

## ***KULTUR AND CULTURAL TRANSGRESSION: A STUDY IN PROPAGANDA***

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James Read in 1941 argued that the treaty of Versailles, with its reparation payments and demilitarization as breeding ground for resentment, was "determined in large part by the picture of the enemy" painted during World War I. Those who signed the treaty in 1919, in Read's words, "were largely the prisoners of their own machinations."<sup>1</sup> Every major nation engaged in the war had ministries for propaganda. Each of the belligerents produced official documents to justify their position in the war, named with a color: Britain, the Blue Book; Germany, the White Book; Russia, the Orange Book; France, the Yellow Book<sup>2</sup>. These books compiled state papers and communications to argue legal and diplomatic cases justifying the war. Propaganda ministries also churned out accounts and imagery, true and false, vividly depicting war atrocities committed by the enemy. The most important compilation of these accounts was Britain's *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Atrocities*, published in May, 1915 in London and New York, and eventually translated into 27 languages. The *Report* focused especially

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<sup>1</sup> James Morgan Read, *Atrocity Propaganda 1914-1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), vii, viii.

<sup>2</sup> There were others as well: Serbia's book was blue, Austria Hungary's was red, Belgium's was gray. Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the United States Was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 1996), 18.

on purported German atrocities committed during the invasion of Belgium, cataloguing acts committed against civilians, soldiers, prisoners and non-combatants such as the Red Cross.<sup>3</sup>

That much is unsurprising. Atrocity stories provide effective and efficient grounds for creating an enemy worth killing.<sup>4</sup> Quick mobilization of the masses can be achieved by providing the basic provender for agitative propaganda: fear and hatred.<sup>5</sup> There was, however, for Allied propaganda, another route for propaganda that functioned symbolically at a deeper level, and that gave atrocity propaganda more power. This propaganda, especially for the United States, trafficked in cultural differences. Indeed, it was a propaganda of *Kultur*.

Artists featured *Kultur* as they symbolized the Kaiser, Germany and her allies, militarism, and the horrors of war. These characterizations ranged from comical to horrific; from the Norman Lynd lampoon, "Hun Rule for Ireland," which depicted a sword wielding German commander barking orders to a line of helmeted, trough

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<sup>3</sup> The report came to be called the Bryce Report because the committee chair was Viscount James Bryce, a respected scholar and author of the authoritative *The American Commonwealth*. The United States was an intended target, and it was widely received there. The *New York Times* gave three pages to the *Report* on May 15. Investigations after the war judged most of the purported atrocities reported in documents such as the Bryce report to be overblown or false. See Ross, 53-6; Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1928), 14-28.

<sup>4</sup> Ross argues that a focus on German atrocities was the "hallmark" of Britain's campaign to secure American support for the war prior to 1917. Ross, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, trans. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner (1965; rpt., New York: Vintage, 1973), 70-79.

feeding swine with the caption, "Kultured pigs," to the Louis Raemaekers drawing, "Kultur Has Passed Here," which showed a dead woman and child with a strong intimation of rape--the woman's dress torn to the waist, her breasts exposed, and the child unclothed from the waist down.<sup>6</sup> Raemaekers' drawings during the war often appeared in *Century Magazine*, but also appeared as a collection in 1917. He featured *Kultur* in two other cartoons, both graphic depictions of *Kultur's* effects: soldiers in a hospital gasping in agony for air, with the caption, "Gassed! Another Victory for KULTUR"; a robed skeleton drinking blood from a goblet that drips down its chest to the ground, with the caption, "-a toast to Kultur."<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Committee on Public Information's Division of Advertising depicted *Kultur* in ads for the Fourth Liberty Loan. In a full-page advertisement entitled, "Remember Belgium," under a drawing of German soldiers abusing women in a burning town, the text states, "The enemy has developed a world distribution on brutalities that bear the Berlin shipping-tag." The text asks readers how long "this obscene commerce and brutality" could continue, and exhorts them to "crack *Kultur* on the head by volunteering more of your money than the government asks for." A similar advertisement from the Division targeting college students and alumni asserts, "In the vicious guttural language of *Kultur*, the degree A. B. Means Bachelor of Atrocities." *Kultur*, the text suggests, burned the University of Louvain, and opposes "every element of decency and culture and taste that your

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<sup>6</sup> Norman Lynd, "Hun Rule in Ireland," *Vanity Fair* (April, 1917): 76. Louis Raemaekers, "Kultur Has Passed Here," Library of Congress, Web, December 30, 2013, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov>.

<sup>7</sup> Louis Raemaekers, "Gassed! Another Victory for Kultur," Library of Congress, Web, December 30, 2013, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov>. Louis Raemaekers, "A Toast to Kultur," Library of Congress, Web, December 30, 2013, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov>. Also see Louis Raemaekers, *War Cartoons of Louis Raemaekers: 100 Illustrations with Descriptive Notes and Biographical Sketch* (New York: Brown, Robertson Co., 1917), plates 18 and 116.

college stands for." Kultur also has destroyed "the world old romance out of war, and reduced it to the dead, black depths of muck, and hate, and bitterness." A third Liberty Loan advertisement entitled "This Is Kultur," with artwork again suggesting rape and murder of civilians, contrasts Kultur and civilization: "There is no sharper contrast between German Kultur and the civilization that our forefathers died for, than the difference in the attitude of the two civilizations towards women and children." The text further suggests that the horrifying artwork understates the point: "Kultur in Belgium, and other devastated countries, is a tale so terrible that never yet has one dared more than whisper fragments of it. Yet the wrongs of Belgium, as a state outraged, pale besides the wrongs inflicted in savage, bestial revenge upon its defenseless women and children."<sup>8</sup> William Allen Rogers, whose work appeared for years in the *New York Herald* and *Harpers Weekly*, depicted enemy efforts at spying and subterfuge as spiked helmets popping up around the US Capitol with Uncle Sam's feet caught on them, over the caption "The New Intensive Kultur." Two of Rogers' cartoons contrasted centuries of European culture to German Kultur by reimagining Rheims Cathedral, which German shelling smashed in 1914, as a new type of cathedral made of smokestacks, skulls, tank treads, hostages and helmeted troops. Wheels take the place of stained glass. Accompanying texts point to the German hosts of Kultur as having destroyed hundreds

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<sup>8</sup> These advertisements appear in Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 1980), 165-7. The Division of Advertising provided these advertisements to businesses, corporations and individuals who would then pay to have them published in periodicals and newspapers. Sponsors could identify themselves in a space at the bottom of the page under the caption, "This space contributed for the Winning of the War by."

of years of consecrated labor, and taking "particular delight" in the act<sup>9</sup>. In April 1918 *Vanity Fair* gave notice to American sculptor Paulanship's "Kultur Medal," which depicted a helmeted Kaiser with "His Rosary"--skulls in place of beads--on one side, and on the other a German soldier carrying away a partially clad woman under the inscription: "Kultur in Belgium." The editor noted, "Even at the hardly popular price of \$10, this wonderful bit of sculptured Hate is meeting with large and popular sale."<sup>10</sup>

Nicoletta Gullace argues that Allied propaganda posters during World War I "re-racialized" Germans as something other, hostile and non-Western. Gullace points to the contrasting of civilized war to the barbarism of the Hun as "a visual and literary trope" common in Allied propaganda.<sup>11</sup> The particular focus on Kultur in Allied propaganda, and especially in American propaganda, which studies have observed but take for granted, points to the need to understand the rhetorical force of this symbol as propagandists deployed it.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

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<sup>9</sup> William Allen Rogers, *America's Black-And-White Book: One Hundred Pictured Reasons Why We Are at War* (New York: Cupples and Leon Company, 1917), plates 38, 3 and 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Vanity Fair*, April 1918: *The American Magazine of Art* criticized Manship's medal for visualizing in bronze horrors of war that should best be forgotten. Such art, argued the editors, "does not lead to better citizenship or greater patriotism." Rather, it "engenders hate and places our own people on the same level as those who have committed these ghastly deeds." "Mr. Manship's Kultur Medal," *American Magazine of Art* 9 (June, 1918): 336.

<sup>11</sup> Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Barbaric Anti-Modernism: Representations of the "Hun" In Britain, North America, Australia, and Beyond," *Pictured This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 64-5.

In this study I deploy propaganda as the theoretical framework for understanding a state's attempt to mobilize the masses during wartime. I also deploy concepts from the field of rhetoric to analyze specific tactics of that propaganda. It is necessary at the outset, therefore, briefly to delimit these terms and to establish their relationship.

Rhetoric and propaganda may intersect in technique, but not in philosophy. Rhetoric at its best operates in an ethic of constructive engagement, whereby openness to constructive engagement by parties interested in issues is a virtue. Rhetorical practice ought to nurture the conditions for such openness. Openness in rhetorical practice produces an enriched public perspective that ought to inform public judgment.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to the principle of constructive engagement, propaganda objectifies a mass and tries to move it to action through psychological and organizational technique.<sup>13</sup> Constructive engagement would matter to the propagandist only if she or he thought the masses valued constructive engagement, in which case the propagandist could use that belief as a wedge to move the mass. For the propagandist efficiency is the standard of success. With a predetermined action as goal, the questions for the

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<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article, 1964," *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49-55. For Habermas the ideal of the public sphere, "preserved in the social welfare state of mass democracy," requires "rationalization of power through the medium of discussion among private individuals." As the public sphere has been transformed by collectivized interests into organizations, however, organizations have supplanted individual power to engage rhetoric.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*, 61. For Ellul propaganda is a type of human technique, where efficient use of the human is the goal. Human technique, like organizational technique and organizational technique, is a product of measured and tested means to produce predetermined ends. For his treatment of technique see Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964), 6-22.

propagandist are those of fulcrum placement and lever size. Propaganda may deploy rhetoric as a tool, just as it may deploy art or music or organizational technique to move the mass, but the propagandist is interested only in the tools of rhetoric and rhetoric as a tool. In short, for propaganda the physics metaphor is apt: the mass is a thing to be efficiently moved.

### **PROPAGANDA CONSTRAINTS<sup>14</sup>**

An important constraint facing American propagandists was what to do about German-Americans, who made up roughly 8.7 percent of the population.<sup>15</sup> American war propaganda would have to factor in that population as an element of the American mass. Before the United States' entry into the war, allied propaganda—mostly British—on purported German atrocities in Belgium heavily influenced American attitudes that tended from the outset to be pro-Entente.<sup>16</sup> Direct American access to German war coverage stopped when the British Navy cut the trans-Atlantic cables coming from Europe. Moreover, the American division of Britain's "propaganda machine" led by Sir Gilbert Parker went into operation at the outset of the war. Over 50 specialists worked to align American sympathies with the British. They operated out of Wellington House in

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<sup>14</sup> I take the term constraint in Lloyd Bitzer's sense, as a key component of a rhetorical situation—the factors in a situation that can constrain decisions affecting an exigence. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Ellis and Panikos Panayi, "German Minorities in World War I: A Comparative Study of Britain and the USA," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (1994): 239.

<sup>16</sup> Ross, 15. Ross notes the "almost overnight" hostile reaction by the American press, especially the New York press, at the beginning of the war.

London, under the direction of the Foreign Office, and worked efficiently and quietly. Very few in America knew of any official British propaganda effort targeted at the United States until late in the war.<sup>17</sup> Official German efforts, in contrast, were weak. Germany never had the equivalent of the Wellington House American division. American defenders of the German cause, some with surreptitious funding and support from Germany, included German language newspapers in the states, George Viereck's periodical *The Fatherland*, university professors, and public relations and advertising specialists from German-American businesses, suddenly idled by the war. But there was no coordinating agency for the Germans to match Wellington House.<sup>18</sup>

When the war began in August 1914, German-Americans, like other American groups of European descent, tended to side with positions aligned with their heritage. In practical terms, German-Americans supported American neutrality. The National German-American Alliance as well as state branches of the organization were thus heartened by President Wilson's call in August 1914 for Americans to "act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the a spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned."<sup>19</sup> German-language newspapers and periodicals defended the German government's position regarding the conflict. Some papers began publishing in English to spread the German perspective beyond ethnic sympathies. German-American social

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<sup>17</sup> Ross, *Propaganda for War*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Ross, *Propaganda for War*, 18-19.

<sup>19</sup> Clifton James Child, *The German-Americans in Politics, 1914-1917* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), 42; Woodrow Wilson: "Message on Neutrality," August 19, 1914. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65382>.



organizations organized relief drives for German orphans and widows. A Madison Square Garden rally in 1916, for example, cleared over \$700,000.<sup>20</sup> Such pro-German sympathies and actions, however, were not necessarily tied to fondness for the Kaiser or the German government. Rather, they tended to be responses to attitudes and actions spurred by prevalent pro-Entente journalistic coverage, and to propaganda that painted German war practice as especially inhumane and German culture as brutal and low. An example of such actions was the movement begun in fall 1917 to ban school instruction in German. By summer 1918 nearly half of the states passed laws banning such instruction. Some local laws even forbade speaking German in public.<sup>21</sup> But even before the anti-language laws, which followed American entry into the war, the push in the press and in politics against things German caused a backlash among German-Americans, and led them to rally around their heritage. That backlash in turn fueled support among German-Americans for Germany.<sup>22</sup> Such support, however, was sorely, if temporarily, tried in May 1915, when a German torpedo sank the passenger liner *Lusitania*, taking 1198 lives, 124 of them Americans.

The *Lusitania* further solidified anti-German feelings in the United States, despite German protestations that the *Lusitania* carried war material, that Britain was using passengers as shields for shipping munitions, and that warnings had been made for passengers not to travel aboard the ship. Wilson and his cabinet's diplomatic response

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<sup>20</sup> Theodore Huebener, *The Germans in America* (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1962), 147-8.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1974), 252.

<sup>22</sup> Luebke shows that backlash emerging as early as 1914. See Luebke, 83-111.

demanded that Germany repudiate the attack and make reparations.<sup>23</sup> The note also proclaimed the absolute right for United States citizens to safely travel the seas. But the *Lusitania* moved neither the President nor American public opinion from a position of neutrality. Wilson was a pragmatist and a realist in having deep suspicions about both the British and German motivations and aspirations for the war. Unswayed by Anglophiles and members of his own administration who accepted the British position that the fight was against imperialism and tyranny, Wilson kept the United States neutral despite the *Lusitania* and other provocations until 1917. His administration could even claim some diplomatic success in negotiating the German retreat from unlimited submarine warfare against passenger liners on September 1, 1915.<sup>24</sup> Leaders in the German-American Alliance and the German-American press, however, came to shift blame to the British for the *Lusitania*. That position separated them from Wilson, who squarely blamed Germany.<sup>25</sup> So while Wilson and German-American leaders and publications still aligned on neutrality in 1915, the split on responsibility for the *Lusitania* culminated in German-Americans moving away from Wilson in the 1916 election. In turn, Wilson made the loyalty of “hyphenated Americans” a campaign issue, and publicly rejected the German-American vote.<sup>26</sup> The question of hyphenated

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<sup>23</sup> Edward Robb Ellis, *Echoes of Distant Thunder: Life in the United States 1914-1918* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization (1927; revised edition, New York: the Macmillan Company, 1934)*, 615-22.

<sup>25</sup> German-Americans argued that Britain had been warned about allowing civilian passengers on ships transporting soldiers and munition, and had been specifically warned about the *Lusitania*, but did nothing to safeguard passengers. They called for investigations, and some suggested that the *Lusitania* was part of a British plan to draw the United States into war against Germany. Luebke, 133-4; Child, 67-70.

<sup>26</sup> Child, 143-4. Wilson voiced fears about disloyal naturalized citizens before the campaign as well. In his December 7, 1915 address to Congress he questioned the loyalty of naturalized citizens “who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the arteries of our national life,” and have “debase[d] our politics to the uses of foreign

Americans reflected increased anti-German feeling in America, which led to divided loyalties among German-Americans. By 1917, anti-German sympathies in the United States were hardening, and the positions of German-Americans in support of Germany were harder to maintain. After Wilson's re-election, Germany announced at the end of January its intention to return to unrestricted submarine warfare, and followed through with attacks on merchant shipping. Moreover, British cryptographers decoded the Zimmerman telegram, which revealed German diplomatic intrigues with Mexico regarding war with the United States, and presented it to the President in February. Wilson and the Congress took the nation to war. From that point forward, as one historian puts the point, German-Americans began discarding "*Deutschtum* [Germanness] as an embarrassing possession."<sup>27</sup> Laws such as the Espionage Act of 1917 certainly increased wariness of all things German. Volunteer non-governmental groups such as the American Protection League, the National Security League and the All American Anti-German League applied pressure to German-Americans to demonstrate loyalty through war loan contributions. As a result, German-American societies began promoting Americanism. Relief efforts for German widows and orphans ceased, replaced by war loan drives. From 1910 to 1920 the number of German language periodicals and papers dropped by more than half, from 554 to 234, with national circulation down by two-thirds.<sup>28</sup>

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intrigue." Woodrow Wilson: "Third Annual Message," December 7, 1915. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29556>.

<sup>27</sup> LaVern J. Rippley, *The German Americans* (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1976), 185.

<sup>28</sup> Ellis and Panayi: 243.

A second constraint facing American propaganda efforts was President Wilson's position on neutrality prior to 1917, which aligned with many Americans' perspective. Could the war footing align with principles underlying the earlier commitment to neutrality? A noteworthy example of both Wilson's earlier position and his view of public opinion was the President's address to the Associated Press on April 20, 1915.<sup>29</sup> There he called Americans a "mediate people," who then not only were disengaged, but cushioned from the war's effects by "3000 Miles of cool and silent ocean" (3). Wilson stayed with the image of heat and cold to project America's postwar mission as mediator: "[I]s it not likely that the nations of the world will someday turn to us for the cooler assessment of the elements engaged" (3-4)? He ascribed as reasons for that future mediating role not only geography, but also that America's "atmosphere is not yet charged with those disturbing elements which must permeate every nation of Europe" (4).

In that speech, sometimes referred to as his "America First" address, Wilson express the principles underpinning the United States neutrality, the advantage of neutrality, and the place for the press in preserving that neutrality. "The basis of neutrality," he argued, was "sympathy for mankind": "It is fairness, it is good will, at bottom. It is impartiality of spirit and of judgment. I wish that all of our fellow citizens could realize that" (4). He noted the existence of "in some quarters a disposition to create

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<sup>29</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *Address of the President Of The United States at the Associated Press Luncheon, New York, New York, April 20, 1915* (Washington DC: 1915). Hereafter citations will be in the text by page number.

distempers in this body politic," but averred that those voices were only local; that the "great silent body of Americans" were "waiting to find out and support the duty of America" (4). In explaining his reasons for the silent majority's patience, Wilson used metaphors of familial substance that would bear directly on the nation's propaganda work two years later. Wilson asserted that the United States was "the mediating nation of the world," not because, after minding its own business during the war, it would be positioned to mediate. Rather, he took the term "mediate" in a larger sense: "We are compounded of the nations of the world; we mediate their blood, we mediate their traditions, we mediate their sentiments, their tastes, their passions; we are ourselves compounded of those things" (4). Due to that compounded nature, Wilson reasoned, the United States was "ready to turn, and free to turn, in any direction," while "almost every other nation," through "long centuries," had become "headed in one direction" (5). In contrast to those nations, he claimed, the United States had "no racial momentum." It had no "history back of it" to "run all its energies and all its ambitions in one particular direction." And the United States was "particularly free" in having "no hampering ambitions as a world power." He reiterated that point succinctly: "we do not want a foot of anybody's territory" (5).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Wilson the historian of course was not ignorant of United States territorial gains from the Spanish-American war. In the speech he accounted for those gains in light of his denial of American territorial ambition. He said that when the United States had considered itself "obliged by circumstances, in the past, to take territory which we otherwise would not have thought of taking," it had administered such territories "not for ourselves but for the people" in them. We placed a "burden upon our consciences" to be "trustees of the great business for those to whom it does really belong, trustees ready to hand it over to the *cestui que* trust at any time when the business seems to make that possible and feasible" (5).

Neutrality would obtain an advantage for the United States during and after the war, but not the advantages of international power, territory or prestige. As President, Wilson said he was "interested in neutrality" because it would garner for the United States "the distinction of absolute self-control and self-mastery," a distinction "that no nation has ever yet got" (5). Such national self-control would demonstrate "at bottom a much more fundamental and courage" than that displayed by those who were bellicose and "irritable." "I covet for America," said Wilson, "this splendid courage of reserve moral force" (5).

As this was a speech presented before the Associated Press, Wilson called on the power of the press to help preserve the United States' neutrality. "There is news, and news," said Wilson. He called on the press to exercise discipline and self-control in reporting news because it was necessary to separate rumor from fact. He encouraged rigorous vetting of stories, and encouraged writers and editors to be responsible stewards of the truth. "Falsehood," argued Wilson, "if you could get the Nation to believe it true, might disturb our equilibrium and our self-possession" (6). Writers and editors should turn to experts for guidance when faced with questionable material: "There is generally, if not always, somebody who knows whether the thing is so or not, and in these days, above all over days (sic), we ought to take particular pains to resort to the one small group of men, or to the one man if there be but one, who knows whether those things are true or not" (6). He used the metaphor of an "unstable equilibrium" to characterize the condition of the world, and contended that it ought not to be disturbed by "rumor" or

by "imaginative combinations of circumstances, or, rather, by circumstances stated in combination which do not belong in combination" (6). He told his audience that they held "the balances" in their hands: "This unstable equilibrium rests upon scales that are in your hands" (6). Shifting metaphors, Wilson reminded his audience that "the food of opinion" was "the news of the day," and he advised patience: "The world is held stable by the men who wait for the next day to find out whether the report was true or not" (6).

Two metaphors in Wilson's 1915 speech encapsulate key constraints that two years later would be faced by the Committee on Public Information (CPI), the United States government's first propaganda agency. First, the familial substance of Americans as a *mediate* people, as a *compounded* people (i.e., "we mediate their [European] blood") points to the problem of how to influence and manage the German-American population. Second, the metaphor of the press holding the unstable equilibrium of public opinion in their hands points to the problem of how the government might influence and manage the press in directing public opinion regarding the nation's new war footing. Wilson was not merely ingratiating himself to the press with this metaphor for their power. Rather, the metaphor prefigures the central role Wilson saw for public opinion and those who influence it when he created the Committee on Public Information. Indeed, the CPI and the propaganda of *Kultur* which it fashioned were important responses to those constraints.

## THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Committee on Public Information was a new entity, created by executive order a week after the President signed the declaration of war. The CPI's Director, George Creel, stated in his official report after the war that the CPI never saw its work as "propaganda." "[T]hat word," Creel wrote, "in German hands, had come to be associated with lies and corruptions."<sup>31</sup> The CPI, in contrast, argued Creel, did not have to engage in propaganda because "only fair presentation of its facts was needed."<sup>32</sup>

To Creel, the CPI's mission was to inform and educate the public. He created new divisions and bureaus as needs emerged (e.g., the Division of Women's War Work, the Cartoon Bureau, the Advertising Division, the Division of Work among the Foreign Born). The Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation was launched

to put into convincing print America's reasons for entering the war, the meaning of America, the nature of our free institutions, and our war aims, together with a thorough analysis of the Prussian system, as well as an exposure of the enemy's misrepresentations, aggressions, and barbarities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> United States Committee on Public Information, *The Creel Report: Complete Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Public Information 1917: 1918: 1919* (1920; rpt., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Creel Report*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Creel Report*, 15.



To organize this work Creel employed Guy Stanton Ford, dean of the graduate school at the University of Minnesota, and a professor of European history. Creel had been impressed by an open letter Ford wrote encouraging high schools to use commencements in 1917 to build patriotism.<sup>34</sup> Despite Creel's aversion to the term, As George E. Vincent said in a *festschrift* for Ford, under Ford's direction of the division, "[p]ropaganda was never put on so high a level before or since."<sup>35</sup> Two months after the Armistice Ford said in an address to the Minnesota Historical Association that "the battle for men's opinions" and "the conquest of their convictions" had been "equally important" to the nation's efforts to provide manpower and munitions.

Labor for Ford's Division was largely voluntary. Ford recruited professors throughout the nation, and others volunteered as writers and worked from their colleges or universities. By the war's end University of Illinois scholars had the largest presence, but the division initially turned to professors at Minnesota, Ford's university. Once word of the Division's work spread, professors throughout the country sent manuscripts as contributions. The vast majority of those submissions could not be used. Rather, the small office in Washington planned its own program for publication by identifying a need and contacting the appropriate scholar to do the work. No one was paid for

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<sup>34</sup> James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of The Committee on Public Information* (Princeton University Press, 1939), 158.

<sup>35</sup> George E. Vincent, "Guy Stanton Ford: An Appreciation," Guy Stanton Ford, *On and Off the Campus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), 23.

research and writing, and no professor declined a request by the Division during the war.<sup>36</sup>

The Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation published *Conquest and Kultur* in November, 1917<sup>37</sup>. The pamphlet was part of the Red White and Blue Series. In his speech to the Minnesota Historical Association Ford claimed that *Conquest and Kultur* had “the most far reaching effect” of all the pamphlets published by the CPI, “or by any government agency for that matter.” The division distributed over 1.2 million copies of the pamphlet. According to Ford that impressive figure understated the pamphlet’s impact, since newspapers throughout the country republished it. Edited by Professors Wallace Notestein and Elmer Stoll from the University of Minnesota, with an introduction by Ford, *Conquest and Kultur* offered readers a scholarly exposé of the philosophical, cultural and historical root of the war, with Germany of course as the culpable agent. “Never in the history of the relations of one government to another,” Ford said in 1919 of the pamphlet’s power, “has such a terrific indictment been put forth under government sanction.” He believed that Notestein and Stoll had “revealed German aims and plans . . . beyond dispute or cavil.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mock and Larson, 159-162.

<sup>37</sup> Wallace Notestein and Elmer Stoll, eds., *Conquest and Kultur: Aims of the Germans in their Own Words* (Washington: Committee on Public Information, 1917). Hereafter citations will be parenthetical by page number.

<sup>38</sup> Guy Stanton Ford, *On and Off Campus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938) 96. The book compiles some of Ford’s writings. Ford made the claim about *Conquest and Kultur* in a speech to the Minnesota Historical Society, January 20, 1919.

What, for Allied propaganda, was Kultur? *Conquest and Kultur* takes the form of an exposé, with history as its theme. In terms of its form, it aligns with the paranoid style addressed by Richard Hofstadter in 1964, with conspiracy as the theme in history, a set of evil conspirators set on destroying whatever was necessary to achieve their epochal ends, apocalyptic seers to lift the veil, and abundant evidence—but no “smoking gun”—to prove the conspiracy actually exists.<sup>39</sup>

Like some other exposés in American history—Theodore Dwight Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is* and William Lloyd Garrison’s *Thoughts on African Colonization*, *Conquest and Kultur* allows the enemies to speak for themselves. The work selects passages from German politicians, writers, philosophers and the Kaiser himself to offer “a carefully documented self-revelation of German ideals.” The editors expose the ideals through quotations organized around seventeen chapters. The chapter headings guide the reader’s attention to the ideals: The Mission of Germany, World Power or Downfall, The Worship of Power, War as a Part of the Divine Order, War as the Sole Arbiter, The Lost Teutonic Tribes (9). There is little editorial comment in the chapters, except to explain the identities of authors with whom the reader may not be familiar. The most explicit rhetorical work takes place in their introduction, written by Guy Stanton Ford.

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1965).

The introduction begins with a pronouncement that frames the reader's experience . Ford offers a dialectical staging in the form of a cumulative pronouncement about the war's meaning: "The present war is in the last analysis distinctly a war between ideals and thus between the peoples who uphold them" (3) The strategic pattern of the introduction, and of the work as a whole, is thesis-to-reason. He deploys cliché to frame the reader's perspective on this clash of ideals: "On the one hand are the peoples who have faith in themselves and in each other and in the ordered ways of law and justice by which they have sought in the past to regulate both their domestic and their international relations. Upon the other hand are those whose ideals have been fixed for them by dynastic aims and ambitions which could only be translated into reality through subservience to authority and by the unrestricted use of force" (3). This cliché brings a clear polarization featuring *purpose* as starting points for two Burkeian purpose-act ratios.<sup>40</sup> Trust and the pursuit of law and justice motivate the allies. Subservience and the pursuit of dynastic aims motivate the enemy. This is a basic division—one that reflects basic psychological motivation. In Freudian terms one purpose is the purpose of civilization—a libidinal purpose in the pursuit of life. The other purpose is the purpose of destruction—an erotic purpose grounded on the energy of the death instinct.<sup>41</sup> The major end terms of the latter ratio are worked out through the pamphlet. That is, subservience and dynastic aim pre-incline the nature of the enemy as agents, the nature of their acts, and the agencies they deploy. The major end-terms of the former ratio Ford works out in the introduction through a brief historical narrative.

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<sup>40</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945; Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), 3-69

<sup>41</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 68-9.

Americans, it turns out, are the historical culmination of “the great self-governing nations,” England and France. Both passed on to the Americans “the best of what they had established or dreamed of establishing in the way of popular government.” Though the Americans split from England, we drew our ideas from British ideas about liberty. Evidence offered in the pamphlet is a list of British statesmen “who held political ideas which made them the supporters of the American colonies: Burke, Chatham, Fox and Barre. Indeed, our independence “aided the English in their own struggle to bring monarchy and political aristocracy into subordination to the will of the great English nation.” France shared those ideas, as was demonstrated by the support of Lafayette, Turgot and Beaumarchais. These nations amounted to a band ascending “toward the same sunlit heights.” Other nations engaged against Germany and her allies had “caught the vision”: South American Republics, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Japan, China, and at last Russia.” All these nations were bonded together in a “newer polity of a common humanity,” and “a heritage, an achievement, a hope.”

Standing against that hope was the culture of Kultur. Kultur for allied propagandists was a fortuitous cultural homonym. It sounds something like its English counterpart—enough so that one might suspect some common meaning between the terms. But as the pamphlet demonstrates, such was not the case. A quotation from Otto Von Gierke, “a most distinguished professor of Law at at the University of Berlin” demonstrates the point: “The more it [German kultur] remains faithful to itself, the better it will be able to enlighten the understanding of foreign races absorbed into the empire, and make them

see that only from German Kultur can they derive those treasures they need for the fertilizing of their own particular life” (13)

That perspective on Kultur, explored throughout the pamphlet and demonstrated throughout the CPI’s efforts enabled the sympathetic readers to enthymematically complete an argument that made Kultur a perverse mockery of “genuine” culture. Moreover, though Kultur shares with its homonym a connotation of aesthetic sensibility accrued over time, its propagandistic depiction explicitly imparts to Kultur an instrumentality. When Kultur is used, evil deeds ensue. Such was the theme of the visual depictions of Kultur in propaganda posters and cartoons. Kultur enabled separation of western culture, including American culture, from Kultur. Insofar as readers aligned with American culture, the pamphlet enabled them, including “hyphenated” Americans, to see the gulf between their beliefs and the perverse otherness of Kultur.

*Kultur*, deployed by propagandists, offered a dialectical irony, a master trope in Kenneth Burke’s terms. Full of ironic possibilities, *Kultur* was stripped by propagandists of any of the humanizing potential that Burke sees in irony—the potential to enlarge perspective and see an issue from the perspective of the other. Rather, *Kultur* as a symbol served both visual and discursive propaganda as an efficiently skewed reduction of German history and German intention. That reduction displayed a vector for German motives to

invoke an inevitable trajectory of conflict: the cause of *Kultur* against the cause of “liberty.” Moreover, unlike propagandists’ use of “the Hun” or “le boche,” both of which were *projected* names and caricatures, *Kultur* afforded propaganda a semeiotic borrowing. German rhetoric itself deployed *Kultur*, thus the term, expressed by propagandists in its German spelling, especially for the American and British audience was both exotic and familiar—a peculiarly German take on a common concept. For propaganda *Kultur* served as an efficiently reduced expose, which allowed the enemy to damn themselves from their own mouths.