

# Pacifism and peace activism in modern Britain: A history of the 'peace studies problem'

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## Abstract

It is over 40 years since Ceadel defined interwar British pacifism as a 'faith'. During that time, pacifism has had little political significance and the influential peace movement of the interwar years is now scarcely within living memory. Yet, what Margaret Thatcher once described as 'the peace studies problem' is a diverse and interdisciplinary field, and one in which scholarship, peace activism and mainstream politics are all closely intertwined. Feminist scholars and peace activists have queried the links between militarism and patriarchy; historians and ethicists have explored medical pacifism and have asked whether medicine is (or should be) a pacifist profession. More recently, scholars have looked at interwar pacifism through the lens of the Empire and have challenged the imperialist pacifist delusion. Despite pacifism's limited political influence, its history over the last 40 years has explored the beliefs and motivations of men and women struggling to respond to militarism and the threat of war.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

It is now over 40 years since Ceadel published *Pacifism in Britain in 1914-1945: the defining of a faith*. He had two main aims, first 'to tell the story of the most significant pacifist movement of modern times', namely that in Britain during the period of the two world wars. Second, to develop a means of analysis which could be applied to the study

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of pacifism more widely (Ceadel, 1980). Since then, the first world war has ceased to be within living memory and the number of people living with direct experience of the second world war has declined; the cold war has ended, and Britain has been involved in a range of conflicts around the world, most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. Peace movements have been a recurrent feature of British cultural and political life during that time but have had little direct influence on government policy. Pacifism is on the political margins and is now mainly associated with specific religious groups such as the Society of Friends (more commonly known as Quakers). So, does this story still matter? What does it tell us other than that peace activists seem unable to stop wars? Yet as Ceadel's work demonstrates, pacifism was not just about stopping war. Pacifism was also a faith, and so its history is one of moral courage, conscience, religion, and the conflict between individual commitments and collective needs. Historians (and other scholars) have long been prominent peace activists while writing about pacifism and peace activism. This link between scholarship and activism has been seen as a problem, but the resulting literature is one way of talking about some of our most profound human anxieties and about some of the most hopeful and utopian human activities and experiments.

## 2 | PACIFISM, PACIFICISM, AND PACIFISTS

But what do we understand by pacifism? The British 'peace movement', in its broadest sense, has existed since the 1730s, but activists first used the term 'pacifist' (meaning friends of peace) at the 10th Universal Peace Congress in Glasgow in 1901, and it was not widely used until about a decade later. Ceadel makes clear distinctions between *pacifism*, which he describes as 'the personal conviction that is wrong to take part in war' and *pacifism*, which is more of an 'ethic of responsibility' and is used to describe those who see 'the prevention of war' as their main duty, although they accept that some wars may be necessary or unavoidable (Ceadel, 1980). Yet, the distinction between pacifism and pacifism is often blurred. 'Pacifism' is now rarely used, and pacifism is the common, very broad umbrella term for a range of beliefs. What Ceadel has described as 'the war-and-peace debate' includes an optimistic pacifism which argues that war can be abolished and a pessimistic version in which pacifists cannot stop war but can only 'bear witness'. Some pacifists believe that all force is wrong, some oppose the taking of life, while others oppose war per se (Ceadel, 1987). While recognising all these distinctions, this paper is concerned primarily with the modern European (largely British) history of pacifism (broadly defined) and peace activism. These terms are not interchangeable but are linked. Pacifists oppose taking part in all wars, but they may or not be engaged in political activism; peace activists may be pacifists or they may just oppose specific wars or specific weapons such as poisoned gas or nuclear missiles.

In the short history of modern European peace activism, there have been many different types of pacifism. Nineteenth century patriotic pacifism (Cooper, 1991) had largely disappeared by the interwar years, as had scientific pacifism (van Bergen & Reid, 2020). Christian pacifism was mainly associated with Protestant Christianity; socialist pacifism was rooted in class consciousness and the conviction that the working class should not fight capitalist wars. Key intellectual figures such as Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) advocated a humanitarian pacifism; Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) presented the utilitarian argument that 'modern war is almost certain to have worse consequences than even the most unjust peace' (Ceadel, 1980). These ideological convictions were meaningful but not watertight or immutable. As a philosopher, Russell was a utilitarian but, consciously or otherwise, his pacifism was an emotional and humanitarian response to the violence and destruction of modern warfare (Ceadel, 1980). Emotions do not exist in neat categories, and in the 1930s, people joined various groups, shifted their loyalties from one organisation to another and collapsed categorical boundaries. The Labour politician George Lansbury (1859–1940) can best be described as a 'politico-religious pacifist' (Pugh, 1980) while Vera Brittain (1893–1970), a writer, feminist and one of the most famous of Britain's interwar pacifists, did not actually become a pacifist until 1936 when she lost faith in the League of Nations Union (LNU) and its commitment to collective security (Ceadel, 1980). The LNU was not a pacifist organisation but there had been a strong pro-League consensus among British pacifists

during the 1920s and early 1930s, many of whom were convinced that a permanent international organisation was the strongest guarantee against a future war. When the League failed to deal adequately with the international crises of the 1930s, they were forced into a painful reassessment of this position. Some turned to a more absolutist pacifism while others began to advocate appeasement or 'peaceful change', a position that was reflected in British universities as 'pro-League professors' adopted a more 'realist position' (Ceadel, 2003).

What was striking about the British peace movement during the interwar years was both its size and its respectability. There was a wide array of organisations including the Peace Pledge Union (PPU), which had 136,000 members by April 1940, and the LNU, which was probably the most influential of all the peace societies (Ceadel, 1980; Pugh, 1980). Pacifism was also central to mainstream political and cultural life. The economist and socialist G.D.H. Cole (1889–1959) appeared regularly on the BBC to castigate the arms trade (Overy, 2010). Fifteen members of the 1924 Labour government were part of the Union of Democratic Control, a pacifist society often described as pacifist (Ceadel, 1980). Most significantly, Lansbury, a committed pacifist, was Labour leader from 1932 to 35. It is hard to imagine any of these things happening in Britain today. Pacifists, from absolutists to reformists, were broadly accepted then because the interwar years were unusually dominated by a widespread abhorrence of war: so many people had the most terrible memories of the previous war and dreadful fears about the next one. There was also a strong political sense that Britain had little to gain from a European war and so a peace movement or individual peace activists could therefore be influential.

The position changed radically as war with Germany began to seem both unavoidable and necessary. Over 60,000 British citizens registered as conscientious objectors during the second world war, but the pacifist influence was too weak and too diffuse to affect Britain's overall commitment to the war effort, especially given that the majority of objectors were given conditional exemptions and so spent the war in 'alternative service' such as agricultural work, fire-fighting, social work or even non-combatant roles in the military (Kelly, 2022). For most people, pacifists included, this war was not worse than 'the most unjust peace'. The position changed again in 1945 after the use of nuclear weapons, and 'nuclear era pacifists' came to believe that such technology had rendered all modern war illegitimate because the risk of escalation was so great (Ceadel, 1987). Britain's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was first launched in February 1958 amidst fears of nuclear tests and radioactive fallout and there was a 'second wave' of anti-nuclear activism in the early 1980s when the installation of Cruise and Pershing missiles seemed to increase the prospect of actual nuclear war in Europe (Ceadel, 2003).

### 3 | 1980s: PEACE ACTIVISM AND 'THE PEACE STUDIES PROBLEM'

*Pacifism in Britain* was published during a period of increased cold war tension, and just before the Thatcher-Reagan years which heralded the revival of Anglo-Americanism, anti-Communism and a fervent commitment to the free market (Gamble, 2014). Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister, 1979–90) and Ronald Reagan (US President, 1981–1989) were both cold war warriors and the 1980s were dominated by fears of nuclear escalation and by a reinvigorated and highly active peace movement throughout Britain and the rest of Europe. 1980 was also the year in which *Virago* re-published Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (2005, originally published in 1933) following a highly successful BBC mini-series in 1979. The British public was far from pacifist but there was a strong popular perception that the first world war had been so terrible that pacifism had been a perfectly understandable response, and Brittain's work was received with enthusiasm and sympathy.

Alongside these political and popular interests, academics were formalising the study of peace. Links between peace activism and academia had a long pedigree. After the first world war, the new discipline of international relations was dominated by the 'special League of Nations Professorships' (Ceadel, 2003). A. J. P. Taylor, one of Britain's first television historians, was a prominent and vocal supporter of CND from its earliest years and the first School of Peace Studies was established in the University of Bradford in 1973. Historian E. P. Thompson played a significant and public role in CND's 'second wave' (Ceadel, 1987) and in 1980, Thompson and Mary Kaldor, an

academic, activist and political advisor, became the founding members of European Nuclear Disarmament (END), an organisation which linked the peace agenda with human rights. END was based upon a humanistic socialism and was committed to mass mobilisation across both Eastern and Western blocs. END was 'the intellectual wing of CND' known as 'PhD CND' (Berger & LaPorte, 2016), but its debates were not restricted to university campuses and common rooms. Smith and Thompson's *Protest and Survive* (1980), a riposte to the government information pamphlet, *Protect and Survive* (1980), was widely read and discussed among groups of peace activists, and was readily available in the many alternative bookshops which were a feature of British cities in the 1980s.

The popular impact of these academic debates irked Thatcher. By the early 1980s, Bradford's School of Peace Studies was flourishing to the extent that it was causing her political anxiety. 'Has the Peace Studies problem been dealt with yet?' Thatcher asked Keith Joseph, then Secretary of State for Education (UK's first Peace Studies turns 50–2023—News—University of Bradford). Thatcher interpreted this scholarship as a form of activism in direct opposition to government policy, and many of the original scholars would have agreed with her analysis. Given that universities are independent bodies, Thatcher's approach was highly interventionist, and it tells us much about British political culture that one can be suspect for studying peace when studying war rarely attracts such censure. It was the seventeenth century Quakers who first vowed 'not to study war no more' (Cooper, 1991) and there remains a sense that those who study peace have a clear moral or political agenda which runs counter to academic professionalism and integrity. On reviewing Kelly's *Battles of Conscience*, Susan Pedersen noted that the author believes 'war, in almost all cases, is deeply wrong' and goes on to say that this is 'not really a position from which a historian would begin' (Pedersen, 2022). This may be one reason for the interdisciplinary nature of the history of pacifism (Kelly is an anthropologist), which now reflects a rich diversity of approaches.

#### 4 | GREENHAM COMMON: WOMEN'S PEACE ACTIVISM

Despite Thatcher's desire to deal with 'the peace studies problem', peace activism plagued Conservative politicians throughout the 1980s, largely because of the growth of the women's peace movement. Female participation in peace activism is not new. On the contrary, women had always been part of British peace movements and Ceadel writes in detail about its many prominent female individuals during the interwar years, such as Vera Brittain, Maude Royden (1876–1956), (Margaret) Storm Jameson (1891–1986) and Rose Macauley (1881–1958), and he discusses the willingness of men and women to bear witness (Ceadel, 1980). His is not an exclusionary account, but he refers to the pacifist as 'he' throughout, and he focuses on organisations, like the PPU, which were largely male (Overy, 2010). What is of greater significance to current scholars is that Richard Sheppard's now-famous Peace Pledge was initially directed solely at men (Overy, 2010). In October 1934, Sheppard, then the canon of St Paul's Cathedral, issued a call asking all men to support the resolution: 'We renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will we support or sanction another' (Ceadel, 1980). Sheppard believed that women were already supporting the peace movement and so there was no need to petition them. In addition, it was men and not women who would be conscripted during wartime and therefore only men had the opportunity formally to object and to refuse to fight. Yet, the exclusion of women was about more than their pre-existing support or the technicalities of objection. Few protest movements can afford to neglect their supporters and so the exclusion of women seems, at best, highly dismissive, especially when considered alongside the reification of the male pacifist. Lansbury held romantic notions of the pacifist as an 'athletic youth in the prime of life.' In a similar vein, writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) wrote that pacifists 'are athletes in training for an event of more than Olympic importance' (Overy, 2010). For these men, pacifism was an opportunity for male perfection, valour and heroism.

Historiographical focus later turned to exclusively female and feminist peace activism. Shortly after the publication of *Pacifism in Britain*, 'Women for Life on Earth' established a peace camp at Greenham Common in protest at the planned deployment of cruise missiles, which were designed to carry nuclear warheads. The camp, which became women-only in 1982, exemplified the strong political message, first articulated by the second-wave

feminists of the 1970s, that women had a very particular role to play in the peace movement because patriarchy was the primary cause of war (Ceadel, 2003). The military-industrial complex was fundamentally male and it was men who declared war, fought in wars, and gained honour through war. For Greenham women, the symbolic and practical importance of women-only actions was integral to their philosophy: men may have had a role but there was to be no heroic male pacifist. Drawing more on the legacy of the suffragettes than the interwar pacifists, Greenham women practiced direct action. As contemporary press accounts and video footage attest, they used their bodies as tools of defiance: they wrapped hand-made webs around themselves and lay on the entry roads to the base, they danced on military silos, and they lived an alternative life which posited feminine co-operation against masculine violence (A flavour of this life can be seen in the video Carry Greenham Home, 1983). These actions reflected the long connections between pacifism and feminism as well as the women's strong sense of war as an essentially male activity (Brown, 2003; Liddington, 1991). Links between feminism and pacifism are well-established but they have always been contested too. Eleanor Rathbone, one of the most outstanding feminists of the twentieth century, was 'infuriated' by interwar pacifism (Johnson, 2004) and feminist arguments have changed across time. Interwar pacifists did not use maternalist arguments (Elgin, 1999) despite the pronatalist political culture across Europe; yet in the 1980s, many feminist peace activists rooted their pacifism in their identities as women and mothers. These maternalist approaches tended to dominate press and television coverage, much to the chagrin of those feminists who dismissed such biologically essentialist viewpoints (Titcombe, 2013). Leaving these disputes aside, what united most women was their lived-experience as women and their commitment to dismantling patriarchal structures: the peace studies problem had become a gendered problem. Feminism may not be 'the answer to militarism' (Titcombe, 2013), yet a consciously feminist critique has marked historical analyses of power and of political activism since the end of the twentieth century. There is now an extensive scholarly literature on feminist peace research, which indicates a real conceptual shift from the earlier focus on class, organisational structure, individual conscience and the responses of the potential, and inevitably male, combatant (Kling, 2019, Roseneil, 1995.).

## 5 | THE EMPIRE, CIVILISATION AND 'CRANKINESS'

Scholarly analyses of pacifism and peace activism have similarly been challenged by the increased attention paid to international or global history. More specifically, the recent historical attention to decolonisation and to de-centering the historical narrative has provoked new questions and new approaches. This is not to say that Ceadel's focus on Britain in the first half of the twentieth century was an insular one. At the time, Britain had an extensive global empire and pacifists were acutely aware of the intricacies of European politics and the possibility of European conflicts. The activities of pacifists and peace groups were intrinsically tied to the LNU, which was explicitly internationalist and was the largest peace society in Britain throughout most of the interwar period (Ceadel, 1980). In addition, many pacifists were interested in the campaigns of the anti-colonial nationalist Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) in India. Many may well have misunderstood or romanticised Gandhi, but he was arguably 'the most influential external influence on the British peace movement' in the early 1930s (Ceadel, 1980). Many of the women in Britain's interwar peace movement had been part of the pre-war International Women's Suffrage Association, and so they were ideologically inclined towards internationalism and often had international contacts (Vellacott, 2001). Socialist pacifists were internationalists because their primary loyalty was to class rather than nation although their position was complicated because they were reluctant to criticise Soviet Russia and were hostile to the League of Nations, seeing it primarily as a capitalist organisation (Ceadel, 1980). The international history of pacifism is now well-established and histories of pacifist groups, individuals and movements across the globe strengthen Ceadel's arguments about the multifarious nature of pacifism and the difficulties of turning pacifist principles into political action (Brock, 2000; Brock & Young, 1999).

*Pacifism in Britain* undoubtedly takes account of pacifism as an international issue, but it also describes those whose opposition to war led them away from the wider world altogether. In an episode of what was sometimes derided as 'crankiness', the PPU's *Training for Peace* manual of 1936 advocated 'meditation, singing together, and folk-dancing' as well as 'spinning or knitting clothes for one's family or others' (Ceadel, 1980). Community living was only ever a minority activity but it is an ideal which has recurring peaks of popularity and the idea of simple, collective sufficiency (if not the actual practice) was popular in Britain throughout the late 1970s, and it was the bedrock of not just the Greenham Common camp but of all the many peace camps which sprung up outside military bases during the 1980s. Building on what would now be described as the study of alternative politics or alternative living, later scholars have explored more fully the history of those pacifists who responded to war and to the threat of war by creating isolated rural communities and establishing collective living experiments and communal farms (Kelly, 2022; Neima, 2022). Many long-term pacifists were irritated by what they saw as inward-looking, isolationist approaches, but dismissing these people as 'cranks' or as self-centred serves little purpose. They were genuinely trying to construct a new peaceable way of living and such experiments continue in response to austerity and to the climate crisis ([www.diggersanddeamers.org.uk](http://www.diggersanddeamers.org.uk); 2024). However, a more global approach does illuminate the power and privilege behind these small-scale or individual actions. While pacifists in interwar Britain struggled to mobilise against wars, 'the colonised people of the world struggled with the question of how to confront far more powerful foes without weapons' (Kelly, 2022). It is not necessarily easier to be a pacifist in a well-defended, powerful country (as Britain was at the time), but it is certainly different from being a pacifist in a country dominated by an aggressive colonising power (as Britain was at the time).

A more nuanced appreciation of the power dynamics of Empire also enables us to interrogate more fully the motivations and assumptions of those who opposed war in the 1920s and 1930s. The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) demonstrated that the public's fears about aerial bombardment were perfectly rational, and those opposed to war suffered genuine dilemmas as they tried to forge a workable pacifist position at the same time as recognising the horrors of Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany. We can all appreciate the desire to avoid armed conflict and to save others from the appalling consequences of modern war, yet pacifists were doing more than trying to save their country, their communities, or their own families. In the interwar years, many pacifists anguished about the inevitable destruction that war would bring because they believed that their own world (the British Empire) was the highpoint of civilisation. A future war really mattered because it would destroy not only their homes and families but their entire civilisation. A section of the British peace movement lived in fear of 'barbarism', and intellectuals worried that the British Empire could suffer the same fate as the Roman Empire, leading to a new 'Dark Age' (Overy, 2010). Others were motivated by the links between Christianity and civilisation. Philip Noel-Baker, a committed pacifist and one of the founders of the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in 1914, felt that he was unable to renounce violence absolutely in the 1930s because the European dictatorships threatened both civilisation and 'organised Christianity' (Overy, 2010). The literature prompts us to think again about the assumed radicalism of the early twentieth-century pacifists. While often presented as radicals, their opposition to war can also be seen as a defence of existing values, structures and organisations. As Storm Jameson's words attest, 'If we let the barbarians take charge of our city [...] they will light their fires with all our poems' (Overy, 2010). This 'imperialist pacifism' (Hinton, 1989) continued well into the post-war period, and it was a key feature of CND's early years. After the humiliation of the Suez crisis in 1956, many, predominantly on the Labour Left, believed that by taking the lead on unilateral nuclear disarmament, Britain could regain prestige and global influence. This belief in Britain's potential for global leadership can even be seen in the New Left of the 1960s, which aimed to promote British unilateralism alongside the non-aligned, post-colonial nations on the assumption that Britain could play a leading role in world disarmament. Once again, the commitment to world peace revealed an underlying 'Great Power chauvinism' (Ceadel, 1987; Hinton, 1989).

## 6 | MEDICS AND MEDICAL PACIFISTS

Further questions about the nature of pacifism and about the ways in which pacifists should behave in wars have been raised by the growing academic interest in medical pacifism. The medical profession has long been interested in its own history, and medical historians were initially medical professionals reflecting on the development of their respective disciplines to improve medical practice. A new social history of medicine developed in the 1990s, influenced by Roy Porter's insistence that medical history was the history of humanity, and that medicine played a major role in human societies and in the construction of modernity (Bynum & Porter, 1997; Cooter, 2011; Porter, 1997). By the end of the twentieth century, medical history departments were flourishing in British universities and shortly afterwards 'medical peace work' (Holtedahl, 2009) was emerging as a new discipline, incorporating the health sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.

Physicians had not always been concerned with promoting either peace or even medical care in wartime, but the medical profession grew more involved with social and political questions throughout 19th century Europe and became increasingly committed to promoting peace and social justice (Lewer, 1992). At the same time, the International Committee of the Red Cross was established and the Geneva Conventions were formalised. By the first world war, the International Humanitarian Law had expanded the principle of neutrality to all medical personnel in war (van Bergen & Reid, 2020). This is the point at which history intersects with medical ethics although the topic was relatively neglected by historians until the 1980s. Nevertheless, the ethical difficulties of providing medical care within military structures had been clear since the late nineteenth century. National Red Cross societies had rapidly become 'wedded to their countries' war machines and highly valued parts of them' resulting in a militarisation of humanitarian work (Best, 1980).

Throughout modern war, most doctors and nurses have felt that the war work was compatible with their own professional ethics, and for the same reason, some pacifists found 'a ready refuge' in medicine (Gross, 2006): they were going to war to cure and not to kill. Others were less sure. Thomas Corder Catchpool, a young engineer, eagerly joined the FAU in the early part of 1914 and served as a dresser on the western front. Yet, he resigned in 1916 when the War Office recognised FAU work as 'approved' (Reid, 2017). For men like Catchpool, this was insupportable because it meant that his medical work had become military work.

It is van Bergen's writing that has most effectively highlighted the medical pacifist's dilemma (van Bergen, 2011). At one level, it seems obvious that doctors and nurses should provide medical care to the war wounded. What is the ethical justification for leaving a man to bleed to death or to die of infection? And yet, military services rely heavily on the goodwill and the expertise of medical professionals. It is medics who declare men fit for war, who provide inoculations and most crucially, treat wounded men so that they can return to the battlefield. If a soldier cannot fight again, it is up to the medical profession to ensure that he (and now she) is at least well enough to work in the civilian sphere, thus saving the national exchequer from an overwhelming pension bill. By the twentieth century, it was inconceivable for a modern army to go to war without a fully functioning medical corps and this is what prompted Jeanne van Lanschott-Hubrecht, a Dutch nurse, to advocate the first medical strike in 1918. She asked fellow nurses if they wanted to accept 'co-operating in a speedy recovery of the sick and wounded, leading to a new trip to the front, so that they can kill or be killed once more.' Like so many British pacifists, she concluded that nurses would have to answer by listening to their own consciences (van Bergen, 2011).

The medical pacifist movement continued during the interwar years. The Dutch, Anti-War Group Nurses were opposed to co-operating with preparations for war, and delegates attending the Physicians' Conference Against War in 1932 took a similar stance. This was an international conference which met in Amsterdam and was attended by 2000–4000 participants (van Bergen, 2011). There was also a discrete medical pacifist movement in Britain. John Ryle (1889–1950) had served with the Royal Army Medical Corps during the First World War and he later became President of the Medical Peace Campaign. By the late 1930s, Ryle was trying to convince the medical profession that it could make war 'almost unthinkable' if it refused to participate in military preparations (van

Bergen & Reid, 2020). How could there be a war without ambulances, clearing stations and hospitals? Men would not fight, and governments would not risk forcing them into battle without medical cover.

There has never been widespread support for a medical strike, in part because most doctors and nurses have never been committed pacifists, and the argument for a medical strike may have an internal logic, but most medics (even pacifist medics) blanch at it. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the twentieth century, nurses and doctors have been involved in peace activism. In 2002, Ilkka Taipale, a Finnish pacifist, politician and physician, unashamedly celebrated an anti-militarist medical history and argued that the doctor's role was to prevent war (Taipale, 2002). Messelken, a medical ethicist, was questioning rather than celebratory and asked, are 'physicians obliged to defend a pacifist position?' (Messelken, 2013). He concluded that there must be limits to the doctor's role during wartime and throughout the world we see medics trying to counter the effects of war without contributing to them, largely in humanitarian organisations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* and *Doctors of the World*. This work provides some medics with ways to resolve the contradictions of military-medical service. Yet, fundamental questions remain: should a pacifist serve in a medical or caring role during wars? Or does that just implicate him or her while prolonging the suffering?

The history of pacifism has ranged far and wide in the last 40 years. We have moved from Ceadel's tight focus on interwar British pacifist movements and there is less emphasis on organisational structure, top-down politics and doctrinal divisions, partly because we have moved away from a world in which those organisations and political structures were memorable and meaningful. The scholarship of pacifism is now highly diverse, encompassing philosophers, anthropologists and social scientists as well as historians. As a result, the literature demonstrates the ways in which people have come together to oppose war and suggests alternative ways of living whether that is through gender, faith, or professional identity. We have also been prompted to question the radicalism of the interwar pacifists who were privileged by their imperial status. Ceadel's history of interwar pacifism prompted scholars to consider pacifism as a social movement and as a belief system. Some of this work has become highly theoretical as it reflects on the discourses of feminism or medical ethics, yet the history of pacifism primarily matters because it focuses on the beliefs and motivations of men and women struggling to make sense of a violent world and trying to find the right response to the threat of war. If 'the peace studies problem' is that its scholars and students are trying to challenge militarism, then it is a problem we still need.

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