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British Masculinity and Propaganda during the First World War

Evan M. Caris

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, emcaris1@gmail.com

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BRITISH MASCULINITY AND PROPAGANDA DURING THE FIRST
WORLD WAR

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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Evan M. Caris
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to address how the issue of masculinity functioned in British propaganda during the First World War, and how it affected individuals. Propaganda relied on prewar conceptions of masculinity to appeal to audiences for reasons such as enlistment or continued support for the war. Propaganda often amplified these conceptions of prewar masculinity, and men would internalize propaganda's message. The British state, however, did not create propaganda uniformly, and there existed major differences between the goals of propaganda posters and propaganda films. It will be demonstrated that posters and film addressed separate issues despite reaching similar audiences, and that posters were more successful at affecting men's sense of masculinity. Through showing how propaganda posters resonated with individuals, this paper highlights and reassesses the impact the propaganda poster had on contemporary British audiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church coined the term propaganda in the sixteenth century. Pope Gregory XV established the practice of *de propaganda fide*, the process by which priests and missionaries would propagate the Catholic faith throughout the world. By the time of the First World War, propaganda became the rationalized process undertaken by the government and private organizations to recruit for the war, justify the war, and manipulate public opinion towards continued support for the war.¹ Technological advancement had also made it possible for propaganda to reach a mass audience. Mass-produced posters calling for enlistment covered walls, and films supporting the war played in cinemas throughout Britain. These mass visual forces of propaganda often relied on gendered content, particularly a version of masculinity developed in the Victorian era, to achieve the goals of recruitment or justification for the war. Propaganda spoke to men through a variety of ways such as appealing to their role as protectors of women and children, or shaming them as cowards for not enlisting. Propaganda tended to amplify the gender roles that had been established for men, and ultimately it helped to reinforce male gender roles because its appeals and coercive tactics deeply affected many men.

The ideology of separate spheres, a concept rooted in the Enlightenment but fully articulated in the Victorian era, defined British gender roles into the late-nineteenth century and beyond. Men were in charge of public life while women were in charge of domestic life. Separate-sphere ideology dictated certain cultural characteristics that defined men and women's roles. Joanna Bourke writes, "The womanly woman was gentle, domesticated and virginal: the

¹ Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fire Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977: 2.

manly man was athletic, stoical and courageous.”² These traits were celebrated and respected. In Coventry Patmore’s poem “The Angel in the House,” an exemplary woman obeyed her husband and ran a successful household. Women were the physical embodiment of moral good. The angel was also worth protecting, and protection of the domestic home fell to men. John Tosh demonstrates how the domestic sphere was integral to Victorian definitions of masculinity because establishing and protecting a home was central to a man’s “good standing” with his peers.³ British people strove for the ideal of manly men and womanly women, and they each knew the other’s place.

Masculinity meant more than just a man publicly protecting his wife and home. It was also deeply intertwined with Christianity; as David Alderson has claimed, “manliness, then, was bound up with the protestant emphasis on autonomy in the pursuit of virtue.”⁴ British men sought a conscientious life of obedience to piety. That search, however, was aggressive and muscular. Muscular Christianity focused on strength and the creation of a fit, virulent Christian gentleman. This concept took hold in the mid-nineteenth century, and it continued to shape British norms of behavior into the twentieth. Men like the clergyman Charles Kingsley helped give muscular Christianity its dimensions. The British placed an emphasis on family life, and Kingsley considered unmarried men such as celibate monks to be “unnatural, unsexed, and especially feminine.”⁵ Many Victorians abhorred effeminate men.⁶ Another important dimension to

² Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 12-13.

³ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999): 4.

⁴ David Alderson, *Mansex Fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998): 15.

⁵ Patricia Anderson, *When Passion Reigned: Sex and the Victorians* (New York: Basic Books, 1995): 55.

⁶ *Ibid.*

muscular Christianity was an emphasis on sports, fitness, and playing games. The Victorians and Edwardians associated creation of strong bodies with the creation of strong morals.

The Victorian focus on athleticism and virility led to the institutionalization of sports, health, and physical fitness. This emphasis initially emerged from the public schools where physical exercise was considered essential to a “whole” man, and from the 1860s on “compulsory games were introduced and an intense enthusiasm on the part of many pupils became evident.”⁷ The public schools, however, were for elite children, and the association with athleticism and masculinity was not present throughout the lower classes of British society until compulsory schooling began in 1880. By the late nineteenth century state schools made provisions for playing fields to help poorer boys adopt “masculine traits.”⁸ The Boer War then helped fuel a national focus on fitness because so many of the men who volunteered were not fit enough for service.⁹ Entire organizations such as the League of Health and Strength emerged to help men with their lack of physical ability. Founded in 1906, the League members pledged themselves “to forward the cause of physical culture, to take judicious exercise daily, to encourage fitness in others... For them, the body was to be built, or finely tuned.”¹⁰ There was also of course the Boy Scouts founded by Robert Baden-Powell in 1907 to “give manliness a popular dimension amongst boys and young men.”¹¹ Athleticism, fitness, and virility would all play important roles in the war and in propaganda.

⁷ J.A. Mangan *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 68.

⁸ Bourke, *Dismembering*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994): 42-43.

¹¹ Allen Warren, “Popular Manliness: Baden-Powell, Scouting, and the Development of Manly Character,” in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America*, eds. J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987): 200.

Masculinity was not a static phenomenon, and the turn of the twentieth century created anxieties about the place of men and women. New class orders, new urban landscapes, and new sexualities threatened traditional and conservative values. Movements like feminism threatened the social order, and organizations like the Women's Social and Political Union "seemed to confirm that the degeneracy of the race was not restricted to the working classes and poor."¹² The trial of Oscar Wilde scandalized society, and it brought the specter of homosexuality out of the shadows. The Victorians and Edwardians considered homosexuality to be a serious perversion that carried with it "an inherent charge of lack of manliness."¹³ After the Wilde trial, too, homosexuality became synonymous with effeminacy.¹⁴ These issues contributed to a general sense of malaise that permeated *fin-de-siècle* Britain. Many men felt the need to escape from a society they felt was corrosive or suffocating. Michael Adams utilizes the J. M. Barrie quotation from *Peter Pan* to exemplify the masculine attitudes that existed before the war: "To die will be an awfully big adventure."¹⁵ Barrie published *Peter Pan* in 1904, and the book exemplified the lesson of dying well through adventures and playing games. Even Hook, the pirate villain, "is at his best at the end."¹⁶

¹² Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London: Routledge, 1999): 269

¹³ Alderson, *Mansex* 81.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Michael C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990): iii. J. M. Barrie actually commented about the effect of propaganda on gender attitudes in a play about the war he published in 1920 titled "Echoes of the War." There is a scene where a soldier confronts a woman about her invention of a heroic son. She does not have a son, but wants people to believe she is the mother to a masculine hero. The soldier asks, "How could it affect you?" and the woman replies, "Oh mister, that's the thing. It didn't affect me. It affected everybody but me... Even the posters on the walls, of the woman saying 'Go, my boy,' leered at me. I sometimes cried by myself in the dark."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

War itself became the greatest manifestation of masculinity. It offered men a way to have adventure, put their fitness on trial, and protect women. The state encouraged this offer, and “the reassertion of traditional masculinity and femininity, and of separate spheres for men and women, found expression in the efforts to legitimate and justify the war itself.”¹⁷ War represented masculinity, and the British state used masculinity to propagate the war. Propagandists did not invent the concepts of masculinity they used. They took what already existed in British society, amplified it, and used it to appeal, coerce, shame, or otherwise manipulate men into the war effort. Propaganda was also successful at resonating with men. They responded to the propaganda messages, and it affected their sense of masculinity and their relationship to femininity.

¹⁷ Kingsley Kent, *Gender*, 273.

2. MASCULINITY IN BRITISH PROPAGANDA POSTERS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

At the outbreak of the First World War, Britain had the smallest standing army of all the major belligerent nations. Committed to a volunteer force, the British in August of 1914 faced the pressing task of raising a large enough army. In an effort to swell the military's ranks, H. H. Asquith's Liberal Government erected several state apparatuses to produce propaganda. The most important office was the Parliamentary Recruitment Committee (or PRC). The PRC created a staggering amount of propaganda during its 16-month existence. They issued 54 million posters, 5.8 million leaflets and pamphlets, organized 12,000 meetings, and arranged 20,000 speeches.¹⁸ Posters, which comprised the bulk of propaganda, bombarded the public with various images and messages compelling men to enlist. The purpose of the British propaganda poster during World War I was to instill the interests of the state within the subject, such as convincing men to enlist for the army. The posters were successful, and a significant proportion of the posters relied on images and messages of masculinity to achieve its purpose. The logic of many posters followed the logic that men were to protect their home, their nation, and the fragile women and children left behind in both. Any British man who did not fulfill his masculine duty was no man at all.

According to Cate Haste and Philip Taylor, British propaganda only appeared under the conditions of the First World War.¹⁹ It is true that home government propaganda was scarce before the war, but it was not nonexistent: "Imperial propaganda was the one area of official

¹⁸ Alan G. V. Simmonds, *Britain and World War One* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2012): 47.

¹⁹ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984): 2.

propagandist activity which seemed to be generally acceptable.”²⁰ Politicians used propaganda at home without complaint from the public. Imperial propaganda took many forms from older vehicles of transmission such as newspapers, and newer ones such as photographs. Propagandists used posters, but they were not common. The most successful modes of propaganda were postcards and cigarette cards. It appears the poster was not employed for large-scale propaganda purposes until the beginning of the First World War.

A relatively recent invention, the poster emerged from the reduction of paper’s cost during the mid-nineteenth century. Advertisers were the first to use posters on a significant scale, beginning in the 1860s when “posters could be run off at the rate of 10,000 an hour at extraordinarily low cost.”²¹ By the early twentieth century, cities were covered in variously themed posters. Robert Roberts writes in *The Classic Slum* about “a culture of the streets,” where “one soaked in information of every kind from posters and advertisements pasted on gable end and massive hoarding.”²² Roberts’ description also uncovers precisely why posters were so important: they filled public space and subjects could not avoid the posters’ messages. Posters reached people in a way that pamphlets, newspapers, and even radio or cinema could not.

Posters were not the exclusive purview of advertisers before the War. Politicians used posters extensively for campaign purposes or on behalf of a political cause. Periodicals of the time frequently noted the relationship between political propaganda and posters. In an article about German politics of 1907, a contributor to *The English Review* mentioned posters as part of Wilhelm II’s anti-socialist propaganda campaign: ‘He [Kaiser Wilhelm] appealed to Germans to think imperially, to vote for the new naval programmes; and for the first time went ‘on the

²⁰ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²² Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), 168.

stump,' as we do in England, with speeches and a big poster campaign."²³ In 1910, radical free trade advocates used propaganda posters on behalf of tariff reform for the coca trade.²⁴ Political posters became such a scourge that W. H. Wiseman wrote an impassioned polemic against them and their "utilization of every available space on our walls and hoardings."²⁵ He argued that posters were devoid of educational value, and that no meaningful political truth could be conveyed with an image and a slogan. More dangerously, the party with the most funds could obtain a monopoly on space, and "reap some advantage from the impression made on the minds of the weak and ignorant."²⁶ Wiseman's reasoning led him to fear political propaganda posters for their demagogy and manipulation of the public's fears. The poster's purpose was to convince by means of emotional appeal.

The state-sanctioned propaganda of World War I more fully embraced the emotional appeals that Wiseman loathed. The conditions of the war provided the state with a monopoly on public space for propaganda, and a poster with an image and a slogan was the standard template for the propaganda poster. It was an effective means of convincing men to leave their lives and homes for a fight they did not fully understand. Charles Masterman, an architect of British propaganda, summarized the problem:

Men volunteered or were pressed into the armies and shipped over the sea in millions who otherwise would never have seen the sea or visited foreign lands or left their native town. They owned no portion of the land from which they had gone... And at the end they came home also in millions again, also without owning any piece of their own land, to take up the thread of life which had been so rudely snapped by service they had previously regarded as incredible. A friend of mine heard fragments of conversation between a bus conductor and a passenger. The conductor had fought through the war and

²³ "The Collapse of Socialism," *The English Review*, 1908-1937 (November 11, 1914): 459.

²⁴ "Notes of the Week," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 110 (July 9, 1910): 36.

²⁵ W.H. Wiseman, "Some Proposals for a reform in our Methods of Conducting Parliamentary Elections," *Westminster Review* 178 (August, 1912): 126.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

become a Sergeant-Major: “But that’s not to say that I liked it.” In reply to some patriotic platitude he burst out fiercely: “I don’t see that it *is* my country. I don’t own a thing in it.”²⁷

One of the chief questions propagandists faced was how to convince the working class and middle class alike to give their lives for Britain. One of the more popular ways they sought to achieve this goal was through attacks on men’s very bodies, roles, and self-image. Propaganda posters operated according to gendered assumption of what it meant to be a man. No poster elucidated “great political truths;” they did not list the intricacies of the ententes and alliances, nor did they expose the dealings of the foreign office. The purpose of those posters was to convince and often shame the unenlisted man into service via gendered messages. They frequently implied that the man who did not enlist was a coward.

The PRC created a staggering amount of propaganda during the war. The PRC estimated they printed 12.5 million copies of 164 different posters.²⁸ Propaganda posters were inescapable: “These materials blanketed the nation, covering walls, windows, hoardings, tramcars, taxis, and kiosks in urban and rural areas alike.”²⁹ Sub-departments of the PRC in local constituencies were responsible for the actual business of physically hanging the posters.³⁰ Poster images and messages could be found reproduced in newspapers or on postcards, but they were primarily hung in open, public spaces--in banks, libraries, clubs, shops, “and anywhere the public might

²⁷ Charles F. G. Masterman, *England After the War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923): 5.

²⁸ M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918* (London: Macmillan, 1982): 103

²⁹ Meg Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men: Recruitment Posters and the Masculine Ideal,” in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009): 312.

³⁰ Sanders and Taylor, 103.

gather in large numbers.”³¹ The PRC was responsible for the producing the greatest number of posters before conscription came into effect with the Military Service Act of March 2, 1916. The PRC then dissolved, but its work was “effectively continued” by the National War Aims Council (or NWAC) for the remainder of the war, although on a smaller scale.³²

There has been much work done on gender and British World War I propaganda. Meg Albrinck’s work focuses on men and masculinity. Albrinck shows how British propaganda appealed to men vis-à-vis traditions of courage, honor, glory, but, also how it utilized “shame and coercion to question the virility of the unenlisted man.”³³ Michele Shover argues the posters of women reflected an assumption that women were to have “a war effort role... that was thoroughly traditional.”³⁴ While women did leave for the factories to work, the British government wanted to preserve their “innately passive natures.”³⁵ These arguments fit into a larger historiographical debate about the impact of World War I on British society. Arthur Marwick represented the war as a great flood that ushered in sweeping, positive changes in British society in his work *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*. Gerard DeGroot, however, insisted that the war “was not a deluge which swept all before it, but at best a winter storm which swelled the rivers of change.”³⁶ Research on the issue of masculinity and gender in British propaganda supports DeGroot’s argument, and takes it a step further.

Propaganda did not even help to swell the rivers of change happening in gender relations. It had

³¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

³² Sanders and Taylor, 105

³³ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 314.

³⁴ Michele J. Shover, “Roles and Images of Women in World War I Propaganda,” *Politics and Society* 5, no. 4 (December 1975), 471-472.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 469.

³⁶ Gerard J. DeGroot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996): 291.

a conservative effect on gender relations, or, to continue the metaphor, it dammed up the rivers of change. Propaganda helped to reinforce the prewar gender roles in British society.

Louis Althusser's ideas on ideology and interpellation help us understand the impact of British World War I propaganda. Concerned with the reproduction of the relations of production, Althusser sought to explain how a Marxist understanding of labor-power relations (the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie) was "integrated into our everyday consciousness."³⁷ Althusser argues that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" and that "ideology has a material existence."³⁸ British propaganda posters were the material existence of a gender ideology of masculinity and femininity. The images and messages on the posters framed the imagined relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. The posters, moreover, operate according to Althusser's idea of interpellation. Subjects do not create ideology, but rather the other way around: "I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals... or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation*."³⁹ The poster "calls" to individuals who are then transformed into the subject of the poster's ideology. Althusser provides an example of what he means by analogy of a policeman hailing an individual by shouting, 'Hey, you there!'"⁴⁰ When the individual turns to the policeman, he has acknowledged that he is the subject the policeman hailed. The individual becomes a subject whose agency

³⁷ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* trans. Andy Blunden (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

depends on the relationship established by the policeman. Similarly, the unenlisted man became a subject of the propaganda poster's call to fight. This theoretical framework is similar to the one utilized by Jim Aulich and John Hewitt in their *Seduction or Instruction? First World War Posters in Britain and Europe*. They are not concerned with gender, but they do lay out the function of the poster: "In Britain, the state controlled the production of posters along propagandistic lines to construct a citizenry with in particular national histories."⁴¹

The PRC created the British propaganda posters of the First World War with different goals in mind. Some posters aimed to entice the public to buy war bonds, or to contribute to the home front; most, however, sought to persuade men to enlist. The posters often attempted to recruit men through shame and humiliation.⁴² Propaganda posters, though, also aimed to recruit women for the war effort. Shover proposed two categories for women in propaganda: service roles and symbolic roles. Service role propaganda sought to enlist women to buy war bonds or to work as nurses. Symbolic role propaganda depicted women as the spirit of war. Shover states, "Real women cannot identify with their [the symbolic figures'] grand scale, their implacable force, their devastating compulsion."⁴³ She is correct, but she is correct about women *and* men. While women could not identify with the image as real women, real men identified women as the reason to fight. It is important to note that propaganda oppressed men and women alike.⁴⁴ Shover examines propaganda in relation to femininity, but the symbolic role of women in propaganda also had important implications for masculinity. Women were potent symbols for men in propaganda posters. Some posters persuaded men to fight on behalf of a nation

⁴¹ Jim Aulich and John Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction? First World War Posters in Britain and Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007): 3.

⁴² Simmonds, *Britain and World War One*, 45.

⁴³ Shover, "Roles and Images," 479-481.

⁴⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 14.

personified as a woman. In Shover's discussion of the symbolic role of women, a category of propaganda posters for *men* can be identified. Propaganda posters frequently employed symbolic women to compel men to fight. Furthermore, the category of symbolic women included mothers and wives, not simply mythic women as the essence of war. Men were to fulfill their identities as masculine protectors of passive women incapable of fighting for themselves. Propaganda posters presented the war as means to protect the nation and the home front, which were often both symbolized as feminine. But even posters that did not explicitly include images of women still relied on gendered logic that men who did not enlist were unmasculine, shameful cowards.

The first posters, however, did not rely on such imagery and tactics. It was not an obvious truth when fighting began that the posters would be an effective means of recruitment. The first major poster campaign launched by the PRC changed that--and arguably produced the most iconic piece of propaganda ever made. It was the imposing image of Lord Kitchener authoritatively pointing at the viewer, and demanding that men enlist in the armies of Britain. Kitchener was already a famous general in Britain for winning the Battle of Omdurman in the Sudan in 1898 and for his exploits in the Boer War. When World War I began, he was the Secretary of State for War. Alfred Leete designed the famous image, one that would prove so instrumental in the propaganda machine. It first appeared as a magazine cover for the *London Opinion* a month after the war broke out on September 5, 1914.⁴⁵ The cover showed Kitchener pointing accusingly and demanding he "Wants YOU." The image of Kitchener was a visual force. The stern face and his authoritative command was the picture of the British "stiff upper lip." Yet Leete's Kitchener image was never actually used as a propaganda poster. A limited run of postcards bore the Leete image, but it never appeared on a poster, although it was mistakenly

⁴⁵ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, xi.

filed as such in 1917 in the Imperial War Museum. James Taylor likens the phenomenon to the present day phenomenon of the World War II propaganda poster urging Londoners “To Keep Calm and Carry on.”⁴⁶ According to Taylor, the memory of the Leete image as a famous poster that blanketed walls was never actually a reality.

Nevertheless, Kitchener’s visage and various commands to enlist *did* feature on extremely popular propaganda posters. Kitchener’s stern face made him a “figure of absolute will and power, an image of British masculinity.”⁴⁷ Kitchener commanded men via poster throughout Britain, and “it became progressively harder for a man to stand back when more and more of his friends and neighbors were seen to be joining up.”⁴⁸ As one recruit put it, “The accusing finger of Kitchener stabbed me at every corner.”⁴⁹ By 1915, Manchester was “plentifully bespattered with Lord Kitchener’s *latest* poster calling for workers.”⁵⁰ A very large poster of Kitchener headed “Kitchener’s Army; Join at Once” hung near the British War Office.⁵¹ A woman in Glasgow even attributed direct causation to one of Kitchener’s posters: She recalled that her husband “had enlisted after seeing Lord Kitchener’s poster proclaiming ‘I Want You.’”⁵² While the Leete image may not have featured on a propaganda poster, Kitchener’s face certainly did. Kitchener posters did exist, and they did affect men. A man in 1916 wrote, “The earliest Kitchener’s Army recruiting poster invited men to ‘enlist for the

⁴⁶ James Taylor, *Your Country Needs You: the Secret History of the Propaganda Poster* (Glasgow: Saraband Press, 2013). See Also: Nicholas Hiley, “‘Kitchener Wants You’ and ‘Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War:’ The Myth of British Recruiting Posters,” *Imperial War Museum review* 11 (1999): 40-58. The Leete image served as the model for the famous American poster “Uncle Sam Wants You.”

⁴⁷ Jane Tynan, *British Army Uniform and the First World War: Men in Khaki* (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013): 35.

⁴⁸ Simkins, *Kitchener’s Army*, 186.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁰ *Manchester Evening News* April 12, 1915. Emphasis placed by author.

⁵¹ *Birmingham Daily Mail* July 22, 1915.

⁵² *Glasgow Daily Record* April 11, 1916.

duration of the war.’ This phrase, shouting out from every available wall-space, gradually came to affect all of us subconsciously.”⁵³

The British Government saw the power recruiting posters could have. Every poster then carried the authoritative weight of Kitchener and the PRC: “the PRC’s materials made use of authoritative speakers and authoritative content. They bore the stamp of the PRC and often employed images or quotations from state representatives... thus presenting their arguments as institutional truths.”⁵⁴ The PRC created a wide variety of posters, and they all carried the authority of the state. Not all of the posters, however, relied on such blunt imagery like a portrait of a state official. Posters contained a wide variety of images and slogans.

British posters drew heavily on images from Britain’s actual and mythic past. Some of the earliest posters depicted Lord Nelson, stiff-backed and imposing. In the poster, Nelson exuded commanding and authoritative presence not unlike that found in the Kitchener image. The words at the top of the poster read “England Expects.” The line came from the Battle of Trafalgar when Lord Nelson signaled to all his men, “England expects that every man will do his duty.”⁵⁵ Duty meant that strong and courageous men, no matter what their occupation or class, would be willing to die for England, if need be. That sentiment is reflected at the bottom with a line that asks, “Are you Doing Your Duty Today?” Nelson appears in several other posters as well. In a poster not even explicitly devoted to enlistment, Nelson, with a glorious fleet of ships behind him, stares out at the viewer.⁵⁶ The type of ship depicted had been made obsolete by the

⁵³ R. Page Arnot, “The War and Wages,” *Athenaeum* 46 (Nov. 1916): vii. See Chapter 3 for a more in-depth examination of how propaganda affected men, and how men internalized propaganda

⁵⁴ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 315.

⁵⁵ William Franks, *England Expects*, Ball State University Digital Media Repository, ca. 1915. See illustration 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* See illustration 2.

creation of the Dreadnaught in 1906, but it was more important to depict the glory of Britain's past than to present the contemporary technology. Another recruitment poster simply showcased those obsolete ships. It utilized the same "England Expects" motif while going further to command that "England must not and will not be disappointed."⁵⁷ The reliance on shame was obvious. It told the male viewer he was the potential source for England's disappointment. The appeal to Nelson seemed to resonate with the public. Only two months after the war began, there were revivals of plays about Nelson's life.⁵⁸ The propaganda projected an indication that the war of 1914 would be little different than the Napoleonic wars where the glory of England prevailed above all.

Perhaps the most overt example that employed the use of Britain's past was a poster that read simply, "Britain needs you at once."⁵⁹ This poster did not depict any actual heroes from Britain's history, but rather a truly mythic figure. The image was of St. George slaying the dragon. Outfitted in full medieval armor upon a rearing horse, George plunges his lance into the heart of the dragon. This medievalist image resonated in British society, in large part because of the impact of "muscular Christianity" and its celebration of "chivalric elitism."⁶⁰ Combining evangelical virtue and male vitality, muscular Christianity stressed "aggressive spirituality and

⁵⁷ Anonymous, *England Expects*, Ball State University Digital Media Repository, ca. 1914. See illustration 3.

⁵⁸ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1991), 33. See also Bradley M. Cesario's "'Trafalgar Refought': 'The Professional and Cultural Memory of Horatio Nelson during Britain's Navalist Era, 1880-1914'" (Master's thesis, Texas A&M University, 2011). He contends, "Horatio Nelson was a link to the navy's past for all Britons, an unbreakable thread connecting bygone heroes to their modern compatriots when nothing else remained to compare the navies of 1805 and 1914 on a direct technological level. The Nelson of the public and the press remained a simple hero, to be admired and emulated for generations to come" (p. 184).

⁵⁹ Anonymous, *Britain Needs You at Once*, Ball State University Digital Media repository, ca. 1915. See illustration 4.

⁶⁰ Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance, and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 222.

physical prowess.”⁶¹ Moreover, the images associated with medievalism worked well on propaganda posters because they reminded people “always, man’s role is to fight.”⁶² The main message of the poster was that Britain needed brave men like St. George. The poster did not explicitly rely on shame, but it did draw continuity from a mythical military and religious past to the present for the glory of Britain. It was a unique instance where the poster could appeal to men’s gender without resulting to coercion or demands of duty. It was also a useful way to “talk about killing without appearing barbaric.”⁶³ Men would be going to kill dragons, not Germans or Turks. The imagery provided men with the romantic ideal of a Christian warrior rather than the reality of twentieth-century warfare. This type of image also influenced other idealized forms of British warfare and masculinity, and it was a prime example of prewar gender sentiments being amplified by propaganda.

The storied cavalry charge also appeared frequently in British propaganda posters. A notable example presented a nameless warrior perched upon the back of great, galloping beast of a horse. The stoic soldier held himself steady with his sword outstretched, presumably charging into battle. He was alone in the poster. Words sparsely framed the scene. Only one word in bold appeared at the top of the image: “Forward!” At the bottom, there was only a simple command: “Enlist Now”.⁶⁴ The average man looking to enlist knew he would not be part of the cavalry, but the poster reinforced and relied upon a heroic and masculine vision of war. There is also the element of instruction in this poster. The poster projects “an ideological position that made

⁶¹ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 13.

⁶² Michael C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990): 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Lucy Elizabeth Kemp-Welsh, *Forward!* Ball State University Digital Media repository, ca. 1914. See illustration 5.

equivalences of national interest, communal solidarity, and personal happiness.”⁶⁵ The war would be fought and won by valiant individuals sallying forth with sword outstretched towards the evil German enemy. A soldier could heed the forward call, safe in the knowledge of his own bravery and the bravery of his commanding officer. These heroes moved forward so that what stayed behind was safe. Part of what stayed behind, part of what the courageous men were going to die for, were women and the roles they represented. The posters did not implore men to fight so women could supplement the role men played in British society and culture. The posters did not promise a fight for change. They simply demanded that men enlist and fight.

Another poster that presented images of the cavalry showcased the charge in action. In this one, a group of men were ride into battle. The action shot captured dashing soldiers on their steeds, navigating the peril of battle. To the right of the charge a shell explodes. The man nearest to the blast directs his rearing horse from the danger. The soldier to the left bravely reaches out to protect his brother in arms. It appears as if the men are playing a game; the scene (*sans* explosions and uniforms) could easily be transplanted onto a polo field. The top of the poster commands, “To the Front.” The bottom of the poster reads, “Every fit Briton should join our brave men at the front.”⁶⁶ There was still the element of shame by the poster’s implication that if a soldier had not joined then he was not brave or fit, but it used the mythic cavalry charge to demonstrate that the war could have an element of adventure. Interestingly, there is again the discrepancy between the elite imagery and the appeal to “every fit Briton.” The word “fit” is important to note here. The logic of shame could be understood two ways in this poster. First, those who did not enlist were not brave, but second, those who were not fit should not sign up.

⁶⁵ Aulich and Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction*, 60.

⁶⁶ Anonymous, *At the Front!*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1915. See illustration 6.

Those who were not fit – the “ragged poor” who were “lighter and leaner” than the middle and upper classes – did not even have the chance to be brave.⁶⁷ The shame of their bodies compounded the shame of their cowardice. Indeed, Albrinck recounts the story of a man too unfit for service who “‘hunts up his old dumbbells’ in order to shape his body into the form required by the War Office.”⁶⁸

The cavalry charge and other visions of masculine bravery in warfare belonged to a category of propaganda that wished to exploit the supposed camaraderie fostered by the war. Posters did not always celebrate heroic charges of sport-like challenges, however. The posters often used existing bonds among the lower classes, such as those fostered by the Pals Battalions, to shame those who had yet to enlist. The Pals Battalions were an initiative to help men enlist with other men from their same area and social group. Deep class divisions marked Britain, and it was a comfort to many volunteers that “they would not go into combat alongside other social groups.”⁶⁹ Indeed, class defined these units, but there was another element lurking beneath the class division. The various classes formed groups unto themselves, but the Pals Battalions also had a dimension of masculinity. A 1915 image queries the viewer, “You’re proud of your pals in the army of course, but what will your pals think of YOU? Think it over!”⁷⁰ Clearly the intended answer to the question was that the viewer’s pals would see him as a coward. Questions like these frequently appeared in propaganda. One poster asked the viewer, “Why are you stopping here when your pals are out there?”⁷¹ The question posed by the poster forced the viewer to

⁶⁷ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 12.

⁶⁸ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 314.

⁶⁹ Simmonds, *Britain and World War One*, 45.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, *You're proud of your pals in the Army of course! But what will your pals think of you?* Library of Congress World War I Poster Collection, 1915. See Illustration 7.

⁷¹ Anonymous, *Why are you stopping here when your pals are out there*, Library of Congress World War I Poster Collection, 1915. See illustration 8.

consider his literal, physical position in the world, and it confronted him with the reality that he was not “over there.” Another poster showed a fellow soldier offering his hand. The poster informed the unenlisted man, “Your pal in the trenches is waiting to shake your hand.”⁷² Here the wartime government assured the viewer a braver man waited in the trenches. All the viewer had to do was shake the braver man’s hand to become brave himself. Of course, to do that the man would first have to enlist. The message was a form of coercion. As Albrinck notes, “the implication is that a true man would be ashamed to face his peers in anything but khaki.”⁷³ Propaganda posters frequently accused the unenlisted man of not being a man, or being less than a man.

Women played an important role in the government’s program to shame men into enlisting. Women appeared as both the cause for enlisting and the reason to fight. One war bonds poster presents a soldier all in khaki, ready for the front, while his wife stands next to him in a fancy black dress, heels, a hat, and a fur shawl. The title of the piece is “For Her!”⁷⁴ The idea that men fought for women at home, shopping and filling any flight of fancy, would prove to be a source of division after the war. But the idea of fighting “for” women or children (often combined together) was common. The poster “The Call of the Women” best epitomized this idea. The poster depicted a pretty English mother clutching her daughter (or, perhaps, an androgynous boy) tight to her chest. Her eyes are wet and pleading, and she tells soldiers to, “Save us from the Hun.”⁷⁵ The poster communicated to men that to enlist and fight meant saving

⁷² Anonymous, *Your pal in the trenches is waiting to shake your hand*, Library of Congress World War I Poster Collection, 1915. See illustration 9.

⁷³ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 325.

⁷⁴ Bert Thomas, *For Her!* Imperial War Museum Collections, PST 10295, ca. 1915. See illustration 10.

⁷⁵ Dorothy Stanley, *The Call of the Women*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1914. See illustration 11.

British women and children from the evil and corrupting barbarity of the Germans. Furthermore, the poster operated according to a logic of shame. The man who did not go to the front to save women and children was no man at all. He was a coward.

The idea of protecting women from the Germans was a popular feature of propaganda. As well as drawing on a mythic past for propaganda, the British also drew upon an idealized vision of the British nation. It was the world of Tintern Abbey and the Cotswolds. A 1914 poster presented “a bit of England” and “a bit of Belgium” as two images side by side. The bit of England was an idyllic village populated with pretty women, the elderly, and children. The bit of Belgium was a destroyed city block with refugees emerging from the rubble. The implication was that the Germans would do to England what they had done to Belgium. Albrinck states that the intent with the “Remember Belgium” campaign was to “remember the immorality of the Germans.”⁷⁶ The village was a device to remind men that the pure and virginal nation faced the violent penetration of the Germans. The poster was alliteratively titled “The Hun and the Home.”⁷⁷ The image of England itself did not rely overtly on strict gender roles (save the fact there are no young men or male children in the “bit of England”), but the language employed by the poster demonstrates rigid gender division and it relies on language, again, devised to shame men who had not enlisted. The poster states that in England “our homes are secure, our mothers and wives safe, our children still play and fear no harm,” which stands in contrast to Belgium where “their homes are destroyed, their women are murdered and worse, their children are dead or slaves.” The poster was outwardly communicating to women as the bottom of the poster stated, “back up the men who have saved you.” Curiously, that was the only provision the poster

⁷⁶ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 317.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, *The Hun and the Home*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1914. See illustration 12.

asked of women. It did not ask women to buy war bonds, support the war effort by working in a factory, or to save food and supplies for the front. It merely told women to “back up” the men who were fighting. Given that the PRC produced the poster before the advent of conscription, one wonders why Britain would ask for nothing else. The reason was that the poster was actually directed at getting men to enlist. The poster communicated to the male viewer that he was *not* one of the men securing homes, saving mothers and wives, and protecting an idyllic England where children could play. It also told the male viewer that, since he was not one of the men who had saved England from the fate of Belgium, he did not have the support and admiration of women. In other words, if he was not the man saving the world depicted in the poster then he was worthy only of contempt by the opposite sex.

A poster from 1915 portrayed a father crying in a hospital next to his dead wife. She died in a zeppelin raid, and his young daughter said to him “but daddy, mother didn’t do anything wrong!”⁷⁸ The image, superficially, is straightforward: fight to protect your wives and mothers. At a deeper level, though, there was the implication that this man was at home, safe in Britain and far from the front. If only he had been fulfilling his role as a man to defend his country his wife would still be alive. The daughter was not really telling the father “mother didn’t do anything wrong.” She was telling the father that *he* had done something wrong, and the poster, by extension, told the male viewer he was doing something wrong by not fighting. To shame men for doing something wrong was powerful. What they had done wrong was not fulfill a basic function of their gender role: protect their wives, the mothers of their children. One poster urged men to consider their situation: “Be honest with yourself. Be certain that your so-called reason is

⁷⁸ Louis Raemaekers, *But Daddy, Mother Didn’t do Anything Wrong*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1915. See Illustration 13.

not a selfish excuse. Enlist today.”⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly, the poster does not provide any examples of reasons that would not be considered selfish.

Female children frequently appeared in propaganda posters. It was the daughter, not the son, in a famous propaganda poster who asked her father what he had done during the war. Another poster from 1914 presented three cherubic female children. The caption is terse and to the point: “For your children.”⁸⁰ The plea invokes the father’s duty to become a soldier. The implication is clear. If he does not become a soldier than he has failed as a father. The father in this poster embodies masculinity. The war illuminated his failings as a man; he could “not maintain his air of ‘manly authority’ once the wartime definition of masculinity begins to circulate in his community.” The recruiting poster communicated more than to simply remain a father was not enough to fulfill the role of protector.

Some recruitment posters lacked all subtlety in what they meant to convey. One particular poster from 1915 had a very direct message for men who thought not enlisting was an option. The image was a silhouette of a presumably upper or middle class single man dressed in a tuxedo. His hand tussled hair above his furrowed brow, and the image was perhaps a somewhat subversive inference that the wealthy unenlisted man was effeminate. With a stressful look upon his face he thought to himself, “I should go, but!!!” He looked for any excuse imaginable, but Britain abided no excuses from any man. There was no promise of glory in the poster. There was nothing offered other than the expectation that men fought. Big, block letters stated to the

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *Be honest with yourself. Be certain that your so-called reason is not a selfish excuse. Enlist today*, Library of Congress World War I Poster Collection, 1915. See Illustration 14.

⁸⁰ Rosina Mantovani Gutti, *For Your Children*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1914. See illustration 15.

unenlisted man the truth of his gender: “**you are no exception, join now.**”⁸¹ No man was special enough to remain behind. The message was clear. Any man who chose not to fight, not to do what England expected, should feel shame and embarrassment for his cowardice.

The nature of that poster was a product of the difficulty in finding resonant imagery to lay the responsibility of war at the single male’s feet. Single men did not have wives or children. It was harder to instill a sense of shame in them for their failure to protect the vulnerable, and depictions of a mythic and heroic past would not work on every single man. The propaganda directed at single men rested on the simple assumption that duty to fight was an innate and essential feature of masculinity. A poster of 1915 was explicitly directed at single men. It stated, “Single men: hundreds of thousands of married men have left their homes to fight for King & Country, show your appreciation by following their noble example.”⁸² The poster simultaneously communicated to the single man that married men fulfilled their masculine duty even though they had something to lose, and that since they had something to lose their lives were more important than the life of a bachelor. The language, too, was striking because the poster did not acknowledge that a bachelor would fight so a married man could stay home. Britain expected all men to fight.

The propaganda poster “Take up the Sword of Justice” best represented the mythic and masculine calls to fight as well as the feminine ideal for which the soldiers were fighting. The poster features a woman standing on water (presumably the English Channel) filled with dead and drowning bodies. Her arms are outstretched and her eyes look far away, incapable of dealing with the horrors that surround her. She holds a sword in her hand, and she pleads with the men

⁸¹ Anonymous, *You Are No Exception*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1914. See illustration 16.

⁸² Anonymous, *Single Men*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1915. See illustration 17.

looking at the poster to take it and fight.⁸³ The poster synthesized the symbolic image of women as the reason to fight with the call to fight by shaming the unenlisted man for the deaths that were occurring. There was another dimension, however, to this poster that was absolutely critical. It was no longer a dead woman or a fearful woman, but a woman actively commanding men to fight. The image of women began to represent not only the passive nation that needed defending, but also the active nation that commanded men to fight and to die. Posters like “Take Up the Sword of Justice” represented the PRC at its most coercive as voluntary recruitment could not satiate the war’s demand for male bodies, and the PRC moved towards more explicit tactics of shame and personal guilt.⁸⁴

The commanding woman appeared in other propaganda posters around the same time as the “Take up the Sword of Justice” poster. E. J. Kealey created a particularly famous one in 1915. The poster features a woman peering longingly from her open bay window. Her family joins her for the view. The adolescent daughter clutches at her mother while she reassuringly touches the daughter’s hand. A small boy, whose face is not featured, firmly grasps his sister’s shawl with both hands. The mother holds her chin high. She is the picture of British resolve, and she has an air of weary stoicism about her. The object of her gaze is a column of khaki-clad soldiers marching over verdant hills. Perhaps as a macabre allusion to death, the soldiers march out of frame much like the actual soldiers at the actual front. The only message featured on the poster was a command from the women to the men: “Woman of Britain say ‘GO!’”⁸⁵ Kingsbury interprets the poster as using women to recruit by “invoking men’s sense of duty to their

⁸³ Bernard Patridge, *Take up the Sword of Justice*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1915. See illustration 18.

⁸⁴ Meg Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 322.

⁸⁵ E. J. Kealey, *The Woman of Britain Say Go*, Ball State University Media Repository, ca. 1915. See illustration 19.

mothers.”⁸⁶ Whether or not that was Kealey’s intention, the woman in the image knew where she commanded the men to go. Men were to go to the front while women stayed in the home.

An interesting feature of the image was its rigid gender divisions. By 1915, women had begun to fill factories and clerical jobs, but there was no indication in the image that those changes were happening. The poster, in fact, held up the “separate-spheres” ideology of the pre-war period as its central theme. Public life was for men, and the domestic realm was for women. This separate-spheres ideology was supposed to be “a ‘supportive language’ allowing women to ‘avoid conflicts’ between private and public values and work by emphasizing the capacity of the ‘different attributes and skills’ of their ‘domestic background’ to ‘strengthen civic life.’”⁸⁷ In the poster, however, the woman did not emphasize her domestic background, nor did she avoid conflict between the private and public life. Instead, safe behind her window in the realm of private life, she directed public life. Furthermore, propaganda had communicated to men the reason they were fighting was to protect the woman in the window.

Some posters lacked images, and they instead relied entirely on text. While not as effective as more visually oriented posters, they still retained their function as ideology in the public space. Two notable examples were messages from the state to women. The first example was almost comically overt with its intent:

To the Young Women of London. Is your “Best Boy” wearing khaki? If not don’t **YOU THINK** he should be? If he does not think you and your country are worth fighting for – do you think he is **WORTHY** of you? Don’t pity the girl who is alone – her young man is probably a soldier – fighting for her and her country— and for **YOU**. If your young man neglects his duty to his King and Country, the

⁸⁶ Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 80.

⁸⁷ Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 471-472. Paraphrased by David Monger in, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain: The National War Aims Committee and Civilian Morale* (Liverpool : Liverpool University Press, 2012), 79.

time may come when he will **NEGLECT YOU**. Think it over – then ask him to join the army today⁸⁸

The text imbued women with the power to dictate gender roles with shame as their tool, and clearly associated women with the nation. The message was also clear to any man who happened to read the poster: if he did not fight, he was a worthless creature not fit for the love and admiration of women. The poster both defined masculinity and gave women the power to enforce that definition. The other notable example was less overbearing. Written in a pleasant script, the poster read, “To the women of Britain. Some of your men folk are holding back on your account. Won’t you prove your love for country by persuading them to go?”⁸⁹ The message is presented in a more positive tone, but the appeal was the same: to recruit women to use their love to coerce men to serve. It communicated that men were not fulfilling the obligations of their gender as defined by the state, and it enlisted the support of women to enforce these gendered obligations.

To get men to fill British ranks, the state had to appeal and to persuade. Those appeals and persuasions were often gendered. Recruitment posters and propaganda used figures and messages that conformed to prewar conceptions of masculinity and femininity to convince and shame men into fighting. Men were athletic heroes duty bound to protect women, the home, and the nation. Often the nation was personified as a woman. In other cases, the state construed the fight as a means to protect women and children. Indeed, images of death and destruction were blamed, subtly, on the unenlisted man reading the poster. The posters lay the deaths of innocent women and the destruction of Britain at the feet of the unenlisted man. Utilizing shame and guilt

⁸⁸ Anonymous, *To the Young Women of London*, Imperial War Museum Collections, PST 4903, ca. 1915. See illustration 20.

⁸⁹ Anonymous, *To the Women of Britain*, Imperial War Museum Collections, PST 4884, ca. 1915. See illustration 21.

through an array of images, propaganda posters both reflected and reinforced the gender expectations of Britain.

The poster, however, was just one form of mass visual propaganda. Another major and important source of propaganda during World War I was film, which operated under a different administrative division with different goals. Comparing film propaganda to poster propaganda deepens our understanding of propaganda's masculine assumptions and of propaganda's effect on actual men.

2.1 ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1



Illustration 2

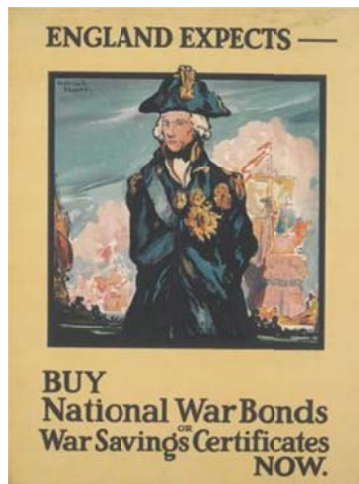


Illustration 3



Illustration 4



Illustration 5



Illustration 6

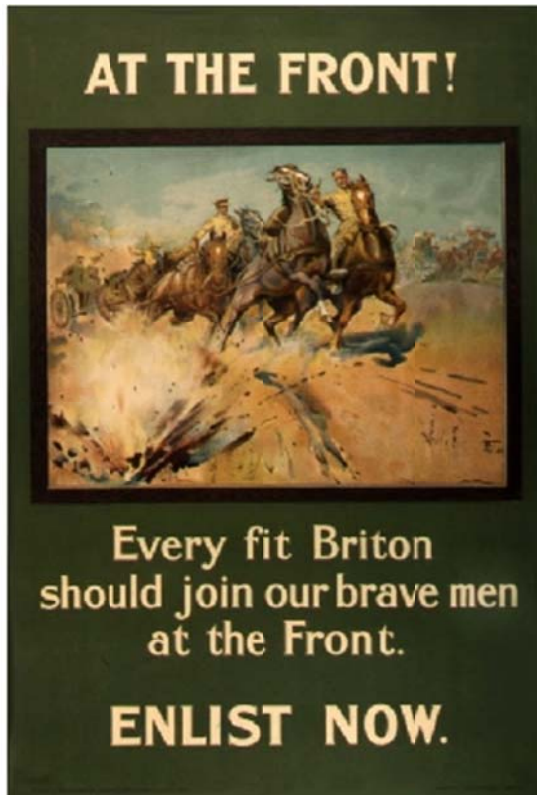


Illustration 7



Illustration 8



Illustration 9



Illustration 10



Illustration 11



Illustration 12



Illustration 13



Illustration 14



Illustration 15



Illustration 16



Illustration 17

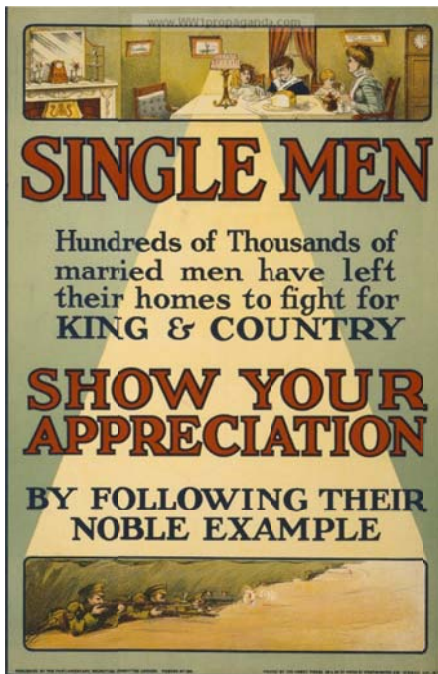


Illustration 18



Illustration 19



Illustration 20



Illustration 21



3. MASCULINITY IN BRITISH PROPAGANDA FILMS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The cinema was the other great source of potent mass visual propaganda. Official propaganda films, however, differed substantially from propaganda posters. The poster relied on stylized art to convince men to enlist or to encourage people to buy war bonds, but the propaganda films were largely bereft of such appeals. The logic of shame found in propaganda posters did not find its way into British cinemas in quite the same way it did with propaganda posters plastered around public space. Film propaganda “was to be factually based, its origins were to be kept secret, and it was to be distributed selectively.”⁹⁰ Realistic content stands in stark contrast to the mythic and idealized imagery found on posters. The reasons for the differences are numerous, but the most important one was that propagandists created films primarily for foreign audiences. The films, however, were also shown in Britain, and they were quite popular. There were also independent recruitment films created outside government control that resembled the propaganda posters that operated according to a gendered logic of shame. The official propaganda films lacked the explicit gendered logic of posters because they were not designed for domestic recruitment, but their prescription for a prewar masculinity still existed (albeit in a subtler form).

The birth of film in Britain can be traced back to February 20, 1896. That was the day the French Lumière brothers, the inventors of cinema, first showed films to British audiences at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in London.⁹¹ The first films were short, usually minute-long, demonstrations of moving pictures rather than what we would think of as a proper film. Initially

⁹⁰ Nicholas Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda during the First World War: Published in Association with the Imperial War Museum* (London: Croom Helm, 1986): 10.

⁹¹ Bill Baillieu and John Goodchild, *The British Film Business* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002): 1.

audiences watched films at music halls, but fixed cinemas supplemented music halls over a period of time between 1908 and 1914.⁹² This was also the period in which films began to take a more narrative driven direction; the commercially successful *Rachel's Sin* (1911) prompted other filmmakers to follow suit.⁹³ The films shown in Britain were of both domestic and international origin, with popular films coming from places outside Britain like the United States and France. Prior to 1914, “the cinema... evolved in a free competitive market situation, without preconceptions or state interference.”⁹⁴ The creation of an office for film propaganda ended that period of film's history in Britain, but the first propaganda films actually came from independent filmmakers.

The independent propaganda films did not use actual footage of the front, but utilized “old travelogues of Belgium” and staged the rest.⁹⁵ The filmmakers intended to capture the patriotism surrounding the outbreak of war, and “deliberate efforts to arouse a warlike spirit included not only the topical dramas, but many elementary ‘recruiting pictures’ shown to the accompaniment of military bands with girls in khaki singing patriotic songs and pointing out the nearest recruitment office.”⁹⁶ The recruitment films rely on gendered appeals strongly similar to those of the recruitment posters, as do the “topical dramas” albeit to a lesser extent. Because both types of these early propaganda films were intended for a domestic, British audience, they rely on shaming men to an extent that the official films do not.

⁹² Baillieu and Goodchild, *The British Film Business*, 4-5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁴ Roy Armes, *A Critical History of British Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): 17.

⁹⁵ Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1978): 45.

⁹⁶ Rachel Low, *The History of British Film 1914-1918, Volume III* (London: Routledge, 2013): 34.

A common plot in the early propaganda dramas was the threat of invasion. *England's Menace*, released in September 1914, "vividly illustrates a carefully planned invasion of England by the German Navy... Grim realism is imparted to the story by the introduction of fine naval spectacles."⁹⁷ It was a simple film in which a politician's daughter discovers her butler is a German spy, and uses his information to get her father to stop an invasion. One reviewer said the "gripping" drama should "stir up patriotism in the breast of anyone."⁹⁸ Many of the propaganda films were not so whimsical in their message as *England's Menace*, but the film demonstrates just how quickly independent filmmakers moved to create propaganda films. The war was hardly a month old by the time *England's Menace* came out, and it was only the first of many such films, each increasing the intensity of its message.

The German Spy Peril was released shortly after *England's Menace*, and it too centers on the threat of German invasion. Instead of the German Navy, however, it features a group of German spies on a mission to blow up Parliament. This propaganda film is particularly important, not only for its message to the male viewer, but because of the event that sets the film in motion. The main character, Jack Holmes, walks down the street when he sees a poster of Lord Kitchener calling for his service, and "he [Holmes] determines to answer the call."⁹⁹ The film not only acts as its own propaganda, but it also commanded the male viewer to obey the propaganda posters he would surely run into after leaving the theatre. The film continues with Jack heading to his nearest recruitment center and intermingling with his fellow enthusiastic countrymen. Jack, however, receives a crushing bit of news when the medical officer declares,

⁹⁷ "England's Menace at Spencer's," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 19, 1914.

⁹⁸ "England's Menace," *Billboard*, September 12, 1914.

⁹⁹ "Haggart's Cinema: 'German Spy Peril' at Aberdare and Mountain Ash," *Aberdare Leader* September 12, 1914.

“You are unfit for service.”¹⁰⁰ Jack then leaves the center disheartened, but, as he walks down the street, he happens to overhear some German spies discussing their Guy Fawkes-esque plan to blow up parliament. Jack follows them on their mission and discovers them with their bomb. They capture him, and leave him to die with the bomb. He escapes, but he is unable to diffuse the bomb in time. The climax of the movie occurs when Jack reaches the Germans and he shouts, “We will die together you German dogs, for my King and my country’s sake!”¹⁰¹ The camera lingers on the rubble, leading the viewer to believe Jack has killed himself in defense of the realm. The hero, however, emerges from the rubble, wounded but intact. The plot and story were almost comically irrelevant to the propaganda message of the film. Not only does the film command obedience to poster propaganda, it prescribes the only acceptable way for a man unfit for service to prove his worth: find some way to die for Britain. Even reviewers seconded this coercive message. One review began by declaring the immediate relevance of the film because of an estimated “30,000 Germans in London alone.”¹⁰² Any man who viewed the film knew what was expected of him, even if he lacked the physical capability.

October of 1914 witnessed the release of Cecil Hepworth’s *Unfit (The Strength of the Weak)*. It, even more explicitly than *The German Spy Peril*, centered on the duty of men unfit for active service. The film journal *Bioscope* gave this description of the film: “Both brothers wish to enlist, only the older is accepted. The younger is ‘unfit.’ He goes to the front as a war correspondent and in the end gives his life to save his brother for the sake of a girl they both love.”¹⁰³ Again there is the motif of a man unfit for service giving his life anyway. The message

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *The Bioscope*, September 10, 1914. *Quoted in: Cate Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 45.

was that there should be no escape from one's duty as a man, even if one could not be a soldier. This film also delivered the common image of a man sacrificing himself for a woman. The "unfit" protagonist was also portrayed quite heroically. The inverse deduction from the film, of course, was that if a man was not willing to sacrifice his life in the war, then he was a coward. The element of unrequited love also contributed to a certain propaganda element. The hero of the story gave his life to protect the love of a woman who loves another. He lacked the virility necessary to truly be a man, but he still embodied "the noble man who would defend a woman's honor."¹⁰⁴

Other early, independent productions were more explicit about recruitment, and worked with the army to bolster enlistment. A notable one from 1914 was *England's Call*. Like the propaganda posters featuring the image of Lord Nelson demanding every British male to do his duty, *England's Call* relied on Britain's glorious past to appeal to men. The film journal *Bioscope* described it as: "A good recruiting picture in which the portraits of Raleigh, Wellington, Nelson, and Gordon leave their frames to offer patriotic appeals. Some of our modern heroes are introduced."¹⁰⁵ Showings of the film also typically included military bands and patriotic songs.¹⁰⁶ Recruitment films of this nature continued into 1915. Films like *Tommy Atkins*, based on a play from 1895, showed a plucky young man out to prove himself and "straighten out domestic difficulties."¹⁰⁷ The film was shown around the country, and

¹⁰⁴ Meg Albrinck, "Humanitarians and He-Men: Recruitment Posters and the Masculine Ideal," in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 330.

¹⁰⁵ *The Bioscope*, July 20, 1916. Quoted in: Rachel Low, *The History of British Film 1914-1918, Volume III* (London: Routledge, 2013), 34.

¹⁰⁶ Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, 45.

¹⁰⁷ Heidi J. Holder, "Melodrama, Realism and Empire on the British Stage." In *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930*, by Jacqueline Bratton et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 141.

recruitment efforts were increased. During March 1915 in York, “A recruiting officer’s office was established in the management offices so that men responding to the call for recruits might be at once enrolled.”¹⁰⁸ The propaganda film, which showed a young soldier doing his duty, propelled the captive audience of young men in the theater into enlistment.

Like the poster, the medium of film was not utilized as mass propaganda until the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, in what M. L. Sanders and Philip Taylor call “undeniably an impressive exercise in improvisation.”¹⁰⁹ There was no precedent for state-controlled film propaganda before the war, but mere weeks after the fighting began Asquith’s government created an office for the production of film propaganda, The War Propaganda Bureau.¹¹⁰ Asquith tasked liberal politician Charles Masterman with heading the operation. Because Masterman used his office at Wellington House to carry out his duties, the term “Wellington House” eventually became shorthand for the efforts and conduct of The War Propaganda Bureau. Wellington House emerged from the same conditions as the PRC, and posters and films did share similarities. However, there were also considerable differences between official propaganda films and propaganda posters.

The production of such independent propaganda films ceased as Wellington House assumed control over film propaganda. Wellington House was a bureau of Asquith’s cabinet. This was not the case with the PRC, which operated outside an official propaganda organization as a parliamentary body.¹¹¹ Official propaganda was intended for foreign audiences while unofficial propaganda was intended for the domestic population. This distinction between the

¹⁰⁸ “Tommy Atkins’ at York,” *Bioscope*, April 1, 1915, 4.

¹⁰⁹ M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918* (London: MacMillan Press, 1982), 1.

¹¹⁰ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 2.

¹¹¹ Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War*, 102.

official propaganda of Wellington House and the unofficial propaganda of the PRC existed because Asquith's government assumed it would be easier to capture popular enthusiasm at home.¹¹² Foreign countries, specifically foreign neutral countries, needed more care and attention to coax onto the British side of war. Masterman quite clearly stated how he intended to use official propaganda:

Anything in the nature of an appeal to neutral countries has been rigidly ruled out; our activities have been confined to the presentation of facts and of general arguments based on those facts. The importance of secrecy need not be labored here. The intrusion of a government, or of persons notoriously inspired by government, into the sphere of opinion, invariably excites suspicion and resentment...¹¹³

Neutral countries would be spared the appeals, but the domestic population would not. Intrusions into the domestic Briton's life would not invite suspicion or resentment. In fact, the government's intrusion into public life was hardly questioned, and state-produced posters hung from every street corner, saturating the public sphere with carefully controlled messages..

While poster propaganda, unilaterally produced and controlled by the state, was fully part of what Althusser calls the "Repressive State Apparatus," Althusser's concept of the "Ideological State Apparatus" better describes film propaganda. Film propaganda included both independent productions and official, government productions, the ISA is diverse and plural, and "the mechanism that produces this vital result [interpellation]... is naturally covered up and concealed by a universally reigning ideology..."¹¹⁴ This point is particularly salient in light of Masterman's

¹¹² Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 9.

¹¹³ First Proof of Wellington House Interim Report, December 2, 1914, paragraph 1. Quoted in: *Ibid.*, 10. Emphasis authors.

¹¹⁴ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* trans. Andy Blunden (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>.

and Wellington House's commitment to the pretense of objectivity, and the simultaneous commitment to secrecy and deceit.

Wellington House's targeted audience was clearly defined: "It was directed at the opinion-makers in foreign societies – journalists, publicists, politicians, government officials, teachers..."¹¹⁵ The modus operandi of Wellington House was to affect those who could effect real change within the targeted country. There was not much point in trying to shame individual men from foreign countries into the British military.

The structure of Wellington House also influenced the content of propaganda films because the films' messages were contingent on Charles Masterman's ideas about the factual film. He was in charge of Wellington House, and he implemented his ideas. Masterman even suggested in an article published in *The Nation* that, if any appeals should be made to working men, it should be on the basis of German savagery on the continent.¹¹⁶ Masterman did not like emotional appeals, and he believed most people would see right through them. His policies would ultimately result in considerably different content from propaganda posters. Masculine roles and masculinity still existed in the propaganda films of the war, but the message of shame was considerably muted.

Another feature unique to film was the initial reluctance of the British government to deploy film for propaganda purposes. Despite the creation of Wellington House at the beginning of the war, no propaganda films were created in the first year of the war. The initial efforts of Wellington House were clandestine distribution of literature like books and pamphlets to key

¹¹⁵ Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War*, 101.

¹¹⁶ Charles Masterman, "Why the Working Man Enlists," *Nation* (September 11, 1915): 743-743. See also the response, "Why the Working Man Enlists," *Edinburgh Evening News*, September 13, 1915. The author rebukes Masterman's point, and states: "Duty requires to be overemphasized in some directions where the imagination of the worker seems to be stunted or lacking development."

figures in foreign governments.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the vast majority of films and newsreels were created after 1916 with the creation of the War Office Cinematography Committee (or WOCC). The recognition of film's usefulness came only after witnessing the success the Germans had with film in Romania.¹¹⁸ Two factors explain the delay in film propaganda production. First was the state's distrust of the camera's "indiscriminating eye."¹¹⁹ A camera catches all, and the propagandists did not have complete control over the content like they did with posters. Film captured reality, and, as Lucy Masterman stated in her biography of her husband, there was a widespread belief in the upper echelons of Wellington House that film would lead to "every sort of secret" escaping.¹²⁰ Secondly, officials, politicians, and administrators alike looked down on film; they "regarded cinema as a shabby means of mass entertainment, totally unworthy of serious attention."¹²¹ As Lucy Masterman put it, cinema was a "kind of music hall turn, probably vulgar and without serious importance."¹²² Curiously, though, the British had an established history with the use of film propaganda dating back to 1900. The War Office had been happy to consult on films like R. W. Paul's *Army Life, or How Soldiers are Made* in 1900. It was much the same story until just a year before the war when, in 1913 Keith Prowse made *The British Army Film*.¹²³ These films were not made by the state, but the state and the military did offer their co-operation.

The propaganda films of Wellington House had a decidedly different tone and content.

Michael Paris shows that the success of the independent propaganda films "awoke" politicians to

¹¹⁷ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 12.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹²⁰ Lucy Masterman *C. F. G. Masterman: A Biography* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968), 283.

¹²¹ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 4.

¹²² Lucy Masterman *C. F. G. Masterman: A Biography* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968), 283.

¹²³ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 48.

the usefulness of film as instruction.¹²⁴ Masterman's main goal for his propaganda was "aimed at getting the United States to enter the war."¹²⁵ This was evident in his first official film, *Britain Prepared*, which debuted in London on December 29, 1915.¹²⁶ The film followed Masterman's prescription that propaganda should be shown to foreign audiences without pretense or appeal. Commenting on the film's "conspicuous...factual approach," Nicholas Reeves provides a description of a typical scene from the film: "The tone was set in the very first film, *Britain Prepared*, where footage of the King visiting a Vickers factory was introduced, not with patriotic words celebrating the event, but with the simple words 'The visit of His Majesty King George V to the Ordnance Works of Messrs. Vickers Ltd.'"¹²⁷ Masterman's philosophy that emotional appeals should not be made to foreign nations and the fact the films were primarily created for foreign nations explained the adherence to more realistic content. Wellington House did show the official propaganda films in Britain, though. They were exhibited extensively throughout the United Kingdom. Most importantly, the propaganda films were successful and widely seen.¹²⁸

Britain Prepared, directed by the Anglo-American Charles Urban, was a marathon three hours and forty minutes long. It comprised twelve reels, and each reel revolved around a theme. Some of the reels centered on simple images showcasing the power of the British military, such as reel two, "manufactures of a 15-inch naval gun and firing trials," or reel nine, "the Grand Fleet

¹²⁴ Michael Paris, "The Great War and the Moving Image," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century British and American War Literature* eds Adam Piette and Mark Rawlinson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 60.

¹²⁵ Jim Aulich and John Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction? First World War Posters in Britain and Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007): 111.

¹²⁶ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 56.

¹²⁷ Nicholas Reeves, "Official British Film Propaganda," in *The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present* edited by Michael Paris (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 33.

¹²⁸ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 56.

at Scapa Flow in the North Sea.”¹²⁹ These reels most accurately reflect Masterman’s hope that “some glimpse of the power and energy of the most powerful of the allies might have its effect on neutrals and induce them to remain neutral if hostile, and to throw their lot in with the allies if they were friendly.”¹³⁰ Indeed much of the film dealt with industrial production. According to Luke McKernan, “Despite the appearance of new recruits being turned into fighting men, and the contributions being made by the women of Britain, it is a film about armaments, not people.”¹³¹

McKernan, however, is too quick to dismiss the film’s gendered messages. Reel one, “Training the New Army,” explored precisely what it meant to be a man during the First World War. After the opening credits, two slides elucidated what was to follow: “Britain’s new army. How 3 million civilians became efficient soldiers.”¹³² The film begins with a display of a mass public rally, where a speaker standing next to a golden lion gives an impassioned speech to an excited audience. The scene cuts at a minute and ten seconds to a scene that treated the viewer to scenes of recruitment. The film displays two men stopping to take papers and direction from a recruitment officer. The first man, clearly upper class, is very tall, and he wears a black coat and a top hat. The next man is squat, and he wears a flat cap with a wool jacket – obviously a worker. The message, however, was clear: no matter one’s social standing one was expected to enlist. The film then fades to another slide. It reads, “The cheery non-slackers receiving their papers and marching to barracks.”¹³³ Not only did the film communicate to the audience that every man was expected to enlist, but it also hammered that message home by characterizing any man who

¹²⁹ *Britain Prepared*

¹³⁰ Lucy Masterman, *C.F.G. Masterman*, 283.

¹³¹ Luke McKernan, *Charles Urban: Pioneering the Non-Fiction Film in Britain and America, 1897-1925* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2013), 138.

¹³² *Britain Prepared*.

¹³³ *Britain Prepared*.

did not enlist as a “slacker.” The film intended to shame any man in the audience who entertained ideas of shirking his duty.

The first message of the first reel of the first official propaganda film was about men and what a man was supposed to do. Beginning at the three-minute mark, the rest of the film was dedicated to how the army turned civilian men into fighting men. The men arrive at the barracks and begin to perform physical exercises. The men are a picture of peak physical performance, and they exercise as a unit. Then the men change into their uniforms to practice military drills. Intended to showcase the power and the energy of the British army--as Masterman wanted—these scenes also communicated to the male viewer what he was supposed to do if he were fit for service. It is rather appropriate that official propaganda films dealt with fit men since the unofficial, independent films had already showcased the role for a man unfit for service. In both cases, the advice was to fight and die for one’s country.

The other major film to come out of Wellington House was *The Battle of the Somme*. This film went further than any other in a quest for realism. Two cameramen were sent to France to record aspects of the actual Battle of the Somme; their shots included footage of “artillery in action, elements of the 29th and 7th divisions moving up, and various facets of the actual attack of 1 July.”¹³⁴ A massive success, the film “was not only the most successful propaganda film of the war, but arguably the most successful British film of all time.”¹³⁵ Nearly twenty million Britons saw the film in its first six weeks, and it may have been seen by a majority of the United

¹³⁴ S. P. Mackenzie, *British War Films 1939-1945: The Cinema and the Services* (London: Hambledon and London, 2001), 7.

¹³⁵ Reeves, “Official British Film Propaganda,” in *The First World War and Popular Cinema*, 31. Reeves explains how he arrived at the argument *the Battle of the Somme* was the most successful British film of all time in his endnote 18. He bases the argument on numbers compiled by Nicholas Hiley in Hiley’s conference paper “*The Battle of the Somme and the British News Media*” presented at the Centre de Recherche de l’Historial de la Grande Guerre, in Péronne on 21 July 1992.

Kingdom's population. The film premiered in London on the third week in August before expanding to the rest of the country a week later.¹³⁶ The response to the film was overwhelmingly positive. *The Times* stated that it “gave a glimpse not merely of the horror of the war but also of its glories.”¹³⁷ *The Manchester Guardian* proclaimed, “the real thing at last.”¹³⁸ Of course, *The Battle of the Somme* was not quite the real thing. Like *Britain Prepared*, the film portrays the action as if it were documentary footage, but the scenes were actually staged. Much of the film is devoted to showing off the general prowess of the British military, but it also showed the British Army in action. There are scenes of men going over the top, of the cavalry charging, and of dead men. The unemotional approach of *The Battle of the Somme* makes it clear that this film was intended to manipulate other countries into joining or otherwise supporting the British side, and not to shame men into enlistment.

Charles Urban, the director of *Britain Prepared*, also directed the *Battle of the Somme*, but at five reels, the later film was considerably shorter than its predecessor. (*The Battle of the Somme* was actually considerably longer, but it was condensed and re-edited by the first theatre to show it. Urban was furious, but he was able to reuse the omitted footage in shorter films.)¹³⁹ The entirety of the film is set on the day before the Battle of the Somme, the day of the battle, and the day after. Each reel shows various parts of the British Army's experience with the battle. The first reel shows the Army preparing for an attack, and the slides are truly of an austere nature. A typical slide is like the one at nine minutes and nine seconds into the film that reads,

¹³⁶ Mackenzie, *British War Films 1939-1945*, 8.

¹³⁷ *The Times*, August 11, 1916. Quoted in: *Ibid*.

¹³⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1916. Quoted in: *Ibid*.

¹³⁹ Luke McKernan, “Propaganda, Patriotism, and Profit: Charles Urban and the British Official War Films in America during the First World War,” *Film History* 14 no. 3/4, War and Militarism (2002): 378. It was also the most realistic of the propaganda films, and it was the high point of Wellington House's efforts to create a propagandistic illusion of reality.

“The 4-7 inch guns were giving the enemy no rest.”¹⁴⁰ A scene of British bombardment of the German position follows, along with men loading and unloading the guns. The men, the soldiers, appear little different than cogs in the war machine. This type of imagery continues throughout the reel, such as at fourteen minutes and thirty-five seconds when a slide appears announcing, “Supply of ‘plum puddings,’ these bombs are most effective in smashing the enemies barbed wire entanglements.”¹⁴¹ The reel treats men as little other than auxiliary support for the technological weaponry. It is only in the second reel, covering the evening before the battle, that some of the men’s humanity comes through. The reel mostly shows men preparing individually for battle, trying to rest, or trying to eat. This is also the case at seventeen minutes and forty-three seconds when a slide foretells the “Royal Warwickshires having a meal in camp on the evening before the great advance.”¹⁴²

Reel three of the *Battle of the Somme* features the attack. It is a thrilling sequence that purported to show actual footage of that famous day, July 1, 1916. The film treats the viewer right away to a slide that says, “At a signal along the entire 16 mile front, the British troops leaped over trench parapets and advanced towards the German trenches under heavy fire of the enemy.”¹⁴³ The film then shows the men dramatically going over the top. The cameramen did film such events, but the actual footage never made it to the screen. The scenes watched by audiences were fakes; the authorities censored the film because they deemed the actual footage “unsuitable for public exhibition.”¹⁴⁴ This is important to note because it helps explain why *The Battle of the Somme* contained the least amount of propaganda intended to shame British men.

¹⁴⁰ *The Battle of the Somme.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *The Battle of the Somme.*

¹⁴⁴ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 104-105.

One of the cameramen of the film, Geoffrey Malins, wrote later in his memoir, “Over my head all the time, like a huge sword, hung... the opinion of neutral countries. They would accept nothing unless there was great excitement in it...”¹⁴⁵ The film needed enough real footage to be convincing to foreign audiences in places like the United States, but it needed to be manipulated in such a way that it did not show what was really happening. It was important that the propaganda did not appear to be propaganda. The main goal was to get neutral countries to join the fight on the Allied side, not to persuade British men into uniform. The same could have been said about *Britain Prepared*, but *Britain Prepared* did have sparse, yet strong, elements of shaming men into service. The discrepancy is most likely explained by conscription. There had been no conscription of British men when Wellington House made *Britain Prepared*. This was not the case with the *Battle of the Somme*.

But as 1916 turned into 1917 the so-called “factual films” gave way to the resurgence of narrative films. The British public had grown weary of Charles Urban and the American presence in British films. *The Evening News* reported:

Why [are] Germans and pro-Germans in America are the only people who are allowed in that country to make huge profits out of the showing of the British Government war films. Are the King’s visit pictures to be placed in the hands of the same group who are making fortunes in the United States out of ‘Britain Prepared’ and ‘the Battle of the Somme?’ This is an important question demanding an answer from the British Topical Committee, which distributes the films all over the world.¹⁴⁶

Americans were not making fortunes off of British productions. As McKernan notes, the article was “misinformed, malicious, and ignorant of the prices that could be expected of films.”¹⁴⁷

However, perception was important, and the administration of propaganda films underwent

¹⁴⁵ Geoffrey Malins, *How I filmed the War* (London: Low Warren, 1920), 197. Quoted in, Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 103.

¹⁴⁶ *Evening News* October 16, 1916. Quoted in: McKernan, *Charles Urban*, 149.

¹⁴⁷ McKernan, *Charles Urban*, 151.

significant changes. From October 1916 to February 1917, Wellington House shared propaganda film production duties with the Trade Topical Committee (later known as the British Topical Committee). In 1917, Lloyd George's government replaced Wellington House with the Department of Information under the direction of novelist John Buchan (the DOI would be subsumed by the Ministry of Information under Lord Beaverbrook in 1918). The DOI began making radically different propaganda films from the films of Wellington House, and the target of the films shifted back to home audiences. Its policy was to make films that were "ninety per cent propaganda and ten per cent entertainment."¹⁴⁸ The new propagandists in the DOI concluded that films like *Britain Prepared* and the *Battle of the Somme* lacked "human interest," and "what was needed was films with the attractiveness and power of a war-story picture with human interest...in connection with the war attractively introduced."¹⁴⁹ These films were similar to the independent features that had been made in the earliest stages of the war. The return to that style also carried a return to renewed propaganda efforts that targeted men and masculinity.

Even newsreels became subject to glossier propaganda under the Department and Ministry of Information. Unfortunately, nearly all of the newsreels of that latter part of the war have been lost, but descriptions of them still exist. One featured shots of British troops in the Alps described as, "War amidst the eternal snows. Always happy, never disappointed, Tommy in the camps in the Italian Alps has become a fighting mountaineer."¹⁵⁰ They did not, however, always have such a cheery message. Two of note demonstrated the horror of the male pacifist. One in May of 1918 described a "PACIFIST FIASCO IN LONDON," and another declared,

¹⁴⁸ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 69.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁵⁰ Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda*, 200.

“NO DEFEATISTS WANTED. Londoners refuse to hear pacifists at Tower Hill.”¹⁵¹ Pacifists were male cowards, and these newsreels treated them as if they were pathogens. Men not willing to fight were not even worthy of being heard. They were a sickness that had to be cured. The majority of the propaganda films made during this era, however, were more explicitly fictional films.

Many of the films were short and focused on eliminating waste. One notable film was the two-minute short *Her Savings Saved*. It was a short piece encouraging the purchase of war bonds in May of 1918. The media has been lost, but the Imperial War Museum kept a record of the film and its plot. It depicts a working-class girl as she is out shopping in a street market. As she browses the goods, a pickpocket sneaks up and steals a receipt for a National Savings Certificate from her purse. A young man witnesses the theft, and runs to catch the thief. After a struggle, the man retrieves the certificate and returns it to the girl. She offers it to him in thanks, but he declines.¹⁵² The lesson was simply that the good citizen should save, but the way the lesson was conveyed informed men the fight was far from over. Men needed to protect what the war was being fought for.

German barbarity was the subject of the Ministry of Information’s 1918 production *Once a Hun, Always a Hun*, “one of the war’s most notorious propaganda films...which played upon popular prejudices about the beastly Germans in a way that had not been done before in this medium.”¹⁵³ The film, despite being under three minutes long, has attracted significant attention from scholars. The film began with a familiar theme from print propaganda: German soldiers brutalizing women and children. Two Germans (or, Stephen Badsey describes them, “baby

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² IWM 533.

¹⁵³ Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War*, 130.

molesters) harass an innocent woman and her child in her village. The film links the wartime Germans with the peacetime Germans that Britain would co-exist with after the war.¹⁵⁴ The idea was for the British not to trade with the barbarians who had raped women and killed children.¹⁵⁵ The film told men they needed to continue inhabiting the masculine role prescribed for them at the outset of the war, even after the fighting had ended. The theme appeared in other films as well, such as the feature film *The National Film*, which centered on a German invasion and occupation of Chester.¹⁵⁶ How effective this propaganda was at the end of the war is difficult to say, but what was evident was that propaganda aimed at the British public relied on notions of men as protectors of women. Gender roles were clearly defined.

British film propaganda differed from poster propaganda in several ways, particularly the films that came from Wellington House. Those films like *Britain Prepared* and *Battle of the Somme* were intended to arouse sympathy from neutral countries like the United States, and convince those countries to join the Allied war effort. The only films that really mirrored the content of the propaganda posters were the independent films made early in the war. Those films, like posters, were intended for a domestic audience: their goal was to get men to enlist. The later official films of the DOI and MOI contained the elements of masculine gender expectations, but the intentions of the later films changed slightly. As the next chapter shows, however, films, even the independent films, appear to have been less effective at affecting men's actual sense of masculinity than posters.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and Its Image, 1918-1918* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 42.

¹⁵⁵ Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War*, 129.

¹⁵⁶ Mackenzie, *British War Films 1939-1945*, 10.

4. THE IMPACT OF PROPAGANDA'S GENDERED MESSAGES

Much of the history of British World War I propaganda has focused on production, or on propaganda's social and cultural function. Much less has been written on the impact of British World War I propaganda on individuals' sense of self and their relations to others. Men and soldiers in particular were sensitive to the messages conveyed through propaganda because the state directed the bulk of propaganda at them. An analysis of World War I diaries, letters, newspapers, periodicals, short stories, poetry, and cartoons written by men during or shortly after the war reveals that many were deeply affected by propaganda's gendered logic. The responses range from derision to agreement, but one thing is certain: significant numbers of men internalized the gendered logic communicated by the state. The state's propaganda campaign strengthened men's perception of their own masculinity and women's femininity. The messages of men's role as protectors of women and children, sons defending the motherland, and shame should they not fulfill their duty communicated by mass visual propaganda affected men's perception of their gender role and relation to women in British society.

Historians who have written on propaganda's impact typically urge caution. Nicholas Hiley argues that the evidence for the impact of poster propaganda at the personal level is far too scant to draw meaningful conclusions. He relies on data relating to the frequency at which the PRC produced certain posters as the evidence for a poster's effectiveness and popularity.¹⁵⁷ Meg Albrinck warns that propaganda's "messages reflect national ideals but not necessarily actual behavior."¹⁵⁸ Despite her urge for caution, however, Albrinck's concluding sentences offer a

¹⁵⁷ Nicholas Hiley, "'Kitchener Wants You' and 'Daddy, What Did You Do in the Great War?': The Myth of British Recruiting Posters," *Imperial War Museum Review* 11 (1997).

¹⁵⁸ Meg Albrinck, "Humanitarians and He-Men: Recruitment Posters and the Masculine Ideal," in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009): 335.

framework for how to investigate the evidence that does exist: “Even if the posters did not produce the desired results, they were affecting popular concepts of gender identity. Such arguments shaped individual perceptions of selfhood and identity during the war years and in the postwar years as well.”¹⁵⁹ Propaganda called to men with a gendered message. Even when the propaganda failed to achieve that goal fully, men still wrestled with a message they internalized of state-sanctioned masculinity.

Scholarship on film propaganda follows similar lines of caution. In 1983 Nicholas Reeves argued that, “The evidence of audience response to films is inconclusive.”¹⁶⁰ Returning to the question nearly 25 years later, Reeves amended his assessment slightly. He acknowledged the popularity and success of propaganda films during the war with audiences, but attributed their success to the “novelty” of cinema and the “emotional intensity of the films.”¹⁶¹ He concluded, “Opinion in Britain during the First World War was more influenced by the changing nature of the war and by people’s own direct, personal experience of the war, than it was by official films, or indeed any other form of wartime propaganda.”¹⁶² Reeve’s assessment of film propaganda is fair, but it fails to recognize that people’s personal experience with the war was often filtered through the propaganda that permeated Britain during the war.

Reeves is correct, however, that official film propaganda made less of an impact on people’s (and more specifically for this chapter, men’s) internalization of propaganda messages. The gendered messages that appeared in unofficial propaganda were considerably muted in official film propaganda. As the previous chapter showed, Wellington House produced official

¹⁵⁹ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 336.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas Reeves, “Film Propaganda and Its Audience: The Example of Britain’s Official Films during the First World War,” *Journal Of Contemporary History* 18 (July, 1983): 470.

¹⁶¹ Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* (London and New York: Cassell Publishing, 1999): 38.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

propaganda for foreign audiences and therefore the content of its productions lacked the direct appeals of unofficial propaganda. Official propaganda films thus provide little evidence for how men internalized the gendered messages of propaganda.

Nevertheless, even official film propaganda had an impact (minor as it was). Michael Hammond has shown how the emphasis on honor and depictions of enlisted men appealed to audiences.¹⁶³ The films both entertained viewers and provided a sense of relief for the audience by “ennobling the enlisted soldier.”¹⁶⁴ Hammond focuses on domestic audiences and does not provide much information on the films’ impact upon recruitment or male viewers’ sense of masculinity, but a report of a showing of Wellington House’s *Britain Prepared* provides a brief glimpse into the male viewers’ responses. In 1916, the film was shown to troops on leave in Holland. According to one reporter in attendance, the soldiers reserved their loudest applause for scenes “portraying the inspection of troops by King George.”¹⁶⁵ The scene in question portrayed the king inspecting troops in training, and it is not clear whether the troops were applauding themselves, the king, or both. Fitness was an essential part of the message of masculinity in propaganda. A reviewer for the *Nottingham Evening Post* praised the opening scene of “recruiting sergeants in Whitehall picking up fine specimens of young manhood.”¹⁶⁶ The reviewer describes what the film called “cheery non-slackers” as the fine specimens of young manhood. *Britain Prepared* does not, however, appear in soldier’s letters home or diaries; it inspired no poems or caustic quips.

¹⁶³ Michael Hammond, *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006), 96.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ “‘Britain Prepared.’ Animated Pictures in Holland,” *Western Daily Press*, June 21, 1916.

¹⁶⁶ “‘Britain Prepared.’ Wonderful Picture at Nott. Empire,” *Nottingham Evening Post* April 3, 1916.

Wellington House's most important film production, *The Battle of the Somme*, also apparently failed to resonate deeply with soldiers and young men. Sources that explore the gendered messages of the film tend to do so out of a sense of home-front catharsis. A film reviewer from the north of England expresses the anxiety he felt at seeing depictions of fallen soldiers, but then he describes relief when he sees some boys returning and looking like "they just returned from a football match."¹⁶⁷ In Michael Hammond's analysis, home front viewers like this one needed to "envelop the living figures in smiles and a masculine tradition of home."¹⁶⁸ He provides another example of a review from *The Star* published on August 25, 1916. The reviewer talks of the heroic soldiers giving cigarettes to "demented German Prisoners," which Hammond writes is the reviewer "construct[ing] the British soldiers as an idealized masculinity while the Germans are...pathetic, vanquished villains."¹⁶⁹ Hammond's study helps to explain why the films did not play prominently in soldiers' constructions of masculinity. While the films were popular in Britain, they operated as education for the home front and as a "practical patriotism."¹⁷⁰ The films were not specifically designed to speak to soldiers and the unenlisted man. Indeed, a man writing shortly after the war proclaimed they probably did more harm than good: "few of them [official propaganda films] could have ... inspired them [young men] to achieve victory at any cost."¹⁷¹

Few contemporary writers expressed similar sentiments about propaganda posters. Both during the war years and in the interwar decades, Britons testified to the poster's effectiveness

¹⁶⁷ "Somme: Impressions of the Great Battle in Picture," *The Film Renter*, September 1916, in Hammond, *The Big Show*, 119.

¹⁶⁸ Hammond, *The Big Show*, 119.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁷¹ Sidney Low, "Propaganda Films and Mixed Morals at the 'Movies,'" *Fortnightly Review* (May 1920): 718.

and how it inspired and influenced men. Hiley, however, argues that propaganda posters did not capture the British imagination during the war, and that their popularity was an invention of later critics. Hiley argues that posters like the well-known 1915 Savile Lumley poster that asked the male viewer, “Daddy what did YOU do during the War?” are “famous because we want them to be famous, not because they give us access to the dominant emotions of the recruiting campaign.”¹⁷² The posters, in essence, only became famous because they resonated with later critic’s distaste for the war. Jim Aulich and John Hewitt have continued this line of argument. They state that the Lumley poster specifically was “not seen at the time as being particularly significant,” and that “as an example of manipulative sentimentality it achieved a certain notoriety after the war during a period that was less jingoistic and more critical of the conflict.”¹⁷³ Certainly it *remained* popular after the war. George Orwell mused in 1940, “I have often laughed to think of that recruiting poster, ‘What did you do in the Great War, daddy?’ (a child is asking this question of its shame-stricken father), and of all the men who must have been lured into the army by just that poster and afterwards despised by their children for not being Conscientious Objectors.”¹⁷⁴ But those sentiments existed *during* the war as well. In 1915 the Scottish Labor Party politician Robert Smillie quipped to a reporter, should his daughter ever pose to the question to him, “I tried to stop the bloody thing my child.”¹⁷⁵ A closer examination of contemporary sources reveals Hiley’s, Aulich’s, and Hewitt’s conclusions to be overstated.

¹⁷² Hiley, “‘Kitchener Wants You’ and ‘Daddy, What Did You Do in the Great War?’”, 55.

¹⁷³ Jim Aulich and John Hewitt *Seduction or Instruction? First World War Posters in Britain and Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007): 43.

¹⁷⁴ George Orwell, “My Country Right or Left,” in *George Orwell: An Age Like This*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1968): 537. Nicoletta F. Gullace also uses this quotation in *The Blood of Our Sons*, but she misattributes it to H. G. Wells, pg. 69.

¹⁷⁵ Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: Bodley Head, 1965): 52.

The Lumley poster appears many times in a diverse set of sources from men throughout Britain during the war. Thomas Macmillan recounted in his memoir, “It happened frequently ‘on the field’ after the completion of an unpleasant job-of-work, that my comrades would turn to each other and ask in derision: ‘Daddy what did you do in the Great War.’”¹⁷⁶ Macmillan’s memory is important for several reasons. First and most obviously, it shows that the question posed by the supposedly insignificant poster saturated an entire group of soldiers as a relief joke for their harsh conditions. The troops mocking derision also highlights how the poster informed their perception of their masculinity. Their answer to the question could not be what it was intended to be. They could not tell their daughters that they were heroic protectors of England. They could only tell their daughters the unpleasant details they would not want to share; that they were menial laborers who performed tasks like digging trenches and clearing dead bodies.

The poster and its question appeared in many articles and editorials. *The Western Mail* posed the question to its readers in 1918, and published a few of the responses. The responses stressed “vital... fighting men,” and one respondent stated, “We stopped what we could, good and quick, my son.”¹⁷⁷ The response indicated the man did his duty, just as England expected. The *Stirling Observer* anonymously published a father’s letter from the front to his children explaining exactly what he was doing. He wrote, “My Dear Boys and Girls... Altogether there are thousands of us helping in numberless ways in this great struggle for Freedom and Liberty. Soon we shall have peace, as the Germans are getting weaker everyday, while we are growing stronger everyday.”¹⁷⁸ The letter seemed to reassure all that every man was struggled and fought

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Macmillan, “Memoirs,” 1935, 5, IWM Documents. Quoted in: Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 69.

¹⁷⁷ “What Did You Do in the Great War, Daddy,” *Western Mail*, November 21, 1918.

¹⁷⁸ “Daddy’s Letter,” *Stirling Observer*, May 14, 1918.

as best he could to protect little boys and girls. The *Morpeth Herald* reported on a Mr. Heatly who asked the whole town of Blyth what they were doing during the war. His speech was one of compassion for the wounded sons of Blyth who had “followed the battle cry of Nelson when he exclaimed ‘England expects everyman to do his duty.’”¹⁷⁹ It appears Mr. Heatly was inspired by more than one piece of propaganda. But by far the most illuminating piece of evidence was an anonymous article written by a soldier about what it meant to be a man in the war.

Another, more idiosyncratic article that referenced the poster appeared in the *Folkestone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald*. Titled “Men’s Meeting at the Drill Halls,” the article began with a straightforward report on a speech given by the Bishop of Dover. A few sentences in, however, the piece switched to first person and the author gives a very personal account of his take on why men enlisted. When the author begins talking in the first person he states:

In the early days of the war we grew very familiar with the posters on the hoardings calling upon men to join the Army in the days of their country’s need. Amongst them was one... bearing the words “Daddy, What did you do during the great war?” We all know how that demand had been answered, and probably when historians writing at a later date one of the first things they would speak of would be the magnificent voluntary response of five million men to the country’s call.¹⁸⁰

The author specifically remembered this specific poster, and he associated it with actually motivating men to enlist. He goes on to discuss the valor of the men who died, and attributes their heroic deaths to defense of the homefront. He then describes overhearing some soldiers discussing the greatest victory of the war, and tells of a man who gave the best answer: “One man said the greatest victory there could be was the victory of a man in his own heart over his

¹⁷⁹ “What Was Blyth Doing?” *Morpeth Herald*, February 11, 1916.

¹⁸⁰ “Men’s Meeting at the Drill Halls,” *Folkestone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald*, November 18, 1916.

own senses. That was the truth.”¹⁸¹ The greatest victory was to be an honorable, Christian soldier who fought despite his fear. This assessment of a man’s greatest victory was directly tied to the propaganda poster’s use of shame as a motivating tool for enlistment. There was nothing worse than being a coward, or perhaps being perceived as a coward by one’s children or women.

Women do enter into the article near the end in the context of male-female social relations: “Men had felt it such a hard fight that they had established the idea of a double standard for men and women.... At any rate, men did care a great deal about the opinions of other people, and what they thought and said of them.”¹⁸² The article is not explicitly clear on what the specific gender double standard was, but it is clear that it came about because of the hard fight men faced and people’s opinion of men going off to fight. The most significant aspect of the article, however, was that all of the author’s thoughts sprung from how he internalized the Lumley propaganda poster. It may be correct the poster rose to greater fame after the war due to its association with disenchantment and disillusionment, but clearly the poster resonated with observers, men and soldiers specifically, during the war. Moreover, the poster appears successful in communicating a gendered message of masculinity and dutiful honor to the male observer.

The Lumley poster was not the only successful poster that appears in contemporary sources. The first chapter provided evidence for the widespread existence and success of Kitchener’s poster, but other posters also deeply affected men. An article in *The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* detailed the success of the “Women of Britain say GO Poster!” This poster came at the end of the voluntary recruitment period and represented the state’s most coercive propaganda efforts. The article discusses the success of a series of posters,

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² “Men’s Meeting at the Drill Halls,” *Folkestone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald*, November 18, 1916.

and asserts that “the most attractive is one containing the message: ‘Women of Britain say GO!’¹⁸³ Expressing “astonishment at the young men attending the picture houses and places of amusement,” the article’s author insisted that “young single men should recognise their responsibility”—and thus echoed the poster’s message of shame.¹⁸⁴ The *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* also affirmed that message in its description of how the poster urges women to shame men into service: “It is realised by everyone that the women of England can, if they use their influence right, become powerful recruiting agents... Woman’s persuasive powers are well-know, and since the days of Adam she has been able to twist man around her little finger.”¹⁸⁵ If men could not be appealed to via masculine heroism, then they would be shamed as cowards by women. Women shaming men had been a propaganda tactic since Admiral Charles Penrose “encouraged women to hand white feathers to every able-bodied man who was not wearing khaki,” but the poster represented the state’s efforts to mobilize every British woman in helping shame men into a prescribed masculine role.¹⁸⁶ Michael MacDonagh recalled watching two women running up to two men in London and saying, “Why don’t you fellows enlist? Your king and country want you. We don’t.”¹⁸⁷ While this poster came at the end (or failure, as some might see it) of the PRC’s propaganda campaign, the poster was a success at using women to shame men into their proper role.

A few men were very aware of the ways in which the state tried to manipulate them into doing their ‘duty’. The work of writer Arthur Graeme West is a good example of a middle class

¹⁸³ “A Successful Campaign in Manchester,” *The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, May 26, 1915.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ “Women Say ‘Go,’” *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, May 26, 1915.

¹⁸⁶ Albrinck, “Humanitarians and He-Men,” 333.

¹⁸⁷ Michael MacDonagh, *In London during the Great War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1935): 69.

man coming to the realization that propaganda was little other than an empty promise, meant to coerce and shame. West was educated at Blundell's school and Balliol College, Oxford before joining the war. He was unusual among the war poets. Unlike poets like Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke, for example, West held deep ethical reservations about enlisting to fight, and he detested the "attitudes instilled in and adopted by his fellow soldiers."¹⁸⁸ It is not exactly clear what compelled him to join, but he did enlist and his writings are very critical about the attitudes held by men at the front. His posthumously published diary and poetry were filled with condemnations of the gendered messages spewed by propaganda. His poetry and diary entries provide evidence for what the ordinary soldier said and thought. West wrote poems with titles like "God! How I Hate You, You Young Cheerful Men!" His contempt stands in stark contrast to something like the opening scene of *Britain Prepared* where the young men are described as cheery non-slackers. Inverting the gendered tropes of propaganda was unsurprising given what he wrote in his diary:

My feeling of impotent horror, as a creature caught by the proprietors of some travelling circus and forced with formal brutality to go through meaningless tricks, was immensely sharpened by a charcoal drawing...called "We Want More Men!" showing Death, with the English staff cap on and a ragged tunic, standing with a jagged sickle among a pile of bleeding, writhing bodies and smoking corpses – a huge gaunt figure that haunted me horribly.¹⁸⁹

The caricature of a propaganda poster, one that showed Britain did not want more men for their masculine heroism or to protect women and children, helped attune West to the reality of his situation. It was what led him more fully to the realization that the beliefs of his fellow man were

¹⁸⁸ Tim Cross, *The Lost Voices of the World War I* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1988): 67.

¹⁸⁹ Arthur Graeme West, *The Diary of a Dead Officer, Being the Posthumous Papers of Arthur Graeme West*, in Tim Cross, *The Lost Voices of the World War I* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1988): 67.

shallow lies propagated by the state. In “God! How I Hate You, You Young Cheerful Men!” West writes that he partly hates the young men for the “tears of [their] mothers.”¹⁹⁰

In his diary, West wrote that his fellow men enlisted to fight because of the appeals crafted by the government: “This is the dismal part of it: that these men, almost the best value in the ordinary upper class, should allow themselves to suppose that all this is somehow necessary and inevitable... to the plain appeals of poverty and inefficacy in government.”¹⁹¹ He showed his contempt for men who never questioned their motives for enlisting and bitterly wrote, “Why should he? Every man, woman and child is taught to regard him as a hero.”¹⁹² The use of the passive voice is interesting, and it raises the question of who taught every man, woman, and child to regard the average soldier as a hero. The answer, partly, was the state’s propaganda campaign. The propaganda campaign utilized and amplified the masculine ideas that existed before the war. West was critiquing this attitude, but that attitude was reinforced and amplified by the propaganda appeals made by the state.

West may have realized the lies sold to soldiers, but most of them were not willing to question the message themselves because they knew those at home would regard them as heroic, masculine protectors even if that were not the reality. Despite West’s self-awareness, however, he was not able to escape feelings of shame for the anti-war beliefs he held. In his poem “Spurned by the Gods” he wrote: “The burden of intolerable shame/ That thou has bound on me, thou wilt not touch/ to Lighten with thy finger – “¹⁹³ Even though he knew the state’s

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Graeme West, ““God! How I Hate You, You Young Cheerful Men!” Cross, *The Lost Voices of World War I*, 69.

¹⁹¹ Arthur Graeme West, *The Diary of a Dead Officer*, in Cross, *The Lost Voices of the World War I*, 68.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Arthur Graeme West, *The Diary of a Dead Officer, The Diary of a Dead Officer, Being the Posthumous Papers of Arthur Graeme West* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918): 91.

propaganda message was demagoguery at its worst, the feeling of shame reinforced at every street corner in England lodged in West's mind. He describes "half-ashamedly" the feelings "that the war was really very silly, and we all ought to go home."¹⁹⁴

West's self-awareness, however, was atypical, and many soldiers celebrated the gendered messages of propaganda. One poem that serves as the antithesis of West's work comes from a collection titled *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, several hundred pages of poems, sketches, cartoons, and stories, contributed by average British soldiers from the various fronts. R. W. Campbell's poem entitled "The Making of Mickey McGhee" celebrated propaganda as a didactic enterprise. "The Making of Mickey McGhee" tells the story of an unscrupulous Scotsman. The poem was accompanied with an introductory sketch drawn by Campbell that showed the derelict Mickey McGhee with his an arm across his chest and turned to a "Your Country Needs You" poster. Mickey had no patriotic feelings of honor or duty; the dirty Scotsman was more interested in "drinking the stuff that burneth, and courting the women called 'Tails.'"¹⁹⁵ Mickey did enlist, but not because his country needed him. He enlisted "for ale, for sleep, and for bed."¹⁹⁶ The author repeats this several times, describing Mickey as a rebel "Who'd only come for drink and bread, and not for the soul of the drums."¹⁹⁷ Quickly, however, Mickey learned the true way to be a British man. Once he dressed in tartan and began to march, Mickey began "to learn the valour of heroes, the glory there is in doom, and how the sons of Princes and Peers are pals of men like he."¹⁹⁸ Despite

¹⁹⁴ West, *Diary*, 72.

¹⁹⁵ R. W. Campbell, "The Making of Mickey McGhee," in *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, ed. Sir Frederick Treaves and George Goodchild (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916): 31.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

turning his back to the pleas of propaganda, Mickey came to learn all of its messages were true. He learns to “play the game like a sportsman,” and he then fought gloriously side-by-side with his sergeant, a Duke.¹⁹⁹ Mickey and the Duke, or the “Peer and the Pauper” as Campbell named them, go out heroically at the Battle of Mons: “Thus the Peer and the Pauper died, linked in the sleep of glory – the death that’s an Empire’s pride.”²⁰⁰ Mickey did not heed the propaganda’s call because he believe it to be true, but in an ironic twist of fate, he learned the truth of the gendered messages of propaganda posters – heroism, playing the game, honor, and dying for his country. The poem ends by telling the reader about one of Mickey’s girl back home named Sarah. When she learns of his death she cries, but she is happy to know of her man’s valiant death. Sarah’s noble grief is another prize for Mickey: “Her pride is a silver medal, a letter and a statement of pay.”²⁰¹ The poem described something in more explicit terms than usual. It informed the reader that Mickey’s fulfillment of the role prescribed by propaganda would earn him the sexual desire of women, even in death. Even though the women of Britain told men to go, going to fight, and sometimes dying, was the only way to earn the respect and love of women.

Not all of the images of women in *Made in the Trenches* were so positive, and some of the contributed material showed what men might find if they survived the war. A poem by J. P. Ede showcased a group of soldiers who had done everything they were told. The poem is a presentation of model soldiers of whom “not a man has strayed;” each soldier dutifully follows orders even if the order is for a menial task like going “down on hands and knees to scrub the Administrative Block.” The poem was just a fairly straightforward telling of men following

¹⁹⁹ Campbell, “The Making of Mickey McGhee,” 34-35.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

orders, and doing as they are told. It would be completely unremarkable if not for the final stanza: “Many a wife in days to come/ When strife at length is o’er/ Complacently will sit and watch/ Her hubby scrub the floor/ And as he slices carrots and removes potato eyes, she’ll murmur, “War is, after all, a blessing in disguise.”²⁰² The poem conveys the sense that, far from being celebrated as a source of manly authority, the war will emasculate men and make them subservient to women. Some men feared while they were fighting at the front women were moving into male roles. Instead of women being temporary men for the duration of the war, men would become permanent women. This contempt and fear is found elsewhere in the book, most notably in a cartoon sketch. The sketch was titled “Administering angel smoothing the pillow of a wounded hero,” but it depicts anything but. The nurse is large and leaning over a frail and broken man. Rather than soothing a patient it appeared she was smothering him with a pillow. The nurse is putting all her weight onto the pillow over the patient’s head, feathers are flying everywhere, and the wounded soldier is telling the nurse to “come off it!”²⁰³ The poem and the cartoon showcase a feeling that the war did anything but create masculine heroes. Rather the war robbed them of their masculinity.

Although *Made in the Trenches* was created to raise funds for wounded soldiers, the rhetoric surrounding wounded soldiers in the book reveals the attitude that broken men were not men at all. The opening page states there is “no more lamentable and pathetic a figure than a paralyzed soldier... One is apt to associate such helplessness with extreme old age or with the final phase of some exhausting illness; but here is a man in the very flower of his youth,

²⁰² J. P. Ede, “Counted For,” in *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, ed. Sir Frederick Treaves and George Goodchild (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916): 121.

²⁰³ *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, ed. Sir Frederick Treaves and George Goodchild (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916): 153.

bedridden possibly for life...”²⁰⁴ A central message of the book was that wounded men had done what had been demanded of them by the public, and the public ought to do more to take care of those the war discarded. In the first story, “The Blighty Squad,” the author quotes a propaganda poster as evidence for why the public should do more to help. He said each and every soldier “‘had done his bit’ plainly and to the proof of broken body and limb.”²⁰⁵ These attitudes are unsurprising given the weight propaganda posters and films like the *German Spy Peril* and *Britain Prepared* placed on health and physical fitness.

The mixture of pity and contempt for the disabled expressed by the editor of *Made in the Trenches* was a sentiment that appeared in the letters and diaries of soldiers. Fitness was a recurrent theme in both poster and film propaganda, and men often wrote about their feelings of health and vitality, or lack thereof. Sometimes these feelings would be directly related to the message of propaganda. Fred Albright, while on leave, described Hertford as devoid of able-bodied men and disgusting because of it: “Now that the able-bodied men are all away to war the population at home seems usually weak and diseased.”²⁰⁶ Albright expresses contempt for able-bodied men, but he also assumed every man left in Hertford was disabled. He considered the unenlisted man, regardless of his health, disabled, and his weakness infected the town. It is impossible to say if propaganda affected Albright’s view of health, fitness, and masculinity, but attitudes like his were common and sometimes directly connected to propaganda.

²⁰⁴ Frederick Treaves, Preface,” in *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, ed. Sir Frederick Treaves and George Goodchild (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916): 5.

²⁰⁵ Boyd Cable, “The Blighty Squad,” in *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, ed. Sir Frederick Treaves and George Goodchild (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916): 20.

²⁰⁶ Fred Albright, *An Echo in My Heart*, ed. Lorna Brooke. <http://www.echoinmyheart.ca/other-documents/diaries/fred-albright/albright-3>

The Rev. J. Reid Howatt wrote in 1915, “One poster has taken grip of me. A handsome young fellow... holding his bayoneted rifle in the one hand and pointing to a wasted land with the other, is saying ‘come and do your bit. JOIN NOW.’ It is the ‘JOIN NOW’ that burns in me.”²⁰⁷ The cleric was deeply affected by the call to arms made by the poster, and he thinks of all the poor “murdered women and babes” he could not save.²⁰⁸ But his greatest pity is for the unhealthy and disabled: “‘Join NOW.’ This may be a simple poster to many who read these lines. They have the good heart, mean well, and have long cherished the good intention, but how many of the poor wee cripples of London still struggle, still languish in their loneliness.”²⁰⁹ He read the lines, which filled him with vitality and the urge to protect women and children. He can hardly imagine what it would be like to be a poor disabled wretch unable to become the handsome man on the poster. All the disabled man could do was “languish in loneliness,” which implies the cripple, unable to enlist, would never find the love of a woman.

The theme expressed by Howatt was popular with writers. Two stories written during and immediately after the war illustrate the link between poster propaganda, fitness, and masculinity. In E. M. Bryant’s “His Call to Arms,” published in *Windsor Magazine*, the main character, known simply as the City clerk, is out with his wife. After looking at a poster of Kitchener calling for men, the clerk declares his desire to join. He discloses this to his wife, but she replies, “Well, at all events, he won’t want *you*.”²¹⁰ Her response can be understood two ways. First, he is her husband and his duty is to her rather than the front. The second, though, is he is too weak. He’s confronted everyday with posters on his way to work, but he feels weak. To strengthen

²⁰⁷ J. Reid Howatt, “The Crutch and Kindness League,” *Quiver* 50 (August, 1915): 873.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 874.

²¹⁰ E. M. Bryant, “His Call to Arms,” *Windsor Magazine*, 817

himself for service he begins to exercise.²¹¹ After weeks turn to months, he begins to feel extreme guilt for not yet having enlisted. The story comes to a climax when his friend is killed at the front. A “fury shook the City clerk to his inmost being, and with it came a fierce, uncontrollable joy – joy that he was a man, with a man’s free heritage to avenge wrong.”²¹² At that moment he decides he’s fit enough to enlist. He walks to the door, but his wife blocks the way. The City clerk expects her to try and stop him, but she merely asks to walk with him to the recruitment office.²¹³ She understands his need to fulfill his masculine duty. The second story comes from J. William Locke’s serial novel *The House of Balthazar*, published in installments during and immediately after the war. Chapter 18 appeared in *Nash’s and Pall Mall Magazine* in October, 1918. Balthazar, and a strange man, acts on whims. At one point in the story, Balthazar saw the “urgent demands for man-power,” but felt “oppressed by his sense of physical fitness” because he was in his fifties.²¹⁴ Despite his feelings, he, “in one of his Gordian-knot-cutting moods, marched into a recruiting office and vaunted his brawn and muscle. ‘I’m fifty,’ he said, ‘but I defy anybody to say I defy anybody to say I’m not physically equal to any boy of twenty-five.’ But they had politely laughed at him and sent him away raging furiously.”²¹⁵ He mocks the men of twenty-five as mere boys, while he envisions himself as the peak of masculinity and fitness. The recruiting officers do not share the sentiment, and he is laughed away as a weak old man.

Propaganda had a significant effect on men’s sense of masculinity. Print propaganda, however, loomed much larger in the male mind than film propaganda. In the case of official film

²¹¹ Bryant, “His Call to Arms,” 818.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 819.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 820.

²¹⁴ J. William Locke, “The House of Balthazar, chapter XVIII” *Nash’s and Pall Mall Magazine* 64 (Oct. 1919): 55.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

propaganda it is not surprising that film made a small impact. Despite being seen by a huge number of Britons, the films followed Charles Masterman's philosophy of the "factual film," and foreign audiences were the object of the film's persuasion. It is more surprising that the independent propaganda films did not resonate more deeply with men. They contained the same logic of propaganda posters, and the posters definitely affected men. References to films like *England's Menace* or *The German Spy Peril* in relation to men's sense of identity are rare. The most likely explanation is those films were not the only ones playing in cinemas, and one had to physically go to the cinema to see any propaganda film. There was no choice in regard to posters, and that was likely what made them such a potent form of propaganda. The poster, contrary to the arguments made by Nicholas Hiley, were powerful sources of influence for the viewing subject. They acted like Althusser's policeman, and when the posters' call created subjects out of individuals.

5. CONCLUSIONS

By October 1918, Lloyd George's Liberal government began dismantling what was left of Britain's propaganda apparatuses. Several officials had considered the option of continuing propaganda work after the war ended, but with peace in sight the production and distribution of both domestic and foreign propaganda ended.²¹⁶ The four years of wartime propaganda, however, had left an impression on British men and their conception of masculinity. There were several groups responsible for producing propaganda, each with its own agenda and goals. The two main forces responsible for the bulk of British propaganda were the Parliamentary Recruitment Committee, and Wellington House. The two organizations were divided according to the need for official and unofficial propaganda. Wellington House was an official government body that produced propaganda films for foreign audiences, while the PRC was a division of parliament (and therefore unofficial) that produced propaganda posters for a domestic audience. The two organizations shared some overlap in the content of their propaganda, but they were more different than similar. It was ultimately poster propaganda that had the greatest effect on men and masculinity.

Poster propaganda came out of necessity. Britain had an all-volunteer army, and it needed ways to convince men to enlist. The poster was one such way the British state achieved that goal. The poster served other purposes than just enlistment, and organizations like the National War Aims Committee used the poster to help strengthen national morale.²¹⁷ It was the recruitment posters, though, that relied most heavily on messages of masculinity. The masculine messages on the recruitment posters took many forms, and not all of them explicitly relied on tactics like

²¹⁶ M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982): 246.

²¹⁷ Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fire Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977): 41.

shame or humiliation. Many of them made appeals to men based on a sense of heroism or duty to Britain. Although these posters were subtler, there was still an element of coercion that reinforced negative gender roles and stereotypes. If the man who enlisted was a hero doing his duty, then the man who refused to enlist was still a coward. The elements of a Victorian and Edwardian understanding of masculinity ran through the posters.

Posters such as E. J. Kealy's "Women of Britain say GO!" represented how propaganda could amplify and then reinforce masculine gender roles. The poster depicts a woman in a window directing male public life. It is the heroic man going off to protect the home, but it is also women enforcing masculinity. Moreover, it was one of the few specific posters that contemporaries made reference to in regard to masculinity. Often when people referred or recalled propaganda it was in the abstract, or they would quote a common theme that showed up across many pieces of propaganda such as "do your duty" or he "did his bit." The Kealy poster, however, inspired impassioned pleas to men to leave the country and protect women: "appeal to their sense of manliness, their love of country, and that innate respect which exists in all true Britishers."²¹⁸ If that did not work then the author suggested women use shame and the threat of sexual exclusion: "If, however, they continue in their old routine unashamed, and show no inclination to do their duty, show them plainly and unmistakably that you do not wish to continue their acquaintance further... [they] are unworthy the friendship of loyal, true-hearted, clean-minded British women."²¹⁹ The poster was a motivating force for women to police masculinity, and the poster would not have existed without the war. This was an extreme case where propaganda reinforced male gender roles with prejudice. The poster also represented a fear that "many men felt threatened by the perception that war had liberated women at their

²¹⁸ "Women Say 'Go,'" *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, May 26, 1915.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

expense.”²²⁰ Men’s relationship to the poster, however, was filtered through the perception of women.

The Lumley poster was the best example of how propaganda aimed to exploit already existing codes of masculinity. It was also important for another reason. The poster’s fame and significance was not an invention of later critics. It did resonate with men, and it did influence how they saw themselves. The author of the article “Men’s Meeting at the Drill Halls,” in the *Folkestone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald* was the best example. His answer to the question “Daddy, what did you during the war?” was “the magnificent voluntary response of five million men to the country’s call.”²²¹ The author also perceived the strengthening of masculine gender roles by the pressure propaganda like the Lumley poster placed on men. The idea that men were to be athletic protectors was taken to extremes. Men were, for the first time, being asked by the millions to risk their lives to fulfill their masculine duty. The article fits well with Louis Althusser’s idea of interpellation. The individual became the subject of the poster’s ideology. He was one of the five million men who answered the poster’s call.

Few written sources contain direct references to specific pieces of propaganda. Instead we see men tended to use propaganda as a corollary to discussion about an issue related to masculinity. This was evident in *Made in the Trenches*, particularly on the topic of fitness. The soldiers created *Made in the Trenches* to help other soldiers wounded in the war, yet many of the contributions expressed disgust at and contempt for the disabled. The disgust and contempt was in line with the attitude towards those who were not fit, but the story *The Blight Squad* in *Made*

²²⁰ George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 49.

²²¹ “Men’s Meeting at the Drill Halls,” *Folkestone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald*, November 18, 1916.

in the Trenches raised the point that the soldier had “done his bit.”²²² In other words, an otherwise able-bodied man had sacrificed his fitness doing his duty as a man. Similar attitudes appeared in stories found in periodicals. In *His Call to Arms* the City clerk exercises to bring his fitness up to the military standards he sees in propaganda posters on his way to work. Eventually his friend’s death inspires him to enlist, and instead of his wife preventing him from going to the recruitment office she walks him there. His fit body was a replacement for his friend’s, and his wife encouraged his decision to fulfill his masculine duty.

Print propaganda’s ability to resonate with men raises the problem of why film propaganda did not, or at least why it did not resonate with men as successfully. The answer in part rested with the administrative structure of Wellington House. It was an official government division dedicated to swaying the support of neutral, foreign nations towards the British war effort. Charles Masterman was also the head of Wellington House and his propaganda philosophy precluded the use of appeals or coercive tactics. The results were films that became incredibly popular in Britain, but lacked the many--although not all-- of the elements that made poster propaganda resonate with men and soldiers. *Britain Prepared* begins with a recruitment scene that refers to the recruits as “cheery non-slackers.” Scenes like this helped to amplify masculinity and men’s role, but they did not reinforce them because they were not largely aimed at British men. The propaganda films were created out of the same social and cultural conditions as the posters so it is unsurprising that they would contain at least some references to essential components of masculinity like fitness or duty. It was just that the message of fitness and duty

²²² Boyd Cable, “The Blighty Squad,” in *Made in the Trenches: Composed Entirely from Articles & Sketches Contributed by Soldiers*, ed. Sir Frederick Treaves and George Goodchild (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916): 20.

was not the primary message, nor was it being used to convince men to contribute to the war effort.

Complicating matters further was the independent film propaganda. The films' content shared much more similarity with the poster than with the official film propaganda. The independent propaganda films' target was the domestic audience, the films amplified prewar masculinity male gender expectations, and the films used appeals and coercive techniques. Films like *The German Spy Peril* and *The Strength of England* were essentially moving propaganda posters. But they show up even less than the official films in the primary source material. The only reference to an independent propaganda film came from a former Oxford student who went to see *The Man Who Stayed at Home* and commented that he was "really quite amusing" and that "I enjoyed myself very much."²²³ It appeared Lord Northcliffe was wrong when he observed, "No one can forget what he has seen happen on the screen."²²⁴

There are several explanations for why the independent films failed to resonate on a significant level with men. The independent propaganda films popularity gave way to the factual films of *Wellington House* in 1915, and audiences wanted real glimpses of what was happening with the war (and audiences were under the impression the films were real). The independent films were numerous, but they never reached levels of ubiquity like the posters or a film like *Battle of the Somme*. They were also competing with other non-propaganda films at the cinema. Cinemas did not exclusively show propaganda films. But perhaps the most important difference was that men had to physically go to a designated area to experience the propaganda films. They were not playing on the sides of trams or in Trafalgar Square.

²²³ Margaret Bonfiglioli and James Munson eds., *Full of Hope and Fear: The Great War Letters of an Oxford Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 56.

²²⁴ Haste, 45.

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VITA

Evan M. Caris, a native of Atlanta, Georgia, received his bachelor's degree in history and philosophy from Georgia College & State University in Milledgeville, Georgia. Thereafter, he lived, worked, and travelled through various European and North African countries. Upon return to the United State, he decided to pursue history at the graduate level and enrolled at Louisiana State University. He will receive his master's degree in December 2015, and he plans to begin work on his doctorate upon graduation.