilian population, who were already involved in industrial action and street protests, to take bolder steps against the colonial power and planter class. From the point of view of the colonial authorities, the WIR could no longer be relied upon as a bulwark against civil unrest. Furthermore, the GOC argued, ‘a discontented negro regiment in Jamaica will not only be not worth its cost but may at any time become a positive danger’. He reported that there had already been ‘cases of opposition to the authority of the civil police which indicates a restlessness not normal’ among the men.⁵³

⁵¹ WO95/4732 WD WIR 8/1918 - 6/1919 entry for 9.5.1919. Huskiness was GOC 3rd (Lahore) Div.

The increasing politicisation of the West Indian soldiers was not only a result of their own experiences, but increasingly they were exposed to pan-Africanist influences and radical black American thought. Claude McKay was writing for the British socialist weekly, the *Workers' Dreadnought*, at this time. He observed a variety of radical and left-wing literature in the black soldier's club in Drury Lane, through which some of the returning veterans passed. McKay also distributed radical literature to the West Indian Repatriation Camp at Winchester to which he was invited by a Jamaican soldier. McKay himself reported on the circumstances facing the black soldiers in London, remarking on their shortage of warm food and cash and the racism of the British and American troops they encountered. McKay believed that the men, who also included black Americans, and East Indians among their number, would return to their respective countries and agitate for change.

We should rejoice that Germany blundered, so that Negroes from all parts of the world were drawn to England to see the Lion, afraid and trembling, hiding in cellars, and the British ruling class revealed to them in all its rottenness and hypocrisy.⁵⁴

The *Crisis*, the paper of the National Association for Colored People, was regularly distributed at the Drury Lane club, as the West Indian soldiers there were keen to know what their black American counterparts were thinking. The paper regularly covered the contribution of black American soldiers to the war effort, detailing the

⁵² WO95/4459 WD Devon Reg. entry for 9.5.1919; WO95/4732 WD WIR entries for 15.5.1919 & 18.5.1919; WO95/ 4373 WD GHQ EEF General Staff Operations entry for 26/5/1919; WO95/4696 WD 3rd (Lahore) Div. EEF General Staff. Army Order No. 54/1919 confirmed the pay rates of all men in service after 1.2.1919 as broadly the same as those under the infamous Order No. 1/1918, although continuing to exclude men of the BWIR and WIR until amended by Order No. 331/1919 (see also Chapter 5).

⁵³ CO318/359/35534 GOC, Jamaica to Sec., WO 28.4.1920.

⁵⁴ McKay, 67; *Negro World*, 13.3.1920, magazine section. I am grateful to Professor Winston James for providing me with a copy of this article. The management of the Drury Lane club made McKay a virtual *persona non grata* after its appearance.

heroic exploits of those black US regiments that were deployed on the front line.⁵⁵ W. E. B. DuBois, in an article entitled 'The Black Man in the Revolution of 1914-1918', remarked on the performance of Senegalese troops, who had on several occasions provided the backbone of the French operations. He stated that '[t]he black soldier saved civilization in 1914-18 ... France not only does not deny this – she is proud to acknowledge the debt'.⁵⁶ DuBois discussed how the French government intended to honour the contribution of its West African troops by admitting the black soldiers through the hallowed portals of French citizenship with its long association with martial fraternity.

M. Diane will give in his speech a detailed account of the native troops and will indicate the new obligations incumbent now on the mother country in recognition of the rights of naturalization which native troops have gained on the battle-fields which they share as brothers with their white brothers.⁵⁷

The *Crisis* special "soldiers number" in June 1918 included verse that implied the blood-sacrifice of black soldiers would be rewarded by freedom for the oppressed throughout the world. The war was presented as a process of purification to undermine or destroy the power of the oppressor. Black soldiers were bestowed with the mantle of righteous warriors which they had inherited from the black revolutionaries of the past as illustrated in the poem, 'War Profiles' by Fenton Johnson, that appeared in the soldiers edition of the *Crisis*.

Toussaint, old man of the mountains,
Is tramping through the streets of Port au
Prince.
"Whither do you go, Graybeard?" challenges
the sentry.
Toussaint's voice is soft and low.

⁵⁵ For an account of the discrimination faced by black American troops see Arthur E. Barbeau & Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African American Troops in World War I* (revised ed.), New York, 1996. Chapter 6 in particular covers the use of black US soldiers as labour battalions.

⁵⁶ The *Crisis*, March 1919, 218;

⁵⁷ *ibid.* M. Diagne was a Senegalese deputy who was made Commissioner-General of Colonial Affairs by Clemenceau after he had assisted the recruitment of the Senegalese levies.

"I go to arouse the sleeping men of Ethiopia,
"This is the hour that tries the nations and the
races."⁵⁸

The doctrine that freedom could only be achieved only through the shedding of blood was recurrent at this time. The Irish nationalist, Padraic Pearse, perhaps presented the most emphatic example of this dogma, but it was a theme taken up by supporters of black enlistment who implied that the sacrifice of black lives would be rewarded.⁵⁹

They shall go down unto Life's Borderland.
Walk unafraid within that Living Hell,
Nor heed the driving rain of shot and shell
That 'round them falls; but with uplifted hand
Be one with mighty hosts, an armed band
Against man's wrong to man – for such full well
They know. And from their trembling lips shall swell
A song of hope the world can understand.

All this to them shall be a glorious sign,
A glimmer of that Resurrection Morn,
When age-long Faith, crowned with a grace benign,
Shall rise and from their blows cast down the thorn
Of Prejudice. E'en though through blood it be,
There breaks this day their dawn of Liberty.⁶⁰

These discourses gleaned from the black American press, served to underpin the Jamaican veterans' sense of their own significance on the world stage in general, and of their potential impact on the development of Jamaican nationalist thought. The pressure on black soldiers to perform came not only from the racial ideology that constructed them as inferior military material, but from the divine mission that had been carved out for them by their own spokespeople. It was not surprising then that the returning veterans would make demands that, if met, would stretch the existing colonial framework to its limits.

⁵⁸ James Fenton, 'War Profiles', the *Crisis*, June 1918, 65.

⁵⁹ Pearse led the Irish Provisional Government established during the Easter Rising of 1916 and was executed in its wake. Pearse's outlook was encapsulated in the following words spoken at the graveside of another Irish patriot, O'Donovan Rossa, in August 1915: "Life springs from death, and from the graves of patriotic men and women spring living nations" (quoted in R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, Harmondsworth, 1988, 477).

⁶⁰ 'A Sonnet to Negro Soldiers' by Joseph Cotter, Jr. The *Crisis*, June 1918, 64.

The Impact of the Returning Veterans

The mutiny at Taranto by the BWIR battalions sent a shock-wave through the spine of the colonial establishment, not only in Jamaica, but throughout the British West Indies.⁶¹ While the military in Italy and the Middle East were eager to divest themselves of unruly troops, the colonial authorities were in no hurry to receive them. The first transports containing the BWIR veterans were not due until May 1919. However, in January 1919, Governor Probyn urged the Colonial Office to ensure the men's pensions and allowances were swiftly settled to defuse potential unrest. The War Office advised that the Jamaican garrison be strengthened by a battalion of British infantry. Lord Milner, Secretary of State for the Colonies, requested that a warship should be stationed offshore, ostensibly on manoeuvres, to deter insurrection among the returning veterans.⁶²

To dilute the threat of disorder it was agreed that all veterans should be dispersed quickly to their homes by special train. In the larger towns the police were to be put on stand-by, reinforced by the first battalion of the WIR, again ostensibly as part of manoeuvres. Constables were instructed not to antagonise the men and to make every effort to provide them with advice and assistance. As if to reassure the colonial state the Inspector-General of Police stated that 'It must not be assumed that these instructions are issued under any sense of fear or panic. They are mainly

⁶¹ For details of the activities of ex-servicemen in the other BWI territories see O. Nigel Bolland, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-39*, London, 1995, 27-34; Elkins, 'A Source of Black Nationalism ...', 102-3; Howe, *West Indians* ..., passim.

⁶² CO137/730/4575 Probyn to SSC 21.1.1919; CO137/735 Cubbitt, WO to Milner, SSC 23/1/1919; CO137/735 Milner, SSC to Sec. Admiralty 5/2/1919.

precautionary and remindful'.⁶³ The colonial authorities went to even greater lengths to shroud official anxiety when the first batch of veterans arrived. Jamaican Military Headquarters issued a statement to the press stating that, contrary to rumours, a steam pinnace and armed detachment of the WIR was not intended to overawe the returning men, but to protect them from over-enthusiastic well-wishers and to ensure their smooth dispatch to the country districts.⁶⁴

The fragility of colonial self-assurance is indicated in the persistent rumours that the returning veterans would initiate a general rising of the black population in Jamaica, which, the intelligence reports suggested would be spread to the other West Indian territories. The use of spies by the military and the sectional in-fighting within the Caribbean League had ensured the organisation's early demise, no doubt compounded by the breaking-up and dispersal of the battalions. However, the authorities were now faced with groups of soldiers who still nurtured grievances, but who, now dispersed, were perhaps harder to police.

On receipt of a circular telegram in mid-July 1919, warning of a possible uprising, Acting Governor Johnstone, moved quickly to dispel the rumours, stating that he had no indication that such an event would take place. However, within a matter of days, on July 18th, BWIR veterans and discharged black seamen were involved in fracas in Kingston with sailors from HMS *Constance*, in which several of the latter and some white civilians were injured. The men used as their rallying cry "kill the whites". Their immediate intent was to exact revenge for the racist violence and official

⁶³ Secret Circular Acting Inspector-General of Police 29.1.1919 contained in Clive A. Crosbie Smith Mss.W.Ind.s.22.

mishandling that black soldiers and seamen had been subjected to in the riots in Cardiff, London and Liverpool. The civil and military authorities feared that the unrest would mar the peace celebrations that had been planned Empire-wide to take place on the 19th July. Sailors armed with clubs and sections of the WIR were put on stand-by to quell any further action by ex-servicemen, which Governor Johnstone claimed somewhat disingenuously in an official dispatch was an entirely successful measure.⁶⁵ However, despite the wartime experiences of Jamaican servicemen and trade unionists, it was evident at the Peace Day celebrations that an element of loyalty to the person of the sovereign was retained by emerging nationalist movement,

A highlight of the peace celebrations was a Trades and Labour Demonstration, a procession organised by Bain Alves, then president of the Longshoremen's Labour Union, the central constituent of the Jamaican Federation of Labour. He was assisted by W. G. Hinchcliffe, the ex-Garveyite activist. The demonstration incorporated a number of local trades and benevolent bodies, members of the longshoremen's union as well as war veterans displaying their official war trophy, a captured German gun. Despite his active involvement in industrial action against local, metropolitan and US companies, as he had done at the outbreak of the war Alves once more reiterated his and the union movements loyalty to the British monarch. "Fear God and honour the King" was the motto of the JFL. Alves used the opportunity of the demonstration in Kingston to present an address to the King. To be communicated by the Secretary of

⁶⁴ JT 17.5.1919, 10.

⁶⁵ C137/733/50990 Johnstone (acting Gov.) to Milner SSC 14.8.1919; DG 21.7.1919, 13. Johnstone had only recently taken on the role of Governor (see JT 28.6.1919, 16) after the departure of Leslie

State for the Colonies. Alves appealed to the monarch to use his influence and power to improve the economic and social conditions of Jamaica. This time his demand was underpinned by strong inferences that the wartime service of Jamaicans should be duly rewarded.

We His Majesty's Loyal subjects impressed with the fullest sense of the goodness of God and the sterling loyalty of the sons of the Empire, through whom victory has been brought to crown His Majesty's arms, beg to tender through you to our sovereign Lord ... our unswerving loyalty and allegiance, and we ask you to assure His Majesty that the hearts of the working men of Jamaica will always beat true to his sacred person; and we hope, we trust and we pray that our Almighty Father may endow you and His Majesty's Ministers with wisdom from on High that you may use the powers vested in you to the great moral, intellectual and material advancement not only of Jamaica ... but of the Empire as a whole.⁶⁶

Despite Johnstone's assurances to the contrary, the peace celebrations did not pass off without incident. Although there was clearly no sign of an organised insurrection, ex-servicemen were in evidence in outbreaks of popular dissent at Morant Bay and Savannah-la-Mar. At Chapelton, a BWIR veteran was killed in clashes with civilians.⁶⁷ But the most significant event was the disruption of the Kingston parade when a number of trams were stormed by local people who refused to pay their fares. The police stood by, apparently powerless to intervene. This incident was used by the *Daily Gleaner* to demarcate race and class status through a discourse of respectability, mirroring that deployed in the early years of the war to discourage

Probyn and may have been trying to convince the Colonial Office that he was in total control of the situation.

⁶⁶ DG 21.7.1919, 13

⁶⁷ JT 16.8.1919, 16; 22.7.1919, 1. The failure of the rumoured insurrection to materialise brought smug comments from H. T. Thomas, an inspector in the Jamaican constabulary, who had already proved to be something of a thorn in the side of the Jamaican establishment, despite his status. Thomas claims to have written a minute to the Governor arguing that a revolt would not take place. Thomas states that he invited the alleged ringleader into his office to warn him that he faced a hanging 'if half what we had heard about him, was true. He left my office in a properly subdued and humble spirit. I hardly need say that the whole story of the projected rising proved to be a bogey, exactly as I had predicted in my report' (215-6).

black volunteers. This discourse implicitly defined who was entitled to enjoy the limited access to civic power that pertained in Jamaica, as well as expressing the anxiety that the balance of forces on which it depended was quite fragile. The paper railed that ‘it was with the utmost difficulty that any of the respectable citizens could board a car ... it means that only those who are prepared to rub shoulders with the unwashed can travel on the cars’.⁶⁸ The *Gleaner* starkly illustrated the belief that the majority of the black population, despite its contribution to the war effort, was incapable of running their own affairs. Any ground relinquished by the colonial machine would spell the end of civil society. What might otherwise have been taken as high-spirited exuberance on a festive occasion, were, in the eyes of many among the white elite, signs of irrationality and chaos – the antithesis of white masculine order. Furthermore, the Kingston masses had had the audacity to intrude upon the world stage. As the *Gleaner* complained,

acts of lawlessness were committed with a degree of impunity which no civilized society can afford to tolerate without running a grave risk of ultimately losing the distinctive mark of civilization ... some persons are apt to allow ... their joy to get the upper hand of reason and commonsense; particularly when these two latter attributes are present in only small quantities ... on a unique occasion, the celebration of one of the most momentous events of history, hooligans interrupt[ed] a peaceful and orderly demonstration of citizens.⁶⁹

While Bain Alves was clearly regarded at this point as an “orderly citizen”, his appeal, though directed in somewhat ingratiating terms, that Jamaica’s war contribution be recognised, was dismissed. The discourse of respectability, responsibility and self-control was extended to the returning soldiers to determine which of them were entitled to some reward as the Jamaican authorities lumbered

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ DG 22.7.1919, 8

towards providing meagre provision for her ex-servicemen. The *Jamaican Times* condemned soldiers involved in the unrest as “less creditable” than the rest of their comrades, the insinuation being that a true soldier could stand firm in the face of any privation.⁷⁰

The colonial authorities continued to be plagued with rumours of an immanent rebellion by the returning veterans. Anonymous letters reached the Governor, the GOC and the Inspector-General of Police stating that an uprising was planned for Emancipation Day 1.8.1919. Kingston would be burned and the white population attacked. Again, though, a concerted assault on the colonial regime did not materialise. However, at this point a group of returning seaman began to lead the demand that the Jamaican contribution to the war effort be recognised.⁷¹ Once more, the ill-treatment meted out to black servicemen in the metropole during the 1919 race riots seems to have acted as a spur to action.

Sixty-nine repatriated seamen, mostly Jamaicans, arrived in early August 1919 on HMS *Cambrian*. Most had been effectively deported from the metropole. Black men who defended themselves against attack found themselves placed on trumped-up charges or kept under house arrest before being urged by the authorities to return to Jamaica as their protection could not be guaranteed. The behaviour of their white assailants went largely unchecked, as did the metropolitan press which had openly stirred up racial antagonism. The seamen’s frustrations in this regard resulted in a

⁷⁰ JT 16.8.1919, 16.

⁷¹ CO137/733/50990 Johnstone to Milner SSC 14.8.1919

brief outbreak of violence against the white sailors of the *Cambrian* once they were landed.⁷²

After seeking the advice of Alfred Mends, a journalist and vice-president of the JFL, over forty of the seamen, put their names to a petition addressed to the new Acting Governor, Colonel Bryan. They resolved in the process to put political pressure on the Jamaican government to gain some redress for the injustices they had suffered and for their wartime service to be fully recognised. Rather than being couched in terms that questioned the Empire, the men were of the opinion that redressing their grievances would be for the greater benefit of the Empire project and would ensure its future stability and development. The men tried to appeal to a sense of military brotherhood in Governor Bryan by pointing to their passage through the rites of military masculinity and its connoted reward of civil rights and legal protection. The men called for an end to class and race discrimination so that

there may dwell harmony, friendship and peace amongst all the Imperial sway adding lustre to our glorious Empire and that varied mixed races ... may fully appreciate and honour the British Constitution under which we are governed to which we forever owe allegiance, and which we demonstrated our unswerving loyalty in the late War daring to lay down our lives in the battlefield side by side with the Europeans to uphold and preserve forever the dignity and honour to our Glorious Empire ... we would beseechingly appeal to you as Governor as a soldier as a British gentleman that our grievances be fully redressed in the interests of Colonial expansion and that of Empire.⁷³

However, attitudes persisted that refuted the right of Jamaican ex-servicemen to demand even these limited rights and greater representation as subjects of Empire. Again language that resurrected the idea of black irrationality and unpredictability –

⁷² *ibid.*; CO318/349/60449 Petition of J. A. Thompson & 43 other seamen to Col. Bryan, Acting Gov. of Jamaica, 29.8.1919 (Enclosure in Govs. dispatch 1.10.1919).

⁷³ *ibid.*

language that had been advanced to deny black men access to the front line – was evident in official reports regarding the veteran seafarers. The Inspector-General of Police described them as “unruly” and “impudent”⁷⁴, while the master of the SS *Santille*, who had transported the men for part of their homeward journey, believed the sixty-nine were ‘more like wild beasts than human beings’.⁷⁵

Another group of repatriated seamen, arrived in October having being involved in the *Orca* mutiny. When they became involved in clashes with English sailors, the familiar discourses of respectability, mental capacity and temperament were reiterated in an attempt to disparage those Jamaicans who were not content to let their feelings of injustice go unrecorded. By this stage, the Colonial Office had arranged a limited compensation scheme for West Indians repatriated after the race riots. The attacks on the white seamen began when the returnees heard rumours that they would not receive their entitlement.⁷⁶ The *Jamaica Times* complained that some “respectable citizens” white, black and “coloured”, were also attacked, such attacks being urged on by the “hooligans” and “woman of the street”, who it was claimed, were especially violent. This illustrates how class and race distinctions, and hence antagonisms, regularly overlapped in Jamaican society. Those among the rioters who displayed a more definite “colour animus” were regarded as “more ignorant”.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Johnstone to Milner SSC 14.8.1919 op. cit.

⁷⁵ CO318/349/60449 W. H. Hinds, SS *Santille* to Messrs Scrutton Sons & Co 17.7.1919.

⁷⁶ JT 11.10.1919, 4. Each man was to receive £5 lump sum (incidentally, the equivalent to the basic war bonus for a private soldier). Once in Jamaica, he entitled to a daily income of 4/-, reduced to £3/- and then 2/- for a limited period before he found work.

⁷⁷ JT 11.10.1919, 4.

A seafarer, Oscar Skyers, was identified as the ringleader of the demonstrators. One witness, defined as a 'young gentlemen ... who has had experiences of such disturbances abroad', stated that he 'had a lot of the unwashed behind him'.⁷⁸ Skyers was arrested and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. Jubilant at this outcome and the sentencing of around a dozen more of the protesters, played on the fact that non-whites had also been attacked, stating 'they are the enemies of their own colour. They are the enemy of every good citizen, and every intelligent citizen, be he black or white or brown will see that clearly'.⁷⁹ This served to demarcate non-whites who could be regarded as citizens, enjoying a share in the limited franchise, from those who were regarded as beyond the pale of civilised society and hence not worthy of such rights.

The Reception of the Returning Veterans

Official and press attitudes to those veterans involved in civil disobedience and the response to the soldiers union highlights how members of the war contingents would be regarded as either deserving or undeserving of public sympathy and assistance. However, even for those deemed worthy of assistance the experience of those who returned early from the war was not encouraging. A number of men from the 3rd Jamaican contingent returned to the island after suffering the effects of frostbite. In March 1916 their transport, the *Verdala* was diverted via Nova Scotia to avoid enemy attack, but the men were not adequately clothed and the ship lacked sufficient shelter and heating. Many had had feet and hands amputated. An article from the *Scotch Kirk Pulpit Monthly and Presbyterian* that was reprinted in the *Gleaner*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

argued that 'those incapacitated are as surely sufferers on behalf of the Empire as those who have lost life or limb on the battlefields of France and Gallipoli ... We cannot tolerate that those so wounded should be left to charity. Should they be permitted to sit at the corners of our streets begging for a livelihood it will be an eternal shame'.⁸⁰ The paper advocated retraining and land grants to those were still capable of at least some work.

A correspondent to the *Gleaner* in 1917, I. J. Livingstone, confirmed the gloomy outlook for discharged soldiers. 'I have heard it said, and it seems to be a fact, that most of our soldiers, those who have seen active service or not, when discharged cannot live long in a community on account of their impoverished means; and their doom is always the Alms House or another place'.⁸¹ The circumstances of soldiers discharged early, either due to ill-health or wounds, were aggravated by the battles they often became engaged in to draw an army pension. Another *Gleaner* correspondent related how his son had been denied a pension, although he had been totally incapacitated by a heart complaint while stationed in Egypt. Pension officials had to decide whether a pre-existing condition had been compounded by war service. Where there were any doubts in this regard, pensions could be refused.⁸²

With these cases in mind, and mindful of the raised expectations and politicisation of returning veterans, particularly after the events at Taranto, debate ensued about the provisions that should be made for the men on their return. In the weeks after the Armistice, the Jamaican press heaped praise on the contingents for sacrifices that had

⁷⁹ JT 18.10.1919, 6.

⁸⁰ DG 4.5.1916, 10.

⁸¹ DG 11.9.1917, 13

⁸² DG 25.1.1917, 13.

been made. Simultaneously, sentiments were also expressed that constructed the veterans as a potentially verminous and uncivilised rabble who would bring about social dislocation if they were not carefully steered in the direction of purposeful employment.

Now that the great war is over, we are all looking forward to seeing once more our brave lads who had left these shores to do their bit ... When the fuss is over, what then ... Are these men going to be let loose in the street like rats out of a bag to wander about ... They are sure to want money and good food, and if they can't get these necessities ... well we know what will happen.⁸³

U. Theo McKay, the elder brother of the writer and radical, Claude, took a more sober view of the situation. He was certain that the veterans would 'not go back to the pick and shovel' to work for 'one shilling or one and sixpence per day'.⁸⁴ He advocated that pensions, employment and, where demanded, a piece of land be guaranteed to each serviceman. But he also recognised that this would only be possible if the Jamaican economy was expanded and modernised.

A limited programme of public works and land tenure would eventually be put in place in an attempt to ensure that the veterans resumed economic activity. But in the official view, the men should take responsibility for their subsequent social and economic standing through their own endeavours. Addressing the first transshipment of BWIR veterans in May 1919, Governor Probyn promised that a public works programme and free grants of land had been arranged. Old employers would of course welcome the men back. But more significantly he urged the men to go and out and seek work themselves for 'Of course, no man wants to rest for ever and ever'.

⁸³ DG 9.12.18, 13.

⁸⁴ DG 20.1.1919, 5.

Perhaps unwittingly anticipating the future for many of the veterans, he cautioned that each 'should make friends with Thrift'.

Probyn also drew on the vocabulary of common purpose that had been deployed to encourage a Jamaican contribution to the war effort, but which left the class and race hierarchy undisturbed. Simultaneously, he tried to suggest that to some extent the Jamaican veterans had entered the fraternity of military masculinity and that their efforts would be accorded a place within the island's history as a spur to industry and effort. This was obviously, in marked contrast to the feminised images that were constructed of black soldiers to deny them, in most cases, admittance to the front line. However, this change in stance has to be seen in the light of the differing preoccupations facing the Jamaican authorities. Not least was the need to appease the men. Secondly, extolling the virtues of the contingent reflected some prestige back onto Jamaican society as a whole. Thirdly, projecting masculine virtue upon the ex-servicemen also imposed on them certain obligations, not least the masculine ideal that each individual was the force behind his own economic status and attainment. Here, Probyn echoed the earlier sentiments expressed by de Lisser that the war represented an opportunity for Jamaicans to engage in industrious activity and cast off the curse of tropical sloth that had been ascribed to them. His words also suggested that Jamaicans could anticipate some significant improvements in the administration of their portion of the Empire.

[Y]ou know it to be the fact that the War was won chiefly by the good-hearted co-operation on the part of the Allies. This, then, is the nature of the help that you can give your neighbours that progress is obtainable only by means of brotherly co-operation. You can explain your meaning in another way, by saying: I am going to do my duty to my neighbour: my neighbour must also do

his duty to me: and, if these things be done, we all shall have good cause for contentment both as regards the body and the spirit.

‘I want Jamaica to become prosperous; and I want all people, in future, to reckon that this prosperity began to run from the day on which Jamaica’s brave sons came back from the War.’⁸⁵

To confirm their temporary admission to the Empire project, all veterans, except those who were discharged for misconduct were granted the vote for the next election to the Legislative Council.⁸⁶ The many gatherings organised in the Jamaican parishes to welcome the men reiterated the Governor’s theme. The veterans, it was averred, had entered the Jamaican pantheon and could claim to have gone through the masculine rigours that entitled them, as brothers in arms, to the citizenship of Empire brothers-in-arms. Phillips, the MLC for St. Anns, addressed a rally at Moneague and averred: ‘It was often thought that heroes lived in past ages, but they were present with them today. They were part of the grand Empire and have won in fighting the battle for the freedom of the world’.⁸⁷ A representative of the recruiting committee went further, unconsciously using words that could be vested with a variety of meaning according to the race and class of the individual listener. The men

had played their part with honour to the Empire ... Fighting side by side with the liberators of the race, their names would go down to posterity with honour. They should always maintain that honour, and let it be handed down, not alone to their children, but to their grand children and great grand children. They should let it be said of them as if the Romans who were proud to be Roman citizens “I am a British soldier”.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ CO318/348/38685 Welcome Given by the Governor on Behalf of All Jamaica, to the Men of the British West Indies Regiment on Their Return Home, May 2nd.

⁸⁶ CO318/348/38685 Notice, King’s House, 22.5.1919.

⁸⁷ DG 7.5.1919, 13.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

Veterans' Demands & Government Initiatives

However, for their admittance to the world of men to continue to be recognised, the veterans would be expected to conform to other constructed images of masculine endeavour. Failure to do so would mean the rapid removal of their newly-earned status, and derision for falling short of the bench-mark of white masculinity. This in effect was a way of ignoring the limits placed on individual and collective effort by the straightened circumstance of the Jamaican economy. A *Jamaica Times* editorial was quick to write-off those soldiers who expected unquestioned rewards and improvements in social conditions for their military sacrifices. Drawing again on historical caricatures, black men were characterised as wanting in motivation and lacking in culture and rational thought. This in turn dictated a life of ease, rather than the expenditure of energy pursuing the products of civilisation.

Among the returned soldiers ... there will be found the unreasonable element ... which is inclined to take the view that having fought for King and Country, they should be provided for without having to work, or with only very light and enjoyable work to do for the rest of their lives ... the majority of the returned soldiers ... do not want to be idlers, loafers, or state pensioners ... their desire is work hard and well. That is the heritage of every honest and manly man.⁸⁹

The editorial did recognise that the men would have raised expectations and newly acquired skills that deserved fair remuneration, but these had to be met within the limits set by the Jamaican economy. Again, this was reiterated within a discourse of white masculine rationality. 'What we want is for the thoughtful, manly, intelligent and moderate element ... to put forward some definite and constructive proposal of

⁸⁹ JT 5.7.1919, 17.

what might be done, and what under the present circumstances of the Island is possible to do'.⁹⁰

The fledgling veteran's organisation, which emerged at the end of May 1919, does not appear to have taken any part in the unrest and agitation that characterised the second half of that year. A number of non-commissioned officers sent a statement of aims and objectives of a "Proposed Association ... of the British West Indies Regiment". As had been the case on active service, it was the NCOs who took the lead in establishing organisations representing the men, borrowing in the process the status conferred on them by their military rank. The programme combined a number of broad political aims with mutual support to the membership, such as financial support and welfare advice in case of death or illness and assistance to members in the search for employment. The Association hoped to promote island-wide improvements in housing, health and morality through a network of the veterans, their families and neighbours.

In many ways the Association had absorbed aspects of the predominant colonial ideology that suggested that improvement was largely achieved through one's own efforts. For example it was suggested that the cost of living could be reduced by encouraging the population 'to be more industrious, thereby becoming a more self-supporting community'.⁹¹ The Association hoped to promote literacy through the establishment of public reading rooms in each parish, the accompanying intellectual development being underpinned by 'the promotion of games ... and stimulating

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ DG 29.5.1919, 3.

competitions'.⁹² This line of thinking had much in common with the muscular Christianity that permeated non-conformist activity in the metropolitan slums and which promised social advance in exchange for vigorous self-help.

The Jamaican establishment found much to approve of in the proposed association, particularly the fact that it appeared to be led by the NCOs, who it presumed would act as a moderating influence on the rest of the men. It also wasted no time in congratulating itself that the war had indeed, in most cases, encouraged a sense of purpose and industry among the men that was generally perceived as missing among the Jamaican masses as a whole.

[I]n Jamaica the environment and atmosphere are deadening – they take the heart and ambition out of a man ... we are convinced that they [the veterans] have changed permanently; and we satisfied that if they obtain good leaders. Men of energy and ability, and consent to be led by these, they will accomplish a good deal of what they now have in view.⁹³

The reality of what the Jamaican economy could offer is evident in several letters to the press. Significantly, they illustrate that the veterans not directly associated with the Association often also aspired to the values promoted through the masculine discourses of industry and Empire, as well as a significant loyalty to, and identification with, Jamaica herself. Joseph Francis a former lance-corporal, on approaching an overseer for work was handed a knife on a pole and told that he could cut and husk coconuts for 6d for one hundred. Insulted by the piece-rate on offer, he turned the work down, but significantly not because of the class of work on offer. Francis wished to point out that 'work does not degrade a man ... we

⁹² *ibid.*

Jamaicans should put our shoulders to the wheel ... to work for the improvement of our island'. Another man, "Ex-Sergeant BWIR", a former teacher who claimed to have reached a high status before volunteering, exposed as fiction Probyn's promise that men would be given back their former posts. He had made numerous applications for teaching posts to no avail, stating 'idleness is to me a torment, not an enjoyment'.⁹⁴

Other men were more humble and appealed for work in terms that reinstated the infantilising relationships of the "white man's burden". An unnamed correspondent of the 7BWIR, pleaded 'Victory has been won. God has spared most of us to return. We are as little children who are looking to their parents ... for their temporal welfare, the Government, the learned and the rich are our parents at this time'.⁹⁵ The Government did lay in place some limited measures to assist the soldiers. The Central Supplementary Allowances Committee, with offices in each parish, was appointed to assist the men in finding work. A booklet was issued to each man stating what help was available and the *Jamaican Times* established "The Returned soldiers Friendly Column" as a notice-board for men seeking employment and to promote government measures.⁹⁶ The men were encouraged to pool their resources into schemes such as hemp farming for rope manufacture and boot-making.⁹⁷

However, from the government's point of view, perhaps the most successful scheme, which removed a considerable number of discontented men, at least in the short term,

⁹³ *ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁴ DG 28.7.1919, 10.

⁹⁵ JT 13.9.1919, 12.

⁹⁶ JT 28.6.1919, 14.

⁹⁷ JT 28.6.1919, 13.

was the promotion of migration to Cuba. The experiences of the veterans once they arrived in Cuba and their subsequent impact on their return to Jamaica from the 1920s merits a study in its own right and goes beyond the scope of the present study. However, it is noteworthy that of 7232 soldiers who returned to Jamaica, 4036 were given permits to Cuba. To promote the scheme, veterans were granted free permits, which normally cost £3, and the government arranged for the passage so that the men were not taken advantage of by dishonest agents.⁹⁸

From the perspective of the remaining veterans, the essential demand was the acquisition of land. Within the context of Jamaican society, the possession of land had, since the slavery era been vested with symbolic power. Slaves were able to acquire provision grounds adjacent to the plantation to cultivate their own produce. Not only did this generate a limited cash income, but the effort put into each plot represented a degree of autonomy from the planter. Over time, the slaves came to regard the plots as their own, regardless of legal tenure, establishing a lineage and inheritance separate to master-slave property relationship. In the post-emancipation era, when peasant development gathered apace, to the detriment of wage labour on the plantation, the peasant plot became a way of asserting autonomous identity through economic means.

Although, peasant development came increasingly under attack through disproportionate taxation and the rationalisation of the plantation economy, the allure of land ownership did not dim. Significantly, land ownership provided the way into

⁹⁸ CO950/93 J33 26th Session BWIR Ass. Witnesses; CO950/944 Written Evidence, Serial No. 169

the legislature by way of the property qualification for the affluent black and brown middle class. From the point of view of the planter class, the development of an independent peasantry, which threatened to deprive them of a cheap workforce, was always generally presented as a “return to barbarism”. Peasant production was encouraged by the Norman Commission of 1897. Sydney, later Lord Olivier, a member of the commission, held that the encouragement of this sector would avoid the crisis threatened by the decline of the sugar industry. Simultaneously, the peasantry would be led to moral improvement through their own efforts. However, peasant development came under increasing pressure from this time as the booming fruit industry bought up redundant sugar plantations.⁹⁹

To the returning veteran, the ownership of land was a significant political issue that represented a symbolic stake in Jamaican society purchased by military sacrifice and duty. From the point of view of the colonial authorities, assisting the veterans to acquire land was also potentially attractive. Echoing the attitude of Olivier, peasant land ownership was the ideal way to ensure that the individual acted as his own taskmaster. Governor Manning had made proposals to the Colonial Office for a number of schemes to encourage veterans to supplement their pensions and bonuses. It was ‘desirable’ argued the governor, ‘that some provision should be made, to enable them to add to the sums received for their pensions, something from their own labour’.¹⁰⁰

Memo. On Unemployment and Rates of Wages; JT 28.6.1919, 14.

⁹⁹ *Report of the Royal West India Commission* (The Norman Cm.) (C 8655), London, 1897, 59, 65; Holt, 347-55.

¹⁰⁰ CO137/725/10155 Manning to Long, SSC 25.1.1918

After the *Verdala* disaster, in March 1916, it seemed likely that a number of men would be returning home early. Recognising the symbolic importance of land ownership, the press threw its weight firmly behind the proposal to grant 'a great track [sic] of land ... of many thousands of acres'.¹⁰¹ In December 1918, the Legislative Council met to discuss comprehensive proposals for the settlement and employment of the veterans. Various schemes were advanced for the development of public works that would employ the ex-servicemen, notably the expansion of the railway to assist the sugar industry. However, the most concrete proposal which was adopted was that a small gratuity be paid to each man and that they be allowed to draw up to £25 to buy land, stock or seed from the Agricultural Loan Bank.¹⁰²

But it was not until 1924 that a designated ex-servicemen's settlement reached fruition. The resulting scheme, which involved an element of free land, was extended to members of both the West India Regiment and British West Indies Regiment. The scheme was drawn up at a conference between the Governor and representatives of the Jamaica Old Comrades Association, one a number of bodies that emerged to represent the veterans. The allotments had to be paid for within twelve years with the exception of the first five acres which were given free. The Government also allocated a sum of £20,000 for the building of roads and the bridging of rivers on the three Crown estates that were given over for settlement.¹⁰³ However, the whole scheme broke down amid recriminations from the veterans. The level of bitterness

¹⁰¹ DG 17.5.1916, 8.

¹⁰² DG 12.12.1918, 6; CO137/728/1983 Probyn to Long 17.12.1918.

¹⁰³ *The Times* 16.6.1924, 11; *The ExService Man*, nd, 5 in CO950/93 British West Indies Regt. Association Memorandum to Moyne Cm.

generated was still evident in submissions to the Moyne Commission, twenty years after the end of the war.

The model settlement, situated in the Rio Grande Valley in Portland was never properly linked to communications, being between three and eleven miles from the nearest main roads. Communication problems were aggravated by two local rivers that were impassable during the five month rainy season. The funding for improvements did not materialise as it was linked to other budgetary legislation overruled by the Secretary of State. Veterans complained that the settlement scheme did not employ any ex-servicemen and many land applications were lost or were held up for several years. Ultimately seventy-two men took up Rio Grande land, but only three stayed for the five year period that was necessary to ensure a full title to the land. The peasant life style proved most unsuitable for those veterans who had grown up in the urban areas and who found the isolation of the area hardest to bear. Although of symbolic importance, the preoccupation of the veterans movement with land ownership did not come to represent any concrete power in Jamaica. After the war, migration to the urban areas increased as opportunities for work on the plantations declined and as the fruit industry monopolised the best cultivable land.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ CO950/93 British West Indies Regt. Association Memorandum, Sgt. W, Johnson to Royal Cm. (n.d.) & J33 26th Session BWIR Association Witnesses.

Epilogue

‘Jamaica’s Welfare First’¹ The Great War & the Rise of Nationalism to the 1930s

While ex-servicemen continued to agitate for improved conditions linked to their wartime sacrifices, Jamaican society in general showed signs of an upturn in nationalist activity that carried in its wake a stronger sense of Jamaican identity. This was evident in the higher profile of the Jamaica League and the increase in industrial unrest. The latter, while not ostensibly nationalist in motivation, served to highlight the limitations for economic and social development within the existing colonial framework. The Jamaica League witnessed an upturn in its fortunes in the months after the war. Influenced by the growing turmoil in Jamaican society, the League showed increasing concern with the social and economic strands of its programme and placed less emphasis on the cultural preoccupations evident at the League’s launch in 1914.

The post-war international preoccupation with self-determination and the fate of the smaller nations renewed the League’s energy. Opening the League’s annual convention in late July 1919, the president, T. Gordon Somers remarked:

On the 19th July, all the British world celebrated peace and started to usher in a new era of readjustment, consolidation and progress. It is devoutly hoped that the striking lessons of the war will be learnt by all nations ... that the great watch-words of democratic

¹ Slogan raised by Rev. T. Gordon Somers, president of the Jamaica League, at the annual convention in July 1919 (DG 6.8.1919, 13).

peoples, liberty, equality and fraternity, will find their illustration in national and international life, and none the less than in our own island Jamaica.²

Although clearly linked to global events, these reflections were also intended to signal that the masculine devotion to duty of the Jamaican contingents could also be used to underpin the nationalist agenda. Somers went on: 'In what tangible and abiding form has Jamaica decided to pay its debt of gratitude? Our men did not fail us at the front, have we failed them at the base?'³ Supporters of the League also drew on the military and colonial discourses which saw the war as a source of invigorating energy for a previously dormant black population. The League did not regard sloth as an engrained element of black character or a consequence of the tropical climate. Instead, it argued the colonial authorities had cultivated a lethargy among the majority population while the island lurched from crisis to crisis. In an open letter to the press, the BWIR veteran, H. B. Montieth, encouraged Jamaicans to support the League and the Jamaica Union of Teachers and stated:

Our country has been lulled to slumber on the edge of a dangerous precipice ... and many of her assumed guardians ... has been watching her from a distance and singing "Sleep on Beloved, sleep and take your rest!" ... Jamaicans for years ... we have been slumbering, undisturbed, except by dreams. The time for actions has now come! Let us therefore unite, let us co-operate, let us present one undivided front, and with determination let us march forward to conquer the future.⁴

At the launch of a new League branch in Saint Ann's Bay in May 1919, one of several launched during that year, the League's assistant secretary, Ethelred Brown, had outlined a renewed emphasis on economic and social reform. The League advocated the economic development of Jamaica through the promotion of 'patriotic

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ JT 5.7.1919, 5.

sentiment and mutual interest'.⁵ Key to this ideal was the promotion of a sense of pride in things Jamaican, chiefly, in terms of the consumption of local products. Jamaicans were encouraged to buy from their neighbours, rather than the Chinese or Syrian businesses who were blamed for squeezing out African Jamaican traders. Brown argued that 'We could love the Syrian or the Chinaman if we liked; but the folly of loving them to such an extent that we put our own out of existence ... could be easily seen'.⁶

Brown was articulating a Jamaican identity that rested largely on the heritage of the African Jamaican population, which as evident by the anti-Chinese riots of 1918, had the potential to provoke racial enmity. Attitudes towards the colonial power, were expressed in softer tones, indeed, the League did not envisage an end to the imperial relationship and vowed to achieve its ends solely by legitimate means. However, the League argued that where a Jamaican and an Englishmen were jointly suited for a post then it should go to the Jamaican.⁷

Encouraging commerce with neighbours reflected the League's aim to encourage Jamaican produce. It was hoped that the dependence on costly imports would be reduced and the domination of the island economy by plantation monoculture broken. To this end, the League advocated the encouragement of peasant development. It believed large plots of land coming onto the market should be

⁵ DG 7.5.1919, 4.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

purchased by government for subdivision and resale to peasant farmers, rather than falling into the hands of the fruit producers.⁸

While wishing to abolish class and race distinctions, the League drew most of its support and reflected the aspirations of the black and brown middle class, which it portrayed as the ‘strength of ... this island’.⁹ This is evident in that the League demanded higher rates partly to cure predial larceny. Ethelred Brown stressed that ‘the labourer should receive a fair proportion of the money that he had been instrumental in making’. But, Brown continued, ‘[h]e was not foolish enough to tell people that every man should get a dollar a day’.¹⁰ Responding to the wave of industrial action that gathered momentum throughout 1919, the League stressed the mutuality that underpinned its approach in other policy areas. T. Gordon Somers stressed:

[t]he demands of labour should be reasonable, the attitude of capital sympathetic, there should always be a readiness to meet each other half-way ... both capital and labour are badly in need of instruction as to their relative importance and their mutual obligations’.¹¹

The theme of mutuality was perhaps the strongest common ground with the veterans movement. Outlining its objectives in May 1919, the proposed BWIR association had advocated the development of communal centres in which the “necessities of life” could be purchased at low prices, with profits accruing to the association to

⁸ DG 6.8.1919, 13.

⁹ DG 7.5.1919, 4.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ DG 6.8.1919, 13. The belief that “instruction” was also key to solving Jamaica’s problems was evident in the League’s policies on education. Compulsory schooling at public expense, beyond the then legal requirement of fourteen years, was demanded. The central concern was that rising generations should learn ‘some useful industry that will fit them for life’, (*ibid.*) to ensure that they were gainfully occupied and not left at the mercy of moral temptation.

extend its welfare operations.¹² The idea of co-operative stores was regularly raised in the League. In October 1919, C. A. Wilson,¹³ the League's honorary secretary, outlined a vision of stores in Jamaica. Based on the British model, Wilson suggested ordinary Jamaicans would take out individual shares to 'turn the tide of profits into the pockets of the men and women who toil and suffer'.¹⁴ This would result in an end to profiteering and the creation of hundreds of jobs. Up to that point, Wilson argued, '[I]ndividualism ... ha[d] been the bane of effort'.¹⁵ But co-operation also had racial implications articulated in a way that would define the identity of the true Jamaican. What Wilson demanded was that African Jamaicans showed the same loyalty to their race in matters of trade that were exhibited by the Chinese and Syrian traders who were often portrayed as profiteering from the black working class. 'The foreigner in our midst with less education than we possess is amassing wealth. He is driven by force of circumstances to unite with his countrymen and by co-operation achieves success'.¹⁶

However, the most explicit message of racial unity and consciousness in the year after the war was espoused by F. E. M. Hercules, the leader of the Society of Peoples of African Origin and editor of the *African Telegraph*. Hercules, a Trinidadian, arrived in Jamaica in July 1919 on a four-month tour, having campaigned against the

¹² DG 29.5.1919, 3.

¹³ Wilson published *Men With Backbone* (Kingston, 1905), which underlined the importance of individual industry to achieve improved status for the black population. While advocating equality for women he also saw the advocated a strong female presence in the home. Wilson also wrote *Men With Vision* (Kingston, 1929), which included biographical portraits of DuBois, Garvey, Booker T. Washington.

¹⁴ DG 11.5.1919, 5.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

outbreaks of racial attacks in the metropole.¹⁷ He shared platforms with leading members of the Jamaica League, such as Ethelred Brown, who was appointed the Society's representative in Jamaica. Hercules stressed that racial unity, pride and consciousness were essential to underpin any campaign for social, political and economic advancement. Hercules reflected many of the aims of the Jamaica League in his advocacy of industrial schools and in his attacks on the taxation system. The bulk of government revenue was raised from items of general consumption and fell most heavily on the peasantry and working class. But Hercules was more forthright in his support for the working-class struggles underway in Jamaica. He demanded living wages that would lift the average Jamaican worker from the mere subsistence rates of between 1/- and 1/6 per day.¹⁸

Hercules' arrival was viewed with some alarm by the colonial regime as the unrest among repatriated seamen increased. Although the acting governor, Robert Johnstone, turned down the suggestion that Hercules be deported, he nonetheless took the precaution of putting pressure on the Jamaican press to give him the minimum of press coverage.¹⁹ In August, after examining the social and economic conditions pertaining in Jamaica, Hercules produced a lengthy memorial for presentation to the Secretary of State, Viscount Milner. He demanded that a proposed Royal Commission investigation of Jamaica should include at least one black representative to take some account of the racial composition of the island. The colour-bar and pay levels in the police service were condemned, as was the poor

¹⁷ CO318/351 Director of Intelligence to USSCO 6.8.1919. For further information on Hercules' activities see Fryer, 311-16.

¹⁸ DG 18.7.1919, 3.

¹⁹ CO137/733/50990 Johnstone (acting Gov.) to Milner SSC 14.8.1919.

investment in education and training. Again, Hercules attacked the burden of taxation and laid into the poor example set by paltry government wage levels. Most significantly, he highlighted the high levels of emigration among ex-servicemen ‘after years of faithful service in which they faced death on an equality with the best of the Allied troops’.²⁰ To this, Hercules added his call for an extension of the franchise and stated:

it is hardly to the credit of the Mother Country that the Jamaicans are not yet regarded as sufficiently capable of returning to the Legislative Council representatives good enough worthily to express the views of their constituents.²¹

Hercules’ aims were limited in that they were framed within a continued allegiance to the Empire. He argued the franchise should be widened to encompass black and “coloured” men of “liberal education” and professional or respectable status only. A further transition towards self-government would not be possible until the majority of Jamaicans had become similarly elevated.²² In this, Hercules betrayed, like many of his contemporaries, the belief that education and a system of stewardship was still necessary to guide the subject races towards greater personal and political freedom. Nevertheless, in the context of Jamaican society, which was still largely controlled by a narrow white elite, these were demands, that if successful, would have represented a considerable victory.

²⁰ DG 2.8.1919, 21.

²¹ *ibid.*, 21-2.

²² *ibid.*; CO318/351 Director of Intelligence to USSCO 6.8.1919

The Motif of Masculine Military Sacrifice & the Demand for Citizenship

The veteran trade unionist and radical thinker, Alfred Mends, was perhaps the most persistent in his calls for a concession to representative government. Born in 1871, Mends became leader of the Artisans Union from 1898. He advocated the co-operative movement and edited several short-lived newspapers, the *Jamaican*, the *Jamaica Penny Weekly*, the *Sentinel* and *Public Opinion*, between 1914 and 1916. He was prominent in the unrest of 1919, assisting repatriated seamen to prepare their case for compensation.²³

In 1917, he prepared a petition demanding the return to the constitution which had prevailed before the institution of Crown Colony government in 1866, chiefly the reintroduction of a house of assembly.²⁴ To Mends, this represented a significant expansion of democracy that would undermine the power of the unelected officials who held sway under the Crown Colony system. A number of measures, including a poll tax implemented in 1859, had considerably reduced the electorate of the House of Assembly before its dissolution and allowed the plantocracy to retain the reigns of government. However, it was evident that significant numbers of black and “coloured” men would eventually qualify to stand as members within the terms of the property qualification. Indeed, between 1861 and 1865, black and “coloured” members accounted for twelve of the forty-five seats in the Assembly.²⁵ Recognition of this situation was a major factor in the decision of the Assembly to relinquish its

²³ Elkins, 65-6.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 66.

²⁵ Holt, 226-7, 256-8. Black representation had fallen from eighteen in 1860 due to the effects of the 1859 Franchise Act, which reduced the registration of peasant freeholders by around eighty-five

powers in the wake of the Morant Bay revolt, making the way for Crown Colony government. Although this meant direct rule from the metropole, and the presence of unelected officials, more stringent property qualifications precluded the advance of black representation. During a period when the industrious and respectable working class in the metropole was granted citizenship, “excitable” and allegedly slothful black Jamaicans were disenfranchised.²⁶

Mends’ demands also have to be set against other proposals for changes in Jamaica’s legislative status current at this time. The proposal that found most favour with the Jamaican establishment was a confederation with Canada. Such a union, it was believed, would improve access to markets. Jamaica’s industry and employment would expand within the Empire, in contrast to alternative proposals that envisaged incorporation into the United States. More significantly, it would place Jamaica under the tutelage of a white Dominion that had shown its preparedness for responsible government. Self-determination, on the other hand, ‘would be another name for anarchy and chaos’.²⁷ Generally, the Jamaican masses were seen as unfit for any involvement in the machinery of government. They lacked ‘the standard of education, ... informed intelligence and ... sobered sense of civic responsibility ... to justify the extension of our present modicum of Representative Government’.²⁸

percent. For an overview of black political activity before Morant Bay see Swithin Wilmot, ‘The Growth of Black Political Activity in Post-Emancipation Jamaica’ in Lewis & Bryan (eds.).

²⁶ Catherine Hall, ‘Rethinking Imperial Histories: The Reform Act of 1867’, *New Left Review*, 208, 1994, 17-21. Franchise reform in the 1880s increased the black electorate significantly – they outnumbered the whites by three to one. However, high property qualifications for office meant that the elected portion of the Legislative Council continued to be dominated by a minuscule elite (Holt, 340-1).

²⁷ JT 17.5.1919, 6. See also JT editorial 24.5.1919, 6 and supplement of 11.10.1919 ‘The Question of BWI Union With Canada’.

In a pamphlet published in 1923, *Can There Still be Hope for the Reformation in Jamaica?*, Mends once more laid out his proposals. He described Jamaica as

[a]n Island shouting, wailing, weeping across the broad blue waters of the Atlantic to the peoples of England – the British parliament and our Sovereign Lord the king, amidst seas of misunderstandings, mismanagements, maladministrations and lamentations – shouting the truth in its political enslavement for a change of her present political Constitution, for a restoration of the status quo ante, 1865 – plaintively shouting the Truth for Full Extended Representation, commensurate with the much vaunted boast "Civis Britannicus sum" (I am a British citizen).²⁹

This last statement highlights the true limitation of Mends' proposal, that, like Hercules, he demanded the extension of legislative freedom within the existing framework of Empire. He did not envisage at any point full self-determination for Jamaica. Nor did he advocate means that went beyond the accepted norms of liberal democracy. He continued,

Men and women of Jamaica! Stand up for your rights! ... Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!!! Hammer at the door of the British parliament until we gain admittance. We must show our discontent, in downright British fashion; we must not raise a gun or lift a sword; but fight to restore our political rights and privileges in a legal constitutional and loyal manner.³⁰

Mends' demands were deeply underpinned by the desire to enfranchise the returned veterans and to ensure their full incorporation into the annals of Empire. By this stage, having been granted the vote in the first election after the war only, the veterans were fully returned to subject status. Mends' aims again raised the image of a collective Empire and Allied effort in which Jamaicans had passed through the rituals of military brotherhood. However, he also invoked the experience and demands of US black veterans, showing that while he operated within the framework of Empire, he simultaneously, allied himself with a pan-African cause.

²⁸ JT 11.10.1919, 6.

²⁹ Alfred Alexander Mends, *Can There Still be Hope for the Reformation in Jamaica?*, Kingston 1923.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 9-10.

In the late Great War, Jamaicans fought heroically side by side ... with Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen, Canadians, Italians, Frenchmen, and Americans against Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, Germanic artillery and shells as hot as hell. Many gave up their lives, others permanently disabled, to uphold the glory of the British Empire, to keep floating proudly in the breeze, the Royal Standard, the Union Jack ... Can there be anything as dear as life? Where is the reward? The Negroes of America said to President Johnson through Frederick Douglas their spokesman and orator: "Your noble and humane predecessor placed in our hands the sword to assist in saving the nation, and we hope that you, his able successor, will be favourably regard the placing in our hands the ballot with which to save ourselves".³¹

Despite the demands of the early nationalist leaders and the agitation of the returning veterans, the wartime service of the black soldiers of Jamaica would go unrewarded. This was despite the fact that the image of the citizen-volunteer continued to be held up as an ideal in Jamaican society. When the flag of the 11th battalion of the British West Indies Regiment was deposited at the Kingston Parish Church, in 1921, the bishop asked "May it constantly remind those who worship here of the self-sacrifice and devotion to duty displayed by the men of this island".³² The Chaplain reminded the congregation that '[t]he good Christian must be a good citizen, recognising the responsibility in political privileges'. Remarks, such as these, from the spokesmen of colonial authority, helped to keep the ideals of military sacrifice alive in the minds of Jamaican veterans.

Returning veterans were not granted lasting access to the rights of citizenship that they had been led to expect, either in the shape of the franchise or land, which they saw as a just reward for their sacrifices. Instead, the political and economic structures remained largely undisturbed until renewed crises in the wake of the Depression placed questions of citizenship at the door of the colonial hierarchy. Significantly,

³¹ *ibid.*, 11-2.

the demands of the ex-soldiers that their masculine sacrifice be rewarded, was rekindled during the renewed mood of dissatisfaction with the colonial regime in the late 1930s.

Veterans in the 1930s Unrest.

Anti-colonial unrest was rife throughout the Anglophone Caribbean during the 1930s.³³ The underlying cause was the failure of the plantation system to provide a suitable basis for full employment and economic growth, but this tied in with an increasing politicisation, brought about by both domestic and international events. In Jamaica, although sugar had been supplanted by banana, the two crops between them still accounted for around ninety per cent of export earnings by the 1930s. The dependence on the export market meant that the island economy was severely hit by the Depression of the 1920s and '30s. The sugar price plummeted, dragging down wages and employment conditions. Workers turned off the land, drifted towards the urban areas in search of work. However, they had to compete with the droves of migrants returning from the United States, Central America and particularly Cuba, who included some of the 4000 or so, former servicemen who had decamped there after the Great War.³⁴ The involvement in the 1930s developments by veterans who

³² JT 5.2.1921, 13.

³³ For readings on the development of the labour movement in Jamaica see Eaton; Phelps; Post, *Arise ...*; Richard Hart, *Rise and Organise: The Birth of the Workers and National Movements in Jamaica (1936-1939)*, London, 1989; Arthur Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers' Movement*, London, 1977; Ken Post, *Strike the Iron: A Colony at War, Jamaica 1939-1945*. (2 Vols.), Atlantic Highlands, 1981; Maurice St. Pierre, 'The 1938 Jamaica Disturbances: A Portrait of Mass Reaction against Colonialism', *Social and Economic Studies*, 27:2, 1978, 171-196.

³⁴ For studies of the experience of West Indian labour in Cuba see Marc C. McLeod, 'Undersirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers, 1912-1939', *Journal of Social History*, 31: 3, 1998, 599-623; Barry Carr, 'Identity, Class and Nation: Black Immigrant Workers, Cuban Communism, and the Sugar Insurgency, 1925-1934', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 78: 1, 1988, 83-116; Alejandro de la Fuente, 'Two Dangers, One Solution: Immigration, Race, and Labor in Cuba, 1900-1930'

had been politicised in Cuba remains a significant untapped avenue for future research.

Former soldiers were involved in the hunger marches that became a regular feature of Jamaican life from the early 1930s. These demonstrations were often ruthlessly broken up by the constabulary.³⁵ As well as demanding access to cultivable land, the veterans also demanded favourable treatment in the granting of public works contracts. Complaints regarding the activities of the so-called “alien traders” were also evident among the ex-servicemen, who may have regarded their war service as a means of delineating their Jamaicanness.³⁶ But the Italian invasion, and subsequent occupation, of Ethiopia from 1935 saw the greatest response from the ex-servicemen. The 1870 Foreign Enlistment Act forbade any subject from taking up arms against a state that was not formally at war with Britain. Convinced that appeasement would not bring about an Italian withdrawal, the Universal Negro Improvement Association presented a petition to George V calling for the legislation to be suspended. More significantly, there was a stark realignment on the part of UNIA, which now saw citizenship rights linked to war service in the gift of an alternative sovereign, the Emperor of Ethiopia. The petitioners were ‘jealous of the preservation of any part of Africa which is free of foreign domination’. They demanded the liberty to ‘fight to preserve the glories of our ancient and beloved Empire ... we have every right to have free parts of our country at our disposal whenever it is our desire to go there’.³⁷

International Labor and Working-Class, 51, 1997, 30-49. I am indebted to Jorge Luis Giovannetti-Torres for these references.

³⁵ Post, *Arise ...*, 240; CO950/93 Sgt. W. Johnson to Royal Cm. (n.d.).

³⁶ CO950/240 Memorandum of Jamaica Ex-Service Men Labour Union

Referring to the contribution of Jamaica to the war effort, another petition of nearly one thousand signatures was collected by Garveyites, Leonard Waison and St. Williams Grant. The petitioners requested '[t]hat in the same way as we helped to safe guard the integrity of other races, we are asking that our race be protected at this crucial moment'.³⁸ In a letter to *Plain Talk*, a weekly paper edited by the veteran radical Alfred Mends, an ex-soldier was more vehement: 'if I had the fighting spirit to defend the whiteman against the whiteman then why could I not defend the Abyssinians my mother against those heartless uncivilized Italians?'.³⁹ In the same edition, another veteran, A. H. Brown, called on all trained men to enlist in the fight against the Italians. Brown argued correctly that Mussolini's ambitions would not stop with Ethiopia and believed that the Italians were 'out to take hold of our Motherland Africa where God did provide for us all'.⁴⁰ *Plain Talk* also reported that one Jamaican, Allan Parker, was actually on his way to join the Ethiopian army.⁴¹ In another departure from the pro-Empire support evident at the beginning of the Great War, black Jamaicans with pan-Africanist leanings aimed to take the initiative in the protection of their homeland, rather than follow in the wake of the Empire.

Other Jamaicans still waited for Britain to show the lead. Ex-members of the West India Regiment, which in the past had proved a reliable ally of the Jamaican colonial regime, were more reticent in taking up the initiative. However, there was still a clear articulation of the wish to endure masculine acts of sacrifice in the name of the greater African nation. A resolution passed by these veterans, whose regiment had

³⁷ UNIA petition presented to George V (Oct./Nov. 1935).

³⁸ CO318/418/4/71062 Copy Petition to SSC 5.10.1935 signed by L. P. Waison, St. Williams Grant. See also resolution by Spanish Town Division of UNIA to SSC 9.10.1935 which took a similar line.

³⁹ *Plain Talk* 2.11.1935, 3.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 10.

been disbanded in 1926, approved of British efforts to avert war with Italy and pledged support for peace.⁴² George Elliott, a former Company Sergeant major in the regiment, was employed as a sanitary inspector in Kingston. In correspondence with a former officer he stated:

This Abyssinian war is going to wreck the equilibrium of the world and put back civilization to about 1000 years ago ... The coloured people of the world ... are watching and taking the deepest interest in this scrap, and if England could only say the words the West Indian element, – about 60,000 men could easily drive the Italian hordes out of Abyssinia ... let England find the fighting planes and she would not have to sacrifice one European, the blacks would do the skirmishing.⁴³

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia helped to promote the idea of sacrifice in the cause of pan-Africanism. Nevertheless, the view persisted that the masculine military sacrifice of the Great War should be rewarded, partly as a way to restore a sense of loyalty to the British crown. After unrest throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, which culminated, in Jamaica, with mass protests and strikes in May 1938, the Moyne Commission was established to enquire into the economic and social circumstances of the region.⁴⁴

Several veterans, either individually, or as members of ex-service associations, submitted evidence to the Commission when it visited Jamaica. Before enlistment, the veterans had believed that not only would their military achievements bring about improved status, but land, which they regarded as part of their reward, would improve their standing also. In the words of Sergeant W. Johnson, ‘we would be

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 11.

⁴² CO318/418/4/71062 Resolution passed by Ex-Servicemen of WIR Sept. 1935

⁴³ CSM George D. Elliott to V. C. Green 24.2.1936.

looked upon as great men of Jamaica our home'.⁴⁵ Although complaining bitterly about the conditions faced by the veterans, Johnson still felt a commitment to the monarch. This simultaneously represented a stake in the military brotherhood of "the King's men" but once more alluded to the deficiencies of white masculinity in the Great War:

Surfdom and dirt are our class Sir so we are begging this Commission to call a stop to this dissatisfaction among ex soldiers and Government, once an for all ... So as to encourage that peace and concord and love towards our Great King George VI and that God shall call us blessed. For all the people of the middle class and the upper class stay at home ... we the lower class ... do their share in the war for they would not go they afraid to die.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The commission's findings were not published until the end of the Second World War see *West India Royal Commission Report* (Cmd. 6607), London, 1945.

⁴⁵ CO950/93 Sgt. W, Johnson to Royal Cm. (n.d.).

⁴⁶ *ibid.* All spelling and punctuation as original.

Appendix

Table One

Dates & numbers of the Jamaican War Contingents¹

| Contingent | Date | Officers | Men |
|------------|------------|----------|------|
| First | 8.11.1915 | 12 | 722 |
| Draft | 24.12.1915 | 2 | 53 |
| Second | 7.1.1916 | 22 | 1100 |
| Third | 6.3.1916 | 25 | 1115 |
| — | 26.5.1916 | 12 | — |
| Fourth | 30.9.1916 | 36 | 726 |
| Fifth | 30.3.1917 | 30 | 1656 |
| Sixth | 1.6.1917 | 33 | 1656 |
| Seventh | 20.7.1917 | 22 | 851 |
| Eighth | 26.8.1917 | 31 | 1304 |
| Ninth | 2.10.1917 | 18 | 985 |

Note: A further 465 men were recruited but were not drafted overseas.

Table Two

Occupations of the first 4000 Jamaican volunteers²

| Occupation | No. | Occupation | No. |
|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------|-------------|
| Bakers | 245 | Hat & Basketmakers | 8 |
| Boot & shoemakers | 176 | Labourers | 1633 |
| Butchers | 33 | Musicians | 9 |
| Barbers | 10 | Masons & Builders | 102 |
| Cultivators | 657 | Not known | 40 |
| Clerks | 249 | Plumbers & tinsmiths | 20 |
| Coachbuilders & wheelwrights | 24 | Printers | 69 |
| Chemists & hospital attendants | 17 | Printers & binders | 17 |
| Chauffeurs | 43 | Potters | 1 |
| Coachmen, grooms, drivers etc. | 159 | Sugar boilers | 1 |
| Carpenters & cabinetmakers | 356 | Shopkeepers | 39 |
| Coopers & sawyers | 20 | Servants | 37 |
| Cigarmakers | 20 | Seamen | 11 |
| Constables | 42 | Saddlers | 21 |
| Engine, motor drivers & trackmen | 52 | Shipwrights | 7 |
| Engineers, smiths & mechanics | 196 | Tanners | 5 |
| Fishermen | 56 | Tailors | 165 |
| Foremen & overseers | 17 | Teachers | 40 |
| Goldsmiths & jewellers | 9 | Total | 4000 |

¹ WWJ, 245, 247.

² *ibid.*, 246.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

a) Official Papers

Public Record Office

| | | |
|----|-----------|---|
| BT | 350 | Merchant Seamen's Papers |
| CO | 28 | Barbados Governor's Dispatches |
| CO | 137 | Jamaica Governor's Dispatches |
| CO | 318 | West Indies Correspondence |
| CO | 323 | War Office/Colonial Office Correspondence |
| CO | 950 | The West India Royal Commission, 1938-39 (the Moyne Commission) |
| MH | 106 | War Office First World War Representative Records of Servicemen |
| WO | 32 | War Office Registered Files (General Series) |
| WO | 33 | War Office Reports, Memoranda & Papers ("O" & "A" Series) |
| WO | 71 | Judge Adjutant General's Office: Courts Martial Proceedings |
| WO | 95 | War Diaries |
| WO | 106/866-8 | Jamaica Headquarters Correspondence & Telegrams |
| WO | 213 | Registers of Field General Courts Martial & Military Courts |
| WO | 339 | World War One Officers Personal Files |
| WO | 364 | Soldier's Papers |
| WO | 374 | World War One Officers Personal Files |

East Riding of Yorkshire Record Office

Hull Quarter Sessions Witness Depositions

Newham Local Studies & Archives

West Ham Police Court Register of Charges

Wellcome Institute

Records of the Royal Army Medical Corps

b) Official Reports & Publications

Aliens Act (Acts of Parliament, 1905, Chapter 13), London: HMSO, 1905.

British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act (Acts of Parliament, 1914, Chapter 16), London: HMSO, 1914.

Jamaica Departmental Reports (1918-1919), Kingston: Govt. Printing Office, 1920.

Jamaica Departmental Reports 1919-1920, Kingston: Govt. Printing Office, 1921.

Jamaica War Contribution (Cd. 8695), London: HMSO, 1917.

Manual of Military Law, London: Hamilton & Sons, 1914.

Report of the Committee on Emigration From India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates (The Sanderson Commission) (Cmd. 5192-4), London: HMSO, 1910.

Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-Shock" (Cmd. 1734), London: HMSO, 1922.

Reports of the West Indian Contingent Committee, London: West India Committee, 1916-1919.

West India Royal Commission Report (Cmd. 6607) (The Moyne Commission), London: HMSO, 1945.

c) Miscellaneous Documents

BWIR, Album of press cuttings (ICS WIC/2/BWIR).
BWIR, War Diary, 1st Battalion 1915-1919 (ICS WIC/3/BWIR).
CSM George D. Elliott to V. C. Green (Rhodes House, Oxford, Mss.W.Ind.s.54).
Ministry of Defence Press Release No. 264, 10.2.1999.
Minutes of the West Indies Contingent Committee (ICS WIC/2/BWIR).
West India Regiment: Trooping the Colours Prior to Disbandment. Kingston, 27.10.1926 (programme) (NAM).

d) Newspapers & Periodicals

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter</i> | <i>Lancet</i> |
| <i>Boy Scouts HQ Gazette</i> | <i>Mansfield House Magazine</i> |
| <i>Crisis</i> | <i>Negro World</i> |
| <i>Daily Chronicle</i> (Kingston) | <i>New York Times</i> |
| <i>Daily Dispatch</i> | <i>Newhaven Chronicle</i> |
| <i>Daily Gleaner</i> | <i>Scout</i> |
| <i>East Ham Echo</i> | <i>Seaman</i> |
| <i>Empire</i> | <i>Stratford Express</i> |
| <i>Empire News</i> | <i>The Times</i> |
| <i>ExService Man</i> | <i>Umpire</i> |
| <i>Guardian</i> | <i>West Africa</i> |
| <i>Hull Daily News</i> | <i>West India Committee Circular</i> |
| <i>Jamaica Times</i> | <i>Zouave</i> |

e) Contemporary Monographs & Pamphlets

Aldington, Richard - *Death of a Hero*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1929.
Annual Report of Queen Victoria's Seamen's Rest, 1922.
Aspinall, Algernon E. - 'The West Indies & the War', *Overseas*, 12, 1917, 55-7.
Barnes, J. Edmestone - *The Signs of the Times: Touching on the Final Supremacy of Nations*, London: Henry P. Brion, 1903.
'British Island Colonies & the War', *The Times History of the War*, XVI, 1918, 73-108.
Brittain, Vera - *Testament of Youth*, London: Fontana, 1979 [1933].
Cundall, Frank - *Jamaica's Part in the Great War 1914-1918*, London: West India Committee, 1925.
De Lisser, H. G. - *Jamaica and the Great War*, Kingston: Gleaner Co., 1917.
The Declining Birth-Rate: Its Causes and Effects (The Report of the National Birth-Rate Commission established by the NCPM - for the Promotion of Race Regeneration - Spiritual, Moral and Physical), London: Chapman & Hall, 1916.
Edmonds, Charles - *A Subaltern's War*, New York: Minton Balch, 1930.
Elderton, Ethel M. - *Report on the English Birthrate* (Pt. 1: England North of the Humber. Eugenics Laboratory Memoirs XIX & XX), London: Dulau & Co., 1914.
Ellis, Havelock - *Essays in Wartime*, London: Constable, 1916.
Ellis, Havelock - *The Problem of Race-Regeneration*, London: Cassell, 1911.
"Fusilier" - 'The British West Indies Regiment', *United Empire*, VII, 1916, 27-9.
Graham, Rev. J. W. & Redcam, Tom - *Round the Blue Light*, Kingston: Jamaica Times Printery, 1918.
Graves, Robert - *Goodbye to All That*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960 [1929].
Herbert, A.P. - *The Secret Battle*, Oxford University Press, 1982 [1919].
Hill, Stephen A. (ed.) - *Who's Who in Jamaica, 1919-1920*, Kingston: Gleaner Co., 1920.
Horner, A.E. - *From the Islands of the Sea: Glimpses of a West Indian Battalion in France*, Nassau: Guardian, 1919.
Horton, R. F. - *National Ideals and Race-Regeneration*, London: Cassell, 1912.
Horton, R. F. - *Three Months in India*, London: Cassell, 1913.

Johnstone, Harry H. - *The Black Man's Part in the War*, London: Simpkin, Marshall & Kent, 1917.
Letters from the Trenches During the Great War, Shipston-on-Stour: King's Stone Press, n.d.
 Lettow-Vorbeck, Paul Emil von - *My Reminiscences of East Africa*, London: Hurst & Blackett, 1920.
 MacGill, Patrick - *The Great Push: An Episode of the Great War*, London: Caliban, 1984 [1916].
 Manning, Frederic - *Her Privates We*, London: Hogarth Press, 1986 [1929].
 Mends, Alfred Alexander - *Can There Still be Hope for the Reformation in Jamaica?*, Kingston: Temple of Fashion Printery, 1923.
 "Morgan, Harry" - *Odd Leaves From an Adventurer's Log, or, Advanced Chapters of an Autobiography* (Vol. I, 'Tales of the Tropics'), Kingston: F. N. Small, 1916.
 Ogilvie, Charles M. - *A Diary of the Great War*, Kingston, 1919.
 Pugh, Edwin - *City of the World*, London: Nelson, 1915.
 Ramson, Rev. J.L. - *"Carry On" or Papers from the Life of a West Indian Padre in the Field*, Kingston: Educational Supply Co., 1918.
 Redcam, Tom - *Orange Valley & Other Poems*, Kingston: Pioneer Press, 1951.
 Salmon, Thomas - *The Care & Treatment of Mental Diseases & War Neuroses ("Shell Shock") in the British Army*, New York: Mental Hygiene War Work Committee, 1917.
 Thomas, Herbert T., *The Story of a West Indian Policeman: Or Forty-seven years of the Jamaican Constabulary*, Kingston: Gleaner Co., 1927.
 Tomlinson, Frederick C. - *The End of the Age*, Kingston: Rainbow Printery and Publishing Co., 1915.
 Wheeler, Leonard Richmond - *Desert Musings*, London: A. H. Stockwell, 1919.
 Wheeler, Leonard Richmond - *Scouting in the Tropics*, London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1926.
 White, Arnold - *Efficiency and Empire*, London: Methuen, 1901.
 Wilson, C. A. - *Men With Backbone*, Kingston: Educational Supply Co., 1905.
 Wilson, C. A. - *Men With Vision*, Kingston: Gleaner Co., 1929.
 Wood Hill, Lt. Col. - *A Few Notes on the History of the British West Indies Regiment*. n.p., n.d.
 Yealland, Lewis - *Hysterical Disorders of Warfare*, London: Macmillan, 1918.

f) Unpublished memoirs and correspondence

Blackadder, Lt. R.J. ts. diary (IWM 88/11/1)
 Crosbie Smith, Clive A. papers (Rhodes House, Oxford, Mss.W.Ind.s.22).
 Laws, M. E. S. *The West India Regiment*, mss. (NAM 8110-41-23).
 Thomas, Mrs. M. A. A ts. (IWM).

Secondary Works

Abraham, J. Johnston - *Surgeons Journey*, London: Heinemann, 1957.
 Adams, Michael - *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990.
 Anderson, Benedict - *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.
 Babington, Anthony - *For the Sake of Example*, Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1983.
 Babington, Anthony - *Shell-Shock: A History of the Changing Attitudes to War Neurosis*, Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1997.
 Bailey, David A. et al - *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, London: Hayward Gallery, 1997.
 Barbeau, Arthur E. & Henri, Florette - *The Unknown Soldiers: African American Troops in World War I* (revised ed.), New York: Da Capo Press, 1996.
 Beckles, Hilary & Shepherd, Verene - *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, London: James Currey, 1993.
 Berman, Marshall - *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: the Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983.

- Bolland, O. Nigel - *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-39*, London: James Currey, 1995.
- Bourke, Joanna - *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare*, London: Granta, 1999.
- Bourke, Joanna - *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, London: Reaktion Books, 1996.
- Brathwaite, Edward - *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820*, Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Brereton, Bridget & Yelvington, Kevin A. - *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition: Essays on Postemancipation Social & Cultural History*, Mona: Press University of the West Indies, 1999.
- Bristow, Joseph - *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, London: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Brodber, Erna - 'Afro-Jamaican Women at the Turn of the Century', *Social and Economic Studies*, 35, 1986, 23-50.
- Bryan, Patrick - *The Jamaican People 1880-1902*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991.
- Buckley, Roger Norman - *Slaves in Red Coats: the British West India Regiments, 1795-1815*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979.
- Bynum, W. F. Porter, Roy & Shepherd, Michael (eds.), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, Vol. II, London: Tavistock, 1985.
- Carnegie, J. - *Some Aspects of Jamaica's Politics 1918-1938*, Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1973.
- Carr, Barry - 'Identity, Class and Nation: Black Immigrant Workers, Cuban Communism, and the Sugar Insurgency, 1925-1934', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 78: 1, 1988, 83-116.
- Cassidy, Frederic G. - *Jamaica Talk: Three Hundred Years of the English Language in Jamaica*, London: Macmillan, 1961.
- Caulfield, Jas. E. - *One Hundred Year's History of the 2nd Battalion West India Regiment From Date of Raising 1795 to 1898*, London: Forster Groom & Co., 1899.
- Chapman, Rowena & Rutherford, Jonathan (eds.) - *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity*, London: L & W, 1988.
- Chomsky, Aviva - *West Indian Workers in the United Fruit Co. in Costa Rica, 1870-1940*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1996.
- Cipriani, A.A. - *Twenty-five Years After: The British West Indies Regiment in the Great War 1914-1918*, Port of Spain: Trinidad Publishing Co., 1940.
- Connell, R. W. - *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity, 1995.
- Cooper Wayne (ed.) - *The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Poetry and Prose, 1912-1948*, New York: Schocken Books, 1973.
- Cooper, Wayne F. - *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.
- Cribbs, W. D. - 'Campaign Dress of the West India Regiments' *JSAHR*, 70, 1992, 174-188.
- Cribbs, W. D. - 'The Royal Africans', *Military Modelling*, April 1991.
- Cross, Malcolm & Heuman, Gad (eds.) - *Labour in the Caribbean*, London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Curtin, Philip - *The Image of Africa: British Ideas & Action, 1780-1850* (Vol. I), Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964.
- Dallas, Gloden & Gill, Douglas - *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War I*, London: Verso, 1985.
- Davin, Anna - 'Imperialism & Motherhood', *History Workshop Journal*, 5, 1978, 9-65.
- Dawson, Graham - *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, London: Routledge, 1994.
- de la Fuente, Alejandro - 'Two Dangers, One Solution: Immigration, Race, and Labor in Cuba, 1900-1930', *International Labor and Working-Class*, 51, 1997, 30-49.
- Drane, John - *Introducing the Old Testament*, Tring: Lion, 1987.
- Dupuch, Sir Etienne - *A Salute to Friend and Foe*, Nassau: Tribune, 1982.
- Dyde, Brian - *The Empty Sleeve: the Story of the WIR of the British Army*, St. Johns, Antigua: Hansib, 1997.
- Dyer, Richard - *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars & Society*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986.
- Eaton, G. - 'Trade Union Development in Jamaica', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 8:1/2, 1962, 42-53, 69-75.
- Eley, Geof & Suny, Ronald Grigor - *Becoming National: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Elkins, W. F. - 'Unrest Among the Negroes': A British document of 1919', *Science and Society*, 32, 1968, 66-79.

- Elkins, W. F. - *Black Power in the Caribbean*, New York: Revisionist Press, 1976.
- Elkins, W.F. - 'Revolt of the British West Indies Regiment', *Jamaica Journal*, 11:3/4, 1978, 73-5.
- Elkins, W.F. - 'A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: the Revolt of the BWIR at Taranto, Italy', *Science and Society*, 33:2, Sp. 1970.
- Elkins, W.F. - *Street Preachers, Faith Healers and Herb Doctors in Jamaica 1890-1925*, New York: Revisionist Press, 1977.
- Ellis, A. B. - *History of the I West India Regiment*, London: Chapman & Hall, 1885.
- Evans, Neil - 'The South Wales Riots of 1919', *Llafur*, 3:1, 1980, 1-24.
- Feldman, David & Jones, Gareth Stedman (eds.) - *Metropolis London: Histories & Representations since 1800*, London: Routledge, 1989.
- Ferguson, Niall - *The Pity of War*, London: Allen Lane, 1998.
- Flaubert, Gustave - *Salammbô* (trans. J. C. Chartres), London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1931.
- Foster, R. F. - *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.
- Fryer, Peter - *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, London: Pluto, 1984.
- Fussell, Paul - *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Gilmore, David - *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*, New York: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Gittings, Christopher E. (ed.) - *Imperialism and Gender: Constructions of Masculinity*, Hebden Bridge: Dangeroo, 1996.
- Grayzel, Susan R. - *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain & France During the First World War*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Green, Jeffrey - *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914*, London: Frank Cass, 1998.
- Green, Martin - *Dreams of Adventure Deeds of Empire*, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1980.
- Grundlingh, Albert - *Fighting their Own War: South African Blacks in the First World War*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987.
- Hall, Catherine - 'Rethinking Imperial Histories: The Reform Act of 1867', *New Left Review*, 208, 1994, 17-21.
- Hall, Donald E - *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Hart, Richard - *Rise and Organise: The Birth of the Workers and National Movements in Jamaica (1936-1939)*, London: Karia Press, 1989.
- Hart, Richard - *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery* (Vol. II), Mona: ISER, 1985.
- Heinel, Robert & Nancy - *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1971*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978.
- Higonnet, M. R. & Jenson, Jane (eds.) - *Behind the Lines: Gender and Two World Wars*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Hill, Robert A. (ed.) - *The Marcus Garvey & Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Vol. I), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Hobsbawm, Eric - *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Holt, Thomas - *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Howe, Glenford D. - *West Indians and World War One: A Social History of the British West Indies Regiment*, London: unpublished PhD thesis, 1994.
- Howe, Glenford D. - 'Military-Civilian Intercourse, Prostitution and Venereal Disease Among Black West Indian Soldiers During World War I', *JCH*, 31:1 & 2, 1997, 91.
- Hurwitz, Samuel J. & Edith F. - *Jamaica: A Historical Portrait*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1971.
- Husbands, Christopher T. - 'East End Racism 1900-1980: Geographical Continuities in Vigilantist & Extreme Right-wing Political Behaviour', *London Journal*, 8:1, 1982, 7-12.
- Hyam, Ronald - *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience*, Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Hynes, Samuel - *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*, London: Pimlico, 1998.
- Jain, Shobhita & Reddock, Rhoda - *Women Plantation Workers: International Experiences*, Oxford: Berg, 1998.
- James, C. L. R. - *The Life of Captain Cipriani*, Nelson: Cartmell, 1932.
- James, C. L. R. - *The Black Jacobins*, London: Alison & Busby, 1980 [1938].
- James, Lawrence - *Imperial Warrior: The Life & times of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby 1861-1936*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993.

- James, Laurence - *Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956*, London: Buchan & Enright, 1987.
- Johnson, Howard - 'The Anti-Chinese Riots of 1918 in Jamaica', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 28:3, 1982, 19-32.
- Jolliffe, John - *Raymond Asquith: Life and Letters*, London: Collins, 1980.
- Jones, Gareth Stedman - *Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship Between the Classes in Victorian Society*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.
- Joseph, C.L. - 'The British West Indies Regiment 1914-1918', *JCH*, 2, 1971, 94-124.
- Keegan, John - *The First World War*, London: Hutchinson, 1998.
- Lake, Marilyn - 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation - Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts', *Gender & History*, 4:3, 1992, 305-322.
- Lee, Emanoel - *To the Bitter End: A Photographic History of the Boer War 1899-1902*, London: Viking, 1985.
- Leed, Eric - *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Levine, Philippa - 'Battle Colors: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldierly in World War I', *Journal of Women's History*, 8:4, 1998, 104-130.
- Lewis, Arthur - *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers' Movement*, London: New Beacon, 1977 [1938].
- Lewis, Rupert & Bryan, Patrick - *Garvey: His Work & Impact*, Mona: ISER, 1988.
- Lorimer, Douglas A. - *Colour, Class & the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Leicester University Press, 1978.
- Loscombe, A.R. - *The 1st Battalion West India Regiment: a Brief Historical Sketch*, London, West India Committee, n.d.
- Lotz, Rainer & Pegg, Ian (eds.) - *Under the Imperial Carpet: Essays in Black History 1780-1950*, Crawley: Rabbit Press, 1986.
- Lucas, Sir Chas. (ed.) - *The Empire at War* (Vol. II), Oxford University Press, 1923.
- Lunn, Joe - "'Les Races Guerrieres': Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34: 4, 1999, 517-536.
- Lunn, Kenneth (ed.) - *Race & Labour in Twentieth-Century Britain*, London: Frank Cass, 1985.
- MacDonald, Robert H. - *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918*, University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Mangan, J. A. - *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Mangan, J. A. - *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*, London: Viking, 1986.
- Mangan, J. A. & Walvin, James (eds.) - *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, Manchester University Press, 1987.
- Manley, N.W. - 'The Autobiography of Norman Washington Manley', *Jamaica Journal*, 7:1/2, Mar./Jun. 1973, 2-19, 92.
- May, Roy & Cohen, Robin - 'The Interaction Between Race & Colonialism: A Case Study of the Liverpool Race Riots of 1919', *Race & Class*, 14:2, 1974, 111-126.
- McClintock, Anne - *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender & Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, London: Routledge, 1995.
- McKay, Claude - *A Long Way From Home*, London: Pluto, 1985.
- McLeod, Marc C. - 'Undersirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers, 1912-1939', *Journal of Social History*, 31: 3, 1998, 599-623.
- Melman, Billie (ed.) - *Borderlines: Genders & Identities in War & Peace, 1870-1930*, London: Routledge, 1998.
- Mendus, Susan & Rendell, Jane (eds.) - *Sexuality & Subordination*, London: Routledge, 1989.
- Mercer, Kobena - *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Mintz, Sidney - *Caribbean Transformations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Mosse, George L. - *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford University Press, 1990.

- Mosse, George L. - *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Myers, Charles S. - *Shell Shock in France 1914-18: Based on a War Diary*, Cambridge University Press, 1940.
- Nagel, Joane - 'Masculinity & Nationalism: Gender & Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 21:2, 1998, 242-269.
- Newton, Velma - *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama 1850-1914*, Mona: ISER, 1984.
- Omissi, David - *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940*, London: Macmillan, 1994.
- Oram, Gerard - *Death Sentences, 1914-1924*, London, Francis Bootle, 1998.
- Oram, Gerard - *Worthless Men: Race Eugenics and the Death Penalty in the British Army During the First World War*, London: Francis Bootle, 1998.
- Ouditt, Sharon - *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War*, London: Routledge, 1994.
- Panayi, Panikos (ed.) - *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries*, Leicester University Press, 1996.
- Parker, Andrew Russo, Mary Sommer, Doris & Yaeger, Patricia - *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- Patterson, Orlando - *Slavery & Social Death*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Peel, Albert & Marriott, Sir John - *Robert Foreman Horton*, London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1937.
- Perry, F. W. - *Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars*, Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Phelps, O.W. - 'Rise of the Labour Movement in Jamaica', *Social and Economic Studies*, 9:4, 1969, 417-68.
- Pick, Daniel - *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Post, Ken - *Arise Ye Starvelings: The Jamaica Labour Rebellion of 1938 and Its Aftermath*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978.
- Post, Ken - *Strike the Iron: A Colony at War, Jamaica 1939-1945*. (2 Vols.), Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1981.
- Putkowski, J. & Sykes, J. - *Shot at Dawn: Executions in World War One by Authority of the British Army Act*, Barnsley: Wharnccliffe, 1989.
- Reed, Paul - Black Soldiers in the British Army, 1914-1919, *Stand To!* April 1997, 10-12.
- Reinders, Robert C. - 'Racialism on the Left: E. D. Morel and the "Black Horror on the Rhine"', *International Review of Social History*, 13, 1968, 1-28.
- Roper, Michael & Tosh, John - *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, London: Routledge, 1991.
- Rose, Sonya O. - 'Sex Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain', *American Historical Review*, 103:4, 1998, 1147-1176.
- Rothstein, Andrew - *The Soldiers Strikes of 1919*, London: Journeymen Press, 1985.
- Rutherford, Jonathan - *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997.
- Schneer, Jonathan - *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Scott, Joan Wallach - *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Searle, G. R. - *Eugenics & Politics in Britain, 1900-1914*, Leyden: Noordhoff, 1976.
- Sheller, Mimi B. - *Engendering Citizenship: Nationhood, Brotherhood, and Manhood in the Republic of Haiti in the Nineteenth Century*, Paper presented to Society of Caribbean Studies, July 1996.
- Sheller, Mimi - 'Sword-Bearing Citizens: Militarism and Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Haiti', *Plantation Societies in the Americas*, 4:2/3, 1997, 233-78.
- Shephard, Verene - *Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica 1845-1950*, Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1994.
- Showalter, Elaine - *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*, London: Virago, 1987.
- Sinha, Mrinalini - *Colonial Masculinity: The 'manly englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester University Press, 1995.

- Smith, Richard - *Gender and Plantation Labour in the Caribbean 1838-1917: A Comparative Study of Jamaica and Trinidad*, Essex, unpublished MA thesis, 1996.
- Smith, Timothy d'Arch - *Love in Earnest*, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1970.
- Soloway, Richard A - *Degeneracy & Degeneration: Eugenics & the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Somerville, Christopher - *Our War: How the British Commonwealth Fought the Second World War*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998.
- St. Pierre, Maurice - 'The 1938 Jamaica Disturbances: A Portrait of Mass Reaction Against Colonialism', *Social and Economic Studies*, 27:2, 1978, 171-196.
- Nancy Stepan - *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982.
- Tabili, Laura - *"We Ask For British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Tosh, John - *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999.
- Turner, Mary (ed.) - *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas*, London: James Currey, 1995.
- Turner, Mary - *Slaves & Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982.
- Tylden, G. - 'The West India Regiment, 1795-1927 and from 1958', *JSAHR*, 40, Mar. 1962, 42-9.
- Vance, Norman - *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Vasili, Phil - 'Walter Tull, 1888-1918: Soldier, Footballer, Black', *Race & Class*, 38: 2, 61-2.
- Vatikiotis, P. J. - *The History of Modern Egypt: From Mohammad Ali to Mubarak*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991.
- Visram, Rozina - 'Kamal A. Chunchie of the Coloured Men's Institute: The Man and the Legend', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 18:1, 1999, 29-48.
- von Albertini, Rudolf - 'The Impact of Two World Wars on the Decline of Colonialism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4:1, 1969, 17-35.
- Wheeler, Leonard Richmond - 'Empire Troops in Sussex During the Great War', *Sussex County Magazine*, XIV, 1940, 202-207.
- Winter, Denis - *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
- Woollacott, Angela - 'Khaki Fever' and Its control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29:2, 1994, 325-347.
- Yeo, Eileen - *Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender & Class*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996.
