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Constructing elite identities

University students, military masculinity and the consequences of the Great War in Britain and Germany

CONSTRUCTING ELITE IDENTITIES: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, MILITARY MASCULINITY AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GREAT WAR IN BRITAIN AND GERMANY*

Did the First World War lead to a crisis of masculinity, or was the masculine ideal strengthened by the war? Were the returning soldiers shaped by a longing for domesticity or rather by a lust for violence? In what circumstances was a demilitarization of the masculine ideal possible, and how can its further militarization in Germany be explained? These questions are highly contentious in research on gender relations in the inter-war period.¹ Recent studies have tended to stress that men's reactions to war varied along lines of class, region, religion and generation, and have often questioned the extent of war's impact on gender relations.²

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¹ See, for example, Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, 1993); Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996); George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford and New York, 1996); Birthe Kundrus, 'Gender Wars: The First World War and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic', and Sabine Kienitz, 'Body Damage: War Disability and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany', both in Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York, 2002); Elisabeth Domansky, 'Militarization and Reproduction in World War I', in Geoff Eley (ed.), *Society, Culture and the State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, 1996); Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, trans. Stephen Conway, with Erica Carter and Chris Turner, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1987–9).

² See, in particular, Benjamin Ziemann, 'Die Erinnerung an den Ersten Weltkrieg in den Milieukulturen der Weimarer Republik', in Thomas F. Schneider (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis und Legendenbildung: das Bild des 'modernen' Krieges in Literatur, Theater, Fotografie und Film*, i, *Vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg, der Erste Weltkrieg* (Osnabrück, 1999), 259–60; Kundrus, 'Gender Wars'.

The following analysis of the ideals of manliness of two elite groups, English and German university students, seeks to demonstrate that conceptions of elite masculinity, which had been remarkably similar in both countries before 1914, developed in contrasting ways after 1918. Using a comparative approach, this article shows that the war proved to be a deciding factor for the fate of masculinities in the subsequent era and hence for the role of militarism in post-war Britain and Germany. It is, however, not the experience in the trenches that will primarily serve to explain changes and continuities, but the social and political consequences of victory and defeat.

Students in Cambridge colleges and Tübingen fraternities are used as a case study, a choice made for two reasons. First, at the beginning of the twentieth century colleges and fraternities were institutions that shaped the attitudes of their members for purposes of social and political leadership. They based their claim to elite status upon — among other things — specific ideals of manliness which their members allegedly represented. In spite of many differences in organization and outlook of the two institutions, this common aim enables a significant comparison to be made. Secondly, two localized examples have been chosen, because the local perspective permits not only the discussion of images and ideas of manliness as presented in student magazines, but also analysis of the students' daily rituals, and thus of the often neglected interdependence of discourse and practice in the construction of male identities.³

I

YOUTHFUL WARRIORS — STUDENT CONCEPTS OF MANLINESS BEFORE 1914

In the decade preceding the Great War, British and German students' concepts of masculinity were remarkably similar.

³ The Tübingen student body as a whole did not correspond to the elite status of Cambridge, but the fraternities, which represented, broadly speaking, the wealthier half of the students, can by function and social composition be compared with the Cambridge colleges. For a detailed discussion of this problem, see Sonja Levsen, *Elite, Männlichkeit und Krieg: Tübinger und Cambridger Studenten, 1900–1929* (Göttingen, 2006). Both communities have left a large variety of sources, including a range of magazines, year books, minutes, letters, memoirs, printed speeches, songs and photographs, which give an insight into the war's impact on the construction of male identity.

Masculinity was not regarded as given, but rather as something that had to be acquired, and both the colleges of the ancient English universities and the student fraternities of the German universities interpreted their communal life as a primary means of achieving this aim. Neither fraternity nor college life revolved exclusively around 'making men', but by 1900 this task had undoubtedly assumed a prominent position in the value systems of students in both countries.⁴ Admittedly, the daily rituals through which manly behaviour and demeanour were supposed to be acquired differed: in England team games were seen as the most important means of making men, whereas in Germany it was formalized duelling with swords that was accorded this role. But the assumption by some scholars, implicitly and even explicitly, that duelling and team games represented two essentially different, even opposite, mind-sets, does not bear closer scrutiny.⁵ Both practices display far-reaching similarities in the underlying concepts of male character, mainly regarding the role of community and the prominence of military ideals.

In the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries combat with swords was a salient feature of student life in German-speaking countries, and indeed has often been interpreted as a symptom of the German *Sonderweg*.⁶ Fraternity students in the Wilhelmine era

⁴ For a more detailed comparison of the situation in 1900, see Sonja Levsen, 'Männlichkeit als Studienziel: Männlichkeitskonstruktionen englischer und deutscher Studenten vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, li (2003).

⁵ This assumption is made, for example, by Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-Siècle Germany* (Princeton, 1994). Also, the works of Norbert Elias are informed by a belief in a fundamental difference between English and German society, a difference which is reflected in his interpretation of the 'martial' cult of duelling on the one hand and the 'civilian' modern English sports on the other: cf. Norbert Elias, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Michael Schröter, trans. and preface Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell (Cambridge, 1996); Norbert Elias, 'Introduction', in Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (eds.), *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Oxford and New York, 1986). In a similar vein, though without direct reference to games, George Mosse sees the English colleges in the Edwardian period as institutions where, in contrast to German universities, 'a military spirit had no place': Mosse, *Image of Man*, 141. This statement somehow conflicts with his judgement of the playing fields in George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990), 60–1. A critique of these views has recently been voiced by Thomas Weber, 'Oxford and Heidelberg Universities before the First World War: British and German Elite Institutions in Comparative Perspective' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2003).

⁶ See, especially, Elias, *Germans*, ch. 1. The reasons for the demise of the duel in England cannot be explored here, but see Anthony E. Simpson, 'Dandelions on the

(cont. on p. 150)

engaged in a specific, highly regulated type of fencing, known as 'academic fencing' to distinguish it from the normal forms (as found in the post-1896 Olympics). The fraternities' daily fencing lessons aimed to train students for the so-called *Mensuren*, highly ritualized duels employing the specialized sabre known as the *Schläger*, which involved a significant and intended risk of facial injury, but, in contrast to traditional duels, carried virtually no risk of death.⁷ In 1900 fourteen of the twenty-nine Tübingen student fraternities required their members to fight a certain number of *Mensuren*, while ten more obliged their members at least to attend academic fencing courses, in order to show their 'unconditional willingness to give satisfaction', should they be involved in a dispute of honour. In fraternities of the latter category a significant number of students engaged in voluntary *Mensuren*. As members of both groups attended at least one, but more often two, fencing lessons on five to six days a week, academic fencing shaped the everyday life of most fraternity students. In addition, the number of *Mensuren* fought by an average fraternity member rose significantly between the 1880s and the 1900s, and many fraternities that had taken a critical stance towards this cult in the 1870s had become hardcore duelling communities by 1910.⁸

The character traits which the *Mensur* and the daily fencing practice were said to foster were courage, self-discipline, fortitude and the willingness to subordinate self-interests to those of the community. Both the military shaping of the male ideal and the pivotal role accorded to the community catch the eye. The *Mensur* was interpreted by students as a symbol of their readiness to fight

(n. 6 cont.)

Field of Honor: Dueling, the Middle Classes, and the Law in Nineteenth-Century England', *Criminal Justice Hist.*, ix (1988). Some comparisons are made with England by Ute Frevert, 'Bourgeois Honour: Middle-Class Duellists in Germany from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century', in David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans (eds.), *The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the Social History of the German Middle Class from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century* (London and New York, 1991).

⁷ Academic fencing lessons also prepared students for 'real' duels fought with sabres, a common way of settling disputes of honour, but this aspect will not be discussed here. For the place of duelling in Wilhelmine society and its relationship to the *Mensur*, see Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: A Social and Cultural History of the Duel* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁸ In Tübingen this process can be shown, to varying degrees, for many fraternities; typical examples are the Landsmannschaft Schottland and the Saxonia: see Heinrich Münzenmaier, *Geschichte der Landsmannschaft Schottland zu Tübingen, 1849–1924* (Stuttgart, 1924), 113; *Saxonia Tubingensis, 1874–1924* (Leipzig, 1924), 46.

for their country,⁹ and was supposed to form the student's character in a way that would eventually make him a good soldier. Taking the soldier as a model for masculinity was neither particular to the late nineteenth century nor restricted to students: images of masculinity in Germany had been influenced by the military during the whole of the nineteenth century. But only at the end of the century did the military ideal of manliness become dominant and virtually unchallenged by other definitions of masculinity.¹⁰ The cult of academic fencing and the *Mensur* furthered this dominance and was one of its clearest expressions.

By 1900 this ideology of manliness formed an important part of the fraternities' self-image of representing a national elite. Interestingly, one element which usually had a firm place in military concepts of masculinity was missing: bodily fitness played no role in the arguments of the *Mensur*'s supporters and was indeed not developed significantly by academic fencing. According to the rules of the *Mensur*, the combatants were not allowed to move their feet or even their body except for the right arm. In addition, it was more important to suffer blows without a sign of pain than to excel in striking techniques.¹¹ Academic fencing was therefore judged by contemporaries to be 'not a practice capable of enhancing one's physique', but rather 'the very opposite of proper physical training'.¹² The 'strong, sinewy, slender student' propagated by some reformers as a new ideal was not the aim of this fencing cult: on the contrary — fat stomachs, often the result of hard drinking, were regarded as manly by the fraternities.¹³

Of equal importance for the military shaping was a second feature of the students' ideal of manliness, which has often been overlooked: the prominent role of community. The student was generally

⁹ A conviction that was repeated almost endlessly in student songs such as the ubiquitous 'Burschen heraus': see *Kommersbuch der Tübinger Hochschule*, 10th edn (Tübingen, 1912), 83.

¹⁰ Ute Frevert, 'Das Militär als "Schule der Männlichkeit": Erwartungen, Angebote, Erfahrungen im 19. Jahrhundert', in Ute Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1997).

¹¹ A contemporary description of this practice is given by the former British MP and Cambridge graduate Lees Knowles, written after a visit to Heidelberg: Sir Lees Knowles, *A Day with Corps-Students in Germany: Being an Account of Some Heidelberg Duels*, 2nd edn (Heidelberg, 1911).

¹² *Das Akademische Leben*, 23 Nov. 1912, 20; see also *ibid.*, 11 Jan. 1913, 69–71.

¹³ Cf. *Roigel-Blätter*, no. 4 (Aug. 1920), 117. The 'ample bosoms' of German students were often noted by British visitors: see *Oxford and Cambridge Rev.*, xi (Long Vac., 1910), 119.

obliged by his fraternity to fight a *Mensur*; the fraternity set up the rules, monitored and finally assessed the student's behaviour.¹⁴ While the bourgeois duellist risked his life to save his personal honour, the student engaged in a *Mensur* had to risk his bodily integrity at the behest — and for the honour — of the fraternity, the community.¹⁵ Hence the *Mensur* was an achievement 'within the community and for the community', and the subordination of the individual to the community counted as an essential element of manliness.¹⁶

In Oxbridge college life around 1900, meanwhile, the status of team games was comparable to that of academic fencing in the German student fraternities. Evidence that the 'cult of athleticism' shaped student life and attitudes in Edwardian Cambridge abounds: sports from rugby to rowing dominated the average students' daily routine as well as their discourses and values.¹⁷ The majority of undergraduates spent several hours per day on the playing fields, student magazines were obsessed with sporting news, students' letters to their parents were full of rowing reports, and the leading sportsmen within the university were frequent objects of hero-worship.¹⁸ Sporting achievements were an

¹⁴ If the demeanour of a combatant during the *Mensur* was judged to be unsatisfactory by the fraternity council, the student in question could temporarily or, in repeated cases, even permanently be excluded from the fraternity.

¹⁵ Ute Frevert has interpreted the duel as expressing a cult of individuality: Frevert, *Men of Honour*, ch. 6. Her interpretation is largely convincing for the non-academic sector, but is not applicable to the student duel, particularly not to the *Mensur*.

¹⁶ Henner Huhle, *Die Entwicklung des Fechtens an deutschen Hochschulen: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Schläger- und Säbelmensur* (Stuttgart, c.1965), 69.

¹⁷ See J. A. Mangan, 'Lamentable Barbarians and Pitiful Sheep: Rhetoric of Protest and Pleasure in Late Victorian and Edwardian "Oxbridge"', *Victorian Studies*, xxxiv (1990); J. A. Mangan, '"Oars and the Man": Pleasure and Purpose in Victorian and Edwardian Cambridge', *British J. Sports Hist.*, i (1984). A critical though not wholly convincing comment on Mangan's argument is given by M. C. Curthoys and S. H. Jones, 'Oxford Athleticism, 1815–1914: A Reappraisal', *Hist. Education*, xxiv (1995). For a comparative view, see Levensen, 'Männlichkeit als Studienziel'. Paul R. Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the Undergraduate Experience, 1850–1920* (Bloomington, 2005), gives an interesting and very analytical portrayal of undergraduate ideas about masculinity, but in my view pays too little attention to the dominance of the sporting ideology.

¹⁸ Examples are given by Donald Portway, *Militant Don* (London, 1964), 36, 38. The Peterhouse undergraduate magazine commented in 1913: 'That a College is judged by its place on the river is a maxim that is not believed because it is a platitude', *Sex* (Magazine of the Peterhouse Sexcentenary Club, Lent Term, 1913), 5. See also Mangan, '"Oars and the Man"'; J. P. C. Roach, 'The University of Cambridge', in J. P. C. Roach (ed.), *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, iii, *The City and University of Cambridge* (Oxford, 1959), 186.

important ingroup–outgroup criterion in the college community, and so their importance was analogous to that of the *Mensur* in the fraternities. This is not to say that Edwardian Cambridge was solely dominated by sport, to the exclusion of all other interests; debating, theatre and music formed an important part of student culture, and academic achievement was also important at least to a growing number of Honours candidates.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the cult of athleticism was dominant around 1900, and its ideology of manliness was one of the most important aspects of the undergraduates' group identity.

Although the imagery of team games does not relate as directly to war as the *Mensur* (with its sharp-edged swords) does, it has been convincingly shown by James A. Mangan and others that the accompanying ideology of manliness was strongly influenced by military ideals, particularly since the late nineteenth century.²⁰ With courage, self-discipline, the capacity to bear pain and exhaustion, and the subordination of the individual to the group, the character traits supposedly furthered by sport were astonishingly similar to those ascribed to the *Mensur*. Although the idea of a 'test of courage' was more central to the *Mensur* than to most games, many of the latter (especially rugby) still brought considerable risk of injury with them, a risk that was judged to be essential for their qualification as manly.²¹ A contrast to the *Mensur* is evident in terms of the role of the body: bodily prowess was central in the ideology of team games; health, fitness, the development of muscles and of an athletic body were crucial elements of the undergraduates' ideal of manliness.

Sports were said to provide young men with the leadership qualities of an imperial ruling class. Health, hardiness, self-discipline

¹⁹ See, for example, John Twigg, *A History of Queens' College, Cambridge, 1448–1986* (Woodbridge, 1987).

²⁰ See J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981); Mangan, "'Oars and the Man'"; J. A. Mangan, 'Games Field and Battlefield: A Romantic Alliance in Verse and the Creation of Militaristic Masculinity', in John Nauright and Timothy Chandler (eds.), *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity* (London, 1996); Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford, 1989); Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, ch. 4. Interpretations of sport as a symbol of civil, peaceful societies, as suggested by Norbert Elias, do not withstand closer scrutiny: Norbert Elias, 'An Essay on Sport and Violence', in Elias and Dunning (eds.), *Quest for Excitement*.

²¹ Lawn tennis for example suffered — because of its lack of danger and pain — in Cambridge from a reputation of being a 'ladies' game': see *Granta*, 30 Jan. 1920, 153.

and pluck were regarded as essential for future colonial governors, as well as for officers in the colonial troops. While it was thus not exclusively the soldier at which the games ideology aimed, military values were always close to its core. This held particularly true for the public schools, where teachers and headmasters eulogized the patriotic and military value of (school) games and created a powerful mythology which lasted well into the Great War.²² Yet the association of playing fields with battlefields was not restricted to elite schools: Edwardian songs, newspaper articles and recruiting speeches used sporting imagery to describe military action; the officer corps was 'absorbed' by sporting language.²³ When on 1 July 1916 the British attack at the Somme was opened by an infantryman kicking a football into no man's land, this was only one powerful expression of the close connection between sport and war in Edwardian culture.²⁴

At the universities, the proponents of sports referred less often to their patriotic value in war, but analogies between sport and war were nevertheless prominent here as well. In a debate on conscription at the Cambridge Union, an undergraduate argued that compulsory training was not necessary in England because 'athletics played the same part in England as drill did on the continent'.²⁵ Furthermore, the idealization of community was as central to the discourse on games as to the ideology behind the *Mensur*. A large part of rowing's special prestige in Cambridge was due to its association with the perfect community. Again and again the oarsman was praised for caring 'for the benefit of the boat, and not of himself', and idealized as a model for every undergraduate.²⁶ The eight 'all working as one man', thereby giving a 'perfect picture of cohesion, complete togetherness', were a powerful symbol of the college community and an exemplar of self-discipline and

²² Cf. Mangan, 'Games Field and Battlefield'.

²³ Michael C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington, 1990), 94.

²⁴ For a description of the incident at the Somme, see Colin Veitch, '"Play up! Play up! And Win the War!" Football, the Nation and the First World War, 1914–15', *Jl Contemporary Hist.*, xx (1985), 363; see also Aribert Reimann, *Der große Krieg der Sprachen: Untersuchungen zur historischen Semantik in Deutschland und England zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen, 2000), 135.

²⁵ *Cambridge Rev.*, 25 Jan. 1900, 170.

²⁶ King's College Archive Centre, Cambridge, KCAS 8, Eleven Society 1907–1909, 1 Dec. 1907, 34–6, Minutes of the debate on the motion: 'That Rowing Is the Best Form of Exercise'; see also T. R. Glover, *Cambridge Retrospect* (Cambridge, 1943), 130–1.

selflessness.²⁷ Undergraduates' accounts of rowing rarely omitted to stress the fascination of merging into a perfect community.²⁸ The idealization of community was not, however, restricted to rowing. Where other sports wanted to convince students that their prestige was on a par with rowing, they often referred to the argument of community. In this vein, a cricketer claimed in 1910: 'For if the eight have to row like one man, even so the eleven have to field and bat and bowl in complete co-operative discipline. Therein is the superb moral value of the national game'.²⁹ Manliness, as defined by the sporting ideology, was closely linked to the ideal of service to the community — the team, the college, the country.

It was widely acknowledged among Edwardian undergraduates that to be a 'Cambridge man' included the duty to fight for the nation. This is present not only in the games ideology but also in the high rate of participation in the Cambridge University Officers Training Corps (CUOTC). In 1900 about a quarter of all undergraduates engaged in voluntary military training; in 1910 almost every third undergraduate was active in the CUOTC.³⁰ Admittedly, the idea of introducing compulsory military training for undergraduates, which was repeatedly suggested by Cambridge dons, did not appeal to the majority of undergraduates; yet it was discussed eagerly and sometimes with positive resonance in many debating societies.³¹ The Officers Training Corps was a highly

²⁷ Jack Hulbert, *The Little Woman's Always Right* (London, 1975), 34; see also Holt, *Sport and the British*, 95.

²⁸ *Granta*, 25 Jan. 1889, 12.

²⁹ Home Gordon, 'University Cricket', *Oxford and Cambridge Rev.*, x (Midsummer Term, 1910), 66. See also the comment on cricket of an Indian undergraduate at Cambridge: 'If there is one thing which is needed for success in this game, it is the absence of all individuality; the good of his side should be the one absorbing thought of each player'. S. Sathianadhan, *Four Years in an English University*, 2nd edn (Madras, 1893), 104; Richard Holt, 'Cricket and Englishness: The Batsman as Hero', in Richard Holt, J. A. Mangan and Pierre Lafranchi (eds.), *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, Sport* (London and Portland, 1996).

³⁰ The Corps was established only in 1908, as part of Haldane's army reforms aimed at meeting the shortage of officers; the percentage given for 1900 refers to its predecessor, the Cambridge University Rifle Volunteers, formed in 1803. See Hew Strachan, *History of the Cambridge University Officers Training Corps* (Tunbridge Wells, 1976); Edward M. Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1980).

³¹ For the debate on compulsory training for undergraduates, see *Cambridge Mag.*, 18 Jan. 1913, 223–4; 19 Apr. 1913, 457; 25 Apr. 1914, 499–500; *Cambridge Rev.*, 27 Feb. 1913, 310; 6 Mar. 1913, 334. Motions in favour of compulsion were carried in several college debating societies, for example *Christ's College Mag.* (Lent Term, 1912), 95; Gonville and Caius College Archives, Cambridge, Debating Minutes, 1899–1904, 22 Nov. 1899.

regarded institution at Cambridge; it served as a guard of honour for important guests and represented the university in the funeral processions both for Victoria in 1901 and for Edward VII in 1910.³² Apart from drills, parades, lectures on military strategy, shooting exercises and summer camps, the Corps organized an annual military tournament against Oxford as well. The event, which attracted thousands of visitors, served to demonstrate Oxbridge's capacity for leadership in military matters. Its public perception gives evidence of the close connection between sporting and military prowess in Edwardian minds: 'the crowds that lined the huge arena at Olympia yesterday showed how keenly the Londoner appreciates the opportunity of seeing and admiring the athletic 'Varsityman and the clean sport that he invariably shows', reported the *Cambridge Daily News* in 1914.³³ The young officers-in-training were perceived as sportsmen, the military disciplines as games. But the military side of the spectacle was not forgotten. The *Times* commented on the 1913 tournament: 'It is not only Oxford vs. Cambridge, as at football, in the cricket field, and on the river. It is the example of Oxford and Cambridge to the country in the direction of military service'.³⁴

The conviction that Cambridge's claim to elite status in British society made an engagement in military matters necessary had been growing continuously since the Boer War, which had stimulated a wave of military enthusiasm in Cambridge as elsewhere.³⁵ Commenting on the relatively high number of Cambridge volunteers for South Africa in 1900, the *Cambridge Review* had voiced the hope 'that Cambridge men will ever be among the first to respond, when the necessity arises, to the call to arms in defence of the Empire', and this aim continued to be influential well beyond 1914.³⁶ In 1909 Military Studies were introduced into the curriculum and attracted a rapidly growing number of students.³⁷ In 1914

³² The honour of attending the royal funerals was not extended to the university corps of the provincial universities and thus served to underline Oxbridge's claim to elite status: cf. *Cambridge Rev.*, 7 Feb. 1901, 147.

³³ *Cambridge Daily News*, 17 May 1914, 'Varsity Day at Olympia'.

³⁴ *Times*, 23 May 1913, 5.

³⁵ See, for example, *Cambridge Rev.*, 18 Oct. 1900, 2. On the 'tremendous upsurge of interest in things military' in Britain after the Boer War, see Anne Summers, 'Edwardian Militarism', in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, i, *History and Politics* (London and New York, 1989), 241.

³⁶ *Cambridge Rev.*, 17 May 1900, 317.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 Feb. 1910, 234; St John's College Archives, Cambridge, College Minutes, vol. VIII, 124, Board of Military Studies, 24 Oct. 1910.

the university could note a double success for Cambridge's claim to military leadership: Cambridge was taking 'a decided lead in providing University Candidates for the Army', as in 1913 it had produced more officers for the regular army than any other British university; furthermore the Cambridge OTC had, since its foundation, sent more officers to the Territorial Force and the Special Reserve than any other British university corps.³⁸ These achievements were regarded as increasingly important for the university's reputation. In Britain, just as in Germany, it had become advantageous for a community with a claim to national leadership to demonstrate military leadership qualities.

College and fraternity students thus based their elite consciousness on specific concepts of manliness, which were heavily influenced by military ideals and closely linked to an ideology of community and sacrifice. Several arguments could be advanced in support of a gradually more intense militarization of German students: war and sacrifice were frequent themes of student songs, poems and speeches in Tübingen but not in Cambridge; authority and discipline were decidedly more central to the fraternities' educational ideal than to that of the undergraduates; undergraduate social life was less influenced by military habit than fraternity life. Yet these differences pale against the impression of far-reaching parallels, most notably in relation to the German and English students' rush to the colours in 1914.

In Tübingen the outbreak of war was greeted with patriotic demonstrations. Student songs praising the analogy between the *Mensur* and the battlefield were sung, and hardly a fraternity report forgot to stress that the students were now to prove the seriousness of their often made 'vow of sacrifice'.³⁹ Even recent studies which have disproved the earlier interpretation of a general enthusiasm for war in August 1914 stress the central role of

³⁸ *Cambridge Rev.*, 13 May 1914, 426; *Cambridge Mag.*, 24 Jan. 1914, 287.

³⁹ *Palatia sei's Panier. Pfälzerchronik: 50 Jahre Tübinger Palatia, 1878–1928* (Tübingen, 1928), 116; *Festschrift des Corps Rhenania zu Tübingen, 7. Juli 1827–1927* (Tübingen, 1927), 42; University Archives, Tübingen (hereafter UAT) 367/42, Jahresberichte der Saxonia Tübingensis, Kriegsjahresbericht 1914. See also Albert Rienhardt, 'Die Tübinger Studenten und der Weltkrieg', *Tübinger Chronik*, 23 Oct. 1914; Ute Wiedenhoff, '"... dass wir auch diese größte Mensur unseres Lebens in Ehren bestehen werden": Kontinuitäten korporierter Mentalität im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Gerhard Hirschfeld et al. (eds.), *Kriegserfahrungen: Studien zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen, 1997).

students in patriotic demonstrations all over Germany.⁴⁰ By October 1914 about two thousand Tübingen students — some 70 per cent of the student body — had left the university to join the army. In mid 1915, 89 per cent of male Tübingen students were already serving in the army.⁴¹ Due to the German conscription system it is impossible to tell the exact number of volunteers, but the sources convey the strong impression that it was almost impossible to reject volunteering. Stepping out of the line of volunteers would have broken two taboos: it would have meant disregarding the ideals of military manliness as well as the tradition of subordination to the community.

The reaction of Cambridge undergraduates was similar. Admittedly, there were no mass demonstrations in the last days of July, but this was due to the fact that war broke out during the long vacation, when relatively few students were in residence. Nevertheless, shortly after Britain's declaration of war, the headquarters of the Cambridge University Officers Training Corps were besieged by a crowd of young men eager to apply for commissions. By the middle of August about a thousand students and recent graduates had been commissioned, and by October 1914 about half the student population was serving in the forces.⁴² Towards the end of 1915, and thus before the introduction of conscription, 75 per cent of Cambridge students had joined the army, the navy or, in a few cases, the air force; conscription in early 1916 brought only a meagre 7 per cent more.⁴³ As in Tübingen, August 1914 was interpreted as a test for the students' often voiced convictions, and the high number of volunteers was repeatedly cited as proof of Cambridge's claim that it was producing a national elite.⁴⁴ The belief that to be a 'Cambridge man' involved the willingness to sacrifice one's life in war was at its height. Sports, so it was claimed, had been important in furthering this attitude: the *Cambridge Daily News* emphasized in an article entitled 'Cambridge

⁴⁰ See, for example, Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000), 40; Christoph Nonn, 'Oh What a Lovely War? German Common People and the First World War', *German Hist.*, xviii (2000).

⁴¹ Albert Rienhardt, 'Universität und Stadt im vierten Kriegsemester', *Kriegszeitung der Universität Tübingen*, ii (1916).

⁴² *Cambridge Rev.*, 14 Oct. 1914, 5, 6; *Emmanuel College Mag.*, War edn (Aug. 1915), 22–9; Christopher N. L. Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, iv, 1870–1990 (Cambridge, 1993), 331.

⁴³ *Cambridge Rev.*, 20 Oct. 1915, 35; 19 Jan. 1916, 143.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1915, 35.

Blues' Splendid Response' that among those who had applied for a commission in the first days of August had been a high percentage of the leading sportsmen of the University.⁴⁵

II

INDIVIDUALIZATION AND DEMILITARIZATION

Did the ideal of military manliness survive four years of modern warfare — the carnage of the trenches, which had little to do with chivalric notions of man-to-man battle? Did it survive defeat and revolution in Germany? Let us first consider the British case. Both during and after the war obituaries and commemorative ceremonies for the fallen repeated and strengthened the ideal of sacrifice. Cambridge men, it was claimed, had done their duty. The *Cambridge Review* proudly reported in 1918 that 'The four years of war have appreciated the function and value of universities beyond telling', and added that 'the part of Cambridge in the war has been proud and unashamed'.⁴⁶ The Royal Commission, appointed after the war to inquire into Oxford and Cambridge, saw the ancient universities' significant contribution to the war effort as proof of them having fulfilled their role as national elite institutions. 'Oxford and Cambridge were in a position to give to the country a peculiarly large number of men fitted to act as officers, by their education, their upbringing and, in many cases, their experience in the Officers' Training Corps', praised the Commission's final report, published in 1922.⁴⁷ The students' sacrifice for 'King and Country' was a good argument for justifying Cambridge's privileges, and the undergraduates themselves left no doubt that they continued to be loyal, even enthusiastic, supporters of the armed forces. When in May 1920 Earl Haig and Admiral Jellicoe received honorary degrees from the university, the undergraduates not only cheered and applauded the military leaders, but also carried them high on their shoulders through the town. The Union Society chose to elect Haig and Jellicoe as honorary members — a rare distinction — and its vice-president eulogized them as role models of military manliness. For Haig, 'the cheering went on and

⁴⁵ *Cambridge Daily News*, 11 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁶ *Cambridge Rev.*, 18 Oct. 1918, 34.

⁴⁷ *Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities: Report*, Parliamentary Papers, 1922 (Cmd. 1588), x, 46–8, 'Note: The Value of the Universities to the Nation as Shown in the War'.

on and on', while Jellicoe was praised in a long speech 'as a sailor, a commander, and as a man', a man 'firmly carrying into execution the high ideals of youth'.⁴⁸

Thus it seemed that the ideal of sacrifice and military manliness had survived, and the attitude of the students towards pacifists confirms this impression. After victory, just as during the war, pacifism was seen by the majority of students as a foreign, treacherous ideology. And when the war ended on 11 November 1918, Cambridge students showed that they would resort to violence in order to demonstrate the university's anti-pacifist stance. Shortly after the news of victory had reached Cambridge, a mob of undergraduates wrecked the editorial offices of the *Cambridge Magazine*, a paper which had repeatedly published pacifist opinions during the war. 'Smash went a window, the signal for a general onslaught. Smash went more windows. Books flew through the windows on to the road. The crowd outside danced with joy; the crowd inside destroyed everything with grim enthusiasm. All was excitement', reported the *Cambridge Daily News*.⁴⁹ Subsequently, the sales department of the *Magazine*, which was located in another street, was raided in a similar fashion.

Two weeks later, a member of the newly founded Society of Returned Service Men of Cambridge University used the Society's inaugural meeting to warn Cambridge pacifists that more action against them might follow. After having said approvingly that 'the good name and fame of the University, both inside and outside, had been honourably and well maintained in connection with the war', he poured scorn on the 'wretched minority' of Cambridge students who 'had carried on their pacifist propaganda and had stabbed the Service men in the back'.⁵⁰ Without mentioning the means, he threatened that the activities of this 'wretched crowd' would be stopped and that the pacifists 'would be swept into the gutter of obscurity'. According to the *Cambridge Daily News*, his remarks were greeted with 'tremendous applause'.

⁴⁸ *Cambridge Daily News*, 19 May 1920, 'Famous War-Chiefs at Cambridge. To-Day's Conferment of Honorary Degrees. Enthusiastic Scenes'.

⁴⁹ *Cambridge Daily News*, 11 Nov. 1918. See also *New Cambridge*, 28 Jan. 1922, 88. In a debate of the Emmanuel College Debating Society half the members endorsed the attacks on the premises of the *Magazine*; the other half condemned it. The motion 'That in the opinion of this house the "Cambridge Magazine" has been treated unjustly' was won by the casting vote of the president. Emmanuel College Archives, Cambridge, Soc. 1.21, Debating Minutes 1913–1923, 15 Mar. 1919.

⁵⁰ *Cambridge Daily News*, 30 Nov. 1918; *Cambridge Rev.*, 15 Nov. 1918, 107.

Admittedly, the militant anti-pacifism of this speaker was not representative of the student body as a whole. But student papers such as the *New Cambridge*, which claimed to represent 'the mass of undergraduate opinion', also took an intolerant attitude towards pacifists and were eager to purge Cambridge's reputation of the slightest whiff of disloyalty.⁵¹ Several other incidents in the years 1919–21 confirm the impression that the majority of Cambridge ex-servicemen shared an anti-pacifist attitude. Meetings of socialist or pacifist groups were repeatedly broken up by large groups of undergraduates; students who confessed to socialist or pacifist ideas were in several cases forced to sing the national anthem and thus to show their 'Englishness'.⁵² The *New Cambridge* greeted the possible return of Bertrand Russell (who had been dismissed from his Trinity fellowship after his engagement with the 'No conscription fellowship' and subsequent imprisonment in 1916) with the verdict: 'To bring him back to Cambridge would be an insult to all loyal citizens, and it would confirm the impression which has been made everywhere outside Cambridge, that this University is rotten with false doctrines and disloyalty'.⁵³ Cambridge was to stand for sacrifice and manliness, and it was in this spirit that the old sports clubs were revived in 1919. The older undergraduates — those who had started their studies before the war — put all their energy into creating new teams, teaching the old rules and customs as well as the old spirit. Former rowing men made frequent visits to Cambridge and tried to persuade the younger generation to pursue this great Cambridge tradition. The university seemed to be heading for another period characterized by sport and the cult of manliness.

A few years later, however, the picture was somewhat different. In 1928 a Cambridge student magazine wrote on the topic of undergraduate sport:

All occasions which bring old Cambridge men back here again serve to show that the attitude of the Undergraduate to Sport has changed. We have heard old and middle-aged men joke how they devoted all their time and energy to games . . . Until recently a man who resigned from his Boat Club

⁵¹ *New Cambridge*, 1 Nov. 1919, 51; 22 Feb. 1919, 1. The *New Cambridge* commented on pacifism at Cambridge during the war: 'Cambridge should never have allowed itself to be contaminated in this way'.

⁵² See, for example, *New Cambridge*, 15 Mar. 1919, 1; *Cambridge Daily News*, 2, 3 and 4 Mar. 1920; *ibid.*, 25 Apr. 1920; *Old Cambridge*, 13 Mar. 1920, 1, 6; T. E. B. Howarth, *Cambridge between Two Wars* (London, 1978), 20–1.

⁵³ *New Cambridge*, 24 Jan. 1920, 155.

was a disgrace to his College, his friends, his University, his country, and the whole race in general; he was 'not fit to be called a man'.⁵⁴

Such an attitude, according to the magazine, had become almost extinct. 'Life is altogether more complex, the undergraduate more enterprising and busy, and yet, things are as well done. This does credit to the younger generation'. The quotation points to a significant change in the attitude of undergraduates towards sport and manliness, which needs to be explained.

One reason for the demise of the cult of athleticism was a new emphasis on serious academic work which characterized the post-war period. Two factors coincided: the undergraduates who had just returned from the fronts wanted to finish their studies as quickly as possible and thus spent less time on the river or the playing fields. Hence the secretary of the Emmanuel Boat Club complained in 1920: 'Owing to the devotion which the College now displays to reading, work, laboratories, and lectures, it was found difficult to persuade the proper proportion of men to row'. And in a nostalgic mood he added: 'Oh for the days of hard rowing and occasional work, as opposed to hard work and occasional rowing'.⁵⁵ But this attitude was not restricted to the generation that had returned from the fronts: the general attitude towards academic work within the student body changed because — in the face of rising unemployment and changing economic conditions — a good degree was increasingly seen as a necessary precondition for finding a job. When the editor of the *New Cambridge* commented in May 1920: 'There is much less interest taken in Sport in general than ever there was before the war',⁵⁶ this was not a passing phenomenon, but the beginning of a development that characterized the whole of the 1920s.

A growing emphasis on academic work was not the only factor which reduced the significance of sport; of equal importance was what has been described as the 'Americanization' of British culture in the form of the cinema, the car and jazz. The 1920s saw a rapid increase in the motorization of Cambridge students.⁵⁷ For car-owners, Cambridge suddenly seemed to be very near to London, and undergraduates now frequently spent evenings and weekends

⁵⁴ *Cambridge Gownsmen and Undergraduette*, 10 Mar. 1928, 1.

⁵⁵ G. Wynne Thomas, *Fit via vi! The Story of the E.B.C., 1827–1977* (Cambridge, 1978), 6.

⁵⁶ *New Cambridge*, 15 May 1920, 391.

⁵⁷ See, for example, *Cambridge Gownsmen and Undergraduette*, 24 Oct. 1925, 1.

in London or elsewhere. In 1927 a student magazine estimated that on Sundays only a third of the undergraduates remained in Cambridge.⁵⁸ The advent of the cinema, which was greeted with enthusiasm, had similar repercussions for the college community. The same magazine observed in 1927: 'Indeed, there is little true University life existing any more in Cambridge. What the cinema has done for our evenings, the motor-car has done for our Sundays . . . Alma Mater, like most modern mothers, is losing hold over her children'. And in a pessimistic mood the author added: 'one can but regret the disintegrating effect on University life and Society'.⁵⁹

Although this student portrayal of drastic change might be exaggerated, there is abundant evidence that Cambridge student life in the 1920s underwent a process of individualization, during which the college community lost some of its formative power. Britain's relatively positive economic development in the 1920s meant that forms of modern mass consumption spread, which offered new possibilities for spending free time. New leisure activities considerably transformed college life in the 1920s and contributed to the erosion of the old ideal of manliness. As fewer undergraduates than before indulged in games, sport became less prominent in student discourse and lost its dominance over the definition of masculinity.

The cinema attracted undergraduates not only because of its films but also because of the new and exciting possibility of going out with girls. Before the war, male and female students had lived completely separate lives. The students of Newnham and Girton (both all-female colleges) had been 'kept more or less strictly to themselves, and play[ed] no part in undergraduate life'.⁶⁰ The separation of the sexes had been partly due to rigid chaperone rules, and partly to the attitude of the male undergraduates, who more often than not had looked down on the female students, clinging to the stereotype that intellectual women were unfeminine and ugly.⁶¹ Although there were some signs of change before 1914, it was only after the war that students of both genders started to

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1927, 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Charles Tennyson, *Cambridge from Within* (London, 1913), 49.

⁶¹ See Rita McWilliams Tullberg, *Women at Cambridge*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1998); Brooke, *History of the University of Cambridge*, iv, 297–300; Elisabeth Leedham-Green, *A Concise History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1996), 176–83; Levens, 'Männlichkeit als Studienziel'.

mingle to a significant extent. After 1918 this change was rapid: student magazines were soon full of love poems, and dance clubs flourished all over the town. Following the combined protests of male and female students, chaperone rules were relaxed. This was in part due to the war. Undergraduates returning from the fronts were older than their predecessors and after several years of war were less willing to adjust to strict chaperone rules. Some of them were already married, a fact which in itself confused college authorities considerably. The new female element in student life had two consequences for the old ideals of manliness. First, it contributed to the individualization of student life, as spending leisure time with the opposite sex was often preferable to staying exclusively within the close-knit male college community. Secondly, having success with girls was an alternative way to express and experience masculinity. Masculinity in this sense was not a question of conforming to a bodily ideal, but was a sexual concept — although only in a wider sense, because sexual intercourse between students was still largely considered to be unthinkable.

In this way the old dominant ideal of manliness, which defined the man by soldierly qualities of mind and body, was supplanted or at least eroded by a plurality of new ways to define masculinity. The extent to which students distanced themselves from the old ideal manifests itself in a debate from around 1926. From 1925 onwards a wave of articles and letters to the editor, often written by old Cambridge men, appeared in the national press complaining about the 'decadence' of modern youth. In 1925 and early 1926 the *Cambridge Daily News*, the *Daily Graphic*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Sketch* and *Punch* printed articles which doubted the manliness of the younger generation. Today's youth, the authors claimed, was sissified and effeminate. Cambridge undergraduates were chastised for not reaching the sporting standard of pre-war times and were even accused of becoming 'girl-men', who powdered their faces instead of pursuing manly exercises.⁶² *Punch* ironically suggested that Oxford should honour this new trend by creating a faculty of dress, where professors should teach 'the

⁶² For example *Daily Sketch*, 5 Oct. 1925, 'The Girl-Men of Cambridge', *Punch*, 9 Dec. 1925, 638, *New Leader*, 5 Feb. 1926, 'A Mealy-Mouthed Generation'. Not all the original articles which were commented upon in the Cambridge student press could be located. Further examples are given by Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640–1990* (London and New York, 1999), 287–8.

discreet but decorative use of cosmetics'.⁶³ Both youth in general and the undergraduates of the ancient universities in particular were chastised in this way; the most frequent object of abuse being Oxford. Even the fact that the post-war undergraduate drank more coffee and less beer than his predecessor was interpreted as a threat to the nation's manliness.⁶⁴

Before the war the undergraduates certainly would not have tolerated such invectives. But in the late 1920s they simply mocked the attitude of these 'old men' as being antiquated and silly. 'The Cambridge type is keeping up with the times!' was the *Cambridge Gownsmen's* reply to the complaints of the old Cambridge men — and indeed, it went on, 'the new generation has discarded the old mould as being old-fashioned and unserviceable'.⁶⁵ Part of this discarded 'old mould' was the sporting ideology, at least in its dominant form. It was now ridiculed in many a satire in the student magazines. The *Gownsmen*, for example, featured a story in which a 'fierce old man' complains to an undergraduate about the 'decadence' of modern Oxford: 'Oxford can't row, can't play cricket, can't even play golf. Decadent. Soft. All the fault of this aestheticism. In my day . . .' Reflecting upon this, the undergraduate who listens to him comes to the conclusion that there are far too *few* aesthetes at Oxford.⁶⁶

An article by Lord Strathspey, which accused the younger generation of laziness, and of having no bodily strength due to lack of exercise, was mocked in a similar vein in the *New Cambridge*. Strathspey's claim that modern undergraduates could not even climb mountains any more, because they drank too many cocktails, was commented on acidly: 'We can most confidently assure his lordship that no amount of cocktails will ever stop some people climbing mountains'.⁶⁷ The vehemence with which some representatives of the older generation fought for the old ideal of military

⁶³ *Punch*, 9 Dec. 1925, 638.

⁶⁴ See the satire in *Cambridge Gownsmen and Undergraduette*, 15 Oct. 1925, 11: 'Umbrageous Outlook at Oxford: Ancient University Tottering to its Fall'; and the caricature 'The Decay of Oxford': *ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 Oct. 1927, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14 May 1927, 12.

⁶⁷ *New Cambridge*, 19 May 1919, 1. The complaints of the press about 'effeminate' youths have also been discussed by Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford, 2004), 193, 229–31. He interprets these complaints as evidence for the persistence of traditional values and language; the focus on the reaction of the students, however, reveals that the younger generation did not identify with these values any more.

manliness was met with a mixture of indifference, mockery and lack of understanding by the younger post-war undergraduates. Their attitude is well illustrated by an article in the *Cambridge Gownsmen* discussing umbrellas. In pre-war Cambridge carrying an umbrella had been regarded as unmanly. The *Fresher's Don't*, a student-edited compendium for first-years on how to behave and what to avoid in Cambridge, explicitly warned them not to carry umbrellas, and a breach of this rule usually resulted in the umbrella being broken into pieces by older undergraduates.⁶⁸ But in 1926 such a way of proving manliness could not be taken seriously any more. The umbrella had slowly invaded Cambridge, a process the *Cambridge Gownsmen* described as follows. Before 1914, the article reports ironically,

The undergraduate strode manfully through the raging elements, disregarding the water which trickled down his nose or behind his collar. He was above such petty cares. But alas, the decadent influence of our sister university is slowly undermining Cambridge. The umbrella, which has for some time been prevalent in Oxford, is slowly creeping into Cambridge, and growing with it is the effeminate fungus. Let us combat this evil and, like our fathers, brave the elements and prove our manhood by our sodden garments.⁶⁹

The article mocks the attitude of the 'old men' and ridicules the talk of decadence and with it the old ideal of manliness. The aims of military hardiness and of the subordination of the individual to the needs of the community had lost their prominence among Cambridge students. This process obviously had its limits: sport still played a large part in student life, and the ideal of the muscular sportsman was still important for a section of the undergraduate population. But, crucially, this ideal had lost its position as the *only* accepted version of masculinity.

The passing of the old ideal of military manliness was accompanied by a process of redefining the students' role in society. In the late 1920s, the notion that they were soldiers ready for their summons found considerably less support than before 1914. This is demonstrated most clearly in the undergraduates' attitudes towards the Officers Training Corps on the one hand, and towards pacifism on the other. The Corps, which had developed into a well-organized and recognized institution by 1914, suffered from widespread lack of interest after 1918. The ex-servicemen

⁶⁸ [A. J. Story], *The Fresher's Don't*, 8th edn (Cambridge, 1908), 3; Portway, *Militant Don*, 37.

⁶⁹ *Cambridge Gownsmen and Undergraduette*, 4 Dec. 1926, 1.

were obviously not interested in military training, but the post-war generation of students, who were too young to have served in the war, did not fill the Corps' ranks either. The infantry battalion, which had had about a thousand members in 1914, did not attract more than 120 volunteers in 1923, and was merely 'the shadow . . . of its former self'.⁷⁰ In the following years numbers rose slightly, but even in 1925 the Corps was little more than a third of its pre-war size.⁷¹ Only the technical special branches and the newly formed Air Force Squadron still attracted a significant number of candidates.

The impression that undergraduates increasingly distanced themselves from ideals of sacrifice and the military in general is confirmed by a survey of debating motions in the 1920s. Whereas college debating clubs as well as the Union had, until 1914, generally voted for further reinforcements of the army and the navy, they were now more critical of the military. In 1919 the Union Society rejected the motion that 'a supreme British Navy is the best guarantee of Universal Peace' and so broke with an important pre-war doctrine.⁷² Two college debating societies argued motions calling for the abolition of the army and the navy respectively. Although both motions were rejected by a narrow majority, their proposers nevertheless had broken a taboo by submitting the existence of these national institutions to debate.⁷³ Looking at the debates of the 1920s in general, a widening range of arguments and attitudes is noticeable.

While motions like these had already appeared in 1919, it was only from 1922 onwards that pacifist opinions found growing support in Cambridge. It is interesting to note that this was the time when the post-war generation came to dominate Cambridge student life. A pacifist society created in 1922 claimed to be founded on the belief 'that war is wrong and useless as a method of settling disputes'.⁷⁴ The society's aims were 'to study and expose the causes and effects of war and the means by which it may be prevented in the future'. In contrast to the small pacifist movement of

⁷⁰ *Cambridge Rev.*, 24 Oct. 1924, 33; see also *ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1925, 9.

⁷¹ *New Cambridge*, 13 Oct. 1923, 11; 7 Mar. 1925, 169.

⁷² *Cambridge Rev.*, 28 Feb. 1919, 237.

⁷³ Trinity College Archives, Cambridge, REC. 22.1, The Wranglers [Debating Society], Minute Book (1919–20), 10 Nov. 1919; REC. 8.10, Magpie and Stump [Debating Society], Minute Book (1913–23), 31 Jan. 1919.

⁷⁴ *Granta*, 23 Nov. 1923, 111.

the early post-war years this society did not encounter any violent opposition, but attracted considerable undergraduate interest.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in November 1925 a group of undergraduates, including the president of the Union Society, signed a declaration by which they pledged themselves to pacifism:

We, the undersigned, convinced that all disputes between nations are capable of settlement either by diplomatic negotiation or by some form of international arbitration, hereby solemnly declare that we shall refuse to support or render war service to any Government which resorts to arms.⁷⁶

Some of the signatories added that they would resort to arms at the request of the League of Nations or in a purely defensive war, but the president of the Union, Hardman, denied even this. To be sure, this declaration was signed by only a small group, and it was mainly the involvement of the Union president which gave it any weight. But there is further evidence for a growing tendency towards pacifist convictions within the Cambridge student body. A case in point is a debate of the Union Society in March 1927. By a majority of 213 to 138 votes the Union accepted the motion 'That lasting peace can only be secured by the people of England adopting an uncompromising attitude of pacifism'.⁷⁷ The decision was striking: before 1914 such a motion would not have had any chance of being carried — indeed, it would not have been proposed at all. Together with other pieces of evidence the motion indicates the growing attraction of pacifism among Cambridge undergraduates — an attraction which was to become prevalent in the early 1930s.⁷⁸ Interestingly, the motion did not arouse the interest of the national press, in contrast to the well-known 'King and Country' debate of the Oxford Union in February 1933. When on 9 February 1933 the Oxford Union voted for the motion 'That this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country', a virulent press debate followed, intensified by the recent National

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*; *Old Cambridge*, 10 Feb. 1923, 13; 17 Feb. 1923, 1; 24 Feb. 1923, 81.

⁷⁶ *Cambridge Daily News*, 14 Nov. 1925; *New Cambridge*, 7 Nov. 1925, 86; *Granta*, 6 Nov. 1925, 67.

⁷⁷ *New Cambridge*, 12 Mar. 1927, 204. See also Martin Ceadel, 'The "King and Country" Debate, 1933: Student Politics, Pacifism and the Dictators', *Hist. J.*, xxii (1979).

⁷⁸ For the political atmosphere of Cambridge in the early 1930s, see, for example, Howarth, *Cambridge between Two Wars*; Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (London, 2002), ch. 7; Matthias Schüth, *Englands politische Universitätsjugend, 1931–1940: ein Beitrag zur Erforschung politischer Kollektivmentalitäten im Europa der dreißiger Jahre* (Münster, 2000).

Socialist seizure of power in Germany. Fears that 'British liberal, pacifist effeteness' could not stand up to 'Fascist martial virility' dominated the discussion.⁷⁹

The generational conflict over masculinity and military manliness, which has been traced in the preceding paragraphs, reached its height in the 1930s, but by the second half of the 1920s it had developed to a considerable extent. The experience of the trenches cannot be named as a primary reason for this process, since the immediate post-war years had seen tolerance of pacifist ideas in Cambridge at a low point. While the ex-servicemen certainly represented many different strands of opinion towards the war, many of them had openly disparaged, or even militantly opposed, pacifism in Cambridge after 1918 and had clung to the ideal of military masculinity. It was during the early to mid 1920s, in a generation who had not fought in the war, that pacifism found growing support and the ideal of military manliness lost much of its influence. The individualization of student life, triggered by new forms of mass consumption and leisure, had furthered this process; it had reduced the traditionally strong formative power of the male college community, and thus the influence of the military ideal of manliness. Yet such 'Americanization' can only serve as a partial explanation of this process. As a comparison with Tübingen will indicate, it was victory in 1918 that proved to be decisive for the pluralization and demilitarization of student attitudes in Cambridge in the 1920s.

III

COLLECTIVIZATION AND THE CULT OF MILITARY MASCULINITY

When British newspapers regarded 'martial virility' as a dominant ideology in 1933 Germany they were certainly right — a military ideal of masculinity, developing from its roots in the nineteenth century, occupied a pivotal position in German discourse after 1918. However, it is unsatisfactory to explain this development in terms of a 'strengthening' of the 'traditional' ideal of manliness through war.⁸⁰ First, it has been seen that the military ideal of manliness in England was only temporarily strengthened after the war, and that there was a subsequent erosion of military

⁷⁹ Ceadel, '“King and Country” Debate', 397.

⁸⁰ Thus Mosse, *Image of Man*, 133, 153.

ideals among the post-war student generation. Hence it remains to explain why this erosion, part of a larger process of individualization and pluralization, did not take place at German universities. Secondly, the German students' ideal of manliness, in spite of its continuing closeness to military values, underwent some significant changes, which will be explored further in the following paragraphs.

From 1919 onwards academic fencing assumed a dominant position in student life once more. The fraternities claimed again and again that the war had proved the value of the *Mensur*: 'with courage, strength and insistence, as learned on the *Mensur*, our corps brother fought and fell on the battlefield' reads a typical obituary.⁸¹ All the fraternities that had required their members to participate in a certain number of ritualized duels held to this rule, and the number of *Mensuren* per student remained at the high level established before the war.⁸² When in 1919 the Tübingen students who had just returned from the fighting fronts claimed, just as their Cambridge counterparts had done, that they needed more time for their studies, the number of fencing lessons was in some cases temporarily reduced.⁸³ But although scholarly achievement, just like in Cambridge, was now accorded a more important place in student life, this did not lead to a permanent reduction of the time used for academic fencing, nor did it diminish the influence of the ideology of the *Mensur*. On the contrary, the 1920s, which saw in Cambridge an individualization of student life, brought in Tübingen a tendency towards collectivization, which went hand in hand with an intensified militarization of student life. This phenomenon and its reasons will be discussed with regard to students' attitudes towards sport and team games.

In Tübingen the 1920s saw a swift change in student attitudes towards sport — a change which took the opposite direction to that in Cambridge. While sport lost its dominant position in student life and attitudes in the old English universities, it became an important element of everyday life in the German fraternities, and a

⁸¹ *Kriegsberichte des Korps Franconia zu Tübingen, 1914–1919*, ed. C. Cronmüller (Stuttgart, 1919), 5.

⁸² Disabled veterans were exempted, but only after lengthy discussions on the question of whether the war could be counted as an experience equivalent to the *Mensur*. See, for example, Landesbibliothek Stuttgart (LBSt), 9. Kriegsbericht der Burschenschaft Germania, 7; 10. Kriegsbericht der Burschenschaft Germania, 5.

⁸³ See LBSt, *Korps-Zeitung des Korps Borussia zu Tübingen*, 15 Feb. 1919, 4; UAT 367/47, *Chronik Saxonia*, vol. 4, SS 1919.

cherished means of constructing manliness. Some forms of sport, particularly hiking, swimming and tennis, had been practised in pre-war Tübingen, but on the whole sport had been marginal to student life and attitudes.⁸⁴ However, there was an abrupt change in 1919. Sport became a topic of discussion everywhere — in the fraternities, in the newly founded student representative council (AstA), in the senate of the university, in the student papers, and in the national union of students (the Deutsche Studentenschaft). Observing this process, the *Tübinger Studenten-Zeitung* stated in early 1920: 'it is today widely acknowledged that it is a point of honour for every academic to do more sport than ever'.⁸⁵

The fraternities prided themselves in leading the new movement. By early 1919 all fraternities had introduced compulsory sports lessons into their weekly schedule, the favourite disciplines being swimming, gymnastics, athletics, and team games such as soccer, fistball or handball. In the middle of the 1920s an average fraternity member did three to four hours of sport a week. For members of duelling fraternities this was added to the daily academic fencing lessons, which were not reduced as a consequence of the new fashion for sport. Thus those students' weekly schedule was often impressive. The members of the Saxonia fraternity, for example, were obliged to participate in two daily fencing lessons, half an hour of daily morning gymnastics followed by a cross-country run, two hours of team games or athletics per week, and one weekly swimming lesson (only in summer, taking place in the local river).⁸⁶ Sport became an important element of student life throughout the whole fraternity spectrum. Thus, whereas between 1900 and 1914, according to a university estimate, about 13 per cent of students had attended some kind of sports lessons, the rate of participation had risen to 60–70 per cent in 1927, and to as much as 80 per cent among fraternity students.⁸⁷

What were the reasons for this change? The students themselves usually explained it by referring to the abolition of compulsory military service following the Treaty of Versailles. They argued

⁸⁴ See Martin Biastoch, *Tübinger Studenten im Kaiserreich: eine sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Sigmaringen, 1996); Levsen, 'Männlichkeit als Studienziel'.

⁸⁵ *Tübinger Studenten-Zeitung*, 8 Jan. 1920, 29.

⁸⁶ The fraternity chronicle stated that physical exercises were now accorded a 'main role': UAT 367/48, *Chronik Saxonia*, vol. 4, SS 1927.

⁸⁷ F. Bauer, 'Zur Geschichte der Leibesübungen an der Universität', *Sonderausgabe der Tübinger Chronik vom 24.7.1927*, 31; see also *Mitteilungen der Tübinger Studentenschaft*, 3 Nov. 1926, 2–3.

that military service had been important for teaching young people discipline and for improving their bodily fitness, aims which now had to be achieved in a different way. 'The Treaty of Versailles took away our army, our defence and our weapons and, in so doing, one of the best institutions to train the bodies and brains of our people. We have to find a substitute, and it is the duty of the fraternity to assist in this task', stated the Saxonia fraternity in 1920.⁸⁸ Reference to the abolition of military training is, however, not sufficient to explain the triumph of sport after 1918. Before the war it would not have occurred to most fraternities to cite sport as a possible substitute for military service, because it had been academic fencing and the *Mensur* that had been regarded as the primary means to further the students' soldierly qualities. At the root of the quick adoption of sport into student life in the 1920s lay a new interest in the body, fitness and health, which flourished at the universities in the context of Volkish ideas. An important transmitter of bodily as well as Volkish ideals into the universities was the youth movement. Within this movement, which until 1914 had been primarily a pupils' movement that began to influence the universities only in the early 1920s, manliness had early on been defined with reference to health and bodily strength.⁸⁹ During the 1900s, when in the traditional student fraternities manliness was still defined by character, and, regarding the body, rather by a fat stomach than by muscles and strength, the youth movement had already propagated the image of the German man as slender, lithe and strong. This ideology had from the outset been close to Volkish concerns about the health of the German race, a connection which was considerably strengthened after 1918. In the wake of the Great War these ideas became prominent in the student body, transmitted primarily by the youth movement but influenced also by further Volkish groups and ideologists.⁹⁰

The new importance accorded to the body in the students' concepts of manliness is striking. Muscles and bodily strength became core elements of the fraternities' self-images. To build up strength and attain control over one's body now took a prominent place in their educational ideology. Athletics attained special significance as a discipline which gave 'the best all-round physical training', and

⁸⁸ UAT 367/47, *Chronik Saxonia*, vol. 3, WS 1920/21.

⁸⁹ Cf. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964), 171–89.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 270–3.

the chronicles of the fraternities regularly reported on the progress of bodily fitness of their members.⁹¹ While the body was thus given new attention, and physical education was praised as a precondition for the students' role as future leaders of the nation, the concept of a manly character remained largely the same. The students now claimed that courage, hardiness and self-discipline were not only learned in the *Mensur*, but also furthered by participating in team games, and by riding, swimming and athletics.

The new sporting movement furthered the collectivization of student life in many ways. The fraternities interpreted sports such as the *Mensur* as a way of strengthening group cohesion. Sport was said to develop the 'sense of togetherness' and was judged to be 'an effective means of learning obedience and subordination in the interest of the community'.⁹² In this way, sport was integrated into the old ideology of community, whose translation into practice was now even more intense than before the war. The sheer amount of time that an average fraternity student had to spend on sport and academic fencing is a case in point: since the fraternities treated sport not as a substitute but as an addition to fencing, the students' leisure time was significantly reduced — and the growing demands of study diminished it further. Even more conclusive evidence for a strong tendency towards curtailing individual liberty is given by the post-war debate about compulsory sport. In May 1920, the Tübingen student council, which was dominated by fraternity representatives, decided unanimously to propose a motion at the next conference of the Deutsche Studentenschaft, calling for compulsory exercises for every student — essentially, it was argued, because it should be a point of honour for every student 'to train himself in the various fields of manly struggle'.⁹³ The abolition of compulsory military training, the endangered health of students, and the aim to 'offer resistance to the degeneration of the German race' were cited as further reasons for the motion.

The 1920 conference of the Deutsche Studentenschaft in Göttingen accepted the motion and decided to make participation in

⁹¹ UAT 367/47, *Chronik Saxonia*, vol. 3, WS 1919/20.

⁹² UAT 646/3, *Verbindung Rothenburg*, Jahresbericht 1928/29, 6.

⁹³ *Tübinger Studenten-Zeitung*, 15 June 1920, 63.

physical exercise obligatory for all students at German universities. It was resolved that the student had a duty to put his body into the service of the Fatherland. Compulsion was judged to be a legitimate means of achieving this important end, and the conference therefore proposed that every student should pass two physical tests before being allowed to take his final exams. Addressing possible critics, it was argued that 'only those lazy in body and mind' would respond negatively to this kind of compulsion.⁹⁴ The conference decided that the national and regional governments should be petitioned to enact laws in accordance with these resolutions.

In Tübingen the student council did not wait for the results of the petitions, but acted on its own. When it became clear in 1921 that most fraternity students, but only a few non-fraternity ones, participated in sports, the council discussed possible measures to change this situation. First, it was suggested that pressure be applied on non-fraternity students by making certain economic advantages conditional on their participation in sport.⁹⁵ When this idea did not find majority support, probably because of difficulties of implementation, the council decided to content itself with a campaign for sport among students, but 'without downplaying coercion'. In order to control student participation in sport, it was resolved to make every sportsman sign a register, and to 'call personally on all those who have not signed the register, in order to convince them of the righteousness of the cause. In this way pressure will be exerted on all reluctant elements'.⁹⁶

Both the language and the content of this decision show how far the student council considered it legitimate to encroach upon personal liberty in the name of the community. Whereas before the war the fraternities had obliged only their own members to conform to the decisions of the community, they now tried, in the name of the nation, to make *all* students conform to the ideal of military manliness. This attitude was accepted by a large number of fraternity and non-fraternity students: plenary meetings of the Tübingen student body in 1921 and 1923 endorsed the call for

⁹⁴ *Studenten-Zeitung für Tübingen und Hohenheim*, 5 Nov. 1920, 97.

⁹⁵ UAT 169/1, AStA-Protokollbuch 1920–1923, 2 Nov. 1921; see also *ibid.*, 27 July 1921.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 Nov. 1921.

compulsory exercise.⁹⁷ In 1925 sport was made obligatory for candidates reading for a teaching degree.⁹⁸

The debate about compulsory exercise reveals clearly what student attitudes in other fields also show: in contrast to the individualization of English student life the cult of community flourished at German universities. Uniformity and the subordination of the individual to the group continued to be prevalent ideals and even grew in importance; the military ideal of manliness remained largely unchallenged. This was partly due to the fact that those processes which furthered an individualization of student life in Cambridge — the new kinds of mass consumption in the form of cinema and the motor car — did not take place in Tübingen. While the early 1920s opened up new forms of consumption and thus new ways to spend their leisure time for Cambridge undergraduates, the same period brought a serious impoverishment of German students. The inflation of the German mark, which began in 1914, accelerated hugely after the war; at its height in 1923 it had hit the upper middle classes severely and had considerably reduced the amount of money that families could spend on the education of their sons.⁹⁹ In the early 1920s the fraternity students, who had before 1914 more often than not led a luxurious life, now had to economize in every respect. During the height of the inflation many had hardly enough money for food, clothing and other daily necessities. During the whole of the 1920s, buying a car was beyond the means of most students, and thus one powerful agent of individualization was lost. The same holds true for other forms of mass consumption, including the cinema. While two cinemas had opened in Tübingen by 1919, they did not attract students nearly so much as in Cambridge. The little money that students could set aside for leisure activities was almost completely spent on traditional fraternity rituals in order to uphold the image of the fraternities as a social elite. The inability to profit from modern inventions contributed to a widespread negative stance

⁹⁷ UAT 169/1, AStA-Protokollbuch 1920–1923, 14 Dec. 1921; *ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1923. All students were invited to plenary meetings, though not all attended; in practice the meetings were often dominated by the fraternities.

⁹⁸ Archives of the Landsmannschaft Schottland, Tübingen: A 34 Studenten-Ausschuß Tübingen, Brief vom 30 Nov. 1925 vom Amt für Leibesübungen an die Korporationen; *Akademische Mitteilungen*, 3 Nov. 1926, 2–4.

⁹⁹ Michael H. Kater, *Studentenschaft und Rechtsradikalismus in Deutschland, 1918–1933: eine sozialgeschichtliche Studie zur Bildungskrise in der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg, 1975), 44–50.

towards 'Americanization', individualism and modern mass consumption among students. Furthermore, the number of female students in Tübingen remained at a relatively low level in the decade after 1918. Although the ratio between the sexes changed to some extent, going out with girls, unlike in Cambridge, did not become a major alternative to spending leisure time within the traditional male community.

Yet these differences do not suffice to explain the focus on community and particularly the continuous dominance of military ideals among Tübingen students. The contrasting development of the male ideal in Cambridge and Tübingen after the war cannot be explained without reference to the consequences of victory and defeat on student discourse. In order to explore this issue further, I now turn to ceremonies of commemoration in post-war Cambridge and Tübingen.

IV

COMMEMORATION, ELITE IDENTITY AND MILITARISM

A high proportion of both British and German students perished in the Great War: of those from Cambridge and Tübingen who served, over a quarter in each case died in combat or because of wounds, illness or accidents.¹⁰⁰ Coming to terms with the death of so many fellow students thus played an important role in student life after 1918. George Mosse has argued that ceremonies of commemoration were not just for the purpose of individual consolation, 'but above all for the justification of the nation in whose name the war had been fought'.¹⁰¹ While this is certainly true, it was not only the nation which had to be justified in the face of unprecedented mass death, but also the students' claim to national leadership. As has been argued above, the readiness to make the ultimate sacrifice for 'King and Country' or for 'Kaiser und Vaterland' had been a pivotal argument for the students' claim to elite status before 1914. After 1918, the credibility of this argument

¹⁰⁰ For Cambridge, see Jay M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 92; *The War List of the University of Cambridge, 1914–1918*, ed. G. V. Carey (Cambridge, 1921); for Tübingen, see Manfred Schmid, *Die Tübinger Studentenschaft nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, 1918–1923* (Tübingen, 1988), 8; Konrad H. Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton, 1982), 395.

¹⁰¹ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 7.

depended largely on whether the sacrifice — the death of a high proportion of students — could be interpreted as meaningful. This posed a problem particularly to German students, as in the face of German defeat the sacrifice of their fellows seemed to have been in vain. The students had fought for the ‘victory and future greatness of the nation’, but in their view the war had ended with Germany being ‘derided, tortured and violated by enemies who call themselves victors’.¹⁰²

The fear that the death of their fellows could have been wasted dominated the commemorative ceremonies of Tübingen students. Again and again poems and speeches addressed the theme by referring to the image that the dead would not find peace, that they would wander restlessly around accusing the survivors of not having fulfilled their task successfully. At the commemoration ceremony of the Roigel fraternity, for example, a long poem addressing the dead was read, reaching its climax in the verse:

O friends — we feel bitterly now
your relentless gaze
that asks us:
What did we die for?
What did we lose youth and life for?
And who made our sacrifice worthless?¹⁰³

This image seems to have had considerable power over both the generation that fought and the post-war generation. Looking back on the war, on its end and on its consequences did not help to justify the spirit of sacrifice or the ideal of military masculinity, and hence seemed to undermine the values for which the fraternities stood. Trying to escape from that impasse, the students created a vision of the future which was to give meaning to the mass death: they pledged themselves to fight a new war for the ‘liberation’, as they termed it, of Germany, as a way to settle a debt they owed to the fallen. In the words of a Tübingen student who addressed the dead directly in his poem:

Have no fears, we swear
that the day will come,

¹⁰² 1914/18: *zum Gedächtnis ihrer toten Helden die Landsmannschaft Ghibellinia in Tübingen* (Stuttgart, 1921), 5. See also *Tübinger Chronik*, 23 June 1924.

¹⁰³ *Roigel-Blätter*, no. 3 (Apr. 1920), 81–2. The topos of the dead not finding peace was widespread: see George L. Mosse, ‘Soldatenfriedhöfe und nationale Wiedergeburt: der Gefallenenkult in Deutschland’, in Klaus Vondung (ed.), *Kriegserlebnis: der Erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen* (Göttingen 1980).

when the Germans' wrath will awake.
 When then they will break their chains
 and above your heads you hear the noise of battle
 and the German cheers again
 You'll know your brothers kept their word.¹⁰⁴

Only if the post-war generation achieved a German victory in a future war, the argument went, would the sacrifice of the war generation become meaningful, and would the dead find peace. The ceremonies of commemoration, which held an important place in post-war fraternity life, staged in words and rituals the emotional community of the dead and the living. 'When we have liberated our country, we shall lay the fresh wreath of victory on your graves', read the inscription on the memorial of the Normannia fraternity.¹⁰⁵ Only then, it seemed, would the burial of the dead be symbolically completed.

Some students did not go so far as to say that a future war would be necessary to give meaning to the death, but stressed other ways of working for Germany's strength as a means of finishing the task for which the fallen had died. Still, many accepted war as a possible means of achieving this aim. When at Würzburg in 1927 the Deutsche Studentenschaft unveiled a memorial to all students who fell in the Great War, it was dedicated to the theme of national redemption through the sacrifice of the present student generation. The memorial showed ten hands reaching for a sword, accompanied by the inscription 'Germany has to live, even if we have to die', and it was meant to be 'a symbolic representation of the power of youth'.¹⁰⁶ Opposing the idea of a future war of liberation was difficult for fraternity students for two reasons: first, it could be interpreted as betraying the dead; secondly, it would have meant acknowledging the senselessness of their death. As a consequence, the whole argument that the students constituted a national elite because so many had been willing to make the

¹⁰⁴ UAT 192/99, Virtembergia, Kneipzeitungen 1918–1921, 'An unsere Toten: zur Einweihung der Gedenktafel'.

¹⁰⁵ *Gedenkbuch der Tübinger Normannia für ihre Gefallenen*, ed. Verein alter Tübinger Normannen (Stuttgart, 1921).

¹⁰⁶ Walter M. Brod, 'Der Studentenstein, das Mahnmal der deutschen Studentenschaft in Würzburg', in Rolf-Joachim Baum *et al.* (eds.), *1582–1982: Studentenschaft und Korporationswesen an der Universität Würzburg. Herausgegeben zur 400. Jahrfeier der Alma Julia-Maximiliana vom Institut für Hochschulkunde an der Universität Würzburg* (Würzburg, 1982), 80. The inscription was a quotation from the poem 'Soldatenabschied' by Heinrich Lersch (1914). A number of Tübingen students attended the ceremony.

ultimate sacrifice would start to crumble. And this argument was the more important for German post-war students because, in the social and political turmoil of the post-war years, other traditional sources of their elite consciousness had also been weakened.

The myth of the wandering dead unable to find peace was one important reason for the lack of pluralization of attitudes among Tübingen students in the 1920s — a reason which points to the importance of defeat as an explanation for post-war collectivization and militarization of German student life. While in Cambridge the post-war generation distanced itself from the military ideals of its predecessors, in Tübingen defeat, and hatred for the victors, bound both generations together. The myth of the wandering dead was a powerful image which made not only the ex-servicemen but also the post-war students who had been too young to fight adhere to the ideal of military manliness. A deep crisis of national identity following military defeat and finally the internal threat of communist upheaval added to this process.

For Cambridge students victory had not made the death of their fellows less painful. In the post-war years, the pages of the student magazines devoted to undergraduate poems convey a deep sense of sadness; they speak of grief and depression, loneliness and mourning for fallen friends. 'Somewhere beyond the hill is he / Who lived and laboured and laughed with me', read the beginning of one such verse.¹⁰⁷ But, in contrast to the situation in Tübingen, there was a widespread consensus that the sacrifice had not been useless. At the unveiling of the Clare College Memorial Building in 1924, the chancellor of the university and former prime minister, Arthur (Earl of) Balfour, articulated his thoughts about the death of so many Cambridge men thus:

Great as was their sacrifice, it was worth while. Irreparable as was the loss, it was worth while. I am certain that the historians, that those who look back on those memorable years in times to come, will endeavour to conjecture what it would have been had the sacrifice never been made, and will unite with me in saying it was worth while.¹⁰⁸

Armistice Day ceremonies in post-war Cambridge combined commemoration with the celebration of victory. While the morning was reserved for chapel services and two minutes' silence, the evening was the time for victory balls and parties, bonfires and

¹⁰⁷ *New Cambridge*, 26 Apr. 1919, 4, 'Night at Gomonie'. For other examples, see *New Cambridge*, 22 Feb. 1919, 1; *ibid.*, 8 Mar. 1919, 8; *Old Cambridge*, 14 Feb. 1920, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *Cambridge Daily News*, 11 Nov. 1924, 5.

general undergraduate revelry.¹⁰⁹ For many undergraduates, this was the most important part of the day, and they vigorously defended against critics their right to rejoice.¹¹⁰

Whereas *during* the war the theme of the 'restless dead' waiting for their fellows to fulfil their task had also existed in Britain, in Cambridge *after* the war the recurring theme was that the dead had accomplished their 'mission'.¹¹¹ In the words of a Cambridge student:

Wrong they have battled down,
subtlety, treachery, devilry come to nought
Children need have no fears
No woman-slaying army shall they see
Ask them for smiles, not tears
Our dead have made them free.¹¹²

Their task achieved, the dead were thought to be resting in peace, and no pledge of the post-war generation to wage another war was necessary. It is clear that commemorative speeches in Cambridge often claimed that the fallen had left a legacy for the post-war students to fulfil; but as to the content of this legacy, opinions diverged. The fact that the first and foremost aim of the dead — securing victory for Britain — had been achieved, their further legacy was open to debate.¹¹³ In these circumstances, post-war students could advocate different visions of their own role in society without running the risk of 'betraying' the dead and thus undermining an important basis of Cambridge's claim to elite status.

Trying to interpret the legacy of the fallen, some undergraduates insisted on voluntary military training, others defined the

¹⁰⁹ For the various commemorative ceremonies on 11 November and the surrounding debates, see Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919–1946* (Oxford and Providence, 1994).

¹¹⁰ See, for example, *Cambridge Gownsmen and Undergraduate*, 14 Nov. 1925, 1.

¹¹¹ Cf. the last verse of the poem 'In Flanders Fields', written by the Canadian field surgeon John McCrae in 1915 at Ypres, which became famous in Britain during the war: 'Take up our quarrel with the foe: / To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high. / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields'. John McCrae, *In Flanders Fields and Other Poems . . . with an Essay in Character by Sir Andrew Macphail* (New York and London, 1919), 3.

¹¹² *Cambridge Rev.*, 15 Nov. 1918, 115, 'November 11th, 1918'.

¹¹³ For the British debate on the legacy of the fallen, see also Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford, 1998); Gregory, *Silence of Memory*.

campaign for the League of Nations as the students' duty. In this vein one undergraduate argued:

The passing of the Unknown Warrior again proved Englishmen of all classes to be susceptible to influences which are more than merely practical. The fact should not be forgotten when they hear the call which comes to them from Geneva to lead the world in the practical interpretation of the ideal held out to it by the League of Nations.¹¹⁴

Others even interpreted the fight for more social and racial justice within the Empire as a legacy of the fallen. All those voices defined the Cambridge man's role in society in terms of leadership — social, political, economic. Regarding the *future*, the commitment to military values was no longer seen as a basis for this claim to leadership; regarding the *past*, the sacrifice of the war generation continued to be an important argument for the same. As the dead were successful heroes, their ultimate sacrifice provided a widely accepted argument for the legitimacy of Cambridge's claim to elite status. Even those undergraduates who advocated pacifist versions of the future roles of students generally adhered to the consensus of the heroic fallen. Thus the president of the Union who in 1925 had put his name to the declaration of pacifism cited earlier, in the very same week (as a student magazine noted) signed an appeal to undergraduates, which claimed: 'Armistice Day demands a solemn and grateful recollection of all who gave their lives for national freedom and the world's peace'.¹¹⁵

Although the conduct of the war was subjected to some criticism by post-war undergraduates, this did not extend to the role of Cambridge students in it. The ideal character of their sacrifice was beyond question, and the conviction that their death had been worthwhile beyond dispute. It should be added that this belief that the 'sons of Britain sleep the deep, honoured sleep of a glorious death' was not equally shared in all strata of British society. Among unemployed veterans for example, who just about managed to survive on their pensions, the feeling that the comrades might have 'died in vain' after all was much more prominent than in Cambridge.¹¹⁶ But contrasting Cambridge with Tübingen (where commemorative ceremonies held under the spell of defeat limited the students' scope for thinking and acting) makes it clear that British victory provided the basis for a

¹¹⁴ *Old Cambridge*, 20 Nov. 1920, 20. See also *Cambridge Daily News*, 9 Nov. 1925.

¹¹⁵ *New Cambridge*, 21 Nov. 1925, 133.

¹¹⁶ *Granta*, 14 Nov. 1919, 65; Gregory, *Silence of Memory*, 58.

pluralization of student attitudes and of ideas regarding the role of post-war students in society. To the majority of the post-war student generation that had not served in the war, neither the ideal of military masculinity nor the ideal of community before individualism seemed any longer a necessary or even useful basis for their claim to elite status.

★ ★ ★

In regard to the relationship between masculinity, military ideals and concepts of elite identity in Britain and Germany, the Great War marked a parting of the ways. While before 1914 both Cambridge undergraduates and Tübingen fraternity students had based their claim to national leadership on ideals of masculinity that were anti-individualistic, shaped by military ideals and linked to an ideology of sacrifice, the 1920s saw a drifting apart. In Cambridge, the traditional ideal of manliness lost its dominance as part of a far-reaching process of individualization of student life and attitudes. The victorious outcome of the war allowed for a pluralization and demilitarization of the undergraduates' concepts of elite identity. While undergraduates continued to idealize the Cambridge men's sacrifice between 1914 and 1918, the post-war generation saw its own role in society as non-military. The demilitarization of the male ideal can be partly explained by a process of individualization of student life: a new emphasis on academic work reduced the time for sports; new forms of individual leisure pursuits eroded the formative power of the male college community. The experience of the trenches cannot be named among the primary reasons for the demilitarization because it was not the generation of the front, but the post-war generation — those who had been too young to fight — that took the decisive steps towards a civil definition of masculinity and elite identity. In Tübingen, only the first factor — a new attitude towards academic work — came into being in a similar way, but its individualizing impulse fell flat when faced with a powerful trend towards collectivization triggered by German defeat. The impoverishment of German students after the war prevented new forms of consumption which would have led to an individualization of student life as they had done in Cambridge. While this may only partly be judged to be a consequence of defeat — German economic policy during

and after the war was an important cause of the runaway inflation — the tendency towards collectivization and towards a new dominance of the military ideal of manliness in Tübingen cannot be explained without referring to the consequences of defeat. The myth of the wandering dead exerted pressure on the post-war generation to adhere to the old ideal of military manliness, the more so because the fraternities' claim to national leadership depended on them giving a meaning to the mass death of their fellows — even if this meaning was only to be found in a future war. Thus the younger generation in Tübingen, those who had been too young to fight in the war, felt compelled to hold on to the ideals of sacrifice and military masculinity, while the same age-cohort in Cambridge started to question and reject these values.

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