Liberty University

“Venerated for their Bloody Deeds”

English Medievalism in Literature, World War I Aviation, and Memorials

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Introduction

A slow precession carried the coffin of a legend to the grave. Each pallbearer was a captain.[1] The king of the sky was dead. The Red Knight had fallen. For the past day, a constant stream of pilots, groundcrew and soldiers had come to gaze upon the cold but faintly smiling face of Manfred von Richthofen, the Ace-of-Aces.[2] The man who had slain the legend could not bear to look on the face, for more than a moment, out of shame for laying low such a hero, even if an enemy. Richthofen's casket was escorted by Australian infantry who stood at attention as the casket passed through the small gate into the quiet graveyard.[3] Soldiers crowded around and peeked over the hedge that surrounded the graveyard as the casket was placed on the ground beside the prepared grave. The escorts took their positions beside the grave with their rifles upside down in a sign of respect and mourning for the fallen legend.[4] All heads were bare and lowered as the chaplain gave Richthofen his final rites. Slowly, they lowered his casket into the ground. The chaplain gave his last words, as the pallbearers solemnly dropped a few handfuls of dirt into the grave. On signal, the escorts shouldered their rifles and fired a final salute into the sky where Richthofen had once reigned supreme.[5] With this final act of chivalric honor by the British to their erstwhile foe, the legend of Richthofen was brought to a close.

Was it actually chivalry that inspired the British to do honor to their enemy who had for so long been a thorn in their side? Or was it just propaganda? Aviators of World War I were trailblazers of the sky. That much is certain. However, there has been a historical debate about

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[1] Stephen Longstreet, *The Canvas Falcons: The Men and Planes of World War I* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1970), 343-344.
[2] Claude Sykes, *Richthofen: The Red Knight of the Air* (Bristol: Cerberus Publishing, 1934), 169.
[3] Ibid., 168-169.
[4] Longstreet, *The Canvas Falcons*, 344.
[5] "Funeral of the Red Baron (silent)." Australian War Memorial. Mar 6, 2008. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJUzIKeJJdY

their reputation as "knights of the air." During the war and for many years afterward, World War I aviators were compared to medieval knights battling in honorable duels amongst the clouds. This was an idea popularized by the pilots themselves. David Lloyd George, British Prime Minister during World War I, described pilots, "'They are the knighthood of this war… without fear and without reproach: they recall the legendary days of chivalry not merely by the daring of their exploits but by the nobility of their sprit.'"[6] However, during the century following the end of the war, this narrative has come under scrutiny.

World War I began with a single shot. With the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, on June 28, 1914, the world began to spiral out of control. Ferdinand had been on a military inspection in the capital of Bosnia, Sarajevo. Crowds had thronged out to see him. Bosnian separatists initially failed to assassinate the Archduke when their bomb bounced off his car, instead injuring one of Ferdinand's aides. Following the military inspection, Ferdinand insisted on visiting his wounded aide at the hospital. While he was in route to the hospital, the assassins tried again and succeeded in killing the Archduke and his wife. Following the interrogation of the assassins, Austro-Hungarian authorities discovered that they had been equipped by Serbian military intelligence. A month later, Austria-Hungary sent an ultimatum to the Serbian government. When Serbia failed to comply completely with the Austro-Hungarian demands, war was declared. Germany, Austria-Hungary's ally, demanded that Russia, Serbia's ally, stand down. Russia did not comply. France, Russia's ally, also began to mobilize and ignored Germany's demands to stand down. Consequently, Germany took matters into her own hands by preemptively striking France through neutral Belgium. On August 4th, Britain,

[6] Arthur Gould Lee, *No Parachute: A Fighter Pilot in World War I*. (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), xiv.

intervening to protect Belgian neutrality, declared war on Germany. One of the most terrible conflicts of human history had just begun.[7]

There are many primary and secondary sources that deal with the issue of chivalry or honor during the Great War. Various pilots shared their opinions on the character of the air war. Bennett A. Molter, an American who volunteered to serve in the French military as an aviator in 1916, explained that aviation recalled his childhood desire for adventure, reminding him of stories of chivalry and knights from stories like those of King Arthur. He claimed that the spirit of the knights of old, to defend the innocent and weak, lived on in the aviators.[8]

William A. Bishop, a Canadian who served in the British Flying Corps, described aviation as a sport.[9] Bishop claimed that chivalry did exist in the air war, describing a sort of brotherhood among pilots.[10] Meanwhile, British pilot, Cecil Lewis, believed that the air war was similar to Medieval warfare with single-combat and chivalry. He claimed there was honor among the pilots of the war and that air combat was a higher form of warfare that should replace all other forms of warfare.[11]

William Mitchell, an American aviator, agreed that there were honorable relations amongst pilots. He believed that chivalry existed because of the more personal style of combat as opposed to the impersonal warfare in the trenches. [12] This type of single-combat fell within the common perception of chivalric warfare and was elaborated upon by Arthur Gould Lee, a British

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[7] John Buchan, *A History of the First World War*. (Great Britain: Endeavour Press, 2014), 5-15.
[8] Bennett A Molter, *Knights of the Air*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1918), 11-14.
[9] William A. Bishop, *Winged Warfare*. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1918), 38-39.
[10] William A. Bishop, "Chivalry in the Air," in *Great Battles of World War I: In the Air*. Compiled by Frank C Platt. (New York: The New American Library, 1966), 73-74.
[11] Cecil Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1963), 45-46.
[12] William Mitchell, "Leaves from my War Diary," in *Great Battles of World War I: In the Air*. Compiled by Frank C Platt. (New York: The New American Library, 1966), 122.

pilot. Lee also claimed that the air war was chivalrous, but he identified this characteristic to being limited to a window of time during the war. It was the advent of single-seater scouts, before the development of mass formations, that provided the opportunity for a chivalric form of warfare. [13]

In the 1960s, Alan Hynd wrote "Flying to Kill" in *Great Battles of World War I: In the Air*. In this book, he uses medieval terminology to describe World War I pilot Billy Bishop. He calls him "A twentieth-century knight"[14] and "the White Knight of Canada."[15] He parallels Bishop to "Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Knight of Germany."[16] In Hynd's description of the duel between Bishop and Richthofen, he describes both men as choosing to fight an honorable one-on-one private showdown.[17] In the middle of the epic struggle between the White and Red Knights, Bishop experienced a gun jam and, much to his consternation, was unable to continue the battle. Richthofen backed off to give Bishop a chance to repair his weapon, but when Bishop was unable, the Red Knight departed, refusing to finish off his unarmed opponent. Hynd claims, "Whatever dirty tactics members of his squadron have been guilty of, Richthofen personally is chivalry itself."[18] In Hynd's eyes, Richthofen was indeed an honorable knight.

Hynd also describes the practice of pilots exchanging notes. He relates a case of Bishop dropping a challenge via a note. Hynd explains this communication over the lines, "The Germans were forever dropping notes, usually to inquire as to what had become of a missing comrade, so

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[13] Lee, *No Parachute,* xiii.
[14] Alan Hynd, "Flying to Kill" in *Great Battles of World War I: In the Air*. Compiled by Frank C Platt. (New York: The New American Library, 1966), 26.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 38.
[18] Ibid.

that they could let his folks know the details."[19] Hynd claims that these types of exchanges were a regular occurrence. He insists that all such correspondence were answered in a timely and polite manner.[20]

In 2003, historian John Morrow, in *Reconsidering a Century of Flight,* indicates that these earlier claims of chivalry amongst the Great War pilots are inaccurate. He argues that this was purely romanticization and mythologizing of air warfare. The common perception has been one of deadly individualistic duels of honor. Morrow points to the fact that pilots from the First World War are more well known by the public then the generals or politicians of the time. The larger-than-life personalities, like Richthofen, still cast an even larger shadow in the popular imagination.[21] This is due to the fact that the war on the ground stood in stark contrast to the battle in the sky. With the soldiers in the trenches where so many were fighting and dying, the individual was swept away in the sea of mass numbers. However, in the sky, an individual could shine. In Morrow's estimation this, "provided a much-needed affirmation of the importance of the individual and youth in slaughter of both. The fighter pilots consequently became not only the symbols of aviation but also the ultimate heroes of World War I."[22] So, while there was some honorable behavior, in Morrow's eyes, this was essentially a show, propaganda, put on for the public.

Morrow points to the portrayal by British airmen of the idea of sportsmanship. He explains that this was the result of the appeal of the adventure of flying, which attracted many

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[19] Ibid., 45-46.
[20] Ibid.
[21] John Morrow, "Brave Men Flying: The Wright Brothers and Military Aviation in World War I," in *Reconsidering a Century of Flight*. Edited by Roger D. Launius and Janet R. Daly Bednarek. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 174-175.
[22] Ibid., 175.

athletes straight out of school. This sense of adventure and sportsmanship then bled over into these pilots' memoirs. Morrow specifically points to Cecil Lewis's *Sagittarius Rising*. Morrow does not indicate that Lewis's claims were inaccurate, but he does look skeptically at the downside of the culture that Lewis described. Morrow references the claim that pilots only mourned in private and states that he believes this meant, "maintenance of a 'stiff upper lip' was mandatory; these young aviators consequently released nerves, rage, and fears together in 'rags,' or brawls, in the mess or in bruising football games."[23] These fights led to much broken furniture and some injuries.[24]

Morrow explains that the image of the romanticized war was propagated by aviation magazines in Britain. He believes that "Anecdotes of wartime aviation that concentrate on the exploits of fighter pilots have given the impression that in this mass war of technology and industry, the air arm was merely an atavistic appurtenance in which a few exceptional aces were the dominant feature."[25] He believes that this approach diminishes the significance of aviation in the war. Morrow states that it is more important to understand the large-scale picture of mass employment of arms in the air than to understand the accomplishments of individual pilots. He claims that the old approach is outdated and anachronistic.[26] Instead, he insists, "This was no sport, no game. It was a deadly, ruthless, and capricious business, where a man's life depended not solely on his individual skills but on a combination of those skills, on luck, and on machines that were very far from perfect."[27] Morrow takes the position that these earlier ideas of honorable warfare had been exaggerated, instead preferring to present it as cold, detached slaughter.

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[23] Ibid., 176
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 177.
[26] Ibid., 177-178.
[27] Ibid., 182.

In *Air Power: The Men, Machines, and Ideas that Revolutionized War, from Kitty Hawk to Gulf War II*, Stephen Budiansky claims that there was a distinctive culture among pilots that occasionally led to acts of chivalry. Budiansky states that elite pilots deeply enjoyed their profession; to them, they saw it as something above war. Like William Mitchell argues, Budiansky states that there was a distinct difference in attitude between men in the air and men on the ground. Ground troops saw themselves as small disposable pieces in a giant game. Meanwhile, Budiasnky says, "once in the air, a pilot could at least believe that he alone held his destiny in his hands. The sensation of being vitally alive in the moments of aerial combat is a recurrent theme in the memoir of First World War Pilots."[28] This aloofness carried over into pilots' unprofessional behavior. They believed themselves, "pioneers, members of a breed apart."[29] Additionally, many pilots shunned traditional military protocol. The military commanders tried to crack down on their insolence, but the crack-downs only made the pilots rebel more. Budiansky explains that this became a self-perpetuating cycle, as the public adoration that pilots received served to further the idea that pilots were somehow a different breed of man. Early on, the various militaries had kept the achievements of their pilots anonymous, as they did with all soldiers. However, the opportunity to propagandize the achievements of their aces was too great, and as the war progressed, all the major belligerent nations had a cast of heroes.[30]

The pilots became heroes out of a public desire for something to cheer about. Common soldiers fighting in the trenches were doomed to collective anonymity and to die forgotten by

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[28] Stephen Budiansky, *Air Power: The Men, Machines, and Ideas that Revolutionized War, from Kitty Hawk to Gulf War II*. (New York: Viking, 2004), 86.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 86-87.

their nation and were unable to rise out of the mud of the trenches to fame. However, according to Budiansky, "Pilots… were the very antithesis of this collective anonymity; they fought as single champions; they were often personally flamboyant; they soared into the skies while other men hid in the mud. They were, in short, chivalrous in a world where chivalry was dead."[31] This contrast between the war on the ground and the one in the air bled over into the public portrayal of the conflict.

Budiansky explains that the newspapers eagerly grabbed any story they could about fighter pilots. This led to the publication of false stories. Budiansky points to a pilot, John McGavock Grider, who recorded in 1918, that he and a few other pilots were, "going to form a new society, - 'The Society for the Extermination of Amateur Aerial Authors,' the purpose of which will be to protect the public from a flood of bunk."[32] Budiansky claims that this "bunk" had twisted the public understanding of the conflict in the air and elevated figures such as Rickenbacker and Richthofen to mythical status across Europe.[33]

However, Budiansky admits that everything was not "bunk." There were some, in his view, limited acts of chivalry. He questions the nature of the cause, raising the possibility that it was just a matter of a self-fulfilling myth. The myth of the chivalrous pilot had become so widely believed that even pilots began to act it out. Budiansky points to the examples of the regular exchange of notes and a duel in which Georges Guynemer refused to kill Ernst Udet because the latter's gun had jammed.[34]

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[31] Ibid., 88.
[32] *War Birds: Diary of an Unknown Aviator*. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1926), 253.
[33] Budiansky, *Air Power*, 88-89.
[34] Ibid., 88.

Stefan Goebel, in his work *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940*, presents an explanation for the popularity of interpreting pilots as knights. He explains that, especially in Britain, chivalry was a dominate concept when addressing war.[35] He goes through the history of Germany and Britain leading up to World War I and how their perception of chivalry had evolved. In Britain, sportsmanship, fair play, and opponents showing respect for each other were key.[36] This idea of chivalry or sportsmanship was pervasive during that period. While industrialization was stealing chivalry from warfare, it remained to some degree in aviation. Goebel states that lone duels between pilots were portrayed as medieval tournaments between lone knights.[37]

It was in large part the revival of English medievalism that brought such ideas of knights and chivalry into the mainstream culture of Britain. It started in the late 1700s with historians and antiquarians reviving interest in the Middle Ages.[38] In the early 1800s, such authors as Sir Walter Scott brought the medieval romances back into common literary usage. The work of Scott and his successors provided chivalry as the highest virtue for the Victorian and Edwardian gentlemen.[39] This cultural development no doubt influenced the aviators of World War I.

This cultural phenomenon would continue after the war. In literature, such men as C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien would carry on the traditions of Scott and his successors. Tolkien would employ their narrative approach to warfare, with the villains of his stories embodying the

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[35] Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940 (Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare)*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 188.
[36] Ibid., 221.
[37] Ibid., 224.
[38] Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), *xx-xxii*.
[39] Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 36-37.

horrors of war, while his heroes embodied the cultural ideals.[40] Meanwhile, Lewis was not only involved in medievalist literature, but he also for the preservation of chivalry as a virtue in society.[41] Medievalism was a broad cultural phenomenon in Britain that explains the thoughts and behavior of the aviators of World War I, which endured far beyond their lifetimes.

How should chivalry and honor be properly understood in the context of World War I aviators? Goebel has already laid the groundwork, but more can be done. The idea of knights was deeply intertwined with the story of World War I pilots, with good reason. Before historians begin throwing away such ideas of honor and chivalry, it would be wise to take into consideration why such ideas exist in the first place. The question of chivalry's role amongst World War I aviators, whether reality or myth, must be considered within the context of the unique role of the pilots in the evolution of warfare from the era of knights to World War I, with the proper understanding of medievalism and the concepts of honor and chivalry in the British culture of the period, as seen in their literature and memorials both before and after the war, and with the realization of warfare's impact on the human psyche, particularly that of a wartime pilot.

Chapter One broadly covers the evolution of the concept of chivalry from the Middle Ages through World War I. Military culture and military ideals embodied by chivalry during the Middle Ages transformed alongside the evolution of warfare. Chivalry was replaced with other ideals such as discipline. However, during the late seventeen hundreds and throughout the Victorian era, chivalry saw a renaissance both in military and popular culture through the

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[40] Andrew Lynch, "Archaism, Nostalgia, and Tennysonian War in *The Lord of the Rings*," in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, Edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 89-90.
[41] C.S. Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," in *Present Concerns*, edited by Walter Hooper. (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1986), 13-14.

literature and the work of such men as Sir Walter Scott and Kenelm Henry Digby. Chapter One also provides a look into the fascination with sports and horses in English culture and how these elements reinforced the revival of English Medievalism leading up to World War I.

Chapter Two picks up with the transition from cavalry to aviation as a means of scouting. It then examines the aviators of World War I and how aviation captured their childhood imagination. The British pilots, in particular, were influenced by sports and the culture of upper-class public schools due to the Royal Flying Corps' recruitment preferences for men with such experiences. The ideas of sportsmanship, in which these men had been brought up, would lend themselves to a culture of respect amongst the opposing flyers. However, there was also an element of wartime psychology that further fed the chivalric culture seen in aviators.

Chapter Three addresses the postwar era. British memorials, which evoked medievalist iconography of St. George and other chivalric ideals, were erected to commemorate the dead and to comfort the living. The Victorian medievalist literary tradition, started by such men as Scott and Digby, was carried well into the twentieth century by authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. The works of these authors of medievalist literature, Scott, Digby, Tolkien and Lewis, provide bookends to the broad cultural phenomenon that explains the cultural context of the World War I aviators and their classification as "Knights of the Sky."

Chapter One:

The Evolution of Chivalry

What is Chivalry and the Pre-World War I Understanding of Chivalry:

Chivalry arose out of the European feudal system in the Carolingian period. In this system, rulers granted tracts of land, or fiefs, to warriors, who in return pledged to support the ruler militarily in time of war or crisis and to protect the inhabitants of the land from plundering. These warriors were the early knights. However, at this point, according to O. B. Duane, they were "far from being the perfect gentleman serving as an ambassador of chivalry. It would be more appropriate to describe him as a blood-thirsty soldier, compelled by circumstance and by the terms of his tenure to equal the barbarity of his aggressor."[42] These early knights followed their lords into battle, in which they commonly displayed a propensity for brutality and plundering. It soon became clear that a system was needed to temper the violence of these warriors to mitigate the damage they caused in war. Around this time, the Catholic Church through the Crusades brought about a union of war and religion in Christianity.[43] Consequently, the chivalric ideal was born.

In the lead up to World War I, there was an effort to unpack the ideas of chivalry by many authors. One such author, Leon Gautier, wrote a book in 1891, in which he provides a definition of chivalry. He claims, "Chivalry may be considered as an eighth sacrament, and this is perhaps the name that suits it best, which describes it most accurately. It is the sacrament; it is the baptism of the warrior."[44] He explained that it is a system of collective members each

[42] O. B. Duane, *The Origins of Wisdom: Chivalry* (London: Brockhampton Press, 1997), 28.
[43] Ibid., 32.
[44] Leon Gautier, *Chivalry*, Translated by Henry Frith (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891), 18.

responsible for their own behavior. He explains that chivalry is very odd, in that it is a brotherhood of warriors that are destined to wage war against and slaughter each other.[45]

However, even as they killed one other, chivalrous warriors retained esteem for their opponents. All were equals from the lowliest knight to the greatest emperor. This was because they had all experienced the warrior's baptism.[46] Guatier laid out "Ten Commandments" for chivalry. The first two rules were religious in nature, to believe, obey and defend the Christian church. The third commandment was to respect and defend the weak. Fourth was loyalty to one's nation. Fifth called for bravery in the face of the enemy. Sixth was to mercilessly wage war on "the Infidel." After that, the seventh rule called for obedience to authority, so long as that authority did not contradict God's law. Next, the chivalrous knight was required to tell the truth and keep his promises. Ninth was a call for generosity, and the tenth the knight was to constantly battle for good against evil.[47] Therefore, mercy in battle were not necessarily expected, instead it was reserved for treatment of the weak. However, it did call for a knight to be a champion of his faith, nation, countrymen, and whatever cause he believed to be just. In an analysis of war, chivalry cannot be excluded as a phenomenon as a result of ferocity in battle. Instead, chivalry must be determined by looking at cultural factors, motivations, justification, and behavior out of battle.

William Henry Schofield wrote in 1912 that chivalry was crafted by and for the benefit of Christianity. Schofield identified key virtues of chivalry as including, "mercy, meekness, and pity, in addition to loyalty faithfulness, and truth."[48] It was also important for chivalric knights to

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[45] Ibid., 18-19.
[46] Ibid., 19.
[47] Ibid., 26.
[48] William Henry Schofield, *Chivalry in English Literature: Chaucer, Malory, Spenser and Shakespeare,* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1912), 5.

resist the traditional vices warned about in Christianity. Schofield states, "Chivalry owed its first sway to the wisdom of those mediaeval writers who grasped the opportunity it provided to soften the hearts of rough warriors and restrain any addiction on their part to cruelty, revenge, and boast." [49] Following those early authors of chivalry, poets and other writers maintained chivalry down through the centuries to World War I.[50]

Schofield showed how English authors and poets had portrayed chivalry through the years. He specifically discussed Geoffrey Chaucer, Sir Thomas Malory, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare. Geoffrey Chaucer focused on the gentle deeds of chivalry.[51] Thomas Malory wrote on King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, popularizing chivalry.[52] Edmund Spenser promoted an intellectual, scholarly gentleman form of chivalry.[53] Meanwhile, William Shakespeare presented a more populist chivalry, for both noble and commoner.[54] As Schofield describes it, "Chaucer presents a standard of conduct for the knight, Malory for the noble, Spenser for the courtier, and Shakespeare for the man…. Chaucer exalts worthiness, determining acts; Malory, nobility, accepting obligations; Spenser, worth, procured by self-discipline; Shakespeare, high nature, transforming character. Chaucer says 'do;' Malory, 'avoid;' Spenser, 'study;' Shakespeare, 'be.'"[55] These writers deeply ingrained chivalry into the English worldview.

What set English chivalry apart from its French counterpart, according to Schofield, was that the English variant was not exclusively an elitist affair. Because it was so widespread in

[49] Ibid., 6.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 70.
[52] Ibid., 123.
[53] Ibid., 178-179.
[54] Ibid., 260.
[55] Ibid., 263.

England, chivalry became part of normal morality. Chivalry was the aspiration of English men.[56] Schofield states, "Christian chivalry made, not for mere fulfilment of duty, but for super abundant generosity; not for simple fidelity, but for glorifying deference to women; not for rigor and harsh display of force, but for tolerance and tenderness."[57] This emphasized the Christian influences on chivalry.

Leon Guatier stated that he saw chivalry as a preserver of Western Civilization, claiming it had protected the West from the medieval Islamic invasions of Europe. He said, from a Euro-centric worldview, "Without chivalry, the West, vanquished by fatalism and sensuality, might to-day have been as decomposed and as rotten as the East!"[58] He called for the preservation of the chivalric code that had "freed and preserved"[59] Western Civilization.

In a sort of prophetic declaration, Gautier denounced critics of chivalry as, "those philosophers who delight in running down the human race, and in despising mankind."[60] In response to the critic's expected argument that chivalry had ended long before, Gautier stated, that chivalry lived on in spirit; its ideals were not tied down to one time period or a cultural institution. Gautier insisted that anyone, even in modern times, could be "as chivalric as any knight of old time."[61] All that someone had to do was abide by the ten commandments of chivalry that he had laid out. He decried the modern love of pleasure. He claimed that a nation that was absorbed with a love of luxury would collapse, being defeated by outsiders who were

[56] Ibid., 267-269.
[57] Ibid., 272.
[58] Gautier, *Chivalry*, 60.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 497.
[61] Ibid.

more manly. Not only was chivalry a conservator of history and culture, but it also could be a future guardian of Western Civilization.[62]

Evolution of Warfare and the Impact on Chivalry:

The system of chivalry collapsed during the fourteenth century due to a combination of factors. Feudalism was being replaced with sovereignty. No longer did kings rely on their warrior vassals for military support. Sovereign kings began to transition to the use of mercenary forces, which would be loyal solely to the king himself, as the primary military force. Knights were too unpredictable, too independent, and too likely to resist unfettered monarchical power. This change was accelerated by the employment of gunpowder weapons. The image of the knight in shining armor, upon a galloping steed with a lance in hand, became something only seen in staged tournaments.[63] O. B. Duane claims that over the next century, as religion became less intertwined with war and warriors, chivalry as an institution died away as "knights had forfeited their ancient splendor and had become mere soldiers, while the art of gallantry had deteriorated into licentiousness."[64] However, the pursuit of an ideal good warrior would not die with the system of chivalry and knights.

Medieval society was centered around martial values. Although, as the chivalric era came to an end, its ideals lived on. This can partially be seen in the evolution from knights to soldiers. Andre Corvisier explains, "the knights of the Middle Ages, or the townsmen or peasants called to arms, were not exactly soldiers. They were fighters, the first by vocation, the others on

[62] Ibid., 497-499.
[63] Duane, *The Origins of Wisdom*, 84.
[64] Ibid., 86.

demand."[65] This changed with the creation of permanent standing armies made up of men who spent almost their entire lives in the military.[66]

As warfare developed, pre-existing distinctions between nobility and commoners in time of war were enhanced. Corvisier explains, "two kinds of fighting were established during the Hundred Years War: on the one side was the 'warriors' war' of the nobles, who followed the rules of chivalry; and on the other was the 'war to the death' waged by foot soldiers."[67] This distinction is one that sounds eerily familiar to the distinction between aviators and foot soldiers of World War I. During the Hundred Years War, the noble still fought according to chivalric ideals and won much glory for himself. Meanwhile, the regular soldiers were labeled mercenaries. In accordance with societal expectations, nobles made up the officer corps or elite units as opposed to the cannon fodder of the lower ranks.[68]

There was a parallel development in the mentality of soldiers. Corvisier claims that "From 1500 to 1800 an evolution from a 'warrior' mentality to an 'army' mentality took place. We see evidence of this in the conception of honor and the idea of the hero, and in changing manifestations of hero-worship."[69] He claims that a transition was taking place over the ideal warrior. Writers of the time period promoted "virtues that were not precisely those of a knight: sturdiness, endurance, experience, sangfroid now opposed the gentle but impulsive actions of the knight."[70] As warfare became more centered around infantry instead of cavalry and firearms instead of melee weapons, militaries became less elitist, less individualistic, and a new warrior

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[65] Andre Corvisier, *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*, Translated by Abigail T. Siddall. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 11.
[66] Ibid., 10-11.
[67] Ibid., 98.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 183.
[70] Ibid.

ideal began to develop. For inspiration for this ideal, the image of the Roman legionary rose to the fore. However, during this era, with such wars as the Thirty Years War, there was a resurgence of the barbaric warrior as the societal expectations for chivalric behavior faded away. In the absence of chivalry, war was simply the pursuit of profit, by both common soldiers and officers.[71]

Over time, the term soldier transitioned from something derogatory, in the vane of a mercenary who fought for money, and became something more honorable. During the 1600s, the terms officer and soldier remained separate, keeping the two worlds of the nobility and common man separate. However, later the two terms came to simply be references to rank instead of being necessarily associated with social class. Corvisier explains that "the word 'soldier' had taken the place of 'man of war' used in a favorable sense. Any man of war who was brave and who knew his trade well was called a soldier."[72] It would be during the 1700s, that the two terms would be combined and both common men and officers were called "good soldiers" when they excelled in their role.[73]

The central virtue of this new ideal soldier was discipline and self-sacrifice. Corvisier explains, "In the 1600s whenever a soldier's life was exalted great emphasis was given to the weariness and bloodshed endured, and a soldier's death was a glorious heroic event. In the 1700s, such a death was a sacrifice."[74] The ideal heroic soldier shifted from an individualistic powerful warrior to a disciplined self-sacrificing soldier. Corvisier gave the example of the early hero in the story of, "The death of the Chevalier Bayard [one of the knights of Charlemagne], which was often held up as an example in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was the

[71] Ibid., 183-184.
[72] Ibid., 184.
[73] Ibid., 185.
[74] Ibid., 185.

culmination of a long series of individual heroic exploits."[75] This contrasted with the ideal hero a century later, "the death of the Chevalier d'Assas [who died a hero's death in 1760, while alerting his troops to danger] was the type for death-as-sacrifice."[76] This new type of hero was anonymous, essentially an everyman figure who the common soldier could emulate, unlike old heroes who were of nigh mythological status and whose exploits were legendary. As warfare became more complicated, military leaders placed a higher premium upon a soldier's ability to follow orders.[77]

There were various rules that carried over from the old chivalric system. These holdovers included, "the rules of war that forbade victors to kill wounded or unarmed men and required them to treat prisoners well, to respect the terms of surrender, and to leave the civilian population out of the war."[78] These rules, which helped humanize warfare, were maintained, in no small part, due to the fear of reprisal; once someone broke these rules, they were no longer protected by them.[79]

During this time, another concept became important to officers, that of honor. At this point, honor did not have much to do with religion or morality. Historian Christopher Duffy explains, "in leading circles of society in the eighteenth-century faith was at one of its lower ebbs, and religious observance in the armies was supported primarily as a means of promoting discipline and cohesion."[80] In the eyes of an officer, law and even duty might have to take a secondary position to honor. Honor was centered around the virtue of courage. As Duffy

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 185-186.
[78] Ibid., 186.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason: 1715-1789*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987), 75.

describes it, “The man of honor refused to remove his marks of distinction when he was under sniper fire. He cast aside protective armor with disdain.”[81] If any officer lacked courage, it was better if he were not in the military at all, as cowardice would not be tolerated by his peers.[82]

In a system of honor, officers were always seeking to prove themselves. Duffy described it as a sort of insecurity. This led to duels becoming common among the officer class, as the slightest insult could besmirch a man’s honor. An elaborate system was developed for duels with mediators, specific types of weapons, agreed upon rules, and as Duffy explains, “Deliberate aiming was forbidden.” [83] However, despite all the pomp, duels were still bloody affairs, when mediation was ineffectual. Honor demanded that a man could not let any insult go unchallenged.[84]

Another element of honor was that officers expected to receive recognition; otherwise, they may take what they viewed as an oversight as an insult to their honor. Duffy relates, “Recognition might also come in the form of a pension, grants of land and nobility, arrangements for rich marriages… and orders and decorations.”[85] This expectation of reward was not unlike the old chivalry in which a knight served a king in exchange for land.

However, honor, like chivalry before it, as a societal system or cult was ground down by the wheel of time. Duffy claims that honor would be replaced with “nationalism, political ideology or religiously based morality. Honor, which had once been the concern of the individual, now refers to loyalty to the group and the state.”[86] However, these ennobling ideas, although widely abandoned, were not without lasting influence.

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[81] Ibid., 76.
[82] Ibid., 75-76.
[83] Ibid., 77.
[84] Ibid., 78.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., 80.

Duane insists that chivalry had helped draw out virtues within men. These "qualities of valor, steadfastness and justice, of courtesy, loyalty and obedience, although no longer publicly embraced, were never entirely forgotten."[87] Duane claims that these qualities never died and were instead passed down into modern times in such forms as courtesy.[88]

Return of Chivalry and Revival of English Medievalism

During the eighteenth century, many people continued to live in, essentially, a Medieval world, both physically and mentally.[89] Christopher Duffy explains that the period is marked as a period of restraint. He claims that the 1700s, "seemed to be incapable of creating anything which looked or sounded ugly – to the extent that the graffiti of the tourists were carved with the utmost elegance. No less impressively, men of the eighteenth century, although much given to fighting wars, conducted them with much less of the inhumanity which has stained the records of the ages."[90] This was especially evident in nations, such as France and England, whose officers seemed to be in a chivalric contest. Duffy gives the example of "the battle of Fontenoy in 1745, when a French colonel came across an English counterpart who had been seriously wounded. He gave him a guard for his protection and offered him the contents of his purse. The enemy colonel exclaimed 'an Englishman could not have done more for me!'"[91] However, for the English in particular, this chivalric behavior was not universal. Duffy explains that England was known for being home to a violent and proud people. He claims that the English were exceptionally brave from the officer to the common soldier. He points to the Englishman's "high opinion of his

[87] Duane, *The Origins of Wisdom*, 86.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*, 3.
[90] Ibid., 3-4.
[91] Ibid., 13.

individual worth."[92] This reflected the English tendency toward a less elitist approach to ideas of chivalry.

A key to understanding the phenomenon of the fascination of chivalry surrounding World War I is understanding the resurgence of Medievalism. Historian Stefan Goebel explains that, "In both Great Britain and Germany, there were people whose epochal consciousness was premised on continuity, people who refused to see history as irretrievably past." [93] He explains that people were trying to find meaning and comprehension of contemporary events in their distant past. Subsequently, this phenomenon really came into play in the aftermath of World War I as people remembered what happened. As Goebel explains it, "The Crusades, chivalry and medieval spirituality and mythology provided rich, protean sources of images, tropes and narrative motifs for people to give meaning to the legacy of the Great War."[94] In Goebel's estimation, this Medieval influence on World War I memory was an effort to bring unity to the past and present. He states, "In medievalist narratives, the cohesive force of history overshadowed the traumatic watershed for kith and kin of the deceased; whatever the circumstances of the soldiers' deaths, the mourners could feel assured that the fallen had their place in history."[95] However, Goebel explains that chivalry had returned to British culture well before World War I.

A key development occurred that returned chivalric ideals to the fore, the revival of English medievalism. According to Michael Alexander in *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England,* the revival of English medievalism, "amounted to a major change in how those living in England, and those who then looked to England, came to imagine their common history

[92] Ibid., 31-32.
[93] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory,* 1.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 39.

and to conceive their very identity."[96] Part of the revival of medievalism in England was the revival of interest in the Middle Ages among historians and antiquarians. The term medieval was developed around 1830, to describe the time period being studied, previously referred to as the Gothic period.[97]

It would be during the nineteenth century that the revival of English medievalism would become a major cultural force. Ideas of chivalry, knights and other medieval imagery would return to the popular culture. Mark Girouard in *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, explains, "Knights in armor by the thousands are described in literature, depicted in painting, sculpture or stained glass, or actually appear live jousting (or attempting to joust) at the Eglinton Tournament."[98] This cultural phenomenon would produce the Victorian and Edwardian concept of gentlemanliness.[99]

The revival began a few years earlier. The French Revolution sparked a backlash among certain key political figures in Britain, such as Edmund Burke. According to Alexander, the revival of chivalry was in some part "due to the guillotine and to Napoleon."[100] Burke would write in response to the execution of the French Queen, Marie-Antoinette, in his *Reflections On The Revolution In France*, "little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honor, and of cavaliers…. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory

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[96] Alexander, *Medievalism, xx.*
[97] Ibid., *xxii-xxv*.
[98] Girouard, *The Return to Camelot, v.*
[99] Ibid.
[100] Alexander, *Medievalism*, 30.

of Europe is extinguished for ever."[101] Almost as if Burke's words were a call to action, the age of chivalry would make its comeback in Britain in the following years.[102]

During his rule from 1760 until 1820, King George III of Britain would invest in art that evoked chivalric imagery. This was a significant development, "A taste for medievalism was now no longer the preserve of a comparatively small circle of antiquarians and a scattering of Northern peers. It, and chivalry with it, had been given royal approval."[103] King George's tendency toward conservativism naturally led him towards medievalism. The medieval time period offered a simple and reassuring alternative to the chaos brought on by the French Revolution.[104]

Perhaps the key figure in the revival of English medievalism was Sir Walter Scott, author of *Ivanhoe* (1819). Scott revived the late medieval chivalric romances, like Thomas Morrow's 1485 *Morte d'Arthur*. Through his writing, Scott brought back ideas of chivalry into popular culture. During his lifetime, he would become the most popular author in the world. Girouard claims, "By his writing Scott encouraged aristocrats and country gentlemen to build castles and cram their halls with weapons and armor; he made young girls thrill to the thought of gallant knights, loyal chieftains and faithful lovers; he spurred young men on to romantic gestures and dashing deeds in both love and war."[105] Sir Walter Scott came at the right time. Toward the end of the eighteenth-century, history was becoming more popular, with historians such as David Hume and Tobias Smollett experiencing success in the publication of large works on the history

[101] Edmund Burke, *Reflections On The Revolution In France*, (London: George Bell And Sons, 1897), 348.
[102] Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 19.
[103] Ibid., 22.
[104] Ibid., 22-23.
[105] Ibid., 30.

of Britain. The ground was ripe for Scott's historical fiction romances.[106] The heroes in Scott's novels provided an archetype for gentlemen of the nineteenth century to follow. A host of authors would follow in Scott's footsteps, solidifying the medievalist revival in such works as: Malory's *History of Chivalry* (1825), G. P. R. James's *History of Chivalry* (1830), and H. Stebbing's *History of Chivalry and the Crusades* (1830).[107]

Another key author was Kenelm Henry Digby. Digby travelled Europe and collected stories and ideas of chivalry. He condensed these stories into his work, *The Broad Stone of Honor* in 1822.[108] While Scott, in his work, was much more reserved about his opinion about chivalry, Digby was explicitly pro-chivalry. According to Girouard, Digby was "chivalry-mad."[109] He refused to see any flaws in chivalry. Any criticism of chivalry he either turned into a virtue or he deflected. For example, he defended the zealotry of the Crusades as preferable to the apathy of his contemporary age. Where Scott presented chivalry in a medieval context, Digby presented it as a code of conduct to follow for all men of all times. As Giraourd explains, "He brought chivalry up to date, as a code of behavior for all men, not just for soldiers; he enabled modern gentlemen who had never been near a battlefield to think of themselves as knights."[110] The knights had not evolved into gentlemen, but rather the contemporary gentlemen were still knights, engaged in a constant warfare against evil.[111]

It would be during the reign of Queen Victoria that chivalry would take British culture by storm. After the debacle of the Eglinton Tournament in 1839, an attempt to revive the medieval tournament tradition where over one-hundred thousand people showed up just to get rained out

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[106] Alexander, *Medievalism*, 30.
[107] Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 36-37.
[108] Ibid., 56.
[109] Ibid., 57.
[110] Ibid., 60.
[111] Ibid., 60-61.

as the event began, Queen Victoria, at first, mocked the idea of chivalry. However, she changed her mind when she fell in love with Prince Albert, a product of German Romanticism, who was an ardent adherent to chivalry. This would lead Victoria to embrace chivalry as a cultural phenomenon in British upper society.[112]

During the Edwardian era, the medievalist literature would continue. Children's authors, such as Ascott R. Hope, W. T. Stead, and Edith L. Elias, adapted the Victorian Arthurian literature by such men as Alfred Tennyson into books for young readers. These works appeared in anthologies, standalone works, and school readers. These books, with increasing levels of complexity, were meant to lead children, as they grew older, towards the original works.[113]

After chivalry made its comeback in the early nineteenth century, it was not simply an aesthetic choice for the nobility, as "romantic images of chivalry were transformed into a normative force. Medieval knighthood constituted a resource for people who wanted to ennoble and improve the existing world."[114] Part of this revival of chivalry was the emergence of gentleman, a concept that made chivalry more applicable to normal day-to-day life. To be a gentleman meant to struggle against one's baser instincts and to strive instead for virtues of trustworthiness, kindness, and fairness. Goebel claims, "Modern knights were engaged in a permanent struggle… The language of fighting permeated the gentlemanly community; it brought about the moral rearmament of civil society. Cultural historians have therefore suggested that the knights of Edwardian Britain were mentally equipped for combat when war broke out in 1914."[115] Goebel identified five virtues that appeared in World War I remembrance that set apart

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[112] Ibid., 96-113.
[113] Velma Bourgeois Richmond, "King Arthur and His Knights for Edwardian Children," *Arthuriana* 23, no. 3 (2013): 55-78. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/523607
[114] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 189.
[115] Ibid., 190.

the modern knight, these being "courage, duty, honor, fairness and faith."[116] These virtues correspond to the virtues laid out by Leon Gautier.

Through chivalry, people were able to find the paradigm through which they were able to praise and commemorate their soldiers that served during the war. Goebel claims, "In the wake of the First World War, every one of the fallen could be regarded a courageous, dutiful, honorable, fair and holy knight."[117] In the context of chivalry, society was able to come to terms with the violent acts of their warriors. Soldiers had not committed senseless violence but rather had obeyed societal expectations for a chivalrous warrior. What soldiers had had to do was noble if bloody.[118]

Two authors, Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, would soon start a key development in the chivalric ideals. These two men were instrumental in the development of the concept of "muscular Christianity." In contrast to what Kingsley saw as a feminine monasticism, chivalry promoted manliness and masculinity in a Christian manner. Instead of suppressing masculinity, chivalry should ennoble it and dedicate it to God.[119] These two men wrote about their experiences in school and developed the idea to promote their concept through sports, which would lead to a complete revolution in British education. For example, in 1829, when sports were of little note, Rugby headmaster, Thomas Arnold, claimed that chivalry was an evil. However, forty years following his death in 1842, sports alongside chivalry were prevalent in a majority of public schools.[120] According to Girouard, Kingsley and Hughes believed, "that the best way to moral prowess was physical prowess, in actual fighting or in sport."[121] The writing of

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[116] Ibid., 194.
[117] Ibid., 200.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 143.
[120] Ibid., 164.
[121] Ibid., 166.

Kingsley and Hughes would inspire English public schools to make sports compulsory in the late 1870s, as a means of developing character in young men.[122]

It was through the revival of chivalry that sports became mainstream. As Girouard explains, "Chivalry helped to create the Victorian gentleman; and the Victorian gentleman created or rather re-created, cricket. Indeed, the whole vast fabric of contemporary sport derives, not just from Victorian England, but from the small percentage of Victorian Englishmen who went to the public schools."[123] These men developed everything, the rules, the equipment, the clothing, and the terminology. Girouard continues, "Kingsley and Hughes encouraged them; games became not just an acceptable, but a praiseworthy, activity for grown men as well as for schoolboys. To play them was both morally creditable and the mark of a gentleman."[124] Even the Royal Commission on the Public Schools promoted sports as a way to develop character and virtue in young men in 1864. This led to the development of such ideas as sportsmanship and fair play.[125] The system developed in Britain would be different from that of other nations.

In many ways, the English viewed the Germans as a brutal people during World War I. Goebel believes that this boils down to the ideals of sportsmanship and fair play. He states, "It was part of 'the game.' British players in 'the game,' though, followed a different set of rules. In Britain, sport provided the experience around which ideas of proper warfare coalesced."[126] This idea of the sportsman played a large role throughout British history, and the development of ideas of fair play were significant forces on British morality.[127]

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[122] Ibid., 168-169.
[123] Ibid., 232.
[124] Ibid., 233.
[125] Ibid., 233-236.
[126] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 216-217.
[127] Derek Birley, *Sport and the making of Britain*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

Michael C. C. Adams believes that the revival of chivalry was tied to a masculinity movement of the time. He presents the claim that, "Knights belong to the revival of chivalry part of the Victorian positive view of war."[128] In literature of the era, chivalric ideals were tied to manhood. Adams states that in the revival of chivalry, "War was viewed as an abrasive to cleanse and toughen a society dissipated by material consumption. To cushion the inhumanity of modern total war, its adherents dreamed of chivalry and… woke up as knights."[129] There was a nobility in dying in war. At that time, death in war was seen as preferable to death of natural causes.[130]

Adams identifies the lack of education in science during this time period as part of the phenomenon. In both British and American upper-level schools, science was neglected. Adams points out that most schools were more interested in building men's character than teaching technical knowledge. He believed this was detrimental and caused a mental deficiency that led to men adopting ideas of chivalry to deal with the horror of war. Adams quotes a British writer from the time period, Douglas Goldring, who stated that graduates of this school system's "'mental equipment for withstanding the shock of experience was as useless as the imitation suit of armor, the dummy lace and shield of the actor in a pageant.' His education 'preserves him as an intellectual adolescent living in a fairyland of chivalrous illusion.'"[131] Adams takes a negative view of chivalry but draws out the point that chivalry played a key role in education in the years before World War I, for good or for ill.

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[128] Michael C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 49.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 49-50.
[131] Ibid., 65.

Adams believes this chivalric revival led the British to not take war seriously. He claims that scouting, which was developed by Baden-Powell based on his experience during the war, took more interest in chivalry as opposed to other skills. Adams states, "Scout projects included 'The Quest of King Arthur' in which boys undertook digs to find Camelot."[132] This was something Adams saw as a childish approach to a serious area of growth for boys.

Women, during the decades before World War I, also embraced the chivalric ideals when it came to their expectations and descriptions of men. Adams admits, "Through the revival of chivalry women could expect at least a modicum of decent treatment from men in an age that left them legally vulnerable to abuse."[133] This female interest in chivalry no doubt further accelerated the chivalric revival.

With the advance of technology, men leaned more and more on ideas of chivalry to counter the escalating destructiveness of war.[134] Adams believes that the revival of chivalry was part of an attempt to assert that "man retained superiority over the machine."[135] British officials like Lord Northcliffe and E. S. Oliver during World War I compared the British soldier to knights of old. Where the war on the ground denied chivalric ideals, the air war provided a source from where inspiration could be drawn.[136]

That is not to say that the revival of English medievalism was purely the result of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such a revival of tradition was a common historical occurrence. Michael Alexander points to Virgil the Roman poet, Edmund Spenser the Elizabethan era English poet, and such works as *Beowulf*, where authors revived the "legendary

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[132] Ibid., 66.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid., 68-69.
[135] Ibid., 104.
[136] Ibid., 104-106.

ancestral past."[137] Alexander states, "There were survivals and revivals from the beginnings of history, and before the invention of writing."[138] Therefore, the revival of medievalism is not a historically unique event but a recurring cross-cultural phenomenon.

With the growing turbulence of the age leading up to World War I, chivalry provided a solid ground. Schofield makes a statement that is very prophetic, "In times of national perplexity, when the morale of the people has seemed weak, Englishmen have often turned for new stimulus to old-time ideals of honor. It is not surprising, then, that now, when so many deplore the materialistic tendencies of the age, chivalry is being revived as a practical religion for laymen."[139] In many ways, this is what occurred during World War I, where men turned to medieval terminology to articulate their experiences during a horrifying and tumultuous time of history.

Chivalry and the Horse:

As late as 1895, in England, horses remained an inseparable part of English aristocracy and gentlemen. As historian Barbara W. Tuchman explains, "Ever since the first mounted man acquired extra stature and speed (and with the invention of the stirrup, extra fighting thrust), the horse had distinguished the ruler from the ruled."[140] The horse played a larger role in English hierarchy than anywhere else in the world. Even writers of the time would employ equestrian terminology to describe the English aristocracy. An aristocrat's childhood memories were ones of horseback riding. Tuchman elaborates that a horse, "provided locomotion, occupation and conversation; inspired love, bravery, poetry and physical prowess. He was the essential element

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[137] Alexander, *Medievalism*, 39.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Schofield, *Chivalry in English Literature*, 272-273.
[140] Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War 1890-1914*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 22.

in racing, the sport of kings, as in cavalry, the elite of war."[141] According to Duffy, the image of a noble riding a horse was an embodiment of the ideal that they were physically, socially and tactically superior to men who were not high born. Adams explains, "Since mounted Norman knights had ridden over Saxon infantry at Hastings in 1066, the cavalryman had been the symbol not only of military but of social elitism in western civilization."[142] Duffy explains that this link between the horse and the noble lasted in some nations, such as England, beyond the eighteenth century.[143]

In the years leading up to World War I, England was among the last Western democratic nations to retain aristocratic characteristics in its government. In June 1895, the Conservative Party came to power in the British government. According to Tuchman, the members of the Conservative Cabinet, "represented the greater landowners of the country who had been accustomed to govern for generations. As its superior citizens they felt they owed a duty to the State to guard its interests and manage its affairs. They governed from duty, heritage and habit – and, as they saw it, from right."[144] This perseverance of traditional elites portrays the traditionalist tendencies of the English.

A special pastime of the aristocratic horseman was fox hunting. Tuchman relates a description that echoes the future descriptions of aviators flying, "To gallop over the downs with hounds and horsemen, wrote Wilfred Scawen Blunt in a sonnet, was to feel 'my horse a thing of wings, myself a God.'"[145] Tuchman states, "If it was bliss in that time to be alive and of the leisured class, to hunt was rapture."[146] However, a horseman's true calling was warfare. In

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[141] Ibid.
[142] Adams, *The Great Adventure*, 69.
[143] Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*, 35.
[144] Tuchman, *The Proud Tower*, 3.
[145] Ibid., 23.
[146] Ibid.

England, the cavalry was the most prestigious branch from which their highest officers were drawn.[147]

However, the fascination with cavalry began to fade leading up to World War I. In science fiction novels before the war, the airplane began to replace the horse as the mount of the chivalrous knight. Cavalry units, in their traditional lance charge usage, had become outdated; however, military leaders leading up to the war still refused to abandon the tactic as being a legitimate strategy, despite the advance in infantry weaponry that eliminated the horseback advantage. [148]

In these ways, chivalry and medievalism remained a cultural force in Britain in the years leading up to World War I. The evolution of military culture and the expectation of officers, while not specifically medievalist, retained much of the chivalric characteristics. In British culture, ideas of chivalry and medievalism had returned to the fore through the influence of men like Sir Walter Scott and Kenelm Henry Digby, these cultural ideals were deeply ingrained in British society when World War I began.

[147] Ibid., 25.
[148] Adams, *The Great Adventure*, 69.

Chapter Two:

Analyzing the Medieval Language of World War I Aviators

During the war itself there were a number of ways that aviation carried over or embodied the ideas that inhabited the medievalism of English culture. It was in chivalric terms that aviators chose to describe themselves and their experiences. Brave young men taking to the sky in their flying steeds, clashing in epic duels of single combat. As historian John Morrow describes them, "they fight tenaciously, win gallantly, or die heroically, their flaming craft plunging to earth like meteoric funeral pyres, extinguishing their equally meteoric careers with scorching finality. Their names – Boelcke, Ball, Richtofen, Guynemer, Mannock – are legend… They are the symbols of the first war in the air, its heroes and victims."[149] Their legendary, but too often short, lives seemingly stepped straight out of the mythology of old.[150]

The Death of Cavalry and Rise of Aviation

World War I was the death of cavalry in warfare. The trench warfare that stretched half-way across the European continent, rendered the horse and rider obsolete. The last British cavalry charge occurred on August 24, 1914 at Audreques.[151] Aviation stepped in to take its place. Before the war, European military leaders saw aviation as a supplementary element to cavalry's reconnaissance duties.[152] With the advent of trench warfare, aviation was solely responsible for taking over the reconnaissance role.[153] Thus, aviation usurped cavalry in its military role.

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[149] John H. Morrow, *The Great War in the Air: Military Aviation from 1909 to 1921*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), xiv-xv.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 289-290.
[152] Morrow, *The Great War in the Air*, 53.
[153] Ibid., 72.

The Imagination of Youth

A main part of this association between aviation and medievalism was how aviation captured the boyhood imaginations of both the pilots and the public. In his work, *Knights of the Air,* Bennett A. Molter explained that his reasons for joining were not just, "(s)ympathy for the Allied cause and the things they were fighting for was the principal motive. But underlying that was the boyhood love of adventure and an avid appetite for the tales of chivalry recounting the deeds and exploits of the knights of old."[154] This American pilot was deeply influenced by English medievalism. He pointed towards the English mythological figures such as King Arthur and Robin Hood as part of his childhood imagination. It was his discovery of aviation as an adult that brought back that childhood dream of knighthood. Molter said, "Instead of faring forth clad in shining armor and mounted on a fiery charger I would don fur-lined vestments and ride a steed of metal, wood, and linen, faster than any horse that ever touched hoof to ground."[155] The aviator's uniform had replaced the knight's armor, but in Molter's eyes, it was essentially the same.[156]

Aviation was the fascination of many young boys at the time, besides Molter. One British aviator, H. D. Lee, described how he was introduced to aviation through weekly flying papers. He also pointed to the 1909 crossing of the English Channel as the point when he decided to become a pilot.[157] Similarly, David R. B. Bentley, another aviator, described how in his childhood, he and his fellow school boys were fascinated by flying when "Mons. Bleriot achieved fame as the first man to fly the English Channel."[158] He stated, "there was much greater

[154] Molter, *Knights of the Air,* 11.
[155] Ibid., 11-12.
[156] Ibid.
[157] H. D. Lee, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 2.
[158] David R. B. Bentley, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 1.

excitement a short time later when another Frenchman Mons. Guillaux, flew over our school, & landed in a nearby field… of course masters & pupils all rushed out in great excitement, as to most of us it was our first close up sight of a plane. The pilot kindly gave many of us his autograph… no doubt Mons. Guillaux with his plane encouraged many of us to have ideas of one day flying ourselves."[159] Another pilot also identified the 1909 English Channel crossing as his inspiration for becoming a pilot.[160] This childhood fascination lent itself to a romanticization of flying later in life.

Molter shared his belief that medieval knights would have been jealous of contemporary pilots. These aviators were like mythological figures riding flying horses above the clouds. Molter compared pilots to eagles driving harpies from the sky and to modern crusaders. "Yes, Sir Knights, much of your spirit and your chivalry have been reborn to live again in our Knights of the Air; the foe is not always an honorable one, but he must be met, as you met yours, in a manner that leaves no ignoble stain upon the hand that slays."[161] He saw the role of the aviator as one who is responsible for protecting women, children, and the defenseless.[162]

Molter's vision of the aviator's role in warfare was also similarly expressed and explained by a member of the British Home Defense Squadron. In reference to the significance of Zeppelins in the war, he stated that, "they represented the first invasion of our territorial virginity since – when? – since William the Conqueror. The nation was outraged; our brave airmen who rose up in our defense were knights in shining armor."[163] Pilots became celebrities with a sort of glamourous status.[164]

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[159] Ibid.
[160] Cristopher Draper, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 2.
[161] Molter, 13.
[162] Ibid., 12-14.
[163] Unknown author 1, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 2.
[164] Ibid.

Sport and the Public School Influence:

From the beginning of the war, the British Royal Flying Corps (RFC) tried to recruit almost exclusively from young men who were in or graduated from British public school, primarily those who had been involved in sports.[165] British pilots, such as R. M. Neill, wrote to their alma maters to encourage the young men there to become aviators. This would lead many pilots to see the air war as a form of sport.[166] Through 1915 and 1916, the RFC maintained its focus on recruiting pilots from the upper classes because they thought they were ultimately better pilot material.[167] Several pilots explained how they had to go through special school to become aviators. One explained that he was trained in cadet school to be "an officer and a gentleman."[168] Another described how, in the officer training corps, trainees were expected to be good at games and sports or else they were "treated as cannon fodder."[169] Morrow explains this was because "Major General Henderson believed that noncommissioned officer pilots broke too many machines and took longer to train. Thus the RFC retained its prewar emphasis on commissioned officers and middle- and upper-class youth, and as the quality of the recruits declined it turned to the Dominions as a reservoir of talent."[170] The British would have rather recruited more pilots from the Dominions rather than from their own lower classes.[171] This ultimately resulted in Canadians taking a disproportionate number of positions in the British RAF by the end of the war.[172] Such a recruitment focus on upper class and public school graduates fed into the idea that the pilots were the knights of the air. Due to the focus of sportsmanship, fair play,

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[165] Morrow, *The Great War in the Air*, 117.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., 118.
[168] Morris F. Mousley, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 4.
[169] A. Robinson, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 2.
[170] Morrow, *The Great War in the Air*, 167.
[171] Ibid., 167.
[172] Ibid., 314.

gentlemanliness, and general chivalry in the British public schools and upper classes, it was only natural for these men, who were inundated with these ideas, to see themselves as the modern knights of Britain.

William A. Bishop, who served in the British Flying Corps, was also heavily influenced by perceived notions of English medieval ideals. In his work, *Winged Warfare*, he described his pursuit of honor in aviation. To Bishop, aviation was a game or sport. Bishop explained, "To bring down a machine did not seem to me to be killing a man; it was more as if I was just destroying a mechanical target, with no human being in it."[173] Occasionally, concern about killing another man would arise, but the concern would pass after a short time of consternation. So, while he did not enjoy killing, he compared the experience of shooting down an enemy aircraft to shooting a clay pigeon. Bishop emphasized the sportsman's satisfaction with hitting his target over the thought of actually killing someone. [174] In fact, one British pilot, P. Davey, stated that, "Most of my pals were all professional sportsmen."[175] These ideas of sportsmanship played a large role in how they understood themselves.

Bishop insisted that a spirit of friendship existed among pilots between the opposing sides. He stated that pilots did not see the conflict as a war but as a game. They held no ill will for their opponents and only shot with the intention of downing the other plane not with a desire to kill. He believed there was a sort of sportsmanship that was predominant on both sides, like two opposing boxers.[176] Bishop gave the example of exchanging notes, which, "were dropped at great personal risk, telling the fate of members of opposing forces who had failed to return to

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[173] Bishop, *Winged Warfare*, 167-168.
[174] Ibid., 38-39.
[174] Ibid., 167-168.
[175] P. Davey, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 7.
[176] Bishop, "Chivalry in the Air," 74.

their own lines, and in many cases these were accompanied by messages of admiration for the skill and bravery of the missing airman."[177] Such notes were a recurring theme of chivalry for many of his peers as well.

Another World War I pilot, Cecil Lewis, recounted his experience in his work, *Sagittarius Rising*. He expressed that flying was similar to, "the lists of the Middle Ages, the only sphere in modern warfare where a man saw his adversary and faced him in mortal combat, the only sphere where there was still chivalry and honour."[178] Whether a pilot won or lost, it was an honorable endeavor. Lewis believed that warfare is a permanent feature of human existence. However, he brought up the comparison of air-warfare to sports, just like Bishop did. Lewis stated that there was a sort of respect for an enemy pilot. He expressed ideas of sportsmanship or brotherhood amongst opposing pilots. [179]

Lewis explained that, during combat in the air, a bond was formed between the opponents. He described it as a sort of dance, as the two warriors faced-off and moved in for the kill. Lewis indicated that a loss was not so bad. In his opinion, to go down in a blaze of glory was a more preferable way to die for he would much rather die that way than to die in bed. Lewis identified this as a higher form of warfare. He stated, "So, if the world must fight to settle its differences, back to Hector and Achilles! Back to the lists! Let the enemy match a squadron of fighters against ours. And let the world look on!"[180] He believed that such an honorable conflict would be better for the world. However, there were times when the English ideas of sportsmanship clashed with the German aviators' behavior in battle. For example, according to

[177] Ibid.
[178] Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising*, 45.
[179] Ibid., 45-46.
[180] Ibid., 46.

British aviator G. Castle, "we considered the Boche pretty unsporting if they shot at chaps in parachutes."[181] These ideas of chivalry, camaraderie, and sportsmanship influenced the British pilots' respect for their opponents.

Respect for the Opponent:

William "Billy" Bishop wrote directly answering the question whether, or not, chivalry existed in air combat. He claimed that it did exist, insisting that the animosity that was common in other branches of the conflict was not representative of the aviation community. He believed that aviators held nothing but respect for their opponents.[182] He claimed there were several causes for this respect. First, he insisted that flying is, at its heart, a romantic profession that draws out the more chivalrous aspects of men. Flying was so new and fresh, and pilots just enjoyed their opportunity to experience the wonders of flight. He believed that this fed into a sense of comradery amongst allied and even opposing pilots. Win or lose, pilots held nothing but admiration and respect for their opponents. Bishop claimed that he never heard a pilot make any angry comment about an opponent.[183]

This idea was expressed by a British Home Defense pilot. The pilot explained the reason why Zeppelins were only used for a short time was because of how easily they were shot down. He expressed, "One can only admire the courage of their crews who, after the precedent set by Leefe Robinson, knew that they were on kamikaze sorties. There is a memorial tablet in Theberton churchyard to the crew of a Zepp shot down there in 1916. The inscription reads: 'Our

[181] G. Castle, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collection, 2.
[182] Bishop, "Chivalry in the Air," 73.
[183] Ibid., 73-74.

enemies have heroes too.'"[184] At least in this case, there was no real hatred for the Zeppelin pilots, despite the fact that they were bombing civilian targets.

In his 1994 work, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Dave Grossman unpacks the necessity of honor and nobility to warriors for them to rationalize their wartime experience. In this work, Grossman identifies that there is an issue with differentiating acceptable and unacceptable killing during a war. To do this, Grossman divides killing into noble and dishonorable killings. The nobility of a kill is separated based on the actions of both sides. If an enemy is noble, he stands his ground and fights in open battle. This is the least problematic killing.

Grossman claims that fighting to the death is noble for both the killer and the slain. The killer must feel no remorse and, in turn, must respect his fallen foe. He explains, "Thus a World War I British officer could speak admiringly to Homes of German machine gunners who remained faithful unto death: 'Topping fellows. Fight until they are killed. They gave us hell.'"[185] Grossman points to the example of Lawrence of Arabia, who in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* described a battle against the Germans, Turks and Arabs in World War I. As the Turks and Arabs retreated, the Germans held together and retained their unit cohesion. Lawrence was in awe, "for the first time, I grew proud of the enemy who had killed my brothers."[186] Thousands of miles away from Germany, abandoned by their allies, the German forces held firm in spite of the adversity. Lawrence described them glowingly, "their sections held together, in firm rank, sheering through the wrack of Turk and Arab like armored ships, high-faced and

[184] Unknown Author 2, Recollections Letter, University of Leeds, Liddle Collections, 7.
[185] Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1996), 195-196.
[186] T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Mitcham, Australia: Penguin Books, 1922), 655.

silent. When attacked they halted, took position, fired to order. There was no haste, no crying, no hesitation. They were glorious."[187] Lawrence shared this feeling of respect for his foe with many British aviators who held respect for their enemies.

Grossman presents this respect of the foe as a noble form of warfare. There was no animosity on the part of T. E. Lawrence toward his German foes, only a deep respect; for to kill those brave Germans would not be difficult and in no way could be construed as dishonorable. Grossman states, "And thus the soldier is able to further rationalize his kill by honoring his fallen foes, thereby gaining stature and peace by virtue of the nobility of those he has slain."[188] However, that is not how combat always plays out. It has become more common, in modern warfare, for kills to be done before the enemy realizes they are in a battle. This is a grey area in regard to a noble killing. Grossman explains that while sometimes ambushes and such tactics are a necessary part of war, "many civilizations partially protected themselves and their consciences and mental health by declaring such forms of warfare dishonorable."[189] Grossman establishes the concept that ideas of honor and dishonor are, to some degree, tied to a civilization's effort to provide rationalization for killing in war for the sake of their soldiers.

So, in this way it would seem that it is not necessarily relevant whether the target was military or civilian. While Zeppelin pilots might have been widely hated for their bombing of English cities, they were also respected, not for what they did, but how they did it. The German Zeppelin pilots were essentially on suicide missions, yet they carried themselves in a sort of

[187] Ibid.
[188] Grossman, *On Killing*, 196.
[189] Ibid.

honorable and respectable way. So, if this generous understanding could be granted to Zeppelin pilots, how much more should it be granted to German fighter pilots.

Bishop also pointed to the treatment of prisoners as an example of this comradery and chivalry among pilots. These were rare occasions when pilots were able to meet their opponents face-to-face on the ground. He claimed that, other than when a wounded opponent was sent directly to a hospital, "we entertained these prisoners in our messes, and great care was taken that they were treated as gentlemen and guests, and not as prisoners."[190] He explained that they were allowed to treat prisoners so well because their commanders hoped they could extract details of military intelligence from the captives. However, Bishop claimed that such concerns were never their driving motivation. Instead, the British pilots would share a drink and smoke with their new friend and help their former foe come to terms with his capture. Bishop stated that, when it was time for the opposing pilot to be sent to a prison camp, the allied pilots would help him prepare by giving him clothing and other items that might make his retirement from the conflict more pleasant.[191]

According to William Mitchell, another American aviator, who also embraced English medievalism there were honorable relations amongst pilots. After describing a battle in which an Allied pilot was killed, he stated that the German aviators "were held in great respect for their daring fight."[192] Their bravery had impressed their opponents. He believed that this propensity to respect their opponents was due to the fact that, "There is more chivalry left among our airmen then is the case with the ground troops."[193] Mitchell explained his reasoning was because troops

[190] Bishop, "Chivalry in the Air," 75.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Mitchell, "Leaves from my War Diary," 122.
[193] Ibid.

on the ground never get to battle face-to-face. The ground war was too depersonalized for chivalry to arise.[194] In contrast, pilots had a very personal combat. He pointed to the exchange of notes to find out the fate of pilots lost behind the lines. He also stated, "In the air the action is entirely individual as far as combat is concerned. Each man singles out his adversary and they engage in mortal combat."[195] This idea of individual combat would be echoed by another fellow aviator.

Arthur Gould Lee supported the idea of chivalry in air combat in his book, *No Parachute: A Fighter Pilot in World War I*. He explained that World War I pilots were placed in a unique position which no one else in history had held: the first men to conquer the air.[196] Lee placed some caveats in his claim that pilots were chivalrous, stating that the knightly pilots were a rare breed among pilots; in general, their moment lasted but a short time before being lost to history.[197] Lee explained that, as aviation evolved in the early days, airplanes went from two-seaters to one-seater scouts. These scouts then began the era of duels.[198]

Because of the construction of these early planes, they opened a short window of opportunity. They were slow and very maneuverable, creating very close and personal jousts.[199] He explained that these young pilots held deep respect for their opponents and were saddened to have to kill them. He stated, "For now was a period, not to last for long, when enemies in the air could fight without mercy but without hate, could even respect and admire each other's skill and valor. Yet in spite of these attitudes every man fought with but one purpose – to kill or be

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[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Lee, *No Parachute,* xiii.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.

killed."[200] Lee claimed that the war in the air could be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase was during 1916 and 1917. This was during the years of the British Royal Flying Corps. It was a phase of single combat and chivalry. He explained the transition to the second phase, "on the formation of the Royal Air Force in April 1918, the brief life of the RFC came to an end, so did the conditions that permitted the phase of the knightly duel."[201] The second phase was characterized by formations of many aircraft engaging each other in large battles for air supremacy. Gone were the days of honorable duels. In the last years of the war, there was "neither chance nor mood for knightly attitudes."[202] Despite this, chivalric interpretations continued to serve a role in the warriors' mindset.

PTSD and Psychology of War

Telling Their Story

Dave Grossman addresses the necessity of warriors coming to terms with their actions during war. He explains that, in order to mitigate the psychological damage which comes with warfare, soldiers need to share their stories. Grossman introduces the idea that, "Pain shared is pain divided, and joy shared is joy multiplied; that is the essence of the human condition."[203] Throughout history, humans have dealt with trauma in a communal fashion, such as funerals following the death of a loved one or around the campfire following a battle.[204] Grossman's work explains the significance of the aviators relating their own stories. In part this is soldiers coming

[200] Ibid., xiii-xiv.
[201] Ibid., xiv.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Dave Grossman, and Loren W. Christensen, *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace* (United State of America: PPCT Research Publications, 2004), 296.
[204] Ibid.

to terms with their experiences. Thus, memoirs and recollections must be handled with care, so as to understand what they are saying and why.

Recognition:

One of Grossman's central themes is the necessity for soldiers to be debriefed following a battle. He explains that this was always naturally part of the warrior tradition, without anyone realizing just how important it was. Usually, throughout most of human history, battles were only fought during the day. This gave soldiers time to recuperate and, most importantly, to discuss what had just happened that day. This served as a rudimentary form of debriefing.[205]

War is a terrible thing, and when it comes, many people will be called upon to fight. The problem arises with the question of what is to be done with those who are called upon, by their nation, to fight and to kill. The warriors must be able to make peace with themselves, and society must be able to make peace with those who have killed in their name. Throughout the countless wars of history, people and nations have learned how to deal with the horrors of taking another human being's life in war.[206]

According to Grossman, there is only one classification of soldier that receives proper debriefing throughout the twentieth century: the pilot. For the common ground-soldier, modern warfare no longer ends at night, for the fighting never stops, and they are always on the front line. This has cost the soldiers the opportunity to carry out the traditional daily debrief with their comrades-in-arms. However, usually, pilots have debriefings between every sortie. Grossman

[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.

believes that this has greatly served pilots. Pilots have been able to debrief in both the more official and the more traditional ways.[207]

Another key advantage of the fighter pilot, according to Grossman, is the accolades they receive. He explains that fighter pilots are praised for their actions. Grossman portrays the idolization of pilots as a positive, providing the example of pilots receiving special markings on their planes. In contrast, common soldiers never receive any comparable recognition for killing the enemy. In the case of infantry, "Very successful snipers or soldiers who receive major awards for valor sometimes have the number of enemy kills carefully set forth in their award citations, but the individual rifleman who kills 'only' a few enemy soldiers is often ashamed to tell how many kills he has made."[208] Grossman decries this treatment of the foot soldier, calling for a similar treatment as what the fighter pilots receive.[209]

While fighter pilots are praised by their commanders, peers, and public, infantry are left unsupported. Because of this, regular soldiers have a harder time coming to terms with their actions while serving their nation. Grossman states that only recipients of the Medal of Honor, or a comparable award, ever receive the proper recognition for their deeds.[210] Subsequently, instead of being able to hold their heads high for serving their country, too many soldiers sink into shame. Grossman states, "They are often ashamed of what they did, and all too often our society acts like we are ashamed of them. The fighter pilot who paints 21 enemy flags on his aircraft is a proud hero, but the infantryman who puts 21 notches in his rifle is considered to be deviant and deranged."[211] Grossman believes that societies take great risks in alienating and shaming their

[207] Ibid., 304.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., 304-305.

warriors. There is no way to know when a nation or a people will need to call upon brave men to stand and to defend their homes and families.[212] This phenomenon explains the tendency of veterans, contemporaries and past historians to seemingly romanticize and glorify war. In this way they gave recognition to warriors and reassured them that they were heroes.

Grossman closes out this point by addressing the dilemma of praising killers even if the killing was honorable. He simply states that while it might seem problematic, "the alternative is to have disposable soldiers."[213] How can a society, in good conscience, turn its back on those who only did what that same society had asked of them. When society needed warriors, these individuals filled the role. Soldiers are armed and ordered by their society to kill and then are treated as pariahs or, worse, as monsters. That is where honor comes into play. Grossman presents a simple solution, "There is honor, if we honor them. There is glory if we give it to them."[214] It is society and culture that determine what is or what is not honorable or chivalrous. These concepts of honor and chivalry if kept within reach of a nation's soldiers, provide a way for those men to reenter society.

Why Chivalry?

Grossman lays out a multi-step process through which soldiers deal with killing. Rationalization is the last and longest-lasting stage. While the sadness that comes from taking a life never completely leaves, a soldier can learn "to accept that what he has done was necessary and right."[215] While many civilians never understand this process or its necessity, Grossman insists that it is vital. A soldier has to be able to justify his actions through some rational.[216]

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid., 305.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid., 237.
[216] Ibid., 238.

However, "If the process fails it will result in post-traumatic stress disorder."[217] Grossman lays out a number of ways that soldiers have traditionally been able to deal with these issues: reassurance they had done the right thing, council from older veterans, abiding by a code, and a re-embracement by their society, to name a few.[218] The components that are keys for this study are the idea of abiding by a specific code and the idea of being re-embraced by society. The concepts of honor and chivalry fulfill that role. If a soldier abides by a code of honor, he can be at peace with himself, and with a shared code of honor, society can rest assured that their warrior has not been compromised by war.

In the later years of the war chivalry became less significant in aviation. As Lee explained, "For the most part, this saga of individual took place in 1916 and 1917, during the hottest spells of the first and only war of the Royal Flying Corps…. It was a saga that was never to recure, for when, on the formation of the Royal Air Force in April, 1918, the brief life of the RFC came to an end, so did the conditions of the knightly duel."[219] The war at that point had become too crowded, too fast, and with too large of formation to allow for individual, chivalrous combat.[220] This loss of chivalry can be seen in the figure of Ira Jones. He joined the RAF in 1918 and believed there was no room for chivalry or sportsmanship in the air battles. He instead adopted a more unsportsmanlike, as described by his more chivalrous peers, approach by for example shooting Germans in parachutes.[221]

Therefore, the medieval and chivalric terminology used to express the experiences of World War I aviators serves a deeper purpose than to downplay or romanticize war. It is

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[217] Ibid., 240.
[218] Ibid., 263-264.
[219] Lee, *No Parachute*, xiv.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Morrow, *The Great War in the Air*, 314.

essentially a coping mechanism. In the aftermath of war, warriors and societies need a narrative to comprehend and come to terms with the horrors. In the context of World War I, medievalism dominated the Western, and especially English, imagination. So, it is only logical that such medieval concepts, terminology, and narratives would be the most readily available to express one's experience. It can be seen in the postwar years that medieval iconography, concepts, and literature would remain, at least for a time, as popular as before. These ideas would contrast the growing nihilism and absurdism that would be born of self-doubt and self-loathing that came as part of the aftershock of the First World War.

Chapter Three:

Post-War Continuation of Medievalism in Memorials and Literature

The culture of English medievalism that inspired the aviators to make their claims of knighthood would carry on for some time after the end of the conflict. This culture would manifest itself in many of the memorials that were erected in honor of British soldiers who had fallen during the war. These memorials would evoke classic medieval images to ennoble the fallen soldier and to comfort their loved ones. However, the medievalist phenomenon would also see its traditions preserved in literature through the work of such authors as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, who would famously write novels set in a fantasy medieval realm. Lewis himself would write an essay on the importance of chivalry. In these ways, the cultural movement that the aviators were a part of was much larger than just World War I.

Medievalist Memorials of World War I

World War I was a watershed moment in history. The horrific scale, loss of life, and mass-industrialization set it apart from previous wars in the eyes of those in post-war years, who dubbed it "the Great War." This war would rock the social and political foundations of all nations involved. However, not everyone embraced this shift. As historian Stefan Goebel, who studied memorials of both Britain and Germany in *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, puts it, "Some survivors, though, set out to heal the fractures of war by asserting historical continuity through memorials and acts of remembrance."[222] They did this by evoking historical iconography and ideals in their memorials. One such figure was an architect, Herbert Baker, who stated that memorials should be designed, "to express the heritage of unbroken history and

[222] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 1.

beauty of England which the sacrifices of our soldiers have kept inviolate."[223] This union of historical England and the modern soldier recontextualized the suffering brought on by World War I.

Medieval imagery became one of the primary vehicles whereby people weaved the post-war present and their national history together. According to Goebel, "The Crusades, chivalry and medieval spirituality and mythology provided rich, protean sources of images, tropes and narrative motifs for people to give meaning to the legacy of the Great War."[224] Medieval times and ideas were both culturally popular and in turn more comprehensible than the war they had just experienced.

During the 1800s, medievalism became the popular way to commemorate the fallen soldiers, as a way to grant nobility to the soldier by association to the chivalrous past and thus comfort those whose loved one(s) had died. Goebel points to many elements that influenced this, "the Gothic revival in architecture; Romanticism in literature; the cult of chivalry in popular culture; the Arthurian revival and the Arts and Crafts movement in British art design; Germanicism in German art and music."[225] However, World War I changed medievalism. The cultural phenomenon that was British medievalism became not just a traditionalist or anti-modernist movement in the conflict's aftermath but an avenue of mourning. Goebel explains that medievalism during this period should be understood as a state of mind.[226]

The ideals of chivalry were vital when expressing medievalism. The memorials put up following the war were guided by an historically and culturally Christian worldview. There were

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[223] Herbert Baker, "War Memorials: The Ideal of Beauty," *The Times*, 41993, 9 January 1919, 9. Quoted in Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 1.
[224] Ibid., 1.
[225] Ibid., 13
[226] Ibid., 14.

two types of responses Christians could have to Christ's sacrifice: one which sought to avenge his death and the other that emphasized forgiveness, as identified by Allen J. Frantzen in his study of World War I memorials of Great Britain and Germany in the book *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*. He labeled the first response sacrificial, because it called for exacting sacrifice from the enemy in response to Christ's initial sacrifice, a sort of cyclical continuation of sacrifice. The second response was anti-sacrificial, which demanded no further sacrifices, instead bringing an end to the violent cycle. In relating this to chivalry, Frantzen states, "Chivalry, I argue, not only made both responses available to knights and to their modern descendants but validated a third response, self-sacrifice, that conflated prowess and piety and blurred the lines between sacrifice and antisacrifice."[227] This was to broaden the interpretation of chivalry beyond simple medieval iconography of knights and dragons. He explains that this is not just about the images of chivalry but about "the theory and practice of knighthood."[228] Ideas such as discipline were necessities of chivalry as a moderation of the abuses of the warrior.[229] The ideal warrior was a selfless, honorable, and glorious knight who fought for the weak and for his king.[230]

Why Medievalism?

Medievalism was employed in memorialization because it tied the fallen soldiers to the past and provided a promise. Medievalism gave reassurance to families. The fallen were removed from the confusing and tumultuous context of the contemporary present and, instead, placed in the context of a solid and unchanging history. The breadth and scope of history

[227] Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 3.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid., 13.

provided stability. No matter how uncertain the present was, the dead warrior had his place alongside the warriors of history.[231]

To understand the motivation in these memorials, one can look at what guidance was provided for putting memorials up. To maintain consistency of memorialization, the Royal Academy of Arts in Britain provided the following guidance:

> It is essential that memorials within our Churches and Cathedrals, in the close, the public park, or the village green should not clash with the spirit of the past; that, however simple, they should express the emotion of the present and hope of the future without losing touch with the past, and that instead of being a rock of offence to future generations, they should be objects of veneration to those who follow us.[232]

This shows that these ideas of unity of the present and history were deeply engrained in the memorialization process. It was a conscious decision to make these historical connections in the memorials following the war.

In the post-war era, it became part of memorialization to retroactively provide meaning to the catastrophic loss of life that the war accrued. It was important to be able to justify the war and that the soldiers died for a worthy cause. Propaganda from during the war laid some of the groundwork; however, post-war memorialists would also call upon much older cultural ideals. Goebel explains, "War commemorations revived images and figures from the nation's cultural memory (such as Richard I and the crusaders…) in an effort to give death on the battlefield a greater historical significance than a purely personal tragedy."[233] The image of the crusade promoted offensive and defensive warfare, spreading cultural ideals abroad or preserving hearth and home. That is not to say that those erecting the memorials were trapped in the past. They

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[231] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 39-40.
[232] Royal Academy of Arts, *Annual Report 1918* (London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1918), 2. Quoted in Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 39-41.
[233] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 154.

recognized World War I for the cultural, technological, and historical watershed that it was; however, that did not stop them from evoking the historical and medieval iconography.[234]

Ernst Junger, a German veteran of World War I, wrote in the English edition of his diary that despite the brutality of the war, the behavior of the English soldiers rendered the conflict less ignoble. "Of all the troops who were opposed to the Germans on the great battlefields the English were not only the most formidable but the manliest and most chivalrous."[235] This appealed to the chivalrous image to which the British held themselves.[236] This self-portrayal can be seen in the statement of William Pulteney in his visit to a British military cemetery following the war. "Chivalry, knighthood, heroism, self-sacrifice from age to age are knit together here."[237] Whether those ideals were lived up to was largely irrelevant, because it was just that: the ideal of British culture, and how contemporaries chose to honor their dead.

However, it was not just a simple appeal to the ideal; there were, of course, deeper reasons for making such an appeal. Ideas of chivalry unified with ideas of sacrifice to provide a route to salvation for the fallen soldiers in the minds of those who remembered them. By emphasizing ideas of nobility and self-sacrifice and paralleling that with the sacrificial message of Christianity, it was a source of comfort and hope for the mourners to think their lost loved ones had found salvation through their deeds in war.[238] As Goebel explains, "Spiritual medievalism, whether religiously or mythologically inspired, originated in the popular need to

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[234] Ibid., 154-157.
[235] Ernst Junger, *The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front*, intro. R. H. Mottram (London, Chatto & Windus, 1929), xii-xiii. Quoted in Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 188.
[236] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 188.
[237] William Pulteney and Beatrix Brice, *The Immortal Salient: An Historical Record and Complete Guide for Pilgrims to Ypres*, (London, John Murray, 4th edn 1926), 54. quoted in Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 188.
[238] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 231-232.

give transcendental meaning to the enormous war losses…. Christian-medieval diction promised everlasting life in return for the supreme sacrifice."[239] These fallen soldiers were identified as Christian by cultural and traditional proxy.

This cultural mixture of Christian and medieval could be seen in their memorials. There were memorials which mixed Christian and Arthurian figures and imagery. Goebel provides the example of, "Alfred Turneer… designed two identical figures clad in armor holding out a sword combined with a crucifix; at Kingsthorpe, Northamptonshire, the knight was identified as St George, whereas his counterpart at Victoria College, Jersey, was meant to represent Sir Galahad."[240] This was due, in large part, to the union of Christianity and medieval legend in English medievalism.

Elements of Chivalry:

The ideal of chivalry goes beyond simple Arthurian imagery. Frantzen claims, "Chivalry means, above all, discipline, which leads to worthiness that is measured by brave deeds freely undertaken, extending to the greatest distinction, the crown of martyrdom and its promise of proximity to Christ."[241] In memorials, there were five elements of chivalry that were predominately displayed. According to Goebel, they were, "courage, duty, honor, fairness and faith. All five elements do not necessarily occur together in any given memorial project…. at Redgrave, East Suffolk, stress was laid on 'chivalry, courage, faith'. In aggregate, however, the five constituents stand out."[242] Chivalry stood as an antidote to the impersonal, massive, and mechanical aspects of modern war. Chivalry was not just a hearkening back to honorable single-combat, but, as Frantzen explains, "more often with testimony to the warrior's discipline,

[239] Ibid., 285.
[240] Ibid., 192.
[241] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 232.
[242] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 194-195.

integrity, and determination."[243] Aviators filled this role. For a significant portion of the war, the air war was characterized by contemporaries who saw themselves as neo-medieval warriors, engaged in single combat in a fashion reminiscent of the chivalric jousts. This stood in stark contrast to the impersonal war of attrition below.

Emphasizing a soldier's sacrifice in defense of civilians was a vital element. This ideal of self-sacrifice, as identified by Frantzen, ennobled each soldier who gave his life in the war.[244] A memorial, in a Cambridge school, portraying St. George was, according to commemoration, supposed to inspire, "those ideals of chivalry, self-sacrifice and patriotism which were essential to the highest conduct of character."[245] This hearkened back to the ideals of chivalry.

Different Types of Memorials with Medievalism

Memorials came in a variety of shapes and sizes. One memorial, in Norwich Cathedral, was a book which was filled with the names of fallen soldiers of the community and decorated with medieval art.[246] However, a much more popular form of memorial was stained-glass windows. St. George, the English patron saint, in medieval armor was a common figure of medievalist memorials, and he was used in stained-glass window memorials. Other window memorials have nameless knights, such as in Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, where these knights are combined with modern symbolism such as the American and French flags.[247]

Stained-glass windows, as a form of memorialization, fit the mold of medievalism memorials in two ways. According to Goebel, "stained glass was by its very nature evocative of the aura of medieval churches and cathedrals. Its whole development took place during the

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[243] Frantzen, *Bloody Good,* 198.
[244] Ibid.
[245] "Speech Day," *Leys Fortnightly,* 46 (1922), 309. Quoted in Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 249.
[246] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 32.
[247] Ibid., 57.

Middle Ages, and it was an art form that was peculiar to western Christianity."[248] Also, in common usage, stained-glass was a medium for relating history. Normally, stained-glass windows would contain images of Bible stories, or saints, as a way to teach and to decorate at the same time. Therefore, when the fallen of World War I were added, they fell into the cultural and historical context of not only the nation but also religion.[249]

St. George and Chivalric Ideal:

Frantzen explains why St. George was the ideal of chivalry: in life St. George was martyred because he refused to follow Emperor Diocletian's order to persecute Christians in the fourth century.[250] By choosing to die rather than kill, St. George represents Frantzen's idea of anti-sacrifice. However, in the legends, St. George's story was changed to a knight saving a princess from an evil dragon and converted the local populace to Christianity. Consequently, according to Frantzen, "Although a martyr, St. George was transformed into a warrior who used prowess to further the cause of piety, an executioner rather than the victim of one."[251] In this way, St. George was both an ideal figure of sacrificial and anti-sacrificial memorials.

There were memorials that employed imagery of St. George by H. C. Fehr in Leeds, Burton-upon-Trent, and Colchester. In Leeds, there were citizens who were recorded emphasizing the need for historical accuracy in the sculptures. This demand for historical accuracy led memorial committees to take the issue very seriously. In London, for example, an armor expert was hired to guarantee that the memorial to British cavalry during the war portrayed St. George in a perfect replica of armor of the late medieval period.[252]

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[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid., 57-59.
[250] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 18.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 62.

Frantzen claims that village churches offered many memorials which evoked the chivalric ideal often in the form of St. George. For an example, he points to the region around Bury, England. St. George is used in stained glass windows in Great Finborough, "Great Whelnetham; the Church of St. Andrew in Great Finborough; Thorpe Morieux; and in Rattlesden, Cavenham, and Higham St. Mary. In St. Peter's Church, Ampton, a mosaic of St. George… and in St. George's Church in Bradfield St. George a statue of the saint is paired with St. Alban."[253] These memorials, according to Frantzen, fall within the sacrificial model. However, not all memorials that evoked St. George drew solely on this sacrificial mode.

On the other hand, there is a memorial at Thorpe-Morieux where St. George is alongside a child and St. Francis. According to Frantzen, these additions modify the meaning of the memorial, "This memorial encodes piety and prowess, separating violence and nonviolence…. The child and the gentle St. Francis introduce a subtle but clear note of antisacrifice."[254] Another memorial, this one at Ampton, combines St. George paired with a child and a peaceful saint, this time St. Christopher. This one also follows the anti-sacrificial mold. Here St. George stands victorious over a dragon, while St. Christopher with the child are meant to stand as a reminder that the hall there was a Red Cross Hospital during the war.[255] Frantzen describes the image as, "Tenderness (St. Christopher) balances prowess (St. George); the injured (and those who cared for them) stand with the force whose business it was to kill the foe. The pairing of the wounder and the wounded moves the Ampton memorial in the direction of antisacrifice."[256]

Other memorials contained a more specifically Biblical message. A memorial at Rattlesden combines three images, two Biblical and one medieval. It has an image of St. George,

[253] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 205.
[254] Ibid., 206.
[255] Ibid., 206-207.
[256] Ibid., 207.

but, alongside it, there are images of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac and David standing to face Goliath.[257] This portrays the deeper meaning of chivalry. On one hand, a young man is about to be sacrificed while, on the other, the young man is prepared for battle. In this way, the image of victim and victor are brought together in the person of St. George, martyr and slayer of dragons. According the Frantzen, "The other images offer complementary visions of George's fate and hence the fate of the men whose sacrifice the window honors. It is righteous to ask the young to die in God's service, for God aids those who undergo danger in his name."[258] Such images further emphasized the medieval-Christian connection to reinforce the comfort the two elements provided to the bereaved.

Modern Crusade:

However, not all imagery was so self-sacrificial. During the war, World War I was often referred to as an "holy war" in Britain and other belligerent nations. Following the war, this would morph into the idea of a crusade, an idea that British Prime Minister Lloyd George embraced in the title "The Great Crusade" for a collection of the speeches he made during the war.[259] Frantzen also identifies the Crusades as being one of the two main conflicts employed in chivalric memory of World War I, the other being the Hundred Years' War. The Crusades appealed to the conception of World War I as a holy war. In this framing, the soldiers could be both avenging warriors and sacrificial martyrs.[260]

In *The Great and Holy War*, Philip Jenkins analyzes the concept of World War I as a "holy war." Jenkins explains, "The First World War was a thoroughly religious event, in the

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[257] Ibid., 207-208.
[258] Ibid., 208.
[259] David Lloyd George, *The Great Crusade: Extracts from Speeches Delivered during the War*, ed. F[rances] L. Stevenson (London, New York, and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), 11. Quoted in Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 86.
[260] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 2-3.

sense that overwhelmingly Christian nations fought each other in what many viewed as a holy war, a spiritual conflict."[261] The religious aspect is important to take into consideration because it frames the war in a more nuanced context. At this point, religion still held a significant sway over society, and religious concepts still carried weight. Jenkins claims, "Religious language and assumptions were omnipresent, on the home front and at the front lines, as part of the air people breathed."[262] These religious ideas did not just cease to exist at the start of the war; according to Jenkins, patriotic and religious fervor remained high well into late 1917, only falling off in the last year of the war.[263] In Great Britain at the start of the war, "religious enthusiasm merged enthusiastically with patriotic fervor."[264] This religious vision of the war culminated in the conquest of the Holy Land. A British force, under the command of General Edmund Allenby, captured Jerusalem from the Ottomans at the end of 1917. This imagery of a Christian army liberating the city, which had been the focus point of medieval crusades, from Islamic occupation was not lost on the citizenry and only led to a stronger belief that this was a "holy war."[265]

This idea of a crusade would add to the imagery of St. George, of Richard I, and of other crusader iconography. For example, a Knight Crusader (possibly St. George) appears in a church window in Hadlow, Kent, and in a Catholic church in Cambridge, a plaque with the figure of St. George was placed in memorial.[266] Not only was St. George the patron saint of England but also a popular saint among crusaders, a popularity that originated with English King Richard the Lionheart who promoted St. George amongst his fellow crusaders. Goebel claims,

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[261] Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade*, (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 4-5.
[262] Ibid., 14.
[263] Ibid., 18-19.
[264] Ibid., 71.
[265] Ibid., 176-180.
[266] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 88.

"Consequently, memorials to the Great War often depict the king and his saint side by side. Eton College decorated the walls of its Lower Chapel with scenes from the life of St George."[267] In a church at Higham, another memorial combines St. George with Richard the Lionheart, where both men stand armed and armored for battle.[268] These two men, separately and especially together, were explicit references to the Crusades.

King Richard I was popular during the Victorian era among medievalists. He would appear in memorials, such as, "the memorial of the Toc H movement, a Christian charity which during the war had cared for Allied servicemen fighting at Ypres."[269] World War I provided another parallel to the crusades in the rare alliance of once long-time foes, France and Great Britain. France had their own counterpart to Richard the Lionheart: their king, and saint, Louis IX. As a representation of their alliance during the war, the "Great Crusade," these two figures appeared together in some memorials. Louis IX would also appear with St. George in memorials in Bathford, Somerset, and Oddington. Goebel claims that, "The unifying effect of the crusading spirit was also prominently emphasized at Winchester College."[270] However, the war itself was not the Crusades, and these images did not reflect reality.

Memorials did not Represent Reality:

There was a detachment between the war itself and the memorials. Goebel explains that this was due to the fact that the erection of memorials was often done by civilians who had been too old for military service and had no point of reference from which to express the wartime experience of soldiers. Goebel states, "Instead, they exalted the soldiers' chivalry, a code of conduct not specific to the First World War, but firmly anchored in British public life prior to

[267] Ibid., 90.
[268] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 207.
[269] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 90.
[270] Ibid., 91.

1914."[271] Meanwhile, in his research, Frantzen was unable to find any memorials that specifically portrayed imagery of the soldiers of World War I around Bury. Instead, St. George, usually with slain dragon underfoot, is portrayed as the embodiment of the soldiers. Frantzen addresses this phenomenon, "However beautiful, these images are strangely unmoving. They speak volumes about how families and communities needed to remember the dead but have little to do with how the young men of Suffolk fought or died."[272] This detachment, while it resulted in unrealistic imagery of the war, perhaps served a greater purpose in the end.

Cross-Class Appeal of Medievalist Memorials

Before World War I, chivalry was not really associated with all English soldiers; instead, it was reserved for the elites as opposed to the common ordinary soldier.[273] However, the pattern of medievalising memorials lent itself to cross-class unification of the English soldiers in common virtues of chivalry. Being a knight of England was no longer reserved to nobility or the upper classes; all English soldiers who fit the chivalric mold of courage, honor and duty were now collectively knights of England. Through this focus on chivalric virtues, the British sought to distance themselves and their heroes from violence. Goebel identifies this phenomenon as a reaction to the contemporary violence and tension in Ireland. He states, "Acts of violence in Ireland and the Empire seemed a negation of an imagined British way. Plagued by specific post-war fears about the consequences of wartime 'brutalization', contemporaries embraced a reassuring view of themselves, namely that they were a non-violent and chivalrous nation."[274]

[271] Ibid., 189.
[272] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 209.
[273] Ibid., 153-154.
[274] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 200.

Britain embraced these chivalric ideals to separate itself from the violence it had to commit in war, unlike Germany which had a much more militaristic cultural tradition.[275]

Following World War I, class separation in chivalry was broken down. It was necessary to strengthen social cohesion, and chivalry was the tool to do that. Chivalry was in the reach of all men, Goebel explains, "Even though, for many middle-class commentators the British worker was at best a sort of 'gentleman-in-training', many applauded the sportsmanship and chivalry of the former private without a trace of condescension."[276] Whether a British soldier was born rich or poor, all could be considered knights of England in this framing. Consequently, by bringing unity in the memorialization of the dead, cultural class barriers in Britain were taken down.

Aviation:

Aviation was not left out of the memorials. British aviators had their own memorials in their communities, as Goebel identifies, "A number of parish churches house stained-glass windows dedicated to home-grown knights of the sky."[277] Historian Stephen O'Shea explains that the end of the era of cavalry left a void of novelty in warfare.[278] Frantzen claims that pilots had filled that void, "and at the same time provided the war's closest analogy to the individual combat characteristic of the knight's jousts and his battlefield exploits. Pilots functioned as performers for men in the trenches, the immobile watching and envying the mobile."[279] While pilots alone captured the "imagined glamour of the medieval knight"[280] as claimed by Frantzen, all soldiers shared in the medievalism of the post-war era.

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[275] Ibid., 202.
[276] Ibid., 222.
[277] Ibid., 226-227.
[278] Stephen O'Shea, *Back to the Front: An Accidental Historian Walks the Trenches of World War I*, (New York: Avon, 1996), 41. Quoted in Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 157.
[279] Frantzen, *Bloody Good*, 157.
[280] Ibid.

C.S. Lewis and Tolkien: Post-War Medievalist Literature

Following World War I and even World War II, the literary tradition that spawned the revival of English medievalism was preserved through such authors as C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. In *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, a collection of Tolkien experts commented on the historical framing of the author and his work. One Tolkien scholar, Rebekah Long, believes that Tolkien's work is a form of memorialization. Long states that one way to read *The Lord of the Rings* is, "not as an allegory of the Great War, enacting a crude correlation between historical event and artistic representation, but as a recollection of it – a literary work… which investigates the creative work of memory in reply to the trauma of war."[281] Tolkien is not trying to write a history or allegory of the World War I but, instead, a memorial of the war.[282]

Tolkien in the Line of Medievalists:

Many of the experts that contributed to *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages* identified Tolkien's work as falling into the medievalist tradition. Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers explain that it is vital to understand the authors, such as James Macpherson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and Sir Walter Scott, who wrote medievalist works during the Victorian era when categorizing Tolkien, claiming that he fits in line with their tradition. Chance and Siewers claim, "In various ways in the works of all these authors, reflections on the past elicited literary fantasies that provided a space for imagining alternate social realities to what appeared to be an advancing and stark economic libertarianism, matched by an often equally stark abstract

[281] Rebekah Long "Fantastic Medievalism and the Great War in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 126.
[282] Ibid.

utopianism."[283] They state that Tolkien was one of the last of this literary tradition, bordering on the modernist era.[284]

While Tolkien did much to correct Victorian medievalist authors' earlier errors in their portrayal of medievalism, there was much they did get right, and, in turn, Tolkien owed the Victorian medievalists a debt. John R. Holmes explains that these Victorian era scholars of the Middle Ages rescued the topic from, "the scorn heaped upon it by the enlightenment."[285] As an example, Holmes points to Alfred Tennyson, one such Victorian medieval author, who employed the growing studies into the English past to translate medieval works from Old English into modern English.[286] The medievalists of the Victorian era revived and preserved the Middle Ages as a topic for works of fiction, such as Tolkien's work. If there had been no Sir Walter Scott or Alfred Tennyson, there would be no *The Lord of the Rings*.

John Hunter traces the roots of Tolkien's writing back to two sources, Sir Walter Scott and James Macpherson. Tolkien follows in Scott's footsteps of medieval novels while, at the same time, engaging in escapism through historical fiction like Macpherson. Hunter's point is that Tolkien was not the first of his kind. Scott and Macpherson provided the tradition both in history and literature that Tolkien fell into. Hunter claims that this connection of literary tradition has been underappreciated.[287] Tolkien and Scott were both trying, "to preserve the last

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[283] Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers, "Tolkien's Continuation of the English Medievalist Literature Tradition," in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages,* edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 3.
[284] Ibid.
[285] John R. Holmes, "Tolkien, *Dustsceawung,* and the Gnomic Tense: Is Timelessness Medieval or Victorian?" in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 43.
[286] Ibid., 44.
[287] John Hunter, "The Reanimation of Antiquity and the Resistance to History: Macpherson-Scott-Tolkien," in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages,* edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 61-63.

fragmentary remnants of a lost culture."[288] The two men referred to the lack of an ancient English literary tradition or legends. Through his writing, Tolkien intended to fill that gap in the form which Scott had established.[289] Hunter claims that the "*The Lord of the Rings* is thus Tolkien's attempt to reanimate a lost past and claim a connection to present reality, but… in such a way that this reanimated world is in no way responsible for producing the present."[290] In this way, Tolkien bridged the historical novels of Scott with the historical escapism of Macpherson.[291]

Tolkien is also distinct from most authors of his time in how he portrays war. His war portrayal falls more in line with the tradition of the medievalist authors of the Victorian era. Andrew Lynch points to Alfred Tennyson as the key figure in the development of Tolkien's style of portraying war in a symbolic and poetic manner. To do this, "Tennyson committed himself to capturing the true 'spirit' or 'ideal' of Arthurian chivalry without much of its troubling military substance, omitting any but legendary history and far reducing the characteristic medieval interest in the detail of wars and tournaments."[292] This was done to resolve the seemingly contradictory chivalrous and barbaric elements of medieval warfare. Therefore, by following this tradition, Tolkien wrote about warfare in a way that portrayed war in a more positive narrative than was common during his time. This view separates Tolkien starkly from his peers and puts him in line with the Victorian medievalists.[293] Lynch claims that Tennyson was a clear influence on Tolkien before the war and that the horrors of World War I did not undermine this

[288] Ibid., 67.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid., 72.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Lynch, "Archaism, Nostalgia, and Tennysonian War in *The Lord of the Rings*," 77.
[293] Ibid., 77-78.

influence.[294] Tolkien continued to follow the style laid out by Tennyson. Tolkien portrays the horrors of war through the villains while maintaining in the heroes the ideal form of warfare. Lynch closes by claiming that in Tolkien's work, "As in Tennyson, the idea of war as an ennobling cultural and moral struggle is allowed precedence over the unpleasant history of war itself."[295] This could be seen as the difference between a constructive and deconstructive approach to storytelling. Both Tolkien and Tennyson sought intentionally, or otherwise, to provide positive moral and cultural imagery.

However, there were also less grandiose ways in which Tolkien followed in the Victorian medievalist tradition. In simple techniques such as in the use of poems, the medievalist influence can be seen in Tolkien. Kaleigh Spooner explains that Walter Scott and Tolkien use history in the form of poems in their novels to add depth to their stories. She says, "The poetic insertions promote a celebration of national character and national values that endure (or should endure), even as old ways give way to new ones."[296] Through the use of poetry and history, culture can be built, even an imaginary world like Middle-earth.[297]

Medieval Elements of Tolkien:

There are many more parallels between Tolkien's work and his medievalist influences. Verlyn Fliege, who taught about Tolkien, emphasized elements of romanticism and fairy-tales.[298] In this interpretation,

> The Rohirrim were… Anglo-Saxons transplanted straight from *Beowulf* to Middle-earth; Isengard and Mordor were obviously Celtic wastelands; Gandalf was a combination

[294] Ibid., 82.
[295] Ibid., 89-90.
[296] Kaleigh Jean Spooner, ""History Real or Feigned": Tolkien, Scott, and Poetry's Place in Fashioning History," (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2017), 7-8. https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/6476
[297] Ibid., 8-9.
[298] Verlyn Flieger, "A Postmodern Medievalist?" in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 18.

> Merlin/Odin figure; Sting recalled Excalibur, and Narsil/Anduril recalled Gram, the broken and reforged sword of the Volsungs Boromir was an epic hero; Aragorn, a healing king; while Eowyn's crush on him was a clear echo of Thomas Malory's Maid of Astolat and her infatuation with Lancelot. The Woses of Druadan forest were typical medieval Wild Men; and my Frodo staggered under the combined burden of being a fairy-tale hero, a Miraculous Child, and a fertility figure.[299]

It would seem there are countless parallels between the writings of Tolkien and his predecessors. His use of history, theology, and unique and stylized language, all of which have become unpopular in the modern era, all point towards medieval or classical styles and traditions.[300] In a way, Tolkien's work provides a medievalist critique of modern and postmodern literature and culture.[301]

C. S. Lewis' Case for Chivalry

C. S. Lewis specifically addressed the concept of chivalry in an essay entitled, "The Necessity of Chivalry." Lewis insisted that there is more to chivalry than just being nice to women. He explains that the key elements of chivalry were expressed in Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.[302] In the passage, Sir Ector refers to the passed Sir Launcelot, "Thou were the meekest man that ever ate in the hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest."[303] Launcelot embodied both gentleness and strength.

Lewis identified this contradictory ideal as the main point of chivalry. The knight should be both meek and stern. Lewis states, "The knight is a man of blood and iron, a man familiar with the sight of smashed faces and the ragged stumps of lopped-off limbs' he is also a demure,

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[299] Ibid.
[300] Gergely Nagy, "The Medievalist('s) Fiction: Textuality and Historicity as Aspects of Tolkien's Medievalist Cultural Theory in a Postmodernist Context," in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Siewers. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 29-30.
[301] Ibid., 38-39.
[302] Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," 13.
[303] Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, 1485, XXI, xii. Quoted in Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," in *Present Concerns,* 13.

almost a maidenlike, guest in hall, a gentle, modest, unobtrusive man."[304] Lewis insisted that it was not partly ferocious and partly meek. Instead, Lewis states that the chivalrous knight, "is fierce to the nth and meek to the nth."[305] Lewis admits that the Middle Ages failed to live up to their chivalric ideals; however, he insists that it is vital to the modern world.[306]

He explained that human nature runs contrary to these ideals. He claimed that in modern times false ideas are promoted, such as bullies being cowards or brave men being gentle. Lewis decried this, "It is a pernicious lie because it misses the real novelty and originality of the medieval demand upon human nature. Worse still, it represents as a natural fact something which is really a human ideal… nowhere attained at all without arduous discipline. It is refuted by history and experience."[307] Lewis points to the brutality of ancient heroes such as Achilles and the violence of Attila and the Romans to their foes. Without chivalry, this brutality is all that remains of heroism.[308]

Meekness and ferocity are polar opposites, but the ideals of chivalry force them together. Lewis claimed that chivalry, "taught humility and forbearance to the great warrior because everyone knew by experience how much he usually needed that lesson. It demanded valor of the urbane and modest man because everyone knew that he was as likely as not to be a milksop."[309] This chivalric ideal presented, in Lewis's opinion, the only hope for humanity. He believed this because if it could not be achieved then humanity was doomed to be split into two categories, the brutal and the cowardly. He claimed that history shows a pattern of the brutal always conquering the meek before they, in turn, become weak and are conquered by new barbarians. The only way

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[304] Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," in *Present Concerns,* 13.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid., 13-14.
[307] Ibid., 14.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid.

to break the cycle is by bringing these two characteristics together, and Lewis explained, "The man who combines both characters-the knight-is a work not of nature but of art."[310] An art that must be forged by each individual person within themselves.

Lewis warned against the modern liberal tendency to categorize the warrior nature of men as an evil. He explained such ideas tend to dismiss "the chivalrous sentiment as part of the 'false glamour' of war."[311] Lewis points towards soldiers serving during World War II as evidence that it is possible to achieve the union of ferocity and meekness. He specifically points to the aviators of the First and Second World Wars as molded in the chivalrous ideal, those of the latter war in his opinion even more so.[312]

Lewis further warned that, as society became more democratic, societal pressures to be chivalrous are removed. He stated that chivalry had earlier been maintained by the knightly classes of citizens, but now it is in the hand of the individual alone. If chivalry were not maintained by individuals, it would die out. He explains that chivalry, "offers the only possible escape from a world divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things which make life desirable. There was… a rumor… that wolves would gradually become extinct by some natural process; but this seems to have been an exaggeration."[313] In his eyes, chivalry was necessary and a positive influence on society. His views show how chivalry over the centuries had evolved, in some ways, but not that much. Chivalry called for a moderation of humanities more violent extremes. However, perhaps explaining its persistence in peacetime, chivalry also called for strength to fight when the time came.

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[310] Ibid., 15.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid., 16.
[313] Ibid.

English medievalism was a broad movement, that in some ways may still continue today. Memorials following World War I employed it, and authors would continue to write in the tradition. The linkage of medieval ideals and modern warfare would ultimately be abandoned only after World War II. Following World War I, such imagery was still employed to provide continuity to the experience of British veterans of the trenches by associating them with the soldiers of Britain's past.[314] This cultural phenomenon cannot be limited to just World War I or the pre-World War I years. It is a very broad cultural element, that stretched across topics such as, military, language, and literature. The same chivalric and knightly ideals brought about during the revival of English medievalism that had aviators tried to live up to inspired many memorials to the fallen of World War I and would continue to inspire literature for decades to come.

[314] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 13.

Conclusion

During and following World War I, British pilots were popularly described and described themselves as the knights of the sky. However, a number of modern historians have taken issue with this portrayal, claiming it is historically inaccurate or propaganda. While in part this is true, it does not take into consideration the specifics of why aviators were identified as the modern knights. To explain this, one must take into consideration the military traditions and culture as well as the popular traditions, culture, and ideals of contemporary Britain.

The evolution of the officer and the ideals of chivalry and honor, while leaving the medieval specifics, retained much of the same flavor and motivations. Through such ideas as chivalry, officers continued to try to maintain themselves as distinctly elite. Meanwhile, the common soldiers, with the transition to professional armies, had to develop new ideals, such as discipline. Through all these developments, the shadow of chivalry and medievalism remained. The fascination with cavalry, who for the time were in many ways the successors of knights, continued until World War I.

On the other hand, in popular British culture, the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century brought about the revival of English medievalism. In the aftermath and uncertainty of the Revolutionary period, people turned to historical and specifically medieval ideals to bring stability to the culture. Such authors as Sir Walter Scott played a key role in this phenomenon. They revived the romances of the late-medieval period and Arthurian legends and returned them to popular culture. These stories retold and modernized the ideas of knighthood and chivalry. These ideas became so popular that they were emulated and integrated into the ideas of gentlemanliness.

This cultural change came to full fruition during the Victorian era. Schools began to focus more on character building and employed sports in that endeavor. Sports became mandatory in many British public schools, and young men were inundated with ideas of proper sportsmanship and fair play. There were also organizations, like the Boy Scouts, that arose in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that sought to engrain these ideals of chivalry in young men.

This movement led directly into the First World War. At this point, upper class citizens, public school students and graduates, officers and gentlemen were all submerged in medievalism. These were the same groups from which the Royal Flying Corps recruited for most of the war; therefore, it is only natural that it is in such medievalist terms that the aviators would identify and describe themselves. In their eyes, they were the modern knights of Britain, following in the footsteps of the knights of yore. It was the world, the culture, the terminology, the virtues, and the ideals which they knew and embraced.

However, there are reasons for the aviators to portray themselves this way beyond purely culture and tradition. To explain this, such issues as psychology of war need to be taken into consideration. Respect for opponents, which aviators often described and displayed, was a part of minimizing the psychological impact of killing. Also, to come to grips with their experience, pilots needed to be able to tell their stories. However, this had to be done in a culturally acceptable way. Recognition for soldiers is also vital to soldiers dealing with the trauma of war. Chivalry provided a mold to address all of these. Knights had their own rules and were from the higher classes, which provided a sort of exclusive elitism, similar to what the pilots experienced. So long as their opponents were knights, in their own right, there was respect and honor amongst foes. When pilots told their stories, they could couch it in a chivalric flavor which made it not

just culturally acceptable but admirable. Chivalry also provided its own reward: to be seen as a knight was to be seen as the cultural ideal. Although pilots still received the military recognition of medals, chivalry provided a reward perhaps larger than that.

Stefan Goebel expresses that the idea of chivalry filled a void. Instead of showing war for its harsh reality, it showed what warfare could and should be: a sort of honorable duel.[315] Goebel interprets this as an attempt by nations to insist, "that their soldiers had remained untouched by the brutality of war, that they had not been transmuted into cold-blooded mass murderers."[316] Sportsmanship and chivalry were ways to codify the proper conduct in war in such a way as to rehabilitate soldiers back into society. Goebel explains that a soldier's, "goodness was important to memorial makers since, as Sir Henry Newbolt noted, 'it is impossible to honour men who have been guilty of barbarous cruelty.' Only 'clean fighters' could be venerated for their bloody deeds."[317] By acting chivalrously, soldiers were seen as honorable, not committing violence out of malice but out of necessity in defense of their nation.[318] In this way, chivalry was a way for a society to pardon and to embrace their bloody men. So long as those men were chivalrous, they would be heroes.

Therefore, based on Goebel's work, it is clearly necessary to establish the purpose of the concepts of honor and chivalry. The idea of honor did not arise out of a void. Such ideas have existed throughout recorded history. However, it is important to note that honor and chivalry are not only rules for conduct, but they also serve a purpose. These ideas create a framework for proper behavior in war.

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[315] Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 227.
[316] Ibid, 230.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid.

Dave Grossman presents some psychological explanations for this phenomenon. He explains how soldiers have to come to terms with their experiences in warfare, and to do so, they have to be able to frame the death they have dealt as being honorable or in line with societal expectations.[319] He explains that society can alleviate this psychological burden by providing a path to honor.[320] Soldiers also have a tendency to try to respect their opponents to make their deaths something noble instead of dishonorable.[321] This provides a phycological explanation for why World War I aviators kept appealing to concepts such as honor, chivalry, sportsmanship and the respect among pilots. They were coming to terms with the death they had experienced, either by losing comrades or by killing their enemies. These ideas, which could be summarized in chivalry, provided a culturally appropriate path to healing.

Stefan Goebel's work, reinforced by the works of Grossman, sets a good path for moving forward on this topic. While it may be true that there was considerable fabrication and propagandization by pilots and the media of the day, to completely dismiss ideas of honor and chivalry as existing during the war reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of these concepts. Whether a pilot did or did not show mercy or engage in single combat has no bearing on the question of honor in combat. Considering the importance of these concepts to soldiers dealing with PTSD, honor and chivalry have not been properly defined by historians who are discussing the myth and reality of such claims in World War I.

Cultural medievalism in Britain did not die off immediately after the war. It would continue, though weakened, for decades. In the immediate post-war era, chivalry and medievalism provided an option for memorials to the fallen soldiers. Imagery of knights, and

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[319] Grossman and Christensen, *On Combat*, 296.
[320] Ibid., 305.
[321] Grossman, *On Killing,* 195-196.

visual and verbal recalling of national history and legends provided a rich tapestry with which and in which to paint the lost sons of Britain. These young men were retroactively raised to the status of the cultural and societal ideal embodied by the knight.

This cultural tradition, revived by the literature of Sir Walter Scott and others, was carried on in literature in its late stages by such authors as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. Tolkien's work continued the genre, style, and traditions of the Victorian medievalist romances. He combined modern elements and experiences with the historical literature of Britain. C. S. Lewis, a fellow author of medieval genre novels, also made an explicit case for chivalry in modern society. His call for chivalry was not altogether dissimilar to the call of Kenelm Henry Digby or Charles Kingsley who, a century before, had promoted chivalry as societal ideal.

Lewis believed chivalry was the way forward for society. By combining both strength and meekness, society could defend itself without falling into barbarity.[322] This parallels the original intentions of chivalry at its founding, as O. B. Duane explains in order "to elevate the knight from barbaric savage to nobleman."[323] Chivalry has been an ideal highly valued in Western Civilization for centuries for this very reason. A society of barbaric men is doomed to tyranny and aggression and a society of weak men is doomed to collapse and subjugation. Chivalry provides a third path, so, in the words of Cecil Lewis, "if the world must fight to settle its differences, back to Hector and Achilles! Back to the lists! Let the enemy match a squadron of fighters against ours. And let the world look on!"[324]

When placed in the broader historical and cultural context, the aviator's claim to knighthood makes sense and is arguably a logical jump. While the pilots of World War I may not

[322] C.S. Lewis, "The Necessity of Chivalry," 15.
[323] Duane, *The Origins of Wisdom,* 32.
[324] Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising,* 46.

have necessarily lived up to the chivalric ideal, that is not really that important of a level of analysis. Chivalry, as a concept, is not an accurate description of any time period; it is an ideal pursued by men and warriors over the course of centuries. Although knights, as technically understood, basically ceased to exist with the end of medieval warfare, the term "knight" was maintained as part of the British lexicon and culture. These terms were imparted unto the aviators of World War I by tradition, culture and society, and it would be historically inaccurate to deprive them of that term. To do so strips away all cultural context. The "knights of the sky" they should and shall remain.

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