

The relationship between Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wells and British propaganda of the First World War

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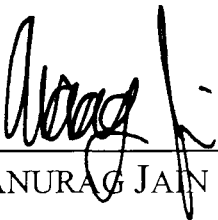
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
FORD, KIPLING, CONAN DOYLE, WELLS AND
BRITISH PROPAGANDA OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

BY

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QUEEN MARY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

THESIS SUBMITTED TOWARD THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

I HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE WORK CONTAINED IN THIS THESIS IS ALL MY OWN, AND THAT WHERE I HAVE USED OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS THESE ARE CLEARLY AND ADEQUATELY REFERENCED.


ANURAG JAIN

March 12/9
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ABSTRACT

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORD, KIPLING, CONAN DOYLE, WELLS AND
BRITISH PROPAGANDA OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

Anurag Jain, *Queen Mary* (University of London)

This thesis resituates the war-writing of Ford Madox Ford, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle and H.G. Wells in relation to official British propaganda produced during the First World War. Examining these authors' institutional connections with propaganda that was authorised by the British government locates some of their texts within a network of materials that were deployed to justify Britain's involvement in the war. The British government, via the War Propaganda Bureau, approached major literary figures to assist in its plan to compete vigorously with Germany to win American support. Positioning Ford's condemnation of Prussian culture within this institutional context reveals that his officially commissioned books functioned as a part of the larger yet-covert government project to influence American intellectual opinion. Although wary that Kipling's chauvinism might offend some readers, the British government reprinted and distributed his denunciations of the 'Hun'. Kipling was given access to censored letters from Indian soldiers in order to assist him in depicting the Imperial forces as united. The result, *The Eyes of Asia* (1918), was a set of fictional texts by Indian soldiers celebrating French and English civilisation in contrast to German barbarism. In addition to official propaganda, these authors produced pro-war stories, poems, and articles independent of direct government commission. Conan Doyle's formal call for men to volunteer to defend their country, and his public denunciations of German atrocities, were followed by his recruitment of Sherlock Holmes to repel a possible German invasion ("His Last Bow" (1917)). Adding to his support for the war in his journalism and war-time fiction, Wells was appointed the Head of Enemy Propaganda for the newly formed Ministry of Information. He resigned almost immediately following disagreements over government strategy. This project situates historically and examines critically these authors' differing roles in relation to British propaganda efforts during the First World War.

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Finally, Hannah Wilson's wit, beauty and love have not only made this last year endurable but a revelation as well. Thank you.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WPB	War Propaganda Bureau, also known as Wellington House (1914)
DOI	Department of Information (1917)
MOI	Ministry of Information (1918)
DORA	Defence of Realm Act (1914)
<i>WBTA</i>	Ford Madox Ford's <i>When Blood is their Argument</i> (1915)
<i>BSDSG</i>	Ford's <i>Between St. Dennis and St. George</i> (1915)
UDC	Union of Democratic Control (1914)
Boer War	Second Boer War (1899-1902)
<i>Bryce Report</i>	<i>The Bryce Report on Alleged German Outrages</i> (1915)
Crewe House	Department of Enemy Propaganda, Ministry of Information (1918)
NWAC	National War Aims Committee (1917)

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INTRODUCTION

On 2 September 1914, C.F.G. Masterman, the head of the British government's newly formed War Propaganda Bureau (WPB), held a meeting with a group of twenty-five prominent writers in Wellington House, Buckingham Gate, London. Masterman gathered these famous authors together to discuss how they might contribute to Britain's war effort. On 18 September, two weeks after this secret meeting, an 'Authors' Declaration' appeared simultaneously in *The New York Times* and *The Times* (London):

The undersigned writers, comprising among them men and women of divergent political and social views, some of them having been for years ardent champions of good-will toward Germany and many extreme advocates of peace, nevertheless are agreed that Great Britain could not without dishonour have refused to take part in the present war.

The conflict was firmly described using the chivalric language of honour. Great Britain had to defend Belgium from Germany's attack and occupation, not only because of treaty obligations, the 'Authors' Declaration' argued, but also to keep the standard of liberty raised. In the words of the British 'Victory Medal', the war was fashioned as 'The Great War for Civilisation.'¹ However much they may have held German culture in 'the highest respect and gratitude', these authors could not 'admit that any nation has a right by brute force to impose its culture upon other nations', particularly when it is the culture of the 'iron military bureaucracy of Prussia.' These British authors also went on to condemn German intellectuals for attempting to justify their nation's aggression:

German apologists official and semi-official [...] dwell almost with pride on the frightfulness of the example by which she has sought to spread terror in Belgium, but they excuse all these proceedings by a strange and novel plea. German culture and civilization are so superior to those of other nations that all steps taken to assert them are more than justified and the destiny of Germany to be the dominating force in Europe and the world is so manifest that ordinary rules of morality do not hold in her case, but actions are good or bad, simply as they help or hinder the accomplishment of that destiny.

These German 'apologists' were alleged to be working for their government in 'official and semi-official' capacities, and to have dwelt 'with pride' on Germany's invasion of Belgium.² This was seen as degrading to the office of the intellectual

¹ See Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London, 2006).

² A month later, in October 1914, ninety-three German intellectuals signed 'An Appeal to the Civilised World' (later known as the 'Manifesto of the Ninety-Three'). The document echoed the language of

itself. The ‘Authors’ Declaration’ already anticipates themes that would dominate official British propaganda: the altruistic duty of a united British Empire to protect Belgium, the militarist aggression of Prussia as distinct from the refinement of the German arts, and the war cast as a clash of civilisations. Consider, for example, H.G. Wells’s impassioned critique of ‘Prussian Imperialism’:

Ever since the crushing of the French in 1871 the evil thing has grown and cast its spreading shadow over Europe. Germany has preached a propaganda of ruthless force and [...] materialism to the whole uneasy world. ‘Blood and iron,’ she boasted, was the cement of her unity, and almost as openly the little, mean, aggressive statesmen and professors who have guided her destinies to this present conflict have professed [...] an utter disregard of any ends but nationally selfish ends, as though it were religion.³

Similar to those who signed the ‘Authors’ Declaration’, Wells laid much of the blame for Germany’s war-mongering on the ‘aggressive statesmen and professors’ who had guided their nation—the Junkers who bolster and justify Prussian aggression. Wells did not reflect however on how his and his peers’ own connections to the British government might have resembled those of the German intellectuals whom he accused. For the authors signing the declaration, Great Britain simply had a ‘destiny’ and a ‘duty’ to ‘uphold the rule of common justice between civilised people to defend the rights of small nations and to maintain the free and law-abiding ideals of Western Europe against a rule of blood and iron’. These authors’ statements were presented as if they were independent and free from any government influence; however heartfelt they may have been, many of the signatories had already secretly agreed to volunteer for the WPB program with the intention of creating materials to justify Britain’s war with Germany.

Amongst those who signed the British declaration were Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and H.G. Wells. Despite not attending Masterman’s initial meeting, less established authors of the time, such as Ford Madox Ford, would also volunteer their writings to the government propaganda program. These four authors would themselves all go on to produce ‘official and semi-official’ propaganda materials for the British government during the war.

civilisation, honour, and defence of their English counterparts: ‘misrepresentation and calumny are all the more eagerly at work [...] As heralds of truth we raise our voices against these [...] Have faith in us! Believe, that we shall carry on this war to the end as a civilized nation, to whom the legacy of a Goethe, a Beethoven, and a Kant, is just as sacred as its own hearths and homes.’ See Martha Hanna, *The Mobilization of Intellect: French Scholars and Writers During the Great War* (London, 1996), chapter two.

³ H.G. Wells, (‘Why Britain Went to War’, in *The War That Will End War* (London, 1914), p. 11.

This thesis examines the relationship between Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells, and official British propaganda during the First World War. This study seeks to examine how the government deployed these authors to justify the war, and further, how this war propaganda compared with their other fictional and non-fictional writing during the war. Authors had supported government wars in the past; both Kipling and Conan Doyle had done so when defending Britain's right to 'pacify' South Africa during the Second Boer War (1899-1902; henceforth Boer War). However, the war against Germany marked the initiation of a new strategy for officially recruiting and organizing such support from authors and intellectuals. Competing with Germany for influence in America, Britain's propaganda ministry would not openly sponsor rallies and newspaper advertisements as the Germans had done but instead, concealed its affiliation via the publication and distribution of pamphlets, articles, and other materials. The prestige, popularity, and authority of many of Britain's most celebrated writers were seen to be crucial to making these organised efforts seem spontaneous and independent. Internal revaluations of British propaganda strategy forced the priority to be shifted to more mass-distributed visual materials for the home and enemy-fronts under the auspices of the newly formed Department of Information (DOI) in 1917 and Ministry of Information (MOI) in 1918. As a result of the increased emphasis on posters and film, the WPB literary texts became less important. Thus over the course of the war, British authors went from being crucial to the production of official WPB propaganda to being marginalised under the MOI strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While the pioneering study of First World War propaganda remains Harold Lasswell's *Propaganda Techniques in the World War* (1927), Peter Buitenhuis's *The Great War of Words: Literature As Propaganda, 1914-18 and After* (1989) is the most sustained exploration of the contribution of literary artists in America and Great Britain to their respective government propaganda strategies. Because of his scope however, Buitenhuis is not able to offer Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells as close and as thorough an examination as the present study. In terms of histories of British propaganda during the war, Michael Sanders and Philip M. Taylor's classic *British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-1918* (1982) builds on the important work of Cate Haste's *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (1977). In covering the entire British government propaganda

programme, these books offer little discussion on the particular roles played by British literary authors. Gary Messinger's *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (1992) adds little to the overall narrative of the institutional aspects of British propaganda presented in other studies, but does have individual biographical studies of figures such as Masterman and Wells, amongst others.⁴ The present study seeks a balance between offering an overall history of British propaganda and a strictly biographical study of these authors and their particular relationships with the government. My goals are thus recuperative, historical, and literary. This study seeks to detail the stories of these four authors and their relationships with British war propaganda—which were concealed during the war—and to examine the tensions between the authors' propaganda materials and their other writings, in order to expand and detail further the current understanding of literary and cultural production during the First World War.

To date, analysis of World War One literature has tended to focus more on accounts of the combat experience (particularly that of protest through poetry), and has lent less attention to literature that sought to justify the conflict. Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) remains the crucial departure text for contemporary discussions of First World War literature. Through his close textual study of the poetry of figures such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, Fussell argued that irony was the defining mode of response to the extreme and senseless violence of the war, and this recourse to employing the rhetoric of irony would later prove influential in the development of modern consciousness.⁵ As Santanu Das argues in *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (2006), Fussell's study was almost too successful as it became 'the *defining* narrative' of the war, even though (with reflection) it has become evident that he was confined 'narrowly to the trench experience of a group of educated, mostly middle-class British officer-writers.'⁶ Fussell's thesis has been challenged as sexist and elitist for idealizing a pre-war innocence when asserting that war initiated a rupture between a time of ideal innocence and a disillusioned modern consciousness, and for his insistence that combat itself offered a special knowledge, or what James Campbell characterises as

⁴ See also George Robb's *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2002), esp. chapter 2, 'Propaganda and Censorship'.

⁵ Subsequent studies have elaborated Fussell's thesis, moving from British trench poetry to European avant-garde culture in Modris Ekstein's *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London, 1989); as well as a wider range of media in Samuel Hynes's *A War Imagined* (New York, 1991).

⁶ Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge, 2005), p.10.

‘Combat Gnosticism’.⁷ The present study distances itself to some extent from the poetry of combat and the language and experience of fighting in the trenches, to examine how another set of writers, physically apart from combat, supported a war they believed to be right, in the service of a government that had asked for their help. This study will not address how distance from combat in particular affected these writers’ language, but instead will explore how reading their war-writing within the institutional context of British war propaganda, can alter our understanding of these texts and their authors’ relationships to the war.

The challenges to Fussell’s bias amount to a new approach to war criticism, that stresses diverse cultural production and interdisciplinarity (Das characterises this as a ‘second wave’ of war criticism).⁸ This new scholarship could be said to have been initiated by Jay Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995). In moving away from Fussell’s grand narrative of the war into the diverse and fragmented experiences that constituted the conflict, this ‘second wave’ of critics has also maintained a distance from what it characterises as top-down models of propaganda in favour of examining the diffuse production and consumption of propaganda throughout society. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, for example, argue that their investigations into the material culture of the war produced a wide array of mass-produced objects that challenged the ‘view of propaganda as something deliberately imposed by governmental and military authority (like censorship)’.⁹ They argue that this market in materials that could be identified as propaganda (because of their ideological denunciations of the enemy)

⁷ *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War*, ed. by Catherine Reilly (London, 1981) includes a large body of civilian poetry, the vast majority of which was written by women. Reilly thus challenged the notion that war poetry of the age was written only by men in combat. Campbell defines ‘Combat Gnosticism’ as ‘the belief that combat represents a qualitatively separate order of experience that is difficult if not impossible to communicate to any who have not undergone an identical experience’; see James Campbell, ‘Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism’, *New Literary History* 30 (1999), 203-215. Daniel Pick quotes Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) on the transformation brought on by the war: ‘Although some memories of the benign last summer before the war can be discounted as standard romantic retrospection turned ever rosier by egregious contrast with what followed, all agree that the pre-war summer was the most idyllic for many years. It was warm and sunny, eminently pastoral. One lolled outside on a folding canvas chaise, or swam, or walked in the countryside. One read outdoors, went on picnics, had tea served from a white wicker table under the trees.’ He notes how Fussell abandons his ‘although’ from the beginning of the paragraph and how the ‘telling pronoun “one”’ demonstrates a presumed unitary experience. He also points out how the passive construction of being ‘served’ (rather than serving) also reveals certain class presumptions in his study. See Daniel Pick’s discussion of Fussell in *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (London, 1993), pp. 200-3.

⁸ Das, p.10.

⁹ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War* (London, 2002), p.108.

demonstrates the enormous network of people involved not only in the design and production but also in the consumption of such goods. From an entirely different perspective, Daniel Pick argues that propaganda cannot account for the origins of the war. Pick says “‘the war of words’ would later be an active and concrete part of the history of the First World War itself”, but he warns that we should be careful ‘not to say that words alone produce wars.’¹⁰ Pick also rejects a reductive economic-determinist explanation of propaganda as reflecting some material ‘bedrock’, some supposedly non-discursive economic stratum’ that can explain the wide variety of propaganda materials produced and consumed by a disparate group of official and non-official figures during the war. The diffusion of propaganda throughout the combatant nations, the indeterminacy and improvisational aspects of the government’s strategies, and the difficulty in evaluating the effects of any official government propaganda campaigns have detracted from the relevance of studying these materials altogether. As Becker argues, ‘what is called propaganda was not just a vertical process but also a horizontal one, even to some extent, a great upsurge from below, sustained by a huge number of individuals.’¹¹ Thus Becker turns traditional models of propaganda upside down to suggest that in creating propaganda, governments were sometimes responding to the needs or desires of the population rather than imposing a set of opinions upon it.

For another set of historians responding to the popular anti-war arguments of Fussell’s study, as well as to similar popular historical studies such as A. J. P. Taylor’s *Illustrated History of the First World War* (1974), the war was not a tragedy but indeed a *Forgotten Victory* (2002), as the title of Gary Sheffield’s book indicates. In his study, subtitled *The First World War: Myths and Realities*, Sheffield argued that Fussell overemphasised the personal visions of a handful of trench writers to transform the memory of the war from a British military victory over German aggression into one of an absurd and hopeless slaughter.¹² Sheffield argued that the

¹⁰ Pick, p.52.

¹¹ Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, p. 108.

¹² The war was neither unnecessary nor a loss for Gordon Corrigan, whose *Mud, Blood, and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* (London, 2003) argues that armies are made to fight wars, that wars are made to be won, and moreover that *we* won the war. It is worthwhile to return to Pick’s critique of Fussell to interrogate Corrigan’s use of ‘we’ or ‘Britain’ when considering who won the war. As Jay Winter has noted in his rejection of the notion of collective memory: ‘national collectives never created a unitary, undifferentiated, and enduring narrative called collective memory. Nations do not remember; groups of people do. Their work is never singular, and it is never fixed.’ Thus, for Winter, in considering ‘memory’, it is important that we always interrogate who is remembering and for whom; see Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the 20th Century* (London, 2006), p.198.

malaise that emerged in Britain following the war erased the memory of why it was necessary to go to war in the first place: to respond to German aggression, particularly the German invasion of Belgium and France. Official government propaganda does not interest this new generation of military historians (such as Sheffield) because of its focus on recuperating the memory of the war by way of highlighting the military logistics of a conflict that had to be won, and which amounted to something worth celebrating. Sheffield does not spend much time therefore reflecting on the role propaganda played in justifying a war that would later prove tragic. Moreover, recent scholarship has challenged the very notion of the war being a tragedy. In *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to Present* (2005), Antoine Prost and Jay Winter argue that because France was attacked by Germany and its soil occupied during the war, French scholarship on the conflict has challenged British scholarly notions of the war being futile.¹³ For other cultural and military historians there were forces of distortion other than wartime propaganda—particularly in the subsequent historiography of the war and in the popular mythologies of the war—that have had a far more malevolent influence than wartime propaganda itself. In his *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (2005), Dan Todman laments how the popular notion (in Britain) of the trenches being filled with protesting soldiers has emerged from the placing onto GCSE and A-Level history curricula the protest poetry of writers such as Owen and Sassoon, among others. Thus, Todman argues, these poems inflect a particular narrative of tragedy associated with the war.¹⁴ Todman criticises the way a small group of texts have become institutionalised as the voice of youth protesting an unjust war—a war of asinine generals leading their leonine soldiers into needless slaughter. Thus the post-war period's disillusionment, for these historians, has distorted the memory of the war through political malaise and an overemphasis on a small, highly select set of literary texts. For this new generation of military historians, it is far more likely that intellectuals and authors would have supported the war than oppose it. Official propaganda was not therefore substantially different from general support for the war. The period of post-war disillusionment also corresponded with propaganda itself being equated with lies that rationalised and justified a needless war.

¹³ See Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2004). Winter has more recently challenged Fussell's contention that irony is the modern mode that emerges from the war by noting that no such tradition exists in France: '[t]his contrast is evident in the simple fact that the poetry of Wilfred Owen was translated into French only in the late 1990s. The first translation of Siegfried Sassoon's poetry was rendered in French in 1987, though a French edition of *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* was published in 1937.' See Winter, *Remembering War*, p. 119.

¹⁴ Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London, 2005), pp. 168-9.

In sifting through the different layers of distortion in the historiography, these military historians do not give much priority to propaganda.

In light of these new currents in war criticism—one examining the contested memories and diverse experiences of the war, the other with a more nationalist agenda of recuperating the war as an important military victory for the British Empire—it would seem that official government propaganda does not command much attention. While this diversification of interests and methodologies has helped to add great detail to our understanding of the war, and challenges assumptions and myths about the conflict, it would be a shame to discard the opportunities offered by a close study of the historical specificity of official British propaganda, and (further) the relationship between these public intellectuals and the system itself. Official government propaganda constituted an organised system that drafted the first formal (albeit self-justifying, pro-British) interpretations of the war; moreover, those drafts were created with the assistance of prominent British authors. Returning to this official propaganda programme will illuminate, to a greater extent, other fronts of conflict in the war: the cultural war, the war of information, and the war over American support. The WPB was improvising techniques as the war went along, and the learning curve proved important. Understanding changing government propaganda methodologies, as well as how authors went from being central to being marginal to the system, offers potential insights into procedures and systems of mass influence that had a looming influence over the rest of the century. It is thus a topic that, in losing its intellectual clout, leaves us with an incomplete picture of the cultural and political landscape of the war.

WORLD WAR ONE BRITISH PROPAGANDA : AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

From the outset of Germany's invasion of Belgium, it became evident that controlling information would prove an essential aspect of modern warfare. In line with pre-war thinking, the first attempts at managing public perception in Britain were made through constraints on information rather than through the production of information. For example, Britain's first offensive action in the war was sending the cable ship *Teleconia* to cut German transatlantic cables. This action left Germany without direct communication links to neutral nations, particularly America.¹⁵ In addition to limiting the enemy's ability to send and receive information, the

¹⁵ M. L. Sanders and Phil Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War 1914-1918* (London, 1982), p. 19.

government took measures to constrict access to information at home. According to George Robb, The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was initially designed, in its own words, to prevent the spread of information ‘of such a nature as is calculated to be or might be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy’.¹⁶ However, over the course of the war, DORA was expanded so that it had increased jurisdiction over communication, including the official suppression of dissent. Opposition to the war was subject to censorship and could lead to an author’s imprisonment. In stifling the voices of those who opposed the war, support for the conflict was thought to have been maintained. Other government offices such as the newly formed Press Bureau appeared as if they might have had different strategies for making information more available. However this office also aimed at limiting access to information (rather than creating materials) as a means of influencing public opinion.

Contrary to the claims made to parliament by Winston Churchill, Lord of the Admiralty, that the Press Bureau had been newly established to provide the press with ‘a steady stream of trustworthy information supplied both by the War Office and the Admiralty’, journalists would soon discover the Press Bureau continued to censor more information than it provided.¹⁷ According to Robb, the Press Bureau staff examined all ‘press cables, issued news releases, and gave instructions to newspaper editors on the attitude they should take to questions of the day’.¹⁸ The Bureau banned all journalists from the front and was selective in the material it made available; it also closely monitored when information would be released to the press. Douglas Brownrigg reflected on Churchill gambling with information: ‘he would hold on to a bit of bad news for a time on the chance of getting a bit of good news to publish as an offset, and I must say it not infrequently paid off.’¹⁹ Journalists were not as impressed with this juggling of information, and quickly dubbed the office the ‘Suppress Bureau’.²⁰ The government could not hope to contain all possible information from leaking out and circulating; in taking significant steps to try to control speech as much as possible from the outset of the war, it created a lag in information. The irony was, according to Robb, that this lag led to the proliferation of gossip, rumour and outright fabrication by individuals starved for information about

¹⁶ Quoted in Robb, pp. 110-111.

¹⁷ Quoted in Sanders and Taylor, p. 20.

¹⁸ Robb, p. 111.

¹⁹ Quoted in Sanders and Taylor p. 25.

²⁰ Robb, p. 111.

what was happening at the front.²¹ Early attempts were made to fight these rumours with narratives expounding the strength and unity of the English army and navy. Initially concerned with censorship, the War Office would also come to counter rumour and maintain the morale of troops. The War Office would later organise visits to the front for the press as well as for popular figures such as Rudyard Kipling and Arthur Conan Doyle, encouraging them to produce articles that would promote a positive vision of the British forces as well as denounce the enemy.

Germany, on the other hand, produced pamphlets, leaflets and posters for neutral nations in order to explain its reasons for going to war and for dismissing the Allied claims of defending itself from German aggression. According to Sanders and Taylor, the British government 'was particularly alarmed at the virulence of the German campaign in the United States and it became apparent that immediate counter-measures were urgently required.'²² In August 1914, C.F.G Masterman, a journalist and Liberal politician, was asked to head the newly formed War Propaganda Bureau to counter these German efforts abroad, particularly in America. On 2 September 1914 Masterman organised a conference of literary figures to meet in Wellington House, the office of the WPB. These writers included J.M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, G.K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, John Masefield, Gilbert Murray, G.M Trevelyan and H.G. Wells (Kipling could not make the meeting and sent a note of apology).²³ With the exception of Hardy, these writers pledged support for the British cause of war against Germany and proceeded to sign petitions, make speeches, and write articles and pamphlets—some of which were published and distributed by the WPB. Not invited to the initial authors' meeting, a number of female writers would also support the government campaigns, including Jane Ellen Harrison, May Sinclair, Flora Anne Steel, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward.²⁴

The WPB produced official publications such as the atrocity reports, speeches for ministers, interviews and articles for the press, original and pre-existing books and pamphlets such as Conan Doyle's *To Arms!* (1914) and Ford's *When Blood is Their Argument* (1915). It also disseminated books for distribution that the WPB did not produce such as Kipling's wartime pamphlets. All of these materials were sent to

²¹ Robb, p. 111.

²² Sanders and Taylor, p. 38.

²³ Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda 1914-18 and After* (London, 1987), p. 14.

²⁴ Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (Woodstock, Oxfordshire, 2006), p. 17.

neutral nations via direct mailing campaigns, steamship companies, religious societies, and patriotic organisations. According to Sanders and Taylor, the WPB also monitored the activities of independent pro-war organisations, reining them in when they made comments that might have been detrimental to the British war effort.²⁵ Gary Messinger argues for the importance of identifying these writers' influence as 'part of an Edwardian literary establishment that had no competition from radio or television and whose representatives enjoyed tremendous prestige throughout the world among both elite and mass audiences'.²⁶ Further, Messinger notes, not only through their writings, 'but also through the earnings they amassed, the access they were given to the social networks of the politically and economically powerful, and the letter-writing correspondence they maintained with numerous loyal readers, these men were as influential a group of writers as the world has ever produced.'²⁷

Both German and British propaganda was targeted at neutral observers, particularly in America, rather than at their domestic populations. The German government openly sponsored materials aimed at influencing mass opinion in America. While also aimed at America, the WPB materials were focused on elite opinion, and bore no marks that indicated that they were sponsored by the British government. As an internal British report later noted:

The existence of a publishing establishment at Wellington House, and, a fortiori, the connection of the Government with this establishment were carefully concealed. Except for official publications, none of the literature bore overt marks of its origin. Further, literature was placed on sale where possible, and when sent free was always sent informally, that is to say through and apparently from some person between whom and the recipient there was a definite link, and with a covering note from the person to whose patriotism the sending of the literature seemed due.²⁸

Masterman would refer to the WPB as Wellington House in parliamentary reports. Mark Wollaeger claims that Masterman used the name in order to 'camouflage his operation's status as the state's central organ of propaganda'.²⁹ According to Buitenhuis, so secretive were the activities of Wellington House that the full extent to which writers were used in war propaganda was not fully revealed until 1935.³⁰ Wollaeger characterises the WPB strategy as 'unique among its European

²⁵ Sanders and Taylor, p. 42.

²⁶ Gary Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester, 1992), p. 35.

²⁷ Messinger, p. 35.

²⁸ H.O. Lee, 'British propaganda during the Great War, 1914-18' (n.d), National Archives, INF 4/4A, p.

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²⁹ Wollaeger, p. 16.

³⁰ Buitenhuis, p.15.

counterparts in that it emphasised facts over overt persuasion, disguised the official origins of its propaganda, and placed literature at the heart of its efforts—at least in the beginning.³¹ Over the course of the war, propaganda would continue to change, and literature would be displaced from its central location within the British propaganda strategy.

Apart from the writing by these authors, propaganda materials associated with Germany's atrocities in Belgium and France were particularly evocative and popular. On 3 August 1914 Germany invaded neutral Belgium. The invasion and subsequent occupation led to 6,700 deaths; the burning of 20,000 buildings; crimes of collective punishment against civilians; and the subsequent arrival of 250,000 refugees in Britain.³² Led by Lord Bryce, the government interviewed a number of these refugees to establish the conduct of the Germans in invading and occupying Belgium. The resulting reports were compiled as the *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (1915), but came to be known as the *Bryce Report*. Amongst critical accounts of the German occupation, there were particularly graphic descriptions of barbaric acts: the rape and mutilation of women, the spitting of children on bayonets, and the amputation of children's hands by German soldiers. These grotesque and highly graphic descriptions provoked outrage at German conduct in warfare. Horne and Kramer emphasise that no evidence has emerged to confirm that these more brutal violations ever took place; they suggest that these accounts were instead a product of the popular mythology, emerging from cycles of storytelling and rumour circulating during the war. Thus the *Bryce Report* cannot be credited with inventing these more gruesome stories; instead, it helped to legitimate and to propagate further what had hitherto been the product of rumour. In translating the report and distributing the publication, the WPB helped to popularise the image of German barbarity as a justification for going to war. The WPB popularised the report through the publication of materials that referred to and made use of the more brutal stories of German conduct. For example, while there were a number of independent cartoonists throughout Europe who were responding to these stories, the WPB financially supported Louis Raemakers, a cartoonist who would gain infamy from drawing scenes that illustrated the more fantastic images of this German brutality. Although the government cannot be considered the originator of these rumours of atrocity, it did prove crucial in making popular the more extreme and savage stories of

³¹ Wollaeger, pp. 13-14.

³² See Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001).

German violence; thus atrocity propaganda was an important part of the government strategy. The WPB helped to legitimate particular interpretations of the war through texts that concealed its connection to the government, and thus hid government interference in the discourse of the war. Further, the *Bryce Report* (and other government atrocity reports in general) provided materials for WPB authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle—as well as for writers not affiliated with the government—to respond to and to inform their own understanding of the enemy and its methods in warfare.

In February 1917, addressing increasing calls from disparate offices of the government for the centralisation and co-ordination of propaganda efforts, the government established the Department of Information. After becoming Prime Minister in December 1916, Lloyd George approached Robert Donald to produce an overview of the entire British propaganda programme. Quoting from his report, Sanders and Taylor note that Donald concluded that the aims of British propaganda should be:

1. to maintain unity of opinion amongst the Allies
2. to 'influence and nurse' public opinion in neutral countries
3. to assume an offensive strategy
4. to explain problems surrounding peace terms—so far as they have been indicated—for the purpose of informing and influencing politicians, publicists, the intelligentsia in neutral countries.³³

Donald determined that Masterman's approach was aimed at too elite an audience. He also dismissed his methods as excessively literary. Donald advised a more unified strategy for propaganda with an emphasis on directing materials towards large audiences, and employing visual propaganda as well as the increased use of outright fabrication. Based on Donald's recommendations, the Department of Information was established, and the novelist John Buchan appointed as the head the Department. The WPB became subsumed under the administration of this new Department. Emblematic of this new strategy was the infamous pamphlet entitled *A Corpse Conversion Factory* (1917). The pamphlet accused the Germans of boiling down dead bodies to make soap.³⁴

Coming under increased pressure on the domestic front because of growing anti-war sentiment, the introduction of conscription in 1916, and demands that

³³ Quoted in Sanders and Taylor, p. 59.

³⁴ For greater analysis and discussion of the corpse factory myth, see Randal Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (2006), pp. 71-74.

intellectuals sympathetic with the government (including H.G. Wells) produce declared war aims, the Department of Information announced that it would establish the National War Aims Committee (NWAC) in May 1917 (which therefore only came into existence on the third anniversary of the war).³⁵ The goal of the NWAC was ‘to keep before our nation both the causes which have led to the world war and the vital importance to human life and liberty of continuing the struggle until the evil forces which originated this conflict are destroyed for ever’.³⁶ These aims were not made concrete until January 1918, when in response to the revelations of Allied imperial and military strategies made by the Bolsheviks during the negotiations of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, as well as to American President Woodrow Wilson’s own demands for a coherent peace strategy (later enshrined in the Fourteen Points), the British government was compelled to make its war aims explicit.³⁷ In addition, the NWAC also produced popular materials emphasising the brutal militarism of Germany, in order to help to focus hatred towards that nation and to stoke support for the war. According to Robb, one of the more famous NWAC publications was its ‘German Crimes Calendar’, depicting different German atrocities for each month of the year—including the ‘burning of Louvain, the execution of Edith Cavell, and Zeppelin raids in London.’³⁸

According to Sanders and Taylor, although attempts at centralising propaganda administration proved helpful, British propaganda was still conducted separately in five different buildings, and continued to demonstrate a disjunction between domestic and foreign strategies. Under the control of the press baron Lord Beaverbrook, the Department of Information became the Ministry of Information in February 1918. The new strategy for conducting propaganda was to appeal to as many people as possible (in contrast to Masterman’s attempts at appealing to leaders of public opinion in neutral countries). According to an internal British propaganda report:

There are three types of propaganda: propaganda by the written word, including pamphlets, articles, cables and wireless; propaganda by picture, including cinemas, photographs and drawings; and propaganda by getting hold of the right man, telling him the facts, and then taking him to the places where he can see for himself that what you say is true. Personal propaganda of this kind is obviously the most convincing of the three,

³⁵ Sanders and Taylor, p. 68.

³⁶ Quoted in Robb, p. 120.

³⁷ Sanders and Taylor, p. 68; see also Henk Wessling, *The European Colonial Empires, 1815-1919* (Harlow, 2004).

³⁸ Robb, p. 121.

but it can be used only on a limited scale, and, though through showing one important editor the concrete evidence of this country's achievement you can reach hundreds of thousands of readers, for getting into more direct touch with large masses of men other means have to be found.³⁹

Pictures and other visual material would satisfy the Ministry's task to 'direct the thought of most of the world'.⁴⁰ According to Robb, the newly found ministry had an increased focus on visual materials such as lantern slides, film and posters, and moved away from printed materials such as books and pamphlets.⁴¹ In addition, propaganda was also to be aimed at the Central Powers, with the establishment of The Department of Enemy Propaganda at Crewe House in February 1918. The aim, according to Sanders and Taylor, was 'to reveal to the enemy the hopelessness of their cause and case, and the certainty of Allied Victory.' Lloyd George invited the newspaper baron Lord Northcliffe to head Crewe House. Northcliffe appointed H. G. Wells as head of the German section, but Wells resigned in July 1918 over personal and political disagreements with Northcliffe.

CHOICE OF AUTHORS

As this project straddles the disciplines of English literary studies and history, methodological issues arise from its focus on four authors—Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells. A strictly historical project analysing propaganda might have chosen a broader range of personalities. For example, Messinger's *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* devotes individual chapters to Masterman, Lord Bryce, Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Northcliffe, alongside literary figures. Although these figures appear throughout the current study, the focus of the project is on the particular relationship between literary authors and British war propaganda. Wells's institutional relationship as Head of Enemy Propaganda at Crewe House made him of particular interest to this project. However, this study could also have considered figures such as Arnold Bennett, appointed Director of British Propaganda in France in 1918; or John Buchan, Director of the Department of Information from 1917-18. What distinguished Wells from these other writers was his political dedication to the disintegration of nations in favour of the establishing of a World State, as well as his own explicit discussion of propaganda as a weapon in the

³⁹ Lee, 'British propaganda' (n.d), p. 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Robb, p.121.

war of ideas. His devotion to this battle of political ideals drew him into conflict with government strategy in ways that complicate his relationship to war propaganda before and after being recruited by Crewe House. Unlike these other figures, Wells's conflicts were serious enough to lead ultimately to his dramatic resignation from the official government propaganda machine. Furthermore, Wells continued to produce novels during the war, which while not being official propaganda, indicate both his political allegiances and his own interests in influence and manipulation, in ways that contrast with Bennett and Buchan, neither of whom were as explicit as Wells in their discussion or theorisation of the goals or processes of propaganda.

As this study concerns itself with pro-war writers associated with the government programme to support the war, it does not focus on the evocative anti-war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, amongst others. When opponents of the war are discussed, they are mentioned as a reminder of the institutional imperatives which authorised—through the means of censorship and internment, as well as publication and distribution—the speech of some authors but not others. The work of Arthur Conan Doyle was pertinent in this respect. In his pre-war pamphlets, Conan Doyle made detailed arguments warning the British about the increased militarism of Germany and the need for a Channel Tunnel connecting England and France; and he defended these ideas both in journalism and in fiction. His arguments contrasted and indeed contradicted the arguments of his friends and peers E. D. Morel and Roger Casement. Morel and Casement both argued that Britain was active in destabilizing the European balance of power, and thus shared in some of the responsibility for starting the war. Conan Doyle, on the other hand, squarely laid the blame on the war with the Germans. Yet during the war, Conan Doyle's pamphlets and articles were widely printed and publicised, whereas Morel would eventually be imprisoned for distributing his anti-war materials to neutral nations, and Casement—taking more direct action against what he perceived as British injustice in Ireland—would be executed for his involvement with the Easter Rising of 1916. Although this study does not focus on anti-war writing, the unique relationship between Conan Doyle and these different anti-war writers offers the opportunity to explore the different facets of government influence upon the cultural discourse of the war.

It could be argued however that within the literary schema, other studies (such as Buitenhuis's *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda, 1914-18 and After*, which focuses on the relationship between literature and propaganda during the war), offer a broader discussion of the variety of different writers associated with

British propaganda, in contrast to this study's limited four-author scope. Buitenhuis's book offers a remarkable overview of the large array of differing relationships that British and American authors had with propaganda. In focusing on this breadth of participants however, he does not explore any single author in depth. Within the larger historical backdrop of the war and propaganda, this study seeks to situate four particular authors' differing relationships with British propaganda alongside their own development as writers—noting the continuities and contrasts between their pre-war writing, their writing during the war, and their writing associated with the broad government strategy of promoting the war. This study seeks to explore the nuances of the legacy of these four authors' literary careers, as well as to expand further contemporary critical approaches to the wide variety of literary and cultural productions that emerged in response to the conflict. For example, Rudyard Kipling was a prominent public figure during the war. Separate from government efforts, he supported the conflict in poetry, letters, speeches, articles, and pamphlets. At the behest of the War Office, he reported on sponsored trips to the front as well as visits made to the navy. Moreover, as archival evidence suggests, Kipling was given access to Indian soldiers' censored letters in order that he might help create a voice of imperial support for the war as well. Examining Kipling in greater depth than Buitenhuis does, can contribute to a more complex view of his activities during the war as well as of the way that colonial, pro-war writings co-existed in the same cultural environment with anti-war and experimental literary writing.

In his *Modernism, Media and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (2006), Mark Wollaeger considers the emergence of British propaganda (particularly in regards to colonialism) in its pre-war forms, from the turn of the century through to the end of the Second World War. He relates the methodologies of propaganda to modernist aesthetics, focusing on figures such as Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, and Alfred Hitchcock. Wollaeger examines how the growth of modernist literature and of propaganda—as an institution as well as a methodology—inform one another, in ways that go beyond the much later promotion of German and Italian Fascism during the Second World War, by a variety of modernist figures such as William Butler Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, and Ezra Pound. This study does use Ford as the figure to bridge the divide between propaganda and literary modernism, but for the most part it eschews literary modernism and experimentation to consider a broader scope of war discourse, primarily from writers renowned for their late-Victorian writing and with prominent public reputations. For

the purposes of this study, Ford proves to be the exception. During the war, Ford was a journalist, a poet, a novelist, and eventually a soldier as well. He was closely associated with writers broadly connected with literary modernism, including Conrad, Pound and Lewis amongst others. In addition to his affiliations with the literary avant-garde in London, two of his books were published by the WPB. While it is true that Lewis was a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery before being appointed an official war artist, he did not make declarations about the war that were as explicit as those of Ford. Furthermore, Ford's close friendship with Masterman facilitated his association with the WPB.

Without this connection, it is questionable whether Ford would have been well-known enough to have been solicited by the government to write officially in support of the war—he did not enjoy the same reputation as the other authors in this study, and moreover he was not invited to the initial Wellington House authors' meeting. Ford had connections with Germany, France, and England, and at the start of the war his allegiances were torn. These conflicting emotions are imaginatively re-figured (to a limited extent) in his later novels such as *Parade's End* (1924-8) and *No Enemy* (1929). However, the books produced and distributed by the WPB do not demonstrate the same complexity of emotion or aesthetic experimentation, although there is some stylistic and rhetorical overlap. Some of Ford's critics have focused on this continuity between Ford's WPB books and his other writing, while current research by critics such as Wollaeger and Sara Haslam has emphasised the importance of framing a reading of these two books within the institutional parameters of the WPB.⁴² Even though the government goals, methods of publication, and means of distribution were all concealed to the public at the time of the war, an institutional analysis of these texts reveals valences that are not evident from close-reading alone. Ford is therefore the most prominent literary modernist in Britain that could have been considered for this project.

It is these four authors' different particular institutional connections to British World War One propaganda that make them pertinent to this study. Examining these authors' war writings enables a discussion of different aspects of official war propaganda: Ford's connection to Masterman and the WPB; Kipling's to the War

⁴² See Sarah Haslam, *Fragmenting Modernism Ford Madox Ford, the Novel and the First World War* (Manchester, 2002); and 'Making a Text a Fordian Way: *Between St. Dennis and St. George*, Propaganda and the First World War', in *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History*, ed. by Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towhead (London, 2007), pp. 202-214.

Office; Conan Doyle's to atrocity propaganda; Wells's to Crewe House. There are also, in addition, imaginative and rhetorical methods that these writers use to touch on issues of aesthetics, empire, dissent, literary criticism, and politics, that make their interactions with government propaganda further nuanced and complex. These later thematic issues are (again) not particular to these writers; but it is asserted here that a closer attention to and awareness of the continuities and disruptions in the language of these particular writers offer their own insights into the changing nature of the cultural discourse of the war. While it must be admitted from the outset that the choice of these authors is not totalising and is necessarily limited, it must also be highlighted that it has been restricted in order to bring into relief the particular imaginative and institutional connections between these four particular authors and British war propaganda.

DEFINING PROPAGANDA

The word propaganda derives from the Latin meaning 'to sow' or 'to propagate', and was first used in the 1600s by the Roman Catholic Church in reference to its attempts at spreading the faith in opposition to the growing popularity of Protestantism.⁴³ In its common usage, propaganda has become a pejorative term, synonymous with lies, deception, manipulation, and thought-control. These modern notions of propaganda, as Harold Lasswell, a historian of propaganda, noted owe a debt to the experience of the First World War:

There is little exaggeration in saying that the World War led to the discovery of propaganda by both the man in the street and the man in the study. The discovery was far more startling to the former than to the latter because the man in the street had predecessors who had laid firm foundations for his efforts to understand propaganda. The layman had previously lived in a world where there was no common name for the deliberate forming of attitudes by the manipulation of words (and word substitutes). The scholar had a scientific inheritance which included the recognition of the place of propaganda in society.⁴⁴

In practice, the attempts both of individuals and of collective organisations (such as government) to influence the opinions and 'attitudes' of other individuals, as well as of large groups of people, well preceded the First World War. However, it was the

⁴³ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London, 2006), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Harold Lasswell, Foreword to G.G. Bruntz (editor), *Allied Propaganda and the Collapse of the German Empire in 1918*(1938), pp. v-viii. Quoted in Jowett and O'Donnell, p. 206.

experience of the war and the corresponding attempts of nations to influence domestic and international opinion through official programmes that assigned these diverse and widely varying processes a commonly recognised name. Lasswell argued that as a result of the war, propaganda would be understood as ‘the deliberate forming of attitudes by the manipulation of words (and word substitutes)’. This understanding of the definition of propaganda is historically situated in the aftermath of the war and would immediately become applied retrospectively to writers ranging from Pericles to Machiavelli, from events ranging from the French Revolution to the American Civil War, and in reference to disparate activities including pamphleteering, advertising, and speech-making, along with the employment of posters and film. Thus in offering a genealogy of propaganda, it must be noted that applying the word propaganda to this wide range of rhetorical methodologies of persuasion is itself historically dependent on the experience of the First World War. What distinguished the phenomenon of propaganda from other forms of rhetorical persuasion for post-war analysts, was its particular institutional affiliations with government. Propaganda became a formal arm of government during the First World War, offering new formalisations of a strategy for controlling information and perceptions. This institutionalisation meant that propaganda could be approached as a concept that had existed before the war, but did not have a name.

Before the war, the analysis of mass psychology and the process of influencing large groups of people had already been an emerging current in psychological thought. Psychologists, such as Gustave Le Bon (*The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896)) and (later) Sigmund Freud (‘Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the “I”’ (1921)), concerned themselves with examining the workings of crowd psychology. Le Bon’s studies of mass psychology expressed anxieties concerning the unruly collective behaviour of people. His speculations about the working of the group mind were early attempts at formulating an approach of how this collective mind could be controlled.⁴⁵ After the war, these efforts to influence and indeed to control the psychologies of the masses were sometimes referred to as propaganda—derogatorily by its detractors, and with praise by those who understood propaganda to be an effective means of preventing society’s disintegration into a herd mentality. In order for these methods of control to function, they needed to be

⁴⁵ See Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London, 1903). For further discussion on Le Bon and Freud’s approach to mass psychology and its relationship with propaganda, see Theodor Adorno, ‘Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda’, *The Culture Industry* (London, 2001), p. 132-158.

implemented on a wide scale. Thus propaganda has more purchase as a concept when placed within the organised and conscious efforts of an institution to influence a large body of people whose opinions matter. In particular, propaganda proves to be important in approaching the relationship between citizenry and governance.

Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell argue that increasing anxiety about the behaviours of crowds driven by irrational appetite correlated with a period of greater political enfranchisement.⁴⁶ As a result of growing fears about popular political participation, the idea of controlling public opinion as a way of managing these large groups became more popular. Jowett and O'Donnell offer the work of the English philosopher Graham Wallas (*Human Nature in Politics* (1908)) as an example of opposition to these methods of control. Wallas noted:

Given a greatly expanded franchise, with its corollary of the need to base authority on the support of public opinion, political society invited the attention of the professional controller of public opinion. When to the demand for new methods of publicity there were added revolutionary advances in the techniques of communication, and the latest discoveries in social psychology, mankind had to fear more than ever 'the cold-blooded manipulation of popular impulse and thought by professional politicians.'⁴⁷

While not employing the term propaganda, Wallas criticised the manipulation of 'public opinion' by 'professional politicians' in a way that echoes modern common usage. The employment of propaganda as a tool for controlling popular opinion and guiding the choices of people was not universally condemned however, and post-war theorists of propaganda (primarily in America) argued that the ability of propaganda to transform and influence the opinions of large groups of people would prove invaluable for the efficient management of society. Once again, as propaganda theorist Edward Bernays opined, it was the 'astounding success' of propaganda's use during the First World War that revealed its potential for 'regimenting the public mind'.⁴⁸ Bernays had worked closely on America's propaganda campaign during the war and the experience turned him into a great enthusiast for propaganda as a way of ordering society. He began his treatise *Propaganda* (1927) with the following observations:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power

⁴⁶ See Jowett and O'Donnell, pp. 94-5.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Jowett and O'Donnell, p. 100.

⁴⁸ Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York, 1927), p. 27.

of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized.⁴⁹

Bernays understood propaganda to be ‘the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinion of the masses’ by an ‘invisible government’ that were ‘the true ruling power’ and which moulded the minds, tastes, and ideas of its populace. Whereas Wallas noted that the attempts of politicians to control opinion were something to fear, Bernays argued that the control and ‘manipulation’ of opinion was crucial to the proper functioning of a democratic society. In America, the government employed propaganda to justify its decision to enter the war in 1917. After re-electing Woodrow Wilson in 1916 on a platform of keeping America out of the conflict, many Americans failed to understand why their government declared war on Germany—so the American government established the Committee on Public Information (CPI) to help to create those justifications.⁵⁰ For Bernays, propaganda was a means for leaders to guide society towards the choices that ‘an invisible government’ had determined were ideal for the nation. It was believed that an ignorant majority would not be able to come to these same choices if left to their own devices. Thus propaganda would aid in making democracy increasingly efficient through the illusion that people were making choices; the reality would be that through conscious and intelligent efforts, ‘the true ruling power’ would make the decisions and then influence the public to support them. Bernays assented to this use of propaganda as a tool for improving governance and notes that it is a ‘logical result’ of democratic society.

On the other hand, for critics of these forms of manipulation and control, the experience of the First World War offered the means for criticising the government’s employment of a wide variety of civil apparatus—including education, news and entertainment—to inculcate some sections of the population with particular attitudes

⁴⁹ Bernays (1927), p. 9.

⁵⁰ Why America entered the war is the subject of intense debate. Ostensibly, the official reason was its receipt of a decoded message which the British had intercepted. The Zimmerman Telegram was directed to the Mexican government and urged it to attack America to reclaim land lost to the Mexicans in previous wars. The crucial point is that the decision to go to war was made by Wilson and his cabinet; the government established their own propaganda office—the CPI—as a means of dealing with domestic opposition to the war. For more on America’s entry into the war see Herbert Bass, editor, *America’s Entry into World War I: Submarines, Sentiment, or Security?* (New York, 1964). For more on the Committee on Public Information, see a memoir by head of the CPI, George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York 1920). For more on the American experience of the war, specifically in relation to propaganda, see also Michael J. Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1997).

while silencing others. In this way the government helped consciously to manufacture the consent of the people in support of the war. Groups such as the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) in Britain had argued that foreign policy remained out of the public's scrutiny or influence, and insisted that foreign policy be subject to democratic participation—they argued that the war was imposed on Britain by a military and diplomatic elite that failed to respond to the needs and wants of its own citizenry.⁵¹ In the years following the war, propaganda would thus also become understood as that process of manipulation employed by the government—seen by some as helpful and others as malevolent. However improvisational the British government was in implementing its strategies for information-control at home—alongside its concealed attempts at influencing prominent American opinion abroad—these different propaganda offices put a great deal of effort into controlling the perception of the war in order to earn and maintain support. In this way, the notion of propaganda as a conscious effort of governments to control opinion would take shape during the First World War.

Apart from its common usage therefore, as a theoretical concept informed by the historical and institutional process of the First World War propaganda would become associated with government methods for manipulating their audiences' opinions. As Lloyd George noted in 1918, when recounting how a guest at a dinner party he attended had described his experiences on the Western Front:

Even an audience of hardened politicians and journalists was strongly affected. *If people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow.* But of course they don't know and can't know. The correspondents don't write and the censorship would not pass the truth.⁵²

Lloyd George acknowledged that the control of information, in this case through the conscious self-censorship of journalists as well as through the government's official programme of censorship, proved essential to maintaining public support for the war: if the population really knew what was going on, it would stop the war tomorrow. Echoing Lasswell's comments, it was only after the war that propaganda could be understood as a collection of the processes employed by the government to control public opinion during the war. As noted, this control of the public was considered positive by some and negative by others, reflecting the subjective aspect of evaluating

⁵¹ For more on the UDC, see Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London, 2000).

⁵² Quoted in Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty : From the Crimea to Vietnam: the War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (London, 1982), p. 109, emphasis mine.

propaganda. As Bernays elsewhere noted: ‘[t]he only difference between “propaganda” and “education”, really, is the point of view [...] [t]he advocacy of what we believe in is education [...] [t]he advocacy of what we do not believe in is propaganda.’⁵³ In attempting to locate the function of propaganda, this subjectivity makes studying and defining what is and what is not propaganda (outside of an institutional setting) a complex endeavour.

In terms of World War One propaganda, it is difficult to distinguish when materials were produced under direction from above—from the government—and when those materials were produced spontaneously. Ford produced articles that as journalism were later collected in his first book for the WPB; does that make them propaganda? Before being officially recruited into working for government propaganda, Wells was already producing materials similar to those produced by the official government offices. Can we consider his early journalism and war novels part of his propaganda? When Conan Doyle attended Masterman’s meeting, he had already finished writing his first pamphlet; was this pamphlet propaganda? What if he had published the pamphlet outside of the WPB system; would that change the way we analyse the text? Kipling produced such popular and virulently anti-German writing that the WPB were worried his efforts might have been counter-productive. Can we refer then to all of Kipling’s war writing as propaganda?

Employing terminology from Jacques Ellul, this study argues that sociological propaganda is made up of those materials spontaneously produced by people throughout society, whereas political propaganda is produced by official bodies with particular aims and methodologies.⁵⁴ If (in this case) we limit the discussion of official bodies to the British government, this political context helps to bind the notion of propaganda in such a way as to make British propaganda of the First World War a manageable object of enquiry. Without this limitation, the subjective evaluation of propaganda could be retrospectively applied to all efforts that either defended or attacked the war. Casting such a wide net for propaganda considers as equal the WPB pamphlets and articles written by those resisting the war—such as, for example, those written by the East London anarchist author and activist, Rudolph Rocker.⁵⁵ The notion of propaganda as all efforts to influence opinions ignores the disproportionate power of the government to influence discourse through censorship

⁵³ Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (New York, 1923), p.212.

⁵⁴ See Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* (New York, 1965).

⁵⁵ Rudolph Rocker, anarchist opponent of the war. See *London Years* (Edinburgh, 2005).

and imprisonment—Rocker was imprisoned in Britain as an enemy alien—as well as through the publication and popularisation of certain interpretations of the origins and conduct of the war.

This thesis defines those materials commissioned, produced, published, or distributed by official government propaganda offices as ‘propaganda’. This helps us, for example to distinguish Ford’s publication of articles in *The Outlook* as journalism, whereas substantially the same written words, when collected in *When Blood is Their Argument*, are to be considered propaganda. Placed within its concealed institutional context, the later book would have been directly sent to American intellectuals whom the WPB decided might be influential in spreading support for the war and bringing an end to American neutrality. Thus the texts associated and published by the government are part of its different propaganda strategies. Whatever one may think of its contents, Conan Doyle’s manuscript for his pamphlet was not propaganda. It *became* propaganda when it was published and distributed by the WPB. Wells’s journalism was not official propaganda; his texts can be read alongside official propaganda texts to note similarities, but lacking an institutional connection, they cannot be defined as propaganda. His official propaganda consisted of his work for Crewe House. Kipling seemingly remained independent of official propaganda, supporting the war in his poetry, letters, and speeches. For both Conan Doyle and Kipling, these activities corresponded to their support for the Boer War. What distinguishes their actions during the Boer War and the First World War, however, was the government’s active participation in the facilitation and promotion of these writers’ materials. The trips Kipling took to the front and later wrote about were facilitated by the War Office. He was offered access to censored letters and was asked to write in support of the British Empire. He lent his writing to the government to use as it pleased. When government offices requested that he tone down his rhetoric when adapting one of his particular articles into a pamphlet, Kipling obliged. This variety of institutional connections helps to locate propaganda as materials produced out of the institution of British government during the war, which connects more broadly with the changing strategy of the government along with its intended audience—particularly the WPB’s focus on American intelligentsia up until 1917.

This firm distinction between these writers’ institutional materials and the writing that was unaffiliated with the government is clearly delineated in each chapter. Also of import is the implicit question of why Masterman believed that literary authors would prove more important than journalists or historians for

appealing to American opinion-makers. Thus issues of imagination and language also inflect rhetorical discussions of official and non-official propaganda throughout this study. In both Chapters One and Two, a subjective contrast is made between what I refer to as the simplistic single-mindedness of the rhetoric of some of Ford's war writing and some of Kipling's short stories, and the complex and suggestive language of Ford's poetry and later novels, and of Kipling's poetry as well as his short-story 'Mary Postgate' in particular. This aesthetic standpoint, borrowed from Virginia Woolf's discussion of an attempt to stage 'Antigone' as propaganda in *Three Guineas*, suggests that art, with its multiplicities and ambiguities, contrasts sharply with the narrow viewpoint posited by propaganda. Woolf argues that the effort to use the play as propaganda will fail because Sophocles's characters 'suggest too much'; she further noted that 'if we use art to propagate political opinions, we must force the artist to clip and cabin his gift to do a cheap and passing service.'⁵⁶ This notion of the simple rhetoric of propaganda in contrast to the multiplicity offered by art was underlined by Adolf Hitler. Propaganda, he argued, 'is not complicated, but very simple and all of a piece. It does not have multiple shadings; it has a positive and a negative; love or hate, right or wrong, truth or lie, never half this way and half that way, never partially, or that kind of thing'.⁵⁷ Hitler understood that art, unless carefully limited, would not prove to be adequate for focusing the public mind upon support for the nation. I am not quoting from Hitler to assent in any way to his employment of propaganda as a justification for the crimes of the Third Reich. It is simply worth noting that for Woolf, the complexity of art recommends it as the antithesis of propaganda, whereas the ambiguities of art were something that repelled Hitler. Propaganda was not for drawing-room teas or for intellectuals to hesitate over suggestively. For Hitler it was meant to deliver a clear message in a powerful way—an opinion that, it seems, Woolf might have obliquely assented to. Similarly, Harold Lasswell argued there must be no confusion in propaganda, there must never be the suggestion that any blame lay with the government—the government must 'mobilise the hate of the people' and place all blame squarely on the enemy.⁵⁸ For supporters of propaganda, artists could be beneficial to propaganda, as long as they did not create confusion or ambiguity, but instead created materials that reinforced certitude and clarity.

⁵⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London, 1993), n. 39, Section Two, pp. 302-3; see also Jane Marcus, "No more horses": Virginia Woolf on art and propaganda', *Women's Studies* 1977, vol. 4, pp. 256-290.

⁵⁷ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1992), p. 167; See Volume 1, Chapter VI: War Propaganda.

⁵⁸ Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* (New York, 1927), p. 44.

It is my contention that on the level of rhetoric, some of the war-writings of Ford and Kipling, when at their best, demonstrate aesthetic possibility that would make them less than ideal as propaganda ('they suggest so much', to echo Woolf). This evaluation is certainly true in regards to their more pointedly ideological writing—writing which the government might have deployed as a means of honing the allegiances of the reader towards support for the Allies and a hatred of the enemy. As this analysis moves from the institutional into the rhetorical, and thus from the historical to the subjective, these judgements may prove contentious and less certain, however. Despite this subjectivity, this project also attempts to situate these authors' non-institutional war writing in context with their official propaganda.

In addition to the institutional approach of propaganda as well as the examination of propaganda on the level of rhetoric, the last chapter examines propaganda as it was itself employed and theorised by one author in particular. Of the four authors this thesis focuses on, only Wells attempted to discuss and theorise the notion of propaganda to any extent, albeit in a way that is highly particular to his own political and aesthetic trajectory. As Chapter Four demonstrates, Wells had a two-fold notion of propaganda: as a weapon in the war of ideas and as a tool for building the World State. For Wells, propaganda was the key weapon in the war and he obliged intellectuals to pick sides and to use their writing to create a better and more just world by supporting the crushing of German militarism. This notion was linked with Wells's own development as a writer and his abandoning of the fiction of fantasy for a literature aimed at changing the world. The notion of using propaganda as a tool, in the second place, would come from his belief that he had to build up the opinion of a single collective World State in as many people as he could. This 'open conspiracy' would bring an end to inefficient government, violence, and poverty. Disillusioned by the war, he would turn away from propaganda as a means for achieving his goals and, instead, would turn his attention towards education as the means for achieving his goals. Because of his own esoteric use of propaganda and its own link to his political and literary development, it is also explored next to his discussion as the Head of Crewe House in Chapter Four.

It is primarily this institutional connection that thus defines propaganda in this thesis; however, as stated, there are also explorations of other ways and means of using this term. As we stray from its institutional and historical parameters, however, the notion of 'propaganda' becomes increasingly unstable, subjective and diffuse. Movements away from the institutional dimension of propaganda are explored

throughout the different chapters with speculative discussion on the aesthetics of propaganda, the imperial imagery in some propaganda and finally, the discourse of propaganda as itself a concept that was employed and used in the period to signify different processes of influence and manipulation. The use of the word propaganda in these diverse and sometimes divergent ways places a great deal of burden on the meaning of the word as a concept and as a phenomenon. Indeed with these speculative explorations, there is the acute possibility of the word becoming so abstract that it has little to no meaning. It is for this reason that what remains the through-line throughout this thesis is the way the ontic nature of World War One British propaganda became manifest only through its emergence from formal government planning and execution. Locating propaganda within the institutional thus bounds the ideas of propaganda to a particular history—a history that is inflected and informed by the relationship between some prominent authors and the British government.

CHAPTER BREAK-DOWN

Conducting its arguments in four, author-based chapters, this thesis explores the relationship between each of these authors and British propaganda; the continuities and disjunctions with their other pre-war and war writing; and the institutional as well as the rhetorical aspects of the materials they produced during the war. The first chapter examines the disjunction between Ford Madox Ford's early war poetry and prose and his later war journalism, which would later be collected into *When Blood is Their Argument* (1915) for the WPB. Ford's later book, *Between St. Dennis and St. George* (1915), would be written as a direct, targeted attack on anti-war writers (Ford referred to them as Anglo-Prussian apologists), specifically George Bernard Shaw, who authored the popular pamphlet *Common Sense on the War* (1914). Ford's books appeared as the opinion of a concerned and independent writer. They were also dispatched by the government to American libraries, institutions, and intellectuals through direct-mailing campaigns. A commonly held myth was that propaganda was directed against domestic populations and used as a means to justify the war to the public. In Britain, however, the decision to go to war was not made democratically, and there was no direct necessity to use propaganda on the domestic population until later in the war, when conscription was instituted and support for the war was wavering. As I discuss in Chapter One, the internal record demonstrates that early British propaganda was aimed at Americans whom the government deemed

influential. The WPB planners believed that appealing to prominent American intellectual, financial, and political figures would be the best way to change the American government's official neutrality. Ford's books were part of this system, and were deployed as a means of identifying Prussian culture as inferior to both British and French culture.

Kipling is a complex character, and the second chapter attempts to wrestle with his varied interactions with government censorship and propaganda during the war. From the outset, Kipling supported the war—writing letters to his American friends to change their opinions on neutrality, making recruitment speeches, publishing articles—all of his own accord. He also lent some articles and pieces of writing to the WPB, and in addition produced articles and pamphlets after making visits to the navy and a variety of battlefronts at the behest of the War Office. The WPB and the War Office both worried that Kipling's violent language might prove counterproductive, and damage the planned presentation of the official British position on the war abroad. As they could not censor Kipling, government offices urged him to delete his more outrageous statements from the articles reprinted as pamphlets, and he complied. Thus while not officially instructed by the government, Kipling's visits to the front were facilitated by the government as an alternative way of promoting the war; furthermore, he also obeyed official requests. Whereas the British government had to tolerate Kipling's outrageous comments, it felt compelled to censor the letters of Indian soldiers writing home for fear that they might erode morale and incite agitation for independence. Kipling was offered access to some of these censored fragments in the hopes that he might be able to write a book about Indian soldiers. *The Eyes of Asia* (1918) presented Indian soldiers in the war enjoying the food and manners of the Europeans, while deploring their enemy. These stories presented a united empire fighting against Germany, and although not official propaganda, they resonated more with the rhetoric of war promotion than with many of the more negative sentiments in the censored letter-fragments. This chapter also considers some of Kipling's more ambiguous war-writing, such as the previously mentioned 'Mary Postgate'—a story that not only questioned the effects of war rumour and propaganda on the imagination, but also demonstrated what happens, in the words of Kipling's poem that followed the story, 'When the English began to Hate' ('The Beginnings', *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917)).

In contrast to the pamphlets, stories, and poems whose influence it is difficult to gauge, the WPB-sponsored report that presented interviews of Belgian refugees

fleeing the German invasion, *The Bryce Report*, had a discernibly large effect on the discourse of German militarism and the perception of German conduct as an occupying power in war. Of the grotesque and brutal images that emerged from the *Bryce Report*, one image proved to reflect an already popular rumour—that of Belgian children with severed hands. Although no irrefutable evidence ever emerged of this crime, it became one of the enduring myths of the war. Other images of severed hands were found in a photo-composite associated with an earlier text by Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Crimes of the Congo* (1909) has as its frontispiece a photo collage of Congolese who had had their hands severed, deployed as Adam Hochschild explains, as proof ‘that the bullet had been used to kill someone, not “wasted” in hunting’ or ‘saved for possible use in a mutiny.’⁵⁹ Conan Doyle’s earlier protests against these crimes did not have the same authority as that of an official atrocity-report. The third chapter contrasts Conan Doyle’s official war rhetoric, his fiction, and official government atrocity-reports. Conan Doyle’s war writing focused on the growing militarist aggression of Germany and the need for Britain to unite in defeating this attacking force. He made these arguments in pamphlets and articles, as well as bringing Sherlock Holmes back for another short story, ‘His Last Bow’. Holmes disguises himself as an Irish-American, going under-cover for two years to infiltrate a German spy ring that anticipated starting a civil war in Ireland if Britain were to commit to fighting in the Continental conflict. This chapter also considers how Conan Doyle’s conflicted relationship with Ireland affected his war writing, examining the implications of references to Ireland in ‘His Last Bow’, and of his agitation on behalf of Roger Casement, who was executed for his involvement in the Easter Rising of 1916. Thus Conan Doyle willingly volunteered for government propaganda, yet some of his independent war writing demonstrates important tensions in his own work that reflect broader themes in government propaganda discourse.

With the British declaration of war against Germany, H.G. Wells was excited about the use of propaganda as a weapon in the war of ideas. The fourth chapter discusses how Wells’s experience working for the Ministry of Information changed his thinking on the possible uses of propaganda. In his memorable and (in retrospect) highly ironic phrasing, Wells’s early journalism argued that the war was to be ‘the war to end war.’ To facilitate this goal, Wells argued that German militarism had to be stamped out, and a peace established that would seek to dismantle empires and nation-

⁵⁹ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London, 1998), p. 165.

states, to be replaced with a single world state. He argued for this vision in his journalism, in his enormously popular novel (*Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916)) and eventually in two memoranda he sent to the government regarding the conduct of war propaganda. Following the establishment of the Ministry of Defence and later the Ministry of Information, Wells was invited to be the Head of Enemy Propaganda, but he quickly became disillusioned by the manner in which the government conducted the programme. He argued that Britain, in its enemy propaganda, had to promise the Germans that it would not be harmed in the peace process; that Britain would abandon its colonies; and that a kind of socialist world government would emerge after the war to improve the lives of the poor Germans. He wrote a further extended memorandum to explain his suggestions, but government officials found his vision naïve; Wells resigned shortly after joining the MOI in 1918. This chapter thus examines Wells's differing notions of propaganda and explores how these changing notions affected his literary and political outlooks before, during, and after the war.

This thesis focuses on the participation of a narrow group of prominent British authors in the creation of official British propaganda, in the hope of expanding our consideration of the literature of the First World War, as well as of the role of artists during wartime in general. Examining the historical specificity of the texts Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells produced during the war will illuminate the aims and methodologies of the system of British war propaganda, and produces further understanding about how participating in war propaganda might have influenced their other writing. The theme of the institutional nature of war propaganda will dominate the discussion, but attention will also be paid to the language of propaganda itself. Many broader issues will arise in the course of this study, but it is my hope that a sustained analysis of the work of Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells will offer its own insight, not only into the literature of the First World War, but also into the broader cultural and intellectual climate of the war.

CHAPTER ONE:
FORD MADOX FORD'S INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP TO
BRITISH PROPAGANDA

Neither as established nor as popular as Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, or H.G. Wells, Ford Madox Ford was a bridge-figure between established authors such as Joseph Conrad and Henry James, and emerging experimental writers including Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis. As well as being a poet, a literary and artistic critic, and a journalist, Ford was also an accomplished novelist. On the eve of the war, he completed his impressionist masterpiece, *The Good Soldier* (part of which was published as 'The Saddest Story' in Wyndham Lewis's war issue of *Blast*). Enlisting as a second lieutenant in the Welsh Regiment in late July 1915, the forty-two year old Ford spent two months at the front before suffering a concussion at the Battle of the Somme (1916). Ford is best known for his refashioning of his combat experience into the four-novel sequence *Parade's End* (1924-1928). Lesser known was Ford's wartime writing that was published by the War Propaganda Bureau (WPB) under the auspices of the British government. Soon after Britain declared war on Germany, Charles Masterman was appointed as the head of the WPB and recruited his friend Ford to produce two large books of cultural propaganda, which denounced Germany's militarism and praised the common culture shared by France and England. Although he discussed propaganda in different ways in his later writings, Ford was careful to conceal his own participation in governmental propaganda.

Towards the end of his manifesto 'On Impressionism' (1913), Ford instructs the artist to 'not write propaganda which is his desire to write'.¹ He elaborates on the concept of propaganda by describing it as the antipathy of art. Artists should never try to deceive their audience 'by special pleadings in favour of any given dogma', he asserted. The artist (and this is most relevant to what Ford called the impressionist writer) must not try to improve, instruct, or influence his audience; instead just as 'the skilled workman doing his job with drill or chisel or mallet', he must allow the reader to experience the sensual impressions of the writer as if they were their own experience.² Twenty years

¹ Ford Madox Ford, 'On Impressionism', *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford* (Lincoln, 1964), p. 54.

² *Ibid*, p. 55.

later, Ford would further explore the issue of propaganda in a different fashion in his essay 'Hands off of the Arts' (*American Mercury*, April 1935).³ Ford opens his essay with the declaration:

For myself I hold so profoundly the view that the moment an artist introduces propaganda of whatever kind into his works of art he ceases to be an artist; and I have so many reasons for holding that belief that I do not propose to waste time on doing any more than make the assertion. It is the merest common sense.⁴

Art that conforms to the will of a dictator such as Hitler or Mussolini, was for Ford as dangerous for the artist as a car built with unstable tyres is for a driver. Whereas in his earlier 'On Impressionism' Ford had declared that the impressionist 'must always exaggerate', in 1935 he argued that negative characteristics of propaganda included 'exaggeration' and 'over-stimulation'.⁵ For Ford, the artist—like every other man—owed a two-fold duty: 'to his art, his craft, his vocation,' on the one hand, 'and then to his State' on the other. Confusing these spheres would lead to deceptive art. This later essay made a plea for the arts as separate from government instruction and jurisdiction. The arts, for Ford, were society's educators and provided 'not for the stuffing but for the enlarging of the human perception'.⁶ For Ford, education (like art) was another antithesis to propaganda—propaganda stuffs heads with information instead of inviting the student to expand their vision of the world as education can do. Ford *by definition* opposed any attempt to enlist the arts as weapons in warfare as propaganda, and ended his article with the call for governments to keep their 'Hands off of the Arts'.⁷

Special pleadings, exaggeration, sponsored speech—Ford's references to propaganda were almost entirely negative. However, in these essays, Ford distinguishes between two definitions of propaganda: firstly, rhetorical propaganda; and secondly, materials defined as propaganda based on an institutional affiliation. Rudyard Kipling was Ford's example of a rhetorical propagandist, a writer 'attempting to become a social

³ Ford, *Critical Essays* (New York, 2004), pp. 402-8.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 300.

⁵ 'On Impressionism', *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, p. 36, *Critical Essays*, p. 300.

⁶ *Critical Essays*, pp. 304-5.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 308.

reformer, a man of action or a censor of the State' (*Critical Attitude* (1911)).⁸ Ford argued that the artist, unlike the specialist, 'has not the power, the energy, or the austerity to state what will be good for to-morrow' and that his only role was 'to register a truth as he sees it.'⁹ In regard to Kipling, Ford argued that he had traded his gifts ('gifts almost as great as gifts could be') to 'set out to attack world problems from the point of view of the journalists' club smoking-room and with the ambitions of a sort of cross between the German Emperor of caricature and a fifth-form public school boy'.¹⁰ When artists lent their ability to a political project, Ford argued, they degraded their art. What proves difficult in referring to any given artist's work as propaganda (as Ford seems to judge much of Kipling's work) is that determining whether any given piece of work is rhetorical propaganda or not, is dependent on the subjective interpretation of any given reader. As propaganda theorist Edward Bernays argues: '[t]he only difference between "propaganda" and "education", really, is the point of view[...] [t]he advocacy of what we believe in is education[...] [t]he advocacy of what we do not believe in is propaganda.'¹¹ As Randal Marlin has shown, this subjective evaluation frustrates a great deal of discussion of propaganda at the level of rhetoric.¹² Ford's second appeal, which defines propaganda as any artistic work produced for the State, proves to contain the discussion of propaganda as a manageable object of study. Although Ford suggested that work with an institutional connection to any given government can also be read rhetorically as propaganda, what distinguishes any given writing as propaganda *by definition* is its formal institutional connection to the government. This second means of defining propaganda proves to be all the more useful in discussing propaganda of the First World War. As a consequence of the war, institutional propaganda would emerge as a particular historical object of study, because for the first time the British government dedicated entire offices and ministries to the production and dissemination of materials aimed at justifying the war.

⁸ Ford, *The Critical Attitude* (London, 1911), p. 106.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹¹ Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (New York, 1923), p. 212.

¹² See chapter one for a discussion of the problems of defining propaganda and chapter two for a history of propaganda in *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (Lancashire, 2002).

Much had ensued in the twenty-year gap between these two essays to explain Ford's later emphasis on the institutional nature of propaganda and the relationship of the arts to government propaganda programmes: the rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany; the Russian Revolution; and of course, the First World War itself. In the later essay, Ford remarked that 'all the artists in Anglo-Saxondom from Mr. Kipling downward thundering or cat-calling for' the First World War had resulted in a commonly held indifference to the actual aims of that war, and even a 'rapprochement with the late Enemy Countries'.¹³ Ford does not explicitly exempt himself from this chorus of pro-war writers; but apropos of the topic of his essay on the separation of the arts from the Government, he fails to mention the books he produced for Britain's War Propaganda Bureau (WPB), *When Blood is Their Argument: An Analysis of Prussian Culture* (1915) and *Between St. Dennis and St. George: A Sketch of Three Civilizations* (1915) (henceforth *WBTA* and *BSDSG*). This chapter will examine Ford's institutional relationship with British First World War propaganda through the auspices of the WPB. As Ford's two texts of cultural criticism were published and distributed by the WPB, they are implicated in the government's broader war strategy: attempting to influence elite American opinion in order to break the US government's policy of neutrality. This relationship was not ascertainable at the time, because the books bore no indication that they were published or distributed by the government. Thus an institutional analysis of Ford's book historicises his texts by drawing them back into a network of producers and consumers of propaganda, and shows how the government played an important role in creating and distributing these materials.

The WPB used Hodder and Stoughton to publish *WBTA* in 1915 in New York and London.¹⁴ According to Thomas Moser, roughly a third of the book had already appeared as articles in *The Outlook* between September 1914 and February 1915.¹⁵ The book is divided into three sections: Part I deals with German civil and financial history; Part II discusses prominent German figures such as Bismarck, Nietzsche, and Wagner;

¹³ *Critical Essays*, p. 300.

¹⁴ As Peter Buitenhuis (*The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda: 1914-1918 and After* (London, 1987)) has noted, most of the Wellington House (WPB) records were 'scattered and destroyed at war's end' (p. 15). As a result it has proven difficult for historians of First World War propaganda to establish the precise and detailed contractual links between publishers and official propaganda, but instead they infer this relationship from a variety of remaining documents, including the *Wellington House Schedule*.

¹⁵ Thomas C. Moser, *The Life in the Fiction of Ford Madox Ford* (Princeton, 1980), p. 197.

and Part III addresses questions on German culture, primarily the German system of education. Ford argues that Germany had ‘steadily and swiftly deteriorated’ under Prussian influence, and that this had led to an erosion of culture throughout the civilised world.¹⁶ Ford’s next book, *BSDSG* (also published by Hodder and Stoughton in New York, London and Toronto), was in part a response to anti-war writers, particularly George Bernard Shaw, as well as a denunciation of German culture as inferior to the cultures of Britain and France.

This chapter, divided into three sections, will examine Ford’s war-writing and his relationship to the WPB. To establish rhetorical continuities and disjunctions with his government propaganda, the first section will examine some of Ford’s early wartime writing including journalism, fiction, and poetry. An institutional analysis of the two books requires that they be situated historically in relation to the establishment of the WPB; governmental aims for the propaganda campaign; methods for the production and distribution of propaganda; and governmental protection from censorship. The second section will offer historical background concerning propaganda, as well as a review of the critical literature that deals with Ford’s propaganda texts. This section will argue that the institutional connections of Ford’s texts are crucial to understanding his cultural propaganda, and that for the most part this institutional aspect has not been sufficiently explored before. When someone picked up, received, or opened one of these books it bore no indication that it was produced by the British government. No one reading these books in Britain or America, for example, could have ascertained that they were published by the British government; or that they formed part of a programme aimed at American opinion-makers aimed to ensure that the contents of these books were disseminated in newspaper articles, speeches, and through word of mouth. These broader aspects of the text—and how and why they were deployed—can only be revealed through a historicized reading of First World War propaganda, and an institutional analysis of the WPB.

In addition to discussing propaganda as an institution, this chapter will discuss the rhetorical aspects of the texts in order to examine how Ford conducted his argument. As Ford’s second book of propaganda was written in response to the anti-war writing of the

¹⁶ *When Blood is their Argument: An Analysis of Prussian Culture* (London, 1915), p. 311.

Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and George Bernard Shaw's pamphlet *Common Sense About the War* (1914), this following section will highlight the power of an institutional affiliation with government propaganda by examining how dissident war literature did not share the same privileges enjoyed by WPB publications. Examining persuasive literature outside of the governmental system of propaganda will better draw into relief how the WPB was able to privilege texts such as Ford's, and how this act of privileging defined his texts as institutional propaganda. The final section will conclude by turning to some of Ford's post-war fiction in order to examine how he crafted his own memory of his propaganda work. Though not as evasive as he was in 'Hands off of the Arts', what Ford reveals and what he conceals in his later fiction (such as his post-war novel *No Enemy* (1929)), illuminates how he remembered British Propaganda.

Thus this chapter seeks an institutional understanding of author participation within the WPB and British Propaganda, and examines the particular rhetorical continuities and disjunctions between Ford's early journalism, his two official propaganda texts, and his recollections of the war and propaganda in later post-war writing.

1 FORD'S WAR WRITING

1.1 EARLY WAR PROSE AND POETRY

Ford initial response to the start of the war appeared in his 'Literary Portraits' columns, published in *The Outlook*. In these articles, he considered the British declaration of war to be 'an indictment of the Parliamentary system and of democracy'.¹⁷ He elaborated on this opinion by suggesting that Britain was more of a plutocracy than a democracy, and that the war was simply a product 'of the indefinite, mysterious, and subterranean forces of groups of shady and inscrutable financiers working their wills upon the ignorant, the credulous, the easily swayed electorate'.¹⁸ Ford hoped that a war would allow for a reconsideration of 'democracy, of Rousseauism, and that the Rights of Man may be put for ever into a dishonoured dustbin.'¹⁹ Arguing against the notion of

¹⁷ Ford, 'Literary Portraits—XLVIII. M. Charles-Louis Phillippe and 'Le Père Perdix', *The Outlook*, 8 August 1914, pp. 174-5, p. 175.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

natural rights, Ford asserted that men are not owed things by the virtue of being men, but instead ‘they have only duties’.²⁰ Max Saunders explains that Ford’s politics were contradictory and are hard to pin down. This is confirmed via Ford’s audacious conflation of two opposing political poles when he refers to the ‘the true Toryism which is Socialism’, as well as in his praise for feudalism as ‘the most satisfactory form of government’ because it provides ‘responsible heads to lop off if the state failed to prosper’.²¹

In an equally paradoxical manner, Ford categorically claimed he did not stand for equality but instead for a ‘ruling class, recruited from the working-class just as often as the working-class produces a man good enough to become a ruler’.²² He argued that a qualified working class could replenish the ruling class and make it accountable. However often this was alleged to have happened was irrelevant; for Ford it was the promise of the possibility of class ascension that would make the ruling classes accountable. Too often in pursuing their own interests, asserted Ford, the ruling classes failed to provide for and protect the citizenry. He argued that financiers were taking advantage of the ignorant public for their own gains, instead of helping to rule society responsibly. Thus the true socialism, for Ford, would emerge when the ruling class took up their responsibility to govern with equanimity and wisdom, and not under the society-eroding self-interest of capitalism.

Death in war did not worry Ford. In his article of 8 August he noted that the ‘greater part of humanity is merely the stuff with which to fill graveyards’; what he thought ‘senseless’ and ‘imbecile’ was the ‘ideas for which people [were] dying’—ideas, he noted, for which the ‘noble callings’ are to be strangled for a decade’.²³ Despite his

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life. Volume 1*. (Oxford, 1996), p. 466. Ford, *History of Our Time*, quoted in Saunders p. 467. Robert Green characterizes Ford’s politics as a ‘politics of nostalgia’ when in a ‘Historical Vignette’ (3 July 1913, *The Outlook*, p. 14) he described the feudal system as the ‘most satisfactory form of government or of commonwealth’ and an ‘enlightened age’ which was followed by a decline with the advent of social reform (Robert Green, *Ford Madox Ford: Prose and Politics* (Cambridge, 1981), See Section I, Chapter 2). According to Arthur Mizener, Ford had an ‘intense dislike of liberal democracy’ with its ‘shady capitalists, venal politicians, and an electorate stuffed with fatuous ideas of its own wisdom by a shoddy system of universal education’; see *The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford* (London, 1972), p. 249.

²² Ford, from ‘A Tory Plea for Home Rule (I)’, *Critical Essays*, pp. 101-2.

²³ Ford, ‘Literary Portraits—XLVIII. M. Charles-Louis Phillippe and ‘Le Père Perdix’, *The Outlook*, 8 August 1914, p. 175.

acceptance that humanity's inevitable resting place was the graveyard, Ford asserted that his love for the English, the French, the Southern Germans, and the Austrians, made him sensitive to any harm suffered by any of those cultures in a war caused over a conflict of financial interests.²⁴ He claimed that his sensitivity to the suffering of these people came as a result of being an artist: as 'a poet so apt to identify myself with anyone's sufferings as to be unable to take sides very violently, I have probably thought more about these things, and certainly suffer more over them, than most people'.²⁵ From the early days of the war, Ford thus claimed a personal stake in the conduct and outcome as well as in the aesthetics of the war.

In his article of 29 August 1914, Ford disapproved of the patriotic poetry coming out of the war ('mad dogs [...] throttling fists, and trampling heels'), and claimed it was his 'job' as an artist to 'extract, for the sake of humanity [...] all the poetry that is to be got out of war'.²⁶ He admitted that it was difficult not 'to be obsessed by the war if you have the misfortune or the high honour to be a poet'.²⁷ After satisfying the duty of enlisting (if you were of the right age), or engaging 'in some form of social relief work', he insisted that the real duty of the poet was 'to keep himself unspotted from the world':

By all means go and pot as many Germans as you can; but, that being done, put the thought of this beastly affair out of your mind. There is no man who, in the middle of a war, unless his country is being harassed, overrun, and crushed out—there is no man who, in the middle of a war, can write poems about war. Poetry for its production needs crystallization, reflection. But no poet in the middle of a war can write about that war and produce poetry, he can very certainly, since he will be highly sensitized by the stirring of his emotions—the measure of the light that is vouchsafed him, write poems about things as to which he has previously reflected.²⁸

Insisting that poets needed time to reflect on their experiences in order to crystallize their impressions, Ford argued that the poet's duty as a citizen was different from his duty as an artist. In his September 12 article, Ford confessed that though asked to write a poem

²⁴ Saunders, p. 468.

²⁵ Ford, 'Literary Portraits—XLVIII', p. 175.

²⁶ Ford, 'Literary Portraits—LI. The Face of Janus', *The Outlook*, 29 August 1914, pp. 270-1, p. 271.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

about the war, he could not do it: '[i]t is a confession of sheer impotence'.²⁹ Unable to believe anything he read in the newspapers, he could not 'see anything' in his imagination clearly enough to write about it—for Ford the 'war [was] just a cloud'. Rejecting the clichés emerging from the war about unleashing freedom's sword, Ford was moved only by the story of a Tommy in the trenches who painted 'Business as usual' on a biscuit tin and hung it up in the barracks. Ford may not have been able to produce a poem to order, but when he witnessed Belgian refugees arriving in London he was moved enough to write 'Antwerp'—a poem T.S. Eliot would later call, in his 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry' (1917), the 'only good poem I have met with on the subject of the war.'³⁰

What Ford could express in his poetry was markedly different from what he discussed in his journalism. According to Max Saunders, 'Antwerp' was written on 9 October 1914, after the city fell to the Germans.³¹ Ford was moved by the 'black crowd' of Belgian refugees he saw at Charing Cross:

And it is not for us to make them an anthem.
 If we found words there would come no wind that would fan them
 To a tune that the trumpets might blow it,
 Shrill through the heaven that's ours or yet Allah's
 Or the wide halls of any Valhallas.
 We can make no such anthem. So that all that is ours
 For inditing in sonnets, pantoums, elegiacs, or lays
 Is this:
 'In the name of God how could they do it?'³²

Ford's comment, 'it is not for us to make them an anthem', is reminiscent of Ezra Pound's poem 'War Verse', in which Pound asks the glory-seeking poets not to abuse the dead by trying to use them as material for their poems. Pound bids the 'two-penny poets' who gun for glory with 'pop-guns' to be still and let the soldiers have 'their turn.' He

²⁹ Ford. 'Literary Portraits—LIII. The Muse of War', *The Outlook*, 12 September 1914, pp. 334-5, p.334.

³⁰ T.S. Eliot, *Egoist*, 4.10 (November 1917), pp. 151-1.

³¹ Saunders, p.473.

³² 'In October 1914 (Antwerp)', *The Outlook*, 24 October 1914, pp. 523-4. Ford Madox Ford, *Selected Poems* (Manchester, 1997) pp. 82-85.

instructs them not to ‘scrape your two-penny glory’ from Louvain, Liege, Leman, and Brailmont.³³ In ‘Antwerp’, Ford is moved to sadness and witness, not action and vengeance; his tone is one of elegy, of recognition of ‘so much pain’ and a kind of hopeless searching to know why it happened—‘I don’t know [...] I don’t understand.’ In Ford’s poem, the focus is not on hating the enemy, but instead on responding to the ‘strange new beauty’ of these refugees with the question ‘how could they do it?’ Ford’s moments of heightened rhetoric when he calls for ‘rivers and rivers of tears’ to wash the blood from Flanders are not directed at persuading the reader to action as much as they are expressions—albeit melodramatic ones—of an individual reacting to scenes in verse and imagination. Ford’s observation of a moment of human experience and suffering is not inflected by an overt political message demonstrating Prussian responsibility. While the poem concerns itself more with Ford’s feelings and reactions to the refugees than with the people themselves, he does not need to justify and explain the horror of the sight of refugees by pointing the finger of blame at the Germans. The result is a haunting witness and elegy to those displaced victims of war, instead of a condemnation of the malicious force behind the displacement that dominates the cultural propaganda.

Ford’s early articles also agonise over the destruction of three cultures with which he closely identified himself. His aesthetic worries centred on the disingenuous clichés of patriotic poetry; his own poetry was an attempt to capture his changing mood that he was able to witness and experience as a result of the war. In article in *The Outlook* on 29 August 1914, Ford expressed his wish that the war be fought as one against a ‘gallant enemy’. A footnote added by the editors distanced themselves from this sentiment: ‘Gallant is as gallant does [...] The English may be pardoned not appreciating German “gallantry” as displayed in Belgium and in the North Sea’.³⁴ With reports and rumours of German conduct in Belgium alongside its submarine warfare, the intellectual climate in Britain was changing in such a way that Ford’s discussion of chivalry in warfare was qualified and informally censured. Ford’s journalism would also change over the course of the first few months of the war, by conforming to this increasing atmosphere of war enthusiasm and negativity towards German war conduct. On 2 January 1915, for

³³ Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound: Poems and Translations* (New York, 2003), p. 1176.

³⁴ ‘Literary Portraits—LI. The Face of Janus’, p. 271.

example, Ford noted a change within himself. Whereas his early writings called for the war to be fought with respect for the ‘gallant enemy,’ now he realised that were he to read ‘A Million Germans Killed’ he would give thanks to God.³⁵ He speculated as to what had changed for him, and questioned if it was even moral to think about such revenging genocide; finally he reflected that it was as natural to wish for the death of a million Germans as it would be to ‘breathe deeply after having been under water after a dive’.³⁶ He expressed his confused thoughts and emotions through his journalism:

Is it then right? is it then wrong [sic]? I don’t know. I know nothing any more; nobody knows anything. We are down in the mud of the trenches of right and wrong, grappling at each other’s throats, gouging out each other’s eyes—and amazed, still, to think that we can do such things.³⁷

Ford uses the metaphors of the current conflict, of mud and trenches, while imagining that soldiers are engaging in hand-to-hand combat instead of acknowledging the separation between armies facilitated by the use of the machine gun and aerial bombing, amongst other military innovations. For Ford, this war of ideas, the war between right and wrong, still involved hand-to-hand combat, the savage ‘grappling’ of throats, and the ‘gouging’ out of eyes. Ford’s confusion over the war was becoming increasingly inflected with violent imagery. One means of accounting for this turn to violence came from pressures in Ford’s own life. Ford’s affiliation with German culture was proving a liability, and he needed to demonstrate his loyalties to Britain more explicitly. According to Sara Haslam, contemporaneously with his stated desire to see a million Germans die, Ford ‘had been ordered by the chief constable of West Sussex to leave the county’ on account of his German affiliations.³⁸ Although the order was later revoked, these attitudes might account for some of his change in tone, and might also indicate some of the factors that led him to abandon his German surname Hueffer (he formally changed his name to Ford Madox Ford in 1919). Ford’s inner conflict was between his familiarity and love of Germany, and the immediate pressure of denouncing its aggression in the

³⁵ Ford, ‘Literary Portraits—LXIX, Annus Mirabilis’, *The Outlook*, 2 January 1915, quoted in Ford, *War Prose* (New York, 2004), p. 210.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Sara Haslam, ‘Making a Text the Fordian Way: *Between St. Dennis and St. George*, Propaganda and the First World War,’ *Publishing in the First World War* (London, 2007), pp. 202-214, p. 206.

current conflict; moreover, his expressions over this conflict were being challenged as not adequately patriotic.

Soon enough, Ford would make the decision to join up and fight at the front, and thus to take a more active part in the war. He fictionalised his decision to sign-up for the war in a book he co-wrote with Violet Hunt, *Zeppelin Nights: A London Entertainment* (1915). The book is a modern-day version of Boccaccio's *Decameron*: a group of intellectuals take turns telling stories to one another during the German Zeppelin raids. Ford and Hunt describe a typical 'Zeppelin Night':

If it were very calm and the leaves did not shake at all, several of us would be silent enough—thinking that that was the best sort of Zeppelin weather. In the dreadful papers that, then, we all pored over every day their oncoming would be advertised to us. We could imagine those silken reservoirs filled with hate, advancing towards England—to punish her for being England [...] Slowly, like great moony pearls, they were moving over the calm summer sea, attaining our land, passing swiftly over the meadows of Thamet and of Kent. In those days we thought of them coming in legions.³⁹

The description of the Zeppelins, approaching London filled only with hate, figures them as both objects of beauty ('moony pearls') and dread. Ford and Hunt presented characters who meet these attacks by continuing to conduct their lives of game-playing and salon-conversation underground, in cellar basements. However, as Ariela Freedman has noted, the novel 'ultimately rejects the created, voluntary communities of civilian society for the structured community of soldiers.'⁴⁰ Ford's and Hunt's character Serapion Hunter explains to the group that he feels an incredible responsibility to go to the front and not shirk his duty: 'Do you think I can look into the dark shadows of those trees and not feel it [...] Damn it all, haven't I been for forty years or so in the ruling classes of this country; haven't I enjoyed their fat privileges, and shan't I, then pay the price?'⁴¹ Ford dramatizes Serapion's Tory sense of responsibility to turn away from the self-declared importance of the arts, and instead to take part and shoulder his weight in the war. When his friends point out that as an older man he will sit in an office and do paper-work,

³⁹ Ford Madox Ford and Violet Hunt, *Zeppelin Nights: A London Entertainment* (London, 1916), pp. 12-13.

⁴⁰ Ariela Freedman, 'Zeppelin Fictions and the British Home Front', *Journal of American Literature* 27.3 (2004), 47-62, p57.

⁴¹ *Zeppelin Nights*, pp. 306-307.

Candour, Serapion's wife, explains to the group that he has lied about his age and would thus be able to enlist for combat duty. Being an artist and being aloof was not enough, Serapion argued; writing propaganda was not enough; one—even one as old as him—had to fight in the war.

The influence of the war on Ford and his writing was broader than his later military experiences—the war affected and transformed his writings in often-unintended ways. For example, Ford changed the title of *The Saddest Story* during the war to *The Good Soldier* for marketing reasons—as, he claimed, it was difficult to maintain the previous title in the face of the destruction and sadness brought on by the war itself.⁴² The war's influence on literature was complex and is not immediately evident from close-reading. Although this novel does not discuss the war, it is in a sense still marked by the war; situating the novel in its historical relationship to war pressures offer an alternative means for understanding the novel's muted relationship to the conflict.

Ford's early war-writing reflected his changing attitudes towards the war: from opposition, to empathy, to responsibility. He found expression in journalism, poetry, and in creative prose. During this same time he wrote two books of cultural propaganda for the WPB which denounced Germany. Before approaching these texts for a close-reading of their arguments, rhetoric, and style, it is crucial that we historicise them by examining how they worked within the government system of propaganda. To do so will give us a better understanding of the institutional nature of British propaganda of the First World War, and of Ford and his texts' relationship to that system.

1.2 HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF BRITISH PROPAGANDA: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF FORD'S WPB TEXTS

To suggest that Ford's books are propaganda due to their affiliation to the WPB necessitates an examination of that institution and its role in the overall strategy for British propaganda during the First World War. This section will argue that understanding the historic emergence of British war propaganda—including its changing structure, its aims, and its methods—will reveal the audience, function, and availability of Ford's books, aspects of the texts that are not evident from close-reading alone. Although the rhetoric of Ford's cultural propaganda will be considered in subsequent

⁴² *War Prose*, p. 209.

sections, the focus here will be on the WPB. The critical literature on Ford's two books has been scant because of their relative obscurity in relation to Ford's oeuvre; and when discussed by critics such as Max Saunders, Allan Judd, and Peter Buitenhuis (amongst others) it is the rhetorical aspects of the books that are privileged.⁴³ This section will subordinate to a concern for history discussion of Ford's application of literary impressionism, in order (for example) to elucidate how the texts were implicated in the aims and mechanics of First World War propaganda.

In an undated post-war report analysing the workings of war propaganda, 'British propaganda during the Great War, 1914-18', H.O. Lee comments that one of the aims of British propaganda was to counteract German propaganda and 'to present the allied case and Great Britain's share in the war in the proper light.'⁴⁴ As this section will demonstrate, these efforts were principally directed at persuading influential Americans to pressurise their government to break its official political neutrality. Furthermore, in contrast to the German government's open sponsorship of demonstrations and of newspaper advertisements, British propaganda worked under conditions of secrecy. It was an understood assumption that the strength of books such as Ford's would be greatly reduced if they were known to originate from an official government source. Lee explains:

The existence of a publishing establishment at Wellington House [another name for the WPB], and, a fortiori, the connexion of the Government with this establishment were carefully concealed. Except for official publications, none of the literature bore overt marks of its origin. Further, literature was placed on sale where possible, and when sent free was always sent informally, that is to say through and apparently from some person between whom and the recipient there was a definite link, and with a covering note from the person to whose private patriotism the sending of the literature seemed due.⁴⁵

When considering the audience for Ford's books, it is important to recall that they were sent via direct mail with a note attached to them to make them seem unaffiliated with a propaganda organisation. Furthermore, they were not always sent when there was 'a

⁴³ A notable exception is Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (Princeton, 2006).

⁴⁴ H.O. Lee, 'British propaganda during the Great War, 1914-18' (n.d), p1, INF 4/4A.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p7.

definite link' between the recipient and the sender; they were often sent, particularly in America, to those people whom the government identified as influential. This personal propaganda—'getting hold of the right man, telling him the facts, and then taking him to the places where he can see for himself that what you say is true'—was particularly valued, especially when that person was an editor of a newspaper (or another such figure) who of his own accord would then continue to pass truths along through word of mouth, writing, or speeches.⁴⁶

Appealing to a variety of neutral nations, the WPB identified America as its main market. Wellington House in London compiled from *Who's Who* a list of names of prominent American politicians, intellectuals, and leaders of industry. If an American, due to his perceived prominence, was on this list, he might have opened his mailbox to find a copy of one of Ford's books of cultural criticism. Along with the books he would have found an attached note that read:

I am sure you will not consider this an impertinence, but will realise that Britishers are deeply anxious that their cause may be judged from Authoritative evidence. In common with the great majority of Americans, you have, no doubt, made up your mind as to what country should be held responsible for this tragedy, but these papers may be found useful for reference, and because they contain the incontrovertible facts, I feel that you will probably welcome them in this form.⁴⁷

Looking to the bottom of the note, our imaginary American reader might have recognised Gilbert Parker as the signatory to the letter, and as the author of the best-selling novel *The Judgement House* (1913). As the head of the American division of the WPB, it was Gilbert Parker's job at Wellington House to decide who should receive any given particular book. Parker, a Canadian, claimed that it was his 'long and intimate association with the United States' that gave him the 'confidence to approach' a typical recipient and he presented his actions as those of an interested citizen. Crucially, had you been one of the Americans on Parker's list, you might have received Ford's books without any indication whatsoever that the note or the books themselves were published

⁴⁶ Ibid, p15.

⁴⁷ Quoted in H. C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality 1914-17* (Norman, 1939), p. 53.

and distributed by—or indeed had any association with—the British government at all. Had a prominent American industrialist, for example, received a copy of *WBTA* or *BSDSG*, he might not have been remiss to suppose that Parker was indeed just a concerned citizen (‘Britisher’) who was offering the book as a gift, or alternatively who was urging Americans to face the realities of German expansionism in Europe. Receiving one of these books in the post, one might never realise that far from being independent, these materials were (as this section will demonstrate) targeted directly at breaking America’s political neutrality in the war. Ford’s books were but a small sample of the materials that Parker sent to American intellectuals from a list including institutions such as libraries, historical societies, newspapers, Universities, and Y.M.C.A. societies.⁴⁸ To understand how Ford’s books might have found their way into the mailboxes of prominent American politicians, academics, or business leaders, one needs to understand the origins and strategies of British propaganda in the early days of the war.

From its inception, British propaganda had to improvise its methodologies—what Daniel Pick, in discussing the deluge of pamphlets released by the government, refers to as ‘an ideological work in progress’.⁴⁹ Without having a definite long term plan, the government’s propaganda efforts focused more on controlling than on creating speech and information. In their study on British propaganda of the First World War, M. L. Sanders and Phillip M. Taylor (1982) emphasise the unplanned nature of British propaganda during the war.⁵⁰ At the beginning of the war, they argue, the government did not have a propaganda plan, but rather experimented with different techniques. Propaganda mostly took the form of censorship and other means of constraining speech. Only as the war went on did creating information become more of an imperative. Britain’s first military action against Germany was sending the cable ship *Teleconia* to cut Germany’s five transatlantic telegraph cables; this was followed by a British cruiser severing two German overseas cables near the Azores later that day.⁵¹ This had the dual

⁴⁸ According to the *Wellington House 3rd Report*, Parker kept an efficient and regular distribution of information to 11, 000 individuals, 621 public libraries, 214 historical societies, 106 clubs, 555 newspapers, 833 Y.M.C.A. societies, and 339 Universities and colleges (p. 16).

⁴⁹ Daniel Pick, *War Machine* (New Haven, 1993), p. 140.

⁵⁰ Michael L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1917*. (London, 1982), p. 1.

⁵¹ Robert Massie, *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea*. (New York, 2003), p. 75.

effect of leaving Germany dependent on information from neutral countries, and ensured that all information to America—the most important neutral nation due to its geographical distance from the war, as well as its economic and industrial strength—would come through Britain. Furthermore, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), passed on 8 August 1914, gave the government far-reaching powers to imprison dissenters without trial, to control economic resources, and to censor the printed and spoken word.⁵² DORA ensured that the government achieved increased power over which aspects of the war could be discussed in the public sphere, as well as having control over the means of sending news from Europe to North America. In relation to constrictions on information availability, journalists nicknamed Churchill's Press Bureau the 'Suppress Bureau' because of its tendency to blue-pencil out facts rather than provide them.⁵³ Early in the war therefore, not even the press was marshalled as a force for rallying support, but was more often monitored to make sure the wrong messages were not leaking out. Although some of these efforts at controlling speech were aimed at the Germans, they were also aimed at managing domestic perceptions of the war.

The British Government had a different plan for propaganda towards neutrals. Shortly after its invasion of Belgium, the German government took out full-page advertisements in American newspapers and held rallies in America to try to justify its attacks as pre-empting a possible two-front invasion from France and Russia. These promotional activities made the British Government uneasy: not only did Britain fear German designs for expanding its territory in Europe, but it also understood the importance of American diplomatic, military, and economic support in a forthcoming war.⁵⁴ The British Government established the WPB to counteract German influence in neutral countries, specifically America, and appointed the journalist and former MP C.F.G. Masterman to head the WPB. Masterman organised two conferences in early September to recruit prominent literary figures and members of the press to aid the government with its campaign. Despite not inviting Ford to the original meeting,

⁵² Sanders and Taylor, p. 9.

⁵³ George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (London, 1991), p. 111.

⁵⁴ For more on German propaganda during the Great War see David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918: The Sins of Omission* (New Brunswick, N.J, 2000).

Masterman, out of personal friendship and admiration for his writing, would later ask Ford to expand his early wartime journalism into books for the WPB.

Ford's books were thus a part of the system created by the architects of British propaganda to counteract German measures and to win the support of neutral America. George Robb affirms this when he argues that 'Britain's official propaganda was initially directed less at its own citizens, whose commitment was taken for granted, than to neutral nations, especially the United States'.⁵⁵ According to Sanders and Taylor, propaganda only became a priority on the home-front when Britain began conscription in 1916.⁵⁶ As mentioned, some of the major analysts of British propaganda of the First World War emphasise the improvisational methodologies of British propaganda. In *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (1977), Cate Haste argues that while the British government was slow in taking 'responsibility of controlling information [...] [t]hey were even slower in real co-ordination of propaganda'.⁵⁷ According to Haste, there was no 'co-ordinated propaganda to the home front until 1917'.⁵⁸ German campaigns in the United States that justified its invasion of Belgium alarmed the British government, according to Sanders and Taylor, and thus hastened the establishment of the WPB to counter German propaganda and gain American support for the Allied cause.⁵⁹

In the United States there was wide-spread popular condemnation of German attempts at interfering in American foreign policy. The British government, paying close attention to American opinion, designed its propaganda in opposition to German methods. Moreover, according to Sanders and Taylor, whereas the Germans appealed to mass opinion, the British aimed their efforts at influencing 'opinion-makers rather than opinion itself'.⁶⁰ Sanders and Taylor confirm that the purpose of the WPB was to supply as much information as possible in order to convince foreign opinion 'of the strength of the Allied position, the justice of their cause and the certainty of their ultimate success,

⁵⁵ Robb, p. 98.

⁵⁶ Sanders and Taylor, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London, 1977), p. 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 37

⁵⁹ Sanders and Taylor, p. 38.

⁶⁰ Sanders and Taylor, p. 41.

and of making clear to the Allied countries the part played by the British Empire in the war and the extent of it's contribution to the common cause'.⁶¹

Internal government documents such as the *Wellington House 3rd Report*, demonstrate how fluctuations in American opinion were important to the British propaganda effort.⁶² Gilbert Parker worried that the British naval blockade and the searching of American ships for contraband goods was harming British popularity in the United States and undermining the work of British propaganda. He defended focusing attention on opinion-makers rather than popular opinion, and rejected German populist propaganda efforts in America as ineffective and counterproductive. He explained that the British would get their message to the man on the street indirectly through the makers of opinion, rather than through direct appeal, arguing that these opinions would filter down through publicity, book reviews, University lectures, and magazine articles.⁶³

Historicizing the institutional connection between the WPB and Ford's two books of cultural propaganda requires that we attend to the way these texts were deployed as part of the British propaganda campaign during the war to influence American opinion. This writing differs from his other journalism, prose, and poetry precisely because it was based on the publishing and distribution network that the WPB offered, as well as because of the nature of the audience for these materials and the way they were used as a means to justify the war. The institutional aspects of *WBTA* and *BSDSG* have not hitherto been explored to a great extent amongst critics and commentators on the books. Frank Macshane, for example, limits his discussion of *WBTA* to describing it as a 'scholarly analysis of the growth of Prussian influence over German education, literature and society, and [...] a well documented exposition of the development of a deliberate policy of nationalism and xenophobia.'⁶⁴ Peter Buitenhuis discusses the organisation of the WPB and its methodologies, but he focuses his study on close-reading a wide variety of British and American literary propaganda, including titles by Ford. While such readings are important, more distanced readings that examine the way texts were produced and distributed, can uncover additional meanings of the text. Historicizing Ford's cultural

⁶¹ Quoted in Sanders and Taylor, p. 50.

⁶² *Wellington House 3rd Report*, p. 11.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Frank Macshane, *The Life and Work of Ford Madox Ford* (London, 1965), p. 127.

propaganda means examining how these books were directly mailed to prominent American intellectuals and framed as impartial opinions in the hopes that the readers might themselves write articles or put other kinds of pressure on their government to support Britain in the war against Germany.

Apart from these institutional parameters, Ford's war-writing has interested some critics for its undisciplined and creative approach to writing history. In his 'The Artist as Propagandist', L. L. Farrar Jr. discusses three aspects of Ford's books of propaganda which make them worth examining. Firstly, he argues, Ford's history offers a good grasp of the issues at stake in the war; secondly, as cultural history the books illustrate both literary and historical 'approaches to reality'; and thirdly, these books offer insight into the development of the oeuvre of Ford Madox Ford.⁶⁵ Farrar does not analyse these texts as propaganda *per se*, but focuses instead on some of the literary and historical aspects of the books. Furthermore, he does not consider how locating them within the British war effort might affect our understanding of them. When Farrar argues that 'Ford's implication that Germany was solely responsible for the war (the Versailles verdict) is rejected by most historians—although, interestingly, not by all German historians,' he oversimplifies the complex relationship between writers, propaganda, and democracy during the war, as well as during the peace settlement at the conclusion of the war.⁶⁶ By focusing on Ford as a writer (instead of on the system of propaganda he was a part of), he fails to draw from the book its particular insight into the Ford's work within a larger network of texts that were secretly published and widely distributed to influence neutral countries such as America to support Britain in the war. Placing the book within this wider network of texts situates how disjointed these texts are from Ford's other writings, as later sections will demonstrate.

In the critical examination of these books, it is this emphasis on Ford as a literary figure—and the insight these books offer to his body of work—that predominate over an examination of their functional use as propaganda. Max Saunders does discuss Ford's two texts and their relationship with British propaganda. However, he also emphasises how Ford's propaganda illuminates aspects of Ford's character, particularly his humanity

⁶⁵ L. L. Farrar Jr., 'The Artist as Propagandist' in Sondra Stang (ed) *The Presence of Ford Madox Ford* (Philadelphia, 1981), pp. 145-161, p. 145.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 155.

and the breadth of his education. For Saunders, these texts not only offer us the presence of the personality of Ford, but Ford's prose is also 'a timely reminder of the value—the necessity—of a liberal, humane education'.⁶⁷ He claims that Ford was 'ahead of his time' in moving beyond 'wartime obsessions with military and diplomatic history [...] to understand such things in their social and psychological contexts.'⁶⁸ As a critical biographer, Saunders focuses his attention on the author's personal life and his aesthetic and psychological changes through these two books. Resituating them within the wider context of Ford's relationship with the WPB, yields an understanding of these books within a system that was trying to justify the war to American intellectuals—thus complicating Ford's own sense of the artist's duty to 'truth'. This institutional focus requires a shift away from the figure of Ford to a closer consideration of the broader mechanics and aims of the WPB, and an understanding of how *WBTA* and *BSDSG* function within that system.

Examining the way these texts were printed, distributed, and used reveal other meanings available in the text, and illustrate how these texts are not as liberal as some critics and biographers have suggested. In his biography of Ford, Alan Judd suggests Ford's work is not the 'normal run of propaganda, it is balanced, informed, lucid, wise, and readable'.⁶⁹ John Meixner notes that because Ford's 'high-minded' cultural arguments were consistent with his pre-war thinking and were 'the products of his own deepest convictions' not 'fakery trumped up for the occasion', the two books were 'propaganda in the good sense'.⁷⁰ In his Introduction to Ford's *War Prose*, Max Saunders argues that Ford's propaganda is one of 'an unusually cultural and humane kind'; though he acknowledges that Ford's patriotic fervour elevated the anger in the tone of his work.⁷¹ Saunders recounts Ford's claim that his poem 'On Heaven' was circulated by the Ministry of Information to troops in order to improve morale. He suggests that we read Ford's propaganda in a similar way, as a means to bolster the pride and vigilance of the troops. Considering the mindset of Ford may offer one way for us to approach these unorthodox combinations of historical, literary, and cultural criticism—what Farrar calls

⁶⁷ Saunders, p. 471.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 476.

⁶⁹ Alan Judd, *Ford Madox Ford* (London, 1990), p. 247.

⁷⁰ John A. Meixner, *Ford Madox Ford's Novels: A Critical Study* (London: 1962), p. 42.

⁷¹ *War Prose*, p. 3.

‘impressionist history.’ However, to contextualise the audience and use of these texts reminds us that *WBTA* and *BSDSG* were not directed at troops, but instead at American intellectuals. Thus scrutinising Ford’s texts for the WPB via a process of institutional analysis historicises them more precisely so that we may better understand the context in which they might have been read.

Although American intellectuals may not have been the only ones reading these books, it would obfuscate our understanding of them to suggest that the audience consisted primarily of soldiers, even though that might have been what Ford believed. At the end of *WBTA*, Ford declared that if he were ‘a propagandist and tried to preach to the United States’ he would emphasise that a victory for Germany would mean German domination of world culture.⁷² Whether Ford knew it or not, the WPB used his texts to influence American opinion-makers. The WPB concealed its sponsorship of materials aimed at American intellectuals in order to offer books such as Ford’s the air of authenticity—a pose that Ford assumed within the texts themselves. Through attending to the aims and functioning of British First World War propaganda we can complicate and scrutinise these poses of disinterested commentary to reveal forces at work in the texts that are not immediately available on first reading.

To readers unaware of Ford’s relationship with the WPB, his polemic might have seemed just another one of the competing discourses of the war, a discourse which focused on the cultural sphere and took a strong anti-German stance. In reality, due to his relationship with the WPB, Ford was not only offered money for these volumes, but the WPB found publishers and means for distributing these books as well.⁷³ No such opportunities for publication, distribution, promotion, or freedom from censorship would be available to writers outside the WPB system. The architects of the WPB positioned their tracts as independent discourses competing with those that explicitly criticised the war. In reality, these ‘independent’ materials were official propaganda sponsored by the government. Emphasising that it is the institutional relationship of the WPB with these

⁷² *WBTA*, p. 317.

⁷³ In his biography of Ford, Max Saunders notes that while Ford declined a fee for his first book, he asked Masterman if Wellington House ‘could pay him a salary of £15 or £20 per week’ for writing the next one. Though it is unlikely that he got such an enormous sum, he wrote the book nonetheless: see Saunders, p. 474.

books that defines them as propaganda is the crucial first step in historicising our reading of these books.

2.0 FORD'S WAR PROPAGANDA

2.1 *WHEN BLOOD IS THEIR ARGUMENT*

Ford took pride in his denunciations of German culture and reflected on them in grandiose terms in *WBTA*: 'I desire that this book should be read by every person in the habitable globe since the subject is a subject of the greatest importance'.⁷⁴ Ford uses his own impressions to guide his discussion of the war and its causes. 'I am attempting to deal as impartially as possible with international phenomena as they present themselves to me,' he claimed, adding:

if the English State appears to me to be an almost perfect organ for the regulation, not the ruling, of human intercourse, I must be permitted to set down what appears to me to be the deleterious converse of this perfection. And if the Prussian State appears to me to be a blind, gross, and imbecile machine, having for its aim the production of a barbarous and uncultured type of *Kultur Mensch*—I must be allowed to point out that the effect of this pressure upon individuals must logically be to develop in many individuals many fine qualities.⁷⁵

Ford did not seek objectivity as a goal in his writing. In defending himself against the charges of 'deliberate unfairness to the traditions of German learning and of German scholarship', he claimed his intimacy with English, French, and German culture gave him a unique authority on the topic of their relative cultural merits, and that he was putting forward data selected 'with a hatred inspired by a cruel and cold indignation' with 'everything that I can think of that can make Prussianism, materialism, militarism, and the mania for organisation appear hideous in their products and disastrous for humanity.'⁷⁶ His presence in the narrative acts as a kind of filter for all his impressions and arguments; if he believes the British Empire to be a 'perfect organ for the regulation' of people and the Prussian state an inhumane machine, he claims the right to describe them as such. Saunders has argued that Ford's methods as a historian offer the reader an

⁷⁴ *WBTA*, p. xix.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. vii, xi.

insight into his mentality, for the historian—rather than trying to erase his authorial presence—makes it evident. He argues that Ford’s study of mentalities anticipates the work of the circle surrounding the French journal *Annales*, founded in 1929; for Saunders, Ford was not ‘attempting their analytic rigour’ but was trying to present the mentality of peoples during the war.⁷⁷ Ford did not study the mentality of the combatants in any systematic way, but instead offered his own mentality and his own impressions of the German mindset through his analysis of its language, history, and culture. Later in the book, Ford explained that as ‘a man of peace’ he could not ‘entertain with equanimity the idea of every inhabitant of the German Empire with his throat cut, or her brains blown out, contemplating, amidst the smoke of his or her ruined homestead, the pale stars’.⁷⁸ Mark Wollaeger observes that however much Ford was a self-declared pacifist, ‘such are the images of vigorous retribution he chooses to conjure.’⁷⁹ Consistent with Ford’s theories of impressionism as an expression of the individual’s reactions, Saunders suggests that Ford reveals more about his own attitude in discussing Germany’s responsibility for the war than about the general attitude in Britain. Furthermore, Ford defended himself against what he anticipated would be a charge of bias by arguing that his opinions about the war had been consistent from his early journalism onwards.⁸⁰ However, despite his insistence that his position remained essentially the same, as earlier sections demonstrated his tone (in particular his increasing promotion of violence against Germany) and his support for the war had changed radically since the onset of war.

Ford’s thesis in *WBTA* is that there is ‘no such thing as “modern” German culture’.⁸¹ Ford defined the province of culture as that which produces such men ‘as can live harmoniously together in any circumstances’, and argued that the word ‘cultured’ should be reserved for those humans who have ‘developed in the arts, by science, and by religion such a sympathy that they can not only live side by side with, but can understand and appreciate the motives of’ all people.⁸² Within these parameters, he argued, it was obvious that Great Britain and France were far more cultured than the German Empire.

⁷⁷ Saunders, p. 476.

⁷⁸ *WBTA*, p. 293.

⁷⁹ Wollaeger, p. 162.

⁸⁰ *WBTA*, p. 171.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

This was a difficult proposition to make given the prevalence of German scholarship (and music) in the world of English letters; yet as the war progressed, there was a discernable volte-face regarding German intellectual culture in some British war-writing. For example, at the onset of the war *The Times* published J. J. Thompson's peace manifesto, which had scholars urging Great Britain to avoid war with Germany: 'We regard Germany as a nation leading the way in the Arts and Sciences' and conflict 'with a nation so near akin to our own and with who we have so much in common' would be 'a sin of civilization'.⁸³ However, in the wake of Germany's invasion of Belgium, praising Germany's cultural achievements became less common. Instead, some formerly sympathetic writers emphasized the schizophrenic nature of German scholarship: 'Side by side with immense ability in creating and applying scientific knowledge we have an almost complete failure to recognise truth, honour, faith-keeping and justice as the foundations of national greatness.'⁸⁴ Others would reject German culture altogether as inferior to English culture and these opinions would increasingly find greater expression in newspapers and other public discourse. In a letter to *The Times*, the Oxford Oriental archaeologist A.H. Sayce denounced the obedient deference paid to German scholarship by the younger generations in Britain and America. Avoiding the issue of music ('for I am not a musician'), Sayce asserted the inferiority of all German culture to English culture. He describes Schiller as a 'milk-and-water Longfellow', and Kant as 'more than half Scottish'.⁸⁵ For Sayce, culture was not restricted to the humanities: '[i]n science none of the great names is German', and Germany could claim none of the great modern technological discoveries such as the steam-engine, telegraph, telephone, or motor-car. Sayce only acknowledged that a German 'can laboriously count syllables and words and pile up volumes of indices, he can appropriate other men's discoveries in the interests of 'culture'; [...] but beyond this, we get from him only theories which take no regard of facts.' Similarly, Ford bemoans the Kultur of German *Philologie* and its obsessions with documentary and biographical fact—an emphasis on repeating facts that engenders

⁸³ J.J. Thompson, 'Scholars protest against the war with Germany' *The Times*, 1 August 1914, p. 6. See also Lawrence Badash, 'British and American Views of the German Menace in World War I', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, Vol 34.1 (July 1979), pp. 91-121.

⁸⁴ J.A. Fleming, 'Notes', *Nature*, 24 September 1914; quoted in Badash, p. 94.

⁸⁵ A.H. Sayce, 'Hermann's a German' A Review of Teutonic Pretensions', *The Times*, 22 December 1914, p. 6.

unthinking obedience and an underdeveloped aesthetic appreciation, privileging facts above beauty: ‘Kultur in this sense means the careful digging out of facts about poets artistically unimportant’.⁸⁶ In disavowing the prominence of German scholarship, it was thus necessary to wage war on German intellectual culture and cast the war as a clash between civilisation and barbarism.

At times this fight was taken so seriously, it was framed as a physical battle between Shakespeare and Goethe themselves. Some British war-writing would employ the very language of warfare when discussing culture, as Daniel Pick has noted. Consider a passage from Herbert Warren’s *Poetry and War* (1914):

The Germans to-day have somehow got it into their heads that they are, before all other nations, a nation of poets. Can they compare with us? Let us put into naval language. Their ‘Grand Fleet’ seems somewhat limited. Grant that they have one ‘super Dreadnaught’, the ‘Goethe’, admittedly a fine and powerful ship; still she is hardly equal in guns or speed to the ‘Shakespeare’.⁸⁷

In participating in similar cultural warfare by measuring the relative strength of their respective cultural boats, Ford anticipated the obvious objection of an imaginary reader exclaiming ‘What, no such thing as culture in the land that produced Beethoven and Goethe!’. He answered by extending an account of the schizophrenic co-existence of culture and violence in German society to chart out the existence of two Germanys:

If you will take a line from the mouth of the Elbe to a spot just north of the city of Dresden [...] you will discover that every German poet known beyond the confines of Germany, every musician, writer of fairy-tales, painter and the like—that every German who has contributed anything noteworthy towards German culture [...] was born to the south-west of that line, and that Prussian Kultur comes almost exclusively from the north and east of that line.⁸⁸

In order to reject Prussian-dominated Germany’s claims to culture, Ford divided the country into the cultured south and the Kultur of the ‘Prussian North’. He counterpoised

⁸⁶ *WBTA*, p. 245.

⁸⁷ Herbert Warren, *Poetry and War* (1914), quoted in Pick, p. 147.

⁸⁸ *WBTA*, p. 20.

the beauty and genius of the south against the violent nature of the 'Prussian North', the force behind the invasion of Belgium. Culture had such importance for Ford's understanding of a nation that he had to reconcile his rejection of the country (and its actions) with his love for its culture. This technique of isolating what one hates in the enemy from the characteristics that one admires would later be identified by critics of First World War propaganda as one of the standard means towards mobilising hatred against the enemy, of dividing the world between what Harold Lasswell characterised as two opposite poles of rhetoric in propaganda, the 'sacred' and the 'satanic'. An emblematic example of this division was offered by Kipling's pronouncement that '[t]here are only two divisions in the world today, human beings and Germans.'⁸⁹

In his pioneering study *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), communications historian and propaganda theorist, Harold Lasswell outlined broad strategies for the propagandist: mobilise hatred against the enemy, preserve the friendship of allies, procure co-operation of neutrals, and demoralise the enemy.⁹⁰ The study primarily describes and analyses the ways the Allies and Central Powers conducted propaganda during the First World War. Lasswell maintained that people must believe that the 'war must not be due to a world system of conducting international affairs, nor to the stupidity or malevolence of all governing classes, but to the rapacity of the enemy'; thus in order to 'mobilise the hate of the people', all blame must be squarely placed with the enemy.⁹¹ Lasswell notes '[w]hen the public believes the enemy began the War and blocks a permanent, profitable and godly peace, the propagandist has achieved his purpose'.⁹² Therefore, the good propagandist must create a complete hatred of the enemy; anything less would not effectively mobilise public opinion. Propaganda was more than 'the spontaneous emanation of mass emotions' of people in wartime; rather, it was a system that emerged as the conscious 'product of the decisions of government.'⁹³ It was planned and organised by governments, and though aspects of First World War propaganda were spontaneous, other aspects (such as its aims) were carefully planned.

⁸⁹ Rudyard Kipling, 'Says We Will Obey If Germany Wins', *New York Times*, 22 June 1915, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the First World War* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 195. This is a reprint of the original with an alternative title.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

Although it could not determine what Ford would produce, the WPB was able to harness his invectives against Germany for its own purposes.

Of particularly ironic interest here is how Ford's narrative of Prussian 'Satanism' in *WBTA* focused particularly on the intellectuals who sacrificed their honesty to write in support of the war. Prussians may have been 'materialist' and 'militarist', according to Ford, but he saved his harshest critique for German academics. Ford hated what he believed was the German academic system's single-mindedness and its concentration on the minutiae of literary insignificance, particularly its obsession with biographical criticism. He found German academics obsessed by facts that were knowable, measurable, or quantifiable, and he argued that when this method was applied to literary studies it stifled creativity. As evidenced by his earlier *The Soul of London* (1905), Ford dismissed facts as a way of knowing or understanding complexities. For example, instead of giving the details of a factory with 720 hat manufacturers and 19,000 employees, Ford claimed he would rather give the reader a 'picture of one, or two, or three hat factories, peopled with human beings, where slow and clinging veils of steam waver over vats and over the warm felt on cutters' slabs.'⁹⁴ Ford also affirmed his elevation of impressions over facts in *Ancient Lights* (1911): 'This book, in short, is full of inaccuracies as to facts, but its accuracy as to impressions is absolute [...] I don't really deal in facts, I have for facts a most profound contempt.'⁹⁵ For Ford, it was individuals that told a story, and not the quantifiable and measurable facts—impressionism was 'a frank expression of personality' characterized by exaggeration and containing multiple emotions and changing viewpoints.⁹⁶ Ford evokes 'literary Impressionism' when he describes *WBTA* as 'sketchy, didactic, and insufficiently impersonal'.⁹⁷ In 'On Impressionism', Ford explains how much we can learn about a character—such as their class, politics, social status, education, and mood—from a simple sentence: 'Them bloody Unionists have crept into Leith because the Labourites, damn them, have taken away 1,110 votes from us.'⁹⁸ Reading impressionistically therefore requires us to pay attention to the character

⁹⁴ Ford Madox Ford, *The Soul of London in England and the English* (Manchester, 2003). p. 3.

⁹⁵ Ford, *Ancient Lights* (London: 1911), p. xv

⁹⁶ 'On Impressionism', *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, pp. 36, 40.

⁹⁷ *WBTA*, p. xix.

⁹⁸ 'On Impressionism', *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, p. 39.

speaking, and what they reveal about themselves without realising, as well as making allowances for characters making contradictory statements.

Ford claimed to have committed himself to this style in order to make the book as readable and popular as possible. He rejected Prussian academic standards of what the proper tone of a serious work should be, and asserted his right to write as a creative artist and not a machine:

I, Professor Hans Delbruek, am a paid official of the Prussian State who was once fined five hundred marks for criticising the action of the Prussian State. By inclination, by self-interest, by national interest, and by conscientious belief I am forced into thinking that the methods of the Prussian State are beneficent and necessary if I and humanity who are of good will are to prosper. I am therefore ransacking history in order to find incidents and precedents that shall make effective propaganda. I am, in fact, a barrister employed by Prussia and I am doing my best for my client.⁹⁹

Although not seeking objectivity, Ford claimed that unlike his imaginary German academic, he was not falsifying evidence and ‘ransacking history’ in order to justify his government’s actions by producing ‘effective propaganda.’ Ford condemned the complicity of the German intelligentsia in sacrificing their independence to support the war. He described their writing as propaganda in both of the senses he understood it: as rhetorical propaganda (just as when a policeman distorts ‘facts in order to secure a conviction’), and as institutional propaganda (just as when the German Professor Hans Delbruek is working directly for the State).¹⁰⁰ Ford claimed that his opinions were independent and personal, and were furthermore on the side of a defence against invasion. By writing for the government and allowing his books to be circulated as part of British propaganda, Ford allowed his writings to work within a concealed system of influence. Whether government affiliation changed actually Ford’s rhetoric or his opinion of the war is not simple to determine; but that affiliation does compromise his claims to independence and suggests a resemblance (in ways he does not acknowledge) with the German intellectuals he condemns.

⁹⁹ *WBTA*, p. ix.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

As Parker had noted, the British blockade was unpopular in America. Britain had extended their list of contraband goods and were routinely boarding American boats and seizing materials. Ford addressed this American anger by dismissing searches as being both less brutal than the German policy of bombing libraries, and as being a necessary evil of the war against the enemy:

[i]f I were a propagandist and tried to preach to the United States I would point out [that] [...] [t]hink what you like about the right to search vessels for contraband; think what you like about the shelling of unfortified towns or the burning of priceless libraries; but if the Prussian Empire assimilate Central Europe, your children born to-day and all unborn Americans for many weary centuries to come will have to become monomaniacs [...] your children [...] will become hopeless industrials, ceaselessly toiling at the work of self-specialisation in one cavern or another of the earth and their own souls.¹⁰¹

Ford directly responds to some of the more popular American complaints in public opinion that Parker had noted by arguing that whatever crimes and mistakes the British may be perpetrating, they are nothing compared to both what the Germans *are* doing (bombing churches and libraries, for example) and moreover, what they *will* do.¹⁰² Ford describes the Germans as ruthless machine-like specialists. He warns his imaginary audience that if no one stops the Germans, they will force their perverse way of life imperialistically upon the rest of the world. Ford represents Prussians as unthinking and brutally violent, in part as a means of defining through negation. The Germans, for Ford, are the antithesis to the cultural alliance between France and England.

In Ford's propaganda, there was an increasing tendency to assert English identity and civilization as the opposite of Prussian barbarism. In Ford's earlier works, such as his trilogy *England and the English* (*The Soul of London* (1905), *Heart of the Country* (1906), and *The Spirit of the People* (1907)), he explored English culture and what it meant to be English through a journey that started in London and moved progressively outwards into the English countryside and provinces. Instead of considering what it meant to be English politically, Ford tried to understand what it meant to be English from

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 317.

¹⁰² For more on the destruction of Louvain, Rheims cathedral and other German attacks on cultural sites, see Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007), esp. chapter 1,.

a cultural standpoint, and how that culture was informed by geography and language over many years. In *WBTA*, he argued that England, France, and Southern Germany shared a common culture that was historically opposed to Prussian militarism and materialism. In *BSDSG*, Ford rather emphasised the unity of France and England: they ‘always have been [...] one and indivisible—one by race, by tradition, by civilisation, and even, strained as the proposition may sound, by construction of language.’¹⁰³ In the later book, he characterizes the English attitude towards international affairs as ‘correctness of attitude [...] the most desirable of all human virtues, at any rate in civic and in social contracts.’¹⁰⁴ This abstract notion of proper behaviour can be understood as part of his general nostalgia for a feudal past, as discussed earlier. Towards the end of *WBTA*, Ford reaffirms his nostalgia once again when he yearns for a past lost to the ‘worship of wealth, the cult of ostentation’; he argues that these decaying values and ‘exploded traditions’ result from the rise of Prussianism:

I should like to see revived a state of things in which port wine and long leisures over the table, and donnish, maybe rather selfish, manners and high gentlemanly traditions, possibly a little too heavy drinking, and classical topic for discussion—in which all these things were considered to be the really high standard of living.¹⁰⁵

Ford laments the loss of a culture of ‘manners and high gentlemanly tradition’, of heavy drinking and conversing on classical topics—the ‘long leisures’ afforded to the property-owning classes. Ford suggested that within these exploded traditions was also the kernel of what it meant to be English; and this core was precisely defined in opposition to what it meant to be Prussian—‘Let us concede [...] the national necessities of a very poor country like Prussia forced upon that people the materialistic view of civilisation’.¹⁰⁶ Ford’s yearning to recapture the English public-school spirit (‘in many ways the finest product of a civilisation’) was deliberately frustrated by the incursion and invasion of Prussianism as both an idea and as a race.¹⁰⁷ In his elevation of the cultivation of the

¹⁰³ *BSDSG*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 182.

¹⁰⁵ *WBTA*, p. 300.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 301.

property-owning upper classes over the materialist drives of the impoverished Prussians, Ford employs yet another binary opposition, this time of class, to distinguish between the origins of the English and German cultures.

While Ford studied culture and not race, his discussion of the relationship of national characters to national cultures resonates with some of the work of race theorists such as Gustave Le Bon (*Psychology of the Great War* (1915)). Similar to Le Bon, Ford argued that the war was not the result of conscious choice or German policy, but was instead the collective expression of national unconscious that became manifest during the strain of war. Le Bon was swept up in the outrage at German atrocities and claimed that the German people were demonstrating their national characters:

[I]t was a great mistake to think that the progress of civilization could transform our feelings by developing our intellects, for nothing of the kind has taken place. Social restraints partially conceal the ancestral barbarity of certain nations, but it is merely disguised, and when these restraints are removed it reappears.¹⁰⁸

Le Bon combined his racial theorisation with his analysis of crowds to conclude that the German people were collectively expressing their inherent ('natural') tendency towards violence. Ford does not go as far as Le Bon in aligning race with culture, but his rhetoric concerning the relationship of a country's culture and its national character does evidence uncomfortable similarities with Le Bon's racial theories. The future of our race is at stake, Ford asserted; and the choice is between the 'organised, materialist egoism' of Prussia and 'the all-round sportsmanship of altruistic culture' in Britain.¹⁰⁹ Thus Ford's virulent tone, and his appeal to a language that resembled the racialist generalisations of Le Bon instead of his claims of emphasising individuals and particular sensations, further complicates our readings of the rhetoric of his cultural propaganda.

Ford contributed to definitions of the common, unified culture of France and England in opposition to the violence of Prussian culture. Ford's rhetorical technique of dividing the world into Manichean spheres (the Prussian North and the civilization of Southern Germany) thus gave language to the case for the necessity of British

¹⁰⁸ Gustave Le Bon, *Psychology of the Great War* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1999), p. 396.

¹⁰⁹ *WBTA*, p. 318.

intervention in the European War, a conflict cast as a war of civilisation against Hun-like barbarism. Germany's invasion of Belgium and the subsequent atrocities committed provided the material and focus for propaganda and were exploited to great effect by the WPB. The Former president of Harvard, Charles W. Eliot, captured the spirit of this exploitation in a letter to James Bryce when he referred to the German violation of Belgian neutrality as 'a very fortunate happening for the cause of freedom and democracy' because it consolidated British opinion on the war.¹¹⁰ Therefore, British propaganda focused much of its discussion on the violation of Belgium's neutrality and Germany's subsequent atrocities, highlighting the emotive barbarity of the enemy. For Ford, this physical violence was simply a material expression of an aspect of its culture and—in rhetoric similar to that employed by Le Bon—its race.

Ford's evocation of English chivalry and the 'sportsman-like' belief in 'fair-play' rang false for opponents to the war, such as writers at the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and George Bernard Shaw. In his *Common Sense About the War*, Shaw took pride in how his position as an Irishman could expose the hypocrisy of the moral arguments behind British involvement in the war. Shaw argued that Britain's treatment of colonies such as Ireland and India undermined its rhetoric of chivalry in defending the Belgians from German occupation and aggression. He maintained that until Home Rule for Ireland emerged from its 'present suspended animation', he would retain his 'Irish capacity for criticising England with something of the detachment of a foreigner' and perhaps 'with a certain slightly malicious taste for taking the conceit out of her.'¹¹¹ Indeed, when placed in an international context, Ford's defining of Anglo-French culture in opposition to the 'violent' and 'expansionist' nature of Prussia is strained by a consideration of the colonial legacies of England and France (as well as Belgium).

Ford dealt with this issue of empire in a peripheral way, maintaining the position that no matter what the situation, the Germans had proven harsher and more barbaric than the British in the past. This evasion of any kind of English or French responsibility in bringing misery to occupied and ruled peoples by insisting on the greater gravity of their

¹¹⁰ Charles W. Eliot to James Bryce, quoted in Nicoletta Gullace, 'Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War', *The American Historical Review*, Vol 102.3 (June 1997), p. 717.

¹¹¹ George Bernard Shaw, 'Common Sense About the War', reprinted in *The European War, Volume I, From Beginning to March 1915* (New York, 1915), p. 11.

enemies' crimes can also be read as rhetorical propaganda. These absolutes that Ford appealed to were uncharacteristic of his criticism, journalism, or fiction. His rejection of Germany on the cultural front had some particularly violent moments:

That a rat has as great a moral right to exist as I myself I am ready to concede. But if I can kill it I will kill it, and its death seems to me to end its rights to existence. And in writing the present book I am attempting to cast such a stone at the rat of Prussianism, as posterity will not willingly [...] well, the reader may complete the simile.¹¹²

Although we may identify the technique of leaving the simile in the reader's imagination as impressionistic, we may also conclude that Ford's employment of de-humanising rhetoric is not reasonable. Whatever passions may have been ignited in Ford as a result of the German invasion of Belgium, they found a more compelling artistic expression in his poem 'Antwerp' (for example), than they did when he employed this kind of rhetoric.

Arthur Mizener describes the argument of *WBTA*, on the other hand, as one conducted with intelligence and restraint, calling it a 'lucid, informal, man-to-man argument.'¹¹³ Jesse Matz's analysis of impressionism as something between the 'sensuous and the rational, the subjective and objective, the personal and the universal' elaborates Mizener's suggestion that Ford's texts have the ability to address the reader in a seemingly intimate and direct fashion.¹¹⁴ Considering some of the quotations this section has examined, we should remain cautious about such evaluations. However, the larger issue at stake is how the emphasis on the style of these texts obfuscates the way they were deployed by the government to justify the war. Critics such as Farrar and Saunders emphasise the aesthetic effects in the book and the way that Ford dramatises his argument through the use of literary impressionism. However, the violent tone, the erratic logic, and the simplistic binaries of 'satanic' and 'sacred' found throughout *WBTA* make them less subtly argued, sophisticated, or crafted than Ford's other fiction and poetry. Such critics' close-readings of *WBTA* offer unwarranted credit for its aesthetic or logical coherence, while failing to acknowledge how such texts functioned as cultural

¹¹² *WBTA*, p. xi.

¹¹³ Mizener, pp. 251-2.

¹¹⁴ Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 157.

justification for the war with Germany within the British propaganda system. The tone of this impressionist text is chauvinist. When understood as part of official war propaganda, this tone can be better accounted for. Furthermore, it illustrates how impressionistic writing, with its emphasis on personal reaction and response, can be conducive to being employed as rhetorical propaganda.

Farrar notes that if Ford had separated the arguments of the book into the mouths and consciousnesses of different characters (as one might do in a novel), then modern readers would be better able to appreciate Ford's ability to capture the contemporaneous war fever and mood of a supporter of the war in 1914. This is an astute observation; and had Ford attempted that project, we would have a fascinating novel that might reflect the complexities of torn loyalties during the war. However, since Ford positions *WBTA* as history and criticism and not as literature, these comments ignore the actual institutional parameters which are important to understanding what was actually in the book, who read it, and how it was distributed. These aspects of the work cannot be read within the text but rather require a historicised reading, to allow critical analysis to reintegrate these meanings back into the text. Ford condemned German intellectuals for surrendering their responsibility as independent critics by serving to justify the actions of their government. Presumably, Ford did not believe that writing for the WPB made him equally compromised, but we must scrutinize this (un-stated) evaluation.

On the level of rhetoric there are stylistic consistencies between Ford's early war-writing and his later cultural criticism, but the differences are quite stark. Ford divides issues of good and evil in ways similar to the best propaganda, as described by Harold Lasswell. On one side stands culture, humanity, honour, and harmony; and on the other is violence, barbarism, dishonesty, and strife. On the first side sits England, France, and Southern Germany; on the other, the Northern part of Germany. This absolute division between good and evil, as Ford casts it, may offer us some insight into rhetorical aspects of Ford's propaganda. Whereas Ford's early journalism was somewhat self-critical of his need to find one-million Germans dead, his propaganda demonstrates no such hesitancy and self-interrogation. Ford's cultural criticism is an unambiguous denunciation of what Ford understands as the military influence of Prussia on German culture.

Voices of dissent are absent from Ford's first volume of cultural criticism. On the institutional level, the government sought to censor, marginalise, and sometimes even intern those with anti-war opinions.¹¹⁵ In Ford's second volume, he refers to those people who protested against the war as 'Anglo-Prussian' apologists, and this book was largely dedicated to responding to their arguments. Dissenters from the cause of war were met with censorship and hostility from the Government. Before turning to Ford's second book, in order to highlight better what privileges Ford enjoyed within the WPB as opposed to writing as an independent critic, let us look at how dissenting literature functioned outside of the government's system of official propaganda.

2.2 WAR WRITING OUTSIDE THE WPB: COMMON SENSE DISSENT

To historicize Ford's institutional propaganda, it is important also to consider what it meant for writers to be outside of the official WPB system, outside the institution of official British propaganda. This section will consider some of the dissenting literature to which Ford would eventually be instructed to respond to in his second book of cultural criticism for the WPB, *BSDSG*.

Shaw's pamphlet *Common Sense about the War* challenged the British justification over its involvement in the continental conflict. Shaw believed the conflict should be 'won', but he scrutinised the way the war was fought and disputed the British version of what a lasting peace should look like. He rejected British criticism of German militarism as one-sided, insisting that both countries had a militarist class and both sides shared responsibility for the war. Pointing to Britain's own conduct in its colonies and in accelerating the Anglo-German arms race, Shaw advocated a more honest discussion of the aims and goals of the war. Illuminating the militarism on both sides, Shaw urged his readers to realise that any lasting peace would need to be an international peace, one that dismissed nationalist priorities and the hatred for other nations:

¹¹⁵ On discussions of interned Germans nationals and dissenters see Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (New York, 1991), and more recently his 'Prisoners of Britain: German Civilian, Military and Naval Internees during the First World War', 'Totally Un-English'? *Britain's Internment of Enemy Aliens in Two World Wars*, *The Yearbook of the Research for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 7 (2005). On the specific experience of one of the most prominent dissidents, the anarchist publisher and writer Rudolph Rocker, see *London Years* (Edinburgh, 2005); and Richard Noschke *An Insight into Civilian Internment in Britain During First World War from the Diary of Richard Noschke and a Short Essay by Rudolph Rocker* (Maidenhead, 1998).

No doubt the heroic remedy for this tragic misunderstanding is that both armies should shoot their officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns; and though this is not at present a practicable solution, it must be frankly mentioned, because it or something like it is always a possibility in a defeated conscript army if its commanders push it beyond human endurance when its eyes are opening to the fact that in murdering its neighbours it is biting off its nose to vex its face, besides riveting the intolerable yoke of Militarism and Junkerism more tightly than ever on its own neck. But there is no chance—or, as our Junkers would put it, no danger—of our soldiers yielding to such an ecstasy of common sense.¹¹⁶

For Shaw, the soldiers on both sides, along with the women and the working poor, were innocents in this battle between the great European powers; he lamented that they did not realise that they were closer to one another than they were to the generals and politicians of their own respective countries. For Shaw the war was between two camps that flew different flags: ‘the red flag of Democratic Socialism and the black flag of Capitalism, the flag of God and the flag of Mammon.’¹¹⁷

For Shaw, if the end of the war was to mean anything more substantial than the rhetoric which concealed its more overt economic and military goals, it had to be a war that worked to dismantle the *roots* of war. Anticipating the eventual settlement, Shaw argued that to end the war by smashing Germany and crippling it financially would be equivalent to looting, pillaging, and raping a country. Real peace would require that Britain realise its own responsibility in creating the war and thus begin the important objective of dismantling the system that contributes to war generally. Shaw dismissed as hypocrisy Britain’s commitment to defending Belgium and its refugees. He castigated the British government for failing to live up to its promise of taking care of the 250,000 Belgian refugees residing in England.¹¹⁸ He lamented that the pragmatic military and economic concerns of the government were concealed behind the rhetoric of humanitarian aid, and that countless innocent people had to suffer needlessly as a result.

Shaw was not a pacifist, however; for him, the war was a worthwhile cause, but it was a war where the soldiers and the people *on both sides* could find something worth

¹¹⁶ Shaw, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 46.

¹¹⁸ For more on Belgian refugees in England see Peter Cahalan, *Belgian Refugee Relief in England During the Great War* (Garland Publishing, 1982).

fighting for. Rejecting abstract notions of English morality and gentlemanly behaviour, Shaw dismissed the contrast between the civilised English and the barbarian ways of the Germans. He argued that for the outcome of the war to mean anything, the general population in both Britain and Germany (and particularly the poor), must benefit from a more just society provided for by a peace settlement that was not simply a pyrrhic victory:

We must use the war to give the coup de grace to medieval diplomacy, medieval autocracy, and anarchic export of capital, and make its conclusion convince the world that Democracy is invincible, and Militarism a rusty sword that breaks in the hand. *We must free our soldiers, and give them homes worth fighting for.* And we must, as the old phrase goes, discard the filthy rags of our righteousness, and fight like men with everything, even a good name, to win, inspiring and encouraging ourselves with definite noble purposes (abstract nobility butters no parsnips) to face whatever may be the price of proving that war cannot conquer us, and that he who dares not appeal to our conscience has nothing to hope from our terrors.¹¹⁹

When Shaw's socialism is contrasted with the official propaganda in support of the war, we see how Shaw avoided the nationalist rhetoric of figures such as Ford for a settlement that was more international. Shaw's opinions can be most closely associated with the Fabian League; and, as we shall see in Chapter Four, they bear some similarities to arguments forwarded by H. G. Wells. Wells believed in establishing an international state that would end war; but, unlike Shaw, he argued that German militarism had to be defeated in order to reach that goal. Britain's crimes did not overshadow Wells's hope for establishing a World State; whereas for Shaw Britain's militarism meant that it needed to overcome its own militaristic society as well as that of Germany. British anti-war writers such as E. D. Morel, J. A. Hobson and Bertrand Russell, radical suffragettes such as Sylvia Pankhurst in England, those prominent in other countries such as Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in the Spartacist League in Germany, and American radicals such as Emma Goldman, W. E. B. DuBois, and Eugene Debs, all offered more rational, detailed, and convincing arguments against the war than Shaw. Shaw's fame, however,

¹¹⁹ Shaw, p. 60, italics mine.

made his pamphlet extremely popular. The other anti-war writers did not have the profile that Shaw commanded, but nonetheless their texts offered an important counterpoint to the official discourses of the war.

The UDC was a group formed by intellectuals and politicians whose aims were to end the war quickly; to ensure a lasting post-war settlement; and to change the way diplomacy, foreign policy and war was conceived and conducted. Its founders included Charles Trevelyan (Secretary to the Board of Education, who resigned when Britain declared war on Germany), E. D. Morel (influential campaigner against Belgian imperialism in the Congo Free State), Arthur Ponsonby (Radical Liberal party member), and later such luminaries as J. A. Hobson (author of *Imperialism* (1905)) and Bertrand Russell. The first UDC leaflet of 1914 expressed the group's desire to make foreign policy more transparent and open to increased democratic input, arguing that 'Aristocratic control' over foreign affairs had consistently failed in avoiding war.¹²⁰ Brock Millman argues that the government's goal in responding to the UDC was to prevent its message from reaching a mass audience, while also mounting counter-propaganda designed so that it did not seem that the government was interfering with the free exercise of speech. Millman argues the government relied primarily on 'volunteer propagandists' who would enforce its influence on dissenters, though books like Ford's *BSDSG* were also commissioned as official responses.¹²¹ Although Shaw (who was not a member of the UDC) would witness his plays removed from library shelves and read how newspapers urged the public to boycott his shows, he could not be prevented from publishing. As the WPB perceived, if it censored him it worried that 'Shaw will make the most' of it and 'people [...] will be convinced that we do not dare allow our literary men to express their views freely to the American public.'¹²² Not all pro-war and anti-dissenting actions were propaganda or emanated from the government; the majority emerged from independent enthusiasts for the war.¹²³ Shaw could not be prevented from publishing. Millman notes that such leniency came as a result of Shaw's fame and was

¹²⁰ Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford, 1971), p. 230.

¹²¹ Millman, p. 30.

¹²² Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw* (Volume 2), p. 355, quoted in Millman p. 78.

¹²³ According to Cate Haste, volunteer propaganda in France, for example, was substantial: by March 1917 there were 30,000 societies with more than eleven million members (p. 47).

not available for less popular writers such as Bertrand Russell. The government prevented Russell from teaching in America once Cambridge fired him for his anti-war activities. Ultimately, Millman argues, the 'level of tolerance shown by the authorities was in direct relation to the popularity of the dissenter in question overseas.'¹²⁴

It was difficult for the government to exercise negative propaganda or censorship directly against public opinion. Through positive propaganda and indirect propaganda, the government relied upon spontaneous (non-governmentally affiliated) propagandists to respond to dissenters. The WPB produced a large amount of materials for foreign distribution. This distribution included direct mailing as well as indirect ways of providing literature and information to a variety of committees, societies, and firms. The literature was commissioned and its means of distribution concealed any government involvement, making all these materials—ranging from pamphlets to books to illustrated magazines—seem as if they were being produced by independent sources, just as UDC materials appeared as independent. But this was not the case, as WPB materials enjoyed protection from censorship along with a substantial budget for publishing.

The WPB's work was funded by the government and sought not only to justify the war, but also to counteract anti-war propaganda. Though Ford's second book particularly championed French culture, its other focus was to respond to critics of the war. In the appendix to *BSDSG*, Ford responds paragraph by paragraph to Shaw's pamphlet. He argued that Germany's militarism was on a scale and magnitude that, due to his naïveté, Shaw did not understand. Ford rejected the comparison of the British Empire to Germany's imperial designs on Europe. Moreover, to bolster his argument he quoted liberally from a variety of German philosophers, literary figures, and generals to demonstrate the violence inherent in German culture and Germany's desires to rule all of Europe. Dissenting literature did not enjoy the same institutional affiliation and protection as Ford's books. This lack of protection from censorship and paper restrictions, as well as the lack of access to distribution networks, rendered dissenting literature outside the protection of the state culturally subordinate to official government propaganda. This distinction proves important to approaching Ford's second book of official propaganda.

¹²⁴ Millman, p. 30.

2.3 BETWEEN ST. DENNIS AND ST. GEORGE

Ford wrote *BSDSG* at the government's request as a means to respond to critics of the war as well as to continue Ford's broader argument about the superiority of the British and French cultures over that of the Prussians.¹²⁵ Whereas in his early war journalism, Ford cast himself as a poet, in this book he declared he would use the historian's methodology to act as a means of correcting the negative effects of rumour. In the age of gossip, he argued, it has become necessary for 'the immense bulk of the population [...] [to] cultivate something of the historian's faculty' which is nothing more than 'a habit of mind [...] which from the uproar of a thousand sentences selects and retains only those things which are first-hand evidence'.¹²⁶ Proposing this more honest criticism, Ford presented himself 'under oath':

The service that I am about to try to do the reader is precisely this: I am about to give very exactly phrased first-hand evidence, not of the Englishman as he is or was, not of the Englishman as I have found him to be, but of that individual as I have found myself to be. And I am about to give exactly phrased first-hand evidence of the German as I have found him to be, and of the Frenchman.¹²⁷

Once again, Ford filters all his impressions and discussion through the presence of himself in the text, while at the same time asserting his honesty as a witness and critic, and offering his own observations as 'first-hand evidence'. Ford now placed his history in opposition to what he called the propaganda of the 'intellectual fictionists' of Shaw and Russell.¹²⁸ Saunders describes the book as an odd thing: 'a propaganda book directed not so much against particular propaganda, but against propaganda itself'.¹²⁹ Ford rejects outright rhetorical propaganda and the manipulation of opinion in favour of the demonstrable truths of the historian in a book that was, in fact, official propaganda.

In her review of the book, 'The Novelist in Controversy', Rebecca West condemns 'our slipshod Press' for waiting to allow 'this analysis, superior in matter and manner to the pamphlet to which it replied' (Shaw's *Common Sense About the War*) to appear, and for not publishing it themselves and offering it as 'wide publicity' as the anti-

¹²⁵ Saunders, p. 474. Ford's critiques of Shaw appeared in *The Outlook* as early as 28 November 1914 ('Literary Portraits—LXIV Mr. Shaw and "Common-Sense About the War"', pp. 693-4).

¹²⁶ *BSDSG*, p. 5.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 29.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹²⁹ Saunders, p. 475.

war tracts.¹³⁰ The irony, of course, was that the Government was offering the publicity for the book, not the press. Ford does not reflect on how his institutional connection may complicate his own position. Instead, he focuses on the issue of rhetoric. The anti-war writers employed methods of ‘the irresponsible artist’ and were propagandists in the rhetorical sense:

Just as the novelist of a certain school will make all landowners appear to be oppressive and unimaginative, or just as novelists of another school will make all Socialists appear in the guise of wife-beaters or usurers, or all Christians fornicators and dipsomaniacs, so these writers treat of [sic] secret diplomacy.¹³¹

Ford claimed that his methods were more historical because they were more rigorous-- ‘we must get down to facts [...], we must insist on documentation, and not the most splendid of oratory must move us or we shall be false to our country.’¹³² As Sara Haslam notes, more than a third of the book is made up of appendices, footnotes, and quotations from other writers and journalists, and illustrate Ford’s scrupulous attention to detail.¹³³

In subsequent sections, Ford presents a ‘true’ and ‘impartial’ history of German naval affairs up to the time of the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare during the war. In contrast to the disreputable use of submarines, he praised British naval strength, but dismissed claims that Britain dominated the sea as ‘stupid’. He described the discipline Great Britain brought to the sea as in a ‘certain sense beautiful.’¹³⁴ Ford argued that ‘[e]ven the blockade of towns by ships’ crews in the distant offing is a feat intellectual when compared with the [German] burning of Louvain.’ Although Ford could not have known that modern estimates credit the British naval blockade with causing over a million deaths, he does not reflect on how the British mining of German ports and its naval blockade might have led to the escalation of the German submarine policy.¹³⁵ In

¹³⁰ Rebecca West, ‘The Novelist in Controversy’, Frank MacShane (editor), *Ford Madox Ford: Critical Heritage* (London, 1972), p. 53.

¹³¹ *BSDSG*, p. 18.

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹³³ Haslam (2007), p. 209.

¹³⁴ *BSDSG*, p. 109.

¹³⁵ Offering comparative studies of mortality rates of women during the war, Jay Winter demonstrates that the naval blockade led to enormous non-military deaths in Germany. See Jay Winter’s essay ‘Surviving the War: Life Expectation, Illness, and Mortality Rates in Paris, London, and Berlin, 1914-1919’ in *Capital Cities at War London, Paris, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 1997). Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker calculate that Winter’s figures suggest that the blockade led to over a million deaths in

Ford's propaganda, there is no sense that Britain shares in any responsibility for the war; the war was strictly the result of German aggression and German desire for expansion. That Britain can bring discipline to the unruly sea may strike Ford as a beautiful image, but the material reality of that discipline and how it affected other people's lives fails to arrive as an impression in his imagination.

Ford decried the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare which resulted in the deaths of innocent women and children, particularly in the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Despite warnings from the German government to neutrals sailing on ships with British flags, there was widespread outrage at the German actions. This reaction was augmented by the fact that the sinking of the ship by chance coincided with the government release of the *The Bryce Report: Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (1915). Ford was horrified by the sinking of the transport ship and saw the attack as pivotal for the Germans in raising the stakes of the war. The sinking of the *Lusitania* did not draw America into the war (still a commonly held misconception), but it did strain German-American relations. British propaganda capitalised on American sentiment over the incident. Ford was irate with the sinking of a commercial ship that killed 1,198 people (124 of whom were American), and referred to it as an act of barbarism. He found particularly brutal the rumour that a German submarine surfaced afterwards to film the sinking of the ship. Others were horrified that the Germans had struck a medal commemorating the event.¹³⁶ Ford was outraged with both the sinking of the *Lusitania*

Germany (See *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War* (London, 2002) p. 62). Alan Kramer complicates the notion that the blockade was the *sole* cause of deaths. He notes, for example, that 'Germany was at war with several countries that had been its main suppliers of grain, above all Russia.' For more on Kramer's challenging of the 'hunger blockade' thesis see *Dynamic of Destruction*, p. 154.

¹³⁶ On 7 May 1915, German submarines torpedoed the British liner the *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland. Because of the American casualties, the US government claimed that the act was an atrocity and, while not breaking their neutrality, reprimanded the Germans for their actions. Despite *Lusitania* flying a British flag—making it a belligerent ship—the incident became a flash point for controversy when rumours began to circulate that the German submarine surfaced to film the sinking of the ship. Worse were the stories that the Germans had had a special medal struck in commemoration of the event. According to Arthur Ponsonby, there were a large number of these medals that circulated in Britain—leaving the impression that these medals were quite common in Germany. Lord Newton explained these phenomena a decade later

I asked a West End store if they could undertake the reproduction of it for propaganda purposes. They agreed to do so, and the medals were sold all over the world in neutral countries, especially in America and South America (Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime* (London, 1928), p. 124).

250,000 medals were sold and proceeds went to the Red Cross and St. Dunstan's. The original was an unofficial medal made by a man named Goetz in Munich and sold as a novelty item with a limited circulation. Newton understood how insulting and angering it would be for the Germans to commemorate

and Germany's conduct during its invasion of Belgium, but in respect of the latter he did not choose to accentuate the atrocities as much as the act of invasion itself. In *BSDBG*, Ford attributes the sinking of the ship to 'works written by Captain Marryat and descriptions of commerce-destroying by [sic] frigates and privateers during the Napoleonic Wars.'¹³⁷

BSDSG is not so much a rejection of German culture as much as it is a promotion and celebration of the superiority of French culture, and of the particularly close relationship between France and England. The book still has passages, however, which refer to the Germans as savage Huns. Take for example a moment when Ford imagines leaders from the Prussian Royal State speaking:

Let us at least go down amidst such waves of blood and such sounding of iron that future historians may at the least say we died splendidly true to our traditions. If we cannot keep the iron sceptre for ever in our grasp, let us at least imprint upon the page of history such gory finger-marks of our Mailed Fist as the tides of oblivion shall never wash out. If we cannot reign in the memory along with Marcus Aurelius and Constantine let us at least be remembered as are Attila and Genghis Khan.¹³⁸

Ford called Shaw and the UDC writers 'intellectual fictionists' because they 'clothe dummy figures with [...] the ideals that they pretend to portray [...] [then] they proceed to foil, confute, and hopelessly confuse their puppets according to the traditions of Adelpic melodrama.'¹³⁹ As the above quotation from an imagined Prussian Royal indicates, Ford did not reflect on how close his own writing came to fulfilling this description. In an early discussion of impressionism and the works of Joseph Conrad, Ford noted that 'an author-creator, presenting his narration without passion, may not indulge in the expression of any prejudices or like any one of his characters more than any other'. To mark further the distinction between his literary production and his cultural propaganda, we can note how different his standards were for this war-writing.¹⁴⁰ Ford appealed to economic facts and figures as well as the specificity of cultural history

what amounted to a massacre and thus capitalized on this event by aiding in the rumour transforming into fact (Ibid, p. 122).

¹³⁷ *BSDSG*, p. 99.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 55.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ford, 'Techniques', *Critical Writings*, p. 69.

intertwined with his own observations, and argued that his amalgamated analysis was fact. At the same time as rejecting the German obsession with facts, he also claimed the need to respond creatively to the war. Thus, in this confusion, Ford ended up employing similar bombast and imaginary drama as the critics he deplored. Shaw was not apologizing for Prussia as much as he was condemning the militarism on both sides; Ford, on the other hand, was seemingly in complete support of all of the Allied actions.

In *BSDSG* Ford also expresses the position from which he speaks as someone with an intimate knowledge of English, French, and German culture. Ford's insider awareness of these countries, he argued, made him an informed and privileged critic of the language, culture and mentality of these different peoples and their respective governments. Early on in the war, he considered the conflict from his personal connection to each of the belligerent countries, but in his later propaganda we notice how he privileges Allied culture and interprets the conflict from its standpoint. If one assumes a position outside of the major national narratives of the Allies of the Great War—particularly one of those that dissented from the war, such as Irish nationalists, South African army rebels, South Asian dissidents and revolutionaries, Quebecois in Canada, or IWW workers in Australia protesting against conscription—the Allied case of a united empire defending justice and liberty and preventing atrocity is more difficult to accept.¹⁴¹ What Ford's text does not reveal, however, is that it was work being used by the government to undermine the German case for war while bolstering Americans' notions of British civilisation, democracy, and liberty in order to persuade them to break American neutrality. Concealing his connection to the WPB, Ford hid an aspect of his true position that might have illuminated what he was arguing in his books, and (more importantly) for what reasons (or for whom) he was making those arguments.

Ford decried British repression of the Irish, but criticised the stupidity of British rule rather than the cruelty that such occupations inflicted on the Irish: his conclusion was that 'no one race had the right to subjugate another.'¹⁴² Ford's arguments offered him the opportunity for a larger critique of war and empire, but he transferred his potential self-critique of the British case and his sympathy with subject peoples into a condemnation of

¹⁴¹ For more details, see Henk Wesseling's chapter on 'The First World War and the Colonies', in *The European Colonial Empires 1815-1919* (Edinburgh, 2004).

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 48-50.

the particular brutality of the German imperial war-machine. Rather than universally applying his conclusion regarding subject races, Ford re-oriented his argument towards denouncing the artistic and militarist culture of Germany in comparison with the humanity of the cultures of England and France. In ‘A Tory Plea for Home Rule (1)’ of 1911, Ford had bemoaned Britain’s inefficient rule of Ireland and urged his fellow Tories to support leaving the Irish to self-rule: ‘Let them have their abuses in their own way.’¹⁴³ Because Ireland had no money, Ford argued, it was impossible to rule; and ‘all that historically we have ever been able to try to take from the Irish is their lives, their lands, their cattle and their Faith[...] [a]nd those last are the things that men fight to the death for’. As the ruling class, Ford claims that the Tories love the Irish like naughty children whom it is their role to govern, but he insists that Ireland is not governable: ‘You could not even keep an Irish servant in order [...] [y]ou have no rewards to give that would move him; there are no punishments you can give that he can feel as a humiliation.’¹⁴⁴ Ford argued that it was the Tories’ business to govern, ‘but not Ireland.’ Britain needed to quit Ireland because it was a hopeless cause, not because self-governance was an important value or the British had ruled the country poorly—they tried to rule well, but the Irish themselves made it impossible.

In his propaganda, Ford avoided discussing Britain’s rule of Ireland in favour of comparing what he considered the more heinous crimes of the Germans in Poland. Shaw argued that as an Irishman he found British complaints over the excesses of the Prussian Empire hypocritical. But for Ford, Prussian imperialism, particularly the prospect of its rule over Europe, was different from British imperialism. ‘Prussia has oppressed Poland’, he argued ‘in a manner and with a callousness that pass the bound of credibility and that put all other oppressions to shame.’¹⁴⁵ In addressing the Irish, Ford pointed out how much worse the Germans treated its colonies than Britain did its own: ‘I wonder how [the Irish] would like the prospect of being transported from County Galway or the Bronx to a Prussianised Verviers and made to work ceaselessly, day in day out, until they, in their turn, had eaten out of house and home the local population.’¹⁴⁶ Unlike

¹⁴³ Ford, *Critical Essays*, p. 99.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 100.

¹⁴⁵ *WBTA*, p. 318.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

Shaw, Ford is not animated by the possibility of an international settlement that could constitute a more just global system; he simply wants Germany's aggression curtailed. He did not consider British responsibility in the current conflict or throughout its empire in general, focusing instead on the horrors of German Junkerism and its desire for world domination.

Although Ford argued that his second book was a history, it was still more of a study of language and literature than a book of history such as the work of Flaubert: 'we are, in the end, governed so much more by words than by deeds.'¹⁴⁷ In an article from *The Outlook* ('France, 1915 (continued)') Ford argued that much of the war had to with aesthetics, especially the need for plain language and clarity: '[w]e are at war today very largely because of the imbecilely figurative language that prevails in German Ministries and Chancelleries, and of the imbecilely phrased reservations that characterise the diplomatic language of the rest of the world.'¹⁴⁸ Germany threatened the world with its eagle banner to 'unsheathe the sword that their fathers had bequeathed to them'. Ford argued that if only the world could have got together and explained to Germany that '[w]e are not so efficiently organized as you, but we are determined to support France, and if you violate the neutrality of Belgium we shall put into the field all the forces that we can raise to oppose you' it would have at least been a clear message to Germany and might have led it to back down. To avoid similar blunders in the future, Ford argued, 'it is important that clarity of phrase and exactness of thought should be cultivated.'¹⁴⁹ This is an aesthetic matter for Ford, and he believed that the only way to make 'a decent thing of peace' was by seeing things clearly and in turn giving matters 'just expression.'¹⁵⁰ In light of these calls for clarity and precision, let us consider how Ford extended his discussion on language in *BSDSG*. Ford argued that the fall of the French monarchy had more to do with Henry IV of France saying 'Je veux que chaque paysan ait une poule au pot le dimanche' than with all that the Encyclopaedists did combined.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the genius who invented the phrase 'Honesty is the Best Policy' had had more of a material influence on England, according to Ford, than the invention of the spinning jenny. It is

¹⁴⁷ *BSDSG*, p. 203.

¹⁴⁸ *Critical Essays*, 'France, 1915 (continued)', p. 171.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 173.

¹⁵¹ *BSDSG*, p. 67.

worth recalling that critics such as Judd and Mizener have referred to Ford's propaganda as 'lucid.' Ford highlights two important things: his unflinching belief in the power of language to bring change to our personal and public lives, and his consequent refusal to offer a seriously coherent, cultural, or fact-based study of the war.

To read impressionist writing, Ford had explained, we must carefully attend to how the argument emerges from the dramatic interplay of contradictions, mood, and personality unfolding within the text, as opposed to expecting to find it via a linear and logical process. Recalling also Ford's injunction to read impressionist prose dramatically and learn as much from how someone speaks as much as what they are saying, we are aware of the persona of Ford in his texts. He is flamboyant and ridiculous, learned and encyclopaedic, as well as being inflammatory and aggressive in these two books. Max Saunders suggests that one of the purposes of *BSDSG* is to help recreate the mindset of an Englishman in 1914. Ford's language, however, did not only reflect a war mindset; it represented his mindset—a mindset influenced by the imperative of responding to critics of the war. These books of cultural criticism differ from his other critical prose by virtue of how important the war was for him. The continuities between his non-governmental prose and his propaganda do not also account for the increasing virulence in this book, his insistence on Manichean divisions between good and evil, and his claims on the power of words to affect the material realities of the war.

It is precisely Ford's own rhetoric and language that obfuscates the issues of the war. Furthermore, as government propaganda his work was deployed by the government to influence the mindset of neutral intellectuals in America by means of cultural denunciations of Germany.¹⁵² Ford may have employed irony, hesitation, and dramatic rhetoric, such as contradiction or outrage, to provoke a response in his audience.¹⁵³ However, there are moments in his text when Ford clearly demonstrates a harsh and unforgiving rejection of anything German: 'I wish Germany did not exist, and I hope it will not exist much longer [...] Burke said that you cannot indict a whole nation. But you can.'¹⁵⁴ In *BSDSG*, Ford demonstrated a chauvinistic support for the Allied cause

¹⁵² Saunders, p. 475.

¹⁵³ See Sara Haslam, *Fragmenting Modernism: Ford Madox Ford, the Novel and the First World War* (Manchester, 2002).

¹⁵⁴ *BSDSG*, p. 66.

through the lens of culture rather than offering military or economic arguments. The arguments in the book are not logical, fair or insightful with regard to the historical situation of the war. Both *BSDSG* and *WBTA* are not coherent as works of cultural criticism, but they do form an important part of the Ford's oeuvre. These books are a testament to Ford's relationship to the war, a relationship he tried to avoid and disavow in later years as he concentrated on his wartime military experience.

The books of propaganda are not as complex as Ford's responses to the war in his best poetry and fiction. Ford's most memorable literary work contains a broader scope of possible readings than the denouncement of Germany and the praise of England and France that comes from his propaganda. Ford's later works were influenced by both his experience of writing propaganda and his experience in the trenches. Looking at these literary responses, we can note that beyond the fact that Ford's literary production was free of the institutional connection with the government, the rhetoric and expression of these works greatly differ from his propaganda work.

3.0 FORD'S POST-WAR RECOLLECTIONS OF PROPAGANDA: *NO ENEMY*

In order to provide a historicised reading of Ford's cultural criticism, this chapter has emphasised the necessity of understanding Ford's institutional connection to the WPB. The distanced readings of Ford's texts it has supplied, situate them within a broader institutional and historical relationship to the WPB and British propaganda of the First World War. Ford's texts were part of the British government's propaganda campaign aimed at American intelligentsia; they were directly mailed to prominent Americans to influence the government to cease official neutrality. To emphasize further the way the government produced and used Ford's texts, it is also important to see how, in contrast, the British Government stifled anti-war speech and how non-governmental war-writing did not enjoy the same privileges as Ford's texts. However rhetorically polemic we may find Shaw's writing, it was not propaganda in the same sense that Ford's texts were—Shaw's work did not enjoy the same freedom from censorship, publication access, and distribution networks as Ford's WPB books. While emphasising institutional propaganda, this chapter has also paid attention to the continuities and disjunctions between Ford's other war-writing and his official propaganda at the level of rhetoric. Ford commits rhetorical gestures in his propaganda that he denounced in his literary

criticism: his discursive division between culture and barbarism, his violent rejections of German culture, and his continued reliance on assertion (however incongruous) over argumentation and presentation. This last section moves towards a consideration of Ford's memory of his propaganda work in some of his later post-war prose.

In a memoir, *It Was the Nightingale* (1933), Ford recounts how he was called up by Arnold Bennett to write in favour of a particular peace-deal. The two quarrelled furiously, according to Ford, because Ford believed France deserved more from the peace negotiations than Britain was offering. Despite fighting, Bennett still wanted to see an article from Ford on the peace settlement—implying Ford would fall into line when producing materials for an official government agency. Ford recalled writing the article 'on the top of a bully-beef case in between frantic periods of compiling orders as to every conceivable matter domestic to the well-being of a battalion on active service'.¹⁵⁵ In his article, Ford demanded Lloyd George's government offer France a more just share of any peace settlement. He explained that although the article was lost in the post, Ford received a reprimand from his immediate superiors and was reminded that an officer of His Britannic Majesty's Army 'was prohibited from writing for the press.' Whereas in his article 'Hands off of the Arts' Ford simply failed to mention his connection to First World War propaganda when he denounced propaganda, in this episode he cast himself as independent and defiant in the face of government requests to write against his own convictions. In emphasizing his fidelity to his own opinions, Ford recalled his experiences with propaganda as one of valiant resistance to and independence from the system, downplaying his proximity to government propaganda before he entered the army and failing to reflect on how this involvement might have compromised his stance on the relationship of propaganda to the arts.

In *No Enemy* (1929), Ford offers an insight into his changing mentality during and after the war, especially his work with propaganda.¹⁵⁶ Ford claimed to have produced the bulk of the writing of *No Enemy* in 1919, despite the fact the novel only appeared in the late twenties. In a letter to Hugh Walpole on 2 December 1929 Ford explains that *No*

¹⁵⁵ Ford Madox Ford, *It Was the Nightingale* (New York, 1984), p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ For more on how the way rumour and propaganda work in *Parade's End* see Trudi Tate's *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 50-62. For a discussion on impressionism, propaganda, and *The Good Soldier* see chapter 3 of Mark Wollaeger's *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda* (2006). Ford Madox Ford, *No Enemy* (New York, 1984).

Enemy was written ‘partly in the line and partly just after the Armistice’.¹⁵⁷ This is important to note, because unlike other popular war novels such as Erich Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) or Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), which focus on the combat experience of the war (and are also critical of the war), Ford’s novel concentrates more on a soldier in the aftermath of the war trying to put his life back together. In contrast to the experience of the war in other combat novels, in this novel Ford was interested in the way the war was being fashioned in the memory of veterans through narratives.

The title for Ford’s book came from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*:

Who doth ambition shun,
 And loves to live i’ th’ sun
 Seeking the food he eats
 And pleased with what he gets,
 Come hither, come hither, come hither.
 Here shall he see no enemy
 But winter and rough weather (II, v, 132-38).

The speech marks a withdrawal from the life of war, to a place where cold weather and not other people will be the only enemy. These lines capture the yearning for pastoral innocence that permeates the life of the hero of the story, Gringoire. In Ford’s book, an interviewer visits the writer Gringoire, who is a cipher for Ford—he is large, he enjoys cooking, he once owned the *English Review*, he knew the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska, and he authored verses which are identical to some of the lines which appear in Ford’s poem ‘On Heaven’. The narrator of the story explains that the book is a record of the transformation of the poet Gringoire during and after the war, and charts this change through a series of interviews with the writer. Gringoire now lives on a farm on his soldier’s pension, and spends his time growing plants and running his house as efficiently as possible, not relying on anyone: ‘I will depend on the profits of no man’s labor, and I will produce more food than I eat and more thought than I can take from the world.’¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Richard M. Ludwig, editor, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford* (Princeton, 1965), p. 191.

¹⁵⁸ *No Enemy*, p. 273.

While tending his garden, walking or cooking he takes breaks to share long monologues on his thoughts and memories of the war which the compiler weaves into his narrative.

Ford's narrator allows him a channel by which to separate himself further from his post-war self-dramatisation. After the war, Gringoire explains, he did not stop using the word Hun. He thought it still an appropriate signifier for the enemy. The enemies for Gringoire however were the German military elite, the professors, the politicians and the defenders of the war, not 'the poor bloody footsloggers who were immediately before us' on the other side of the trenches.¹⁵⁹ Gringoire demonstrates a fondness for his fellow soldiers and a hatred for the German military elite that caused the war. Instead of describing his experiences of combat in the trenches, he discusses his earlier work in propaganda.

Gringoire always had a 'dreamy contempt for politics': '*Ah, mais non. That one should prostitute one's pen!*'¹⁶⁰ He claimed to focus his propaganda writings on issues of economics and culture (eschewing atrocity propaganda); when speaking of the enemy he aimed at discussing the Germans as the 'gallant enemy'.¹⁶¹ Later, however, his propaganda focused almost entirely on economic and cultural matters. Gringoire's hatred was reserved for the architects of the war, though he concedes that both sides believed they had good causes.¹⁶² Moreover, Gringoire never believed that the Germans committed atrocities: 'I SIMPLY DO NOT believe in atrocities [...] or at the most I half believe in one. It is asserted—the Huns asserted themselves but I found it difficult to believe—that they filmed the *Lusitania* whilst she was sinking. That I find atrocious.'¹⁶³ What Gringoire found disgusting was the use of a 'cinema machine to represent, for the gloating of others, the ruin and disappearance of a tall ship'. Ford's explanation of only half-believing the rumour of the German soldiers filming the *Lusitania* is consistent with his discussion of the sinking in *BSDSG*. However the implication in *No Enemy* that the filming might have been a rumour takes on a different significance from the earlier propaganda text: 'perhaps they never did it. Perhaps they only said that they did.' During the war, as I have mentioned, false medals were struck to make it appear that the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 47.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 69.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 91.

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 108.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 109.

Germans had celebrated the event, and those rumours (along with the story of the filming of the sinking) were part of the discourse of the inhumanity of the Germans. After the war, Gringoire's reflection on the haze of rumours—suggesting that the Germans themselves might have originated the story—suggests how fragile the understanding had been of what was happening in the war. Gringoire had emerged after the war seemingly with a stoic and even-handed interpretation of the conflict, as well as an awareness of how stories, rumour, and legends took on their own reality. Although we should be wary of reading these discussions and pronouncements as being directly applicable to Ford's own war-writing, as Gringoire is presented as a fictional character with some autobiographical qualities they do suggest a critical and literary distance that Ford did not build into his cultural propaganda. Ford further complicates our first impression of Gringoire and the way the war affected him when the character speaks about his garden.

Gringoire explains how his contact with the earth has helped him to reconstruct himself after the war. He elaborates on how such activity can become addictive, and he understands that farmers are disagreeable because of their attachment to their land. He understands what it means now to awaken to find 'a whole crop of seedlings has vanished before myriads of slugs':

It is a loss, ruin perhaps. It is like a death: a profound and unforeseen disaster. And your mind personifies the slug as intelligent, malignant, a being with a will for evil directed against you in person. I think that, whilst it lasts, it is the worst feeling in the world.¹⁶⁴

Here Gringoire inadvertently reveals more of how the war has changed him; he projects motivations, anger and deceit upon the slugs. We see how easy it is for Gringoire to assign blame and wilfulness for causing harm for the death of those things that he loves. Later Gringoire reveals that the death of the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska had a similar effect on him. It is this wilfulness and anger that resonates with Ford's attitude towards the Germans during the war; particularly his strong reaction to the death of a close friend.

The sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska was an important presence within the Vorticist group that surrounded the journal *Blast*. His close friendships with Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, and Ford amongst others made him a particularly mourned figure. Just as

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 46.

the death of Gaudier hit their entire circle hard, so too did it affect the fictional Gringoire. As a result of Gaudier's death, he recounts, 'I began to want to kill certain people. I still do—for the sake of Gaudier and those few who are like him.'¹⁶⁵ Though the death of Gaudier was too late to account for Ford's own shift in tone from his earlier articles and his later propaganda, the dramatisation of the effect of his death provides some insight into the way in which grief and anger can change the mentality of a person towards vengeance and the desire to kill. Ford reveals Gringoire's need for revenge and for assigning guilt toward those that have brought him pain and misery, human emotions which for Gringoire spring from war. Despite his ability to filter his own impressions through his cultural criticism, Ford did not bring that kind of personal emotion to his propaganda. What reads as fire and brimstone toward the German Hun in Ford's propaganda reads more as impotent rage toward those who inflicted war on the people and the things that Gringoire loved.

There is a further sense of the way in which the war dead affect Gringoire when he recalls seeing hundreds of swallows at the front. Gringoire describes them with 'their rust-stained breasts against high, blotted, gray clouds'.¹⁶⁶ They were so near, 'that they brushed my hands, and they extended so far that I could see nothing else [...]it was like a miracle.'¹⁶⁷ Quickly, though, the memory disintegrates when Gringoire recalls how many dead lay amongst the thistles and how many flies must have collected on their bodies. The swallows had not collected as a chance act of beauty during the war, but instead to feed on the flies feeding on the dead. In a similar fashion, Ford did not emphasise the dead of the war in *No Enemy*, but the dead have a presence in the book. They are below the surface, not as ghosts, but instead as a presence that animates the need for Gringoire to explain and narrate his stories. Once again, Ford's tone is not one of rage, but instead one of sadness, elegy, and a kind of constrained horror of the brutality the war unleashed.

There is melancholy in Ford's post-war writing which does not explain his own changes, but instead dramatises the change that runs through the character he resembles. Ultimately, whether in his propaganda or in his novels or poems, we cannot find a way of

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 110.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 45.

accounting for how the war affected Ford or the choices he made. Ford's literature humanises his responses to the Belgian refugees, the death of his friends, and the enormity of the chaos of the war in a way that is completely dissonant from the tone of his propaganda.

Ford did not write literature for the WPB, but cultural propaganda. Ford's literary writing would not have worked as well for propaganda as his cultural criticism did, because his literary writing offers images, characters, and narratives that suggest the potential for multiple interpretations. In considering Ford's propaganda as opposed to his literature, it proves more fruitful to look at how Ford was part of a system and an institution of propaganda, rather than as an individual author for that entire system or even a particular discourse contrasting British and German culture. Such contextualisation places the criticism of Ford's work within the framework of First World War propaganda, instead of trying to account for the personal choices he made in writing propaganda or fighting in the war.

When Gringoire claims that his propaganda 'would not have been different [...] if it had been unofficial or if there had been no war', we should be wary of accepting his conflation of rhetorical and institutional propaganda.¹⁶⁸ Ford might have written the same books had he written them for the British government or not; but having his books institutionally affiliated with the WPB transformed the texts in terms of their use and their audience. In concealing his association with the WPB, Ford made himself appear as an independent voice. Whatever his claims regarding the content and the rhetoric of these works, to understand how these books were published, distributed, and potentially received, or even for what purposes they were deployed and by whom, requires an examination of how their institutional affiliations transformed Ford's texts into official propaganda.

While the WPB may not have been dictating the type of works Ford authored, in commissioning, printing, and distributing his two books of criticism, the WPB made use of Ford's texts as propaganda. Although Shaw and Ford might have shared bombastic and argumentative rhetorical styles while taking different sides on the issue of the war, what distinguishes Ford's work from Shaw's is that Ford's works were published and

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 197.

distributed by the government, and as a result enjoyed all the privileges associated with that official relationship; Shaw's on the other hand enjoyed the celebrity associated with its author, but no governmental protection. Ford's work shared more in common with other WPB materials such as the cartoons of Louis Raemaekers and the *Bryce Report*; however, these later works were aimed at a wider audience, and due to their popularity and accessibility were more successful in evoking condemnation for German brutality (see chapter three).¹⁶⁹ Ford's tracts served an entirely different purpose and had a different market from atrocity propaganda such as *The Bryce Report* and Raemaekers's cartoons. They were positioned as the independent voice of an important literary figure and were aimed at denouncing Germany on the cultural front. They were presented as history. The WPB could not know what propaganda would work and what would not, as their early methodology was improvised. But however improvised, it was not unplanned. However much it relied on independent pro-government intellectuals to write propaganda, the WPB had to ensure a certain amount of planned material would also be produced and aimed at American intellectuals to counter German influence. Thus Ford's texts functioned within particular boundaries of expectation and they were sent to American intellectuals to maximise the effect of denouncing German civilisation with the further aim of justifying the war and trying to persuade America to break its neutrality in the war. Ford gave his cultural criticism to the government for propaganda, but he kept his literary work independent. Apart from a difference in their institutional affiliations, Ford's propaganda and his literature have fundamental differences on a rhetorical level too.

Ford claimed his two books of cultural propaganda were rigorous and that they employed the same literary techniques as his other writing. His denunciations of Germany, however, reveal a tone that is chauvinist and dismissive of German literature and culture. In his imaginative fiction, Ford brought a subtlety of presentation that offered readers the possibility of interpretation from different perspectives, not just of denunciation, but of elegy, regret, and pain alongside anger. It is precisely this

¹⁶⁹ Louis Raemaekers, *Raemaekers' Cartoon History of the War, Volume One: The First Twelve Months of the War* (London, 1919); and Viscount Bryce, *The Bryce Report: Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages Appointed by His Britannic Majesty's Government and Presided Over by the Right Hon. Viscount Bryce, O.M* (New York, 1915).

multiplicity that propaganda tries to limit. Away from the institutional realm, the contrast between propaganda and art can be seen in Ford's use of Shakespeare.

The titles of both Ford's books of cultural criticism come from *Henry V*. 'When Blood is their argument' is a line delivered by a soldier to a disguised King Henry on the eve of battle, and 'Between St. Dennis and St. George' comes from Henry wooing Katherine into a marriage between England and France that would produce progeny to vanquish their common enemy, the Turk. In *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003), Vincent Sherry illustrates how unruly and inadequate Shakespeare proved for propaganda; he reproduces a recruitment poster that reads:

STAND NOT
UPON THE
ORDER OF
YOUR GOING.
BUT GO
AT ONCE

Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 3.4

ENLIST NOW¹⁷⁰

Isolated, these words suggest a patriotic sense of duty. When taken in their original context however, they suggest different, contradictory meanings. Lady Macbeth delivers these orders to assassins at a banquet following Macbeth's fit of madness at the sight of the ghost of Banquo, whose murder he had just ordered. Sherry notes that considering the context in which these lines are spoken undermines the patriotic tone of the war poster. Similarly, with Ford's title are we to assume that only the Germans are the ones who use blood as their argument? In his speech in *Henry V*, the soldier warns that if the King's purpose for going to war is not just—'if the cause be not good'—then the King will be haunted by the return of all the dismembered limbs and heads of the dead. James Shapiro points out '[t]hose seeking to pinpoint Shakespeare's political views in *Henry V*

¹⁷⁰ Reproduced from a poster in Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford, 2003), p. 59.

will always be disappointed [...] the play is not a political manifesto.’¹⁷¹ The play is filled with critical voices:

the backroom whispers of self-interested churchmen, the grumblings of low life conscripts, the blunt criticism of worthy soldiers who know that leaders make promises they have no intention of keeping, the confessions of so-called traitors, the growing cynicism of a young boy off to the wars, the infighting among officers, the bitter curses of a returning soldier [...] much of the play, from beginning to end, is composed of scenes in which opposing voices collide over the conduct of the war [...] the debate about the war is the real story.¹⁷²

Shakespeare’s play is not about war, in Shapiro’s reading; it is instead about the debates over going to war. It presents anger and protest over the war as well as the suggestion of British brutality (Henry threatens to see France’s ‘naked infants spitted upon pikes’ if they do not surrender, for example) *alongside* rousing patriotism. In his literary work, Ford’s impressionism was a playful expression of the dramatic and aimed at providing new experiences in language. Ford denounced propaganda as assertion, emotional prose, and writing based on selectivity and dishonesty. However, Ford’s two books of cultural criticism are open to these accusations; they employ impressionism as a writing style, but do not offer questions or hesitations over Britain’s case against Germany.

Ford selects passages from Shakespeare for the purposes of propaganda to bolster support for his case against Germany, but literature does not easily lend itself to being recruited as rhetorical propaganda. There remains the danger however, particularly with impressionist writing, that it may be used for such ends—to capture the interest of your reader, Ford explains, ‘you will seek to exasperate so that you may the better enchant [...] [y]ou will, in short, employ all the devices of the prostitute [...] [t]hat is why the artist is, quite rightly, regarded with suspicion by people who desire to live in tranquil ordered society.’¹⁷³ But, as if to respond to the instability of impressionist writing, he further asserts that you ‘must not write propaganda’ or try to change the reader’s opinion, to ‘improve him’ or ‘influence him’—through attending to the writing, as a craftsman approaches his work, the impressionist writer can hopefully attain his effects without forcing his reader to submit to the writer’s will, instead persuading her to consent to his

¹⁷¹ James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London, 2005), p. 91.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁷³ ‘On Impressionism’, *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, p. 54.

impression. This is a fine and subtle distinction between propaganda and art, one that other artists have also puzzled over. In a footnote to *Three Guineas* (1938), Virginia Woolf argued *Antigone* could be used as propaganda, but would not work too well because the characters ‘[s]uggest too much’; Sophocles uses all his resources as a writer to present enough opinions and perspectives to have us even sympathising with Creon. Woolf asserts

if we use art to propagate political opinions, we must force the artist to clip and cabin his gift to do us a cheap and passing service. Literature will suffer the same mutilation that the mule has suffered; and there will be no more horses.¹⁷⁴

Going back to Shakespeare, we find that his original text complicates Ford’s uses of *Henry V*. Shakespeare’s plays go beyond the exigencies and needs of First World War propaganda. Although the consumption of any given text cannot be determined, at the level of rhetoric propaganda tries to guide and limit interpretation—borrowing Woolf’s phrasing, it clips and cabins expression. Propaganda has the single-minded aim of getting audiences to adopt the opinion and attitudes of the author; the literature of mature and sophisticated artists such as Sophocles and Shakespeare is not easily gelded for labour—their work leaps over the fences they are penned within.

For propaganda to be effective, Adolf Hitler noted in *Mein Kampf* (1925-6), it needs to presume that ‘the people in their overwhelming majority are so feminine by nature and attitude that sober reasoning determines their thoughts and actions far less than emotion and feeling.’¹⁷⁵ Propaganda needs to appeal to the base emotions of people and not to their intellects through debate. Propaganda, he argued, ‘is not complicated, but very simple and all of a piece. It does not have multiple shadings; it has a positive and a negative; love or hate, right or wrong, truth or lie never half this way and half that way, never partially, or that kind of thing.’¹⁷⁶ He noted that ignoring this reality was what made German propaganda during the First World War a failure: ‘English propagandists understood all this most brilliantly—and acted accordingly. They made no half

¹⁷⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London, 1993), Note 39, Section Two, pp. 302-3; see also Jane Marcus, ‘“No more horses”: Virginia Woolf on art and propaganda’, *Women’s Studies*, 4 (1977), 256-290.

¹⁷⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London, 1992), p. 167; See Volume 1, Chapter VI: War Propaganda.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

statements that might have given rise to doubts.’¹⁷⁷ For Ford, enough meaning was left abstract and ambiguous in literature for subsequent readers to continue to create their own meanings through interpretation; meanings that may not even have been intended by the author. Ford surrendered his books to function within a system of propaganda during the First World War, thus placing them within strict boundaries of interpretation. Apart from this institutional dimension, these materials contrast starkly with his literary prose and poetry—these books do not reflect the subtlety of mind and expression that we have come to expect from his finest writing. They are firm condemnations of German culture and offer complete justification for Britain going to war with Germany in aid of France. Ford does not offer doubts over this issue in his cultural propaganda as he might have done in his other writing, and the British government did not wish to project such sentiments of subtlety and possibility. They used Ford’s books to contribute to the justification of the war, not add to the debate on whether the war was just or not.

The progeny of art and propaganda, for Woolf, was a mule. In contrast to the beauty of a horse, a mule is created only for work. Ford shared Woolf’s revulsion against propaganda and kept his literature separate from his official government work, perhaps, as a way of maintaining this distinction; or perhaps literature would not serve the aims of First World War British propaganda. Woolf exemplified the artist who wanted to free herself from the social and aesthetic constraints of her time—what she categorises as the violence of definition, the fixed facts, and the authority she associates with the war in her ‘Mark on the Wall’ (1921). This story highlights Woolf’s suggestive division between art and propaganda in the context of First World War fiction and proves a convenient place to conclude.

The narrator in Woolf’s story remembers a mark on her wall during the war, by fixing a series of sensations such as a yellow light on a book and the vision of a ‘cavalcade of red knights’ charging.¹⁷⁸ The narrator is less interested in the ‘hard separate facts’ of the mark but rather the way her mind works when faced with the new object, enjoying her space to repose.¹⁷⁹ Ruminating on historical fiction she imagines a mirror smashing into an infinite number of pieces, now offering thousands of images instead of

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Virginia Woolf, ‘Mark on the Wall’, in *The Complete Shorter Fiction* (London, 1987), p. 109.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 111.

simply one. Future novelists, she notes, will be less interested in the outside truth, the whole mirror, than the alleyways and depths that each of those reflections might provide. As her mind is 'moving, falling, slipping, vanishing' through these thoughts someone walks in to declare that they are buying a newspaper even though '[n]othing ever happens'.¹⁸⁰ After cursing the war, he names the mark on the wall as a snail, thus ending any more dreams and fantasies of what it might be. Nothing ever happens to minds harnessed to hard fact, newspapers, utility, and a solitary perspective; the mind in repose, however, has the freedom to explore and imagine. If the artist 'could write what he chose, not what he must', Woolf argued in her essay, 'Modern Fiction', 'if he could be free and not a slave,' then he could create a style that moved beyond plot, beyond genre and beyond style to create new art.¹⁸¹ The artist is bound and chained by convention, and the modern artist sought to experiment, to smash mirrors, and to think about marks on the wall in wartime as a way of freeing herself from authority; in short, the aesthetic is one that turns away from being useful. For modernist authors such as Woolf, using art to propagate political ideas meant becoming fact-obsessed, hating the enemy, and serving a cause; for the artist to write in such a way was to mutilate her dreams for freedom, to trade all her graceful horses for the stolid mules of instruction. Ford would later agree with these conclusions, conveniently adapting his memory to reconcile his aesthetic standards with his own participation in official propaganda during the war.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 118.

¹⁸¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', *The Common Reader* (London, 1968), p. 189.



CHAPTER TWO

REPRESENTING NEUTRALS, FRIENDS, AND ENEMIES:

KIPLING'S IMPERIAL IMAGINATION AND LITERARY PROPAGANDA

On 8 September 1914, *The Times* reported a speech Rudyard Kipling delivered to a recruitment meeting in Brighton ('Mr. Kipling on German Barbarism'). According to the article, Kipling claimed 'Germany was fighting to conquer the civilized world' and the Germans 'had deliberately filled the earth with horror and hate'. He argued that through their educational system, they 'had been taught that nothing less than world conquest was the object of their preparations and sacrifices'; he further noted 'Germany's real objective was England—England's wealth, trade, and world-wide possession.' He held that Germany's expansionism was not simply a Continental problem the British could ignore, for it directly affected Britain's status as a dominant force to be reckoned with. In other words, losing the war to Germany would not simply signify the victory of an expansionist power in Europe; it would also mean the emergence of Germany as a world power to challenge British dominance: we must 'oppose the fate of becoming a second-rate Power'. The supremacy of the British Empire was an explicit and important standard for Kipling,

and Germany represented a significant threat clamouring at the gate. It was thus important for the British Empire—along with other English-speaking peoples such as the Americans—to unite and vanquish this common foe. Indian soldiers, and India as a representative of the Empire, would both prove essential for this fight.

Rudyard Kipling's depictions of Indians combined derision towards (some) Indians' inferiority, with admiration at their simplicity and wonder at their culture. To enter Kipling's Indian writing, Benita Parry (1998) argues, 'is to plunge into a vortex of conflicting sensations, to confront one story in a blind racial rage, to be charmed in another by delight in sights and sounds Indian'.¹ Kipling's *The Eyes of Asia* (1918), a book of four narratives in the form of letters from Indian soldiers to their families, is seemingly one such vortex wherein the Indian soldier is described as steadfast in his defence of empire. These soldiers and their experiences, usually ignored by British writers, are given voice and attention by Kipling in ways that can be read as tender and sympathetic.² However, when placed within the context of First World War propaganda, this book of stories also makes more evident its utilitarian function of justifying the war as the fight of a united empire against barbarism. Kipling's representations of the Germans, on the other hand, belie his complete rejection of expansionist militarism which he associated with the invading savage hordes from the east, the German Hun.

In an article entitled 'Indian Troops' (which appeared in Kipling's pamphlet *The New Army in Training* (1915)), Kipling detailed how the British were amazed by the Indian soldiers. For Kipling they made the British towns feel like the East: paper boys screamed in Hindi to get the soldiers' attention, while British soldiers intently watched the preparation of sub-continental cuisine. The Indians may have complained about the weather and spoken flatteringly of the Orientalist scholarship of Max Arthur MacAulliffe and his studies of the Sikh religion, but they nevertheless could still be counted on to repeat the refrain that this war was a war of 'our Raj'.³ The Raj, for Kipling and for the soldiers he presents us with in this pamphlet, is something the British and the Indians share, uniting them in their support for the war.

¹ Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (London, 1998), p. 190.

² For more on the treatment of the experience of Indian soldiers in English and Indian historiography, see Santanu Das, 'Sepoys, Sahibs and Babus: Reading and Writing about the Great War in India', *First World War and Publishing: Essays in Book History*, Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (editors) (London, 2007), pp. 61-77.

³ Kipling, 'Indian Troops', *The New Army in Training* (London, 1915), pp. 44-53.

Kipling emphasises them as such in both the journalistic pamphlet *The New Army in Training*, as well as his fictional *The Eyes of Asia*. But the voices emerging from *The Eyes of Asia* are Kipling's composite versions of imagined and idealised Indian soldiers, gleaned from his experiences with Indians as well as from his access to their censored letters. As Benita Parry (2004) again remarks of Kipling's general employment and dramatisation of the Indian voice:

on those occasions when the Indians do appear to speak, they are the mouthpieces of a ventriloquist who, using a facile idiom that alternates between the artless and the ornate, projects his own account of grateful native dependency.⁴

Exploring and applying Parry's observation to Kipling's representation of Indians (and their voices) in his First World War writings can illuminate provocatively Kipling's use of literature as a means for supporting the war. This becomes all the more apparent in some of his wartime writing, when Kipling's use of the Indian voice functions as a 'mouthpiece' for his own attitudes towards the unity of empire against Germany.

In *Kipling's Message* (1918), Kipling compares German activities in Belgium and France with violence inflicted upon British colonials in India as a result of crimes committed by a section of its subject-inhabitants, the Thugs. These roadside bandits, who took British travellers into their confidence before killing them 'by giving them poisoned foods' or striking them over their heads, were not as bad, according to Kipling, as the 'German International Thuggee'. This latter day phenomenon was much worse—partly because it occurred in Europe—but also because, according to Kipling, the Germans mutilated and defiled the bodies of the dead; tortured, raped, and enslaved people; killed children for fun; and burned down villages.⁵ Germans were both born Huns and indoctrinated into becoming them: 'the Hun has been educated by the State from his birth to look upon assassination and robbery, embellished with every treachery and abomination that the mind of man can laboriously think out, as a perfectly legitimate means to the national ends of his country.'⁶ The Germans not only become savage in pamphlets such as this one, but

⁴ Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London, 2004), p. 123.

⁵ *Kipling's Message, an address delivered by Mr. Rudyard Kipling at Folkstone on Feb 15, 1918*, pp. 1-2.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 6.

also in short fiction such as ‘Swept and Garnished’. In contrast, some of Kipling’s prose and verse managed to complicate the simple binaries of civilised and barbarian. ‘Mary Postgate’, for example, is a complex psychological tale wherein an English woman’s need for revenge leads her to exact punishment upon a German airman—it is the English who behave in an uncivilised manner in this tale. As a result of the divergent political dimensions of the story, its particular ideological position is more difficult to determine than some of Kipling’s other war-writing. The story’s language creates an ambiguity which leaves it unclear if Mary is hallucinating concerning the airman’s presence or not; this effect allows the story to transcend its seemingly simplistic revenge-narrative. The manner in which the story dramatises the act of representation—in this case of the enemy—lends the story its sophistication at the level of language and narrative, further complicating the relationship between Kipling’s war-writing and propaganda.

During the war, Kipling was often asked to write official propaganda.⁷ Charles Carrington’s claim that Kipling ‘would never submit to any routine of writing sponsored propaganda’ is technically true but somewhat misleading.⁸ While Kipling liked to consider his writing in support of the war effort as being entirely independent of the government’s propaganda campaigns, he regularly offered his work to the government to use (in Kipling’s own words) ‘as articles in newspapers or as pamphlets in propaganda work in all countries’.⁹ Kipling’s fiction and some of his pre-war verse were collected during the war in *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917). Throughout the war years, Kipling also saw reason to collect his non-fiction wartime articles into pamphlets: *The New Army in Training* (1915), *The Fringes of the Fleet* (1915), *France at War* (1915), *Sea Warfare* (1916) and *The War in the Mountains* (1917). Kipling’s enormous popularity meant an anxious public readily consumed his pronouncements concerning the war—thus Kipling did not rely on the official British government’s propaganda scheme for publication. Kipling would lend his articles to the government while retaining the copyright, which he expected to revert back to him

⁷ In the Sussex Kipling Archive there are letters requesting Kipling to go to the Balkans to write about the plight of the Serbians (23 May 1917); Churchill himself wrote to ask Kipling to promote the munitions industry (6 February 1918); the Marconi company asked Kipling for a history of Marconi telegraphs and the war (4 December 1918); see Sussex Kipling Archive 22/1.

⁸ Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work* (London, 1986), pp. 499, 512.

⁹ Rudyard Kipling to Sir Douglas, 24 April, 1916 (Sussex Kipling Archive 23/7); in the letter Kipling makes stipulations that he would keep copyright for all of his work and they would revert back to his full property at the end of the war.

at the end of the war. In addition, he also gave speeches, penned occasional verse, and corresponded with American friends—petitioning them to help to change their government’s position of neutrality. Kipling’s enthusiasm for the war thus resulted in a prodigious output of writing on behalf of the British. According to Gilmour, Kipling’s war writing consisted ‘of over 300,000 published words’, excluding his public orations and his voluminous American and British correspondence.¹⁰

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Kipling appropriates Indian soldiers’ voices in *The Eyes of Asia*. These stories, archival evidence suggests, owe their composition to Kipling’s access to the confidential files of Indian soldiers’ censored letters. Thus on the level of official and unofficial government propaganda, Kipling was a key figure in raising morale, rallying the troops, and justifying the war as a battle for civilisation.

This chapter investigates in four parts the ways in which Rudyard Kipling’s representations of the neutrals, Allies, and enemies in his war writing inform his non-institutional relationship with First World War British propaganda. The first part examines Kipling’s war correspondence with some Americans as well as some of his early-war verse. This personal activism worried the directors of official government propaganda, and this first part also examines the official responses to Kipling’s efforts. The second part, which discusses Kipling’s representations of the Allies, and specifically the Indians in *The Eyes of Asia*, proceeds in two sections. The first section examines archival evidence which demonstrates how Kipling’s access to the censored letters of Indian soldiers during the war informed his construction of the narratives in *The Eyes of Asia*. This institutional connection implicates this overlooked fictional work in the official project of British propaganda during the war. The second section is a close-reading of the stories with a consideration of the representation of the Indian soldier as well as of voices excluded from the text. The third part of the chapter discusses representations of the enemy in two of Kipling’s war stories: ‘Swept and Garnished’ and ‘Mary Postgate’. ‘Swept and Garnished’ is a rather typical depiction of the enemy, which explores the results of German atrocities in Belgium on the German psyche in a manner befitting official propagandistic discourse. Despite suggestive moments in both *The Eyes of Asia* and ‘Swept and Garnished’, their evident perpetuation of disturbing ideological messages makes them

¹⁰ David Gilmour, *The Long Recession: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London, 2003), p. 264.

rhetorically more akin to propaganda than some of Kipling's other more suggestive and complex war-writing. In 'Mary Postgate', for example, Kipling was able to create a piece of writing that questions the very act of representation. The story, like Kipling's later war poetry discussed in the final part of the chapter, exceeds the utilitarian boundaries of propaganda through a heightened attention to language and ambiguity rather than ideology and dogma supporting the war. It is this story and these later poems that best highlight the contrast between Kipling's most propaganda-like war-writing and his more sophisticated and complex work. Examining this wide variety of materials, this chapter emphasises how Kipling's prodigious work in justifying the war was both unavoidable and by no means uniform—comprising official and unofficial, prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction.

1 NEUTRALS

1.1 'SO THE HELL-DANCE GOES ON: AND THE U.S. MAKES NO SIGN': KIPLING'S LETTERS AND POEMS TO NEUTRAL AMERICA

A Letter to the Editor of *The New York Times* on 11 August 1914 lamented that Rudyard Kipling had, so far, 'not written anything on the subject of the present terrible war,' but suggested readers return to his 'Hymn Before Action' (1896) because 'it expresses the feelings with which tens of thousands of his countrymen must be taking up their stern duty today, and is, moreover, one of the noblest war poems in any language'. Given the original context in which Kipling wrote the poem, this may have been an ironic choice. According to David Gilmour, 'Hymn before Action' was written partly out of a response to the growing tensions between America and Britain over a border dispute in Venezuela:¹¹

The Earth is full of anger,
The seas are dark with wrath,
The Nations in their harness
Go up against our path:

According to Philip Mallett, the images of enemy hordes in 'harness' were too excessive for Moberly Bell, the assistant manager of *The Times*, and he declined to publish the poem even though the threat of an Anglo-American war 'receded almost

¹¹ Gilmour, pp. 117-118.

as quickly as it sprung up'.¹² Nearly two decades later, with the British mobilisation for war against Germany, there was renewed interest in the poem. Before having it reprinted as a small pamphlet, Kipling offered the poem to H. A. Gwynne (in a letter dated 18 August 1914). In the letter, Kipling further authorises Gwynne to 'reprint anything else of mine that seems useful. There is the work of twenty years, ready to your hand and prepared for this moment. Use it.'¹³ Thus in the different context of an upcoming war, 'Hymn Before Action' took on a new relevance:

E'en now their vanguard gathers,
 E'en now we face the fray—
 As Thou didst help our fathers,
 Help Thou our host to-day!¹⁴

As the enemies congregate together—now Germans, previously (potentially) Americans—it is time to once again ask for God's help. The British may be undeserving of his protection—'High lust and forward bearing, / Proud heart, rebellious brow', with 'Deaf ear' and uncaring souls—but they still make their appeal: 'Jehovah of the Thunders, / Lord God of Battles, aid!'

In addition to asking for help for the English, the 'Hymn' also called on the Christian God to protect those of other faiths who were willing to fight for empire:

For those who kneel beside us
 At altars not Thine own,
 Who lack the lights that guide us,
 Lord, let their faith atone.
 If wrong we did to call them,
 By honour bound they came;
 Let not Thy Wrath befall them,
 But deal to us the blame.

Bewildered, because they are not led by the same lights that guide the British, those who kneel at different altars still deserve protection. They fight for 'honour', and their virtue, the poem seems to suggest, is worthy of God's grace even if they do

¹² Phillip Mallett, *Rudyard Kipling: A Literary Life* (London, 2003), p. 86.

¹³ Thomas Pinney, editor, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4:1911-19* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 251.

¹⁴ *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (London, 1966), p. 325.

worship idols. The honour which they fight for is their devotion to empire. If anyone should be subject to the 'Wrath' of God for their false beliefs, it should be the British themselves, as they are the ones responsible for the well-being of their colonials. This protection seems to be offered in exchange for the duties of their subjects. Kipling would continue to express this outlook regarding the colonies in his other, much later, wartime fiction.

In addition to offering older verse in renewed contexts, Kipling also wrote new and occasional verses for the war, and newspapers were happy to print them. 'For All We Have and Are', a poem which decries the arrival of the Huns at the Gate, appeared in *The Times* on 2 September 1914:

For all we have and are,
 For all our children's fate,
 Stand up and take the war.
 The Hun is at the gate!
 Our world has passed away
 In wantonness o'erthrown.
 There is nothing left to-day
 But steel and fire and stone.

Below the poem, the editors of *The Times* added a note: 'At the request of Mr. Kipling we are sending £50 to the Belgian Relief Fund in his name'. As a public figure, Kipling made himself an example of selflessness and sacrifice; he offered inspiration for the British to remain united against foreign invaders and to be generous in their responses to displaced refugees fleeing German Imperialism. In addition to offering his verses to bolster morale, Kipling also delivered public speeches, which encouraged men to volunteer. Furthermore, he personally petitioned friends in America to support the Allies by denouncing German atrocities.

Kipling had maintained a suspicion of German military expansionism for a number of years leading up to the war. It was Kipling who coined the term 'Hun' in reference to the Germans and their barbaric hunger for expansion in his poem 'The Rowers' (1902): 'With a cheated crew, to league anew / With the Goth and the shameless Hun!'¹⁵ Elsewhere, in his pamphlet *France at War*, he would also objectify the Germans as 'the Boche': 'England and the rest—had begun to doubt the existence

¹⁵ 'The Rowers' appeared in *The Times*, 22 December 1902; Gilmour, p. 117.

of Evil. The Boche is saving us.’¹⁶ Gilmour notes that when newspapers started to use the phrase, Kipling urged editors not to capitalize ‘Hun’ or even to refer to the Germans as people. Instead he preferred they objectify the enemy through the use of the third person impersonal ‘it’ (something the character Mary Postgate also does when referring to a possibly imaginary, dying German airman, see below).¹⁷ As George Orwell would later note, whether or not Kipling could be credited for having coined the phrase ‘Hun’ in relation to the Germans, it was certain he had done more than anyone else to popularise the usage of the phrase.¹⁸

In addition to his efforts to provide anthems, songs, and hymns for the British during the war, Kipling was also acutely aware of the importance of America’s support, and of the special relationship between the two nations. Through a large body of written correspondence, he attempted to make the case for America to shoulder their share of the responsibility in the current war for civilisation—a plea he had been making for nearly two decades. Shortly after the publication of the ‘Hymn’, Kipling addressed a poem to America urging it to do precisely that in another context—to shoulder the responsibility and burden, of empire. ‘The White Man’s Burden’ (subtitled *The United States and the Philippine Islands* (1899)) directed the Americans to take up empire in a new way, not in the European fashion—‘No tawdry rule of kings’—but as a new and emerging world power. Colonialism is a burden because it required the best sons be taken away in exile to serve ‘wild’ people’s needs. This is a difficult and thankless endeavour because there is no ‘lightly proffered laurel’ but instead ‘thankless years’ and the ‘judgment of your peers’. Kipling would express similar sentiments in his short stories, most notably ‘On the City Wall’ (1888).¹⁹ In a letter to Edward Bok of 5 December 1914, Kipling echoes this burden in terms of the contemporaneous war:

¹⁶ Kipling, *France at War* (London, 1915), p. 4.

¹⁷ Gilmour, p. 117.

¹⁸ See George Orwell, ‘Rudyard Kipling’, *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters: Volume 2* (London, 1970).

¹⁹ First published *In Black and White* (Volume 3 of the *Indian Railway Library*) and later reprinted in *Soldiers Three and Other Stories* (1892). As expressed in the story the idea, of an independent India is a ‘pretty one’ but thoroughly unbelievable:

Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line, which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death, or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good

At the present moment we are fighting for civilization all over the entire planet; human nature being what it is—we are expected to save the world and to keep it comfortable, as well as to supply it with heart-warming emotions and good chances for making money, while we are at the task.²⁰

The war, like colonialism, was a thankless burden for civilised nations—they had to save the world as well as maintain trade opportunities for economic stability. In his early poems, his early fiction, and his later personal war-correspondence, Kipling wanted to impress this point on Americans, to urge them to take seriously their responsibility to join the ranks of mature nations. The voice of those who are to be ruled, or their concerns, are conspicuous by their absence from these discussions.

‘And so this Hell-dance goes on: and the U.S. makes no sign’, Kipling lamented to Frank N. Doubleday in a letter dated 11 September 1914.²¹ Kipling was exasperated with America’s refusal to condemn German atrocities in Belgium: ‘Be as neutral as you like; but do not pass these brutalities over in silence officially.’ He urged his friend to find ‘means of making people see that this is a matter which touches the whole foundation and future of civilized life’ and asked him to ‘*try* to bring it home to them.’ For Kipling, the scale and brutality of German atrocities in Belgium and France did not have any precedent in history, and he worried that by ‘sit[ting] dumb’ the U.S. was negating those very values upon which its country was built.

In his letters to former President Theodore Roosevelt, Kipling echoed these sentiments: ‘we are aghast at there being no protest from the U.S. against the Belgian dealings[...] [i]t seems incredible that America which has always stood so emphatically against these horrors should be silent now’ (15 September 1914).²² Kipling noted a Germany left unchecked would transform the Monroe Doctrine, the American declaration of responsibility and control over Latin America, into a ‘scrap of paper not worth tearing up’. In his later *Kipling’s Message*, he suggested that if the Allies were to lose, democracy would expire: ‘it will die discredited, together with

living goes forward. ‘On the City Wall’, *The Man Who Would be King and Other Stories* (Oxford, 1987), p. 223.

²⁰ To Ed Bok, 5 December 1914, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4*, p. 275.

²¹ To F. Doubleday, 11 September 1914, *ibid*, p. 254.

²² *Ibid*, p. 255.

every belief and practice that is based on it.’²³ Immigrants and those not attuned to the need for militarism were going to erode the American values of democracy and liberty. In a letter dated 4 December 1914, Kipling asked Roosevelt to consider the influence of German immigrants on US policy:

Has it ever struck you that if the game goes our way, the largest block of existing Germans may perhaps be the eight million within your Borders? And precisely because, to please this contingent and to justify his hereditary temperament, Wilson did not protest against the invasion and absorption of Belgium. Wilson will not be able to save for them the sentimental satisfaction of having a Fatherland to look back up from behind the safety of the United States frontier. It seems a high price to pay for “domestic politics.”²⁴

German influence on American politics and its continued devotion to the ‘Fatherland’ worried Kipling. He accused Woodrow Wilson of playing to these large immigrant populations for electoral gain, and lamented that such manoeuvring may prove a ‘high price to pay’. Kipling bemoaned the fact that Roosevelt was no longer President, for he understood the urgency of these matters better than the ‘schoolmaster’—Kipling’s demeaning nickname for Wilson (20 October 1914).²⁵ Roosevelt’s *The Foes of Our Own Household* (1917) reflects Kipling’s own inherent fears over Germans in America:

The Hun within our gates is the worst of the foes of our own household, whether he is the paid or the unpaid agent of Germany. Whether he is pro-German or poses as a pacifist, or a peace-at-any-price-man, matters little [...]. The German-language papers carry on a consistent campaign in favor of Germany against England. They should be put out of existence for the period of this war [...] Every disloyal native-born American should be disfranchised and interned. It is time to strike our enemies at home heavily and quickly.²⁶

Roosevelt employs Kipling’s rhetoric regarding the ‘Hun within our gates’, but takes it further to suggest extending suspicions towards ‘disloyal native-born’ citizens. It was this intensity Kipling lauded in Roosevelt, particularly for policies such as domestic internment and the stripping away of civil liberties from those who failed to support America and denounce the Germans.

²³ Kipling’s *Message*, p. 11.

²⁴ To Roosevelt, 4 December 1914, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4*, p. 272.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Foes of Our Own Household* (New York, 1917), p. x.

While it was clear that Kipling worried about the relative strength of the British Empire in relation to the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, his letters increasingly focused on the brutality of the German atrocities in Belgium and France. In a letter to Kipling, Roosevelt explained his hesitation on these issues and accounted for not mentioning them in his articles and speeches:

I have not touched on the outrages against individuals because there is much conflict of testimony and because in huge armies of many millions of men it is perfectly certain that some thousands of unspeakable creatures will commit unspeakable acts of infamy and moreover my own experience in the Spanish war has taught me that there is a tendency to exaggerate such outrages.²⁷

Kipling claimed he had first hand experiences of the wounded Belgians, whom he visited: ‘Women who have been raped to any large extent don’t talk about it, but those who have lost children and relatives are very eloquent’.²⁸ In a letter to Bok (28 October 1914) however, Kipling admits ‘I have not yet seen any mutilated children’—one of the primary accusations of atrocities attributed to the Germans (See chapter three)—but claims ‘they can be verified’.²⁹ Kipling tried to understand further the American position in terms of the atrocities: ‘Any people that passed over in official silence the horrors in Belgium [...] believe that those horrors are exaggerated or, better still, have never taken place’.³⁰ The exposure of these acts was a double-edged sword; Kipling worried that as more atrocities were revealed, the greater would be the outcry that they were ‘invented’. Kipling also explained to Bok that although he would write to individuals on behalf of the war, he would not be writing any more verses about ‘America next’ to try to influence public opinion about the war.³¹ His duty, he explained, was to the British Empire and the Allies—he simply reiterated his hope that America’s position would be justified by an Allied victory; if England were to lose the war, America’s neutrality would be retrospectively tragic and irresponsible. Kipling would not maintain this policy of declining to write poetry about American neutrality, however.

²⁷ Roosevelt to Kipling, 3 October 1914, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4*, n. 3, p. 262.

²⁸ Kipling to Roosevelt, 20 October 20 1914, *ibid*, p. 261.

²⁹ To Bok, October 28, 1914. *Ibid*, p264.

³⁰ Kipling to Bok, 28 October 1914, *ibid*, p. 263.

³¹ Kipling to Bok, 28 October 1914, *ibid*, p. 264.

By 1916, a poem of Kipling's appeared at the end of his pamphlet *Sea Warfare* entitled 'The Neutral'. A footnote to the poem explains that the work refers to the 'Attitude of the United States of America during the first two years, seven months and four days of the Great War':

Brethren, how shall it fare with me
 When the war is laid aside,
 If it be proven that I am he
 For whom a world has died?

How will America, after the war, shoulder the knowledge that their safety came at the expense of the lives of other people, that their 'greater good' came purchased 'by a multitude / Who suffered for my sake'?:

That they did not ask me to draw the sword
 When they stood to endure their lot—
 That they only looked to me for a word,
 And I answered I knew them not?

In this poem, Kipling casts America in the role of Peter renouncing a suffering Britain, which plays the role of Christ. Britain did not demand America's military engagement, it sought only acknowledgement; and as Peter denied Christ, so too did America deny Britain. What justification for that person for whom all 'mankind has died' and to whom that sacrifice has been 'denied'? There is a redemptive possibility for America, as there was for Peter; but it required America recognizing its duty in acknowledging England's sacrifices. The poem's language of proof, discovery, and blindness from battle, chime with the need for America to open its eyes and accept what neutrality really means: condoning German atrocities and abandoning Britain in an hour of need.

Thus while writing poems, speeches, and articles for domestic audiences, Kipling petitioned Americans in letters and in verse to face up to their duty to help the Allies in the war. Kipling took his own responsibilities seriously and his generosity and sacrifice in other facets of the war were substantial. In addition to his writing, he was also instrumental in establishing The Club of the Maple Leaf, a meeting place for

Canadian soldiers in London, the absence of such an institution having made the injured Canadian soldier's path from injury back to the front all the more difficult.³² Kipling also fitted his own farm-house as a 'place where a convalescent officer can come with his wife and rest a bit' (letter to André Chevrillon, 22 June 1916).³³ As an unofficial propagandist for the war, Kipling's dedication to defending the British Empire and to defeating the Germans was immense. However, there were some who suspected Kipling carried his chauvinism too far.

1.2 'THE ONLY HOPE WOULD BE TO GET POWERS TO LOCK HIM UP AS A DANGER TO THE STATE': OPPOSITION TO KIPLING'S INDEPENDENT PRO-WAR ACTIVISM

Kipling's passionate and sometimes fiery support for the war made some, such as C. F. G. Masterman and Sir Edward Grey, nervous. In a letter to Masterman dated 14 September 1914, Grey announced he had heard Kipling was going to America and had insisted he be in a position to say the trip was in no way official; if unable to denounce Kipling's trip officially, Grey threatened to resign stating 'all my efforts to keep the goodwill of the United States will be useless'.³⁴ Masterman responded that he had no knowledge of the trip, and that if he had he would have done all he could to stop it, noting all efforts 'have been devoted to preventing the Kiplings, X-'s, etc., from doing this sort of thing: but the only hope would be to get powers to lock them up as a danger to the State'.³⁵

In addition to increasing the anxiety of Masterman and the WPB, some of Kipling's articles worried the War Office as well. On 28 June 1916, the War Office sent Kipling's agent a letter with offensive passages underlined from his *Times* article of the same day (*Tales of the Trade* 'Part III'): 'But one cannot rejoice over dead Mohomedans—unless they are Arabs—and I have never met anyone in the trade who did'. The News Department of the War Office was worried by Kipling's comments because Britain was trying to court the Arabs to fight against the Ottoman Empire: 'All the experts in the News Department are much puzzled as to what Kipling really means to convey by his strange remark about the Arabs; possibly you can enlighten me!'³⁶ It was important for the War Office not to upset its allies, a point Kipling fully

³² Ibid, n. 5, p. 312.

³³ Ibid, p. 381.

³⁴ Quoted in Lucy Masterman, *C.F.G. Masterman* (London, 1939), p. 277.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Sussex Kipling Archive 23/7.

understood even though he seemed not that sensitive to it. Kipling's bursts of enthusiasm made his independent efforts worry some government propagandists. For the publication of *Tales from the Trade* in his pamphlet *Sea Warfare*, Kipling was persuaded to strike out these offending passages regarding Arabs. Thus in addition to lending his work to the government cause and making official visits to the fronts, Kipling was also willing to be reined in and censored by the authorities. These institutional connections established Kipling's relationship with British Government First World War propaganda—and there were many others in the government happy to have his help—whether it was official or not.

While some government officials may have been uncomfortable with Kipling's independent activities, others found his efforts admirable and greatly influential. The Navy lauded the very same *Times* article mentioned earlier that drew the admonishment of the War Office. In an unpublished letter dated 4 July 1916, a British Naval Officer, John Balfour, praised Kipling's ability to 'stir the public imagination' even with something as seemingly mundane as 'naval enterprise'.³⁷ It was this ability to 'stir the imagination' that made the government look to him as a potentially effective propagandist. In a request to write about the Italian front (later realised in *The War in the Mountains*), the War Office emphasised that Kipling's writing

would give the imaginative and spiritual touch, which would enable the English to realize that the present campaign is, in addition to being action in support of the just cause of the Allies, also the fulfilment by Italy of a destiny—the first steps towards which were so generously encouraged and assisted by England.³⁸

Journalists recounting facts would be unable to do what Kipling could do: make the 'flame of sympathy between England and Italy burn brighter and better.' In writing about the war, Kipling was able to present the Allied cause in compelling ways. The fact that he was able to do so not only in his correspondence and his journalism, but also in his short stories and poetry, made him only more noteworthy amongst his supporters within the government.

³⁷ Letter to Kipling, 4 July 1916; Sussex Kipling Archive 23/7.

³⁸ Letter to Kipling, 13 April 1916; Sussex Kipling Archive 23/10.

An internal report entitled ‘Advertising the British Empire’ (19 March 1918) stated there was ‘a lamentable ignorance’ with ‘regard to the greatness, power and resources of the British Empire’.³⁹ The suggestion was made that propaganda be employed to popularise the advantages of empire—‘what it stands for, what our system of self-government means; to explain the vastness of our resources, our commanding control over a great many raw materials, our success in governing alien races and the way we have built up a free commonwealth of nations by freedom instead of force’.⁴⁰ Similarly, an earlier internal government memorandum titled ‘Propaganda’ and dated 11 November 1917 (sent from Sir E. Carson to Kipling on 14 November), emphasised the need for the British Government ‘to make capital out of military achievements in the East’ in order to make the neutral world, ‘especially the Americans’, realize our ‘efforts and successes’.⁴¹ As the memorandum went on to claim, these campaigns are ‘one of the greatest dramatic things in history’ and, ‘a great historic drama requires a great writer’⁴²; of course, the writer who met this requirement with his enthusiastic appreciation of ‘all that is best in the British character and of the strong sides of our Imperial system’ was Rudyard Kipling.

Kipling did not ultimately take up the project of visiting the fronts in Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, as was suggested in the memorandum. He had however already written *The Eyes of Asia* a few months earlier, a book of short fiction which proved prescient in the way it obliquely and partly satisfied the memorandum’s subsequent request to portray ‘the wonderful combination of forces [...] Indian subject races [...] fighting far from their homes along with our own troops—the most wonderful epitome of the strength of the Empire.’⁴³ Kipling’s dedication to the solidarity of the Empire was synonymous with much of his diverse canon of writing. This reputation meant that from the outset of war, people turned to his past writings (‘Hymn before Action’) and awaited new work that would transform his vision of

³⁹ ‘Advertising the British Empire’ dated 19 March 1918, INF 4/8.

⁴⁰ It is important, it goes on to state, that they should begin this publicity now ‘to prepare for a great offensive campaign after the war,’ presumably in justifying the Empire against the claims of self-determination of small nations that would become so popular.

⁴¹ Letter to Kipling, 14 November 1917; Sussex Kipling Archive 22/1.

⁴² The details here reflect how well suited Kipling’s war and adventure stories would be to the task: ‘Not only the places involved, with their far-resounding names, but all the incidents are dramatic [...] Then the actions themselves—night rides across the desert, bursting at dawn upon the surprised enemy; wonderful work of the river boats, etc. etc.’, *ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

empire as something noble and important into song. As Holbrook Jackson (1914) noted during the war:

[Kipling] set the Empire to music before we realised that the Empire was worthy of anything higher than trade. The spirit behind the great-hearted loyalty of India, the miracle of South Africa, the valorous munificence of Canada and Australia and New Zealand, and the innumerable offerings of service and treasure from the remoter and smaller outposts was foreseen by Kipling when the Empire for most of us was little more than a geographical expression—"the British Possessions coloured Red," of the maps.⁴⁴

However much his independence and chauvinism worried official government propagandists, he was an essential voice in the war. He could unite the diverse voices of those who lived on the red-coloured parts of map to recite a song of empire together. Voicing this unity in opposition to the Hun at the Gate would prove an essential theme in his later war writing.

2 ALLIES: *THE EYES OF ASIA*

The newspapers that they print tell lies. They do not contain news of us.

Letter from a Sikh soldier in hospital in
England to his father in India dated 14/3/15⁴⁵

It is a war of *our Raj*—'everybody's war,' as they say in the bazaars.

Rudyard Kipling, quoting an Indian soldier in 'Indian Troops'
The New Army in Training (London, 1915)⁴⁶

The Eyes of Asia unintentionally responded to a Sikh soldier's complaints that the newspapers contained no news of the Indians in the war.⁴⁷ The book is made up of four short fictions involving Indian soldiers writing to their families. Representing marginalised voices in the war, these intimate portraits demonstrate respect for the

⁴⁴ Holbrook Jackson, *TP's Weekly*, 'The Book of the Week: The Prophetic Kipling' 19 December 1914 (p. 655), Newspaper clipping, Sussex Kipling Archive, Tyler Gift 1/7.

⁴⁵ MSS EUR D681/18, p106 (dated 14 March 1915).

⁴⁶ p. 51.

⁴⁷ In fact a number of books discussed Indian soldiers and their contribution to the war effort including John Walter Beresford Merewether and Sir Frederick Smith, *The Indian Corps in France* (London, 1917) as well as Saint Nihal Singh's *India's Fighters: Their Mettle, History and Services to Britain* (London, 1914), *India's Fighting Troops* (London, 1914) and *India and the War* (London, 1918). *India and the War* was a pamphlet arguing that India's sacrifice came about because 'educated India is freedom-loving and is anxious to strengthen the British hand to prosecute a war of liberation'; Singh argued that it was India's hope to achieve greater self-rule as a result of educated Indians refraining from political agitation, and of soldiers sacrificing their lives for the war (pp.3, 5).

sacrifices of Indian soldiers. Although there are moments of tenderness and empathy expressed in these stories, this section will focus on how Kipling appropriates the Indian voice as another voice of support for the war. Moreover, as my later discussion of archival evidence suggests, Kipling crafted these stories from access to censored Indian letters—fragments Kipling stitched together in such a way as to avoid any negative or critical comments on the war. Returning to the Sikh soldier's first complaint about the lies of newspapers, it is also worth considering what ends were served by Kipling's representations of Indian soldiers praising the conflict as a common battle for the Empire as a whole—'a war of *our Raj*'. To draw Kipling's representations into greater relief also necessitates a consideration of voices prevented from entering into the discourse of war propaganda—marginalised voices of dissent and opposition to the war and to empire—particularly from the Indian soldiers' own censored letters.

In 1927 Kipling attended the dedication of the Indian Army memorial at Neuve Chapelle, France. In his autobiography, Charles Wheeler, President of the Royal Academy, claimed he saw Kipling at the unveiling and that the French were in awe of him:

They were not interested in Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, nor in his speech, the most important of the occasion, but they were eager to see the poet and became entranced—we all did—by the words of Rudyard who, though not on the Speech List, was called to his feet and spoke without notes briefly and movingly about the bravery of Indian soldiers fighting on European soil.⁴⁸

Kipling's speech was reported in *The Times* on 11 November 1927. Kipling noted that 'Lord Birkenhead has touched on the material difficulties and bewilderments that met' the Indians 'in their adventure to the West', but, he asked his audience, 'have you ever thought what they endured on the spiritual side when they voyaged forth over oceans, whose existence they had never conceived, into lands which lay beyond the extremest limits of their imagination, into countries which, for aught they knew, were populated by devils and monsters?' He argued that Columbus and his men 'did not confront half the dread possibilities which these men of India prepared themselves to meet.' In addition to the wonderment and terror of Indians coming to Europe,

⁴⁸ Charles Wheeler, *High Relief: The Autobiography of Sir Charles Wheeler, Sculptor* (Feltham, 1968), p. 44.

Kipling had marvelled during the war at inexperienced English Territorials voyaging to India—‘in their wildest dreams they never expected temples and elephants’ (letter to Andrew Macphail, January 3, 1915).⁴⁹ The experience of wonderment—of the east meeting the west, and the west meeting the east—characterises Kipling’s representation of the Indian soldiers’ experiences of the European war, as we shall see.

In his speech, Kipling went on to discuss the letters Indian soldiers wrote home: ‘Some of these letters I have read [...] I can testify it was not long before the essential humanity, honesty, good will, and the sane thrift of France as an agricultural nation soothed their hearts and set their minds at rest.’ He quoted a letter from memory of a young man reassuring his mother:

Oh my mother, do not be afraid. These people are as civilized as ourselves, and, above all, the women are as good agriculturists as the men. I have seen it. Their land passes from father to son on payment of the necessary taxes, precisely as it does with us. They buy and sell in the streets, too – portions of fowl and meat, with needles, thread, scissors and matches, just as we do in our bazaars at home. Have, then, no more fear for they are in all respects like ourselves.

According to Wheeler, Kipling’s ‘earnest words silenced the restless feet and impatient murmurings so you could hear the proverbial pin drop till he sat down to tumultuous applause’.⁵⁰

Were there any people in the crowd who wondered how Kipling had seen Indian letters during the war? Might they have pondered why the letters were in English? During the war, the British government translated and censored Indian letters, and Kipling gained access to these censored fragments through contacts in the government who wanted him to use them for a story or some other form of propaganda. Kipling did eventually write a series of stories for American and British newspapers later printed in America under the title *The Eyes of Asia*. Two of the passages from the book are similar to Kipling’s quotation:

Their land descends securely from father to son upon payment of tax to the Government, just as in civilized countries. (‘The Fumes of the Heart’)⁵¹

⁴⁹ *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4*, p. 276.

⁵⁰ Wheeler, p. 44.

Scissors, needles, threads, and buttons are exposed for sale on stalls in a market. ('The Private Account')⁵²

Kipling had access to the fragments of censored letters, not the entire letters; and it is possible that the impromptu speech he delivered may have been an invention or a pastiche from his memory. The references in his speech to taxation and the marketplace imply that instead of quoting from a letter, Kipling may have been presenting as a whole that which he had compiled from the fragments he had access to ten years earlier. He may even have invented it outright.

There are other fragments Kipling did not quote from which detail complaints about the weather in Britain and France, the agriculture, and the violence of the war itself. Kipling's narratives, like his speech, did not include voices from people who opposed the war or agitated for Indian self-rule, for example, but presented instead honourable soldiers devoted to defending the Empire. Kipling's representation of the Indian voice during the war is consistent with some of his other fiction, but the Indians in these particular war stories represent the unity of the British Empire against Germany for its American and English readers. Speaking at the memorial of the Indian dead, Kipling emphasised the honour of the Indian soldier in order to laud the sacrifice Indians made for England—but there were other voices, excluded from Kipling's text, that would have challenged India's role in the Empire and the war itself, such as those from the San-Francisco-based *Ghadar* (Mutiny) party, for example.⁵³ However, informed by these archival sources it should be noted that Kipling's representations of the Indian soldier do not include critical voices, and are a special means of advertising the unity of the Empire in fiction.

2.1 'IT'S TO THE CENSORED LETTERS THAT I OWE IT':

THE INFLUENCE OF INDIAN SOLDIERS' LETTERS ON *THE EYES OF ASIA*

The Eyes of Asia appeared in the *American Saturday Evening Post* in six parts during the month of May and the beginning of June 1917, and was published in book

⁵¹ *The Eyes of Asia*, p. 30.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁵³ See Norman Gerald Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and Political control in British India, 1907-1947* (Columbia, 1974) and A.C. Bose *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad* (Patna, 1971).

form by Doubleday in the United States in 1918.⁵⁴ Though three of the stories appeared in the *Morning Post* in London, there was no British book publication until they were collected in Kipling's posthumous Sussex edition.⁵⁵ The book consists of four stories that read as letters home from non-British soldiers, and which take place in 1915 and 1916. 'A Retired Gentleman' and 'The Fumes of the Heart' are both fictionalised letters written from the perspective of wounded Indian soldiers, a Rajput and a Sikh, to their families. The second is cast as a dictated letter from a Sikh soldier to his brother, and has dramatic asides and digressions from the injured soldier punctuating the text. 'The Private Account' is presented as a scene showing Afghan parents reading and responding to a letter from their son on the Western Front; and the final story, 'A Trooper of Horse', takes the form of a letter from an unwounded Muslim soldier in France to his mother.

According to Lord Birkenhead's notes made from Carrie Kipling's (now destroyed) diary, on 19 June 1916 Major Sidney Goldman of the Intelligence Department brought Brigadier General Cockerill to meet Kipling to discuss 'how best to give intelligence to neutrals at home'.⁵⁶ Shortly thereafter, on 26 June, it is noted that Kipling had started 'work on some Indian letters from men who have been at the front'. The notes from the diary explain that the framework of the book came from censored Indian soldier's letters that he had received from Sir Dunlop Smith. Kipling's correspondence confirms this. On 9 June 1916, for example, he wrote to Smith that he was glad that some work was finally being done on Indian soldiers, but that he would not be able to write an introduction to any such pamphlet himself, because he was too busy. The letter finds Kipling then thanking Smith for the Censor's reports on letters from members of the British Indian army active in the war, calling them a 'complete revelation' and asking for more of them.⁵⁷ As Kipling further explained, he wanted to make 'some sort of article out of them', assuring Smith that he would not give his sources away. Though it is not clear if Smith was allowed to circulate these reports, it does seem evident that the materials were

⁵⁴ The stories were published in a slightly different order: 'The Fumes of the Heart', May 19, 1917; 'The Private Account', May 26, 1917; 'A Retired Gentleman', June 2, 1917; 'A Trooper of Horse', June 9, 1917.

⁵⁵ *The Morning Post* published them in a six part series. 'The Fumes of the Heart' on 10 May and 14 May 1917; 'A Retired Gentleman' on 17 May and 21 May 1917; 'A Trooper of Horse' on 24 May and 29 May 1917.

⁵⁶ Sussex Kipling Archive, Ad.40, p. 70.

⁵⁷ *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4:1911-19* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 374-5.

sensitive enough that Kipling would have had ample reason to anticipate his correspondent's possible fear about revealing his sources.

As for the more specific nature of these sources, Indian soldiers' letters were initially censored on grounds of preventing the dissemination of 'seditious literature', whether from the enemy or the 'Indian Revolutionary Party'.⁵⁸ After being dictated to a scribe, as was most often the case (and as in the process Kipling dramatises in 'The Fumes of the Heart'), soldiers' letters were then censored at two levels, according to David Omissi. The first was at the regimental level, and the second was at the more centralised military level. As previously noted, this was initially to prevent seditious literature from coming into regiments; but this policy was later extended to prevent bad news from leaking out as well.⁵⁹ An internal report by the Head Censor of Indian Mails, Captain E. B. Howell, reveals part of the government's thinking behind this policy:

If the men had been allowed to write freely, they might conceivably have given information of military value to the enemy and they certainly would have terrified their relatives, and so cause considerable political danger, by exaggerated *or even accurate*, accounts of the suffering which they were required to endure (emphasis mine).⁶⁰

In other words, without restrictions on writing, troops not only might inadvertently give information to the enemy, but they also might portray the events of the war with a tone of realism that could have caused a slump in morale not only amongst the soldiers, but amongst citizens as well. Somewhat paradoxically, there was minimal interference with outgoing letters, according to Omissi, because deletions were 'more likely to excite the fearful imagination of their recipients than letters which had not been tampered with'.⁶¹ Moreover it was assumed, Omissi notes, that the stories that came from injured soldiers would enflame the 'oriental' imagination more than what could be said in any letter.

⁵⁸ E. B. Howell, Captain Head Censor, Indian Mails, 'Report on Twelve Months' Working of the Indian Mail Censorship', quoted in David Omissi (editor), *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldier's Letters, 1914-18* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 369-72.

⁵⁹ Omissi, 'Introduction', pp. 5-6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 370.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

Yet despite this often ‘minimal’ interference with outgoing letters from the battlefield, censorship was eventually extended from ‘inward’ mail to letters ‘written by Indian sick and wounded in the hospitals in England, where the men had leisure to write and unlimited notepaper’ as well.⁶² In addition to controlling access to more accurate information about life on the war-front, according to another internal report, Indian Mail Censorship helped to draw certain issues of morale to the attention of government authorities, including questions of pay, remittances, rations, clothing, and restrictions from certain activities enforced in the hospital. Censoring the letters offered a cross-section of ‘the current sentiments and opinions both of the troops in the field and of their circle of correspondents in India and elsewhere’ and thus gave the government a means of gauging opinion and morale, and learning about what was happening in the trenches.⁶³ The report ends with the note that the extracts from the Indian correspondence are of historical and psychological value, and if ever permitted to be published, would make ‘a very entertaining book’.⁶⁴ The entertaining aspects of the letters contrast with the complaints and the anger that some soldiers expressed when commenting on the war. In approaching these materials, Kipling looked at the ‘entertaining’ aspects of the letters and was able to expand them into four narratives.

Kipling had first-hand experience of Indian soldiers and wrote about them in *The New Army in Training*. According to Carrington’s notes from Carrie’s diary, he was also familiar with the Indian wounded, having visited some of them in Brighton (see entry for 23 January 1915).⁶⁵ When, over a year and a half later, Kipling had finished his first drafts of the composites of the letters, he sent them to Smith on 10 [13?] July 1916. In total, this initial output (the original manuscript version of which has been lost) resulted in three sketches: firstly, of a Sikh landowner; secondly, of a young ‘sweep of a Pathan without morals’; and thirdly, of a ‘Raffish native officer’. Intriguingly, Kipling explained to Smith that he found the censored extracts from the soldiers’ letters that emphasised the prosperity of England and France, together with their focus on education, to be the most remarkable: ‘What they mean by “education” is, I think, capacity to use and profit by the material of the civilization they have seen—such as churches, ploughs, washing tubs and so on.’⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid, p. 370.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 371.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 372.

⁶⁵ ‘Extracts from the Private Diaries of Carrie Kipling’, Sussex Kipling Archive, 1/11.

⁶⁶ Sussex Kipling Archive, Ad 1.

From these letters Kipling imagined hundreds of thousands of men ‘who have gone abroad and discovered the nakedness of their own land—as well as the gravity of war then waged in earnest by Sahib-log’. For Kipling two events were especially important. The first of these was the clearing of the officer’s horse manure by Flemish (‘Phlahamahnds’) farmers, and the second was an artillery officer’s lust for a green tent. He referred to them as ‘literal facts’ in his letter to Smith, and they both eventually appear in the story ‘Fumes of the Heart’.⁶⁷ He also makes reference in ‘A Retired Gentleman’ (in passages redacted from the text of the original letters) to stories that he heard from Smith himself. Kipling admitted that he took ‘large liberties with the material’ in creating these sketches, and simultaneously insisted that much of what he borrowed was only tenuously related to his fictional versions, which amplified ‘what I thought I saw between the letters.’ Kipling explains how the censored letters influenced his stories, thus further establishing his connection to government propaganda; but he also demonstrates how he adapted his source material to his own projections of what he thought he might have seen between the lines of the letters.

Wary of exposing Smith to any trouble, Kipling assured him there was nothing in his fictionalised accounts that the India Office should have reason to object to, and promised to return the censored letters to him as soon as possible. On 6 October 1916, Kipling thanked Smith for another batch of the letters and explained he was trying to ‘get together a whole collection of letters giving points of view, from all parts of the Empire, of quite humble folk.’ Though this project never materialised, by November 1918, Kipling was in a position to forward a copy of *The Eyes of Asia* to Smith. Despite the author’s distaste for small books, he published it because of popular demand in America: ‘the thing seems to have really done useful work, over there’. Fittingly, Kipling closed this correspondence with Smith by giving thanks to him, claiming ‘[i]t’s to the censored letters that I owe it’.

Appealing to Smith’s knowledge of India in the letter of 10 [13?] July, Kipling asked Smith to confirm the materials were believable, requesting ‘if you find any error in caste or mental outlook in the characters give me a hint’.⁶⁸ In creating these four stories, Kipling had to negotiate several tasks at once: being sure to maintain the secrecy of his sources, minimising potential offence to the India Office, and still

⁶⁷ *The Eyes of Asia*, pp. 34, 43-5.

⁶⁸ Sussex Kipling Archive, Ad. 1.

creating characters that were believable and accurate in terms of their ‘mental outlook’. Kipling’s appeal to a British colonial administrator to determine whether his characters have the right outlook or not (rather than to an Indian or an Indian soldier), further reveals his notion that even in awareness of themselves the Indian people were inferior to their British rulers. Indian soldiers were constructed in these stories in order to confirm colonial imaginings of what the Indian soldier *would* say and think about the Great War. Kipling’s compositions show no trace that his source letters were partly censored to discourage seditious literature and conversations regarding independence. On the contrary, these representations not only confirm the ‘spirit behind the great-hearted loyalty of India’, in Holbrook Jackson’s phrasing, but also Bhupendranath Basu argument that India’s ‘heart and soul’ was ‘with Great Britain in the present crisis’, and that it recognized ‘the benefits of British rule and its immense potentialities for good’ (*Why India is Heart and Soul with Great Britain* (1914)).⁶⁹ *The Eyes of Asia* demonstrates Kipling’s affinity with Indian soldiers and he represents a marginalised and ignored minority fighting in the war. His recruitment of their narratives is also consistent with his previous appropriations of the Indian voice in his earlier fiction—but this time it is more self-consciously demonstrating a united empire facing the barbarous Hun.

2.2 SIGHTS SEEN AND UNSEEN: *THE EYES OF ASIA*

As noted above, when writing to Smith, Kipling insisted that although he took liberties, his compositions were grounded in the censored materials; beyond this he elaborated what he imagined he could read between the lines of the letters—what he imagined the speaker might have meant or could have been thinking. In approaching these stories, it is important to recognise that though influenced by the censored letters, Kipling did not transcribe the fragments. Instead, he transformed these fragments into compositions and crafted them into narratives.

As a first observation, it is important to note that the stories in *The Eyes of Asia* are not traditional narratives, but instead, appear as imaginative reconstructions of letters. Because the framing devices for these stories were removed in their English newspaper publications, they could have been mistaken by their readership for actual letters from Indian soldiers to their families. The other major difference between the censored fragments and Kipling’s reconstructions is that the latter are

⁶⁹ Basu, pp. 1, 5.

entirely positive. Certainly, amongst the censored extracts there were letters that were supportive of the war and in awe of the British. Compare, for instance, Kipling's 'We are nothing besides these people', and 'We in India are but stones compared to these people', to the actual sentiment of the soldier who stated 'When one considers this country and these people in comparison with our own country and our own people one cannot but be distressed [...] they have a real moral superiority'.⁷⁰

Yet be this as it may, there were many of the fragments available to Kipling that were negative about the weather, the lack of food, and the soldiers' treatment by the British: 'The war is a calamity on three worlds and has caused me to cross the seas and live here [...] The cold is so great that it cannot be described';⁷¹ 'I have been starving for lack of food' (a Tamil woman to her husband (France));⁷² 'We are slaves of masters who can show no mercy'.⁷³ Indian soldiers warned their friends about joining the war ('You should know that you should not on any account come out to the war');⁷⁴ they shared tricks about how to seem sick and avoid duty ('I learnt from other people that if you want to make your eyes sore, you should do as follows: grind the seed of the *rand* plant and apply it to the eyes');⁷⁵ tried to communicate in code about the black and red pepper (Indian and British troops respectively);⁷⁶ and discussed the prospect of sleeping with European women ('The ladies are very nice and bestow their favours upon us freely [...] [but] they do not put their legs over the shoulders when they go with a man').⁷⁷ Considering these same fragments that Kipling had access to aids the analysis of his representation of Indians by indicating the letters and voices absent from his texts, as well as the letters and voices displayed in them.

Indian soldiers, in Kipling's First World War prose, differs from his earlier representations in terms of their attitudes towards the food and luxury of Europe and the reciprocal relationships of intimacy they share with other Europeans—particularly with women. In terms of their relationships with violence, however, there are some consistencies. In 'A Retired Gentleman', an injured elderly Sikh, Bishen

⁷⁰ *The Eyes of Asia*, pp. 14, 94; Omissi #15, pp. 33-34.

⁷¹ Omissi #18, p. 35.

⁷² *Ibid*, #26, p. 40.

⁷³ *Ibid*, #146, p. 102.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, #78, p. 69.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, #75, p. 67.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, #43, p49; other example of codes being used in letters include #20, p48.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, #170, 171, 172, pp113-4.

Singh Saktawut, writes from a hospital in Lyndhurst, Hampshire. He laments his injury and feels that if he returns to India he will be useless because he will not be able to drill the new troops. He explains how he is revered in the hospital because of his 'knowledge of the English tongue', his seniority (he is 'forbidden to stoop even for my crutches'), and for winning a 'medal for fetching in my captain from out of the wires upon my back'.⁷⁸ Saktawut's act encapsulates Kipling's vision of the colonial soldier—willing to lay down their life to save and support his captain. Much of the letter is spent puzzling over his observations of British life: English modesty is a mystery to him—'[t]heir boast is not to boast'—and he notes the class system is an adequate cipher for the Indian caste system.⁷⁹ The elderly Sikh has an intimacy with the British nurses.—they jest with him 'as daughters with a father', and call him 'Dada', the Indian name for grandfather (and elder brother).⁸⁰ While some of the censored letters illustrated sexual interest in white women, Kipling represents the Sikh realising the necessity for education and equality amongst women, whom he admires: 'What man of us now relies upon the advice of his womankind in any matter outside? In this country and in France the women understand perfectly what is needful in the day of trial'.⁸¹ Through educating women, they are able to be more productive: 'Our women should be taught [...] Otherwise we are as children running about naked under the feet of grown men and women'.⁸² The grown men and women, the British, are admirable models of behaviour: '[w]e are not even children beside them'. Kipling represents the Indian as learning from the English. The nurses run after Saktawut, calling him Dada and rebuke him if he does 'not wear a certain coat when it rains daily'; but the water does not bother him, it nourishes him, for he concludes his letter by describing himself as 'a dying tree in a garden of flowers.'⁸³

The elderly Saktawut does not glorify war ('[o]nly fools will desire more war when this war is ended'⁸⁴), but he insists he did not make a mistake in signing up. The censored letter fragments contain those that rather emphasise the horror of warfare, something Kipling's Indians never do:

⁷⁸ *The Eyes of Asia*, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 17.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9.

[T]he earth is covered with dead men and there is no place to put one's foot [...] So many men were killed and wounded that they could not be counted, and of the Germans the number of casualties is beyond calculation. When we reached their trenches we used the bayonet and [...] the blood was shed so freely that we could not recognize each other's faces; the whole ground was covered with blood. There were heaps of men's heads, and some soldiers were without legs, others had been cut in two, some without hands and others without eyes. The scene was indescribable. If I survive I will tell you all [...]. At first in Belgium the Germans thus treated the inhabitants, they cut off the hands and feet of little children and let them go, and also in the case of women they cut off one hand or one foot or blinded one eye [...]. We have been constantly fighting for six months, but we have not seen the sun; day and night the rain has fallen; and the country is so cold that I cannot describe it. The produce of the country is nothing; beyond wheat they have no crops.⁸⁵

It is easy to see why this letter was censored. Rifleman Rawat describes a battle in savage and bloody detail, including mounds of severed heads and limbs. The weather seems to have slowly eroded his spirit to the extent that he cannot even describe the cold—unlike the dying tree in a garden of flowers, Rawat's roots are freezing. He even goes so far as to insult France's agricultural produce, claiming they have nothing other than wheat. Saktawut claims the soldiers eat as if it were a 'bunnia's marriage-feast' and eat so often they need to exercise 'to keep thin.'⁸⁶ The comparison with another of the stories, 'The Fumes of the Heart', is illuminating: 'They grow all that we grow such as peas, onions, garlic, spinach, beans, cabbages and wheat'.⁸⁷ Once again however, there are letters that do reflect Kipling's choice of rhetoric:

The fields are very large, all gardens full of fruit trees. Every man's land yields him thousands of mounds of wheat. The chief products are wheat, potatoes, beans and every kind of grain except the noble millet.⁸⁸

However, Kipling's letters are not simply a relocation of these sentiments, but instead supply a new context for the letters altogether. Whereas his source materials were excised from their original texts to prevent too much knowledge of the front, Kipling's letters demonstrate the joy and honour of fighting for King and country—Kipling makes his writers speak in order to legitimise the war.

⁸⁵ Rifleman Amar Singh Rawat, Kitchener's Indian Hospital, dated 26 March 1915, Omissi #36, p. 45.

⁸⁶ *The Eyes of Asia*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁸⁸ Omissi, #121, p. 90.

There were letters, for example, that expressed awe at the material wealth of the west: ‘the buildings [...] are very, very fine indeed [...]. Each house has at least seven storeys and the workmanship that they put into them is beyond description’;⁸⁹ ‘[e]ach house is a sample of paradise’.⁹⁰ What links ‘A Retired Gentleman’ and another of the stories, ‘The Private Account’, is their shared emphasis on these moments of awe at the luxuries of Europe. ‘The Private Account’ is presented as a play, with the stage directions and characters clearly marked out. The story was only printed in American newspapers—not the British—and the framing narrative demolishes any kind of sense that the story is an actual letter. The scene is of an Afghan family reading the letter from their boy in France, by kerosene lamplight. In ‘A Retired Gentleman’, Saktawut describes a world filled with gramophones, hot water delivered in ‘in silver pipes’, and baths that are perpetually renewed; Europe is a ‘palace filled with carpets, gilt furniture, marbles, mirrors, silks, velvets, carvings’, and the luxuries for washing clothes are in every house: ‘tubs, boards, and irons, and [...] a machine to squeeze water out of clothes.’⁹¹ Similarly, the family reads out their son’s list of the amazing sights of France:

This country is full of precious objects, such as grain, ploughs, and implements, and sheep which lie about the fields by day with none to guard them [...]. We reside in brick houses with painted walls of flowers and birds; we sit upon chairs covered with silks. We sleep on high beds that cost a hundred rupees each. There is glass in all the doors and windows; the abundance of iron and brass, pottery, and copper kitchen utensils is not to be estimated. Every house is a palace of entertainment filled with clocks, lamps, candlesticks, gildings and images.⁹²

What to Kipling’s readers might have seemed the simplest pleasures are described with such wonder that they are transformed for the reader: houses made of brick; glass in windows and doors; iron, brass, copper; miraculous machines that tick and keep time are to be found everywhere! Despite this abundance, Ahmed, the soldier writing the letter, emphasises that stealing is not acceptable: ‘To take one chicken is to loosen the tongues of fifty old women.’ One of the censored letters notes a much harsher punishment for theft: ‘if a man commits theft they inflict a very severe punishment on

⁸⁹ Ibid, #11, p. 30.

⁹⁰ Ibid, #121, p. 90.

⁹¹ *The Eyes of Asia*, pp. 13, 18.

⁹² Ibid, pp. 56-58.

him. They fix him alive and upright to a stake and fasten his hands with nails, and there he dies.’⁹³ The soldier’s confusion over the sight of Calvary, with the two thieves flanking Jesus, may have proved the kind of innocent naïveté Kipling dramatized Indians in his fiction as having—but in this case the confusion implies the violence of the non-German Europeans that Kipling may not have wished to emphasise. Recalling Kipling’s comments regarding the Indian soldier’s new-found awareness of the nakedness of his own land, he describes this ‘palace of entertainment’ in a fantastical tone, emphasising how a sense of material disparity, commodity envy, and the moral imperative not to steal all commingle in his imagined Indian soldiers.

Kipling’s constructions prove incapable of including the sort of reference to the beef-eating English as demonic ‘Raksha’, who are bleeding the beauty of ‘Bharat’—a four-(broken)-legged representation of India—that is found in one of the poems appearing in a soldier’s censored letter (not collected in Omissi’s book of letters, incidentally).⁹⁴ Instead, in ‘The Private Account’, the Pathan son recounts that only the ignorant spread the rumour that France is ‘the country of the Rakshas [Demons]’; for in reality, the reader finds him claiming, it is a ‘country created by Allah and its people are manifestly a reasonable people with reason for all they do.’⁹⁵

Ahmed discusses the violence of war, of how ‘Men are swallowed up or blown apart here as one divides meat’, and explains that in the trenches there is no time for getting revenge ‘on private account’.⁹⁶ However, it is not the danger of combat that worries his family, it is the development of intimate familial relationships. Ahmed has inherited ‘A French mother’. ‘Mother’ is upset by this news and wants to hear more: ‘mother, like you, my French mother does all she can for my welfare’.⁹⁷ If he does not come home, she searches for him; if he is in another village she asks to visit to ‘see her boy’, where she brings him food. A similar surrogate mother appears in ‘The Fumes of the Heart’. The landlady of the soldier had lost one child, a second had been injured, and a third was in the trenches. Whilst living in her house, the Indian soldier becomes another of her children:

⁹³ Omissi, #10, p. 30.

⁹⁴ MSS EUR D681/18, p. 91.

⁹⁵ *The Eyes of Asia*, pp. 62-3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 53.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 61.

she washed my clothes, arranged my bed, and polished my boots daily [...]. She washed down my bedroom daily with hot water [...]. Each morning she prepared me a tray with bread, butter milk and coffee. When we had to leave that village that old lady wept on my shoulder.⁹⁸

In addition to feeding and cleaning the soldier, she even gives him money ‘for expenses on the road’. There are moments of incredible intimacy in these stories, which suggest the Indian soldiers were treated on an equal footing with their European counterparts. Once more, in considering these stories’ relationship to propaganda, we need not appeal to the historical records of soldiers’ actual experiences, but instead enquire what purposes such representations of the Indian soldier might have served.

A particularly touching moment in ‘The Private Account’ occurs with the recounting of the funeral of a young girl, ‘Marri’. Ahmed explains she was ‘slain by a shell while grazing cattle’.⁹⁹ Ahmed describes a funeral devoid of professional mourners and bricks around the grave. The strange ceremony leaves him sad moreover, because the French ‘do not know that the Two Angels visit the dead’. Another intimate scene involving death occurs in ‘A Trooper of Horse’ where the Muslim Diffadar Abdul Rahman explains to his mother that the French lay their dead in gardens and do not believe, as Muslims do, ‘a burial-ground to be inhabited by evil spirits or ghouls’.¹⁰⁰ He describes how he reburied a newly dead woman, whose grave was disturbed by the shells, ‘for the sake of the Pity of Allah’, and how he then ‘made the prayer.’ The Muslim soldier brings peace back to an innocent grave disgraced and disturbed by the German artillery. In these stories, Kipling draws the Indian and the European into an imagined closeness and unity that erases cultural difference, distance, and animosity. These moments of tenderness and remarkable empathy are characteristic of Kipling’s finest writing on India; however, placed against the horizon of British propaganda other valencies can also be detected. In another scene in the same story, the Rahman describes how a three year old named Pir (Pierre) ‘learned to speak our tongue and bears a wooden sword which was made for him and a turban of our sort’.¹⁰¹ The boy plays at being an Indian soldier and

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 67.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 100.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 96.

demonstrates an intimacy and closeness to Indian soldiers which removes any formality between the soldiers and their hosts—the boy sleeps in the same bed as the soldier even though his parents forbid it. These stories represent forms of cultural hybridity. With surrogate mothers, the performance of funeral rites, and the rearing of children, Kipling's Indian soldiers are deeply imbedded within the domestic life of the European families that surround them. Notably, there remains the absence of sexual or erotic emotional relations that sometimes emerge from the censored letters (see above).

'A Trooper of Horse' illustrates a soldier's fixation upon his separation from his mother:

I tell you truly, Mother, I will salute you again. Do not grieve. I tell you confidently I shall bow thus, Mother. I shall come in the dead of the night and knock at your door. Then I will call loudly that you may wake and open the door to me. With great delight you will open the door and fold me to your breast, my Mother. Then I will sit beside you and tell you what has happened to me—good and evil.¹⁰²

Rahman attentively fantasises about returning home and sitting with his mother, but his dream and his arrival in the 'dead' of night suggest that he is not completely confident of his return. To appease her he describes what he eats:

I eat daily sugar and ghi and flour, salt, meat, red peppers, some almonds, and dates, sweets of various kinds as well as raisons and cardamoms [...]. In the morning I eat tea and white biscuits. An hour after, halva and puri [native dishes]. At noon, tea and bread; at seven o'clock of the evening, vegetable curry. At bedtime I drink milk. There is an abundance of milk in this country. I am more comfortable here, I swear it to you, Mother, than any high officer in India.¹⁰³

Similar to his fantasy of returning home, this long list of food—particularly the native dishes (labelled as such by Kipling in the original)—betrays a need to convince his Mother ('I am comfortable here, I swear it to you') that he is well fed. This emphasis on the luxury, intimacy, and abundance of food is not evident from the censored letters—this is the representation of a wishful narrative in a different capacity from that of an historical Indian soldier writing home from the front. Moreover, it is also the wishful narrative that Kipling would want an Indian soldier's reality to reflect—he

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 78.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 80.

underlines the soldiers' abundance of food, their access to their native dishes, and their observances of their religious dietary requirements. Along similar lines of respect for cultural tradition, he explains, Sikhs do not wear helmets because 'they had not found any permission in their Law to wear such things'¹⁰⁴. By emphasising the wonderful aspects of the war, particularly the food, Kipling inadvertently demonstrates that he is constructing a particularly sanitised version of trench life.

The French are discussed as the Indians' betters: 'Indians are but stones compared to these people'; they do not 'litigate amongst themselves'; 'they speak truth at first answer'; they marry only when they are eighteen; and 'no man has authority here to beat his wife'.¹⁰⁵ Indians are not just represented as anachronistic in their moral development in relation to gender relations, but their innocence also betrays a perpetual child-like wonder that Kipling relishes in recreating through language games. Rahman learns French and shares what he learns with his mother: '*Zuur monofahn*: the morning salutation', '*Wasi lakafeh*: Coffee is prepared.'¹⁰⁶ In an unpublished censored letter-fragment, a wounded Sikh soldier complains 'No one has any clue to the language of this place. Even the British soldiers do not understand it [...] [t]hey call milk 'doolee' & water 'dooloo' [du lait and de l'eau]'.¹⁰⁷ These passages share similar tropes of language confusion, but Kipling's are a self-conscious and questionable attempt at humour.

There are other notable instances in the stories where characters express a virulent and passionate anger about the way that the war is being fought. In 'A Trooper of Horse', the Muslim soldier expresses anger at holy men in Zilabad who have gathered together for a festival, and as a result have spread cholera all over the district:

There should be an order of the Government to take all those lazy rascals out of India into France and put them in our front-line that their bodies may be sieves for the machine guns [...]. It is certainly right to feed the family priests, Mother, but when the idle assemble in thousands begging and making sickness and polluting the drinking-water, punishment should be administered.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁰⁷ From Sikh wounded and in hospital, MSS EUR D681/18 p. 51 (dated 27 January 1915).

¹⁰⁸ *The Eyes of Asia*, p. 81.

Who is the reader meant to take to be speaking here? Who, in other words, are we to imagine asking the ‘lazy’ holy men to be placed in *our* ‘front-line’, and in a particularly grotesque and violent image, to be made into ‘sieves for the machine guns’? Whose voice is asking for the administration of justice? It is worth emphasising that even if there may have been censored letters that expressed similar sentiments, it is an entirely different issue for Kipling to select, edit, and frame such commentary in a manner which seems independent and natural—as if he simply found a letter and is sharing it with the readers. In actuality, Kipling recruits these voices to express an apparent admiration for brutality alongside their feelings of honour and civility in warfare.

In a brief moment in ‘A Retired Gentleman’, Kipling’s narrator condemns the violence of the Germans:

The nature of the enemy is to commit shame upon women and children, and to defile the shrines of his own faith with his own dung. It is done by him as a drill. We believed till then they were some sort of caste apart from the rest. We did not know they were outcaste. Now it is established by the evidence of our senses. They attack on all fours running like apes. They are specially careful for their faces. When death is certain to them they offer gifts and repeat the number of their children. They are very good single shots from cover.¹⁰⁹

Through the voice of the Indian soldier, the Germans are made out to be animals who walk on all fours and spread their faeces (‘dung’) indiscriminately. They show no honour towards women, children, or graves; and what is worse, they are cowards: in begging for mercy they try to invoke sympathy by mentioning their children. Finally, they shoot only once under cover so as to not leave themselves exposed to counter-fire. Having the Indian soldier denounce the cowardice of the enemy serves obvious purposes. However, the violence that Kipling has his soldiers demand is somewhat excessive, and is that of clearly evident propaganda.

In an aside from the letter he is dictating, the Sikh soldier in ‘The Fumes of the Heart’ grows so irate with the manner in which Indians in France are taking advantage of the other soldiers’ ignorance of caste that he wants to ‘*slipper them publicly*’: to teach a lesson to those of lower castes who demonstrate vaulting ambition.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 29.

Kipling has his Sikh soldier re-inscribe the hierarchy of caste in Europe. The story is written as a letter dictated by a Sikh soldier in a hospital in Brighton to his brother, a farmer in India, and draws its purported realism from the intimacy of the detail it finds its fictional author 'naturally' focusing on, such as the different farming techniques in France, as well the different traditions and clothing of the French. Kipling omitted the second story's framing narrative of the Sikh arguing with the letter's scribe in the *Morning Post* publication, which gave the British publication of the stories a greater aura of authenticity, by presenting them as actual letters. In the American publication, the voice of the Sikh soldier is found commenting on his own letter periodically; this technique serves to bring attention to the constructed character of Kipling's narrative without simultaneously bringing attention to Kipling's own construction of the Indian soldier's voice. For example, in this version we find the soldier telling the letter-writer to emphasise certain magnificent sights, such as dogs churning butter, in large letters so that his brother would not find reason to call him a liar.¹¹¹ Kipling constructs voices of soldiers that are romantic and dramatic in their dedication to King, empire, and the war itself: 'a soldier's life is for his family; his death is for his country; his discomforts are for himself alone.'¹¹²

In the context of the First World War, soldiers' complaints about the war in letters were sometimes written in code and would be censored and removed from their texts. Refashioning complete letters from the entirely positive censored fragments, Kipling once again imagined idealised soldiers that match his own vision of India. Whether conscious or not, the result is a reinstating of the unity, benevolence, and strength of the British Empire as a force to meet the Germans. While these stories demonstrate moments of tenderness and affection, we should consider Benita Parry's conclusion that the soldiers that emerge from these stories are childlike 'pasteboard figures' of Indians 'genuflecting' before the West.¹¹³ Like the *Punch* cartoon 'India and the King' (9 September 1914), *The Eyes of Asia* adequately advertise the Empire and its unity. The reinforcement of the notion of the Empire as one family particularly occurs in the recurring image of surrogate motherhood that runs through

¹¹¹ The detail of a dog churning butter is taken directly from one of the censored letter fragments. See Omissi, letters #10 (pp29-30) & #255 (pp. 156-57).

¹¹² *The Eyes of Asia*, p. 46.

¹¹³ Parry (1998), p. 201. In comparing Kipling's earlier Indian fiction which she praises for its subtlety and awareness of India, Parry denounces Kipling's later attempts to represent Indians with cloying phrases 'offered as authentic renderings of the vernacular' which, according to her, are rather 'facile ways of evoking atmosphere' (p. 202).

these stories: this unity, which excludes dissonant opinion, is also further reinforced through other domestic images such as those revolving around feeding and food.

Kipling's Indian soldiers are thus mouthpieces for the war's advocates and more propagandistic than some of his other literary efforts during the war. Even in a pro-war, pro-empire pamphlet such as Basu's 'Why India is Heart and Soul with Great Britain', there are questions that need to be resolved about British rule, 'such as the right to carry arms, to enlist as volunteers, to enter the commissioned ranks of the Army, the recognition of equal citizenship in British colonies, the better administration of justice, a more equitable participation in the government of the country, still await solution and India has necessarily felt at times sore and heart sick'.¹¹⁴ Of course Basu carefully underlines that despite what the Germans may think, India does not doubt its loyalty to England despite the slow progress on these issues; all India 'desires is that British rule in India should be compatible with the self-respect of her people, growing in education, knowledge, and experience is there never has been any desire to break away'. Even in such a pamphlet, the lightest gesture towards increasing rights is mingled with the underlying unity of empire

they are prepared to lay down their lives on the field, so that the old order of things may pass away and a new order be ushered in, based on mutual understanding and confidence and heralding an era brighter and happier than any in the past—the East and the West, India and England, marching onwards in comradeship, united in bonds forged on the field of battle and tempered in their common blood.¹¹⁵

Basu claims the Indian is willing to 'lay down their lives' for a 'new world order' wherein India and England are partners—not cast in the role of the master and the servant. In Kipling's stories we cannot even detect such a gesture regarding the rhetoric of a new order; it is as if his stories already presume not only this equality but indeed the unity of the British Empire; a unity which would remain in perpetuity. Moving from representations of Allies, the next section will consider two different representations of the German enemy in his wartime fiction.

¹¹⁴ Basu, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

3 THE ENEMY IN OUR MIDST: REPRESENTING THE ENEMY IN KIPLING'S WAR FICTION

In 'Swept and Garnished', a feverish old German woman suffering from influenza, Frau Ebermann, finds herself speaking to the ghosts of the child victims of Germany's invasion of Belgium. In the climax of the story, her servant discovers her on all fours soaking up 'blood' she imagines has been dripping from the bodies of the injured children. In 'Mary Postgate', we find a young female house-keeper burning the possessions of a recently deceased airman when she discovers a German, who has just crashed his plane, hanging from a tree. She refuses to help him, celebrating his death instead. Unlike 'Swept and Garnished', where the servant is our witness to Frau Ebermann's hallucinations, it remains ambiguous for the reader as to whether Mary Postgate is actually visited by this figure or not.¹¹⁶ Though Germans are represented in both these stories, part of what makes 'Mary Postgate' more complicated is the way in which its representation of the German is mediated by the character of Mary Postgate. Although both these stories are about women in the domestic sphere during the war, both also represent Germans and involve principal characters who hallucinate; yet they also create two entirely different responses to the war.

This section will consider the characterisations of both Germans and English in these stories and assess how they can be situated alongside the discourse of official war propaganda. As in *The Eyes of Asia*, Kipling denounces the Germans in 'Swept and Garnished' as complicit with the crimes of their military and their government. He depicts Frau Ebermann's repressed guilt concerning German crimes in Belgium, the same crimes Britain used to justify its own involvement in the war: Ebermann is all the more haunted by these visions because they are perpetrated against innocent children. 'Mary Postgate', on the other hand, is as much about the framing narrative of the tale as it is about the events in the story itself. Kipling radically complicates the representations of Mary on the home front by having her consciousness filter different parts of the story. Kipling thus dramatises home-front anxieties concerning death, fear of invasion, and German atrocities as popularised by then contemporary media and official propaganda. This story had a much smaller role to play in official

¹¹⁶ Sandra Kemp, in her important commentary on the works of Kipling, does not discuss these stories in any detail. However, the way in which these stories explore the subjectivity of the two female characters' inner worlds may be seen as examples of what she calls Kipling's 'hidden narratives.' Sandra Kemp, *Kipling's Hidden Narratives* (Oxford, 1988), p. 6.

propaganda, primarily because it would have complicated one of the principal mythologies of the war—that of English civility in the face of German barbarism. Moreover, close attention to the ambiguity suggested in the language of ‘Mary Postgate’ opens up an array of possible interpretations that are unavailable in the case of either *The Eyes of Asia* or ‘Swept and Garnished’. In these stories, the representation of the Allies and the Germans is a principal part of the narrative. However, in ‘Mary Postgate’ the very act of representation becomes central to the story itself. Kipling thus demonstrates an awareness in this story of how propaganda and the war affected the consciousness of people on the home front. Mary claims she has no imagination, yet she feeds on a steady stream of newspaper stories (which she reads out to Miss Fowler) and atrocity reports, and is further fuelled by grief over the death of a loved one; she finds sexual gratification only when enacting a (possibly imagined) revenge. This demonstration of the process of representation can thus offer the reader a radical reconsideration of how propaganda affects the home front in wartime.

3.1 THE GUILTY GERMAN’S IMAGINATION: ‘SWEPT AND GARNISHED’

‘Swept and Garnished’ opens with a description of Frau Ebermann’s fever. In describing her ailments, Kipling gives us insight into fastidious nature of the old woman. He then shifts the tone by undermining her perfectly ordered bourgeois middle-class German life:

she noticed that an imitation-lace cover which should have lain mathematically square with the imitation marble top of the radiator behind the green plush sofa had slipped away so that one corner hung over the bronze-painted steam pipes.¹¹⁷

It is not so much that this lady is particular in the precise arrangement of her bedroom, but rather that there is something disturbing in her meticulousness; Kipling makes us feel her profound unease if anything, no matter how small, appears out of its assigned place. Angus Wilson argues that this story illustrates that when Kipling hated something ‘he shows extra attention to detail.’¹¹⁸ Kipling carefully describes the life of a woman portrayed as a typical member of the German bourgeoisie, to emphasise the way in which she uses her comfort to insulate herself from the realities of the war.

¹¹⁷ Kipling, *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 407.

¹¹⁸ Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works* (London, 1977), p. 308.

Yet those realities creep into her imagination nonetheless, and Kipling suggests the gravity of German atrocities will also be visited upon all Germans.

Once Ebermann starts to relax in bed, the children start to appear. There is nothing supernatural about these seeming apparitions, but from the first moment we encounter them, we remain uncertain as to whether they are real, or only the product of Ebermann's imagination. It is as if they first emerge to satisfy her unease; and so she addresses their curious arrival by asking them to straighten the lace cover. Anna, the maid, comes in with some news from the chemists, but when asked, claims she had not seen any children. Anna corrects the lace cover and assures Ebermann that her brushes and watch and the other items that make for her comfortable life are all in order. The narrator describes Ebermann purring when she hears of a German military victory, and then corrects this description, calling the noise she makes a 'grunt' instead. The narrator reminds us that we are not after all dealing with humans like ourselves, but with the animal-like Germans. This effect works more covertly (making it less immediately noticeable) within a narrative than it does in a pamphlet such as *Kipling's Message*.

Soon the five children reappear and they earnestly declare that they do not have homes, parents, or pets any longer. Frau Ebermann chastises the children for coming into homes where they are not invited, and when they admit that they know it to be wrong she tells them 'If you know it is wrong, that makes it much worse'.¹¹⁹ Ebermann speaks both to the children here and to her own conscience about the Germans entering Belgium uninvited; this scene seems to mark the emergence of a repressed awareness of past wrongdoing. Ebermann warms to the lost children and tells them they must speak to the police if they are indeed lost. But as the conversation wears on she becomes more unsettled. At first she is defensive, repeating the German justification for reprisals in Belgium: 'That is silly [...] [t]he people fired on us, and they were punished. Those places are wiped out, stamped flat.'¹²⁰ Ebermann even rehearses to herself the German justification for its atrocities in Belgium; namely, that non-uniformed citizens fired on German soldiers, thus inciting German reprisals against the civilian population. However, she ends with an ominous approval of the reprisal that brought these children to her room.

¹¹⁹ *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 413.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

Over the course of the story she becomes increasingly frustrated, and starts to manifest her sense of guilt for the murders. The children say there are hundreds and thousands like them, which Ebermann; but she inadvertently reveals she did know children were dying: 'That is a lie. There cannot be a hundred even, much less a thousand.'¹²¹ She scolds the children for playing in the streets when the horses went by, for that is how her son described in a letter how children were killing themselves in Belgium:

*I tell you; and I have very good information. I know how it happened. You should be more careful. You should not have run out to see the horses and guns passing. That is how it is done when our troops pass through. My son has written me so.*¹²²

Ebermann's concealed knowledge slowly emerges in the story, and demonstrates her repressed insecurity about what actually happened. Ebermann insists the children died by playing near the horses and maintains that hundreds, not thousands, were killed as the children claim. Our sense of her guilt comes out not only through her insistence that the children killed themselves by playing near the horses, but also in her inviting the children to take 'cakes to stop their bleeding', in a haunting phrase that appears towards the closing of the story.¹²³ In a perversion of a theme noted in *The Eyes of Asia*, these children again seek a surrogate mother (a role which was provided by the British Empire to its colonies), but in this instance the vision of the domestic sphere is grotesque. Food is presented as means of stopping up wounds instead of stuffing mouths; the abandonment, wounds, and voices of these children will not be suppressed. Following Ebermann's confusion between food and bandages, she repeats her earlier prayer about preparing everything to be swept and garnished for the Lord's arrival, when everything will be 'as it should be.' By the end of the story we find her cleaning the floor with the lace cover because it was 'spotted with the blood of five children'.¹²⁴ Through the text's title, Kipling evokes Matthew 12:43-45 wherein a man, attempting to expel an unclean spirit from his soul, finds himself like a house, 'empty, swept, and garnished'. His attempt to rid himself of the negative forces proves futile because of his failure to repent, and 'seven other spirits'

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 417.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 418.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

return to the man to dwell within him. Thus with its Biblical framing, the ideological message of the story is difficult to avoid: even as the Germans attempt to cleanse themselves of the memory of their brutality, more misery will be returned on them—at very least in psychological terms.

Ebermann negotiates her personal suspicions about the conduct of the German soldiers in this story, and under the strain of sickness and guilt her ordered psyche deteriorates. Kipling represents the luxurious and wilfully ignorant life of a German woman who lives in Berlin, whose son fights in the war and who tacitly supports German expansion in Europe. These purring and grunting animals are what maintain the power of the German Junkers, but they are also those whom Kipling suggests will suffer the nightmares associated with the war as well. Kipling endows Ebermann with the words and mindset of a Prussian apologist, particularly when she offers her defence for acts of collective reprisal ('wiped out, stamped flat') in Belgium when discussing snipers. Kipling punishes Frau Ebermann with guilt and has her recognise her errors in the narrative's macabre ending, but the story is far from a humanising portrait of the Germans. Kipling demonstrates his protagonist knows what the military is doing, but simply shrouds herself in lies and justifications. If the Indians who emerge from *The Eyes of Asia* were caricatures of Indian loyalty, here the German is a slightly more sophisticated caricature. Frau Ebermann's denials surface in her imagination even as Kipling condemns her complicity with respect to Germany's crimes during the war. In 'Mary Postgate', by contrast, while the main character Mary also denies and conceals a great deal of personal thought and desire, she is still presented in a complex and layered fashion. Kipling explores how the individual imagination is affected by war, particularly through the plot arc which finds Mary enacting revenge upon the German airman. The complexity and violence of Mary's character and imagination and the subtlety of the story's language and narrative make it difficult to interpret according to any particular ideological or political stance. It is therefore unlike the other stories that this chapter has discussed, and all the more difficult to identify as propaganda.

3.2 WOUND FOR WOUND, STRIPE FOR STRIPE: IMAGINING REVENGE IN 'MARY POSTGATE'

'Mary Postgate' has proven one of Kipling's most celebrated and most discussed stories amongst his later fiction. Attacked for its brutal and violent ending, and

defended as an alternative portrait of the domestic spaces of war-time, the story has certainly excited passionate disagreements. Angus Wilson argues that whether we condemn the story, as Wilson has for years, or defend it, as other critics have done, amounts to

a refusal to face the difficult truth that aesthetic satisfaction is not one with ethical satisfaction, although the critic has every right to distinguish the moral impulse which disgusts him from the story which is such a wonder to read.¹²⁵

Wilson acknowledges the workmanship of the story as well as the interpretation that Kipling may have been dramatising—if not necessarily sanctioning—the killing of Germans. Wilson is dissatisfied with this interpretation, however, because he detects an air of something that remains diabolic and unstated in the story—the acceptance by Kipling and (by implication) the reader as well, of the torture of another human being. This evaluation seems suspect because of the conflation between the aesthetic and the ethical aspects of the story which Wilson himself tried to separate. The effects of the story are more complicated and nuanced than Wilson suggests; moreover, attention to the language and the narrative technique of ‘Mary Postgate’ can illuminate how moral expectations are manipulated and twisted in Kipling’s best writing.

A close-reading of the story reveals that Mary’s fantasies guide the narrative, thus making the story, on one level, about her consciousness and personality. In the space of fantasy, the reader can witness how the act of representation (or the way in which Mary perceives the German airman) is constructed in Mary’s mind. Her killing of the airman is a figment of her imagination. The mastery of the story is that she takes over the narrative to such an extent that many readers have mistaken her fabulist imaginings for a realist’s descriptions. Trudi Tate rejects this reading—according to which the airman’s appearance is attributed to an hallucination—because, as she argues, it ‘diminishes the story’s horror’ making it more palatable for post-war readers.¹²⁶ William Dillingham insists the events are real and claims no one else sees the soldier she allows to die, not because it is part of her dream, but because she must go through the experiences alone; moreover he claims Kipling’s ‘detailed description of the scene is simply out of keeping with an intention to make it Mary’s

¹²⁵ Wilson, p. 311.

¹²⁶ Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the Great War* (Manchester, 1998), p. 34. Tate insists that the story can be read as both real and as a fantasy.

hallucination'.¹²⁷ Norman Page argues that Mary's hysterical behaviour suggests she may be mad.¹²⁸

In contrast with these interpretations, this section argues that an attention to the language that Kipling uses to build Mary's imagination illustrates how central her fantasy-life is to the story. Far from hollowing out the horror of the story, this interpretation may deepen our understanding of how the story works on different levels—that of a kind of horror-story about death and invasion, as well as that of a story about the way war's effects persist within the domestic sphere. Kipling leaves it open as to whether the airman is or is not merely a figment of Mary's dreaming, and this ambiguity grants the story a level of narrative complexity that *The Eyes of Asia* and 'Swept and Garnished' do not achieve.

From the outset of 'Mary Postgate' we interpret the image of its namesake character as a meek woman devoted to the family she serves, particularly the orphaned nephew who joins the household. Kipling relates Mary's credentials as 'thoroughly conscientious, tidy, companionable, and ladylike.'¹²⁹ He also tells us how Mary 'listened unflinchingly' to everyone, helping us to learn more about her employer Miss Fowler (such as her visit to the Great Exhibition of 1851 which 'had just set its seal on Civilization made perfect'), but little about herself. Kipling's descriptions are superficial ('Mary was not young, and though her speech was as colourless as her eyes or her hair, she was never shocked'), and the story itself is resistant to yielding any more direct insight into her personality. We learn more about her hidden nature only through suggestion, and about her thoroughly darker instincts only towards the end of the story. Initially, Mary does not seem to have any desires; she is like a machine, disciplined and good at accounts: she 'had no enemies', 'provoked no jealousy', and did not gossip. Miss Fowler finds this frustrating and demands to know why she has had so little to say. She asks: 'Mary, are not you *anything* except a companion? Would you *ever* have been anything except a companion?'¹³⁰ Mary's answer reveals how little self-awareness she brings to her words, as she is left repeating, 'I do not imagine I ever should. But I've no imagination, I'm afraid.' Wynn, the orphaned nephew of Fowler, always teases Mary

¹²⁷ William Dillingham, *Rudyard Kipling Hell and Heroism* (London, 2005), p. 146.

¹²⁸ Norman Page, 'What Happens in 'Mary Postgate'?' *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* (No.1, 1986), p. 44.

¹²⁹ *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 419.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 425.

about having the mind of a mouse. However, in her relationship with Wynn there is the suggestion that Mary, the unthinking simple companion, may have other hidden emotions and thoughts. Through his characterisation, Kipling demonstrates to us how complex Mary's imagination really is.

Mary has an unusually intense connection with the boy she cares for. As a child, Wynn tests Mary's limits, chasing her around the house, calling her names such as 'Gatepost,' 'Postey,' and 'Packthread', and demanding things from her; he is able to send Mary from tears to laughter depending on his mood. Though we learn less of what Mary feels for Wynn, it is clear they have a close relationship. Later in life, he shares what he learns in the army about planes and warfare with her, while continuing to tease her: 'You *look* more or less like a human being [...]. You *must* have had a brain at some time in your past. What have you done with it?'¹³¹ She does not mind getting teased, promising to get details about the machines she is quizzed on right the next time he visits. Only later in the story do we learn that Wynn has kept letters he received from Mary as well as a picture of her, and that he has spoken of her to the rest of his squadron. When Wynn dies, Mary shows almost no emotion, her tears, like her sweat ('Nothing makes me perspire'), remain inside of her, but the knot of repression unravels in the final moments of the story. With Miss Fowler, still a matronly figure to Wynn, remaining in the background, Mary now occupies the space between mother and playmate. She becomes that figure of mediation between him and his aunt; they are each other's closest companions and there is certainly some degree of attraction that Mary feels to the young man. Once again, we have the interesting figure of the surrogate mother repeated from Kipling's other war-writing. In this context, however, as we shall see, Kipling emphasises her attachment to the child and the need to avenge his death, whereas *The Eyes of Asia* stories (as I explained above) focus on the providing mother of empire and her abundance of food.

Mary's mourning for Wynn implies hidden aspects of Mary's character that we may not notice on first reading. Kipling offers us a long and meticulously detailed list of Wynn's possessions, including 'schoolbooks, and atlases' as well as a variety of sporting goods, through which we find some insight into Wynn's short temper: 'golf-clubs that had to be broken across the knee, like his walking-sticks, and an assegai [a kind of spear]'. There is a conspicuous absence of any toy airplanes, but a

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 422.

virtual wasteland of other vehicles that suggest the contrast of an earlier, peaceful civilian life, yet also resonate with the contemporaneous destruction that is a feature of the war: ‘the remnants of a fleet of sailing-ships from nine-penny cutters to a three-guinea yacht’, and a ‘disintegrated steam and clockwork locomotives with their twisted rails; a grey and red tin model of a submarine’. Meanwhile the gramophone is ‘dumb’ and the records ‘cracked’, suggesting the permanence of the silence following Wynn’s death.¹³²

This list, a detailed archive of childhood objects of a boy growing up at the turn of the century, reveals less about Wynn than it does the person who is cataloguing and preparing them for burning. This list is impressive and varied, and Kipling illustrates how, when drawn together and juxtaposed, seemingly mundane objects can create a kind of memorial or site of memory for a loved one. The list builds the atmosphere of the boy’s world, a record of his different ages and changes, and transforms this act of naming into an act of remembrance.¹³³ Mary’s attachment to the boy is amplified via Kipling’s use of language for the paraffin as ‘sacrificial oil’, and the destructor as a ‘pyre’, suggesting she may have had erotic feelings of attachment.¹³⁴ The elevated rhetoric here proves disjointed from the rest of the story, and suggests we are entering Mary’s own private world described in a language of fantasy and desire: ‘As she lit the match that would burn her heart to ashes, she heard a groan or a grunt behind the dense Portugal laurels.’ Once again, the figure of the animal-like German, this time an airman, appears in the same moment that Mary’s passion and imagination lights up. He then seems to become a vehicle for her to work through her emotions. While in ‘Swept and Garnished’ Kipling painted Ebermann as animalistic through her satisfied grunts, here we start to see how Kipling dramatises the mentality of the English who are filled with hatred for an enemy they imagine to be becoming animal-like. It is in this fashion that in ‘Mary Postgate’ Kipling presents us with a powerful metaphor for the ways in which the imagination is transformed by the experience of war, even when far from the front.

In a letter dated 11 September 1916, Kipling described to Andrew Macphail a couple going to see plane wreckage, reporting ‘that the smell of the burnt Huns was

¹³² Ibid, p. 431.

¹³³ To further bolster this idea, we could also interpret Mary’s pyre as a ‘site of mourning’, in terms that Jay Winter discusses in his *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1995).

¹³⁴ *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 431.

extremely pungent and [that the couple] sniffed it with the deepest satisfaction'.¹³⁵ He goes on to ask '[b]ut was that what the Hun intended should be the effect on civilian morale?' Kipling articulates a similar interest in the way that the English were learning to hate in 'The Beginnings', the poem that follows 'Mary Postgate' in *A Diversity of Creatures*:

It was not preached to the crowd,
It was not taught by the State.
No man spoke it aloud,
When the English began to hate.

It was not suddenly bred,
It will not swiftly abate,
Through the chill years ahead,
When Time shall count from the date
That the English began to hate.

John Ramsden notes that the poem is a response to the German *Hymn of Hate* by Ernest Lissauer, 'which earned its author an Iron Cross that Kipling would have refused'.¹³⁶ Hate was not preached, planted, or engendered in the English, but they will not stop hating anytime soon, Kipling notes. Hate seems to change the very climate of the coming years in Kipling's line 'Through the chill years ahead'. The poem, Peter E. Firchow argues, serves 'as a kind of moral signpost for the story [...] tracing [...] the development of England's hatred for Germany' and matching it to 'the gradual intensification of Mary's emotional response.'¹³⁷ 'Mary Postgate' demonstrates the evil and fear of hatred that is only semantically alluded to in the poem. What is unclear about this process in which the English begin to hate its enemies in war, is how much they really may be willing to act on these instincts, since abstractly wishing death upon an enemy is distinct from directly taking action to bring about that result oneself. How then, we are led to ask, did Mary come to hate? In

¹³⁵ *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 4:1911-19*, p. 397.

¹³⁶ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans Since 1880* (London, 2006), p. 92.

¹³⁷ Peter E. Firchow, *The Death of the German Cousin: Variations on a Literary Stereotype 1890-1920* (London, 1986), p. 107. See also, Peter E. Firchow, 'Kipling's "Mary Postgate": The Barbarians and the Critics', Harold Orel (editor), *Critical Essays on Rudyard Kipling* (Massachusetts, 1989), pp. 168-180.

arriving at an answer to this question, it is instructive to consider how atrocity stories, news, and even propaganda might have affected Mary's imagination.

When Mary goes to town to get paraffin (to assist the pyre in burning), she finds Nurse Eden announcing that there has been an accident, which has left a girl named Edna bleeding. Mary becomes convinced that this must have been caused by a bomb dropped from an airplane, and refuses to believe that the accident could have been the result of a beam snapping in the barn in which Edna was playing. Dr. Hennis relays the information about the barn beam of the 'Royal Oak' snapping, and asks Mary not to spread rumours that might frighten people. Despite being sure that she had heard an explosion, Mary convinces herself the doctor is right: 'She was sorry she had even hinted at other things, but Nurse Eden was discretion itself. By the time she reached home the affair seemed increasingly remote by its very monstrosity.'¹³⁸ Mary represses her own suspicions, but they emerge again in a fantasy of exacting revenge on the Germans. Underlining this interpretation of the story as hallucination are the logical problems that complicate Kipling's narrative. According to John Stewart, 'there is no final thought that the police or military must be called' or the 'body disposed of', thus opening the possibility that the German is not quite real.¹³⁹ Other questions that remain unanswered include those concerning the location of the plane wreckage; why no one but Miss Fowler confirms hearing the planes, and why no one corroborates hearing a bomb; and why there was not more visible damage at the site where the bomb fell.¹⁴⁰ It remains unclear therefore as to whether Edna's wounds might be explained by a falling beam instead of a bomb. These narrative questions do not fit with the realist portrait that critics have claimed this story provides. Instead they add to the overall effect of the story by building the ambiguity of the atmosphere and inviting the reader to consider how the war took place in the imagination for people on the home front.

Celia Malone Kingsbury argues there was historical precedent for war bombings such as those in 'Mary Postgate', and that understanding the events in the story as a hallucination takes away from the true horror of the events it depicts. However, her conclusions concerning the story lead her to criticize Kipling for laying all 'the blame' for the war's violence 'solely at the feet of Germany' by 'ignor[ing]

¹³⁸ *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 435.

¹³⁹ J. I. M. Stewart, *Eight Modern Writers* (Oxford, 1963), p. 277.

¹⁴⁰ 'As she came in, Miss Fowler told her that a couple of aeroplanes had passed a half hour ago.' *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 435.

the complexities of war and war trauma and further extend[ing] the reach of atrocity stories and propaganda'.¹⁴¹ A more nuanced reading can be undertaken if we attend to the way Kipling presents such atrocity stories, and how they seemingly take over Mary's imagination. Through such a strategy of reading, the power of the story emerges not only from the violence Mary imagines being inflicted upon the airman, but also from the way in which hatred takes over her imagination and threatens to take over the imagination of the all those grieving on the home front.

Another strange and hidden aspect of Mary's character, drawn out in the text, is her knowledge of German, which is evidenced towards the conclusion of the story when she says 'I have seen the dead child' to the airman in German.¹⁴² This linguistic proficiency is another signal of Mary's fantasy life. There is a shift in tone when Mary says 'Nein' to the soldier, and when she begins the slow, pleasurable torture of the mirror image of her beloved. The soldier becomes an object, an 'It', and Wynn's words start to be channelled through Mary: 'Stop that, you bloody pagan!'¹⁴³ The fury she unleashes on this German ('the thing', 'It') is the opposite of the love she has for his alter ego, Wynn:

Now Wynn was dead, and everything connected with him was lumping and rustling and tinkling under her busy poker into red black dust and grey leaves of ash. The thing beneath the oak would die too [...] She would stay where she was till she was entirely satisfied that It was dead.¹⁴⁴

There are coincidental correspondences in the story between the name of the dead girl, Edna, and the Nurse Eden who helps her, as well as between the beam of the 'Royal Oak' that snaps and the oak beneath which a German airman hangs. While these clues are not conclusive in themselves, the similarities clearly add to the strange, ambiguous and particularly macabre atmosphere of 'Mary Postgate'.

Mary drinks in the pleasure of the German's misery, humming while she works. Her later luxuriating in a hot bath to prolong her satisfaction is further suggestive of the sadomasochism involved in her fantasies of revenge; these can be understood as an expression of her repressed sexual desires. In the final pages this sexuality unfurls. Notice the sexually charged language associated with thinking

¹⁴¹ Celia Malone Kingsbury, *The Peculiar Sanity of War: Hysteria in the Literature of World War I* (Lubbock, Texas, 2002), p140.

¹⁴² *A Diversity of Creatures*, p440.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p438.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p439.

about Wynn while poking the fire: ‘lumping and rustling and tinkling’. Her ‘lunges’ with the poker start an exercise of stoking that give her a ‘glow which seemed to reach to the marrow of her bones’.¹⁴⁵ In the final few paragraphs this sexualised language comes to a crescendo: becoming a machine, ‘She thumped like a paviour through the settling ashes at the secret thrill of it’. In the final paragraphs, ‘an increasing rapture laid hold of her’.¹⁴⁶ Peter Buitenhuis argues Kipling that makes the ‘sexual connotations’ clear as Mary waits for the death of the soldier: ‘She ceased to think. She gave herself up to feel. Her long pleasure was broken by a sound that she had waited for in agony several times in her life. She leaned forward and listened, smiling.’¹⁴⁷ The ‘increasing rapture’ leads Mary to an orgasm after the soldier is dead: ‘Mary Postgate drew her breath short between her teeth and shivered from head to foot.’¹⁴⁸

If concurring with the reading of this story as an exemplar of a brand of literary ‘realism’, one would do well perhaps to add that it is a paradoxical realism, that of Mary’s fantasy life in particular. Recognising this aspect of the story helps better to articulate a response to Wilson’s condemnation of the story for the way in which it assents to hate. This is because the story becomes all the more impressive if we take note of how the fantasy itself is constructed in Mary’s imagination. In other words, the text may best be understood as dramatising how atrocity stories, news, propaganda, and grief for the dead can affect the imagination. This claim seems all the more plausible precisely because ‘Mary Postgate’ is an ambiguous story in which Kipling makes sure we do not know with any certainty what he, the artist, thinks. Unlike either *The Eyes of Asia* or ‘Swept and Garnished’, ‘Mary Postgate’ proves far too complex to be reduced to the status of literary propaganda primarily geared towards a single slogan for a ‘united Empire’, or a concomitant denunciation of ‘enemy savagery’.

One important means by which the story can be even more plausibly interpreted in this manner is to look at how Kipling creates the effect of entering Mary’s imagination. Before the war, we learn that Mary experienced wars at a distance. Unlike those earlier wars which stand in Mary’s consciousness only as memories, this war does not stay in the newspapers but instead ‘intrude[s] on the lives

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 440.

¹⁴⁷ Buitenhuis, p. 106; *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 440.

¹⁴⁸ *A Diversity of Creatures*, p. 441.

of people she knew.’¹⁴⁹ After reading atrocity reports (‘certain Belgian reports’), Mary begins keeping a gun for defence, and it is this very gun that she later fetches to kill the German soldier. She also begins reading aloud about the land and sea battles from newspapers at breakfast with Miss Fowler, if with ‘idle breath’ because her real interest is with Wynn and his air battles. Similarly, she studies closely the different planes, and their ‘dials and sockets’ for dropping bombs and fighting, because learning about these things proves another way of being close to Wynn. When he dies, she expresses her lament for him by complaining that he died without first killing a German. At his funeral she only wants to know from how great a height he fell. Mary claims to have no imagination, but she stores a great deal of information about the war and how it was fought—particularly in its aerial combat dimension—and the intricacies of falling from a plane. This data informs the way her imagination reconstructs the fall of a parachuting pilot from the enemy’s side.

Though Dr. Hennis assures Mary that the death of the young girl, Edna, was the result of a stable falling over, Mary is sure that at the time she had heard propellers. Doctor and patient, therefore, do not share an understanding of what happened. If the reader examines Mary’s language, we can see how she withdraws into her personal imagination. Likewise, if we go back to the moment when Mary hears the propellers, we realise that she is fantasizing about Wynn and ‘it seem[s] to her that she could almost hear the beat of his propellers overhead, but there was nothing to see.’¹⁵⁰

For Mary, the Germans are the enemy that killed her beloved, and she echoes Wynn’s words and thoughts of them as ‘bloody pagans’. Just thinking of the Germans makes her angry, even though she does not know any Germans herself; she merely imagines what they must be like. In her rich and private imagination Wynn’s fall from the sky translates into the fall of a German soldier. Likewise, Mary attributes the death of the child in a barn-accident to a bomb, even though there are no bombers in sight. The reader is not meant to dwell on how a bomb might have fallen without anyone realising it, but is not necessarily meant to join Mary in disbelieving the Doctor’s explanation either. For Mary, ‘a woman’s business was to make a happy home for—for a husband and children. Failing these—it was not a thing one should

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 421.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 432.

allow one's mind to dwell upon—but—'.¹⁵¹ Mary's hesitations concerning what her role should be are part of the narrative; they are not thoughts or speech cordoned off by quotation marks. This linguistic and narrative shift suggests that Mary, to some extent, has taken control over the narration of the story. Mary reveals the distance between what she imagines her role to be and what it is in reality; and here Kipling allows us to understand how she has cast herself as a force of revenge and enjoys exacting that revenge (there is another shift at the conclusion of the story where, coming down from her bath, Miss Fowler notes how 'handsome' she appeared). Mary's knowledge of German is dissonant given what else we know about her, and contrasts furthermore with the airman's fragmented attempts at communication as well: "Che me rends. Le médecin! Toctor!". Mary's comments are more reminiscent of a moment from a revenge fantasy or a melodrama than a realist portrait of events in any traditional sense. Yet as noted earlier, examining Mary's experience of her imaginary world can be undertaken as part of an interpretation that situates the story's realism in a different manner. Instead of lessening the overall realism, this simply functions to shift the ground from the real world to Mary's fantasy world.

Kipling suggests this reality *is* the fantasy life Mary now finds herself consumed by. What we experience *as real* is Mary's imagination and how, though she claims otherwise, it is filled with private languages of desire and revenge. So too do we experience as real the fashion in which Mary's imagination is informed by newspapers, rumour, propaganda, and neuroses. Ultimately then, Kipling is at his most complex and suggestive in this story. He manipulates perspective; he suggests complex psychology and relationships through small details such as the list of Wynn's possessions; and he forces the reader into becoming a complicit witness, horrified voyeur, and participant in a brutal murder fantasy. If like Wilson, we find the politics expressed in the story offensive, this only recommends the story all the more.

In 'Mary Postgate', Kipling invites us to consider the way that the imagination can play on the mind of a particular woman in a particular moment; but he also urges us to see how much the imaginations of all the readers of the story must be manipulated. 'Mary Postgate' is a story about what it means to hate as much as it is a story about hating, and it is this double aspect which makes it a disturbing and

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 440.

indeterminate (and hence, aesthetically sophisticated) piece of writing. Furthermore, the way that it presents Mary's fantasies is complex, never leading the reader to the conclusion that we should hate the Germans, or that the British Empire is an institution above reproach and only to be celebrated. It is difficult for the reader to walk away from 'Mary Postgate' understanding any political message at all, given that as an aesthetic experience the story disturbs and provokes the reader without offering any answers to the questions it raises. It is this last effect, I believe, that makes 'Mary Postgate' ultimately resistant to being read as propaganda. What Peter Morey notes about Kipling's supernatural tales in general certainly applies to 'Mary Postgate': it 'no longer tell[s] the story he originally wrote'.¹⁵² The story's language and narrative devices have come to suggest so much. In contrast, with the distance of time, we can see how both 'Swept and Garnished' and *The Eyes of Asia* can be read as exemplifying stereotypical representations of Allies and enemies in wartime.

4 CONCLUSION: KIPLING, POETRY, AND PROPAGANDA

This chapter has compared Kipling's dramatisation and representation of Mary in 'Mary Postgate' with the representations of Germans and Indians in 'Swept and Garnished' and *The Eyes of Asia* respectively. The monologism of these fictions contrast with Kipling at his most complex in 'Mary Postgate'. Benita Parry argues that it is those texts of Kipling's 'which call attention to their own fictional nature and stage the multivalencies of language,' wherein 'the pretence to authentic representation and the imparting of truths is caricatured'.¹⁵³ This distinction is important as it offers the reader a means to distinguish whether Kipling can better be seen as representing an opinion held by many people (without condemning or condoning him for endorsing that opinion), or whether he can be seen as using the narrative as a vehicle for personal opinions. This difference can be better explained by turning to some of the debates surrounding Kipling's poetry.

In *Rudyard Kipling: A Study in Literature and Political Ideas* (1940), Edward Shanks argued that Kipling's poems such as 'Loot' have 'proved stumbling-blocks even to the most devoted of his admirers'.¹⁵⁴ He notes that trying to explain how Kipling sings about striking niggers with cleaning rods to grab their loot 'makes the

¹⁵² Peter Morey, *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 49.

¹⁵³ Parry, p. 123.

¹⁵⁴ Edward Shanks, *Rudyard Kipling—A Study in Literature and Political Ideas* (London, 1940), p. 80.

commentator on Kipling turn red'.¹⁵⁵ In his introduction to his *Selection of Kipling's Verse*, we find Eliot arguing against Shanks, and claiming that by presuming that Kipling's presentation of this scene amounted to his assent to it, Shanks was confusing the author with his work. Eliot, in other words, argues that in 'Loot', Kipling acts like a reporter trying to dramatise the private miseries of soldiers. We may not agree with the sentiment dramatised, Eliot suggests; but that would not justify our dismissing the work on such a basis alone.

Some of the stories about the Indian soldiers have dramatic frames (removed for the British newspaper publications), but these framing devices do not themselves dramatise the act of representation. 'Mary Postgate' dramatises the act of representation within the imagination of Mary herself. Whether her representation of the Germans is positive or not is not as important as understanding that she may well be constructing and perceiving the image she holds, based on the influences of grief, fear, media, and propaganda. The representation of Germans in 'Swept and Garnished' is not dramatised in the same way, and thus we are led inevitably to have to accept Kipling's unmediated presentation. It is the process of dramatisation that Eliot, amongst others, I believe, was applauding in Kipling's work; and it was this technique that makes his seemingly more political poetry difficult to limit to its ideological sentiments alone.

In reviewing Shanks's book, Jorge Luis Borges noted it would be impossible 'to mention the name of Kipling without bringing up the pseudo-problem: should art be a political instrument or not?'¹⁵⁶ Borges described this as a mere pseudo-problem, because he felt that in art 'nothing is more secondary than the author's intentions' and that though they try, both detractors and worshippers of Kipling could not 'exhaust the analysis of the diverse aesthetics of thirty-five volumes' to a handful of 'simpleminded political opinions.'¹⁵⁷ Kipling's use of language, his delightful characters, and his rhythmic and musical verse and ballads, were for Borges more remarkable and diverse than any political opinions they might give voice. In a late essay 'Poetry and Propaganda' (1930), Eliot argues poetry 'is not the assertion that something is true', but 'making that truth more fully real to us.'¹⁵⁸ Propaganda, in

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 81.

¹⁵⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions* (New York, 2000), p. 250.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 251.

¹⁵⁸ T.S. Eliot, 'Poetry and Propaganda' (*Bookman* 70/6, February 1930, pp. 597-602), p. 601.

contrast, Eliot argues, compels us to believe something is true: whereas we do not turn to poetry to find out the truth, but rather

[w]e do so largely for the exercise in assumption of entertaining ideas; for the enlargement and exercise of mind we get by trying to penetrate a man's thoughts and think it after him, and then passing out of that experience into another. Only by the exercise of understanding without believing, so far as that is possible, can we come in full conscious to some point where we believe *and* understand.¹⁵⁹

For Eliot, poetry does not have the capacity of proof, but is more akin to a journey that allows the reader to enter someone else's thoughts and to experience them once again. Poetry is about the expansion of thought without any specified outcome: assertion, seduction, and manipulation are the methods of the propagandist.

The subtlety of 'Mary Postgate' offers a multitude of readings, partly because the horror in which the story culminates cannot be easily accounted for. It is not simply a tale of blood and gore, but a complex portrait that gives the reader the uneasy feeling of sharing Mary's passionate fantasies. We cannot as easily reduce 'Mary Postgate' to a political slogan as we can some of Kipling's other war-era literature. For example, while demonstrating moments of tenderness and ambiguity, *The Eyes of Asia* and 'Swept and Garnished' reproduce the dominant ideology of official war propaganda; partly through some of the stories' aesthetic weaknesses, and partly because the effects of these stories can be read as less sophisticated than those of 'Mary Postgate' or some of Kipling's late war verse.

Kipling responded to the war in verse in a variety of ways. According to Charles Carrington, Kipling's war journalism left him little time for writing imaginative prose, but with verse 'he was more productive'.¹⁶⁰ Carrington claims that some of Kipling's war poetry, particularly 'Mesopotamia' (1917), can be read as forceful diatribes in verse, 'against those whom he held responsible for the errors of the war'. Kipling's poetry, however ideological, is more difficult to read as propaganda, because his manipulations of meter and rhythm are suggestive of meanings other than the literal words in the poem. In particular, it is worth considering his 'Epitaphs of the War':

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 601-2.

¹⁶⁰ Carrington, p. 518.

COMMON FORM

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.¹⁶¹

The 'Epitaphs' are neither confessional nor defiant; they are not apologies or simple declarations of blame. While some of the poems are less successful, many of them have a haunting, painful lament to them. In 'Common Form' the banality of the couplet contrasts with the brutality of the sentiment. The rhyme of 'died' and 'lied' emphasises the point, but it is not immediately clear who is being chastised in the poem. Though it is tempting to read the poem as Kipling's confession of his own lies, historicising the poem with other statements by Kipling demonstrates (according to Gilmour) that the lies refer to the ones told by politicians in their neglect of Britain's defences which forced the nation to sacrifice its youth unnecessarily.¹⁶² Be this as it may, there remains the tantalizing suggestion in this poem that all liars—acknowledged and unacknowledged—share some blame.

HINDU SEPOY IN FRANCE

This man in his own country prayed we know not to what Powers.
We pray Them to reward him for his bravery in ours.¹⁶³

With 'HINDU SEPOY IN FRANCE', Kipling reflects a similar sentiment to that found in *The Eyes of Asia*, and his earlier 'Hymn Before Action'; but the way he

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 164.

¹⁶² Gilmour, p. 251. He notes that this theme gets most harrowingly elaborated in his poem 'The Children' which accompanies the story 'Honours of War' in *A Diversity of Creatures*:

That flesh we had nursed from the first in all cleanness was given
To corruption unveiled and assailed by the malice of Heaven—
By the heart-shaking jests of Decay where it lolled on the wires—
To be blanched or gay-painted by fumes—to be cindered by fires—
To be senselessly tossed and retossed in stale mutilation
From crater to crater. For this we shall take expiation.
But who shall return us our children?

Consider also Kipling's later 'Dead Statesman' (1924):

DEAD STATESMAN

I could not dig, I dared not rob,
Therefore I lied to please the mob.
Now all my lies are proved untrue,
And I must face the men I slew.
What tale will serve me here among

Mine angry and defrauded young? (*Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition*, p. 390)

These are not Kipling's confessions over his own propaganda, but instead his admonishment of politicians who were more interested in politics and pleasing the mob than the war itself.

¹⁶³ *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition*, p. 387.

recognises the difference of the Indians—not simply in terms of their exotic attachments to the Empire—and the way in which his presentation is less pervasive in claiming knowledge of all things Indian (‘we know not to what Powers’), makes the poem more evocative than those appropriations of the Indian voice. The poem is more an expression of gratitude to the Indian Army than it is an appropriation of their voice to support the war. In these compact and ambiguous poems, Kipling proves all the more difficult to pin down ideologically, and thus, like ‘Mary Postgate’, resistant to being read as propaganda.

The sparseness of ‘The Epitaphs of War’ can be attributed to two factors: Kipling’s work as a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission—which sought to register, mark and take care of the graves of British soldiers—and his translations from Horace’s *Odes*. After joining the commission in 1917, Kipling’s main contribution, according to Michael Aidin, was drafting inscriptions for headstones. According to Aidin, to avoid the language of Christianity, Kipling chose a phrase from *Ecclesiastes* 44:14 in the *Apocrypha*: ‘their name liveth for evermore’; for those whose burial place was destroyed by shelling, Kipling chose a line which came from an earlier part of the same section of the *Apocrypha*: ‘their glory shall not be blotted out’.¹⁶⁴ The concision of the epitaph ushered in a new register for Kipling’s writing, which could also be detected in his reworking of Horace. In 1914, Kipling acquired a copy of Horace’s *Odes* and over the years he made loose translations (Charles Carrington calls them ‘doodles’) of the poems, some of which dealt with the war.¹⁶⁵ These translations are compact, as when Kipling takes a lengthy detailed Horatian Ode of 28 lines and transforms it into this poem dated 1918:

Oh, caught with me in April’s push,
 My beamish boy!
 Wash, shave, and dress,
 And let us rush
 To the Savoy!¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Michael Aidin, ‘Rudyard Kipling and the Commemoration of the Dead of the Great War’, *Kipling Journal*, forthcoming.

¹⁶⁵ In *A Diversity of Creatures*, Kipling dramatizes Stalky and Co. in Latin class translating the Fifth Ode of the Third Book of Horace in ‘Regulus’ and offers a mock translation after the story in ‘A Translation’.

¹⁶⁶ A crude literal rendering of the poem from Carrington:

We were often together on service, when General Brutus pushed us to the limit. You the first of my old pals, what brings you to Italy? How we spent off-duty days, drinking, and

Kipling takes out Horace's details concerning the soldiers' shared battles to emphasise instead the joy of the soldiers being reunited. The immediacy of this poem, the way it dismisses the mud-filled trenches of the war in favour of embracing the clean, luxury of off-duty life in clubs and bars, makes it a delight to read. The combined experience of doodling with Horace and his work with the Imperial War Graves Commission can thus be detected in his later war-verse.

In addition to capturing a certain lyrical compression, Kipling's other remarkable 'translation', 'A Recantation (To Lyde of the Music Hall)' (1917), also thematically captures the aspects of impersonality that Eliot admired in Kipling's verse. The poet speaks poorly of Lyde before he realized she was appearing on stage to do her wartime duty:

Never more rampant rose the Hall
 At thy audacious line
 Than when the news came in from Gaul
 Thy son had—followed mine.
 But thou didst hide it in thy breast
 And, capering, took the brunt
 Of blaze and blare, and launched the jest
 That swept next week the front.¹⁶⁷

The poet realises his mistake in scorning Lyde; she is a consummate artist who is able to suppress her own pain yet still sing to rouse the room to joy, even on the day her boy died. The poem ends with triumphant though painful praise for artists who do their duty even as the harshness of their lives eats away at them:

*Yet they who use the Word assigned,
 To hearten and make whole,
 Not less than Gods have served mankind,
 Though vultures rend their soul.*

getting our hair messed about till it shone with Syrian oils ['my beamish boy']! [...] Just remember Phillippi and how we ran from it. No medals for Valour. Did not we rub our noses in the dirt? [...] Thanks to Mercury, I got away overseas, but you went back to the war [...]. Take a rest now, under my laurels. You owe Jove a sacrificial feast [...]. Don't spare the wine [...]. I'll get as drunk as bacchanal [...]. What fun to go on a binge with a friend!

(*Kipling's Horace*, Charles Carrington (editor), London, 1978, p43).

¹⁶⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (London, 1940), pp. 369-70.

Kipling lost his son John in the war and his expressions of grief over the loss were contained; they are most, if at all, evident in his poem ‘My Boy Jack’

‘Have you news of my boy Jack?’

Not this tide.

‘When d’you think that he’ll come back?’

*Not with this wind blowing, and this tide.*¹⁶⁸

Both ‘My Boy Jack’ and ‘A Recantation’ exemplify the impersonality Eliot admired in Kipling’s work—they are not the expressions of emotion by the poet, but are instead attempts to create emotion in the reader. For Kipling, the role of the artist was to conquer his or her own emotions and ‘to hearten and make whole’ their personal worlds so that their audience could also participate and believe in them. In translating Horace, as well as in working on actual epitaphs for graves, he pared down his lines so that, as Harry Ricketts has noted, ‘The Epitaphs of War’ also resemble the minimalism of Ezra Pound’s Imagism.¹⁶⁹ Kipling’s Horatian ‘doodles’ allowed him to focus on his craft, particularly in terms of his compressed poetic statements, and not on the need to ‘say’ something. The forms that his Horatian compositions took offered Kipling a new way of giving shape to his emotions in poetry. The results were a poetry that did not rely on jingles or anthems; this was not poetry of sloganeering against the Hun, but rather one of short and compact elegies that responded to the horror of the war and attempted to honour the dead. They are difficult to read as propaganda because the utility of their message is unclear and difficult to pin down—whatever the literal or prose meaning of the poem might be is complicated by the form and lyricism of its verse.

In the ‘Working-Tools’ section of his autobiography, *Something of Myself* (1937), Kipling explains how his writing benefited from the assistance of a Daemon:

My Daemon was with me in the *Jungle Books*, *Kim*, and both *Puck* books, and good care I took to walk delicately, lest he should withdraw. I know that he did not, because when those books were finished they said so themselves with, almost, the water-hammer click

¹⁶⁸ *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, p. 216.

¹⁶⁹ Harry Ricketts, *Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London, 1999), p. 337. The comparison with Ezra Pound is interesting and could be extended to his own appropriations of Asian voices in *Cathay* (1915). Although these poems are not usually considered war poetry (Hugh Kenner being an important exception), their images of loss, death, and lonely soldiery beg that their relationship to the war be re-evaluated.

of a tap turned off. One of the clauses in our contract was that I should never follow up ‘a success’, for by this sin fell Napoleon and a few others. Note here. When your Daemon is in charge, do not try to think consciously. Drift, wait, and obey.¹⁷⁰

Kipling describes the feeling of success in writing as a passive experience, as if a mechanism such as a tap was turned on and off; as if the force controlling his ability to write well was outside of his own will. Referring to Aristotle’s notion of happiness as if a Daemon were removing obstacles from one’s path, Kipling locates his own in his subconscious and compels the reader to let this Daemon remain in charge, to ‘Drift, wait, and obey.’ When reviewing *Something of Myself*, E. M. Forster noted the ‘case of Kipling is of great importance to the student of literature’ because it raises the question: ‘Can an immature person be a great writer?’¹⁷¹ Forster answered in the affirmative, paying close attention to Kipling’s Daemon: when the writer calls upon his Daemon, ‘as he calls it, he enters another world at once, the world of inspiration, and he moves with authority there’. Building on these observations, Benita Parry notes that Kipling’s ‘inventiveness was no less fertile when he was intent on demonstrating the validity of some prejudice or belief’; yet it is ‘when he is least committed to ideology that his writing is at its most compelling’.¹⁷² What we can see from his war writing is how Kipling called on his Daemon in a variety of ways to support the war from personal correspondence, articles, stories, and poetry. When his Daemon left the leash of his ideology, he was able to suggest other worlds, meanings, and emotions; and in turn he created lasting, non-utilitarian, and complex works of fiction and verse. When he obeyed his Daemon he was able to continue to create works of subtlety and sophistication; whereas when he demanded his Daemon to obey his will, the stubborn beast would not yield to its master’s call—at least not with the same mystery, wonder, and ambiguity.

¹⁷⁰ Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself* (London, 1937), p. 210.

¹⁷¹ E. M. Forster, ‘That Job’s Done’, *The Listener*, Supplement III, March 1937, quoted in Parry (1998), p. 219.

¹⁷² Parry (1998), p. 219.

CHAPTER THREE

‘HATE HAS ITS USES IN WAR’:

THE INDEPENDENT AND THE INSTITUTIONAL IN CONAN DOYLE’S WAR PROPAGANDA

Why should we recall these incidents? It is because Hate has its uses in war, as the Germans have long discovered. It steels the mind and sets the resolution as no other emotion can do.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Times* (26 December 1917)

From the outset of the war, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle prepared for the possibility of England being invaded. On the night of 4 August 1914, the night that Britain declared war on Germany, he and some of his fellow residents of Crowborough, Sussex created a volunteer civilian reserve to protect the home front.¹ One of the reservists remembered in a poem how ‘Sir Arthur started it all one night’ when the ‘Crowborough Rifles first saw the light’.² In his memoir, *Memories and Adventures* (1924), Conan Doyle explained how he had sought ‘a universal [reserve army] where every citizen, young and old, should be trained to arms—a great stockpot into which the nation could dip and draw its needs’.³ Within two weeks, however, the war office disbanded all such civilian reserve forces. Still eager to set an example for voluntary service that others might emulate, Conan Doyle tried enlisting in the army: ‘Though I am 55, I am very strong and hardy, and can make my voice audible at great distances which is useful at drill.’⁴ His application for service was denied. When the government established its own system of volunteer regiments Conan Doyle sat on the organising committee, in addition to enlisting in the 6th Royal Sussex Volunteer Regiment. These older men were, by his own account, more ‘police-constable than

¹ Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower, and Charles Foley, editors, *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* (London, 2007), p. 602.

² ‘I love to think of the days gone awe/ When I was a smart little V.T.C/ To see us drill was a sight to see/ Such raw recruits were we!/ Sir Arthur started it all one night,/ Twas August the Fourth, if my mem’ry’s right/ That the Crowborough Rifles first saw the light/ The first of the V.T.C.’: R. Guy Ash, ‘Conan’s Rifles, or the Crowborough Reserves’, quoted in *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 602.

³ Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (London, 1930), p. 365.

⁴ *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 605.

the purely military type', but he nonetheless enjoyed participating in the war in this military capacity.⁵ According to Andrew Lycett, in addition to volunteering, he advised the government about how to improve the soldier's chances of survival in war; including suggestions that the navy attach protruding steel tridents to ships to guard from sea mines, that sailors should be equipped with personal flotation devices, and that soldiers should wear body armour.⁶ This chapter will examine the diverse military, journalistic, and literary efforts of Conan Doyle during the First World War, and situate these independent activities in relation to his official work producing government propaganda. Further, this chapter will also consider how this war-writing and Conan Doyle's outlook and politics generally, were marked in different ways by the experience of imperialism.

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Scotland in 1859 to an Irish-English father and an Irish Mother. Educated at a Jesuit college in Lancashire, he would later reject Catholicism to become agnostic. Studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh, he would increasingly spend time writing stories. In 1887, he published a story that introduced the public to Detective Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson. Although he wrote a wide variety of fiction, it was these two characters who would prove his most famous creations. Conan Doyle's concern for the safety and integrity of the British Empire—as well as his fear of invasion and contagion—was evidenced by his membership of The Legion of Frontiersmen.⁷ He was also involved in a variety of political campaigns, including supporting Britain in the Boer War, as well as supporting the reform of Belgian rule in the Congo Free State. Conan Doyle had great admiration for the campaign leaders, the journalist E. D. Morel and the diplomat Sir Roger Casement, and would later become friends with both men. In terms of the issue of Irish sovereignty, Conan Doyle had been a confirmed Unionist since 1866—according to Martin Booth, he stood for office as a Liberal Unionist for Edinburgh

⁵ Ibid, p. 607.

⁶ Ibid, p. 607, Andrew Lycett, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (London, 2007), p. 361.

⁷ Lycett, p. 270, According to Christopher Andrew, prompted by fears of what he believed was the imminent invasion of Britain, Roger Pocock founded the Legion in 1904, claiming it was meant to be 'an army of observation, a unit for field intelligence in peace and war, its duties being those of scouting—"to see, run and tell"—in case of any menace to the British Peace' (quoted in Christopher Andrew, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London, 1985), p. 42). Along with being volunteers, The Legion of Frontiersmen ran intelligence; in addition, paying for their own passage to abroad themselves, they were some of the first troops in battle in Belgium in 1914. See also Geoffrey A. Pocock, *One Hundred Years of The Legion of Frontiersmen* (Chichester, 2004).

Central in 1900 and for Harwick in 1906, losing both times.⁸ Pierre Nordon argues Conan Doyle's Irish Catholic parentage and his being born in Scotland complicated his attitude towards the issue of Irish sovereignty.⁹ In addition, his personal friendship with Casement influenced Conan Doyle to back Home Rule in Ireland. During the First World War, however, Conan Doyle's support for Britain's involvement in the European conflict contrasted with both Morel and Casement's opposition to the war. In fact, Morel was charged for distributing anti-war materials to neutral countries and spent time in jail, while Casement was executed for his involvement in the Easter Rising of 1916. Conan Doyle actively petitioned against Casement's execution, arguing anti-British forces would only portray his death to Americans in a negative light, and thus give strength to the German arguments for war.

As a famous author and the creator of the celebrated detective Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle knew he could also volunteer his writings to rouse public support for the war, to encourage younger men to volunteer to fight, and even to appeal to the civilian German population who were dragged to war by the Prussian Junker elite. In a letter of late August 1914, Conan Doyle explained to his brother Innes that he had 'been drawing up small leaflets which (in German) are to be scattered about wherever we can go to show the Germans that it is really their own tyrants, this damned Prussian autocracy that we are fighting'.¹⁰ His first pamphlet, *To Arms!*, was already written by the time he attended Masterman's WPB authors' meeting in early September, and was published by the end of the same month.¹¹ Conan Doyle supported Masterman's plan to recruit artists to the war effort, and signed the 'Declaration by Authors' which was later printed in *The Times* on 18 September 1914 (his name is misspelled as 'Doyel'). According to Lycett, some of his articles, unbeknownst to him, were translated into several languages and passed on by the WPB, such as an article appearing in America, 'An Outbreak of War'. Conan Doyle thanked Masterman for 'putting the British cause before the world' in 'this

⁸ Martin Booth, *The Doctor, The Detective, & Arthur Conan Doyle: A Biography of Arthur Conan Doyle* (London, 1997), pp. 118, 256-57.

⁹ 'Conan Doyle might be said to be a Unionist by vocation, although his Irish birth and the Doyle family traditions helped him to understand the emotional strength of Irish nationalism', Pierre Nordon, *Conan Doyle* (London, 1966), p. 62.

¹⁰ *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 604.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 605, Lycett, p. 355.

admirable document.’¹² His other pamphlets included collections of his war journalism and articles in *The World War Conspiracy* (1914) and *The German War* (1914), as well as his protestations about the treatment of British prisoners of war in Germany in *The Story of British Prisoners* (1915), and his reportage of his trench visits in *A Visit to Three Fronts: Glimpses of the British, Italian, and French Lines* (1916). Conan Doyle also donated stories and poems in support of the war to charity books such as *Princess Mary’s Gift Book* (1914) and *The Queen’s Gift Book* (1915).

Having been refused admission to military service in the Boer War, Conan Doyle had then employed his skills as a doctor as well as a pamphleteer to support and participate in that earlier conflict. In *The Great Boer War* (1900) and *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct* (1902), he countered accusations that Britain had used disproportionate force against the Boers. According to Barbara Harlow, these accusations included the use of ‘executions, train hijackings, and hostage taking, farm burnings, and the use of expansive and explosive (dumdum) bullets (outlawed at the Hague in 1899).’¹³ In the Preface of *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, Conan Doyle explained the necessity of presenting the British case: ‘[i]n view of the persistent slanders to which our politicians and our soldiers have been equally exposed it becomes a duty which we owe to our national honour to lay the facts before the world’.¹⁴ Without an established office dedicated to propaganda, the government had not approached Conan Doyle to request these materials—he produced them out of his own sense of duty and published them without government support. According to Alvin Rodin, Conan Doyle was knighted as a result of his outstanding support for the war.¹⁵ With the advent of this new war he hoped to narrate another official history, as well as function as a voice of support for the war. Boasting to his mother in a letter of September 1914, Conan Doyle explained, in reference to *To Arms!*, ‘the government are circulating my statement about the war all

¹² Quoted in Lycett, p. 362.

¹³ Barbara Harlow, ‘Sappers in the Stacks: Colonial Archives, Land Mines, and Truth Commissions’, *boundary 2* 25.2 (Summer 1998), 179-204, p. 195. As a response to the Boers’ early successes in the war, the English began to institute a scorched earth policy, burning the Boer farms to starve the rebels of support. Further, they created concentration camps to cut off support. After sickness broke out in the camps, conservative estimates are that 24,000 Boers and 14,000 Black South Africans (most of them children) died from starvation, disease and exposure: see Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London, 2003), p. 280. For more discussion of British concentration camps, see also, Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh, and Mary-Lynn Suttie (editors), *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War 1899-1902* (Athens, Georgia, 2002).

¹⁴ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct* (London, 1902), Preface.

¹⁵ Alvin E. Rodin, *Medical Casebook of Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle: From Practitioner to Sherlock Holmes and Beyond* (Florida, 1984), p. 65.

over the world. It is very pleasing. I have had an official letter of thanks': in a postscript he added 'Entre nous if I want a baronetcy after this I could get it, I fancy.'¹⁶ Conan Doyle's hope for a second title would elude him, but he did produce a six-volume history of the war, *The British Campaign in France and Flanders* (1916-19).¹⁷ In his memoir, Conan Doyle expressed his pride in the achievement of his history of the war, and was careful to separate these last volumes from what he classified as his 'literary propaganda.'¹⁸

Although he only made reference to his pamphlets as 'literary propaganda' in his memoirs, it is possible that Conan Doyle also had in mind his recruitment of Sherlock Holmes to foil a case of German espionage in 'His Last Bow' (1917). Regardless of what he might have meant by his distinction between his historical work and his 'literary propaganda', the division itself highlights some troubling complications in approaching First World War propaganda. Recent historical studies such as those by Jay Winter as well as Annette Becker, Leonard Smith, and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau have argued, in different fashions, that too much emphasis has been placed on state-directed propaganda, and that not enough attention has been paid to materials produced from the private sector.¹⁹ In *France and the Great War 1914-1918*, Becker, Smith and Audoin-Rouzeau argue that in considering mass-produced goods, we must incorporate a system outside of government control wherein networks of people were involved in the design as well as the consumption of privately produced propaganda items.²⁰ In focusing on material culture and the emergence of diverse war-support throughout society, these historians reject traditional propaganda models which locate propaganda as originating from the government as overly 'vertical', 'authoritarian', and hierarchical.²¹ These criticisms are substantial and ask that a cultural history of First World War propaganda reflect the non-institutional materials of authors as well as their official work for the WPB. As Conan Doyle's

¹⁶ *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 607.

¹⁷ See Keith Grieves, 'Depicting the War on the Western Front: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Publication of *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*', in *Publishing the First World War*, Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed, editors (Basingstoke, 2007).

¹⁸ *Memories and Adventures*, p. 369.

¹⁹ See Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995). Winter notes that 'Too much has been written about state-directed propaganda in wartime, and not enough about the source of most popular images—the private sector' (p. 128).

²⁰ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, and Leonard Smith, *France and the Great War, 1914-1918*. (Cambridge, 2003), p. 59; the book focuses on French culture, but there is still some relevant discussion in Chapter Two: Mobilizing the Nation and the Civilian's War. See also Pick, p. 53.

²¹ Audoin-Rouzeau, Becker, Smith, p. 53.

war-writing engages in a variety of different spheres of discourse—military and civilian, official and unofficial, literary and journalistic—it proves an interesting example to work through in considering the value of an institutional analysis of propaganda.

This chapter's exploration of the institutional and non-institutional aspects of Conan Doyle's war writing is divided into three sections. The first section examines Conan Doyle's official propaganda for the WPB and its thematic continuities with his pre-war wariness of Germany. Considering the antithesis of his WPB writing, the second section will examine how the fears of invasion and the anxiety over Ireland's loyalty were expressed in Conan Doyle's short story 'His Last Bow'. In this story, written independently of the system of government propaganda, Sherlock Holmes returns to fend off German spies. Although the story shares similar language with official propaganda, it cannot be as easily defined as propaganda as his WPB pamphlet *To Arms!* (for example). The final section examines how the discourse of atrocity emerged in different governmental and non-governmental materials. Of particular interest was the image of a severed hand which was highlighted in Conan Doyle's earlier protests over Belgian rule in the Congo (*Crime in the Congo* (1909)) and then re-emerged in the WPB-sponsored *The Bryce Report on Alleged Atrocities* (1915). The government atrocity-report managed to legitimate the rumours and legend surrounding German brutality in Belgium and thus to justify British intervention in the war, in a way that Conan Doyle's earlier, non-governmental, protestations against the brutal nature of Belgian rule in the Congo could not achieve. Thus the contrast between these two contexts further highlights the power of institutions to legitimate rumours and spread belief—a power which deserves specific recognition and study.

1 CONAN DOYLE'S EARLY WAR WRITING

This section establishes the continuities and disjunctions between Conan Doyle's institutional and non-institutional propaganda by examining his pre-war and early-war writings. In the years leading up to the war, Conan Doyle advocated plans for a Channel Tunnel between France and England as a means of protection against a naval blockade of the country, possibly at the hands of Germany. He agitated for the acceptance of the Channel Tunnel in two ways. Firstly, he reviewed General von Bernhardi's *Germany and the Next War* (1912), to illustrate how Junkerism was ensnaring Germany into plans for further imperial expansion in Europe—expansion

that might strangle Britain, he argued, without access to supplies on the continent via a Channel Tunnel. Secondly, he wrote a story wherein a submarine fleet manages to cripple the British navy and enacts a blockade on the country, 'Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius' (July 1914). Pertinent to this section's discussion of non-institutional propaganda, it is worthwhile to note how Conan Doyle would use fiction to supplement his political arguments for the adoption of a particular political plan.

With regard to his official propaganda, Conan Doyle supported the WPB, and (as mentioned) he was one of the first to submit writing for an official pamphlet. This section concludes by contrasting the arguments regarding the origins of the war in Conan Doyle's *To Arms!* with those from a pamphlet by E. D. Morel. As mentioned, Conan Doyle became friends with Morel while working on the campaign to end violent abuses in the Congo, but their opinions diverged in regards to who was responsible for starting the European conflict. In considering their opposing arguments it is also important to note the penalties Morel had to suffer as a founding member of the UDC, compared with the publishing and distribution offered Conan Doyle by the WPB. Morel was imprisoned for sending UDC materials to neutral countries, whereas the WPB liberally distributed Conan Doyle's pamphlets throughout neutral nations. Contrasting the way in which the government treated Conan Doyle and Morel respectively highlights the opportunities offered by an institutional affiliation with government propaganda, and the penalties for criticising the government's war agenda.

1.1 *GERMANY AND THE NEXT WAR* / 'GREAT BRITAIN AND THE NEXT WAR'

In 'The Great German Plot', an essay Conan Doyle published during the war, he explains how his enthusiasm over Anglo-German co-operation and friendship had been transformed into aggressive feelings towards Germany's militarism and the further realisation that war between the two nations was inevitable.²² According to Conan Doyle, in the years preceding the war, Germany had been secretly planning to take over Europe: there was a 'deep, deep plot, a plot against the liberties of Europe, extending over several years, planned out to the smallest detail' and developed 'by hordes of spies' as well as naval and military planning.²³ In the end, it was a friendly car tour of Germany in 1911 that brought to Conan Doyle's attention the existence of

²² Conan Doyle, 'The Great German Plot' *The German War* (London, 1914), p. 59; see also 'World War Conspiracy', pp. 32-41.

²³ 'The Great German Plot', p. 62.

what he would elsewhere call the ‘World War Conspiracy’. In sharing so much time in the company of the Germans, Conan Doyle was struck by their harsh and competitive attitude. He also noted that British officers openly discussed how both nations were heading for conflict. He started to suspect the Germans, deciding that they thought they were ‘the most cultured people, the best settlers, the best warriors [...] the best everything’ and now needed to prove it.²⁴ If experiencing the competitiveness of Germans ignited Conan Doyle’s suspicion, reading a book on military theory was what made the expansionist philosophy of the Germans undeniable.

For Conan Doyle, General von Bernhardi’s *Germany and the Next War* proved a pivotal text for understanding how the Anglo-German friendship was destined to deteriorate. His review of the book, entitled ‘Great Britain and the Next War’, was originally published in the *Fortnightly Review* in February 1913 and reprinted in *The German War*. Conan Doyle found the book a succinct expression of Germany’s imperialist plans in Europe, considering the imminent prospect of a German raid or possibly even an invasion of the British Isles.²⁵ Of particular concern for him was Britain’s vulnerability as an island to a submarine blockade. German submarines, he argued, could isolate, cripple, and starve the country. His answer to the problem of blockade came in his recommendation for a Channel Tunnel between England and France—a suggestion he made in the conclusion of the review.

Conan Doyle argued that to ensure the safety of the country it was imperative that Britain revive the idea of having a Channel Tunnel between England and France. While such a tunnel, he argued, would have increased financial and trade benefits, its importance for *both* waging war and protecting against war would be paramount. The access to food and military supplies in case of a naval blockade would make the tunnel invaluable, he argued: ‘[s]hould anything so unlikely as a raid occur, and the forces in this country seem unable to cope with it, a Franco-British reinforcement can be rushed through from the Continent’.²⁶ Reinforcing his own preoccupation with fears of invasion, Conan Doyle acknowledged previous objections to the tunnel falling ‘into wrong hands and be[ing] used for purposes of invasion’.²⁷ Daniel Pick notes that fears over any proposed tunnel were one of the currents in invasion

²⁴ Ibid, p. 62.

²⁵ ‘Great Britain and the Next War’, *The German War*, p. 126.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 136.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 137.

literature.²⁸ However, Conan Doyle's invasion fiction was different in this respect; he transformed the Channel Tunnel as a means for *preventing* invasion, a fear he displaced onto the possibility of Great Britain being surrounded by a submarine blockade. Conan Doyle himself remarked that the traditional fear of the tunnel as a point of invasion originated from the historic antagonism between England and France. However, with the 'close ties of friendship and mutual interest' between the two countries, also known as the *Entente Cordiale*, he argued that these fears should be abated. Once again demonstrating his preoccupation with invasion, Conan Doyle acknowledged such a state of friendship may not be permanent, and recommended the exit in Dover be fortified. Arguing that Bernhardt's evaluation of the British military as poor was a gross under-estimation, Conan Doyle made a plea for British vigilance in the eyes of a German threat and concluded that the financial and defensive qualities of a Channel Tunnel would ensure the safety and security of the nation. Conan Doyle thus positioned his case for the Channel Tunnel as a direct response to the increasing militarisation of Germany. To make his argument more vivid, Conan Doyle would also use a short story to demonstrate what might happen if his advice was not heeded.

1.2 'DANGER! BEING THE LOG OF CAPTAIN JOHN SIRIUS'

'Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius' appeared in the *Strand Magazine* in July 1914. The story is narrated from the perspective of a captain from a fictional country called Norland and details how Captain John Sirius was able to defeat and cripple Britain through the use of a small submarine fleet. The story opens with a condemnation of the lack of preparedness on the part of the British people: 'It is an amazing thing that the English, who have the reputation of being a practical nation, never saw the danger to which they were exposed'.²⁹ Despite having a more extensive army than any other country in Europe, Britain is ruined by the small fleet led by Captain Sirius. Sirius does not go into details, but it is clear that there has been a dispute between the two nations on 'the Colonial Frontier' that led to the 'subsequent deaths of the two missionaries'. Norland's King wanted to surrender to the English, but Sirius, according to his diary, developed strategies to exploit Britain's weaknesses and urged the King to authorise going to war. Sirius begins a submarine campaign to strangle Britain by forcing the price of commodities to rise through a

²⁸ Pick, p. 123.

²⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius' *The Tale of the Next Great War*, I. F. Clarke, editor (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 293-320.

blockade that prevented the import of any goods. Although Sirius loses a few submarines, he focuses on hitting ships carrying essential supplies such as food in order to drive up the prices of wheat, maize, and barley. The British attack Norland's towns and the navy occupies its ports; but the Norland submarines are able to escape without notice and destroy British ships. As a result of food shortages, riots begin in England, along with a small Socialist revolution in the East End of London.³⁰ Reflecting on the ease of his victory, Sirius notes:

[the] true culprits were those, be they politicians or journalists, who had not the foresight to understand that, unless Britain grew her own supplies, or unless by means of a tunnel she had some way of conveying them into the island, all her mighty expenditure upon her army and her fleet was a mere waste of money so long as her antagonists had a few submarines and men who could use them.³¹

It is instructive to note that Conan Doyle allows Sirius to voice the same argument that he had himself made regarding the need of a Channel Tunnel to prevent a domestic dependence on food shipments from the sea—Sirius ironically notes that not only did the British lack ‘foresight’ in neglecting to build a tunnel, but they also failed to heed the warnings of those prescient intellectuals such as Conan Doyle whose advice might have left Britain less vulnerable to a naval blockade.

Sirius explains how peace settlements were quick and simple because the Norlanders did not want to make permanent enemies, but on the other hand, there remains the suggestion that had they sought to dominate Britain they could have done so easily. As in the above passage, Sirius offers the salient lessons from the experience as things that Britain must consider if it does not wish to be beaten or dominated so easily again: it must develop a stronger domestic food supply and establish a Channel Tunnel. ‘Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius’ is a fiction which contains political ideas that echoed in a fictional form Conan Doyle’s essay on possible invasion and his recommendations for a Channel Tunnel; he used the story as an extension of his case by trying to make the possible invasion of Britain a imaginatively palpable experience. ‘It needs a righteous anger to wage war to the full, and we can feel it when we think of the long-drawn plot against us’, argued Conan Doyle in ‘The World-War Conspiracy’; and he understood that the Germans

³⁰ ‘Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius’, p. 315.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

had this quality and that the only way the British could ignite it in themselves would be to contemplate ‘the fate which defeat would bring’.³² Ironically, the story backfired on Conan Doyle once the war started. In a letter to his mother from September 1914, he explained that he had heard complaints that the story ‘hurt the feelings of Britains abroad’; but as he explained to his mother in the letter, he was quick to remind his critics that the story was written and published before the war and thus was not meant to hurt people’s feelings—it was intended instead to ‘warn the country against the danger’ of submarines.³³ Conan Doyle thus used his fiction explicitly to present his case for preparing for the inevitable conflict with Germany, something he would do in a similar (though slightly different) manner in bringing back his great detective.

1.3 CONAN DOYLE’S *TO ARMS!* AND MOREL’S *TEN YEARS OF SECRET DIPLOMACY*

Conan Doyle’s *To Arms!* was published as a thirty-two-page penny-pamphlet on 30 September 1914. The first impression of 91,650 copies was followed up by a further printing of 50,000.³⁴ It was later reprinted under the title ‘The Causes of the War’ in his wartime collection, *The German War*. Conan Doyle claimed it was his duty to write about the war: ‘if there is a doubt in the mind of any man as to the justice of his country’s quarrel, then even a writer may find work ready to his hand.’³⁵ His work was aimed at addressing those people who were unsure as to why Britain was at war with Germany. He thus sought to establish the case for going to war and to persuade readers to volunteer for the fight:

All our lives have been but a preparation for this supreme moment. All our future lives will be determined by how we bear ourselves in these few months to come. Shame, shame on the man who fails his country in this its hour of need! I would not force him to serve. I could not think that the service of such a man was of any avail. Let the country be served by free men, and let them deal with the coward or the sluggard who flinches.³⁶

Conan Doyle disapproved of forcing men to serve under government conscription; instead, he wished ‘free men’ might recognise that volunteering to fight was a way of

³² Conan Doyle, ‘The World-War Conspiracy’, *The German War*, pp. 36-37.

³³ To Mary Doyle, September 1914, *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 608.

³⁴ Richard Lancelyn Green and John Michael Gibson, *A Bibliography of Arthur Conan Doyle* (Oxford, 1983), p. 278.

³⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle, *To Arms!* (1914) (Cambridge, 1999), p. 14.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 13.

defending their country and attaining honour, as well as of avoiding shame. The pamphlet reaffirms the twin notions of pride and shame in its conclusion: ‘Have you who read this played your part to the highest? If not, do it now, or stand for ever shamed.’³⁷ He framed the war as a fight of the ‘sacred’ versus the evil; the honour of the British soldier in contrast to the German soldier who ‘commit[s] outrages on person and property [...] murdering women and children.’³⁸ The justification for the war was not simply a rhetorical exercise for Conan Doyle, but was aimed principally at inspiring men to join up; he argued that the war effort did not require rhetoric, but instead ‘men, men—and always more men.’³⁹ Conan Doyle thus sought to assuage any of his reader’s hesitations regarding the importance and justice of the British cause for going to war, and further to urge men to join the fight or ‘stand for ever shamed’.⁴⁰ If Germany were to win the war, he argued, Britain would have to institute a policy of compulsory military service and thus further dislodge the peace of mind and sense of glory that until then had accompanied empire. He urged brave British men to shoulder the responsibility for protecting their nation—the alternative was to live with a lifetime of shame and never to be able to look your children in the face when asked about the war. These same sentiments could be seen in the famous war poster ‘Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War’ wherein a boy is playing soldiers at the feet of a seated man with a small girl on his knee; the girl reads a book that inspires her to ask her father about the war—instead of responding, his pensive stare is fixated on the viewer. Evoking similar notions of duty and shame in his pamphlet, Conan Doyle argued that while a man could die happy knowing he had sacrificed himself for his country, ‘who could bear the thoughts of him who lives with the memory that he had shirked his duty and failed his country at the moment of her need?’⁴¹

Conan Doyle identified German jealousy of the British Empire and German intellectual hatred for Britain as broad categories that contributed to the current conflict: ‘That we have nothing material to gain, no colonies which we covet, no possessions of any sort that we desire, is the final proof that the war has not been

³⁷ Ibid, p. 32.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 17.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 13.

provoked by us.’⁴² He emphasised the need for British men to meet the challenge of an expanding Germany or face the consequence that a

larger and stronger Germany would dominate Europe and would overshadow our lives. Her coast line would be increased, her ports would face our own, her coaling stations would be in every sea, and her great army, greater than ever, would be within striking distance of our shores.⁴³

Conan Doyle carefully places Britain on the defensive in the war, coming to the aid of Belgium and France against German aggression. Moreover, he worried about Germany’s expanding power and its threatened consumption of Britain. The growing power of Germany also irrevocably threatened the British Empire, and by extension the peace of mind, standard of living, and the prestige associated with it:

To avoid sinking for ever into the condition of a dependant, we should be compelled to have recourse to rigid compulsory service, and our diminished revenues would be all turned to the needs of self-defence. Such would be the miserable condition in which we should hand on to our children that free and glorious empire which we inherited in all the fullness of its richness and its splendour from those strong fathers who have built it up.⁴⁴

Not volunteering in the fight immediately, he argued, would simply defer the inevitable militarization of the nation as well as the gradual disintegration of the Empire. Without vigilance, he argued, we might hand our father’s glorious empire in tatters to our children. Without the strength of the Empire, Conan Doyle noted, we would no longer be an independent nation—we would be beholden to the will of other nations. By emphasising the imminent invasion of Britain by Germany and the immediate deterioration of the Empire, Conan Doyle invited a sense of insecurity. Conan Doyle highlighted the destruction of our ‘peace of mind’ and the discarding of ‘self-respect’ for the ‘remainder of our lives’:

And yet this will be surely our fate and our future if we do not nerve our souls and brace our arms for victory. No regrets will avail, no excuses will help, no after thoughts can profit us. It is now—*now*—even in these weeks and months that are passing that the final reckoning is being taken, and when once the sum is made up no further effort can change

⁴² Ibid, p. 25.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 27.

it. What are our lives or our labours, our fortunes or even our families, when compared with the life or death of the great mother of us all? We are but the leaves of the tree. What matter if we flutter down to-day or to-morrow, so long as the great trunk stands and the burrowing roots are firm.⁴⁵

There is urgency in Conan Doyle's prose: 'now—*now*—even in these weeks and months that are passing that the final reckoning is being taken'; he frames the threat of German invasion as immediate and the effect is to heighten the fear of what a dominant Germany would mean. Conan Doyle asks his audience to subordinate 'lives', 'labours', 'fortunes' and 'families' to the 'mother of us all', and to do so immediately, before it is too late. The British Empire is a tree with a great trunk and deep roots and the citizens are but leaves—to be replenished perennially as long as the tree continues to live. Conan Doyle thus elevates the duty of defending the Empire and shames as cowards those unwilling to defend the inheritance that our fathers had built.

In charting the rise of Germany and the origins of its conflict with Britain, Conan Doyle pointed to two particular historical factors: Germany's reaction to the Boer War, and the building of the German naval fleet. Regarding the Boer War, Conan Doyle quotes himself, according to Philip Weller, referring to his source only as 'a British writer of the period' to describe how the friendship between Britain and Germany deteriorated over Germany's criticisms of British conduct in the war.⁴⁶ According to Conan Doyle, German criticisms of British suppression of the Boer rebellion in South Africa (see above) coincided with the expansion of the German naval fleet.⁴⁷ Philip Weller explains that Conan Doyle quoted from his own *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct* without acknowledging his source material or revealing himself to be the author of these comments, in order to prove that from the Boer War period onwards there was increasing British wariness over the potential of German aggression. More than simply exposing a certain academic obfuscation, this discrepancy reinforces Conan Doyle's own fixation that Germany was growing into a threat to Britain—and moreover, that Britain needed to develop new networks of friendship and political alliances with other European powers in order to protect itself from the possibility of German aggression.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Philip Weller, 'Afterword', *To Arms!* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 54-56.

⁴⁷ *To Arms!*, p. 16.

The opportunity for Britain to oppose Germany and thus to develop a closer relationship with France emerged directly out of the Morocco Crises of 1906 and 1911. According to Conan Doyle, in both cases, Germany's attempts to bully France were thwarted by Britain. In the current war, he argued, Germany expected Britain to step aside and allow Germany to defeat France.⁴⁸ However, Conan Doyle insisted that Britain would not leave France undefended. He reiterated that Britain had done nothing to provoke Germany either militarily or economically, except to stand 'between Germany and that world empire of which she dreamed'.⁴⁹ Conan Doyle suggested it was Britain, not Germany, who made the offer of disarmament and 'a navy-building holiday' in order to diffuse military tensions, whilst the Germans insisted on continuing an arms race.⁵⁰ Regarding the current conflict, Conan Doyle recognised the complications regarding the web of treaties that entangled Austria, Russia, and the Balkan states, but argued that it was Germany's notion of the British as 'degenerate' and its preference for violence over diplomacy that had hastened the start of the war.⁵¹ He periodically reiterated that the British ('we') 'are in no way to blame for the hostility which has grown up between us'.⁵² According to Conan Doyle, beyond some accidental causes, the blame for the First World War lay strictly with the Germans.

Conan Doyle's WPB pamphlets and articles privileged a justification for the British case for war. Other opinions, specifically those that dissented from these interpretations, did not enjoy the same prominence as Conan Doyle's texts. E.D. Morel, for example, argued that Britain shared the blame for starting the war. Morel insisted that examining this shared responsibility would better illuminate the origins of the war rather than placing all the blame on Germany. However, when it was discovered that Morel was making these and similar arguments on behalf of the UDC and sending pamphlets that broadcast such views to neutral Switzerland, he was imprisoned for six months for violating DORA. This example once again reinforces how an institutional connection with the government protected the speech of men such as Conan Doyle, while non-institutional speech—particularly speech which was critical of the government and the war—was subject to censorship or prosecution.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 18.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 20.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 19.

⁵² Ibid, p. 21.

Edmund Dene Morel was one of the founding members of the Union of Democratic Control (see the discussion of the UDC in Chapter One). Consistent with his later arguments for the UDC, he had campaigned for greater democratic scrutiny of British foreign policy in his pre-war writing as well. Morel argued that the World War was the result of mismanaged diplomacy rather than of outright and one-sided German aggression. He argued that European politics and diplomacy did not depend on the 'martyrdom of millions' but instead 'upon the ambitions, intrigues, jealousies, fears and suspicions of rival diplomatists'.⁵³ Appeals to values such as humanity, justice, and common sense were valueless in what he described as the 'diplomatic chess-board of Europe'. Morel closes his 'Personal Forward' in a book of essays by stating that his position concerning both the violations in the Congo and the Great War was essentially the same: 'The Leopoldian rule in the Congo was an odious and wicked wrong perpetrated upon a section of the human race. The present war is an abominable outrage upon the whole human race.'⁵⁴ While their views diverged in terms of the present war, Conan Doyle was first drawn to Morel out of a sense of admiration for his work concerning what he regarded as a human rights violations in the Congo.

Morel became radicalised by what he witnessed as the inhumane genocide of Congolese as a result of King Leopold of Belgium's personal rule over the country, as well as slave-labour, hostage-taking, mass killings, and torture. In particular, Morel highlighted the practice of severing the hands of natives as punishment for not meeting rubber quotas.⁵⁵ His activism and writing influenced a movement that attracted a great number of literary figures of the day including Mark Twain, Joseph Conrad, and Arthur Conan Doyle.⁵⁶ Inspired by Morel, Conan Doyle befriended him

⁵³ E.D. Morel, *Truth and the War* (London, 1916), foreword.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ According to missionary reports, if rubber quotas were not met, the natives were attacked. A sentry hired to monitor rubber extraction reassured a disturbed missionary by noting: 'Don't take this to heart so much. They kill us if we don't bring the rubber. The Commissioner has promised us if we have plenty of hands he will shorten our service.' He went on to note that the hands 'were often smoked to preserve them until they could be shown to the European officer.' Quoted in Peter Forbath, *The River Congo: The Discovery, Exploration and Exploitation of the World's Most Dramatic River* (New York, 1977), pp. 373-5. Peter Forbath further explained how these hands were often used as proof that soldiers were doing their job. For more details on Belgian conduct in the Congo, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston, 1998).

⁵⁶ See also Mark Twain's *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule* (Boston, 1905). Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) takes place in Congo and the narrator, Marlowe, witnesses some of the atrocities. Roger Casement approached Conrad to assist in public protests to Leopold. Conrad responded:

and joined his campaign by working to end King Leopold's personal ownership and exploitation of the Congo in 1909 (and they continued to call for reforms afterwards). In his *Crime of the Congo*, Conan Doyle noted Morel had done the work of ten men in making these crimes known and in seeking reform.⁵⁷ He dismissed Edward Grey's claims in a July 1909 speech that Britain was reluctant to censure Belgium diplomatically because of the fear of Britain being drawn into a European war. According to Conan Doyle, Grey argued that the war was being held in the balance over the issue of Belgian atrocities in the Congo.⁵⁸ Conan Doyle explained that Grey dismissed the idea that the issues at stake were so grave and barbaric that it was a matter of honour and human decency for Britain to exert influence on Belgium to stop the crimes. On the other hand, Conan Doyle asserted that if Britain failed to condemn the brutal acts, it would lose honour in failing to do our duty: 'if all Europe frowned upon our enterprise, we should not be worthy to be the sons of our fathers if we did not go forward on the plain path of national duty'.⁵⁹ To Conan Doyle, Belgian imperialism demanded an appeal to a higher principle than merely diplomatic exigencies. In the case of the First World War, it would be German imperialism in Belgium and France rather than Belgian conduct in the Congo that would, for Conan Doyle, require immediate attention.

Although they agreed about Belgian outrages in the Congo, Morel and Conan Doyle later disagreed about the causes of the First World War as well as the justification for the war itself. As we have seen, Morel explained that his experience of trying to bring to light an awareness of the humanitarian concerns over Leopold's rule in the Congo led him to understand that diplomats did not care about human rights. Instead Morel viewed European diplomacy as a large game of chess. As early as 1912 he argued in *Morocco in Crisis* (later reissued as *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy* (1915)) that the secret diplomacy which existed between France and

It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe, which seventy years ago has put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds, tolerates the Congo State today. It is as if the moral clock had been put back many hours. And yet nowadays if I were to overwork my horse so as to destroy its happiness or physical well-being, I should be hauled before a magistrate [...]. In the old days, England had in her keeping the conscience of Europe. The initiative came from her. But I suppose we are busy with other things—too much involved in great affairs to take up the cudgels for humanity, decency and justice.

Identifying himself as 'only a wretched novelist', Conrad declined Casement's request (Quoted in Harlow, pp. 196-7).

⁵⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle, *Crime in Congo* (London, 1909), p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Introduction'.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Britain in 1904, and which was subsequently brought to a head in the Morocco Crises of 1906 and 1911, was antagonising Germany, destabilising Europe, and thus drawing Europe (and by implication, its colonies) into a large war:

German action has lain in the existence of secret conventions and arrangements between the British, French, and Spanish governments, withheld from the knowledge of the British people, who have, therefore, been induced to form their judgment upon incomplete data; secondly because a concerted effort, inspired by certain influences connected with the British diplomatic machine, and conveyed to the British public through the medium of powerful newspapers, has been consistently pursued with the object of portraying German policy in the Morocco question in a uniformly sinister light.⁶⁰

Morel maintained German policy in Morocco had been presented as aggressive to the British public. He noted however that as the public remained ignorant about secret agreements between France, Britain, and Spain, this image of Germany's aggression was all the easier to fashion. Not only did Morel find this kind of behaviour unfair, he found British diplomacy secretive, dangerous, and reckless. His arguments thus complicate the notion that Germany was solely responsible for the war: 'The blame has not been [Germany's] alone [...] [t]en years of secret diplomacy has done their deadly work.'⁶¹ Morel's arguments contrast with the assertion made in *To Arms!* and elsewhere that Germany had acted aggressively towards French commercial and military claims in Morocco. Morel quoted Count de Laling's opinion that 'the *Entente Cordiale* was founded, not on the positive basis of a defence of common interests, but on the negative basis of hatred against the German Empire'. Furthermore, Morel himself maintained that '[i]f the Entente Governments imagined themselves to be threatened by the Teutonic Powers, the latter had equally good reason to believe themselves threatened by the Governments of the *Entente*'. Morel thus argued that there were forces on both sides that contributed to the initiation of the war, and that Britain and France's *Entente* was threatening Germany in a way that would inevitably inspire a reaction.

Morel insisted that Germany was responding to the diplomatic aggression of the *Entente Cordiale*—aggression concealed from the British public. According to

⁶⁰ Morel, *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy* (Manchester, 1916), p. xxvii.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

Wesseling (2004), the agreement which established the *Entente Cordial* came in the wake of Britain defeating France in Egypt (also known as the Fashoda Crisis) in 1898, and their rapprochement in 1904 which established Egypt as a British protectorate and Morocco as a French one.⁶² Morel argued that these secretive deals infringed German trading privileges, and thus led Germany to assert its commercial rights. Instead of determining its own foreign policy, Morel noted, these secret deals tied the British public 'to the cartwheels of the French Colonial Party or any other Party or Parties in France'.⁶³ According to Wesseling, the secret agreements subverted democratic scrutiny not only because they were kept from the public, but also because of conditions which stipulated that if for any reason the agreements were forced to change due to domestic political or economic pressure, the substance of these agreements would remain the same.⁶⁴ Morel's demand, consistent with the recommendations of the UDC, was for foreign policy to be more transparent and 'democratized.'⁶⁵ He argued that examining the secretive nature of British and French diplomacy would complicate the notion of German aggression as the sole cause of the First World War.⁶⁶ In contrast, Conan Doyle's *To Arms!* set out to lay the blame for the war squarely with the Germans:

I have tried to show that we are in no way to blame for the hostility which has grown up between us. So far as it had any solid cause at all it has arisen from fixed factors, which could no more be changed by us than the geographical position which has laid us right across their exit to the oceans of the world.⁶⁷

Conan Doyle again emphasises the nature of the conflict as one where Britain somehow prevented Germany's hegemony over Europe—just as we are physically in its way from preventing Germany's geographical domination of Europe, so too are we

⁶² H.L. Wesseling, *The European Colonial Empires* (London, 2004), pp. 178-79.

⁶³ Morel, *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, pp. 172, 170.

⁶⁴ Ibid. For more on secret agreements and formation of Entente Cordial see also *Decisions for War, 1914-1917* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 25-38.

⁶⁵ Morel, *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy*, p. 172.

⁶⁶ As Germany was left out of the agreement it was both economically and militarily threatened. The Kaiser made a speech to reaffirm the Moroccan independence and an 'open door' policy to trade. Then president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, intervened to diffuse the situation and an agreement was signed in Algeiras. However, demanding compensation for increased French control of Morocco, Germany sent their gunboat to the port of Agadir in 1911. To resolve the conflict, France ceded part of French Congo to Germany. Wesseling, pp. 229-230. In contrast, like Conan Dole, Alan Kramer argues both crises came as a result of 'Germany's brash attempts to stake imperial claims' (*Dynamic of Destruction*, pp. 72-73).

⁶⁷ *To Arms!*, p. 21.

in its way diplomatically. Conan Doyle does not consider that while the geographical position of England could not be changed, English support for French control of Morocco—an important trade location—might have been a factor in antagonising Germany. He argues instead that Britain's only complicity in bringing about the war amounted to standing in the way of an aggressive and expansionist nation in order to protect Allies and to meet treaty obligations to protect Belgian neutrality, which he noted, was 'signed in 1839'.⁶⁸

As previously mentioned, Morel was imprisoned for distributing pamphlets to a neutral country. Bertrand Russell saw him on his day of release and noted Morel's physical deterioration in a letter:

His hair is completely white (there was hardly a tinge of white before)—when he first came out, he collapsed completely, physically & mentally, largely as the result of insufficient food. He says one only gets three quarters of an hour for reading in the whole day—the rest of the time is spent on prison work etc.⁶⁹

Russell, anticipating his own imprisonment, worried about having only 45 minutes a day to read: 'It seems highly probable that if the sentence is not mitigated my mind will not remain as competent as it has been. I should regret this, as I still have a lot of philosophy that I wish to do.'⁷⁰ Institutional connections to the WPB determined the audience, distribution, and in the broadest sense bound the expressible content of official pamphlets. These materials emphasised that the war was fought in defence against German aggression—particularly its barbaric crimes against women and children in Belgium. Other materials, as this chapter will discuss, emphasised this final point by focusing on German atrocities in Belgium and France as compelling Britain's humanitarian responsibility to stop German aggression. Anti-war materials, such as Morel's, objected to the war as an act of irresponsible diplomacy, aggravated by the secret dealings of British and French foreign policy. To contextualise Germany's invasion of Belgium and France, Morel examined the history of the decades preceding World War One to argue that some origins of the conflict could be detected within the colonial sphere, thus suggesting British complicity in starting the war. Writers who made such arguments had faced the risk of censorship and possible

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 24.

⁶⁹ Bertrand Russell, letter dated 27 March 1918; *Autobiography* (London, 1998), p. 311.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

imprisonment; pro-war materials outside of the sphere of official propaganda may complicate the boundary between official and independent propaganda, but this is not the case for anti-war writing. Outside of the institutional parameters of government information ministries, some anti-war writing was actively suppressed by the government. Government efforts to censor and alter speech worked hand in glove, and conflating official and independent propaganda does not acknowledge the problems suffered by those who were outside of official government propaganda. Although he remained firmly pro-war, Conan Doyle's war-writing was not limited to governmentally authorised printings; one story, in particular, offers us the opportunity to contrast Conan Doyle's non-institutional attempts at propaganda. The next section will thus examine this non-institutional publication that detailed the war service of the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

2.0 'HIS LAST BOW': INVASION AND THE IRISH PROBLEM

This section examines how Conan Doyle supported the war through fiction by recruiting his famous detective Sherlock Holmes in 'His Last Bow'. Conan Doyle wrote the story outside of official governmental systems of publication and distribution; and although it contains a number of themes consistent with other propaganda discourse, it cannot be defined as institutional propaganda in the formal sense. One of the themes consistent with other propaganda is fear over invasion—an anxiety that can also be discerned in Conan Doyle's pre-war writing. That private-sector materials replicate the themes and discourse of governmental propaganda—and were indeed indistinguishable from British propaganda during the war, as official propaganda bore no governmental marks—further complicates the relationship between institutional and non-institutional propaganda. Moreover, Conan Doyle's story actually goes further in challenging topics sensitive to British propaganda, such as the collusion between Ireland and Germany. Conan Doyle's relationship with both Ireland and the Easter Rising of 1916 find a fragmentary expression in 'His Last Bow', and only gesture to a far more complicated discussion of Home Rule and the punishment of Irish rebels that occurs in his other literary, journalistic, and activist work. While Conan Doyle had a close affiliation with the WPB and government propaganda, much of his wartime writing cannot be accounted for within that system, even though his independent writing replicated many of the same ideas, fears, and narratives.

In 1916, the Foreign Office facilitated Conan Doyle's visit to the French and Italian fronts and requested that he write about his experiences; he obliged, and the account would later appear as *A Visit to Three Fronts: Glimpses of the British, Italian, and French Lines*.⁷¹ In his memoirs, Conan Doyle recounts how, at lunch in the trenches, a French general accosted him about what his famous detective was contributing to the war: 'Sherlock Holmes, est-ce qui'il est un soldat dans l'armée Anglaise?' A hush fell over the table until Conan Doyle stammered: 'Mais, mon general [...] il est trop vieux pour service'.⁷² Conan Doyle's inquisitor (whom he likened to one of Dumas's famous musketeers—'Athos with a touch of d'Artagnan') had implied that Holmes was either a real person, a cipher for Conan Doyle, or was needed as a character within the cultural landscape of the war effort. Although Conan Doyle's response implied that both he and Holmes were too old to fight, shortly after this meeting he found the means for both himself and his famous detective to offer more of their service to the war effort.

The September 1917 cover of the *Strand Magazine* announced 'Sherlock Holmes outwits a German Spy', and 'His Last Bow' appeared inside with the subtitle 'The War Service of Sherlock Holmes'.⁷³ Later that year, with the publication of a book with the same title, *His Last Bow* (1917), Conan Doyle changed the subtitle to the story to 'An Epilogue of Sherlock Holmes'. Perplexingly, Holmes and Dr. Watson did not appear till the middle of the story when it becomes apparent that Holmes had worn one of his impenetrable disguises for much of the tale. Narrating the story from the third-person, instead of using Watson's usual narration, better augments the surprising appearance of Holmes. It is also only in the concluding pages of the story that we learn not only that had Holmes retired, but that he had come out of this retirement for important counter-espionage work in order to protect England from imminent invasion. The German spy in question, Von Bork, 'was a bit too good for our people', Holmes explains to Watson, '[h]e was in a class by himself'.⁷⁴ This story thus fills in narrative details regarding Conan Doyle's claims in his journalism, already quoted, of a 'deep, deep plot, a plot against the liberties of

⁷¹ Buitenhuis, p. 86.

⁷² Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Visit to Three Fronts: Glimpses of the British, Italian, and French Lines* (London, 1916), p. 72, and *Memories and Adventures*, p. 416.

⁷³ Daniel Stashower, *Teller of Tales: Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York, 1999), p. 314.

⁷⁴ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 978.

Europe, extending over several years, planned out to the smallest detail' and developed 'by hordes of spies'.⁷⁵

With the publication of the book, *His Last Bow*, Conan Doyle added a 'Preface' to elaborate upon what would be Holmes's final adventure. In the 'Preface', Dr. Watson explains that '[t]he friends of Mr. Sherlock Holmes will be glad to learn that he is still alive and well' but that his age is catching up with him, as he is 'somewhat crippled by occasional attacks of rheumatism.'⁷⁶ Continuing the pose of Holmes as real person, Conan Doyle has Watson detail how Holmes's retirement means that he refuses cases, lives on a small farm 'five miles from Eastbourne', and divides his time between 'philosophy and agriculture' (and, as we later learn in the story, bee-keeping). In addition to collecting a number of other cases published over the previous years in order to complete the present collection, Watson details how '[t]he approach of the German war caused [Holmes] [...] to lay his remarkable combination of intellectual and practical activity at the disposal of the government, with historical results' detailed in the 'His Last Bow'.⁷⁷ Although Holmes was Conan Doyle's most celebrated creation, he was not averse to ridding himself of the detective, much to the chagrin of his reading audience. However, he was also inclined to allow Holmes to return in a variety of different ways to triumph over evil-doers once again. This last story served both to send Holmes off the stage and to return for a final bow at the same time.

There was a public outcry when Conan Doyle allowed Holmes to topple from the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland in the grip of his nemesis Professor Moriarty, in 'The Final Problem' (*Strand Magazine*, December 1893). Martin Booth observes that as a direct result of the story, over twenty thousand people cancelled their subscriptions to the *Strand Magazine* and Conan Doyle was inundated with abusive mail from irate fans.⁷⁸ Eight years later, during the Boer War, he brought Holmes back in a novel serialised in the *Strand Magazine* from August 1901 to April 1902. The novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, was a prequel to Holmes's fateful descent with Moriarty—or rather his 'alleged' fateful descent. Holmes would usher in

⁷⁵ 'The Great German Plot', *The German War*, p. 62.

⁷⁶ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 869.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Martin Booth goes on to note: 'Newspapers around the world reported the death as a new [sic] items [sic] and there were obituaries by the score. *Tit-Bits*, perhaps in an attempt to regain some of the income lost by the *Strand Magazine*, announced the instigation of a Sherlock Holmes Memorial Prize. Sherlock Holmes clubs sprung up in America. And evil, it seemed, had triumphed over good' (Booth, p. 190).

Holmes's formal return from death a year later. 'The Adventure of the Empty House' (1903) presented a disguised Holmes revealing himself to Watson and explaining he had only faked his death to avoid Moriarty's men. In the intervening years, he explained, he had travelled the world as an explorer and adventurer. The only other post-retirement story, 'The Adventure of the Lion's Mane', is narrated by Holmes himself, and was published in *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* (1927).

As mentioned, we only learn of Holmes's supposed retirement in the middle of 'His Last Bow'. Holmes describes his life in the country watching 'little working gangs' of bees as he once 'watched the criminal world of London.'⁷⁹ Having finished his monograph, *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen*, Holmes offers Watson a copy after using it as a prop in his counter-espionage trap.⁸⁰ When the government disturbed his country repose, Holmes explains, he agreed to do his service for the country. Along with posing as an American and employing an uncharacteristic amount of slang, and thus declaring war on the 'the King's English as well as on the English King' ('deliver the goods', 'bringing home the bacon', 'the dough', and 'the boodle'), Holmes also grew a goatee to play his role: 'These are the sacrifices one makes for one's country'.⁸¹ For two years, Holmes had gone undercover, trading his signature pipe for a cigar, and becoming the Irish-American, Altamont. This new alter-identity emerged in America, where he was able to infiltrate an Irish secret society in Buffalo and learn about groups interested in attacking England.

The story opens with the German spy Van Bork discussing his plan with another spy, Baron Von Herling. They are reviewing their scheme to steal British secrets in order to prepare for a possible invasion of Britain should it decide to come to the defence of France and Belgium in the upcoming war. Von Bork's stolen data are marked in pigeon-holes (with titles such as 'Fords', 'Aeroplanes', 'Ireland', 'Egypt', 'The Channel') in a safe made of a metal resistant to being cut with any kind of tool (according to Von Bork), and further secured with a double alpha-numerical lock—with the password 'August 1914'. In describing the 'doubleradiating disc round the keyhole', Conan Doyle contrasts the ease with which a German spy is able to infiltrate the country, and the care with which the spy guards against the same

⁷⁹ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 978.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

infiltration of his own secrets.⁸² Despite Von Bork noting that the German spies could not have predicted the precise date of the war, Conan Doyle emphasises German planning for and premeditation of the conflict. Whereas in previous Holmes adventures, such criminals might have been working for Moriarty, these spies were instead ‘devoted agents of the Kaiser’.⁸³ Following the departure of Von Herling, the Irish-American Altamont arrives with the new naval codes needed to complete the plan (‘[t]he Admiralty in some way got the alarm and every code has been changed’). However, when Van Bork opens the book, he discovers its topic is Bee Culture. Before being able to realise what had happened, ‘he was gripped at the back of his neck by a grasp of iron, and a chloroformed sponge was held in front of his writhing face’.⁸⁴ Reunited after a long absence, Holmes appears in the subsequent paragraph opening a bottle of wine and explaining to Watson how he executed his plan while listening to the vows of revenge from a reviving Von Bork.

Holmes explains how he acted as an agent of disinformation and counterespionage by aiding the capture of five of Von Bork’s best agents—as well as revealing to the Admiralty that their old naval codes had been compromised. In terms of the actual invasion taking place that same night, Holmes recounts some examples of the misinformation he had passed to Von Bork: ‘Your admiral may find the new guns rather larger than he expects, and the cruisers perhaps a trifle faster’.⁸⁵ Moreover, Holmes sardonically notes ‘[i]t would brighten my declining years to see a German cruiser navigating the Solent according to the mine-field plans which I have furnished’.⁸⁶ Holmes demonstrates similar sentiments when Von Bork threatens to attempt an escape—Holmes warns against it unless he wanted to christen a new local public house, ‘The Dangling Prussian’.⁸⁷ The British are united in their hatred of invading foreigners; and were Van Bork to be found running in the fields, Holmes was sure that the people of the local village would not allow him to live, let alone get away. Conan Doyle emphasises the unity of the British people, who, however ‘patient’, act differently when their ‘temper is a little inflamed’.

Holmes’s hostility towards Van Bork exemplifies this story’s anxieties about invasion and the porous nature of borders, something that is a recurring theme in

⁸² Ibid, p. 975.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 971.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 977.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 978.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 980.

Conan Doyle's writings. The story also demonstrates possible worries about Irish-German collusion. One of the folders is, as mentioned, marked 'Ireland'; and when noting the difficulty Britain might have in involving themselves in a Continental conflict Holmes mentions how the Germans 'have stirred her up such a devil's brew of Irish civil war, window-breaking Furies, and God knows what to keep her thoughts at home'.⁸⁸ To infiltrate the German spy-ring, Holmes takes on the identity of an Irish-American, Altamont, to infiltrate 'an Irish secret society at Buffalo'. Furthermore, Altamont is defended by Von Bork from Von Herling's accusations of being a traitor, on the grounds of his Irish national identity and his hatred for the British. The story does not speculate concerning what Holmes's agitation on behalf of the secret society might have entailed, or what his rhetoric might have been when speaking of Ireland and Britain; but the implication is that 'Altamont' supported Home Rule and hated the British Empire: his speech was not simply that of an agitating traitor interested in financial gain. These references would have had some uncomfortable resonances with contemporaneous political events, such as the Easter Rising of 1916 and the subsequent execution, as traitors, of some of the participants, including Conan Doyle's friend, Roger Casement. Thus the references to and representation of Ireland in the story demonstrate some of the ways Conan Doyle's own discussions of the fear of invasion and of Home Rule meet.

2.1 INVASION

By the time Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, there had been nearly half a century of literary narratives which imagined a major European conflict that was likely to see Britain occupied by a foreign power. According to commentators such as I. F. Clarke and Daniel Pick, British invasion narratives exploded in the years following the German victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870). By the time the World War began in 1914, invasion narratives had become a popular and established genre and included the publication of texts portraying a German-occupied Britain, such as Saki's *When William Came* (1913).⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 972.

⁸⁹ According to I.F. Clarke, although it had a long history predating the Franco-Prussian War, the modern vogue for the genre began with the George Tomkyns Chesney's publication of *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer* (1871). Clarke suggests the invasion story is a single tradition that runs from 1796 to 1913 with only the circumstances and figures changing. *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749* (Oxford, 1992), p. 18. *The Battle of Dorking* and *When William Came*

Invasion narratives were remarkably consistent, argues Clarke: the only things that changed were the particulars of the different enemies, and the different circumstances surrounding the invasion. The substantial framework of the stories remained the same. Though not as explicit in employing invasion narratives as contemporaries such as H. G. Wells, the theme of invasion is present in a number of Conan Doyle's stories.

In the final paragraphs of 'His Last Bow', Holmes explains to Watson that 'an east wind' was approaching.⁹⁰ Watson insists that on the contrary, the weather was warm. Holmes corrects the Doctor:

Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age. There's an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it's God's own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared. Start her up, Watson, for it's time that we were on our way.⁹¹

The approaching threat of war is transformed into an amorphous, all pervasive wind—it is cold and bitter and will 'wither' a number of the English before its 'blast'. Unlike the more explicit arguments made for the Channel Tunnel, in 'Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius', 'The Last Bow' does not offer a means of avoiding this wind; instead it simply anticipates its arrival. Although the story presents the British Government as being aware of and closely observing foreign spies, it is Holmes who remains the resolute knight sworn to protect Britain from invasion. Holmes is sure that whatever the force of the German wind, God's 'better' wind will ensure that sunshine will follow the storm. Holmes concludes the story with a promise that an other-worldly force will protect Britain, and in a way Holmes is himself the representation of that force—the all pervasive, almost omnipotent figure that prevents invasion, sends incorrect messages to the enemies, and foils the plans of spies.

The transformation of the threat of war into a wind is reminiscent of one of Conan Doyle's earlier Professor Challenger novels, *The Poison Belt* (1913). In that novel a cloud of ether passes through the earth and seemingly kills everything it comes in contact with. It later transpires however that the effects are temporary. Clouds completely disregard borders, cannot be stopped, and permeate through cracks to occupy the entire world. That invaders, like clouds, could arrive from anywhere

can be found in Clarke's anthology *The Tale of the Next Great War, 1871-1914*. For more discussion on invasion literature and the war, see Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), pp. 1-11.

⁹⁰ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 978.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

heightened the fear of occupation. As Daniel Pick notes, '[i]t was precisely the uncertainty about where the main enemy lay which exacerbated the sense of cultural drift and national insecurity' in the years between 1880 and 1914, and which contributed to the growth in invasion narratives.⁹² In the same year as *The Poison Belt*, Conan Doyle also published 'The Adventure of the Dying Detective', wherein Holmes becomes infected by a highly contagious disease—transmitted through touch—which he claims to have brought back with him from an investigation of Chinese sailors in the East End docks. By the end of the story, we learn that Holmes was only faking his symptoms to trap the killer who had placed poison in a specially triggered box he sent to Holmes. The suggestion in the story seems to be, Susan Cannon Harris argues, that 'imperial commerce is indeed' itself 'infecting the British population'.⁹³ Invasion thus came in a variety of forms in Conan Doyle's writing: from immigrants returning from the outskirts of the Empire, natural phenomena such as gas or disease, and criminals—as well as foreign armies.

Conan Doyle's specific fears of an invading empire emerged from his first Holmes story and continued as a theme throughout his writing. In 'A Study in Scarlet' (1887), Dr. Watson's narration describes his return to London as an injured veteran from the Second Afghan War (1843-1880). On returning to the metropolis, he describes London as the end-drain for a vast sewage network, 'that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained'.⁹⁴ Daniel Pick argues that invasion narratives speak 'to a specific ensemble of late Victorian and Edwardian fears about [...] metropolitan degeneration', and Conan Doyle's fears, as expressed through Watson in this story and in his other writings, demonstrate some overlap between his notions of degeneration and invasion.⁹⁵ McLaughlin argues that

⁹² Pick, p. 115.

⁹³ Susan Cannon Harris, 'Pathological Possibilities: Contagion and Empire in Doyle's Sherlock Holmes Stories', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31 (2003) 447-466, p. 460; Dianne Simmons has noted the plots of two-thirds of the Holmes stories written between 1888 and 1902 do not centre on criminal activity but instead on 'some foreign pollution, like a mysterious disease, [which] has been carried into the country'; see Dianne Simmons, *The Narcissism of Empire: Loss, Rage, and Revenge in Thomas De Quincey, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling and Isak Dinesen* (Brighton, 2007), p. 69. See also Yumna Siddiqi 'The Cesspool of Empire: Sherlock Holmes and the Return of the Repressed', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 34 (2006), 233-247; as well as Siddiqi's *Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue* (New York, 2008).

⁹⁴ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 15 This passage compares with a passage from Le Queux: 'The riff-raff from Whitechapel, those aliens whom we had so long welcomed and pampered in our midst—Russians, Poles, Austrians, Swedes and even Germans—the latter, of course, now declared themselves to be Russians—had swarmed westward in lawless, hungry multitudes.' (*The Invasion of 1910*, p. 280; quoted in Pick, p. 128)

⁹⁵ Pick, p. 280.

in the Holmes stories Conan Doyle used the ‘thematics of invasion to assuage a sense of imperial guilt and project the practice of violence and aggression as the desire of their colonial others’.⁹⁶ What is evident in the years approaching the World War is that Conan Doyle focused this fear of invasion from an abstract, perhaps colonial anxiety, into the specific fear of a German invasion. As discussed, Conan Doyle’s anxieties concerning invasion at the frontier of empire in the pre-war years changed into a more particularised fear of a German invasion of Britain.

‘His Last Bow’ takes place on the night of 2 August 1914, ‘the most terrible August in the history of the world’. Conan Doyle describes the sun setting in terms that anticipate the horror of the war: ‘one blood-red gash like an open wound lay low in the distant west’. Von Bork is described as an eagle, and when he speaks with Von Herling they are described as huddling together in a bird-like manner: ‘their heads close together, talking in low, confidential tones’. If the narrator is in fact Watson—he does claim to collect the case stories himself in the Preface to *His Last Bow*—he abandons his narrative style to allow his imagination to elaborate the images: ‘[f]rom below the two glowing ends of the cigars might have been the smouldering eyes of some malignant fiend looking down in the darkness’. Von Bork describes how the English are ‘not very hard to deceive [...] [a] more docile, simple folk could not be imagined’.⁹⁷ Von Herling disagrees and notes that English custom is difficult to get a grip on; but they agree that playing sport is one excellent way to insinuate oneself into English society. As in ‘Danger!’, Conan Doyle allows his German spies to demonstrate their ironic reasoning about Britain’s possible neutrality in the war. The two speak about Britain’s diplomatic commitments, assuring themselves that Britain might leave France to her fate as they have ‘no binding treaty between them’. Moreover Von Bork discusses how the British might ignore their treaty with Belgium in order to maintain peace. When Von Herling objects that this might mean Britain betraying its honour, Von Bork replies that ‘Honour is a mediaeval conception’. These arguments, alongside Holmes’s heroics, ironically reiterate the necessity of involving Britain in the war.

Conan Doyle expressed his devotion to chivalric values in his essay ‘A Policy of Murder’ in *The German War*:

⁹⁶ Joseph McLaughlin, *Writing the Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London from Doyle to Eliot* (Charlottesville, 2000), p. 73.

⁹⁷ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 971.

War may have a beautiful as well as a terrible side, and be full of touches of human sympathy and restraint which mitigate its unavoidable horror. Such have been the characteristics always of the secular wars between the British and the French. From the old glittering days of knighthood, with the high and gallant courtesy [...] the tradition of chivalry has survived.⁹⁸

Conan Doyle expresses his horror at how the Germans have abandoned these traditional values of European warfare and thus abandoned civilisation for barbarism, and he constructs his German spies to reflect this attitude. He argues that the German mentality is laid bare as ‘The Devil’s Doctrine’ in the writings of Bernhardt, Bismark, Moltke, and Nietzsche—‘whose moral teaching was the supplement to the Pan-German Material doctrine.’⁹⁹ For Conan Doyle, the Germans exemplify their lack of ‘gallant courtesy’, honour, or chivalry not only in their violence but in their attacks on bridges, universities, and the Cathedral in Rheims: ‘What a gap between them—the gap that separates civilisation from the savage!’¹⁰⁰ Unlike Morel’s notion of a complicated intertwining of forces, Conan Doyle simplified responsibility for the war as that solely of Germany, a country that has abandoned the chivalrous codes of knighthood. If Britain is at all culpable, for Conan Doyle, it is in not acting sooner to prepare to eliminate the threat of Prussian Junkerism in Europe.

Von Bork emphasises how Britain has simply ignored German militarisation to the point that it is not ready to go to war:

It is an inconceivable thing, but even our special war-tax of fifty millions, which one would think made our purpose as clear as if we had advertised it on the front page of *The Times*, has not roused these people from their slumbers [...] I can assure you that so far as the essentials go—the storage of munitions, the preparation for submarine attack, the arrangements for making high explosives—nothing is prepared.¹⁰¹

Von Bork’s comments are ironic in that he does not realise how he has been deceived by Holmes; but his speech echoes Conan Doyle’s own suspicions of the German Junker attitude exemplified by Bernhardt. Through these German voices, he reiterates that ‘England is not ready’, and that if it does not wake from its slumbers it may be destroyed.

⁹⁸ Conan Doyle, *The German War*, pp. 80-81.

⁹⁹ ‘The Devil’s Doctrine’, *The German War*, p. 45. See also Nicholas Martin “‘Fighting a Philosophy’: The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda of the First World War’ *Modern Language Review*, 98:2 (April 2003), 367-380.

¹⁰⁰ ‘A Policy of Murder’, *The German War*, p.81. See also Chapter One of Kramer’s *Absolute Destruction* for more on German destruction of cultural sites.

¹⁰¹ *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 972.

I will return to the issue of Ireland below, but for now I will note that Holmes linked Von Bork to his nemesis Professor Moriarty, particularly via his promises of revenge.¹⁰² Returning to the first reference to Moriarty, we can detect how the power that Conan Doyle assigns to the criminal mastermind is located everywhere, dispersed throughout society:

For years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organizing power which forever stands in the way of the law, and throws its shield over the wrong-doer [...] I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its action in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally consulted. For years I have endeavoured to break through the veil which shrouded it, and at last the time came when I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty, of mathematical celebrity ('The Final Problem').¹⁰³

Holmes compares Moriarty to the expansionist French conqueror of Europe, 'the Napoleon of crime'. He describes him as a motionless 'spider in the centre of its web' who knows every vibration in his surroundings but does little to betray his existence. Moriarty, like Holmes, has a cool and mathematical rationality; however, human life, morality, and justice are not part of Moriarty's equations as they are for Holmes. He is without empathy; he is an arachnid who simply follows an intricate internal programme. His splendid organisation of crime has pervaded and fully invaded Britain, and has violated its borders. Finding the source, Holmes has no option but to attempt to destroy it, even if it might lead to his own destruction. It is frightening to consider the enemy coming from anywhere and everywhere, but just as Moriarty would be found to be the silent architect, so too would the all-prevailing fear of invasion be assigned to the Germans and particularly to the Kaiser himself. Thus coupled with fears of invasion were fears of concealment—of undetected spies or forces of criminal activity that could not be seen.

2.2 IRELAND, GERMANY, AND THE NEXT WAR

And, dear old Ireland, God save you,
 And heal the wounds of old,
 For every grief you ever knew
 May joy come fifty-fold!

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 979.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 471.

Set Thy guard over us,
 May Thy shield cover us,
 Enfold and uphold us
 On land and on sea!

Arthur Conan Doyle, 'A Hymn to Empire'¹⁰⁴

Conan Doyle's belief in the unity and benevolence of the British Empire was not so different from that of the more recognised imperialist Rudyard Kipling. Elsewhere in his 'A Hymn to Empire', Conan Doyle expresses the unity of empire under God's protection, and the duty of the strong countries 'To help our weaker brother'. The 'hero breeds' of Africa, he hoped, would one day become a united people; yet when the Boers tried to separate, he advocated using force to maintain the unity of the British Empire. In 'His Last Bow', Van Bork noted how unprepared the British were for the unleashing of 'the window-breaking Furies' of an Irish civil war; and in his safe, alongside his folder on 'Egypt', he had a file labelled 'Ireland'. Conan Doyle's own awareness of possible German-Irish collusion would be further highlighted by making Holmes pose as the Irish-American character Altamont. In choosing the middle-name of his own father for Holmes's alias, Conan Doyle was already demonstrating some of the story's ambiguous relationship with his own heritage and with the issue of Ireland generally.¹⁰⁵ Conan Doyle's changing and sometimes conflicting attitudes towards Ireland and Irish Home Rule, and his personal friendship with Roger Casement (who was executed for his involvement in the Easter Rising) demonstrate an independence from official government discourse and propaganda. His arguments also reaffirm his support for the unity of the British Empire—a support that complicated his relationships with anti-imperial activists such as his friends Morel and Casement.

When Von Herling refers to Altamont as a traitor in search of blood money, Von Bork corrects his colleague, pointing out that Altamont was an excellent worker and no traitor; instead, Von Bork claims, he is intent on hurting Britain because of his own grudges and not simply for money: 'our most pan-Germanic Junker is a sucking dove in his feelings towards England compared with a real bitter Irish American'. Holmes chooses his disguise carefully, projecting an image of hatred for the British Empire in the persona of an Irish-American; Conan Doyle thus demonstrated his

¹⁰⁴ *Songs of the Road* (1911), pp. 3-7.

¹⁰⁵ Lycett, p. 365.

awareness of the bisected loyalties of some of Irish people. Indeed, Conan Doyle himself demonstrates a confused and divided mentality when it came to Ireland—on the eve of the war in an interview in the *New York Times*, he explained ‘I am for home rule in Ireland and home rule in Ulster’.¹⁰⁶ By the publication of ‘His Last Bow’, the Easter Rising was only a year past and Conan Doyle understood how deep the emotions ran over that conflict. In addition to losing a friend to execution as a result of that failed revolution, he saw the Rising as an insidious example of German agitation. Thus Conan Doyle’s references to German agitation in Ireland speak to volatile contemporaneous historical themes, and do so in such a manner that was neither requested nor authorised by the government—in fact, Conan Doyle disagreed with the way the government handled the rebels involved in the Easter Rising. Thus it is worth considering how Conan Doyle’s opinions on Home Rule and the Easter Rising differed with official government policy, and whether these differences are registered in his independent war-writing.

Although Conan Doyle was committed to a Union that included Ireland, by 1911 he started to argue that the method for maintaining unity in the United Kingdom was to support Home Rule for Ireland. In *Why He is now in favour of Home Rule* (1911), Conan Doyle explained his change of thinking. He argued that he had always supported Home Rule once adequate economic, military, and social conditions were in place—and that the realisation of those conditions was now imminent. Another factor that made him more optimistic in regards to Home Rule was the ‘complete success of Home Rule in South Africa’ (South Africa became a Dominion in 1910; Canada had become a Dominion in 1867).¹⁰⁷ For Conan Doyle, Home Rule in South Africa had eased tensions remaining from the wake of the Boer War: ‘the animosities in Ireland are tepid compared to the boiling racial passion which existed only ten years ago in Africa’.¹⁰⁸ He argued that the examples of South Africa and Canada proved that ‘Ireland can never break away from the Union’, because when called upon they would most surely ‘unite against any disruption.’¹⁰⁹ The manner with which South Africa and Britain healed their mutual wounds was heartening for Conan

¹⁰⁶ ‘Conan Doyle Fears Drastic Rising against Militants’, *New York Times*, 31 May 1914.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘Why he is now in favour of Home Rule’, Westminster, published by the Liberal publication department (in connection with the National Liberal Federation and the Liberal Central Association), 42 Parliament Street, S.W. and printed by Bowers Bros, 89 Blackfriars Road, S.E. (1911); Houghton Library, Harvard.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*.

Doyle, and left him optimistic about the future. He called upon all those people who believed in serving the Empire to support Home Rule so as to keep Ireland within the Union—antagonism would simply further alienate the Irish.

He amplified this point in a speech that was printed in *What the Irish Protestants Think: Speeches on Home Rule by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, and Other Prominent Irishmen* (1912). Seemingly reversing the common-sense understanding of the term, Conan Doyle argued for Home Rule precisely because he identified himself as an imperialist:

Such an Imperialist [sic] am I that I would sacrifice any portion of the Empire—even Ireland—for the common good. Just as I would sacrifice my arm for the preservation of my body. The part must give way to the whole.¹¹⁰

He reiterated the same comments elsewhere that same year: ‘I am an Imperialist [sic] because I believe the whole to be greater than the part, and I would always be willing to sacrifice any part if I thought it to the advantage of the whole’.¹¹¹ His sympathies with Irish grievances as well as his support for empire led him to embrace Home Rule as the means for maintaining unity. People on both sides of the argument, Conan Doyle argued, were constantly pointing to historic narratives of blame—‘[i]f we could only let our grand-dads rest peaceably in their graves, we would get a much clearer view of what we need in the present, and a better chance of obtaining it’.¹¹² Consistent with themes from his other literature, Conan Doyle anticipated the powers of foreign intrigue in the battle over Home Rule, as well as invoking once again the metaphors of infection and invasion. Imagining a ‘foreign potentate’ who wanted to see the demise of the Empire, Conan Doyle argued that nothing would confound them more than learning, ‘that the secular quarrel between England and Ireland was in a way to be composed’.¹¹³ As he explained in a letter to the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* on 22 September 1912:

A solid loyal Ireland is the one thing which the Empire needs to make it impregnable, and I believe that the men of the North will have a patriotism so broad and enlightened that they

¹¹⁰ *What the Irish Protestants Think: Speeches on Home Rule by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, and Other Prominent Irishmen* (London, 1912), p. 9.

¹¹¹ Quoted in *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 579.

¹¹² *What the Irish Protestants Think: Speeches on Home Rule by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, and Other Prominent Irishmen*, p. 9.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

will understand this, and will sacrifice for the moment their racial and religious feeling in the conviction that by so doing they are truly serving the Empire, and that under any form of rule their character and energy will give them a large share in the government of the nation.¹¹⁴

Conan Doyle sought unity and protection and argued that the way to realise these goals would be to offer Home Rule to Ireland—and furthermore, he trusted that Ulster Unionists would realise this to be the case and cease their opposition. Catherine Wynne has argued that Ireland and Irish feelings of injustice towards Britain are inflected in a series of Conan Doyle stories such as ‘Touch and Go: A Midshipman’s Story’ (1886), ‘That Little Square Box’ (1890), and ‘The Green Flag’ (1900). She argues that these stories are ‘testimonies to Doyle’s keen and sympathetic interest in Irish political grievances’.¹¹⁵ This sensitivity complicated his relationship to Ireland.

Nothing would make the British Empire’s common enemies more pleased than to see the Irish problem weaken Britain, a proposition that Conan Doyle dramatises in ‘His Last Bow.’ Moreover, Conan Doyle argued that keeping the Irish in a state of antagonism against Britain kept them as enemies—enemies, like Altamont, that were potentially all over the earth:

When the Irish race was scattered, it carried this infection of discontent everywhere, and vitiated our relations to some degree with our own colonies and largely with the United States of America. Surely it is an object of wise statesmanship to remove this.¹¹⁶

The Irish spread their dissent like an ‘infection’ to the colonies and in particular to the United States. Thus Conan Doyle’s affirmation of Home Rule was pragmatically anticipating how the Irish problem left the nation open to the possibility of more strife of which foreign powers could take advantage; moreover, turning the Irish into even greater enemies by opposing Home Rule would sow the seeds of greater resentment and the possibility of the dissolution of the Empire. Conan Doyle’s pragmatic approach to Home Rule was, as he stated, from the standpoint of an imperialist who believed in the unity of the British Empire. His divided feelings however are well summed up in a 1912 letter to Roger Casement: ‘Yes, I feel strongly for Ireland &

¹¹⁴ Quoted in *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, p. 579.

¹¹⁵ Catherine Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle: British Imperialism, Irish Nationalism, and the Gothic* (Wesport, Conn, 2002), p. 20. See also Joseph A. Kestner, *Sherlock’s Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle, and Cultural History* (Aldershot, 1997).

¹¹⁶ *What the Irish Protestants Think: Speeches on Home Rule by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, and Other Prominent Irishmen*, p. 9.

hope I may strike some blow in that cause. But I see the British point of view very clearly also. However, from both points of view I am convinced that Home Rule is the solution'.¹¹⁷ Casement's own critical stance towards Britain made his approach to the British Empire quite different to that of Conan Doyle, and led to increasing clashes between the two.

Sir Roger Casement was an Irish-Protestant, who as a British diplomat had exposed human rights abuses in both the Congo and Peru. For his services, Casement was knighted by the British Government. In *The Crime of the Congo*, Conan Doyle referred to Casement as 'a man of the highest character, truthful, unselfish—one who is deeply respected by all who know him'.¹¹⁸ Casement's first-hand experience of colonial crimes led him towards anti-imperialist political stances. Conan Doyle's condemnation of the Congo crimes was in tandem with his defence of British imperialism, and these later opinions would draw him into greater conflict with Casement—in terms of the war, as well as the issue of Home Rule in Ireland.

A disagreement emerged between Casement and Conan Doyle after a comment Conan Doyle made in regards to Ireland at the end of his article 'Great Britain and the Next War' (1913). As mentioned, Conan Doyle presumed that even with Home Rule or Dominion Status, Ireland would remain loyal to Britain as South Africa and Canada had done. This claim was all the more pertinent for Ireland because the British Fleet was Ireland's only shield, and if the navy were to fall at the hands of an invader, so too would Ireland—'for no sword can transfix England without the point reaching Ireland behind her'.¹¹⁹ Realising this would be the case, Conan Doyle felt sure that Ireland would 'throw themselves heartily into the common defence' of the Empire. Casement disagreed and published an article in the July 1913 issue of *The Irish Review*, entitled 'Ireland, Germany and the Next War'. He argued that 'far from sharing the calamities that must necessarily fall on Great Britain from defeat by a Great Power', Ireland might actually emerge 'into a position of much prosperity'.¹²⁰ Casement argued that if Germany defeated Britain, it would be in their best interest to foster a strong and prosperous Ireland to keep Britain in check; to keep Ireland in subjection would just earn the world's ire. Moreover, Casement argued, a free Ireland would break Britain's domination of the sea and thus facilitate greater

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Wynne, p. 22; Letter from Arthur Conan Doyle to Roger Casement, 12 February 1912.

¹¹⁸ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo*, p. 57.

¹¹⁹ Conan Doyle, 'Great Britain and the Next War', p. 236.

¹²⁰ Brian Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London, 1973), pp. 217-18.

European trade. As he was still working for the Foreign Service, Casement did not sign his name beneath such radical pronouncements, employing instead a pseudonym, 'Shan van Vocht'.¹²¹ He resigned from his post later that year.

When Casement was tried for what was interpreted as his role in the Easter Rising, Conan Doyle focused his efforts on preventing Casement from being executed, while still acknowledging that his actions in approaching Germany for arms were treasonous. Despite their subsequent disagreements about the nature of British imperialism, Conan Doyle remained loyal to his friendship with Casement. His privately printed petition to the Prime Minister argued that as with the American Civil War, clemency was needed for the Irish rebels in the same way as for generals of the Confederacy so that the healing of the nation could take precedence over revenge. On the pragmatic level, Doyle argued that Casement's execution would be beneficial to Germany policy, and would be used as a 'weapon against us in the United States and other neutral countries'.¹²² William M. Leary Jr. notes that the 'Dublin executions set off waves of shock and outrage in the United States and prompted mass protest meetings throughout the country'.¹²³ Irish-American agitation had proved a nuisance to Wilson in what was an election year, but ultimately did not prove enough of a pressure to change his official position of staying out of all facets of the European war that did not directly bear on American affairs. Although Wilson refused requests to ask for clemency on behalf of Casement, the American Senate adopted a resolution to plead for Casement's life and Wilson was obliged to pass on the statement to the British government.¹²⁴ These protests came too late; Casement was executed on 3 August 1916.

Conan Doyle's evocation of Casement's 'Abnormal physical and mental state' as a means for explaining his treason illustrated his own attempts at reconciling Casement's guilt with their personal friendship.¹²⁵ He claimed that a 'violent change' in opinion against Britain had come over Casement since his knighthood, and he blamed Casement's 'mental irresponsibility' on the exposure to 'several tropical

¹²¹ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 228.

¹²² Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Petition to the Prime Minister on Behalf of Roger Casement* (1916); one of an edition of twelve copies, British Library, p. 2.

¹²³ Including in San Francisco, Boston, Providence, Buffalo, Wilmington, according to William M. Leary, Jr, 'Woodrow Wilson, Irish Americans, and the Election of 1916', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jun, 1967), 57-72; p. 59.

¹²⁴ Leary Jr (1967), p. 61; see also David M Tucker, 'Some American Responses to the Easter Rebellion, 1916' *The Historian*, v.29:4(1967): pp. 605-19.

¹²⁵ *A Petition to the Prime Minister on Behalf of Roger Casement* (1916), p. 2.

fevers', and the witnessing of 'nerve trying' atrocities in Peru and the Congo. In Conan Doyle's estimation, something had invaded Casement's psyche to taint his loyalties, dilute his reason, and leave him open to committing treason. Although he recognised Casement's crimes, as in other instances when Conan Doyle engaged in negotiations with aspects of his Irish identity he found it difficult to accept the British government's line of argument or their behaviour in dealing with the rebels.

The references to a possible Irish Civil War and Holmes's hidden role as an Irish-German spy in 'His Last Bow' are condensed and suggestive expressions of Conan Doyle's own complex relationship with Ireland, Civil War, and Roger Casement. Crucially however, this story—like Conan Doyle's actions and articles in regards to Casement or Home Rule in Ireland—was independent of government instruction or participation. 'His Last Bow' presents Germans engaging in espionage and planning the war—the combination of Von Bork's safe was the prescient 'August 1914'; this presentation is consistent with Conan Doyle's arguments elsewhere that Germans were not only responsible for the war but for planning it as well. These representations reflect worries over invasion that emerged in a variety of different public and privately created materials, but it is difficult to identify a single source from which these ideas and images originated. Beyond being a representation of the complex relationship between Britain and Ireland, 'His Last Bow' is a triumphant narrative regarding Holmes's defence of Britain. It is difficult to know who this story was aimed at and what effects the story may have had, if any.

Outside of its institutional dimensions, propaganda is a profoundly difficult subject to examine, in terms of interpreting and measuring its impact. The final section will return to a consideration of the issue of atrocity, and how—when drawn into the institutional framework of an official atrocity-report—the government was able to legitimate rumour and thus further to bolster their justifications for going to war. Conan Doyle himself would rely on such information, and atrocity became one of the more predominant discourses of official and non-official war propaganda.

3.0 THE BRYCE REPORT AND ATROCITY PROPAGANDA

In *The Story of British Prisoners*, Arthur Conan Doyle offered accounts of the mistreatment of British prisoners at the hands of their German captors. However, he placed these crimes within the broad spectrum of German crimes including Zeppelin bombing of small defenceless villages; and in his other war writing he discussed

Germany's use of poison gas in warfare (as in his war poem 'Ypres (September 1915)',¹²⁶) and German atrocities in Belgium. He decried 'the foul methods by which the Germans have conducted the war—methods which have come from the rulers, but which have been adopted without any audible protest from the public or the Press [...] [t]hese methods can only be characterized as methods of systematic murder.'¹²⁷ Conan Doyle claimed that he had a responsibility to 'circulate the facts among neutrals as one more proof of the absolute degeneration of the German character'.¹²⁸ He credited his source for these observations and testimonies as the Foreign-Office issued White Paper No.5 (1915). Conan Doyle thus produced a pamphlet that relied on government authentication of German atrocity stories. This pamphlet falls under the broad category of 'atrocity propaganda', as it became known; it would prove an important aspect of British propaganda strategies during the First World War.¹²⁹ This section will examine the power of government atrocity-reports in legitimating rumours and myths regarding the German invasion of Belgium during the war, in more powerful and organised ways than independent non-institutional propaganda was able to achieve.

Stories of brutality exploited by British propaganda were not strictly the result of fabrication: Germany's invasion of Belgium in August of 1914 resulted in the military targeting of civilians, collective punishment for resisting invasion, and widespread destruction of buildings. According to *German Atrocities: A History of Denial*, John Horne and Alan Kramer conclude that the German army killed 6,500 civilians and destroyed 20,000 buildings during the invasion and occupation of Belgium.¹³⁰ The invasion also created a large refugee displacement of 250,000 Belgians who arrived in Britain. Refugees were interviewed and their accounts were compiled under the auspices of the WPB and released as a publication, the *Bryce Report*. They testified to the brutality of the German invasion and propagated stories regarding particularly barbaric acts of German atrocity. This final section will examine how rumours over German atrocities became accepted as fact through the publication and dissemination of government atrocity-reports, as well as the affiliated atrocity pamphlets (such as Conan Doyle's) that would repeat similar information in

¹²⁶ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Ypres (September 1915)', *The Queen's Gift Book* (1915), p. 55.

¹²⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle, Preface and annotation, *The Story of British Prisoners* (1915) (Cambridge, 1999), p. 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹²⁹ See James Read, *Atrocity Propaganda* (New Haven, 1941).

¹³⁰ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001), p. 430.

different formats. One crime in particular has relevance for this chapter's exploration of the distinction between institutional and non-institutional propaganda. One of the *Bryce Report's* infamous images was of German soldiers severing the hands of Belgian children. Certainly, the report was not the origin of such a myth—the story emerged from interviews with Belgian refugees—but the report aided in making it one of the iconic images of the war (see Figure 1).

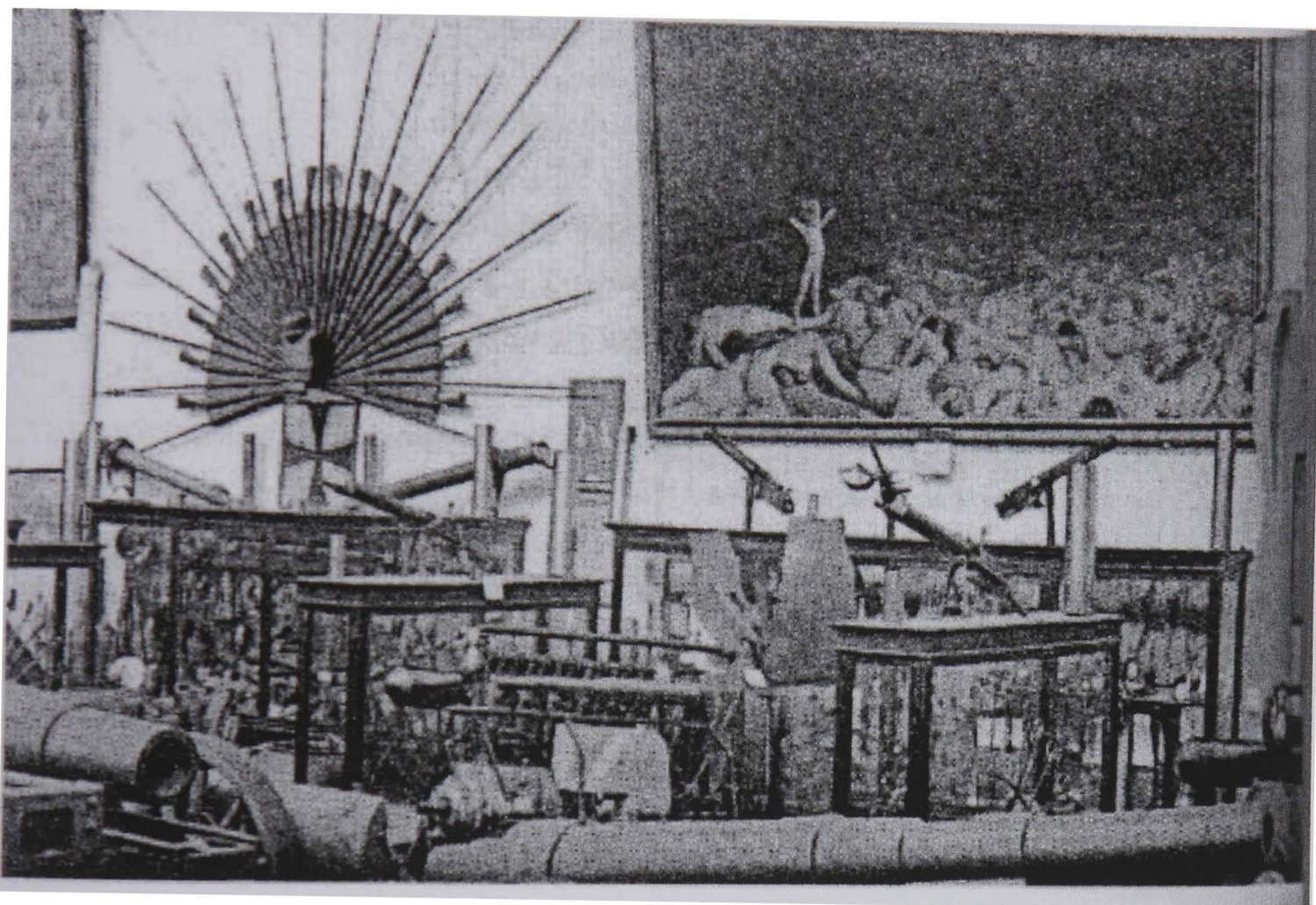


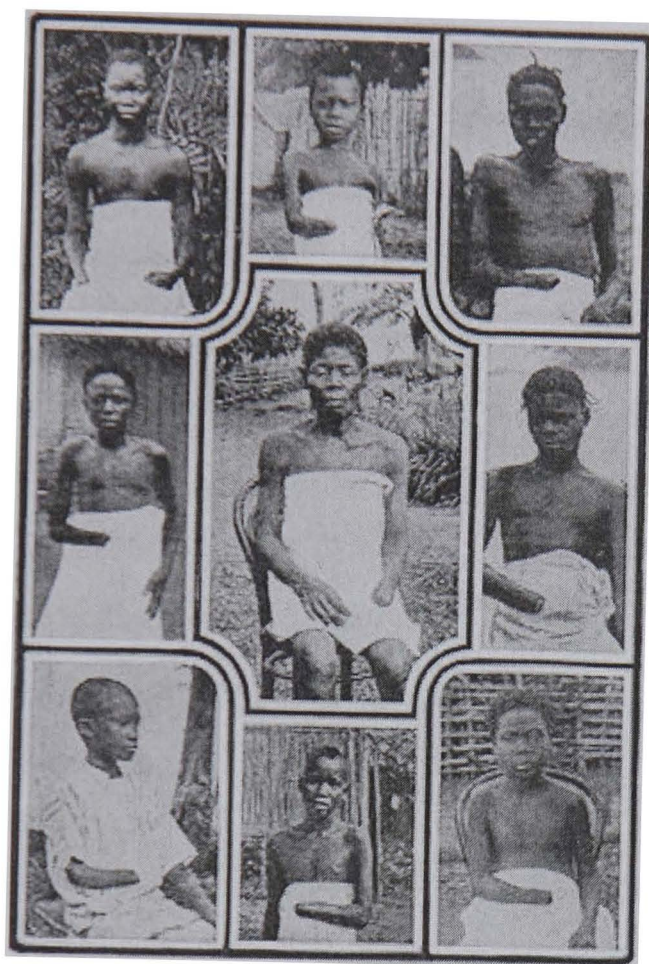
Figure 1: 'The Mutilation of Belgium' Towards the left of the canvas, a handless child reaches out over a sea of corpses. According to Horne and Kramer, the painting hung in the Royal Army Museum, until it was removed in 1930, as a result of German diplomatic pressure.¹³¹

Horne and Kramer demonstrate that the rumour was widespread in France, by making reference (for example) to a number of contemporaneous cartoons. Despite any photographic or physical evidence, this alleged crime—an act that symbolised the depravity of the Germans—became accepted as fact, and this acceptance was somewhat facilitated by the *Bryce Report*. Examining Belgium's own imperial legacy may offer some insight into why this image was so evocative for refugees, as well as

¹³¹ From Horne and Kramer, p. 392; for more examples of the severed hand myth in French cartoons see pp. 210-13.

why the image of severed hands was available as a symbol for Belgians retreating from an invading and occupying force.

When Conan Doyle protested about human-rights abuses by the Belgian government in his *Crime in the Congo*, he provided photographic evidence of Congolese whose hands were severed by Belgian authorities (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2: 'Some of the Victims', Frontispiece
Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Crime of the Congo* (1909)**

The frontispiece to *Crime in the Congo* is a composite photograph of Congolese who had been victims of the official Belgian policy of severing the hands of natives who failed to meet their rubber quotas. According to Adam Hochschild (1998), soldiers would use ammunition while hunting monkeys and then sever the hand of a native in order to demonstrate that ammunition was spent on discipline and not recreation.¹³² As mentioned, activists such as Morel and Casement found the treatment of Congolese natives inhumane and exposed these atrocities. Despite having evidence of these crimes, as well as the support of famous authors such as Mark Twain and Arthur Conan Doyle, it was an arduous task independently (rather than nationally) to place legal or diplomatic pressure on King Leopold of Belgium.

¹³² For more on Belgian Imperial rule of Congo and Morel's campaign, see Hochschild; 'For each cartridge issued to their soldiers they demanded proof that the bullet had been used to kill someone, not 'wasted' in hunting [...] [or] saved for possible use in a mutiny' (p. 165). See also Forbath, p. 374.

As Conan Doyle's protests against Belgian crimes were not part of a government programme but instead acts of independent investigation, they did not benefit from the authority and the distribution networks of the WPB (for example). Conan Doyle's general use of atrocity discourse and his specific production of atrocity propaganda during the First World War differ in their relationship to official government mechanisms. These institutional mechanisms which proved so important in making the *Bryce Report* one of the most powerful of the British justifications for the war, help to explain the way in which atrocity was framed, popularised, and transformed from rumour into reality in the public consciousness during the war.

The rhetoric of German brutality was quickly evoked as a justification for going to war, specifically with regards to German atrocities in its African colonies (examples of German barbarism, in particular, include the German suppression of the Herero Tribe Rising in 1904) as well as in Belgium and France.¹³³ *Germany's War Mania: The German Gospel of Blood and Iron* (1914) was a WPB collection of German writing that illustrated the German passion for violence and war. In the preface, Lord Bryce parodied the German approach to imperialism:

If a State has valuable minerals [...] or an abundance of water power [...] or if it hold the mouth of a navigable river [...] the great State may conquer and annex that small State as soon as it finds that it needs the minerals or the water power, or the river mouth [...]. It has the Power, and Power gives Right. The interests, the sentiments the patriotism and love of independence of the small people go for nothing.¹³⁴

Lord Bryce, as we shall investigate in this section, would lend his name to the war's most important atrocity report. Bryce condemned the naked aggression of the Germans and their belief in the principle that 'Power gives Right' over the sovereignty and resources of another nation. *Germany's War Mania* was distributed by the WPB as a primer for understanding the aggressive and expansionist nature of the German imperial war-machine, and the ethical necessity of bringing that machine to a halt.

With the emphasis of government discourse on the violent and expansionist nature of the Germans, Conan Doyle also elevated his language of the threat of

¹³³ For more on Germany's repression of their African colonies, see Isabel Hull's *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, 2005).

¹³⁴ *Germany's War Mania (The German Gospel of Blood and Iron)* (London, 1914), p11.

incipient violence. In terms of retribution, Conan Doyle advocated policies of revenge and reprisal: he argued that for every Zeppelin attack on England, the British should raid three German towns with planes ('Reprisal', *The Times*, 15 October 1918); he advocated placing German officers, or alternatively entire hulls full of German prisoners, on ships to prevent submarine attacks ('Questions to be Answered', *The Times*, 16 March 1918). Conan Doyle's advocacy of using prisoners as hostages came into direct conflict with his charges against the German military for its treatment of British prisoners a few years earlier in *The Story of British Prisoners* (1915): 'But how can we kick, beat, freeze or starve innocent men who are in our power because our own men have been kicked beaten, frozen and starved! It is not possible.'¹³⁵ He contended that the Germans treated British prisoners with the same brutality as it employed when invading Belgium.

Conan Doyle argued that their sense of fair-play had led the British to dismiss lingering grudges against old adversaries such as the Boers. However, in the case of the Germans and the present conflict, he advocated making an exception: never 'again should our students of music flock to Dresden' or our students of art to Leipzig or our invalids to their spas.¹³⁶ Because of their 'foul methods' in conducting the war, British friendship with Germany had been irrevocably demolished. In addition to their Zeppelin and submarine raids, Conan Doyle argued, the Germans had been keeping food from British soldiers, providing them with inadequate beds, and committing torture upon their bodies. He refrained from suggesting proportional reprisals in this pamphlet—those would only emerge, as mentioned, as the war wore on.¹³⁷

In addition to making these crimes known to neutral countries, Conan Doyle insisted that the truth of German behaviour be made known to British soldiers: 'so that the torture of their comrades may warm their hearts in the day of battle, and teach them that it is better to die on the field than fall into the cruel hands of German Gaolers'.¹³⁸ Conan Doyle may have failed to realise that his suggestion that it may be better to die in battle than to become prisoners at the hands of the Germans might not have been as rousing a battle cry for young soldiers going into battle as he thought. Elevating German brutality to a monstrous level may have appealed to the sentiments

¹³⁵ *The Story of British Prisoners*, p. 4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5.

of neutral countries considering entering the war; but Conan Doyle may not have offered the common soldier a reason to be heartened, let alone to fight to the death.

Conan Doyle argued that failing to suppress this attitude of violence ‘would mark a retrogression of the human race’. In order to rouse his audience’s sense of outrage, he continued to appeal to examples of sensational acts of violence. In a letter to *The Times* of 26 December 1917 he defended his focus on the issue of atrocities and his incitements designed to inspire anger in British society: ‘Why should we recall these incidents? It is because Hate has its uses in war, as the Germans have long discovered. It steels the mind and sets the resolution as no other emotion can do.’ For Conan Doyle, the Germans were not observing the laws of chivalry, and the British needed to employ different methods to scare the public into focusing on what needed to be done—the alternative, as the atrocities themselves attested to, was unacceptable. He went on to suggest that this kind of hate would be especially effective for munitions workers who ‘have many small vexations to endure’ and whose nerves ‘get sadly frayed’. He also recommended, in *The Times* on 16 January 1918, that pictures of atrocities should be hung in shops and widely distributed, especially in areas with waning support for the war: ‘in the Sinn Fein districts of Ireland, and in the hot beds of socialism and pacifism in England and Scotland—the facts should also be put in a ‘red-hot’ fashion and scattered throughout French Canada also’. Wherever there was dissent against the war, he recommended that visual evidence be provided as proof of German atrocities—as if to underline that this war was being fought against savages who engaged in the worst forms of atrocities. These evaluations were bolstered by atrocity rumours as well as by official reports detailing German atrocities.

In another letter to *The Times* (‘Outrage of the Hospitals’, *Times*, 27 May 1918) Conan Doyle argued that out of vengeance for the shooting of Edith Cavell ‘we should at once have shot our three leading prisoners’. Edith Cavell was an English nurse who was executed in German-occupied Belgium in 1915 for aiding the escape of injured Allied prisoners. Cavell was a martyr in British propaganda literature and continues to endure as a symbol of tragedy in the war. However, the reason that her death was really a tragedy—because she was an innocent humanitarian worker—

implies a standard that the British failed to apply universally.¹³⁹ Conan Doyle typically failed to echo the outrage he had expressed over the death of Edith Cavell when it came to the Allied execution of a German nurse for helping German soldiers escape. Harold Lasswell argues that this lack of reciprocity was an important aspect of the rhetoric of propaganda.

In British propaganda, the death of Edith Cavell reaffirmed the aggression of the Germans and the passive innocence of the Allies. However, as Nicoletta Gullace has argued, it is precisely the sexualised nature of the war crimes such as those committed against women that become sensationalised by government propaganda so as to justify the war.¹⁴⁰ Gullace argues that propaganda literature during the war framed Germany's invasion as the rape of Belgium; moreover, she claims that '[i]n the bureaucratic production of truth, women acted as narrative objects while the expertise of men substituted for any physical substantiation of the facts. The result was an official discourse at once lascivious, voyeuristic, and irrefutable.'¹⁴¹ We can witness the way Cavell herself was recruited as a symbol of innocence—as well as a speaking object defiled by savagery—in the cartoon 'Thrown to the Swine: The Martyred Nurse' by Louis Raemaekers (Figure 3). German soldiers are transformed into pigs that surround the dead Cavell as if she were a trough—some seem to be drinking from the blood that comes from her body, others stare hungrily from above her.

¹³⁹ 'Shortly after the Allies had created a tremendous uproar about the executions of Nurse Cavell, the French executed two German nurses under substantially the same circumstances. Not a murmur in the German Press. The American saw the official shortly afterwords and asked—

Why don't you do something to counteract the British propaganda in America?

Why, what do you mean?

Raise the devil about those nurses the French shot the other day.

What? Protest? The French had a perfect right to shoot them!

Which, of course, was probably true, but utterly irrelevant to propaganda. A Prussian officer simply could not look at the situation with the naïve indignation of an untutored civilian.' (Lasswell, pp. 32-33).

¹⁴⁰ Nicoletta Gullace, 'Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102:3(Jun, 1997), 714-47. For a more detailed discussion see her *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (London, 2002), Chapter One, 'The Rape of Belgium and the Wartime Imagination'; and Chapter Two, 'The Making of Tommy Atkins: Masculinity, Propaganda, and the Triumph of Family Values'.

¹⁴¹ Gullace (2002), p. 31.



Figure 3: Louis Raemaekers, ‘Thrown to the Swine: The Martyred Nurse’

The *Bryce Report* exemplifies the use of atrocities—in particular the use of the bodies of women and children as the site of conflict itself—to justify British involvement in the war,. Assembled from more than 1,200 depositions from Belgian refugees, the *Bryce Report* was an enormously popular publication by the War Propaganda Bureau that detailed German outrages in 38 locations in Belgium.¹⁴² Coincidentally, it was released the same week as the German sinking of the passenger boat, the *Lusitania*. Such was the effect of the report, Trevor Wilson argues, that in ‘some quarters of the USA, even the American dead of the *Lusitania* could not match the supposed Belgian victims of sexual outrage’.¹⁴³ Thus Germany’s barbarism on the sea became twined with its savagery against Belgians, particularly the violation of women and (as shall be discussed) the mutilation of children. A cartoon from the *New York Tribune* exemplifies the link between atrocity and sexual crime: America, personified as a woman, is grief-stricken by the news of the *Lusitania*; another woman, the personification of Belgium, comforts her: ‘They only drowned your women’ (Figure 4).¹⁴⁴ Conan Doyle was one amongst many who used the authority of atrocity reports to condemn German behaviour in the war.

¹⁴² Horne and Kramer, p. 232.

¹⁴³ Trevor Wilson, ‘Lord Bryce’s Investigations into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium, 1914-15’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 14.3 (July 1979), p. 380.

¹⁴⁴ From Georges Sylvester Viereck, *Spreading Germs of Hate* (New York, 1930), p. 200.

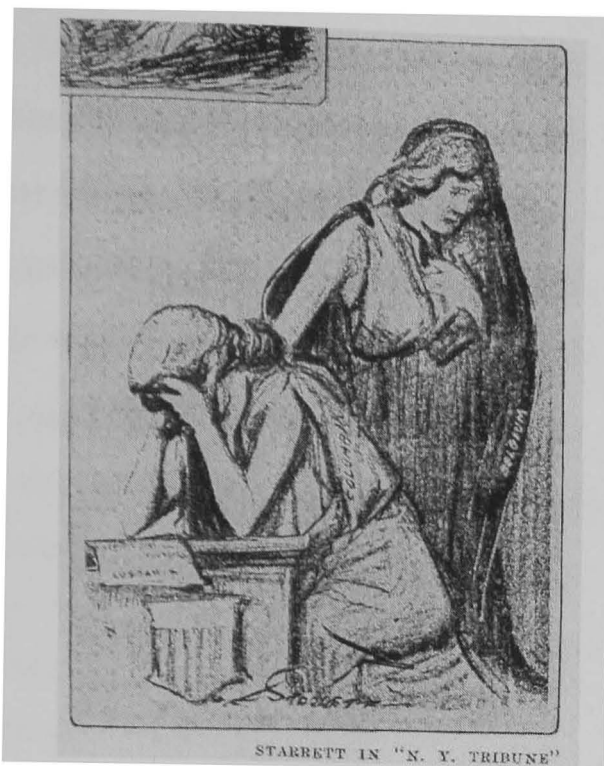


Figure 4: 'They only drowned your women'

According to a letter of 7 June 1915 letter from Masterman to Bryce, the report was phenomenally popular in America: it had quelled scepticism over British involvement in the war by making people aware of the violence of Germany's invasion of Belgium:

Your report has swept America. As you probably know even the most sceptical declare themselves converted, just because it is signed by you! It was a great idea of the P.M.'s to ask you to do this piece of work, which will stand as a historic document—hideous enough, God knows [...] [b]ut it was *true*—the world must know it; that it may *never* occur again.¹⁴⁵

Masterman notes not only that the Prime Minister requested that Bryce head the enquiry into atrocities, but also that whilst the crimes—'hideous enough'—were true and not fabricated, the crucial thing was that 'even the most sceptical declare themselves converted' because Bryce had lent his prestige and name to the report. Gilbert Parker was particularly amazed at the public's appetite for atrocity propaganda, commenting in 1916 on the popularity of these stories: 'It is remarkable to note how instant is the response in the United States to every fresh German atrocity [...] [i]t might have been expected [...] [that] German atrocities would have by this

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Messinger, p. 74.

time become somewhat stale. But this is not the case. There seems to be no more certain appeal to the American public than through the medium of such atrocities.’¹⁴⁶

Although it is inaccurate to depict the *Bryce Report* as being dominated by images of sexual violence, when these acts did appear they were striking in their graphic brutality. In the words of the report, these accounts demonstrated perverted forms of sexual instinct, coupling killing with sex:

About 24 soldiers came towards [ten women and some children] and one of the soldiers had undone his trousers, and exposed his private parts. He approached one of the women, intending to violate her and she pushed him away. He at once struck the woman in the breast with a bayonet [...] some of the men’s comrades laughed as he showed them the bayonet dripping with blood.¹⁴⁷

The sexual aggression of this scene becomes consummated by the knife penetrating the woman’s breast; however, the sexual pleasure of the soldier and his comrades seems to emerge from domination, violence, and of observing the blood on the knife. A similar scene of perverted sexuality can be observed, once again, from the visual imagination of Louis Raemaekers. In ‘The Seduction’ (see Figure 5), a German soldier suggestively strokes the face of a woman on her knees chained to a post while simultaneously aiming a gun at her head—the woman is unable to make a sound as a handkerchief is wrapped around her mouth, but crucially, she is able to witness the scene through her uncovered eyes. Here also, the soldier derives pleasure from watching the woman being subjected to his violent and frightful erotic touch.

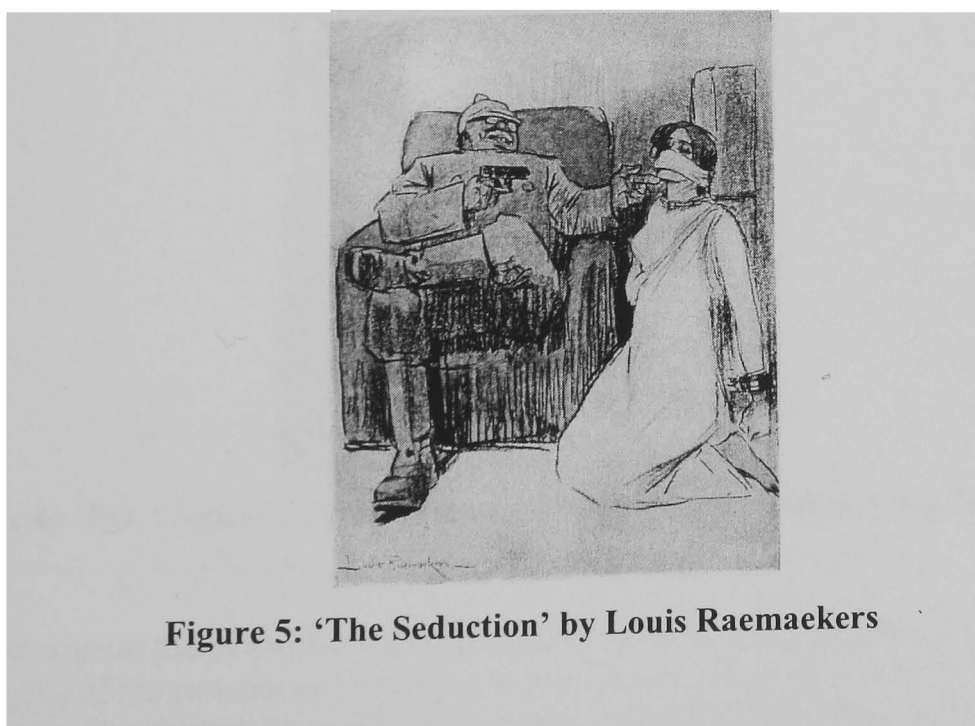


Figure 5: ‘The Seduction’ by Louis Raemaekers

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Horace Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign Against American Neutrality, 1914-17* (Washington, 1968), p. 243.

¹⁴⁷ *Bryce Report Appendix*, p. 28.

German sadism would reach its logical limits in these accounts wherein singing German officers would unleash sudden bursts of sadistic violence:

One day when the Germans were not actually bombarding the town I left my house [...] I saw eight German soldiers, and they were drunk. They were singing and making a lot of noise and dancing about. As the German soldiers came along the street I saw a small child [...] about two years of age [...]. The soldiers were walking in twos. The first line of two passed the child; one of the second line, the man on the left, stepped aside and *drove his bayonet with both hands into the child's stomach lifting the child into the air on his bayonet and carrying it away on his bayonet, he and his comrades still singing.* The child screamed when the soldier struck it with his bayonet, but not afterwards.¹⁴⁸

According to this account, German soldiers have become sufficiently dehumanised to bayonet a child and carry its corpse on their march, singing the whole time. Such images reinforced the savagery and barbarity of the German army and its occupation. These images of violence would become further popularised in books such as *German Atrocities: A Record of Shameless Deeds* (1915) by William Le Queux, *Crimes of Germany* (1917) by Theodore Cook, and the cartoons of Edmund Sullivan (see Figure 6) and Louis Raemaekers.¹⁴⁹



Figure 6: 'The Gentle German', Edmund Sullivan, from *Kaiser's Garland* (1915)

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 41

¹⁴⁹ In addition to severed hands and feet and asphyxiated families, Cook recalls a particularly brutal account: 'From one of the cottages at Micheroux a woman came out with a baby in her arms, and a German soldier snatched it from her and dashed it to the ground, killing it then and there.' Le Queux recounted stories of brutalities against the dead as well as violence and rape to women: 'aged villagers in many places on the Franco-German Frontier were hanged to trees; others after being killed, had their eyes gauged out'; a soldier 'drew his bayonet and plunged it into the poor girl's breast' after she was 'subjected to ill-usage'. Theodore Cook, *Crimes of Germany* (London, 1917), p. 15; William Le Queux, *German Atrocities: A Record of Shameless Deeds* (London, 1914), pp. 14, 20.

These images did not emerge from official government-propaganda; instead, they circulated as rumour and legend. Although the government could not control the flow of these images, they could lend the wide variety of atrocity stories legitimacy. Further, as Gullace has argued, the government actively appropriated the language of sexual violation as a means of rallying support for war.

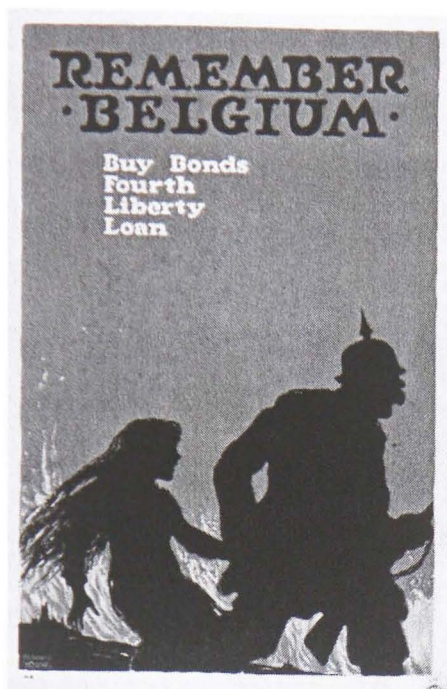


Figure 7: Ellsworth Young, 'Remember Belgium : Buy Bonds, Fourth Liberty Loan'

The American poster for Liberty Bonds 'Remember Belgium', is an example of this phenomenon. The image is of a German soldier pulling a long-haired girl by the hand in silhouette (Figure 7); the image links German violence upon women—with the implication of a sexual violation—to the buying of bonds in order to finance the war. The message inherent in this poster is that buying bonds will ensure that this kind of crime will not happen again and perhaps will be avenged. As with 'Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?', posters and other propaganda materials appealed to masculine narratives of defending the family, particularly from sexual violation. Regardless of whether the crime actually occurred or not, the government poster couples atrocity and military fund raising. Such violent and sexualised cartoons were the signature of the Dutch cartoonist Louis Raemaekers. Early in the war, the WPB noticed his work, brought him to England, and commissioned work that then became widely distributed (Figure 8). Home and Kramer argue that Raemaekers only became truly popular once the WPB distributed his work through 'books, lanternslides, millions of postcards, and syndication in the world's

newspapers, especially the USA'.¹⁵⁰ Raemaekers made visible some of the worst alleged atrocities—however grotesque.



Figure 8: Raemaekers cartoon. ‘A FACT: this brutalization by Major Tille of the German army on a small boy of Maastricht was vouched for by an eye-witness’

The second part of the *Bryce Report* grouped crimes into typologies. From this section there emerged the striking image of Germans severing children’s hands:

A third form of mutilation, the cutting of one or both hands, is frequently said to have taken place. In some cases where this form of mutilation is alleged to have occurred it may be the consequence of a cavalry charge up a village street, hacking and slashing at everything in the way; in others the victim may possibly have held a weapon, in others the motive may have been the theft of rings.

The language of the report is careful to offer different explanations for this mutilation: the reckless use of swords in cavalry charges, self-defence, or for looting jewellery. Although these explanations sound neutral, their attempt at rationalising the crimes underlines the brutality all the more. Why, for example, could soldiers not remove the rings instead of severing limbs? Horne and Kramer illustrate how the image of severed limbs was further elevated as criminal because it was children who were the victims of this senseless violence; the image of Belgian children with severed hands became so prevalent, they argue, that these images became in turn part of the popular

¹⁵⁰ As his were being published internationally, Horne and Kramer note that Raemaekers was nearly ‘prosecuted by the government for jeopardizing Dutch neutrality’. Impressed by his work, the WPB invited him to London and hired him (Horne and Kramer, p. 297).

imagery of the war, particularly in paintings and cartoons.¹⁵¹ However, apart from the testimony of traumatised Belgian refugees, no one could confirm that this particular crime had actually occurred by producing photographic evidence or any actual children who had suffered this injury. In *Atrocity Propaganda* (1941), James Read quotes from William G. Shepherd, a US press correspondent:

I was in Belgium when the first atrocity stories went out. I hunted and hunted for atrocities during the first days of the atrocity scare. I couldn't find atrocities. I couldn't find people who had seen them. I travelled on trains with Belgians who had fled from the German lines and I spent much time among Belgian refugees. I offered sums of money for photographs of children whose hands had been cut off or who had been wounded or injured in other ways. I never found a first-hand Belgian atrocity story; and when I ran down second-hand stories they all petered out.¹⁵²

When Shepherd tried to substantiate some of the more horrific rumours of Germany's invasion of Belgium, such as those of the severed hands, he failed to uncover any evidence. As rumours, it is particularly difficult to speculate concerning the origins of this image; however, it was one that was widely associated with Belgium's own imperial past in the Congo. The image of the severed hand in the Congo inspired shocked, and moved some (such as Conan Doyle, Morel and Casement) to respond out of a sense of outrage—an outrage that Conan Doyle transferred to the Germans during the war.

Conan Doyle's efforts against Belgian conduct in the Congo inspired warnings from that his attitude might drive Belgium into closer allegiance with Germany and thus further destabilise Europe.¹⁵³ Without government support, Morel, Casement, and Conan Doyle, amongst others, found it difficult to popularise stories of Belgian crimes in the Congo, let alone stop them. In *German Atrocities*, Horne and Kramer suggest the connection between the crimes in the Congo and the myth of the severed hands during the war; however, they focus solely on *cartoon* evidence for their visual discussion, ignoring the famous composite photograph of handless Congolese distributed by the Congo Reform Association, and reprinted not only in Conan Doyle's book, but in both Twain's book and Morel's own writing as well. Still, these

¹⁵¹ Horne and Kramer, see chapter ten.

¹⁵² William G. Shepherd, 'The Fee Lance and the Faker', *Everybody's Magazine*, XXXCI (March 1917), quoted in Read, p. 30.

¹⁵³ Letter from H. A. Gwynne to Conan Doyle, 4 October 1909, Gwynne Papers, Box 18, Bodleian Library, quoted in 'Afterword', *To Arms!*, p. 35.

crimes were well known, and *pace* Horne and Kramer, not just in cartoon representations. It seems that when fleeing from invading armies, the imaginations of Belgian refugees sought the language to describe the horrors that they had to endure. Amongst the images of violence and horror that came to mind—and would subsequently become part of the popular imagination through rumours—was the same crime that their own King had inflicted on the Congolese. They found themselves repeating the traumas and relocating the image of severed hands from the Congo to Belgium.

When placed in the European context, these same crimes were an important part of the justification for British involvement in the war. Hochschild argues that in an instant, Belgium's colonial past—a colonial past that Conan Doyle actively protested against—evaporated, and its inhabitants were transformed into the 'brave little Belgians' facing German invasion.¹⁵⁴ Conan Doyle was consistent in his denouncing of what he judged to be the brutalities of the Belgian imperial authorities in one instance, and of the German army in another. But unlike either Morel or Casement, Conan Doyle did not scrutinise the conduct of Britain in its colonies. Morel complained that secret diplomacy between France and Britain regarding their respective colonies was drawing Europe into the war; in contrast, Conan Doyle focused on German aggression as the sole cause of the war. While he might have supported calls for Home Rule in Ireland, Conan Doyle did not acknowledge that the British might have committed crimes in Ireland that were comparable (if not in scale, in kind) to the colonial crimes of the Belgians—or that so it may have seemed for Casement and others who demanded Home Rule. While he admired Casement and joined in his protests against Belgian crimes in Congo, on Casement's other campaigns (such as that against the crimes of British rubber companies in Peru) he did not lend his support. Much like Kipling, Conan Doyle's enthusiasm for the British Empire kept him from denouncing what might have been perceived as its excesses in conduct. In some already mentioned cases, such as the Boer War, Conan Doyle went so far as to defend Britain against charges of brutality. Conan Doyle's denouncing of the colonial crimes of other European nations such as Belgium and Germany, whilst defending the British Empire from similar charges, amounts less to a contradiction than to a position of British exceptionalism.

¹⁵⁴ Hochschild, p. 296.

The British Empire, by Doyle's definition, was a civilising force in the world, whereas the activities of official enemies amounted to overt aggression; and sometimes, as in the case of the Germans, savagery. These forces of violence and barbarism were always on the frontier for Conan Doyle, threatening Britain with invasion and contagion. The British Empire, on the other hand, spread civilisation and the rule of law. This attitude was exemplified by Winston Churchill, who championed 'the reputation of the British Empire as a valiant and benignant force in the history of mankind' claiming that 'what is called colonialism' was indeed 'bringing forward backward races and opening up the jungles'.¹⁵⁵ Commenting on the British legacy Churchill would also note that 'I was brought up to feel proud of much that we had done'.¹⁵⁶ As Conan Doyle declared in 'A Hymn of Empire', England was a source—'the acorn isle from which the great / Imperial oak has sprung'—and that all the countries were protected and united under Empire's shield:

From the palm to the pine,
From the snow to the line,
Brothers together
And children of Thee.

Conan Doyle's belief in the essential humanity of the British Empire gave him the clarity to condemn the crimes of his enemies all the more, whilst ignoring how his own empire might be replicating comparable crimes.

The government may not have invented these atrocity stories, but it utilised them as justification for the war, by circulating images and stories and contributing to making them popular. What is particularly worth noting is how these images were sent to American audiences and developed into myths about the savagery of the Germans—myths the Americans themselves propagated when they wanted to enter the war. The American poster, 'They Mutilate' (see Figure 9), is a tribute to German 'Kultur'—the statue of a handless child in front of a town on fire presenting an image that is supposed to encourage men to enlist 'For Humanity's Sake.' This recruitment poster explicitly evokes the soldier's sense of outrage at crimes humanity should not tolerate. Considering the imperial origins of the image of severed hands and the way the image was popularised and circulated does not offer definitive insight into the way rumour itself passes from person to person; but it does help us to understand how governments define and frame atrocity, and then use those definitions (selectively) to

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Mark Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power* (London, 1995), p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 10.

further its goals of justifying the war to its own citizens as well as to neutrals abroad. As Gullace argued, however atrocity stories were popularly created and distributed, their 'widespread credibility was established only through the painstaking efforts of official organizations.'¹⁵⁷ It is this institutional framing that proves crucial to understanding the influence of British propaganda during the First World War.



Figure 9: 'They Mutilate'

4.0 CONCLUSION

Conan Doyle contributed to the war effort in Britain in a variety of ways, including volunteering for a civilian reserve, researching a history of battles, issuing recruitment pamphlets, and bringing his most popular creation Sherlock Holmes out of retirement to fight against German spies. As with the Boer War, Conan Doyle felt a responsibility to defend the unity of the British Empire. In that last conflict, the government had no formal propaganda ministry, thus Conan Doyle's writings in favour of the Boer War (and in defence of the conduct in fighting the war) came entirely from his sense of duty and justice. Furthermore, in other political matters

¹⁵⁷ Gullace (2002), p. 27. To maintain this legitimacy, the government also had to track down stories that could be proved false. Gullace recounts an incident when the Press Bureau Official E. T. Cook wrote to a clergyman accused of spreading false atrocity stories from the pulpit: 'The dissemination of unauthenticated charges which break down under enquiry is, apart from other considerations, undesirable in the national interest, as tending to weaken the force of much weighty material which exists on the subject of misconduct of the enemy' (p.26).

Conan Doyle was not afraid to speak his mind and dissent from official government policy, as in the case of the issues of Home Rule in Ireland or King Leopold's atrocities in the Congo. Had there not been an official propaganda ministry in Britain during the First World War, it is entirely conceivable that Conan Doyle would have produced the same literary materials. This speculation makes distinguishing between Conan Doyle's official and unofficial propaganda troublesome. However, despite these seemingly indistinct demarcations, this chapter has insisted on maintaining a formal distinction between Conan Doyle's official, institutional propaganda and the materials he produced independently from governmental publication and distribution systems in support for the war. The final section of this chapter emphasised the particular institutional powers—through the government—for marginalising dissent (as well as popularising and legitimating claims of atrocity) as a means for justifying the war.

The WPB was able to publish and distribute books on a scope that independent dissenters could never have hoped to achieve. Furthermore, through governmental regulations on speech (such as DORA), critics of the war such as Morel and Russell had to negotiate the threat of imprisonment in a way that was not a concern for WPB authors. In terms of popularising atrocity stories, the myth of the severed hand demonstrates the power of institutional legitimacy. In the case of protestations over Belgian brutalities towards the Congolese, Morel, Casement and Conan Doyle produced materials (including photographs) of these crimes. These efforts did not enjoy the wide dissemination and distribution afforded to the descriptions of real and mythical German crimes against Belgians during the First World War. The WPB commissioned artists, in particular, to make these mythical atrocities visible. The government thus helped legitimate atrocity claims by lending its authority to the *Bryce Report* amongst a wide variety of other materials.

However, it is also important to recognise that government propaganda did not completely control perceptions or actions, nor can it account for all the beliefs and fears that people had during the war. Conan Doyle's invasion fears were not born from government discourse, for example, but instead were consistent thematically with much of his pre-war writing. The remarkable predominance of rumour during the war lends strength to the suggestion that propaganda does not function hierarchically, from the state downwards, but instead from stories and legends that are dispersed through many vectors in any-given society.

As one of the founders of the *Annales* School of history, Marc Bloch was interested in how false rumours became real for individuals. Bloch argued that German soldiers in Belgium were over-excited by suddenly appropriating the terrifying position of an occupying army, and that they were haunted by rumours of the violence of *francs-tireurs* from the Franco-Prussian War (1870). During the war, un-uniformed French guerrilla fighters resisted German invasion. Fear of the *francs-tireurs* can be demonstrated in a letter quoted by Horne and Kramer from General Hans von Kretschman to his wife from 1870:

In International law he only has the right to be treated according to the customs of war who acts according to the customs of war. If I hide behind a tree, in civilian clothing, shoot dead an officer passing by, hide the shotgun, and then come out of the woods as if nothing had happened, then I am no soldier, but a murderer. The francs-tireurs are associations of men not in uniform, who have come together on their own account to organize treacherous murder.¹⁵⁸

Without uniforms, the *francs-tireurs* could not be identified as the enemy—this gave the impression that the enemy was everywhere at all times. Legends emerged of French civilians killing German soldiers in the middle of the night while they billeted in their homes. Soldiers made themselves visible, Kretschman noted to his wife; *francs-tireurs*, on the other hand, were murderers who blended into the crowd alongside civilians. According to Bloch, German soldiers invading Belgium in 1914 were well-versed in these stories:

ces hommes ont été nourris de récits relatifs à la guerre de 1870 ; dès leur enfance on leur a rebattu les oreilles des atroces exploits prêtés aux francs-tireurs français; ces contes ont été répandus par le roman et par l'image; des ouvrages militaires leur ont conféré une sorte de garantie officielle; plus d'un manuel que les gradés ont dans leur sac enseigne comment on doit se conduire envers les civils rebelles; c'est donc qu'il y en aura.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Horne and Kramer, p. 144.

¹⁵⁹ 'Now these men had been fed on recent stories of 1870; from their childhood one had beaten their ears with the atrocious exploits attributed to the French irregular soldiers; these stories had been spread by the novel and the image; military work had given them a sort of official guarantee; more than one manual that the officers have in their sacks teaches how one should behave towards civil rebels; that's what happens.' Marc Bloch, 'Réflexions d'un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre'. *Écrits de Guerre 1914-1918* (Paris, 1997), p. 178.

Fed on this steady stream of stories, these exhausted soldiers invaded Belgium and met Belgian resistance. In this state of anxiety during invasion, Bloch argued, memories and literary motifs would dominate the imagination—‘histoires de trahisons, d’empoisonnements, de mutilations, de femmes crevant les yeux des guerriers blessés, que chantaient jadis aèdes et trouvères, que popularisent aujourd’hui le feuilleton et le cinéma.’¹⁶⁰ For Bloch, the imagination easily generated tales of betrayals, poisonings, mutilations, and women gouging out the eyes of wounded warriors—images themselves made popular in cinemas and sensational newspapers. This fear led German soldiers to take quick reprisals against civilians. These reprisals in turn created new sets of myths, including stories about severed hands and children stuck on bayonets. Bloch was responding to—and seeking to complicate—arguments put forward by a Belgian sociologist, Fernand van Langenhove. Less interested in the psychological state of German soldiers committing atrocities, van Langenhove examined how government manuals and educational institutions attempted to give legitimacy to the more brutal myths of the *francs-tireurs*. In *The Growth of Legend* (1916), van Langenhove argued that the literary motifs of the *francs-tireurs* history constituted something more advanced than rumour; he elevated them to the status of a cycle of legends perpetuated by the German military, educational elite, and the media.¹⁶¹

The WPB not only favoured van Langenhove’s argument, but according to the *Wellington House Schedule* of the literature produced, printed, translated and distributed by the WPB, *The Growth of a Legend* is listed as Item #187.¹⁶² The WPB translated and helped to popularise van Langenhove’s thesis as a way of identifying the blame for German atrocities with the Junker military class. Moreover, WPB cartoonists such as Raemaekers mocked the explanation of German military conduct in Belgium as a response to the terrors experienced by soldiers in the Franco-Prussian War. In ‘They shot her as a Francs-Tireur’, a man cradles the small coffin of a child as a gravedigger reaches out to receive it. Raemaekers juxtaposes the brutality of the German war crimes, particularly its crimes against children, next to the avowed claims concerning the memory of *francs-tireurs*. The strength of using atrocity propaganda in a variety of different guises—from cartoons to sociological studies to

¹⁶⁰ ‘[T]he story of treasons, poisonings, mutilations, women tearing out the eyes of wounded soldiers, songs of past times that today are popularised in the journal and the cinema.’ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Fernand Van Langenhove, *The Growth of a Legend*. (London, 1916), p. 3.

¹⁶² *Schedule of Wellington House Literature*, Imperial War Museum 80/311, p. 17.

atrocities reports—was that it made a mockery of any explanatory principles; atrocity propaganda focused the reader into a sense of outrage and justification for revenge.



Figure 10: Raemaekers cartoon. Caption: ‘They shot her as a Franc-Tireur’

The government could not over-determine the response to its materials; and we cannot understand all the rumours and mythologies of the war by seeking their origins in governmental materials. However, the government did play a crucial role in regulating speech, bounding debate, legitimating rumour, and popularising particular arguments justifying the war, such as those surrounding atrocity. These functions could not, however, exhaust the efforts of any given writer, as this chapter has illustrated was the case with Conan Doyle. Despite having his relationship with government propaganda formalised during the war, he maintained independent opinions (particularly with regard to the Easter Rising); and he was able to express them in journalism, fiction, and poetry in ways that did not always correspond with official propaganda discourse. However independent, for the most part Conan Doyle’s writing tended to remain within the parameters set by official government justifications for the war.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘OUR BUSINESS IS TO KILL IDEAS’:

WELLS, THE WAR OF IDEAS, AND THE WORLD STATE

Our enemy is not afraid of our guns or shells, but the one thing he is afraid of is the truth and the business of the Ministry of Information is to disseminate the truth.

Robert Donald

Quoted in the *Daily Mail* 10 April 1918

I shall keep on saying and writing just exactly what I am moved to say and write about our side or any side, in the dismal world situation, until I am forcibly stopped. If I lend myself to any propaganda, then by all my standards I shall be damned. And I will be damned if I lend myself to any propaganda.¹

H. G. Wells

Travels of a Republican In Search of Hot Water (1939)

During the Second World War, H. G. Wells reflected that he did not want to be a propagandist for the government, claiming his right to believe whatever he wanted, and rejecting the idea of creating literary works under instruction. Writing propaganda ‘damned’ his standards, and he promised that he would ‘be damned’ if he participated in producing propaganda. Wells had maintained similar beliefs during the First World War, despite working for the Ministry of Information as a Director of Enemy Propaganda. Recalling his experiences twenty years later, Wells explained his ambivalence to propaganda:

The work I did was done in absolute good faith, and the gist of the business is that we, who lent ourselves to propaganda, were made fools of and ultimately let down by the traditional tricks of the foreign office [...]. We were kept in the dark about all sorts of secret entanglements to which these gentry had committed the country, and we were allowed to hold out hopes to the German people of a liberal post-war settlement our masters had no intention of making. We were tricked, and through us the German liberals were cheated.²

Wells had worked in ‘good faith’ for the government and with a great deal of optimism about the potential for propaganda to initiate change. In fact, before his

¹ H. G. Wells, ‘The Honour and Dignity of the Free Mind’ (Harmondsworth, 1939), p. 144.

² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

involvement with official government propaganda, Wells had, of his own accord, written positively about the necessity of using propaganda as both a weapon to destroy the ideas of militarism, and as a tool to hasten the end of war as we know it. While his views on propaganda changed during the First World War, working for the government left Wells feeling personally betrayed, and with a lasting negative impression of propaganda more generally.

As this chapter elaborates, Wells was closely associated with later strategic developments in British propaganda. In May of 1918, Lord Northcliffe invited H. G. Wells to take on the responsibility of creating propaganda literature directed at the Germans. The restructuring of government propaganda offices had led to the establishment of the Department of Information in February of 1917. In 1918 Lord Beaverbrooke, the newspaper magnate, took over the Department, in which he administered three offices: the Department of Publication (formerly the WPB), still headed by CFG Masterman; the Department of Intelligence, run by the spy novelist John Buchan (*The Thirty Nine Steps* (1915) and *Greenmantle* (1916)); and the Department of Enemy Propaganda (also known as Crewe House). As a result of domestic conscription in Britain, America's entry into the war, and British internal pressures and disagreements, the Ministry was restructured to encompass the domestic and the foreign spheres, as opposed to the WPB's focus on neutral nations—specifically America. Moreover, this restructuring called for increased reliance on mass media, such as posters and film, as opposed to the WPB's focus on literary materials from prominent authors. Before joining Crewe House, Wells had written to the government with recommendations about how he believed an effective propaganda campaign should be run.

Wells believed that the war could hasten an end to militarism, a value he associated with the Prussian leadership but not with the German middle classes. He came to realise that both British and German moderates had to suffer because there were proponents of militarism on both sides of the conflict. Wells felt cheated once again by the antiquated and superstitious (as opposed to scientific) aristocratic ruling classes (or 'gentry') that were ruining Britain and (by implication) the world. As he recounted in his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), his suspicions about the inadequacy of this ruling class were roused when he saw a poster of King George addressing his people: '[t]here was no official "we" and "our" about it [...] [the] allied Powers were [...] in pursuance of their established policies, interests, treaties,

and secret understandings', not a common goal of peace and justice for all.³ What he had imagined might be a conflict that offered the opportunity for establishing a lasting world peace, he would come to understand as little more than a selfish war led by 'characters' formed from a system of inequitable privilege and tradition, with leaders improperly educated and showing little awareness of science or rationality: people who reminded him more of 'bright [...] patriotic school-boy[s] of eight' than of the leaders needed for building a better world out of the ruins left by the war.⁴

H. G. Wells lent his prestige to the Allied cause in a series of books and pamphlets such as *The War That Will End War* (1914), *The War and Socialism* (1915), *Peace of the World* (1915), and *What is Coming?* (1915), and also in an account of his visit to the war-fronts in Italy and France, *War and the Future* (1917). Wells argued that the war was a people's war—that is to say a war against the idea of expansionist imperialism. He explained that by removing the threat of German militarism, the world's greatest predatory power, militarism itself could be dismantled in turn. Wells's interest in politics did not emerge suddenly, but was consistent with his writing and activism over the previous decade.⁵ He had been interested in the possibilities of world peace and international governance as early as his book *Anticipations* (1901), and his subsequent fictionalisation of some of those concepts in *A Modern Utopia* (1905) supplies a further meditation on the subject. *Anticipations* marked a break from his early, celebrated scientific romances *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). He explained how his later fiction 'did not horrify or frighten', because he became 'tired of talking in playful parables to a world engaged in

³ Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain, Since 1866* (London, 1969), volume 2, p. 669.

⁴ *Experiment in Autobiography*, volume 2, p. 704.

⁵ Sue Malvern identifies Wells's politics as part of the New Liberalism. New Liberalism emphasised state intervention to manage a capitalist economy as well as to protect individualism through 'a concern for the welfare of the wider community'. New Liberalism argued that Socialism privileged a particular class interest over 'the common good'. Wells argued individualism was achieved through collective goals and relative material equality; over-emphasis on individual rights and liberty enabled people to make their own desires a higher priority than the overall good and thus sabotage the collective gains. Thus New Liberals, such as Wells, argued the traditional Liberal attachment to personal freedom prevented the achievement of true liberation. See Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony and Remembrance* (New Haven, 2004), p. 22. For a different account of liberalism and its responses to the war see Vincent Sherry *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford, 2003). For further discussion, see also Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, 'State and Society, 1880-1930', in Mary Langan and Bill Schwarz, eds., *Crises in the British State 1880-1930* (London, 1985), pp. 22-23.

destroying itself'.⁶ Wells was bored with writing 'imaginative books' that did not 'touch imaginations' and even stopped planning to write any more of them.⁷ As an intellectual, his job (as he understood it) was to focus his attention on social analysis and to offer solutions to the 'social perplexities' of the present cataclysm. He became committed to the notion of a world under a single government, one that would be ruled by an educated elite and that would be governed under the principles of science and rationality. This same ethical drive animated his early war journalism.

Wells's earlier fiction is typified by acts of destruction that initiate the possibility of starting a new world. Following his expression of a desire to address social perplexities, his later fiction (along with his writings generally) emphasises construction over devastation. For example, *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) all world conflict—from diplomatic and military tensions, to infidelity, jealousy, and revenge—is resolved through the release of a gas from a comet that collides with the earth. In contrast, a throwback to his earlier fiction would be *The World Set Free* (1913), where atomic bombs destroy so much of civilisation that mankind decides to abandon warfare and nationhood out of feelings of revulsion for war. However, this later book is still directed at solving the problems of war and the conflict of nations in a manner that his earlier fiction does not.⁸

Wells referred to some of his novels from this period as his 'Prig novels' ('books that turn on a man asking what he shall do with life'). The heroes of these books hope to 'enlighten the collective mind and stir up their collective will' through their own actions.⁹ He reaffirms this notion in his essay 'The Contemporary Novel' (1912). Wells claimed that the novel should facilitate a discussion of what was happening in the world: it should be 'the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals and the

⁶ 'Preface to the scientific romances', in Patrick Parrinder and Robert M. Philmus, eds, *H. G. Wells's Literary Criticism* (Brighton, 1980), p. 243.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁸ Finding a means to replace war recurred as a theme in Wells's pre-war writing. In his books of children's games (*Floor Games* (1911) and *Little Wars* (1913)), Wells asserted that we could replace war with games played with paper soldiers if nations would submit to playing: '[m]y game is just as good as their game, and saner by reason of its size.' Great War is 'a blundering thing' and we need only play *Little Wars* a few times to realise this: 'Great War is at present, I am convinced, not only the most expensive game in the universe, but it is a game out of all proportion. Not only are the masses of men and material and suffering and inconvenience too monstrously big for reason, but—the available heads we have for it, are too small. That, I think, is the most pacific realisation conceivable, and *Little War* brings you to it as nothing else but Great War can do' (*Little Wars* (London, 1913), pp. 1, 99-100).

⁹ 'Preface' to the Atlantic edition of *The Works of H. G. Wells*, Volume XIX, *The Research Magnificent* (London, 1927). On 'Prig Novels', see also John Batchelor, *H. G. Wells* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 94.

exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas'.¹⁰ In satirising the aestheticism of figures such as Henry James and their indifference to the lives of everyday people ('dominated by the imperatives of Saturday night and Monday morning'), his wartime *Boon* (1915) restated the necessity of the artist engaging with the real world.¹¹ Wells maintained that artists should try to make the world a better place, and that this required an engagement with rationalism, science, and progress. According to Patrick Parrinder, in the books that followed Wells's declarations, he 'deliberately began to dilute his fictional skills'.¹² Wells himself would denounce some of his early 'scientific romances' for holding the reader's attention through the employment of illusion instead of 'proof and argument';¹³ but John Batchelor typifies a commonly held critical opinion when he argues 'these early works, to which he devoted the whole of his talent without chaining it to a particular cause, yield the highest kind of literary and imaginative pleasure.'¹⁴ This chapter argues that Wells's theorisation of propaganda owes a debt to his earlier thinking, both political and literary.

In revisiting his essay 'The Contemporary Novel' in *Experiment in Autobiography*, Wells complained that he had reduced his discussion to the phrase 'Novel with a Purpose'. He wanted to distance himself from this idea because he felt—as when referring to Dickensian novels of purpose—that the phrase flattened out complexities and did not contain enough of the 'inner confusion', 'conflicts of opinion within the individual characters', or of any sense of change in them either.¹⁵ Furthermore, Wells dismissed the associations between 'purpose' and 'propaganda'; he disliked having his novels labelled as propaganda because 'the word propaganda should be confined to the definitive service of some organised party, church, or doctrine'. As per his later ambivalence to propaganda, he resented the notion that his work emerged from and was subject to 'direction from outside'. Although he acknowledged that he 'thrust views upon [his] readers' he maintained that 'they were at any rate my own views and put forward without any strategic aim'. Wells took the

¹⁰ Wells, 'The Contemporary Novel', *An Englishman Looks at the World* (London, 1914), pp. 167-68.

¹¹ Wells, *Boon* (London, 1915), p. 98.

¹² Patrick Parrinder, *H. G. Wells* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 89-90.

¹³ Wells, 'Preface to the Scientific Romances', *H. G. Wells's Literary Criticism*, edited by Patrick Parrinder and Robert M. Philmus (Brighton, 1980), p. 241.

¹⁴ Batchelor, p31. This judgment is implicitly supported by Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances* (Manchester, 1969).

¹⁵ *Experiment in Autobiography*, volume 2, p. 496.

accusation of writing propaganda seriously—for him it implied a surrendering of one's own will to act as a vehicle to convey aims for a political movement or end. Wells is thus an important writer to consider in terms of First World War propaganda, because he explicitly theorised about propaganda; because his thinking about propaganda changed; and, as already noted, because he worked directly for the Ministry of Information (MOI) developing propaganda. Moreover, Wells had a more sustained and elaborate relationship with propaganda than the other artists considered in this thesis.

In discussing Wells's wartime propaganda work, critics have focused on his official role with the MOI and his continuing agitation for the world state. John S. Partington (2003), for example, has integrated Wells's discussions in favour of world governance and his wartime propaganda in important and illuminating ways.¹⁶ Different generations of Wells's critical biographers such as Lovat Dickson (1969), Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie (1973), and Michael Foot (1995) have used Wells's war novels as a way of organising discussion of his controversies with the MOI.¹⁷ Following Wells's own recollections, these writers have limited discussion of Wells's relationship with propaganda to a focus on his official role as Head of Enemy Propaganda. In contrast, this chapter argues that approaching Wells's changing relationship with propaganda can highlight the different intellectual currents and pressures on Wells during the war, particularly his changing positions concerning the role of the novel, religious belief, German Junkerism, and his eventual embracing of education as the best means for creating an ideal society. This examination contextualises as well as complicates Wells's wartime activities through examining his different approaches to propaganda. Interpreting his theorisation of propaganda as a reflection upon a lifetime of thinking about social, political, and literary problems

¹⁶ John S. Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells* (Aldershot, 2003). Partington's book is in part a response to Warren Wagar's classic *H. G. Wells and the World State* (New Haven, 1961). Wagar's book offers a critical overview of the philosophical and economic underpinnings of Wells's approach to world governance. Partington's study adds a great deal of detail while also pointedly defending Wells against charges of authoritarianism.

¹⁷ Lovat Dickson, *H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times* (London, 1969), Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller: The Life of H. G. Wells* (London, 1973), Michael Foot, *H. G.: History of Mr. Wells* (London, 1995). In his history of First World War propaganda, Gary Messinger (1992) describes Wells as an eccentric figure within the sphere of official war propaganda. His portrait provides important detail regarding Wells's official propaganda work particularly concerning his work as Head of Enemy Propaganda, but he is less successful in integrating Wells's broader aesthetic, religious, and political thinking.

will supply a more sophisticated means for understanding his wartime writing than a biographical or even a strictly literary reading can do.

This chapter examines three stages in Wells's relationship with propaganda during and immediately following the war: propaganda as a weapon to destroy German militarism; propaganda as a tool to set up the world state (this also coincided with Wells's vocal turn towards God during the war years); and finally Wells's movement away from propaganda towards a model of education (and in particular the teaching of history). The first section focuses on the restructuring of British propaganda and the creation of the Ministry of Information, Wells's institutional relationship with this new organisation as Director of Enemy Propaganda, as well as (by way of contrast) a consideration of his early journalism which was independent of formal institutional connections. Wells's attitude in regards to propaganda changed during the war, from optimism in his early journalism to a disillusionment with working for the government. There is some overlap between his beliefs that propaganda can be a weapon to destroy militarism and also a tool to found the world state, and this can be understood from examining the advice he gave to the government in the form of two memoranda he sent in 1918. The second stage of this chapter discusses Wells's wartime turn to God as the vehicle for achieving his increasingly pronounced belief in the world state—a view articulated in his popular war novel *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916). The final stage discusses Wells's later turn to education as more effective means than propaganda for achieving the world state. Wells's later emphasis on the training of leaders who would establish world government is demonstrated in another of his war novels, *Joan and Peter* (1918). By the end of the war, Wells's ideal of a world state would still be an important rallying cry for him, but increasingly he dismissed propaganda in favour of education as a better means of achieving reform. Whereas his propaganda was formerly aimed at the masses, Wells would direct his educational efforts towards training a new elite of future leaders who would take over the government in order to found the world state. With this move from mass-propaganda to a focus on educating the elite there was also a corresponding rejection of democracy as a viable political system to bring about world peace. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how Wells's changing relationship with propaganda informed his post-war political thinking, particularly his attractions to Russian Bolshevism and Italian Fascism.

1 WELLS, PROPAGANDA AND JOURNALISM

1.1 'TO DIRECT THE THOUGHT OF MOST OF THE WORLD':

THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

This section outlines structural changes in the organisation of British propaganda at the institutional level during the later stages of the war, with particular focus on the subordination of the WPB under the auspices of the newly formed Ministry of Information. As I discussed in chapter one, British propaganda—under the auspices of the WPB—aimed its efforts at American intellectuals. Over the course of the war, America's official entry into the conflict—as well as Britain's own domestic conscription policy—required new efforts in broadening propaganda's scope to encompass both the enemy and the domestic sphere. Wells was a part of this broadening of propaganda strategy. He made recommendations to the government about how propaganda should be conducted before and during his employment with the Ministry of Information. Wells emphasised that effective propaganda should focus on the nature of the peace that was to follow after the war—a peace that would be non-punitive to the Germans, and that would lead to the establishment of a world government (alternatively he would settle for a League of Nations) that could end militarism, inequality, and war. He argued that enemy propaganda had to appeal to the German people so that they would cease supporting their government and embrace the Allies' peace plan. This section examines Wells's changing ideas about propaganda during the war by considering his institutional relationship with government propaganda; his recommendations of how propaganda should have been constructed and distributed (in the form of government memoranda); and his later frustrations with the Ministry that would lead to his resignation.

As the war progressed, the British government sought to overhaul its propaganda strategy to create a Ministry of Information that would supersede the War Propaganda Bureau.¹⁸ When Lloyd George came to power in December of 1916, he asked Robert Donald, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, to produce a report on the government's propaganda system.¹⁹ Donald found the WPB did not have sufficient mass appeal, and furthermore that it was 'too often on the defensive, and frequently

¹⁸ Robb, p. 119.

¹⁹ 'My dear Donald, I wish you would go into the question of our present propaganda arrangements and let me have your views on the subject soon': letter from Lloyd George to Donald, 1 January 1917, INF 4/4B.

late with news'.²⁰ While he recommended that the British government continue to conceal its involvement in sending propaganda to America, he also advised that British propaganda needed to be more aggressive; Donald argued there was 'no clear-cut organisation, no system of efficient delegation, no definite distinction between the work of one branch' of propaganda and another in the British government.²¹ To solve some of the problems around efficiency he proposed the creation of a centralised umbrella organisation that would co-ordinate propaganda efforts; this reorganisation resulted in Lloyd George appointing the author John Buchan to be the Director of the newly formed Department of Information.²² With regard to Wellington House (the WPB), Donald acknowledged the 'colossal amount of work' that had been done, but recommended that 'operations on the literary side [...] [should] not be so great in the future'.²³ One of Donald's recommendations was a greater focus on the home front: since the introduction of conscription in 1916, the government perceived home-front morale to be declining. Donald also urged that less time be spent on propaganda aimed at Allied and neutral countries, and recommended renewed efforts to produce propaganda aimed at the enemy.²⁴

In February 1918 Lord Beaverbrook was appointed Britain's first Minister of Information, and the Ministry itself officially came into being on 4 March 1918. According to a later report from H. O. Lee (undated), the task of the Ministry of Information was 'to direct the thought of most of the world'. This task

it performed sometimes through hints and indirect suggestion, more often with the brazen tongues of facts and statistics. In the way of propaganda by implication and nuance, it sent British musicians at times to strengthen the reputation of British music abroad; or it sent Union Jacks to remote parts of France where they were rarely seen; or unofficially offered prizes in French schools for essays on the British navy; or obtained signed photographs of the Prime Minister and Lord Crey of Fallodon for the President of a South American Republic, at his own request.²⁵

²⁰ Letter from Donald to George, 9 January 1917, INF 4/4B.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Sanders and Taylor, p. 63. According to Sanders and Taylor, Buchan reorganised the department into four main sections: Wellington House was the art and literary branch, a press and cinema division, an intelligence branch, and an administrative division in charge responsible 'for the direction of policy matters relating to propaganda' (p. 64).

²³ Second Donald Report, 'VIII. Literary Department', p. 12, INF 4/4B.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ H.O. Lee, 'British propaganda during the Great War, 1914-18' (n.d), p. 14, INF 4/4A.

No longer maintaining Masterman's focus on literary materials or 'facts and statistics', the government began to attend to the way propaganda functioned as a broader set of cultural activities aimed at enhancing Britain's reputation abroad through 'hints and indirect suggestion'—in other words, via music, patriotic symbols, and essay contests. Propaganda, more broadly conceived, was meant to guide and shape peoples' perceptions. If left to his own devices 'the average man dispenses praise and blame according to his individual prejudices and animosities'; it was thus the business of propaganda, Lee argued, 'to make the wheels of victory run smoothly'.²⁶ Propaganda and the role of the Ministry of Information were highly valued:

The peace and security of the world do not depend on armaments and diplomatic combinations, but on the friendliness and goodwill of the peoples of the world. National prejudices can be removed only if one nation is told in detail what has been done is being done and will be done in the future by another nation. This is what the MOI tried to do, and that it was successful there is abundant evidence.²⁷

British propaganda, Lee argued, 'carried conviction'; whereas (in contrast) it was evident to him that the German materials were acts of distortion. Propaganda was seen as necessary not only to make victory smooth, but also as an essential part of maintaining public and diplomatic relations—in short, propaganda was understood as crucial to the war and it was recognised that the way it was conducted needed to be overhauled, to reflect its greater importance within government strategy.

The Ministry of Information's official Department of Enemy Propaganda announced the government's late co-ordination of enemy propaganda in the final year of the war.²⁸ In February 1918, Lloyd George invited Lord Northcliffe to head the newly established Crewe House. Crewe House was the name of the building where the offices for propaganda to enemy countries were located. According to Sanders and Taylor, the 'creation of the Enemy Propaganda Department marked the British government's final attempt of the war to find an adequate organisational solution to the new problem of propaganda'.²⁹ In his *Secrets of Crewe House* (1920), Sir

²⁶ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Robb, p. 121; Sanders and Taylor, p. 89. See also Cate Haste's discussion of the Ministry of Information pp. 39-40.

²⁹ Sanders and Taylor, p. 89.

Campbell Stuart (who himself worked for the offices for enemy propaganda) explained that by the spring of 1918 ‘about a million leaflets monthly were being issued’.³⁰ He went on to explain that at first, the leaflets were dropped by plane over the German lines—but this soon proved too risky, and the government used specially adapted air balloons instead.³¹

Wells worked briefly for the WPB, according to Messinger, translating *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*. However, despite his friendship with Masterman, other members of the Wellington House staff criticised Wells’s novel for undermining British political and military figures.³² Wells would encounter different tensions with officials when approached to work for the MOI. In May 1918, Northcliffe invited H. G. Wells to direct the preparation of propaganda literature against Germany:

I would be very grateful to you if you would undertake the organization of propaganda work against Germany. I know of no one who could do it better, and I have arranged, if you should desire it, to have the assistance of Mr. J.W. Headlam, the chief of the German section of the Foreign Office, should you accept this post [...] Mr. H.K. Hudson, secretary to the Committee will be at your disposal as Secretary of the German section; and office accommodations and staff will be provided for you at Crewe House³³

Prior to the offer of this post, Wells had written a short ‘MEMORANDUM OF THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PROPAGANDA’ (21 March 1918; hitherto ‘March Memo’) which is housed at the National Archives.³⁴ After taking the post, he continued to expound these recommendations of how he thought propaganda should be conducted. He wrote a ‘Preface’ and another ‘Memorandum’ in May 1918 (hitherto ‘May Memo’) that dealt with propaganda more extensively—this later memo has been reprinted in Stuart’s *Secrets of Crewe House* as well as Wells’s own *The Common Sense of War and Peace* (1940) under the title ‘A Lesson from 1918’. Both of these documents reflect Wells’s investment in the aims, methodologies, and ends of

³⁰ Stuart, p. 54.

³¹ In June and July Britain dropped 1,689,457 and 2,172,794 pamphlets respectively (Sir Campbell Stuart, *Secrets of Crewe House* (London, 1920), p. 93. During August, they averaged over 100,000 a day; they dropped nearly 4,000,000 in October and in the first ten days of November, before the Armistice, they dropped another 1,400,000.

³² Messinger, p. 192.

³³ Letter of 12 May from Northcliffe to Wells, quoted in letter from Wells to the Chairman of the Enemy Propaganda Committee (17 July 1918), *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells: Volume 2* (London, 1998), p. 554.

³⁴ The document I am referring to as Wells’s ‘March Memo’ is housed in the National Archives, INF 4/9.

British propaganda, and in the war in general. They also reveal an enormous optimism about the war, and a naivety regarding the government's own war aims and plans for peace after the war.

Wells's unpublished 'March Memo' requested the preparation of propaganda 'appetizers' that would convince the enemy that the Allies would win the war, and furthermore that they had the superior moral case for going to war. The 'main dishes' were related to the ends the Allies would be seeking at the conclusion of the war—ends that should be 'righteous and desirable even by a right-spirited and decently patriotic German'.³⁵ Wells's earlier unpublished 'March Memo' argued that propaganda should be aimed at breaking any popular support enjoyed by the German government, by offering visions of the peace after the war that would appeal sufficiently to the German population to make it abandon support for its leaders. The 'March Memo' also supported projects of disinformation designed to erode German morale, such as its advice that the Allies should pretend having developed new weapons such as poison bombs. In the unpublished memo, Wells argued that '[h]alfwitted suggestions for inventions have their use', particularly if the enemy believed in Allied myths.³⁶

Wells focused his critique on the lack of clearly stated Allied War Aims, and argued that the government needed to popularise the idea of a singularly governed world state that would emerge after the war as a way of establishing unity and an end to war. Germany, he argued, wanted to draw the world under a unity of Imperial Conquest; and in order to counter that vision the Allies needed to offer an alternative.³⁷ In an imaginary address to the German citizenry, Wells's 'March Memo' summarised his plan for enemy propaganda:

You belong to a people not now increasing very rapidly, a numerous people, but not so numerous as some of the greatest peoples of the world, a people very highly trained, very well drilled and well armed, perhaps as well trained and drilled and equipped as ever it will be. The collapse of Russia has made you sad if now you can get peace and can get a peace now that will neither destroy you, nor humiliate you, nor open up the prospect of fresh wars. The Allies plainly offer you such a peace. To accept it, we must warn you plainly, means refusing to go on with the manifest intentions of your present rulers which

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 4,5.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 7.

are to launch you and your children and your children's children upon a career of struggle for predominance, which may no doubt inflict untold deprivations and miseries upon the rest of mankind but whose end for Germany and things German can in the long run only be one thing: Judgment and Death.³⁸

With the collapse of Russia, the 'March Memo' argues that Germans need not feel that Germany's defeat necessarily entailed them being destroyed or humiliated. 'The March Memo' emphasises that the peace the Allies should offer need not be punitive nor place Germans in fear of further reprisals, but instead should be a peace that helps Germany abandon aggression and the 'struggle for predominance'. Wells urged the government to make this message known in a variety of different forms 'to German women, to German sentimentalists, to civilised and reasonable Germans, to fearful Germans, and to neutrals in contact with Germans', and argued that this kind of message 'would do a great work in the task of bringing this war to a tolerable end.'³⁹ He was convinced that enemy propaganda needed to focus on eroding the confidence of Germans in their own government; but to make propaganda effective—to dismantle the war machine—he argued that the Allies had to offer a viable alternative to Prussian aggression.

Once working for the MOI, Wells wrote the (later republished) 'May Memorandum' in which he reiterated that the most important thing for enemy propaganda was for the Allies to state their war aims as clearly as possible.⁴⁰ Without war aims, the 'May Memorandum' argued, the Allies could not claim any moral or ethical superiority in the war. Donald had made the same point regarding war aims when overhauling the propaganda ministries. Sanders and Taylor note that Lloyd George found such suggestions rather difficult to answer, as he was already trying to respond to Woodrow Wilson's request that the belligerents 'state clearly their reasons for continuing to fight'.⁴¹ In August 1917, the National War Aims Committee (NWAC) officially came into being as an organisation aimed at providing justifications to citizens on the home front and which was to be kept separate from overseas propaganda.⁴² Its aims were:

³⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Wells's 'May Memorandum' reprinted in *Secrets of Crewe House*, pp. 61-81.

⁴¹ Sanders and Taylor, p. 62.

⁴² Sanders and Taylor, pp. 67-68.

To keep before our nation both the causes which have led to the world war and the vital importance to human life and liberty of continuing the struggle until the evil forces which originated this conflict are destroyed forever.⁴³

Even after the establishment of the NWAC, the government made it difficult to understand the specific war aims of the British government. Sanders and Taylor quote a Cabinet decision of July 1917 to postpone the discussion of war aims 'as long as possible as, once it was known that we were discussing these questions, the effective prosecution of the war might be rendered more difficult'.⁴⁴ In contrast, the 'May Memo' argues the aim of the war was simply to create a 'world peace that shall preclude the resumption of war'; thus by definition successful propaganda aimed at the Germans (who, according to Wells, 'are particularly susceptible to systematic statements') had to have lasting peace as its principle objective—and (furthermore) he believed the Allies did have this broader peace as a main goal.⁴⁵ Partington argues that Wells erred when he believed that the Allies would seek a just peace—Wells did not, as yet, realise that 'the Allied governments were using the war to further their world influence and expand their empires'.⁴⁶ Wells presumed that the Allies were seeking peace instead of the expansion of their own power and territory.

In any case, Wells believed that it was crucial to have clearly stated war aims if the war was to be successful; Britain needed to continue fighting until the Germans accepted an Allied peace settlement. Once there was peace a 'Fighting League of Free Nations' would need to be established to pool 'military, naval, financial, and economic resources' until 'Peace is established on lasting foundations.'⁴⁷ Wells wanted to appeal to the German people and help them to realise that the true criminals were 'their ruling dynasties and military and economic castes', and that the longer the war was prolonged, the more impossible would a reconstruction and peace become.⁴⁸ The Allies must make it clear, he argued, that their designs were not on crushing the

⁴³ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Sanders and Taylor, p. 68. After the Bolsheviks declared peace with Germany (Brest-Litovsk Treaty), they accused the Allies of waging a war to expand Imperial territory and published secret treaties to expose these intentions. According to Sanders and Taylor, on 5 January 1918, Lloyd George 'made the most complete British statement of war aims to, significantly, the Trade Union leaders'. On 8 January, Woodrow Wilson followed with his famous 'Fourteen Points Speech'—the most clear statement of war aims to date (p. 68).

⁴⁵ Wells, 'May Memorandum', p. 62.

⁴⁶ Partington, p. 72.

⁴⁷ Wells's 'May Memorandum', p. 64.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

Germans, but rather on 'self-determination to be exercised under definite guarantees of justice and fair play'.⁴⁹ The purpose of enemy propaganda would be to appeal to the German people themselves as partners in the Allies' program to overthrow the militarism of the ruling German classes; to delineate 'what is to happen *after* the war'.⁵⁰

If Germany's militarism and 'aggressiveness' could be nullified, then the possibility for world harmony could exist: '[t]here has arisen in the great world outside the inner lives of the Central Powers a will that grows to gigantic proportions, that altogether overshadows the boasted *will to power* of the German junker and exploiter, *the will to a world peace*'.⁵¹ In the republished 'May Memo', the 'League of Nations' is presented as a potential blueprint for world peace, albeit a blueprint that still required scrutiny. The 'May Memo' expresses hope that the League could establish international law and a supreme world court that would have legal jurisdiction, as well economic and military power over all the world states; in contrast, Wells argued that the League of Nations itself was simply a modest first step in that direction.

The 'May Memo' argued that the greatest obstacle to peace was German expansionism:

The spectacle of German Imperialism, boastful, selfish, narrow, and altogether hateful, in its terrible blood-dance through Europe has been an object-lesson to humanity against excesses of national vanity and national egotism and against Imperial pride.⁵²

In contrast to Germany's 'blood-dance', Wells argued, British imperialism—however inequitable—had some honourable goals, and (more importantly) could be amicably dismantled. According to Wells's analysis, with the prospect of a 'suitable congress', the Imperial Powers could accommodate the sacrifice of their colonies for the betterment of mankind. He claimed that the 'two chief Imperial Powers', Britain and France, would be more completely 'prepared to-day than ever they had been before to consider its imperial possessions as a trust for their inhabitants and for mankind'.⁵³ If a League was established after the war, it could 'set a restraint upon competitive and

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 65.

⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 66-67.

⁵² Ibid, p. 69.

⁵³ Ibid.

unsanctioned 'expansionist' movements into unsettled and disordered regions', and would 'act as the guardian of feeble races and communities'.⁵⁴ All subject peoples, according to Wells, would be given liberation and 'world citizenship' under the auspices of an international League of Nations.⁵⁵ As this chapter's later discussion of Wells's journalism illustrates, these positions were consistent with his other writings. He believed that the Allied Empires needed to dissolve in order to achieve a world peace and he wanted the Allies to advertise this dissolution as part of their propaganda campaigns.

In his article 'The White Man's Burthen', Wells criticised the anti-war movement, noting that one of the more curious things about the British 'Pacifist' is 'his willingness to give over great blocks of the black and coloured races to the Hohenzollerns to exploit and experiment upon'.⁵⁶ For Wells, German imperialism (akin to slavery, an evil that 'ended in America a hundred years ago') was a far greater evil than British imperialism; and the pacifist who did not find the war a just cause was surrendering to a far worse foe those peoples for whom the pacifist claimed to care.⁵⁷ Wells acknowledged how this case might be complicated by Britain's attitude towards India and Ireland, but was confident that Great Britain and her Allies would come to realise that to achieve a 'United States of the World' they must release their grip on their foreign 'possessions' in order to build a larger world unity.⁵⁸ He was not clear what the status of these 'possessions' would be, but he was sure that the governance of the world body would ensure that the savagery of German rule was not inflicted on any other states.

Wells argued that the European Empires should be dismantled, but should still rule over this United States of the World because of their experience and disinterest in personal gain. Wells's 'May Memorandum' dismisses the notion that if smaller nations such as Haiti or Abyssinia be given a voice in international governance, their

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 68.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 69. It has been a common misreading to understand Wilson's Fourteen Points as a call for self-determination or national independence: 'V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the *interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined*' (emphasis mine). However, to claim independence, the indigenous or colonised people must have 'equal weight' with the colonial ruler. If the ruling government maintains that their claims are greater than the indigenous population then there would be no legitimate claim for self-determination.

⁵⁶ Wells, *What is Coming?: A Forecast of Things After the War* (London, 1916), p. 240.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 241.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 247.

voices should have equal weight as those of the major powers. The only powers strong enough to permit and prevent war (the United States of America, Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, and—‘doubtfully’—Austria-Hungary) were to be the ones that control world government:

They are at present necessarily the custodians of the peace of the world, and it is mere pedantry not to admit that this gives them a practical claim to preponderance in the opening congress of the World League.

The power to enforce territorial adjustments, international law, and a ruling peace—not to mention the tax system and the prevention of expansionism—would require nations powerful enough to implement these changes. For Wells, the rule of powerful nations would be more benevolent than Imperial rule because it would be guided by reason instead of greed. Without these powerful countries acting as rulers there would be both military and economic ruin after the war, as well as what Wells referred to as the ‘War after the War.’⁵⁹

Wells argued that in order to achieve the goal of a world peace that would found a world governing body, the primary aim of the Allies should be to direct propaganda at educated Germans and to ask for their co-operation in changing Germany from within.⁶⁰ Wells argued that the most efficient way to change the German government was by creating propaganda that appealed to this class of German citizen. The war must be fought both militarily and on the propaganda front, Wells argued, if there was any hope at a lasting peace.⁶¹ The Allies did not share Wells’s vision. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie point out that Wells was ‘naïve about the realities of power politics’ and had ‘no knowledge of the secret agreements which Britain had made during the course of the war, and even less appreciation of the fact that he and his colleagues were cynically used as decoys’ by a government which had no intention of translating their ideals into political realities.⁶² Wells believed that his proposals offered a rational alternative to war and believed that the strength of his arguments would convince the government to adopt his policies.

⁵⁹ Wells, ‘Memorandum’, pp. 79,78.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 80.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 81.

⁶² Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, p. 316.

Perhaps as a consequence of the combination of his optimism concerning future peace and his ignorance of the government's rejection of his war aims, Wells launched himself into a number of projects as Director of Enemy Propaganda against Germany. It was this same combination of optimism and ignorance that eventually would lead to his disillusionment and rejection of British propaganda as well. According to Messinger, Wells and his small staff produced an enormous amount of work in a short time. Together they

[d]etailed analyses of the economic and psychological effects of the blockade against Germany; obtained the co-operation of British labour leaders in crafting propaganda leaflets addressed to German workers; gathered information of use to British propagandists on the hardships of German U-boat crews; explored additional methods for sending propaganda into Germany via Russia; pressed Lord Milner and others at the War Office to allow the resumption of leaflet distribution over Germany by aeroplane; solicited the help of German-American societies in advocating the creation of a republican Germany; commissioned a propaganda pamphlet exalting the liberal tradition in German culture and calling upon moderate Germans to overthrow militarism; and hired the artist Will Dyson to produce a series of caricatures showing the evil effects of German imperialism upon the welfare of German workers.⁶³

Messinger asserts that what I am referring to as Wells's 'May Memo' was an example of Wells's belief that his 'post would be the means to achieve his idealistic ends'.⁶⁴ However much Northcliffe admired Wells and his contributions to enemy propaganda, he dismissed the 'May Memo', writing to the fifty-two year old Wells by way of response: 'May I say, with respect, that you are young at this game?'⁶⁵ Continuing his campaign for clearer statements of war aims and a more consistent propaganda rhetoric, Wells wrote back to Northcliffe that he thought it better if Northcliffe were 'to take hold [...] of the whole of this Propaganda situation' (Letter to Northcliffe 17 June 1918).⁶⁶ Wells asked Northcliffe to co-ordinate the statements of his papers, such as *The Times*, with the propaganda campaign at Crewe House:

⁶³ Messinger p. 195; Wells detailed this list of activities in his 17 July letter of resignation from the MOI: see *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells: Volume 2*, pp. 554-59.

⁶⁴ Messenger, p. 195.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (London, 1959), p. 646.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 648.

because from a foreign point of view *The Times* still speak for England [...] But while Crewe House is working its way towards certain definite ends, *The Times* is evidently running on Imperialist lines that are at least four years out of date, across and even counter to our activities. Next to the public utterances of leading statesmen *The Times* is our chief medium for propaganda in enemy countries and unless *The Times* can be brought up to date, briefed upon our lines, and our memorandum used as its general instruction, our work will remain by half effective.⁶⁷

Wells emphasised that '[u]nless we have better team work [...] this war is going to end in a worse muddle than the muddle that begot it'.⁶⁸ He complained that *The Times*' editorial stance was imperialist, and that because of its prominence its imperialism was being interpreted as the official British stance on the war. Wells wanted the newspaper to tame its rhetoric and to bring it in line with government propaganda. He hoped to streamline and thus to co-ordinate British propaganda to focus on the goal not of winning the war, but of establishing a lasting peace and a League of Nations as a prelude to the world state. Nationalist and chauvinist statements were causing much more harm than good, in his opinion.

Northcliffe rejected Wells's requests to change the rhetoric of *The Times*: 'Let me say at once that I entirely agree with the policy adopted by my newspapers, which I do not propose to discuss with anyone' (Letter to Wells, 16 July 1918)⁶⁹. Wells responded that he was sorry that Northcliffe was insisting 'upon being two people when God has made you one. I cannot for my own part, separate the *Evening News* from Crewe House while you remain one person.'⁷⁰ As head of enemy propaganda, Wells argued that Northcliffe should present a viable alternative to the German population; yet his newspapers presented a far more punitive and aggressive rhetoric that was at odds with what Wells imagined consistent government rhetoric to be. According to S. J. Taylor, Wells and Northcliffe almost came to blows over the issue of German immigrants; and as a result of these conflicts, Wells officially resigned from his post as Director of Enemy Propaganda in Germany on 17 July 1918 (although, once temperatures cooled, Northcliffe asked Wells to maintain an advisory

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.655. In a letter to Wells of 29 June 1918, Northcliffe disagreed with Wells's opposition to German internment in Britain: 'I would intern every one of them who had been naturalized within five years of the outbreak of war [...]. The freedom of a good many of the Germans in England is due in a great degree to snobbery and worse in *very high places*' (p. 649).

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 655.

role).⁷¹ Rather than becoming disheartened with the propaganda process, Wells devoted himself more towards other avenues of expression, such as novel-writing and his continued political work. This later political work focused on education as a more effective way of appealing to larger groups of people, by training better leaders who could guide the masses away from nationalism and towards global governance.

Wells's brief career as an official government propagandist was preceded by his years of writing journalism (wherein he first explored his ideas about propaganda), his elaborations on global peace and governance, and a novel that explained how his new-found faith in God coincided with the inevitability of the world state. His experiences after working for the Ministry of Information forced him to re-evaluate his ideas about government, propaganda, and world peace altogether; and increasingly he turned to education as a way of forging leaders capable of creating a better society. He expounded these educational ideas in both his fiction and his non-fiction. The subsequent sections of this chapter return to the beginning of the war to examine how Wells's thinking about propaganda would change from that which he expressed in his early journalism, as well as in his fictional war novels (particularly *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916) and *Joan and Peter* (1918)).

1.2 WELLS'S WAR JOURNALISM: *THE WAR THAT WILL END WAR*

From the start of the war, H. G. Wells offered a number of suggestions as to how he thought the war should be fought. In a letter to *The Times* (later printed as an article) Wells complained that his ideas for arming and training non-professional irregulars to prevent an invasion by Germany were dismissed by what he termed 'so-called experts'. He felt that he had been reprimanded for not paying adequate attention to the greater wisdom of the military leadership, and that he had been effectively silenced as a consequence of the situation.⁷² He puzzled over whether 'under war conditions' one should ask difficult questions of the government, or rather whether one should 'obey poor, or even bad, directions'. Wells was unable to remain silent, and asserted his responsibility to offer his ideas and criticisms in the face of

⁷¹ S. J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London, 1996), p. 187.

⁷² *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells: Volume 2*, p. 390. Wells's letter to *The Times* of 25 October 1914 appeared in *The Times* on 31 October 1914 under the title 'Mr. Wells on Invasion: The Civilian's Place in Home Warfare'.

authority and expert opinion.⁷³ He believed that the government was wasting energy by not making use of able-bodied men and women on the home front who did not happen to be soldiers:

If I try to use my pen on behalf of my country abroad, where I have a few friends and readers, what I write is exposed to the clumsy editing and delays of anonymous and apparently irresponsible officials. So practically I am doing nothing and a great number are doing very little more [...]. Let me warn them of the boredom and irritation [the government] are causing. This is a people's war, a war against militarism; it is not a war for the greater glory of British diplomatists, officials and people in uniforms. It is our war, not their war, and the very last thing we intend to result from it is a permanently increased importance of the military caste.⁷⁴

This ending to his letter emphasised the need for the entire country's involvement in the war, as well as an annoyance with the government for allowing such a great deal of talent and skill go to waste, causing both 'boredom and irritation'. The government's position (as Wells saw it) simply reinforced the notion that the war was strictly a military affair conducted by politicians and the 'military caste', for which Wells expresses scorn. On the contrary, for Wells, this 'war against militarism' was a 'people's war' and people needed to be encouraged to invest in it—its causes, its aims, and its peace. He went so far as to offer his own pen to help—but to help in a proactive way, not through simply keeping silent. The article was printed in *The Times* in late October—around the time that Wells's first book of war journalism, *The War That Will End War*, was also being published.

Wells was a renowned figure and there were some in the government who felt his writing could contribute to the war effort. Masterman, the head of the WPB, was a great supporter of Wells, and according to Gary Messinger he was probably responsible for a meeting between Wells and Lloyd George in early August 1914.⁷⁵ According to Messinger, Lloyd George urged Wells 'to write something that would move Americans to give greater support to the British cause'. Wells, in turn, wrote an

⁷³ In this case he was responding to government fears over a German invasion of England, which he did not think possible ('I am supposed to be a person of feverish imagination, but even by lashing my imagination to the ruddiest I cannot, in these days of wireless telegraphy, see a properly-equipped German force [...] upon British soil'). Wells did not want able troops to be kept back for this impossibility, but instead revived his suggestion for having untrained soldiers trained and ready to meet the Germans if they were to invade.

⁷⁴ Wells, letter to *The Times*, 25 October 1914; appeared in *The Times* as an article on 31 October 1914.

⁷⁵ Messinger, p. 189.

article entitled 'The War that Will End War', which would be the title and first article in his book of essays. Although Wells credited Germany with starting the war, he expressed hope that the conflict would bring about the downfall of the German Empire. For Wells, it was Germany's predatory militarism that kept all nations in thrall to cycles of defence and war, and defeating this aggressive spirit would remove the last obstacle of ending war as we know it. He argued that stopping German militarism would stop the impetus for militarism in Europe generally, and would begin the process of dismantling national rivalries and establish international world governance. Wells would later explain that disarming the aggressor was the truly pacifist position: 'of course we are all pacifists nowadays; I know of no one who does not want not only to end this war but to put an end to war altogether'—but to do so (Wells continued) we must '*make* peace by beating the armed man until he gives in and admits the error of his ways, disarming him and reorganising the world for the forcible suppression of military adventures in the future.'⁷⁶

The immediate cause of the war, according to Wells, was Germany's invasion of Belgium: 'We declared war because we were bound by treaty to declare war' ('Why Britain went to War').⁷⁷ However, in the broader scope of his wartime writing, Wells identifies other contributory factors to the war, including the privatised weapons industry, nationalism, and militarism. These were all strong forces that were concentrated in Germany, and these were what needed to be eliminated for world peace to be possible. 'We are fighting Germany [...] without any hatred of the German people', Wells claimed. He further asserted that we 'do not intend to destroy either their freedom or unity', but instead aim to destroy 'an evil system of government and the mental and material corruption that has got hold of the German imagination and taken possession of German life'.⁷⁸ According to Wells, in the immediate years preceding the war, the German government diverted money from social programmes and education towards starting an arms race. Wells dramatised this pre-war time as a period when Germany 'drilled' and 'darkened' the happy pre-war days.⁷⁹ The chaos brought on by war was actually 'a relief' for Wells, because despite the discomfort and 'torment', the war also offered 'the possibility of an organised peace'. Continuing his theme that the war was a battle to end all war, he reiterated that it was

⁷⁶ Wells, *War and the Future: Italy, France, and Britain at War* (London, 1917), p. 193.

⁷⁷ Wells, 'The War that Will End War', *The War That Will End War* (London, 1914), p. 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

‘not just another war—it is the last war’—that it was, in his paradoxical phrasing, ‘a war for peace’.

The distinction between fighting Germany and German ideas—as opposed to fighting the German people—was an important one for Wells, and the conflation of the two would later lead Wells to distance himself from government propaganda. He would make the same point in his early working-class press articles in the *Labour Leader*: ‘all wars are thought to be righteous, but no war hitherto has put an end to war. If this war is to end differently, it must produce a different spirit, and, above all, it must make us forget, in the claims of humanity our fiery conviction of the enemy’s wickedness.’⁸⁰ The war to end war was not simply a military battle for generals or the ‘military caste’, it was a people’s war where everyone played a particular role. Intellectuals, for Wells, had to fight what he called, ‘The War of the Mind’, and propaganda was the key weapon in this war. ‘All the realities of this war are things of the mind’, he argued; ‘this is a conflict of cultures’.⁸¹ The battle in the trenches was, for Wells, the material manifestation of a battle between competing ideologies:

All the world-wide pain and weariness, fear and anxieties, the bloodshed and destruction, the innumerable torn bodies of men and horses, the stench of putrefaction, the misery of hundreds of millions of human beings, the waste of mankind, are but the material consequences of a false philosophy and foolish thinking. We fight not to destroy a nation, but a nest of evil ideas.⁸²

Wells’s description moves from the nerves and abstractions (‘anxieties’ and ‘destruction’) to the sensory horrors of war—‘torn bodies’ and ‘the stench of putrefaction’—to emphasise further how the cause of these material horrors is the ‘false philosophy’ of militarism. Destroying a nation would mean little if such ‘foolish thinking’ would later incubate further military conflict: the ‘nest of evil ideas’ itself had to be destroyed to end ‘the misery of hundreds of millions of human beings, the waste of mankind’. Wells carefully distinguished between punishing the German people and the rooting out of an ideology spread by a military class. He appealed to propaganda as his weapon of choice.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Foot, p. 152.

⁸¹ ‘The War of the Mind’, *The War That Will End War*, p. 90.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

However vulnerable flesh was to metal, Wells argued, new recruits would be prepared to offer up more flesh if the idea of war itself was not punctured: ‘Rifles do but kill men, and fresh men are born to follow them.’⁸³ Propaganda could destroy wrong ideas in the same way a machine gun might destroy a body; but it also could be the tool for creating new and proper ideas in a way that guns could never do:

Our business is to kill ideas. The ultimate purpose of this war is propaganda, the destruction of certain beliefs, and the creation of others. It is to this propaganda that reasonable men must address themselves.⁸⁴

The war of the mind was indeed the war of propaganda, and propaganda was principally a weapon to destroy militarism and expansionist imperialism as ideas. However, in order to do so propaganda also had to serve as a tool to aid the ‘creation of other’ ideas that would replace the destroyed ones. For Wells, ‘reasonable men’—or intellectuals—could offer more than their bodies to the trenches: they could offer their intellect for the battle of ideas.

Although a weapon to stamp out foolish ideas, propaganda was not meant to be lies and manipulation. For Wells the war of ideas was a noble pursuit that sought to make the case for the war earnestly, employing empathy and reason. Wells insisted that the war of ideas had ‘to be no vile argument to the pocket, but an appeal to the common sense and common feeling of humanity’, again emphasising how the German and British people should be united in their war against German militarism.⁸⁵ It was essential therefore if propaganda was to be used as an effective weapon ‘to clear the heads of the Germans, and keep the heads of our own people clear about this war’.⁸⁶ Both the government and intellectuals had responsibility for making the causes of the war and the aims of the peace manifestly obvious to both the enemy and the domestic populations. To avoid alienating the German people it was important to use propaganda, Wells argued, in order to convince them that their leaders were guiding them to ruin. In order to make this case to the nations of the world, Wells wanted to juxtapose photographs of the German military elite with pictures of ‘men killed and horribly torn upon the battle field and men crippled and women and men

⁸³ Ibid, p. 91.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 92.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

murdered and homes burnt and, to the verge of indecency, all the peculiar filthiness of war.⁸⁷ As in the conclusion of *The World Set Free*, Wells hoped that by coming to understand the costs of war, people would be compelled to reject warfare, and to demand the discovery of other means for resolving conflict.

Furthermore, to ensure that it was a people's war as opposed to a war fought for the benefit of the British military caste, Wells argued that it was equally important for the British government to convince their own people of the importance of stamping out the militarism of Germany, and of pursuing the ultimate goal of a peace that would bring an end to oppression in general: '[w]e have to reiterate over and over again that we fight, resolved that at the end no nationality shall oppress any nationality or language again in Europe for ever'.⁸⁸ As he would later demonstrate in his War Memoranda, Wells was aware of the hypocrisy of Britain fighting a war to end militarism while simultaneously refusing to abandon imperialism. Never interested simply in 'victory', Wells was more interested in 'the point of view of Right', as expressed in a letter to Walter Lippman (September-October 1916).⁸⁹ To 'tell both sides plainly'—meaning to discuss German *and* British imperialism—Wells accepted it was no surprise that the Americans 'would like to mention Ireland and India as well as Bohemia and Belgium'. In *What is Coming?*, Wells argued that European colonial Empires could devolve imperial rule by emulating the American model of annexing of 'territories' and then elevating them to the rank of 'States'.⁹⁰ Whereas his early journalism urged the necessity of Britain facing the contradiction of holding colonies while fighting against imperialism, his later texts—such as *In the Fourth Year*—boldly proclaim that this devolution would happen in Ireland as well as throughout the colonies:

It is the open intention of Great Britain to develop representative government, where it has not hitherto existed, in India and Egypt, to go on steadfastly increasing the share of the natives of these countries in the government of their own lands, until they too become free and equal members of the world league.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 93.

⁸⁹ *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells: Volume 2*, p. 470.

⁹⁰ *What is Coming?*, p. 263.

⁹¹ Wells, *In the Fourth Year: Anticipations of a World Peace* (London, 1918), pp. 82-83. In his 'MEMORANDUM', Wells makes an almost verbatim argument: 'It is the open and declared intention of Great Britain to develop representative government, where it has not hitherto existed, in India and in Egypt, and to go on steadfastly increasing the share of the natives of these countries in the government

Wells's ideal vision of establishing a world peace that would lead to a singular world state and would also bring an end to all oppression animated his war journalism. The government, he would discover, did not share these ideals; and this discovery would eventually lead to his disillusionment with government propaganda.

Wells lamented that the British Government failed to declare its war aims clearly (see above) because in doing so they failed to express the ideals and values for which they were fighting and which they would seek to establish in the peace. To redress this lack, Wells believed writers should produce propaganda to explain why the war was being fought. Wells called on writers 'outside all formal government' to spread the word of the justness of the Allied cause: 'we have to spread this idea, repeat this idea, and *impose upon this war* the idea that this war must end war'.⁹² Writers should repeat and spread the word that the war is a war of peace; but they must also '*impose upon the war*' this idea as well. In repeating his ideas, Wells believed writers could shape what the war was about—not just in people's minds but in reality as well. Such was the power of propaganda. For Wells, propaganda would be instrumental in delineating what for him were the crucial points of the war: a redrawn map of Europe, the abolition of private arms sales, and the establishment of a common unified political and economic market (a first step towards the world state). He argued that however absurd it may have seemed, the British government needed to start dropping pamphlets instead of bombs on the Germans immediately, in order to erode the people's faith in its leaders, the German military elite. Propaganda, which was for Wells the key weapon in the battle for ideas, would destroy German faith in militarism and establish a collective belief in a better future.

Wells chastised the Liberals and pacifists who failed to understand the necessity of the war of ideas: 'Intellect without faith is the devil, but faith without intellect is a negligent angel with rusty weapons'.⁹³ For a Christian truly to have faith, he argued, he needed to become 'a propagandist for peace'. Liberalism 'merely carps at the manner of our entanglement'; whereas what Wells sought was a way to realise and 'organize the way of peace'. In his article 'The Opportunity of

of their own affairs, until they too become free and equal members of the world's League [...]. Is it to be conquest or is it to be League? For any sort of man except the German the question is will you be a free citizen or will you be an underling to the German Imperialism?', 'MEMORANDUM OF THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PROPAGANDA' (March Memo), INF 4/9, p. 8.

⁹² *The War That Will End War*, p. 94.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 97.

Liberalism', Wells explained how the war offered the Liberals the means to achieve their goals. 'Ideas that have ruled life as though they were divine truths'—such as the rights of property and individualism—'are being chased and slaughtered in the streets', argued Wells, leaving 'Socialism and Collectivism' in their wakes.⁹⁴ He emphasised that out of necessity the state had had to take control of a number of industries, and there was 'not even a letter to *The Times* to object'. Wells chastised the Liberals for holding onto the illusions of representative democracy—'a swarm of little wrangling men swept before the mindless bosom of brute accident'—and he asked if they were ready to take part in planning 'this vast collapse or re-birth of the world' by producing 'ideas that will rule'?⁹⁵ Wells invites these disaffected Liberals to join in writing propaganda that could make their ideals into reality—public ownership, state-run industry, redistribution of wealth, jobs for greater numbers of people. He argued the war had shown the real weaknesses of capitalism and that the peace, when it came, would afford an important opportunity to reconstruct and re-plan not only Europe, but to construct a global government and globally-run economy.⁹⁶ He asked Liberals to join with him in insisting upon a 'World conference at the end of this conflict' to help 'set up a Peace League that will control the globe'.⁹⁷ The world would be ripe for it, he argued, and ripe also 'for the banishment of the private industry in armaments and all the vast corruption that it entails from the earth for ever'.⁹⁸ Bringing about the great changes in economic and military practices that Liberals hoped for, Wells believed, would require power, control, and management from above, not a revolution of the masses from below or slow social reform.

In the conclusion of his article Wells makes sure to demonstrate his ultimate goal of dismantling a system comprised of the personal greed of the few for a system that would benefit the many: 'we may help to set going methods and machinery that will put the feeding and housing of the population and the administration of the land

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 58.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 60.

⁹⁶ The war had shown that unchecked individualism was a blueprint for disaster—Wells insisted that what was needed was the application of science and rationality in public affairs. The war had made manifest the idea of a nation 'as one great economic system working together, an idea which could not possibly have got into the sluggish and conservative British intelligence in half a century by any other means than the stark necessities of this war': see 'Europe and Socialism', *What is Coming?*, pp. 101, 113.

⁹⁷ *The War That Will End War*, p. 62.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 63.

out of the reach of private greed and selfishness for ever.’⁹⁹ Wells expressed similar sentiments in the one-page handbill *Britain v. Germany: The Socialist Point of View. Letter from the Infamous Socialist Writer*. Unlike other socialist writers (such as Shaw, for example, with whom he disagreed), Wells’s global peace was rooted in going to war and defeating the Germans:

We have to organise the peace and social justice of the world, we have to educate mankind to these ends, as thoroughly as the Germans have organised their state and trained their children for this war of pride and aggression upon mankind. The Programme of Socialism is not complete unless it includes the Peace of the World [...] to be secured [...] not by indolence and cowardice posing as Mystical Pacifism, but the strenuous resolve of all free peoples to beat down the armed threat in their midst [...] THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST WHO IS NOT DOING HIS UTMOST TO-DAY TO OVERTHROW GERMAN IMPERIALISM IS EITHER A DELIBERATE TRAITOR OR A HOPELESS FOOL.¹⁰⁰

Global peace was the goal, according to Wells, but achieving that goal would not come from opposing the war and waiting for a revolution or a just state to appear. Instead it required hard work—particularly work that would eliminate German aggression. By organising education around such values, Britons would do as thorough a job as the Germans had done with their children in respect of militarist ideology, emphasising again the twin aspects of propaganda as a weapon to excise evil ideas such as German ‘pride and aggression’, and a tool to establish new ones of ‘peace and social justice’.

Wielding propaganda as a tool for demolishing the old ideas in order to establish a lasting peace (which implied certain socialist principles) was for Wells the responsibility of intellectuals. The destruction of the idea of militarism using propaganda would hasten an end to war. Wells reiterated some of these concepts in the final paragraph of this book of essays. He reiterated that ‘[t]hought, speech persuasion, an incessant appeal for clear intentions, clear statements for the dispelling of suspicion and the abandonment of secrecy and trickery’ should be the ‘work for every man who writes or talks and has the slightest influence on another creature’.¹⁰¹ The monstrosity of the conflict—with its famine, darkness and murder—would

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Reprinted in *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells: Volume 2*, p. 395.

¹⁰¹ *The War That Will End War*, p. 98.

vanish, he suggested, if we could reach the understanding that the war was a war of ideas. Wells argued that understanding this would be akin to a child reaching for the light to dispel the night. He maintained that the war continued because intellectuals ‘who might elucidate and inspire’ were too weak to turn these lights on.¹⁰² As a result, during the first few weeks of the war darkness had crept over them, and had made the world feel like ‘a waking nightmare’ of paralysis, ‘when, with salvation within one’s reach, one cannot move, and the voice dies in one’s throat’. Propaganda was a way for intellectuals to dispel this nightmare by turning on the lights. The alternative was to choke with the truth still unspoken in one’s throat. Propaganda would not only vanquish the darkness of militarism, it could also provide the light via which intellectuals may be guided to salvation. Wells used his journalism to provide some light for the pathway; his literature and his faith in God furnished the rest.

2 WELLS ASKS GOD FOR A WORLD STATE: MR. BRITLING SEES IT THROUGH

Warren Wagar (2004) argues that ‘disregarding almost everything he had said about the causes of international conflict in his pre-war writings’, ‘the patriot’ Wells blamed Germany alone for starting the war and ‘blessed the armed forces of the Entente’ for opposing militarism.¹⁰³ However, Wagar goes on to note, Wells also ‘hailed the war as a unique opportunity to create a new world order that would render future wars impossible’. As this chapter has already outlined, a corollary to Wells’s interpretation of propaganda as a weapon to destroy ideas was its function as a tool to build new ideas and create belief. Wells wanted to destroy ideas such as militarism, imperialism, and nationalism, and in their place he wished to use propaganda to create ideas of global governance that would bring an end to conflict, poverty, and inequality. Over the course of the war, this second function of propaganda as a tool to help people come to accept a world state would dominate his thinking, a change that can be examined in his war novels. Part of this change from propaganda as a weapon towards propaganda as a tool also coincided with his increasingly vocal belief in God (he would later repudiate his wartime turn to religion most stridently in his *Autobiography*). Indeed, Wells’s beliefs in both the world state and God were closely intertwined in the war years, as he would later reflect: ‘I cannot disentangle now,

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 99.

¹⁰³ Warren Wagar, *H. G. Wells: Traversing Time* (Middletown, Conn, 2004), p. 148.

perhaps at no time could I have disentangled, what was simple and direct in this theocratic phase in my life, from what was—*politic*.’¹⁰⁴ God, like propaganda, became another means for spreading faith in the world state: ‘my deity was far less like the heavenly Father of a devout Catholic [...] he was like a personification of, let us say, the Five Year Plan’.¹⁰⁵ Wells’s approach to propaganda as this collusion between his faiths in both a globally organised government and God as leader is best illustrated in his war time novel, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*. Wells’s novel continued his early calls for the novel to respond and engage with the world (see above discussion on ‘The Contemporary Novel’)—arguments he elaborated further in another of his wartime books, *Boon*.

While Wells presented *Boon* a manuscript of the writer George Boon edited by ‘Reginald Bliss’, he also acknowledged himself as the true author of the book on the title-page. *Boon* is a patchwork of connected fragments supposedly authored by the recently deceased George Boon, and includes satirical portraits of the aesthetes of the day, such as Henry James and Ford Madox Ford (still known at the time as Hueffer). The book furthers much of Wells’s thinking about the form and function of the novel, and particularly about its role in wartime. The concluding fragment of George Boon’s fictional narrative ‘The Last Trump’ seemingly focuses on the complacency of mankind:

Men will go on in their ways as rabbits will go on feeding in their hutches within a hundred yards of a battery of artillery. For rabbits are rabbits, and made to eat and breed, and men are human beings and creatures of habit and custom and prejudice; and what has made them, what will judge them, what will destroy them—they may turn their eyes to it at times as the rabbits will glance at the concussion of the guns, but it will never draw them away from eating lettuce and sniffing after their does.¹⁰⁶

Boon’s stoic acceptance of the indifference of men and rabbits to the sound of guns implies that in his final days Boon may have given up hope that the fear of war might animate men to avoid the pain and bloodshed of conflict. Wells explains Boon’s cynicism as a symptom of ill health. To Boon, men and rabbits may not seem to

¹⁰⁴ *Experiment in Autobiography*, Volume 2, p. 673.

¹⁰⁵ The passage continues to note that ‘a Communist might have accepted him as a metaphor.’ *Experiment in Autobiography*, Volume 2, p. 674.

¹⁰⁶ *Boon*, pp. 313-14.

respond to war, but for Wells it was not necessarily so; the writer had a role in trying to make the end of war important to people:

It is better that I should help than not in the great task of literature, the great task of becoming the thought and the expressed intention of the race, the task of taming violence, organizing the aimless, destroying error [...]. [I]t does not matter how individually feeble we writers and disseminators are [...] as the feeblest puppy has to bark at cats and burglars. And we have to do it because we know, in spite of the darkness, the wickedness, the haste and hate, we know in our hearts, though no momentary trumpeting has shown it to us, that judgement is all about us and God stands close at hand.¹⁰⁷

Even if the effects are similar to those of puppies barking at burglars, Wells believed that certain men—certain writers—should use their talent and try to change the world. Wells's compulsion to make the novel represent the world of everyday life, as well as to face the political realities of the world, contrasted sharply with the vision of the disinterested aesthete (epitomised in this particular book by Henry James). Wells presented the aesthete as being aloof and unaware of the world that surrounded him. Under no illusion that his writing would necessarily change anything, Wells still found it important at least to try to offer up his literature as a way of making sense of the world—and indeed (more particularly) the war—to his readers. At the end of the quotation above, Wells mentions that God judges us as a witness but not an actor in our lives—being aware of God's watchful gaze is one means of gauging our ethical responsibility. As this section will discuss, this analysis of God and ethics was typical of Wells's faith: Wells's God was present, but non-interfering; he was watchful and omnipotent, but ultimately left mankind responsible for its own fate. This responsibility made the role of writers to guide other people towards the right choices all the more ethically important. Wells saw it as his goal to create a world without war, and propaganda was one of the mechanisms to spread this notion—not only in the form of essays, but in fiction as well.

Wells's most recent novel, *The Research Magnificent* (1915), still concerned itself with commenting on and even improving the world. In this case, Well's suggested that improvement would come from establishing a new aristocracy (similar the Samurai of *Modern Utopia*) whose members would act as proper leaders and slowly contribute to the disintegration and re-integration of other nations and states

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 320.

(‘[t]hey’re things like niggers’ nose-rings and Chinese secret societies; childish things, idiot things that have to go’), and ‘who will preach the only possible peace, which is the peace of the world-state, the open conspiracy of all the same men in the world against the things that break us up into wars and futilities’.¹⁰⁸ As I discuss in the Conclusion, Wells’s desire that this responsible leadership should facilitate the world state—and specifically the notion of ‘the open conspiracy’ of these new aristocrats to produce that world state—would continue in his post-war writing. However, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* moves away from this secular focus on leadership, to discuss faith and the idea of God as leader—ideas he would elaborate on in his other war-writings, such as his book of theology, *God the Invisible King* (1917), as well as the novels *The Soul of a Bishop* (1917) and *The Undying Fire* (1919).

An enormously successful novel, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* went through thirteen printings in Britain between its publication in October and Christmas 1916. According to Lovat Dickson, the novel’s success in America was legendary and did much to restore Wells’s finances as well as his fame.¹⁰⁹ The novel opens in the summer of 1914—war ‘had not been a reality of the daily life of England for more than a thousand years’, and the British had become ‘the spoilt children of peace.’¹¹⁰ Still, the threat of a German war, Wells notes, hung as a threat over their entire generation: ‘A threat that goes on for too long ceases to have the effect of a threat, and this overhanging possibility had become a fixed and scarcely disturbing feature of the British situation’.¹¹¹ Mr. Britling is a successful author who lives in a village in Essex named Matching’s Easy; Buitenhuis describes him as an average little Briton, whose various activities ‘as an artist, as an irresponsible driver, and as an adulterer

¹⁰⁸ H. G. Wells, *The Research Magnificent* (London, 1915), p. 239.

¹⁰⁹ Dickson, p. 266. According to Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, American royalties totalled 20,000 pounds by Christmas 1916 (p. 311).

¹¹⁰ H. G. Wells, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (London, 1916), p. 212.

¹¹¹ *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, p. 125. In fact, Wells goes on to note, this inevitable German war was the source of a great deal of political pressure: ‘It kept the navy sedulous and Colonel Rendezvous uneasy; it stimulated a small and not very influential section of the press to a series of reminders that bored Mr. Britling acutely, it was the excuse for an agitation that made national service ridiculous, and quite subconsciously it affected his attitude to a hundred things. For example, it was a factor in his very keen indignation at the Tory levity in Ireland, in his disgust with many things that irritated or estranged Indian feeling. It bored him; there it was, a danger, and there was no denying it, and yet he believed firmly that it was a mine that would never be fired, an avalanche that would never fall. It was a nuisance, a stupidity that kept Europe drilling and wasted enormous sums on unavoidable preparations; it hung up everything like a noisy argument in a drawing-room, but that human weakness and folly would ever let the mine actually explode he did not believe’ (Ibid).

symbolize the preoccupations' and indulgences of the Edwardian period.¹¹² His untidiness, passion for newly invented ball-games, and his bad driving of a car he names Gladys, make him (at least to a degree) a comic character. As the novel itself explains, the 'story is essentially the history of the opening and of the realisation of the Great War as it happened to a small group of people in Essex, and more particularly to one human brain.'¹¹³ The war takes over Britling's life; and instead of seeing it through—as he had vowed he would—he struggles to find meaning within the chaos of the war: 'On the very brink of war—on the brink of Armageddon [...] Do they understand?'¹¹⁴ At the close of Book I, War itself is personified, and delivers some haunting pronouncements:

"I am the Fact [...] and I stand astride the path of life. I am the threat of death and extinction that has always walked beside life, since life began. There can be nothing else and nothing more in human life until you have reckoned with me."¹¹⁵

Echoing Wells's calls for writers to engage with the world, Britling realises '[w]e must all do what we can' and rushes home to write a pamphlet about the conflict.¹¹⁶ The title of his pamphlet 'And Now War Ends' is reminiscent of Wells's own *The War That Will End War*, suggesting an autobiographical connection between Wells and Britling.¹¹⁷ But we should be wary of extending this analogy too far, as some of the key events of Britling's life—particularly those involving his son—are not experiences that Wells shared.

Britling initially welcomes the war as a way to wake his countrymen from their torpor. This awakening includes sending his son, Hugh, to fight in the war. But Hugh's letters from the front initiate Britling's disintegrating faith in the war, and his realisation that the war is neither as well run nor as honourable as he once thought: 'the spirit and honour and drama had gone out of this war [...] [t]he war became a nightmare vision'.¹¹⁸ Hugh's letters assist Britling in understanding that 'even by the standards of adventure and conquest' the war 'had long since become a monstrous

¹¹² Buitenhuis, p. 124.

¹¹³ *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, p. 210.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 180.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 186.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 182.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 185. This is also suggested by Patrick Parrinder who goes further to suggest that Britling is a 'fictionalized autobiography' (see *H. G. Wells*, p. 98). This notion is complicated by the fact that Wells never lost his son in the war as Britling had done.

¹¹⁸ *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, p. 325.

absurdity'.¹¹⁹ Considering his earlier enthusiasm for the war, this is a difficult conclusion for Britling to reach. Eventually, Britling would cease 'to write about the war at all', abandoning them because he could no longer 'imagine them counting, affecting any one, producing any effect.'¹²⁰ Britling's further disillusionment and his eventual turn towards faith and hope are directly precipitated however by the death of his son.

Following his denouncement of Mr. Direck for his views about the war—as an American, Direck parrots the line on American neutrality—Britling receives a telegram informing him that Hugh, his son, has been killed. His first reactions involve a great deal of fretting over how much to tip the girl that brought the telegram—he wants to tip adequately for the message announcing his son's death. Once he tells his wife, the weight of the matter starts to sink in: 'Why did I let him go?'¹²¹ The few pages following this announcement of death are devastating and painful: 'Loneliness struck him like a blow.'¹²² He imagines his boy playing on the lawn as if he were still alive, and vows to work tomorrow but promises 'To-night is yours [...]. Can you hear me, can you hear? Your father [...] who had counted on you...'¹²³ His death also inspires lyric and fond remembrance: 'He came into life as bright and quick as this robin looking for food'.¹²⁴ In his mourning he makes further demands of himself to try to account for the war, to explain it, to find some meaning in the 'monstrous absurdity.'

He begins by trying to broker political solutions to end the war as a means of mediating the loss of his son: 'The only possible government in Albania [...] is a group of republican cantons after the Swiss pattern [...] [w]e have to put an end to the folly and vanity of kings, and to any people ruling any people but themselves'.¹²⁵ Letty, the wife of Britling's secretary Teddy, has a different solution for bringing about an end to war:

[...] after the war [...] I shall go off to Germany and learn my way about there. And I will murder some German. Not just a common German, but a German who belongs to the guilty kind. A sacrifice. It ought, for instance, to be comparatively easy to kill some of the

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 351.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 248.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 375.

¹²² Ibid, p. 380.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 402.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 403.

children of the Crown Prince or some of the Bavarian princes. I shall prefer German children. I shall sacrifice them to Teddy. It ought not to be difficult to find people who can be made directly responsible, the people who invented the poison gas, for instance, and kill them, or to kill people who are dear to them. Or necessary to them [...]. Women can do that so much more easily than men [...]. That perhaps is the only way in which wars of this kind will ever be brought to an end. By women insisting on killing the kind of people who make them.¹²⁶

Letty's solution to end war is distinct from Britling's—she seeks revenge and the assassination of those men that create war, while Britling seeks elaborate political reform. Her appeals to violence belie her distress about rumours concerning her husband's safety—her relish in imagining the killing of children is particularly grotesque, and indicates some kind of fear and anxiety concerning war even as she employs the language of war to call for its end. When it is confirmed that Teddy is dead, instead of raging in a fit of violence, she collapses with sorrow. Thus Letty and Britling find that they 'had not been so comforted before since their losses came upon them.'¹²⁷

Part of the way Britling comforts Letty is through elaborating on his intricate political solutions to end war: 'no life is safe, no happiness is safe, there is no chance of bettering life until we have made an end to all that causes war'.¹²⁸ However, beyond his gravitation towards politics as a solution to war, Britling also turns to God in order to make sense of it all:

I have suddenly found it and seen it plain. I see it so plain that I am amazed that I have not always seen it [...]. It is, you see, so easy to understand that there is a God, and how complex and wonderful and brotherly He is, when one thinks of those dear boys who by the thousand, by the hundred thousand, have laid down their lives [...]. Ay, and there were German boys too who did the same [...]. The cruelties, the injustice, the brute aggression—they saw it differently. They laid down their lives—they laid down their lives [...]. Those dear lives, those lives of hope and sunshine.¹²⁹

Enlightened by his vision of God, Britling reaches out for faith as a means of making sense of the hundreds of thousands left dead ('those lives of hope and sunshine') by

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 386.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 403.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 407.

the war. Paradoxically, he seems to embrace the idea that God is all the more ‘wonderful and brotherly’ as well as ‘complex’ because he let all those boys die. Letty is wary and opposes his new-found religion:

As for God—either there is no God or he is an idiot. He is a slobbering idiot. He is like some idiot who pulls off the wings of flies [...]. There is no progress. Nothing gets better. How can *you* believe in God after Hugh? [...] [H]e must let these things happen. Or why do they happen?¹³⁰

Britling retorts that it is the theologians who have claimed that God is all-powerful, and so have to answer to these charges. For Britling, Christianity’s suffering Christ, ‘a poor mocked and wounded God nailed on a cross of matter’, is more believable than an omnipotent being that is responsible for creating everything—the ‘Jew God’.¹³¹ For Britling, ‘God is finite [...]. A finite God who struggles in his great and comprehensive way as we struggle in our weak and silly way—who is *with* us’.¹³² God is not omnipotent; instead, he attempts to do right in the same way that mankind tries: ‘Why! if I thought there was an omnipotent God who looked down on battles and deaths and all the waste and horror of this war—able to prevent these things—doing them to amuse Himself—I would spit in his empty face...’¹³³

Wells intertwines the struggle for the realisation of the world state with that for God’s struggle to come into being. Britling’s God struggles to manifest Himself as the divine ruler of the world through the beauty of the world. Britling believes that that beauty will become most manifest when there is justice for all people; thus the realisation of the world state is the realisation of God, and Britling focuses his energies towards achieving that goal. Dickson explains Wells’s own conception of a finite god as ‘mystical in the sense of being raised above humanity but finite in the sense that he is simply the collective consciousness of mankind, the Captain at the head of his troop, who fights through man against Evil’.¹³⁴ Britling then elevates the idea of his responsibility to initiate a political solution to end war to the level of faith and God. In what we understand as a moment of conversion, Britling (we are told) ‘lay prone under the hedge’ with the atlas in front of him, frantically redrawing the

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp. 405-06.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 407.

¹³² Ibid, p. 406.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Dickson, p. 264.

borders of the world's nations in red ink.¹³⁵ Britling feels as if he is doing God's work by co-ordinating a lasting peace and (possibly) realising the City of God, or the world state, here on earth.

Britling's new found faith inspires him to dedicate himself to a new piece of writing, an essay titled 'The Better Government of the World'. Wells's Britling mediates his mourning over his son and his disillusionment with war via his self-absorption within a political project. He spends his nights in constant work—'unless he defended himself by working, the losses and cruelties of the war came and grimaced at him, insufferably'.¹³⁶ The sufferings of refugees and of dead soldiers haunt him, as do the imminent economic and social dissolution he envisions following in the wake of the war. The stupid and triumphant people who swagger during this war are bringing about the 'triumph of evil'. These men help to direct the spirit of the day towards a war which has shattered his boy's inanimate skull—scattering the 'stuff of his exquisite brain into clay'.¹³⁷ Amidst this chaos of emotions and the grotesque brutality of his imagination, Britling holds onto his idea of a God that can rule triumphant through the achievement of world governance.

In achieving God's kingdom on earth, democracy was not going to prove to be the best tool. Britling believes in democracy, but thinks society is not ready for it. What is still required is a means to capture 'the consciousness of men', and to create 'uniformed organisations' through 'years of patient thinking, of experimenting, [and] of discussion'.¹³⁸ In other words, people are not ready to make up their own minds—they require more training before they will be ready for having a say in leading and ruling themselves. Britling struggles with the nightmarish realities of the war and death, and with his own fervent belief in God in the shape of the world state. His struggle is put to the test when Britling learns that his son's German tutor, Heinrich, had also died.

Britling puts aside his manuscript of 'The Better Government of the World' to write a letter to the parents of Heinrich. He claims that the tutor meant as much to him as his own children, and stops writing when he reminisces about their childhood together: 'the photographs [reminded him] how kind and pleasant a race mankind can

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 409. Carey refers to him as 'poor crazy Mr. Britling scribbling red lines on his map of the world'. John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London, 1992), p. 151.

¹³⁶ *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, p. 417.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 418.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

be'.¹³⁹ This happiness unfortunately renews his anger and hatred at the Germans who started the war. Quickly, Britling's letter starts to degenerate into a polemic, employing what he himself identifies as 'the tinpot style' of his bitter prose.¹⁴⁰ He works and reworks the phrase 'War is like a black fabric' a number of times before deciding that his letter requires a draft to be drawn up first.

Working all night, Britling rants about the origins and conduct of the war: 'I want to tell you quite plainly and simply that I think that Germany which is chief and central in this war is most to blame for the war'.¹⁴¹ Britling acknowledges that Britain was not blameless in starting the war—in particular via its enthusiasm for empire—but makes it clear that Germany was the aggressor in the war, and by implication is the party responsible for the deaths of both their sons. As he continues to write throughout the night, his thoughts become increasingly fragmented; they make less and less sense. Finally, Britling realises what a 'weak, silly, ill-informed and hasty-minded writer' he is, and how much he needs to humble himself to allow God to pass through him: 'And for the first time clearly he felt a Presence of which he had thought very many times in the last few weeks, a Presence so close to him that it was behind his eyes and in his brain and hands'.¹⁴² He feels the presence of Hugh and Heinrich as well as 'the Master, the Captain of Mankind, it was God, there present with him, and he knew that it was God'. Britling continues to write with renewed vigour, but his writing is no less fragmented and nonsensical (Wells reproduces a page from Britling's manuscript which contains a few scribbles and the name of his son, see image below). While sitting in a room with both his thoughts and his papers scattered, Britling is sure only that he has found and felt the presence of God.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 426.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 428.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 432.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 438.

Hugh
 Hugh
 My dear Hugh

 Lawyers Princes
 Dealers in contention

Honesty
 'Blood Blood'

Animate an end to them

Figure 1. Britling's Doodles.

Dickson argues that *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* marked the beginning of Wells's use of God to support the idea of world government. Wells would elaborate these ideas, most particularly the idea of a Finite God—one that participates in our struggle—in his non-fiction treatise *God the Invisible King*:

The conception of a young and energetic God, an Invisible Prince growing in strength and wisdom, who calls men and women to his service and who gives salvation from self and mortality only through self-abandonment to his service, necessarily involves a demand for a complete revision and fresh orientation of the life of the convert [...]. God faces the blackness of the Unknown and the blind joys and confusions and cruelties of Life, as one who leads mankind through a dark jungle to a great conquest. He brings mankind not rest but a sword.¹⁴³

Wells's God is a leader who rouses people to action—leading 'mankind through a dark jungle to a great conquest'—but refrains from acting directly; he inspires action instead of taking it himself. As I have already mentioned, Wells later repudiated his search for salvation and comfort in God. In his *Experiment in Autobiography* he explains that turning to God was the choice of someone suffering a great deal of stress. Wells echoes Britling's own comments about the comfort of God's presence when facing the darkness of the war, claiming that 'it is a very good thing to imagine the still companionship of an understanding Presence on a sleepless night [...]. Then

¹⁴³ Wells, *God the Invisible King* (London, 1917), p. 114.

one can get to sleep again with something of the reassurance of a child in its cot.’¹⁴⁴ Wells lamented that the turn to God transformed his ‘New Republic’ into a ‘Divine Monarchy’, but he explained that it was comfort that he sought in doing so. This belief, for Wells, was simply a way of deifying his arguments for world government and giving them a new form.

In repudiating his belief in God—however rational or finite he believed Him to be—Wells did not reflect on how his tendency to embrace Utopianism and faith also informed his passion for world government. Britling does not just embrace God for the answers to his nightmares; he argues for God *and* the world state as intertwined necessities. It is evident in the concluding pages of the novel that Britling’s turn to God and the world state are desperate attempts to rationalise the meaning of the war and the death of his son. This presentation of Britling is tragic—he uses these ideas as a way to be able to continue living; a way of making his world hold together. However, Wells does not understand himself in the same terms; despite a brief lapse into faith that God was to provide the salvation of mankind, Wells argued that his rationalism, his scientific nature, and his universalism all pointed to the necessity of working to create the world state. During the war, God—and for that matter, fiction—were just other guises for his fervent belief in world governance. As the war proceeded and he became disillusioned with government propaganda, education would become his new focal means for spreading belief.

3 THE TURN TO EDUCATION: *JOAN AND PETER*

After all, the Empire, indeed the whole world of mankind, is made up of Joans and Peters. What the Empire is, what mankind becomes, is nothing but the sum of what we have made of the Joan and Peters. (Wells, *Joan and Peter*)¹⁴⁵

Wells’s beliefs in the world state, and in propaganda as both a weapon to destroy certain ideas and as a tool to facilitate and build others, changed over the course of the war. The use of propaganda presupposed for Wells an able group of leaders that would wage war on militarism and establish a more just society after the war. Wells had found that the British government lacked an adequately trained

¹⁴⁴ *Experiment in Autobiography*, Volume 2, p. 673.

¹⁴⁵ Wells, *Joan and Peter* (London, 1933), p. 181.

leadership, thus making their employment of propaganda just another weapon in repeating the cycles of continuing war. In his novels, Wells was able to dramatise these conflicts, his turn to God, and his later abandonment of propaganda for education. Wells's second war-novel demonstrates his turn to education as well as his continued dedication to the novel's ethical responsibility to engage in the social and political realities of the world.

Appearing in 1918, *Joan and Peter* is a novel about the education of two young and affluent children under the watchful tutelage of their uncle Oswald and their coming of age during the Great War. Wells uses this narrative frame to discourse on the nature of education and on the necessity of establishing strong leaders via appropriate educational processes. Wells demonstrates an increasing frustration with the war, particularly with the leadership that insisted on pursuing their narrow nationalist goals: 'old men who have led the world to destruction [...] ignorant men who can neither make nor end war; the men who have lost the freshness and simplicity but none of the greed and egotism of youth [...]. Germany is no longer the villain of the piece.'¹⁴⁶ Wells's novel chastised Allied leaders for failing to share in the blame for the war: they simply were not adequately prepared to accept his ideas regarding world peace, Wells later argued, because they held onto chauvinist and superstitious beliefs.

Wells argued that in order to achieve world peace through global governance, leaders needed to be trained to accept this reality. Such training would require new forms of education that dismissed the traditional emphasis on Greek and Latin, and instead turned towards progress. This new education therefore amounted to an increased emphasis on practical sciences and mathematics:

You must still keep on with Latin and Greek, with courses that will never reach through the dull grind to the stale old culture beyond. Why not drop all that? Why not be modern outright, and leave Eton and Harrow and Winchester and Westminster to go the old ways? Why not teach modern history and modern philosophy in plain English here? Why not question the world we see, instead of the world of those dead Levantines? Why not be a modern school altogether?¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 325-26.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 189.

Oswald believed that new methods in education are essential for training what he called ‘the fortunate Elite’. Since their society cannot yet afford to educate everyone adequately, he argues, it is important to develop an educational elite (as opposed to an idle, aristocratic elite)—‘It’s to them and their class the Empire will look,’ Oswald explains. Furthermore, it is to them that education should be directed in order to explain the aims, responsibilities, and duties associating with improving the world. Wells’s emphasis on education was thus to place the responsibility for improving the world on the next generation, to have it take over from the incompetence of the current leaders:

You and your generation have to renew and justify England in a new world. You have to link us again in a common purpose with our kind everywhere [...] you have to take the world out of the hands of these weary and worn men, the old and oldish men, these men who can learn no more [...]. You have to become political. Now. You have to become responsible. Now. You have to create. Now. You, with your fresh vision, with the lessons you have learned still burning bright in your minds, you have to remake the world.¹⁴⁸

Wells could no longer trust propaganda to create a new world order, because the leaders who were supposed to administer the materials and create the new future (‘old and oldish men’) could not be trusted to do so. He was forced to revert to the idea that education should train and establish a new elite, who would then have to take up the responsibility of remaking the world.

Wells came to see educational reform as crucial to achieving the world peace that the current leadership would not bring about; and *Joan and Peter* represents his thinking and promotion of this idea through the medium of the novel. In his own ‘Preface’ to the 1933 edition, Wells recalls that the novel—one of his most ambitious—was meant to complement *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, and was ‘designed to review the possibilities of a liberal education’ in England in 1918. Wells blames the lack of success that the book enjoyed (he describes it as one of his least known and least regarded books) on the post-war shortage of paper, and the publisher’s insistence on setting an expensive price for it. Recalling his claims that he did not want his writing to be escapist any longer, but rather to offer the means of interacting and even changing the world, in his ‘Preface’ Wells share his frustrations

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 397-8.

with trying to write a novel with the wider intention of emphasising the need for educational reform as a means of realising a Utopia through the world state.

Joan and Peter are two bright and loveable children. Due to a series of deaths and accidents they are shuffled off to experience the care of different guardians and a variety of educational institutions. In his 'Preface', Wells explains that he fell in love with Joan while writing the book, and that she was his favourite and best-executed heroine. He parodies the fear of punishment and the fear of God that children are subjected to in Britain, claiming it inhibits their natural curiosity, strength, and vigour. These critiques come from Oswald, Peter's uncle and Godfather. Oswald is not as comic as Britling, but instead is a rather serious colonial administrator in Africa who is intent on bringing order to the colonies, and upon his return home (due to repeated illnesses) to Britain as well. He takes the education of Peter and Joan as seriously as he took Britain's best work in bringing 'pacification and civilization' to Africa.¹⁴⁹ However, upon returning to London, he finds it lacking not only the beauty but also the order that is offered in British-administered Africa. Convinced that education is the most important factor in bringing order if not to England, then at least to the two children he takes responsibility for, Oswald puts all his efforts in saving them from the violence and ignorance of the antiquated public-school system. Wells therefore shift in this novel from the sort of grand utopian-vision exemplified by the colonial project, to a more microscopic vision of the particularised individual education of two future leaders. His hope for propaganda was that it might facilitate this utopia; but Wells's later thinking illustrates his pessimism concerning leadership and the use of propaganda in the hands of the unprepared.

Oswald reflects that in the years leading up to the war there was an 'educational stagnation in England'.¹⁵⁰ The people who should have been leaders were too busy 'having a thoroughly good time', and no one thought of 'sticking a goad in a teacher' to explain to pupils the growing conflicts between worker and employer. The system, he thinks, has the 'inertia of a spinning top' and could be summarised under the motto: 'Learn, obey, create nothing, initiate nothing, have no troublesome doubts'.¹⁵¹ Innovation, creativity and progress had not been emphasised at all. Oswald criticises the British dedication to custom over innovation, something

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 151.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 193.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 194.

Wells would also have Jacob Huss (the elderly schoolmaster in *The Undying Fire*) denounce when he advocates the teaching of history, science, and philosophy over the classics as a way to better achieve God's paradise on earth. Without proper education, Oswald argues, children are teaching each other incorrectly about the most important issues in life—God and sex amongst them. Furthermore, without the proper development of their minds, children are susceptible not only to the 'propaganda of the socialists', but to an inadequate understanding of empire and of the general project of creating a better society.¹⁵² Children were not taught to be critical—to be independent in their thinking. Wells believed that this independence of mind would necessarily lead people to the same conclusions that he had—something that it is easier to accept in the realm of a novel than in actual life.

God remains an important element of this better society; or more precisely, God is the force in the struggle that can help us to realise this perfect society. Peter eventually enlists in the war, and as a result of an injury he imagines meeting God, and making a formal complaint about the state of the world. Peter's God is hurried and stressed, and has a dingy, messy office, 'very like the London War Office'.¹⁵³ Peter's experience of fighting at the front leaves him disillusioned about the military and political leadership, and he projects this distaste onto God. Peter interrogates God about why he would make a world full of war and containing the German Kaiser. He chastises God for his mismanagement of the earth: 'the appalling waste [...] the waste of material, the waste of *us*, the waste of everything'.¹⁵⁴ Pointing to a cobweb in the office, Peter gets impassioned—there is 'no decency [...] no order[...] why do you suffer all these cruel and unclean things?'¹⁵⁵ God patiently listens to these complaints and then instructs Peter that if he does not like the state of the world, he should 'then *change* it [...]. If you have no will to change it, you have no right to criticise it.'¹⁵⁶ God admonishes mankind's—but more specifically Peter's—wasteful attitude. 'Don't blame me', God argues; mankind can change the world that He created, but it is easier to blame him than to do anything oneself: 'It depends upon you [...] why don't *you* exert yourself'. From these scenes we can better understand how Wells's notion of God fits in with his greater political project. All the misery of the world,

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 355.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 356.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 357.

God argues, is 'purely educational'.¹⁵⁷ We can learn not just from the natural world, but also from the social, political and economic realms about how to make a better society; and moreover about how the responsibility to make that better world is our own. We cannot expect a supernatural force to do it for us. Although the distinction is fine, Wells further emphasises how action is essential to faith, and in fact constitutes faith—it animates our collective responsibility to make things better in an active—instead of a passive—sense.

For Oswald, it is education from beginning to end that can best change society, and it is on education he focuses his efforts. Changing society and changing education are one and the same for him:

And see what education always has to be! The process of taking this imperfectly social, jealous, deeply savage creature and socialising him. The development of education and the development of human societies are one and the same thing. Education makes the social man.¹⁵⁸

For Oswald, education is what socialises us and what we must be socialised into; it will bring about the unity of all people, as well as necessary world peace. God is an abstract idea for him (like the square root of negative one), one that ultimately contains the notion of unity. Through this unity humans will realise that we are one race, universally, and not simply a set of greedy individuals. The three characters decide that they have a chance to achieve this better world—to go beyond empire and the Monroe Doctrine ('great as these ideas have been')—to conquer Germany's new Caesarism, and to discover a more advanced universalism: 'There is nothing else to do, nothing else that people of our sort can do at all, nothing but baseness, grossness, vileness, and slavery unless we live now as a part of that process of a world peace.'¹⁵⁹

The novel, in its conclusion, is yet another vehicle for Wells's world state. Michael Draper asserts that the novel was 'not structured so as to unfold the experiences of its characters but to provide opportunity for Wellsian comment and discussion'; whereas Batchelor criticises the novel for 'solipsistic conviction that only one point of view is possible'.¹⁶⁰ This time the three characters agree that a

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 356.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 393.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 395.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Draper, *H. G. Wells* (London, 1987), p. 99, Batchelor, p. 99.

preventative or policing 'League of Nations' is ideal; but they seek one where nations work together towards the common betterment of all people.¹⁶¹ In identifying God as part of the system, Wells's characters do not want to debate the fine points of theology with the Catholics such as G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Instead, their God is one of progress, one who facilitates democracy based not on greed, but on enlightened values chosen in such a manner that all people can benefit from equality. God exists in these ideas, in the manifestation of more universal and just thinking about the world; he *is* the world state, or rather the world state is the ultimate expression of Wells's God. It is the motivating spirit, the unnameable and incomprehensible essence of God that motivates Oswald in the final lines of the novel—despite 'a famine in matches'—to light his lamp with a rolled up newspaper and to start working.¹⁶² Peter decides to become a doctor and Joan wants to learn to build houses—practical activities that leave the idle world of aesthetics and 'Architecture for Art's sake', in Joan's words, by the wayside.¹⁶³ Oswald has discovered victory in his education of these two young people, and continues to want to teach—but now he realises he can also teach through his writing.

Beginning the war with an idealism that the conflict was a war of ideas, Wells's scepticism grew once he had a closer understanding of how propaganda worked from the inside of the Ministry of Information. The war offered him an excellent opportunity to use propaganda to spread his ideas about the world state through articles, pamphlets, and his novels of ideas. His disillusionment came from the realisation that his ideals were not the same ones embodied by the government's propaganda department. Wells also aligned a belief in God as a force within his belief in the world state; and though he later repudiated his religious beliefs, his faith highlights the way in which his dedication to the world state itself was a kind of religion for him. Since *Anticipations* (1902), the world state was—in one guise or another—one of the key visions that motivated Wells's political critiques. Whatever it was that was going to achieve it—be it war, propaganda, belief in God, or education—Wells was committed to employing it in order to make the world state a reality.

¹⁶¹ *Joan and Peter*, pp. 400-01.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 414.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 405.

In *Joan and Peter*, Wells remains dedicated to the cause, focusing on education as a means of achieving salvation. Virginia Woolf, in an unsigned review of *Joan and Peter*, argued that despite being finely written the book felt like a polemic; she felt that she was being ‘talked at’ by someone with an incredible rage about the educational system. Wells had not created characters of flesh and blood, she argued, but rather ‘crude lumps and unmodelled masses, as if the creator’s hand, after moulding empires and sketching deities, had grown too large and slack and insensitive to shape the fine clay of men and women’.¹⁶⁴ Woolf mocks Wells’s own self-fashioning as a kind of deity and architect of new worlds, by suggesting that with his scope so wide he is unable to provide us with the portrait of actual characters, but instead supplying representations of ideas. Based on her reading of his latest novel, Woolf predicted that Wells was only going to abandon further his interest in individuals and fiction for systems and instruction in the years following the war. As is suggested in the conclusion to this chapter, it was perhaps an astute prediction. Wells’s ever-increasing dedication to the world state would take the guise of an interest in education, and specifically education in history: what Partington refers to as a ‘means of progressive indoctrination in world citizenship’.¹⁶⁵

Wells’s new emphasis on educating a new elite of selfless leaders is echoed in his earlier writings such as *Anticipations* and more particularly *A Modern Utopia*, in which he argues in favour of appointing an elite leadership (referred to as ‘the samurai’) to run his ideal republic.¹⁶⁶ Influenced by the Utopias of Plato and More, Wells’s earlier arguments about selfless leaders who are specially trained to govern began to re-emerge. Wells concurred with Plato’s assertion that just as the mind and not the stomach should govern the body, so too the most rational leaders—rather than the appetites of the masses—should rule the city. Like Plato’s guardians, the samurai are not hereditary, nor are they consecrated nor initiated into a group, such as a club. The samurai are volunteer nobility, who live according to a strict, ascetic code of rules

¹⁶⁴ Reprinted in *H. G. Wells: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Patrick Parrinder (London, 1972), p. 247.

¹⁶⁵ Partington, p. 93.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter 9 of *A Modern Utopia* for extended discussion and explanation of ‘the samurai’. Incorporating the science and philosophies of Charles Darwin and Thomas Malthus, in *Anticipations*, Wells argued his New Republic would be constructed on a new ethical system. This new system would privilege ‘right conduct’ in ‘living fully, beautifully, and efficiently’ and to those that could not conform to the rules there would be the penalty of forced exile or perhaps even death: ‘For a multitude of contemptible and silly creatures, fear-driven and helpless and useless, unhappy or hatefully happy in the midst of squalid dishonour, feeble, ugly, inefficient, born of unrestrained lusts, and increasing and multiplying through sheer incontinence and stupidity, the men of the New Republic will have little pity and less benevolence’ (p. 299).

and morals, thus constituting a new ruling class.¹⁶⁷ All ‘political power rests in the samurai’; they are ‘the only administrators, lawyers, practising doctors and public officials of almost all kinds’, and they form nine tenths of the electorate.¹⁶⁸ Similarly to Plato’s concept of the ‘noble lie’, Wells argued that propaganda was both a weapon and a tool, one which was wielded by the governing classes to fight the war on the level of ideas. Propaganda was to be used to bolster support for the war on the home front, and to erode support for the enemy government amongst the Germans. These were not aimed at the abstract goals of King and country, but instead they at that of establishing a new republic on a global scale. Wells shifted from concerning himself with propaganda aimed at the masses to propaganda directed at the leaders themselves—the training and teaching of right conduct and right belief so that leaders might dedicate themselves to the world state as a way of establishing world peace. The samurai would prove to be better rulers than the will of the mob, Wells argued; but in *A Modern Utopia* he did not explain how the samurai were to emerge, or what their training might entail. With his new focus on education, Wells now elaborated on the training of the new elite. Furthermore, with this emphasis on educating the ruling class—instead of propaganda aimed at the mass of mankind—Wells’s dissatisfaction with democracy would become more marked in his late-war and post-war writing. This attitude can be evidenced in the final pages of *Joan and Peter*:

If democracy means that any man may help who can, that school and university will give every man and woman the fairest chance, the most generous inducement to help, to do the thing he can best do under the best conditions, then, *Yes*; but if democracy means getting up a riot and boycott among the stupid and lazy and illiterate whenever anything is doing, then I say *No!* Every human being has got to work, has got to take part.¹⁶⁹

Wells believed that though every person had a role and duty in society, leadership was to be reserved to a trained and educated elite, not ‘the stupid and lazy and illiterate’. Democracy was a fine idea, but if it did not lead to increased feelings of national participation, but instead rewarded laziness and stupidity, then democracy itself needed to be rethought as an ideal political system. Wells had come to believe that if he wished to achieve the world state, he needed to train the

¹⁶⁷ *A Modern Utopia*, p. 187.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207. The other tenth comes from outside members; Wells notes ‘a sort of wisdom [...] comes of sin and laxness which is necessary to the perfect ruling of life.’

¹⁶⁹ *Joan and Peter*, p. 403.

cultural elite to take over the government and to distance themselves from the demands of the masses. Wells noted that ‘[a]ll novels that run through the years of the Great War must needs be political novels and fragments of history’.¹⁷⁰ In this light, *Joan and Peter* demonstrates how Wells’s thinking about propaganda and education was adapted and inflected as a result of the war. As he would note in his post-war *Outline of History* (1920), itself an incredibly popular volume dedicated to popular education, ‘[h]uman history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe’.¹⁷¹ The legacy of his earlier theorisations of propaganda—as well as his practical experience with government propaganda—would continue to loom over his later, post-war political ideology.

4 CONCLUSION: HISTORY AND THE ‘OPEN CONSPIRACY’

For H. G. Wells, propaganda was meant to be a means for waging a war of ideas that would itself bring an end to war by establishing the doctrine that nationalism, militarism and imperialism were antiquated notions that should be dismissed for a singular, unitary government—the material realisation of an ideal that Wells associated with God. Unlike the other authors that this thesis has examined, Wells worked more closely with government propaganda strategy than was required by simply producing pamphlets. The war presented itself to Wells’s political thinking as an opportunity to end war—and propaganda would hasten this ending. Wells’s disillusionment with the war came from working so closely with government propaganda and realising that the British leadership was not fighting for higher ideals such as justice or world peace, but instead for expansionist national priorities. Government propaganda was changing: from courting American opinion, to influencing domestic opinion through the National War Aims Committee, and foreign opinion through the Ministry of Information. Wells initially believed that the British government would want to establish world peace rather than to act as a punitive force against Germany, and he argued further that propaganda was both the most important weapon in fighting the war and also the best tool for establishing the peace.

However, in realising that the current leaders could not be trusted to take the opportunity presented by the war to establish a just settlement that would end periodic European conflicts, Wells became disillusioned with propaganda as a means for

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 302.

¹⁷¹ Wells, *Outline of History* (New York, 1920), Volume 2, p. 594.

rationally convincing either leaders or the people of the correct choices. Propaganda, for Wells, instead became a means for making the types of leaders that would listen. Education reform was crucial to establishing a new class that would be prepared to lead a new world order. As Wagar (2004) noted, what Wells meant by education was really ‘indoctrination’: ‘the systematic replacement of the loyalties and values of the various national educational establishments and their political sponsors with the loyalties and values of Wellsian scientific cosmopolitan humanism’.¹⁷² Wells did not stop writing in favour of the world state and a League of Nations; albeit that he moved away increasingly from classical liberal ideas concerning freedom and democracy to embrace more authoritarian methodologies.

Wells’s later war-writings continued to emphasise the need for a World Supreme Court (*In the Fourth Year* (1918)) and League of Nations (*The Idea of a League of Nations* (1919)) to make the peace after the war into something meaningful and substantial. In his *Experiment in Autobiography* Wells audaciously suggests that a letter he had sent to Woodrow Wilson during the war ‘contributed materially’ to the President’s Fourteen Points.¹⁷³ In his letter of November 1917, he underlined the importance of a just peace that would end German imperialism and establish a League of Nations. Wells hoped that Wilson himself, the ‘elucidator’, would become the ‘advocate of the new order’: ‘President Wilson alone of all mankind can speak and compel the redeeming world’.¹⁷⁴ Wells believed that the peace negotiations in Versailles still offered an opportunity for establishing a world state, and that Wilson was a key part of his hope for a just peace.

Wells praised Wilson as an ‘able and successful professor of political science’, and lauded his Fourteen Points for starting discussions about ending secret diplomacy, freeing commerce, opening the sea routes, and disarming countries.¹⁷⁵ Comparing Wilson with Henry James’s character Daisy Miller, Wells argued that his good intentions and enthusiasm (like Miller’s) were swiftly entangled in ‘the complex tortuousness and obstinate limitations of the older world’.¹⁷⁶ The old-world personalities—with their old-world egos, and desires for reparations and for carving

¹⁷² Wagar (2004), p. 163.

¹⁷³ *Experiment in Autobiography*, Volume 2, p. 707.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 714.

¹⁷⁵ *Outline of History*, Volume 2, p. 684.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 685.

up empires—wasted the opportunity for a real peace. Wilson represented a new way of thinking globally that needed to overthrow the old nationalisms.

Wells would later question what else he really could have expected from leaders who did not even know why the ‘Great War came about or what ought to come out of it’.¹⁷⁷ Versailles was a failure, Wells came to believe, because of the ‘imperfect, lopsided, historical knowledge and the consequent suspicion, emotion and prejudice of those who assembled there’. As a means of correcting this ignorance, Wells set out to arrange the main facts of the world story in his two-volume *Outline of History*. Unlike Kipling’s *History of the Irish Guards* (1923) or Conan Doyle’s *The British Campaign in France and Flanders* (1919), Wells’s history is a kind of textbook with a narrative that stretches from the beginnings of life on earth to the Great War, and concludes with projections of what Wells expected to happen in the immediate future. If the readers of Wells’s history are willing to follow the lessons he has carefully laid out in his narrative, they will discover that the world state is the most promising and *logical* possibility for the future. In addition to the broad goal of education, the teaching of history (including natural history) as a specific goal was an important priority for Wells, in order to ensure that people would abandon the national allegiances they may have, in order to embrace global ones. Not only did it become clear that education occupied the place that propaganda once occupied for Wells as a tool and a weapon, but it would become increasingly evident that Wells’s emphasis on the educated elite led him to support systems of government that ignored the opinions of the masses. The mode of government that Wells supported imposed their ideas on the populace, rather than representing its opinions in government.

It was those leaders, argued Wells, who would take the issue of government and peace seriously enough to become the new leaders. He referred to these new leaders in a series of lectures entitled *After Democracy* (1932) as the ‘competent receiver’.¹⁷⁸ Elsewhere, in *Open Conspiracy* (1933) he alleges that those who were dissatisfied with the way government was run, and who were ready to ‘accept the message’, would conspire together to take over and initiate changes on a global scale. Wells was becoming increasingly discontented with parliamentary democracy, and felt emboldened to the support model of a scientific elite being placed in control of

¹⁷⁷ Wells, *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* (London, 1928), p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ Wells, ‘Liberalism and the Revolutionary Spirit’, *After Democracy: Addresses and Papers on the Present World Situation* (London, 1932), p. 9.

government. The necessity of educating and indoctrinating that elite to become trained, world governors was becoming his highest priority. The ‘competent receivers’, would be ‘an organization, a responsible organization, able to guide and rule the new scale human community that is struggling to exist to-day among the entanglements of the old’.¹⁷⁹ The old system was decrepit and would not change quickly enough if everyone needed to be educated sufficiently for democracy to function properly—instead small groups needed to take over the government to usher in the new era.

This new set of technically and scientifically trained managers, he explained, would be an ‘adumbration of the idea’ of the Guardians in Plato’s *Republic*.¹⁸⁰ Lenin’s Bolsheviks and Mussolini’s Fascisti were models that Wells appealed to in order to explain his own system:

A systematic organization of the will and ideas of public-minded, masterful people to handle the problems of the modern state, and a modernized state cannot come into complete existence, much less get along, without the directive and sustaining control of such an organization.¹⁸¹

Wells was proposing to train of an elite ruling body—not just for the spreading of ideas, but to take over the government itself. The organisations he imagined were not meant to be ‘ancillary’ or sub-parliamentary, but organisations ‘to *replace* the dilatory indecisiveness of parliamentary control’.¹⁸² The world state would not emerge through mass appeal or through parliamentary reform—it needed a group dedicated to take over the government and to help it run on progressive, global values.

Education of these elite had now come fully to occupy the space left vacant by Wells’s earlier, different conceptions of propaganda. His dedication to the idea of ending war through the establishment of the world state made him look to education as propaganda or indoctrination. In the post-war years, he would continue to make a call to arms to those strong enough to dismiss democracy, in order to get rid of the old order and found the world state, and dismiss ‘mob’ government for ‘right’

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 25

government.¹⁸³ But for Wells, propaganda became a bad word; by 1939 it was associated with the dishonesty of governments and the ‘little dictator-murderers of culture’.¹⁸⁴ Wells believed what he wrote to be true, and he claimed that he never wrote to order. He argued in favour of the world state because he believed it to be the only way to stop war. During the war, however, Wells thought the war of ideas was consistently being fought:

All human institutions are made of propaganda, are sustained by propaganda and perish when it ceases; they must be continually experienced and re-experienced to the young and the negligent.¹⁸⁵

All teachers, tutors, parents, and writers were enjoined to dedicate themselves to popularising the idea of a League of Nations and a world state, and to fighting the propaganda war. It was this older idea of propaganda—as a means of waging a war of ideology—that would remain with Wells, while he dismissed the more narrow definition of propaganda as working on command or working for the government.

After the war concluded, Wells became more determined than ever to influence a world peace and an end to war; and however much his ideas about propaganda changed over the course of the war, some altered notion of propaganda remained an important part of how he would achieve that goal. Wells thus offers an example of a war-writer who worked closely with official government propaganda later during the war; but he also offers us a means to understand one of the lasting theoretical influences that the idea of propaganda had on post-war political thinking. Unfortunately, Wells’s advocacy and popularisation of certain ideas led him to support political movements that were far worse in practice than parliamentary democracy, whatever failings he understood it to contain. In the years following the First World War, Wells found both himself and the World to be ‘sick of parliamentary politics’, because everyone was trying to be a competent receiver in his own way, instead of leaving government to those for whom it was best suited: ‘The Fascist Party, to the best of its ability, is Italy now [...] the Communist Party, to the best of its ability, is Russia’. Wells noted that it was obvious that if the Fascist experiment was

¹⁸³ ‘The Study and Propaganda of Democracy’, *In the Fourth Year: Anticipations of a World Peace* (London, 1918), p. 151.

¹⁸⁴ ‘The Honour and Dignity of the Free Mind’, *Ibid*, p. 142.

¹⁸⁵ ‘The Study and Propaganda of Democracy’, *Ibid*, p. 154.

to be really successful it must aim at a more international scale—it must prepare the ground for establishing competent receivers internationally. He asserted that these expectations were not so different from Communist conceptions of an international revolution. In the wake of the First World War, propaganda would take on ominous associations of the limitations imposed upon freedoms of thought and expression, of thought-control and a dominant state-apparatus. Wells's theorisation of propaganda during the war was the culmination of years of thinking about social, political, and even literary problems. When closely examined, his differing conceptions of propaganda before, during, and after the war, lay the early seeds of propaganda's associations with thought and behavioural control, as well as a rejection of principles of democracy and liberty.

Wells would recall how he was 'one of those people who were violently roused by the Great War'; and in envisioning the coming catastrophe he felt a great responsibility to turn 'away from imaginative literature into new directions', in order to alter the course of mankind away from disaster.¹⁸⁶ As this chapter has demonstrated, Wells's turn from literature had begun long before the war, but what the conflict afforded Wells was specific exposure to differing notions about propaganda as a possible new literary direction that would take him away from imaginative fiction. His relationship with propaganda in his journalism and his novels informed his continuing agitation for world governance, his belief in God, and his eventual embrace of education. Abandoning literature for indoctrination, Wells's relationship with propaganda came to inflect his political thinking. At the ominous conclusion to his lecture at Oxford, Wells challenged his audience with the question: 'Are we really as much the intellectual and moral inferiors of that band of Russian Jews as we seem to be?'¹⁸⁷ Bemoaning the fact that England had no 'nucleus of educated youth' that was able to disseminate and propagate his ideas, he urged them to begin to 'remedy this'. This call-to-arms would ring out in different ways across Europe in the post-war years—with propaganda, in its ever changing guises, leading the march towards new wars.

¹⁸⁶ 'Money and Mankind', *After Democracy*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁸⁷ 'Liberalism and the Revolutionary Spirit', *Ibid*, p. 26.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has approached the relationships of Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells with British propaganda during the First World War. In order to do so it has made use of two broad approaches. Firstly, it has conducted an institutional analysis of British war propaganda in order to integrate an examination of the aims and mechanics of official propaganda within a reading of materials that these writers produced for the government. Secondly, it has considered the continuities and disjunctions between the rhetoric of their official propaganda writings, and some of the other works that these authors produced during the war.

The texts that these authors produced, and the roles they played in the creation of British propaganda, are not immediately self-evident upon close-reading any given text. I have argued that to understand better the texts these authors produced for the government during the war, it is helpful to locate them specifically within their historical and institutional settings. This textual historicisation necessitated an investigation of the founding and operation of the two principal British propaganda agencies during the war, the War Propaganda Bureau and the Ministry of Information. As Chapter One demonstrated, Britain improvised much of its early propaganda-strategy in response to German efforts to gain American support for the war. The government's initial plans had been negative; it had envisaged that censorship would be the best way to control perception during the war. This did not prove an adequate strategy when it came to appealing to neutral nations. Fearful of German influence in America, the British government established the WPB, and appointed Masterman as its head. The WPB's goal was not, as is a common misconception, to justify the war to the domestic population in Britain; but was instead to target American intellectuals with materials seemingly unconnected with the British government, in the hope that they would persuade the American government to discard its policy of neutrality.

Masterman personally believed that prominent authors would lend legitimacy and prestige to the campaign. He recruited writers and published texts, distributing them to libraries and passenger ships, and sending them directly to prominent Americans, free of charge. Whereas Kipling would try self-consciously to maintain his independence from official propaganda—while still lending his texts to the WPB and censoring his more chauvinist writings when instructed to do so—Ford's cultural criticism and Conan Doyle's discussion of the unfair treatment of British prisoners

(for example) were explicitly produced and distributed by the WPB. They were sent to individuals whom the government perceived might prove influential. Analysing the diverse energies and networks of production and distribution that went into the creation of these texts is not therefore an immediate or simple critical process, but instead requires one to construct distanced readings of them.

Unlike in earlier conflicts, this official system appealed to artists and used their texts as essential within its early propaganda-strategy. As Chapter Four demonstrated, following internal restructuring in 1917 there was a shift in focus from America to the domestic and enemy fronts, as well as a change in the dominant media for propaganda from literary pamphlets to posters and film. H. G. Wells worked closely with the newly formed Ministry of Information, hoping to influence the government strategy of appealing to the enemy. Despite his official title he felt that he personally compromised whilst holding the post, and resigned as a result of continuing disagreements with the government. British War Propaganda understood authors to be crucial to its early propaganda-strategy, but by the end of the war they had become largely irrelevant.

Although the government could not dictate exactly what materials were created, some themes can be detected as consistent throughout war propaganda. Ford exemplified the discourse of the war of culture, marking the division between the civilised cultivation of southern Germany, and the Kultur of violent expansionist imperialism in the Prussian north. Kipling maintained the dichotomy while abandoning the subtle distinction between North and South Germany; he regarded all Germans as savage Huns, and in contrast celebrated the unity and benevolence of the British Empire. Conan Doyle's belief in the British Empire was tinged with his explicit fears concerning the possible invasion of Britain from continental Europe, as well as the nation's susceptibility to a naval blockade. Germany's growing military and naval strength, as well as what Conan Doyle interpreted as its avowedly aggressive nature, made it the greatest challenge to the British Empire. Bolstered by atrocity reports detailing German crimes in Belgium and France, the apparently perverse and violent nature of the German army reinforced the dichotomy of savagery and civilisation that separated the warring nations. Although Wells would later lament the militarism on both sides of the conflict, his early war-journalism emphasised that German militarism was uniquely violent, expansionist, and a threat to the stability of Europe. Yet while these themes pervade much of these authors' war-

writings, other texts demonstrate tensions between these institutional themes (on the one hand) and individual responses to the war (on the other). Ford's poem 'Antwerp' and his late war novel *No Enemy*, Kipling's short story 'Mary Postgate' and the poems 'Epitaphs of War', Conan Doyle's arguments for Home Rule in Ireland and his defence of Roger Casement, and Wells's disagreements with the government over the failings of propaganda directed at the enemy (via which he attempted to promote his own arguments for a world state), all demonstrate tensions and conflicts that these writers perceived between their own positions and the rhetoric and discourse of official government propaganda, and indicate opinions that are more complicated and layered than the straightforward fear and rejection of German 'Kultur' in the official propaganda materials.

Reflecting on the period nearly two decades later, Ernest Hemingway declared that 'the last war, during the years of 1915, 1916, 1917 was the most colossal murderous mismanaged butchery that has ever taken place on earth' and '[a]ny writer who said otherwise lied'.¹ Of the writers 'who were established before the war', he noted, 'nearly all sold out to write propaganda'; and following the war, Hemingway asserted, their 'reputations steadily slumped', because they 'never recovered their honesty' afterwards. Hemingway believed that the war was self-evidently an extended massacre, and that the writers who justified it were lying. However, as I have attempted to demonstrate, Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells were earnest in their support for the war. Hemingway's notion of the conflicted artist presumes that the war was obviously ridiculous, and that *by definition* anyone who disagreed with that viewpoint was lying.

Hemingway's estimation of the decline of those writers who wrote propaganda during the war was only partly true. Ford, for example, would go on to produce his four-novel masterpiece *Parade's End* during the 1920s; whilst Wells's *Outline of History* (1920) would prove to be his best-selling book, if in the post-war period he become more renowned for his educational and political work than for his fiction. Kipling spent five years on his two-volume *History of the Irish Guards* (1923). He would continue to produce some compelling writing, but would not again enjoy his pre-war success or fame. According to Andrew Lycett (1999), his history was denounced by Edmund Blunden for failing to understand the true pandemonium and

¹ Ernest Hemingway, 'Introduction', *Men at War* (New York, 1942), pp. xiv-x (p. xi).

nervous strain of the war.² Conan Doyle withdrew into a world of private fantasy and imagination, writing books that discussed spiritualism (*The Vital Message* (1919)) as well as the existence of magical sprites (*The Evidence of Fairies* (1921)). These later interests would not prove as popular as either his detective or his adventure literature.

Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, and Wells certainly had their internal contradictions, conflicts, and tensions, but in volunteering their efforts for British war propaganda they did not appear to feel an ethical imperative to question their motives. For them, it was not a crime to support the government decision to go to war, but rather it was an expression of duty. They were not lying, but indeed making arguments that they genuinely believed in. Crucially moreover, these authors' propaganda roles were marginal by the end of the war. Writers and artists would prove even more incidental and irrelevant to later post-war theorisations of propaganda.

Propaganda would acquire an infamous reputation in the post-war years. Furthermore, given its later associations with Bolshevism and Fascism, propaganda would loom as one of the more malevolent forces of the twentieth century. In *Mein Kampf* (1925), Adolf Hitler espoused a debt to Anglo-American war-propaganda, and blamed Germany's loss in the war for not having as well developed a propaganda strategy as the Allies: 'I, myself, learned enormously from this enemy war propaganda'.³ Rejecting artists as inadequate propagandists, he argued that future propaganda 'must never [...] be led by aesthetes' because if it were propaganda would 'have drawing power only for literary teas', instead of for appealing to the masses as it must do in order to be successful—a conclusion the British government had themselves reached by 1917.⁴ Hitler insisted on keeping the decadent 'drivel about aesthetics' and the 'cultural perfume' of the Jews away from propaganda, because of the importance of propaganda to future warfare: 'where the destiny and existence of a people are at stake, all obligation toward beauty ceases'.⁵ What would go on to be one of the century's greatest ideological tools for legitimating aggression and controlling thought, originated in a rather inauspicious manner: with a meeting of writers in early September 1914. Examining the relationship between Ford, Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wells and official British government propaganda, focuses more

² Andrew Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, p. 514.

³ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 161.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

attention on this moment in order to understand how artists and writers would prove crucial in waging a war of ideas that was fought for the hearts and minds of potential allies, the enemy, and Britain's own citizenry.

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