Gender, Bolshevism & the Popular Press in Britain, 1916-1921

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Preface

Like many scholarly labours, this work began as something entirely different from what it ultimately became. I originally hoped to examine the legacy of the First World War and its effects on British society in the press for the centenary. Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony had been a useful framing device for explaining how dominant groups maintain control during periods of social upheaval. However, I was not expecting history to be made while I was researching this material. Although this work was meant to be one that acknowledged the centenary, it became apparent the topic may be more relevant to 2016 and its aftermath.

Following the EU Referendum in the United Kingdom, the election of Donald Trump in the United States and the rise of the populist right in Continental Europe, a crisis of hegemony and its reconstruction was no longer an abstraction but were represented in events occurring before our very eyes. The aftermath of these events has followed a pattern Gramsci would have undoubtedly recognised: members of dominant groups have adorned themselves in the clothes of the 'The People' and promised changes they hope will appease the masses whilst keeping dominant groups safe, wealthy and influential. Moreover, none of these developments would have been possible without mass media.

These events should reinvigorate the long-time academic debate over whether media is influential or reflective, specifically when discussing the construction and reconstruction of hegemony. Perhaps more importantly, a discussion on how the use of fantasies, particularly patriarchal fantasies, has been vital to the construction of hegemony in a post-2016 world. Whether it has been narratives on domination by effeminate Continental Europeans in Britain, innocuous 'locker room talk' in the United States, anti-feminism in Continental Europe or the image of the 'immigrant rapist' in all theatres, gender and its relation to the patriarchal imagination in Western society has been immensely important to this new hegemony and it has been almost wholly reliant on construction through the media.

Many have claimed society is entering a new, 'post-truth' era where politics and media alike have abandoned objectively. I believe such statements are premature. As my research shows, panic, emotionalism, incitement and fantasy (what some might call 'fake news' today) are not new to media. Mass narratives that focus on fantasies—particularly dark ones—have been aspects of reactions to social shifts since humanity has possessed mass media. They represent not only how sections of society attempt to navigate social change but also how they attempt to reassert

dominance over subaltern groups they believe threaten social order. I once believed this project would be an interesting portrait of post-war Britain, but it has ultimately become something more. It is now an indirect picture of our own times, one that shows how media narratives and fantasies, especially those pertaining to gender, continue to shape our world in relation to dominant and subaltern groups.

Abstract

Antonio Gramsci described 'hegemony' as the organisational and connected means by which a dominant group exercises influence and control throughout society. One of the primary ways this is possible is through media. This dissertation examines how the British popular press constructed a gendered hegemony using narratives involving women and Bolshevism during the aftermath of the First World War. These narratives were a response to a perceived crisis of gender related to the women's suffrage movement and new roles created for women during the war. I argue that the popular press helped construct a gendered variant of hegemony during and after the war by appealing to the patriarchal imagination pervasive in British society as well as relying on Euro-Orientalist tropes and fears of the unclean masses. In all cases, women were placed in narratives that often depicted them either as maternal, victimised or deviant.

Those narratives fixated on anxieties of social disorder and degeneration. This work draws from a variety of British scholarship pertaining to media history, labour history and gender studies. Apart from Gramsci, this thesis has been influenced by the gendered scholarship of Billie Melman, Nicoletta Gullace, Joane Nagel, the social studies of Ezequiel Adamovsky and Klaus Theweleit and the media studies of Adrian Bingham and Jean Chalaby. It synthesises these fields to explain how women were used in different narratives by the popular press from 1916-1921 to describe how elements of British society saw women, how they wanted them to change and what they feared women might become if society changed too radically. Those symbolic narratives were crucial to the renegotiation of the place of women in post-war British society; they were narratives where women were recognised as political beings but were still relegated to the private sphere. Questioning that paradigm was depicted as risking social disorder and revolution.

Introduction

The First World War irrevocably changed the United Kingdom. The resources and human lives spent during the conflict caused a major transformation in British society. Among the greatest of these transformations were social representations of women. Largely confined to the private sphere in public narratives prior to the war, women emerged as an invaluable contributor to the war effort. They played a major part in industry and symbols of national vigour during the war. This image of women remained prominent in British narratives after Armistice in 1918. By the end of the war, many feminists and suffragettes, derided as unfeminine fringe radicals in the early 1910s, had become prominent pro-war voices.

The image of patriotic women, who worked for the good of the state and supported national victory, became a special narrative in the British popular press. There were three primary narratives on women during this period. The first was the 'reimagined woman'. She represented a reconfiguration of femininity, depicted in the press from roughly 1915-1920. Unlike previous narratives on women prior to the war, which often portrayed them as domestic, inactive and incompetent in the public sphere, reimaged women were depicted as patriotic and highly visible. It represented a reimagining of femininity in Britain, allowing women to partake in new activities and have new identities.

Narratives of reimagined women were contrasted by other two others, common in British newspapers. These were of 'victimised women', physically and sexually violated by the enemy; and 'enemy women', who symbolised a corrupted femininity, depicted as antithetical to British identity. Although narratives on victimised and enemy women were partially reimagined to fit post-war crises in Europe, these were not truly new. They were based on older concepts of damaged or corrupted femininity. What I describe as reimagined women, in contrast, was an entirely new narrative created during the period. This conveyed what it meant to be a patriotic woman (and a patriotic man) to the public during the First World War in Britain. These narratives did not suddenly fall out of circulation

after the war, however. They were heavily utilised by the British popular press to identify a new enemy to Britishness in the post-war period.

The October Revolution of 1917, the Russian Civil War and the spread of Bolshevik uprisings throughout Europe from 1918-1922 captivated imaginations and generated new anxieties in British politics and culture. Class politics were at their most volatile in the decade after the First World War; the overwhelming dominance of a right-wing, middle-class press put the labour movement on the defensive. The war enabled significant growth in the membership and authority of trade unions; while schisms in the Liberal Party after 1916 opened the door for Labour to become the second major party at Westminster. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia raised the spectre of proletarian uprisings around the globe and led to considerable anxieties about the activities of Communist activists and sympathisers within society. The 1918 enfranchisement of most working men, the promise of a home 'fit for heroes', and the short lived post-war inflationary boom suggested to some that the political and economic dominance of the middle classes was being undermined.[1] Moreover, socially conservative circles believed stability was further undermined by the enfranchisement of women over thirty in 1918. These anxieties spilt over into the narratives on Bolshevism.

Whilst British expeditionary forces clashed with the Red Army in Russia and provided aid to the White Army and other anti-Bolshevik forces from 1918-1920, newspapers and politicians warned Bolshevism was a pestilence which could spread throughout Europe if societies were not properly immunised. This thesis explores how narratives on women formed a crucial element of those meant to condemn Bolshevism in much of the British popular press from 1917-1920. These narratives, which began as sexually violent anti-German propaganda during the First World War, were adapted to suit Britain's changing social and political climate during the inter-war period. Women were often depicted as anti-revolutionary, nationalist symbols.

[1] Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896-Present*, (Oxford: 2015), p 172.

In much of the British popular press, these narratives were meant to dilute the supposed threat of social revolution. Prior to the First World War, suffragettes and suffragists were often viewed as a threat to the gendered political order of Britain. During the war, however, narratives on these women depicted them more favourably. In some cases, women once considered adversaries of public order where exalted as exemplars of British patriotism. In this context, the image of enfranchised women no longer seemed revolutionary. By the end of the war, some were frequently depicted as patriots and their identity incorporated into the norms of British society. Instead of them being perceived as fighting against the system, the system put women to use as an industrial and nationalistic force in numerous media narratives. In 1918, when the Representation of the Peoples Act awarded suffrage to women over thirty, they were used as a political force: depicted combating Bolshevism in British popular imagination. I argue this was part of the construction of a political and sexual hegemony in Britain.

This thesis explores why the popular press and British imagination adapted their narratives on women from 1916-1921. During this period, the depiction of women was significantly altered to accommodate new places for them. Those places, however, grew increasingly limited after the end of the First World War. Yet it is important to explore how new roles for women in the workforce and politics were not entirely erased. Britain did not experience a gendered 'restoration', but instead adapted the roles of women to suit its patriarchal power structures. One of the primary means in which this was communicated was through narratives on women and Bolshevism in the British popular press.

The thesis follows the evolution of these narratives and what they conveyed about women, Bolshevism and the British imagination during the post-war period. I argue these fantasies were part of a hegemonic function and served to help reconstruct the hegemony of men in Britain. I will explain how the presentation of these fantasies about women and Bolshevism communicated the

new place of the former in British society, following what Antonio Gramsci called an organic crisis of the State.

Key Aspects of this Thesis

This thesis will explore these questions by examining three established narratives of women that existed in the popular press during the period: reimagined women, victimised women, and enemy women. This thesis has three sections following this introduction. The first section follows the popular press from 1916-1917. It explores early incarnations of these female newspaper narratives, and the role which fascination and disgust played in them. The chapter establishes how narratives on women, especially those connected to women's suffrage, changed dramatically during the period; and how social anxieties over forces perceived as a threat to social order in Britain, such as suffragettes and foreign invasion, helped reconstruct gendered paradigms.

The second section explores how these narratives changed during the immediate post-war period. I argue that Euro-orientalism—the social and cultural othering of Russia and Eastern Europe—was a major influence in the creation of gendered anti-Bolshevik narratives in the popular press. These narratives became a cornerstone of gendered hegemony. The third section examines gendered narratives of Bolshevism from 1919-1920, when anti-Bolshevik themes were most prevalent in the popular press. And in the epilogue and conclusion, I will examine the how these narratives began to wane in 1921 as the 'new' place of women in Britain began to crystallise and newspapers lost interest in the supposed threat of Bolshevism to feminity. It examines how each of the major publications chose to depict gender and Bolshevism, both abroad and in Britain. I have framed this research with Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Using Gramsci's theory, I argue narratives on women and femininity related to anti-Bolshevik narratives, which helped to construct a gendered hegemony that sought to influence how much freedom women would have in post-war society. This was connected to anxieties about a loss of public order and abandonment of hierarchies in Britain, fears acutely felt by the middle and upper-classes.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine both how Gramsci's theory of hegemony can be used when discussing gender; and explore how societies adapt to political and social changes whilst preserving their authority. It is also a means of analysing gender in the British popular press, through Gramscian methods. I will do this by discussing not only how this is done through mediums like the press, but how their communication does not need to be factual to be influential. Whilst most historical dissertations focus on the exploration of facts and truth, this is a project on fantasies and lies, and how they are a major component of social history.

Through narratives on reimagined, victimised and enemy women, the British popular press helped redefine femininity in public consciousness. This marginalised or ignored more radical aspects of female suffrage and feminism in Britain. The emergence of women into the British public sphere and politics was concurrent with what Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz describe as an organic crisis of the British State.

Crucial conceptions of reality were dominant in the Victorian period: of the individual, family, constitution, law and nation. These defined the very core of liberal thought. They did not form the codified 'philosophy' or body of political thought, but 'common sense' ideas: taken for granted points of moral reference and practical ideologies of the leading classes in society. The crisis of liberalism was one of confidence and continuity in these practical and ideological conceptions. Leading ideas were challenged and redefined in the interwar period, not only by new conceptions, but in practice and social organisation.

The fissures and breaks in the practical organisation of common sense represented—as Gramsci has argued—no mere shift in the socio-political zeitgeist. They have a direct bearing on the mechanisms of power in both civic life and political institutions. They lead to questions concerning the maintenance of social authority and hegemony. More specifically, how does the State reconstruct its dominance after it is threatened? Hall and Schwarz argue that by the end of the First World War, the liberal state could no longer represent new social forces, such as socialism and feminism; nor could it

reproduce itself as a point of political and social stability. The issue at stake was how a new type of State could be reconstructed, capable of sustaining these new forces. However, each moment of crisis is also a moment of reconstruction; crises are the means by which social relations are reconstituted.[2] Gramsci described this 'restoration' as: 'The realization of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge… when one succeeds in introducing a new morality in conformity with a new conception of the world, one finishes by introducing the conception as well…'[3] In order to understand the meaning of hegemony and the realisation of a hegemonic apparatus, however, Gramsci and his theory of hegemony must be examined.

Methodology: Antonio Gramsci, Hegemony and Gender

Gramsci and Cultural Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci is regarded as one of the most important Western Marxists of the twentieth century. This is largely due to the work of scholars like Perry Anderson, Noberto Bobbio, Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. They returned to the history of twentieth century Marxism in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s to rediscover neglected intellectual currents, divorced from Stalinism, that might provide intellectual insights into radical socialist and democratic politics within and beyond the Marxist tradition.[4]

Whilst imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime, Gramsci adapted the concept of hegemony to explain why socialism failed to overthrow capitalism in Europe between 1917 and 1921. Rather

[2] Stuart Hall & Bill Schwarz, 'State and Society, 1880-1930', *Crises in the British State 1880-1930*, eds. Mary Langan & Bill Schwarz, (London: 1985), pp 7, 11, 16.
[3] Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, eds. David Forgacs & Eric Hobsbawm, (London: 1988), p 192.
[4] Perry Anderson, 'The Antimonies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review 100*, (1976-1977), pp 5-78; Noberto Bobbio, 'Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society,' ed. Chantal Mouffe, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, (London: 1979), pp 21-47; Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', *Journal of Communication Inquiry 10*, (1986), pp 5-27; Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', *Marxism Today*, (June, 1987), pp 1-21; Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London: 1985). For a wider discussion of interpretations of Gramsci as a 'Western Marxist' see: Carl Boggs, *The Two Revolutions: Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism*, (Boston: 1984); Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*, (London & New York: 2014).

than a revolutionary wave overtaking Europe as the Bolsheviks predicted, capitalism stabilised. Liberal-democratic regimes either endured or were replaced by right-wing authoritarian ones.[5] To explain why revolution did not occur as prophesised by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, Gramsci sought to theorise the State's social structure and how it responds to crises.

To Gramsci, the State is the sum of civil and political society. It corresponds to the function of 'hegemony', whereby the dominant group exercises influence throughout society; 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State; and 'juridical' government. Gramsci believed these functions are connected. Intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' and exercise the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise:

1) Spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group. This consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2) The apparatus of state's coercive power, which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This, however, is constituted for the whole of society, in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.[6]

Put more plainly, political leadership is based on the consent of the led, secured by the diffusion and popularisation of the world view of the ruling classes.[7] This results in alliances between classes and social groups. When consent fails, these alliances break down and society enters a crisis. This is known as a crisis of the State. According to Gramsci, a crisis of the ruling class's hegemony occurs either because it has failed in some major political undertaking, forcibly extracted the consent of the broad masses through an event such as war, or because large masses (especially peasants and petty-

[5] Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, ed. David Forgacs, (London: 1988), p 189.
[6] Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. & trans. Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (London: 1971), p 12.
[7] Thomas R. Bates, 'Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 246.

bourgeois intellectuals) have transitioned from a state of political passivity to activity. A 'crisis of authority' is spoken of: precisely the crisis of hegemony or the State.[8]

To combat this, intellectuals of the ruling class use forms of mystification, blaming the failure of the State on opposing ideologies or ethnic and racial minorities, as well as conducting nationalist campaigns based on irrational appeals to patriotic sentiment.[9] These forms of mystification are constructed through apparatuses of civil society. Apart from stressing the role of intellectuals in spreading hegemony, Gramsci insisted on the importance of the material and institutional structure of the elaboration and spreading of ideology. This was composed of different hegemonic apparatuses; of which the media is one example.[10] These construct the ideological structure of a dominant class, and the level of the superstructure where ideology is produced and created. This is what Gramsci called civil society. This constitutes the ensemble of 'private' bodies, through which the political and social hegemony of a social group is exercised.[11] Gramsci theorised that the entrenchment of these civil society apparatuses in Western European nation states gave them the means to resist revolution during these crises.

Gramsci believed that the superstructures of civil society in Western Europe were far more developed and complex than in the East. He explains that in Russia, 'the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed'[12]. This meant a frontal assault on the system, a 'war of position', could not succeed there. The more 'developed' systems in the West were resistant to the 'catastrophic "incursions"' of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.). Ergo, socialist and Bolshevik revolutions failed in the

[8] *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, ed. David Forgacs, (London: 1971), p 218.
[9] Bates, 'Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony', p 258.
[10] QC I, p 332.
[11] QC I, p 476; Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 303.
[12] *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Hoare & Smith, (London: 1971), p 238.

West when they succeeded in Russia. Gramsci described this phenomenon in the language of the First World War:

> The superstructures of civil society are like the trench systems in modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack, the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective. The same thing happens in politics...[13]

Hegemony makes these systems capable of outlasting the bombardment of a crisis. The complexity of these 'trenches' in civil society allows the system to remanufacture consent and diffuse a crisis of authority. Gramsci insists on the importance of the material and institutional structure of the elaboration and spreading of ideology within society. This is made up of different hegemonic apparatuses: schools, churches, the architecture and names of streets and—most importantly to this thesis—the media.[14] This ensemble of apparatuses represents the ideological structure of a dominant group. The level of the superstructure where ideology is produced and created is called 'civil society'. This constitutes the ensemble of 'private' bodies which the political and social hegemony of a social group is exercised.[15] Gramsci explained that in countries like the United Kingdom—where he believed civil society was the most advanced and entrenched—people had become convinced that the ideal of a state that transcends class interests could be attained through continual perfecting of the present system.[16] This meant that the British State easily repulsed social movements that threatened to overthrow its dominant groups, such as Bolshevism.

The ruling classes, with numerous trained cadres and institutions, changes people and programmes and, with greater speed than that achieved by the subordinate classes, reabsorbs the control which had been slipping from its grasp.[17] Joseph Buttigieg explains this more succinctly: Gramsci theorised

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[13] *Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Hoare & Smith, (London: 1971), p 235.
[14] QC I, p 332.
[15] QC I, p 476; Thomas R. Bates, 'Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony', p 303.
[16] Joesph Buttigieg, 'Gramsci on Civil Society', ed. James Martin, ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 431-432.
[17] *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, ed. David Forgacs, (London: 1971), p 218.

that hegemony is sustained by the consent of the governed; the surest sign of its success is that it does not need to resort to the use of force, but hold it in reserve .[18] For these reasons, he believed a revolution in a country like Britain was highly unlikely.[19] Gramsci's theory on hegemony and Britain, however, is not without limitations.

Interpreting Gramsci

Perry Anderson argues that Gramsci was attempting to make sense of the failed socialist revolutions in a manner that did not adequately explore the power of the State or the limitations of Marxism's popularity in Europe. In the early years of the Third International, an infatuation with Bolshevism blinded many revolutionaries outside Russia to the nature of their enemies. Those who remained lucid initially sought to adapt to their indigenous realities without relinquishing their fidelity to the cause of the Russian Revolution, by evoking the difference between East and West. However, they soon desisted. Only Gramsci, isolated from the Comintern and Communist politics, continued this line of reasoning from prison.

There is no theory of bourgeois democracy anywhere in Lenin's writings. Gramsci, on the other hand, was intensely conscious of the novelty of the capitalist State in the West as an object for Marxist analysis and adversary for Marxist strategy, and the integrity of representative institutions to its normal operation.[20] Having taken part in the failed *Biennio Rosso* in Italy, Gramsci created a concept that was always changing, with different iterations throughout his *Prison Notebooks*, blaming every social and political factor except the ideas he was loyal to.[21] That failure, however, resulted in Gramsci's interest in the manufacturing of consent and how it can be manipulated.

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[18] Buttigieg, 'Reading Gramsci Now,' ed. Joseph Francese, *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture, and Social Theory*, (New York: 2009), p 30.
[19] Buttigieg, 'Gramsci on Civil Society', ed. James Martin, ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 431-432.
[20] Perry Anderson, 'The Antimonies of Antonio Gramsci', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), pp 378-379.
[21]Anderson, 'The Antimonies of Antonio Gramsci', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, p 351.

Gramsci recognised coercion and domination by force were not necessarily the most effective means of control and subordination. Consequently, he explored aspects of the State and civil society, such as relations of power and influence between political and civil society, which mutually reinforce each other to the advantage of certain strata, groups and institutions.[22]

Mark McNally holds that one of the most remarkable qualities of Gramsci's political thought is that despite the predominantly Marxist and revolutionary tenor of his writings, they have enriched and informed an array of intellectual currents since the 1970s; many of whom do not share Gramsci's interest in world revolution.[23] To McNally, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is a molecular process in which a 'balancing function' is carried out by dominant groups. It not only 'balances the various interests struggling against the predominant (but not absolutely exclusivist) interest', but also takes responsibility for 'holding the balance between the various interest in civil society'. This 'hegemonic function'[24] goes beyond a simple compromise of interests, however.

For Gramsci, it required a form of unity at the level of ideology to transform and assimilate new elements to the bloc and thwart disintegrating tendencies.[25] Gwyn Williams describes Gramsci's hegemony as a sociological situation, a 'moment', in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant. One concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing all tastes, morality, customs, religious and political principles and social relations,

[22] Buttigieg, 'Gramsci on Civil Society', ed. James Martin, ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 427.
[23] Sonya Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, (Oxford: 2004), p 21; For further discussion of ways in which Gramsci's writings have been appropriated see: Alistair Davidson, 'Uses or Abuses of Gramsci', *Thesis Eleven 95* (2008), pp 68-94; Giuseppe Vacca, 'Gramsci Studies since 1989', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies 16* (2011), pp 174-194.
[24] Gramsci, *Quaderni, Vol. I, Q5, 662*; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p 349.
[25] Mark McNally, 'Gramsci, the United Front Comintern and Democratic Strategy', ed. Mark McNally, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought*, (New York: 2015), pp 25-26.

particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious, is implied.[26]

In its most basic terms, the hegemonic function returns the State to equilibrium, dominant groups remaining so through manufactured consent. For Gramsci, political subjects were not strictly classes, but complex 'collective wills'. Consequently, the ideological elements articulated by a hegemonic class do not necessarily have a class belonging.[27] Instead, it can be better defined as the will of dominant ideologies and traditions in a society which the State has defined as normal. Moreover, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, hegemony alludes to a kind of contingent intervention required by the crisis or collapse of what would have been a normal historical development.[28] The primary goal of hegemony is to reassert a kind of normality that allows dominant groups to remain in control. This function or process can be applied to numerous social and political scenarios, including gender.

Sonya Rose has briefly explored how hegemony balanced the interests of gendered factions in civil society; but does so largely in the context of the Second World War. Not only that, but she does not explain how this occurred through the lens of mass media. This area of history and philosophy remains mostly unexamined. By discussing gendered hegemony and its construction through media narratives on Bolshevism following the First World War, I am investigating a previous unexplored field and concept in inter-war British history. The 'balancing' or 'realignment' of gendered interests through organs of civil society such as the popular press represents a new contribution to twentieth century cultural history, depictions of Bolshevism in British culture, and Gramscian theory.

Gramsci, Gendered Hegemony and the Press

Gramsci was referring specifically to class uprisings throughout history when writing about the crisis of hegemony. However, crises of the State and hegemony can be applied to other groups in society.

[26] Gwyn A. Williams, 'The Concept of "Egomania" in the Thoughts of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation', ed. James Martin, (London: 2002), p 230.
[27] Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Towards a Radical Politics*, Second Ed, (London: 1985), p 57.
[28] Ibid, p 1.

A crisis of authority is connected to fears of a revolt from subaltern groups. Bolshevism represented one of these threats but was not alone. Women were among the subaltern groups participating in the passive transformation of the State and marginalised in its internal reconstitution.[29] The use of Gramsci's theory to explain changes in the representation of women in the British popular press is relevant in two ways. Firstly, gender is related to subalternity. Gramsci wrote briefly on the need for gender equality in his *Prison Notebooks*. He referred to this as the 'crisis of morals', believing it was connected to capitalist society and the aftermath of the First World War. To Gramsci, the institutions connected with sexual life were profoundly shaken by the war; new, utopian ideas developed around the 'sexual question'. He believed the crisis was made more violent by it affecting these strata of the population; conflicting too with new methods of work beginning to impose themselves.[30]

He claimed a society could only become healthy once women and men were perceived with the same amount of respect. He believed this could be achieved from the creation of new narratives on women. He wrote:

> The formation of the new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sexual question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics and caution must be exercised in proposals for new legislation.[31]

Gramsci inadvertently revealed the limitations of the left's motivation to liberate women during this crisis of the State. Despite his calls for equality, Gramsci utilised narratives on the supposed inferiority of women to men. He ascribed negative attributes to femininity and claimed it was more important to put men first in the workforce.

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[29] Hall and Schwarz, 'State and Society, 1880-1930', eds. Langan & Schwarz, *Crises in the British State 1880-1930*, (London: 1985), pp 25-26; Mark McNally, 'Introduction: The Life of a Reflective Revolutionary', ed. Mark McNally, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought*, (New York: 2015), p 1.
[30] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Hoare & Smith, (London: 1971), pp 299-300.
[31] Ibid.

Like many on the left who attempted to create a socialist counter-narrative to hegemony in Europe, Gramsci shared these prejudices. He claimed feminist movements in Anglo-Saxon countries like England were spearheaded by the bourgeoisie; and that their message on gender equality was warped. He believed their attempts to address the sexual question were unsuccessful because they focused on '"sentimental" or pseudo-sentimental conflicts'. Like many on the right, he believed this created 'unhealthy "feministic" deviations in the worst sense of the word'[32]. To Gramsci, bourgeois women were to blame for these 'deviations'.

Gramsci was merely one voice in a chorus of men who claimed feminists were undermining the family and social morality in the West. To him, a movement for gender equality meant women must allow themselves to be absorbed into an alteranative historical bloc. In these movements, however, women would be forced to accept their status as a subaltern group, subservient to the interests of male Marxists.

Gramsci's personal life provides insight into this. In 1933, Gramsci wrote to his wife, Giulia Schutch, about subalternity. In it, his judgements of Giulia, albeit surrounded with expressions of affection, are extremely harsh. Gramsci wrote:

> I think that… you place yourself in the position of an underlying [*subalterno*] rather than a leader—that is, of someone incapable of criticizing ideologies from a historical standpoint, of getting on top of them and explaining them in the light of historical needs of the past. Instead, when encountering a given world of emotions, you feel yourself alternatively drawn and repelled and continue to remain within the immediate sphere of passions.[33]

Gramsci, as suggested by Guido Liguori, clearly saw gendered limitations in his wife. This can be ascribed in large part to a certain conception of women, associated above all with a masculine world

[32] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Hoare & Smith, pp, 299-300, pp 297-298.
[33] Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, ed. & trans. Lynne Lawner, (London: 1975), p 258.

view. Today, we might describe such views as 'macho' or 'patriarchal'. Gramsci did not detach himself from these.[34]

This reveals a paradox in his work on gender and hegemony. Whilst advocating for subaltern groups, Gramsci was also an instrument of gendered hegemony, devaluing women and their accomplishments towards gender equality. His patriarchal views reflected those on the right, who wished to see women remain in subordinate, subaltern positions. As I will explore, many socialist newspapers in Britain shared Gramsci's gendered prejudices.

This belies a blindspot on Gramsci's part. Although he took great interest in discussing how hegemony can be imposed by the ruling class, he and many others on the left did not acknowledge that gendered hierarchies are not based on class alone. They were pre-existing constructs that permiated all the classes in British society. Much of the left failed to acknowledge this and consequently helped construct gendered hegemony, even when it was in the interest of the State they opposed. This was not done at their direction of the ruling class but out of a desire to preserve male priveledges. Despite attempting to create a socialist challenge to hegemony during the post-war years, they in fact helped construct gendered hegemony, conveying a message that celebrated women's recent accomplishments but also sought to continue their subalternity. Newspapers were among the most important apparatuses that constructed this hegemony.

Gramsci was aware of the power of the media, recognising it as a 'source of linguistic innovation' inherent to the forms of cultural hegemony. He saw the media as an organ of intellectuals of dominant classes which can manufacture passive consent from the masses. Buttigieg claims Gramsci believed that what makes the modern democratic state robust is not the power of coercion it can exercise through political society (the legislature, executive, judiciary, police, etc); but rather, the myriad ways in which the core elements of self-definition and self-representation are internalised,

[34] Guido Liguori, 'Conceptions of Subalternity in Gramsci', *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought*, ed. Mark McNally, (New York: 2015), pp 128-129; See: Lea Durante, 'Gramsci e le soggettivita politica delle donne tre natura e storia' *Critica marxista 1*, (2012), pp 57-66.

endorsed by most of its citizens: including those who belong to social strata other than the ruling or privileged groups.[35] The true power of the State's ability to adapt and survive is not in its force, but its capability to persuade.

What role, Buttigieg asks, has mass media played in the context of economic, political and civil society; and what role does it now play 'to bring the overwhelming majority of citizenry into line and to marginalise the dissenters through a campaign of vilification'?[36] Joseph Francese adds another element: how has the media played an active role in creating an illusion of choice, if not of bewilderment?[37] Whilst Gramscian scholars such as Buttigieg, Francese and Marcia Landy have examined the role of media in the reconstruction hegemony in the 2000s, I believe the role of media (particularly the popular press), should, along with its focus on gender, be explored in post-war Britain: because it provides gendered examples both of what Gramsci described as a crisis of the State; and the reconstruction of hegemony.

The Popular Press

Proliferation of the Popular Press in Britain

The birth of New Journalism, sometimes referred to as the 'Northcliffe Revolution', irrevocably changed mass media in Britain. Improvements in print technology, the development of more effective, quicker and cheaper means of distribution, growth of the urban population congregated in large conurbations, a war which mobilised British public opinion (the Second Boer War), and increased demand for news facilitated expansion of the press. The First World War accelerated this process further. By 1918, total circulation of the national daily press stood at 3.1 million a day.[38] At the time of Lord Northcliffe's death in 1922, his flagship newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, had an

[35] Joseph Buttigieg, "The Contemporary Discourse on Civil Society" 2005, p 43.
[36]Buttigieg, "The Contemporary Discourse on Civil Society" 2005, p 46.
[37] Marcia Landy, 'Gramsci In and On Media', 'Reading Gramsci Now,' ed. Joseph Francese, *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture, and Social Theory*, (New York: 2009), p 117.
[38] Murdoch & Golding," The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press, 1914-1976, eds. Boyce, Curran & Wingate, *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day*, (London: 1978), p 130; Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper*, (Milton Park: 2010), pp 138, 135.

estimated circulation of 1.75 million.[39] By the inter-war period, national newspapers were the dominant voices of written news.

The media sits at the centre of the political process in modern democracies. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the expansion of the reading public, along with the growth and increased circulation of the daily press, coincided with the expansion of the electorate.[40] Newspapers became ubiquitous in Britain during this period.

Stephen Koss notes that the First World War intensified pre-existing trends for newspapers in Britain, strengthening already powerful press barons at the expense of provincial newspapers. In 1919, the latter were in disarray. National dailies siphoned off circulation and advertisements at a time of soaring production costs. By expanding northern and Scottish editions, the metropolitan aggressors were:

> Able to considerably reduce the advantage in terms of time and space hitherto enjoyed by the provincial dailies and to invade what, until their coming, had been a sheltered market. The provincial morning papers found themselves faced for the first time with competitors whose resources, both financial and journalistic, enabled them to give their readers a more extensive service of foreign news and a greater variety of features.[41]

Filling the void left by a shrinking local press, the national popular press became a printing and advertising empire in Britain. Although the local press remained influential, the long reach of the popular press and its barons meant there was a greater amount of ideological homogeneity in print following the First World War. By the inter-war period, the newspaper was arguably Britain's most powerful medium of political communication and social influence.[42]

Between 1918 and 1978, newspapers were at the heart of British popular culture. Most adults regularly read at least one national paper. By mid-century, Britons read more newspapers per capita

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[39] Francis Williams, *Dangerous Estate: The Anatomy of Newspapers*, (Newton Abbot: 1958), p 151.
[40] Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, (Urbana: 2004), pp 3, 5.
[41] Report, Royal Commission on the Press, 1947-1949, ch. VII; Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. II: The Twentieth Century*, (London: 1984), p 354.
[42] Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain*, (Urbana: 2004), p 19.

than any other population in the world.[43] The massive circulations of popular newspapers inevitably conferred political, social and cultural authority onto them, despite disdain for their commercialism and sensationalism from social and political elites. Adrian Bingham claims that the popular press helped set the tone of popular culture; their contributions to public debate were closely monitored by politicians, policymakers and campaign groups, as well as by other media. These 'dailies' and Sunday papers were the most potent form of commercialised mass culture that characterised the twentieth century and their owners, who became wealthy figures with powerful public profiles.[44] This made them an extraordinarily powerful appendage of civil society in Britain. These publications were also keenly interested in the political and gendered crises of the inter-war period. Numerous publications had a unique influence on British culture. It is important, however, to note that the narratives they adopted were not solely meant for social and political inculcation.

The Press Barons: Entertainment and Influence

The era of the press barons is sometimes depicted as a maverick interlude in the development of the press, when newspapers were subject to the whims and caprices of their owners. According to this view, the barons built vast press empires and ruled them like personal fiefdoms. In the hands of men like Beaverbrook and Rothermere, newspapers became 'engines of propaganda', manipulated to further political ambitions. As Stanley Baldwin damningly accused: 'What proprietorship of these papers is aiming at is power, and power without responsibility—the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages.'[45] However, this was merely the destination of newspapers' long journey in Britain.

James Curran and Jean Seaton note that the reign of the press barons did not constitute an exceptional pathology in the evolution of the press. It was merely a continuation of tendencies it

[43] Williams, *Dangerous Estate*, (Newton Abbot: 1958), p 232.
[44] Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978*, (Oxford: 2009), p 3; Adrian Bingham & Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896-Present*, (Oxford: 2015), p 10.
[45] James Curran & Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*, 7th Ed, (Abingdon: 2003), p 37.

already possessed. The barons did not break with the tradition of using their papers for political propaganda. Instead, their distinctive contribution was that they downgraded propaganda in favour of entertainment.[46] Political messages were often insinuated through this instead of via overt, dry political journalism. It was a strategy that worked exceptionally well.

By 1921, the three Harmsworth brothers (Lord Northcliffe, Lord Rothermere and Sir Leicester Harmsworth) controlled newspapers with an aggregate circulation of over six million—probably the largest press group in the Western world at the time.[47] Despite this, they often failed to sway elections. Some historians have interpreted the relative failure of the barons to sway governments as evidence they exercised no significant political power. However, this erroneously implies that the barons' influence can only be assessed in terms of gaining support for changes in public policy. Their main impact lay in how their papers selectively represented the world. They tended to strengthen the prejudices of their readers and reinforce opposition, particularly among the middle-class, to progressive change.[48] In other words, the popular press was more interested in reaching and influencing the public through entertainment; printing fantasies and titillation. Newspapers were far more interested in printing peoples' desires and fears than conveying a political education. Those emotions, those fantasies, were critical to influencing the masses, especially during a crisis of the State.

Phillip Simpson argues that hegemony needs to be achieved through coercion; it constitutes the work of intellectuals of the directing class, intended to persuade subaltern classes that their interests too are best served by dominant conceptions of reality (referred to as 'common sense'). Thus, the hegemonic relationship need not be the product of conspiracy on one side and gullibility

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[46] Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure, & Adrian Smith, *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, (London: 2000).

[47] Circulation figures from the inter-war period are not entirely reliable. Principle sources used in this citation have been the Royal Commission on the Press 1947-1949 Report, (London: HMSO, 1949); N. Kaldor & R. Silverman, *A Statistical Analysis of Advertising Expenditure and of the Revenue of the Press*, (Cambridge: 1948); W. Belson, *The British Press*, (London: 1959); The Audit Bureau of Circulations; and Individual Publishers.

[48] Curran & Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain,* 7th Ed, pp 37-40, 46-47.

on the other. In a capitalist society, the dominant group uses its command over resources to establish and refurbish its conception of the world as all inclusive. Gramsci argues that the dominant class developed a 'professional category of intellectuals' to act as constructors, organisers and 'permanent persuaders'. Whilst these experts legitimise the dominance of the directing group, they also consider the interests and tendencies of subaltern groups, if these do not threaten the fundamental economic activities of the former.[49] Fantasies, ostensibly meant to entertain and titillate, alter perceptions of reality and convey 'common sense' to the audience. These fantasies, created by the media, were performing a hegemonic function. They were not uniform, however. Different newspapers had their own versions and interpretations. One of best examples of how narratives influenced gendered hegemony is that of patriarchal fantasies.

Bolshevik Fantasies, Gender and Hegemony

Following the First World War, the threat of Bolshevism conquering Britain was a fantasy. Yet this was critical in shaping the image of Bolshevism outside of Russia. British newspapers explored published fantasies on Bolshevism *ad nauseam*. Many of their grimmest narratives involved women and femininity at the mercy of the Bolsheviks. These were meant to captivate audiences by conveying fascination and disgust to the reader. In these fantasies, the fate of women and femininity hung in the balance in the war against Bolshevism and the 'threat' of Eastern cultures. In the right-wing press, these narratives resembled what the German sociologist, Klaus Theweleit, described as 'male fantasies', through which reactionary German politics and hyper-masculinity converged during the inter-war period. In such narratives, war against communism was not only a class war, but a sex war, in which dangerous 'Red Women' were dehumanised and became objects of violence.[50]

[49] Phillip Simpson, 'The Whalebone in the Corset: Gramsci on Education, Culture and Change', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers Vol III*, (London: 2002), p 269.
[50] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Vol. I: Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Chris Turner, Stephen Conway, & Erica Carter, (Minneapolis: 1987); Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Vol. II: Male Bodies—Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Chris Turner, Stephen Conway, & Erica Carter, (Minneapolis: 1987).

Left-wing newspapers also utilised some of these fantasies, placing women in physical or moral peril. The actors may have been different, but their stories were often written in the same manner. Women, their morality, their welfare and their place in society were critical components of these fantasies, the construction of which was part of a political and gendered hegemony in Britain. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Theweleit's Male Fantasies involving the German Freikorps are not interchangeable with the British post-war experience.

Both were based on male insecurities connected to the nation-state. In Germany, however, Male Fantasies represented the desires and hatreds of outsiders on the far-right political fringe who sought to restore a specific kind of male dominance in a nation they believed had been humilated. Moreover, they were mainly written by reactionary men for reactionary men who thought of themselves as rebels in a failed state. In Britain, the gendered fantasies of newspapers represented the conservative mainstream, which hoped to return society to a kind of 'normality' in a victorious state following the war. The British variation was less extreme and less militant than German proto-fascist narratives and was also consumed by British women who shared many of these gendered prejudices. For these reasons I have differentiated the British narratives in this thesis as 'patriarchal fantasies'.

Newspaper Analysis

The primary focus of this research is on the *Daily Mail*, the *News of the World*, the *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds' Newspaper*. All four had different narratives on the topic of women and Bolshevism. Although there were overlaps—the *Mail* and the *News* were right-wing and vehemently anti-socialist, whilst the *Herald* and *Reynolds* were left-wing and socialist—each newspaper had unique narratives on Bolshevism and gender that have not yet been fully examined in academia. For the sake of clarity, I refer to *Reynolds* and the *Herald* together as the Labourite Press in this thesis. I have chosen the *Mail* and the *Herald* because they were major publications on the right and left that can be examined in a new way. I have chosen the *News* and *Reynolds* for the opposite reason. They have

received little to no academic attention on this topic and deserve more scrutiny. The *News*, the *Herald* and *Reynolds* are not yet digitised and consequently have not received the same level of examination as other publications, despite their popularity during the period. This project has involved a considerable amount of archival research, exploring these publications. By examining these newspapers, I explore right-wing narratives on women and Bolsehvism, left-wing counter-narratives to them and the unexpected commonalities they shared.

The *Daily Mail*

Of all the newspapers examined in this thesis, the *Mail* was by far the largest and most pervasive. Alfred Harmsworth—better known as Lord Northcliffe—was a shrewd advertiser and businessman, who aggressively cornered the British newspaper market with cheap dailies. The success of the *Mail* owes much to its presentation and content. When Northcliffe launched the *Mail* for a half penny in London in 1896, he did so with the explicit object of entertaining as well as informing readers.[51] The *Mail* was part of a conscious repudiation of the Victorian press. The late Victorian national morning press operated per a narrow definition of what was 'newsworthy' and of who its audience should be. These newspapers were dominated by reports of the happenings of the 'public sphere': parliamentary debates and the machinations of party politics, diplomatic and imperial developments, financial and business transactions, and the activities of 'high society'. This reportage had only a sprinkling of crime and sport stories. Political speeches and public meetings were reported at great length, with little attempt to summarise or analyse the material. The *Mail*, in contrast, published simpler, better designed and more accessible articles. And it sold them at half the cost of its rivals. It also sought to publish news outside the affairs of the privileged, such as the latest orations of parliament. It instead advertised to the 'average' reader.[52]

[51] Asa Briggs & Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: from Gutenberg to the Internet 3rd Ed*, (Cambridge: 2009), p 181.
[52] Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004), p 23.

Northcliffe applied populist techniques previously found in the Sunday and evening press, weekly magazines and American journalism to the more traditional, conventional—but more high profile and culturally significant—morning newspaper market.[53] More importantly, Northcliffe took interest in women as both the objects of reportage and as a potential market.

Although Northcliffe may not have been 'the discoverer of the woman reader', as he was labelled by the *Manchester Guardian* editor and press historian A. P. Wadsworth, his pursuit of a female audience was far more consistent and committed than previous pioneers of popular journalism, and his success ensured competitors followed his lead.[54] This was part of Northcliffe's marketing strategy. The *Mail* was the first daily newspaper to include a women's page, and 'stunts' were as much part of Harmsworth's strategy as features.[55]

Northcliffe recognised women were major spenders of the domestic budget and prime targets for retailers. Thus, they were crucial targets for the popular press. The *Mail's* business manager, Kennedy Jones, who initially doubted the wisdom of including a women's section, came to recognise the commercial imperative behind appealing to them: 'We realized that women are by nature more loyal and conservative than men, and that if we had them with us and got a firm footing in their homes, the value of our papers from the advertisers' point of view would be greatly enhanced.'[56] This viewpoint and market strategy culminated in Northcliffe's creation of the *Daily Mirror*, initially launched as a women's newspaper in 1903.[57]

Northcliffe's interest in women's topics and female readers was more than commercial, however. Both Northcliffe and Jones believed in the supposedly conservative nature of women. They believed women and femininity were central to narratives in the *Mail*, which should educate as well as

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[53] Bingham & Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain*, (Oxford: 2015), p 7.
[54] A. P. Wadsworth, 'Newspaper Circulations 1800–1954', *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, Session 1954–5 (Manchester: 1955), p 30; Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004), p 23.
[55] Briggs & Burke, *A Social History of the Media: from Gutenberg to the Internet 3rd Ed*, (Cambridge: 2009), p 181.
[56] Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street*, (Milton Park: 2006), p 331.
[57] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-war Britain*, (Oxford: 2004), pp 31-33.

entertain the masses. To them, women and femininity were crucial aspects of the British Empire's strength, especially against foreign, revolutionary ideas like Bolshevism. They wished to reaffirm that women deserved due credit for their part in traditional social and political norms. Reportage that impugned on these social and political norms and depicted women as pure symbols of Empire were meant to 'fascinate and disgust' the reader as a captivating, immoral tale.[58] Sex, femininity and threats to Empire and Britishness were the main themes explored by the *Mail* when it reported on women and Bolshevism.

Although the *Mail* was a right-wing newspaper, more dramatic than its Victorian predecessors, it claimed to be a paper for the emerging middle-class. The Northcliffe model of journalism sought content and modes of presentation that appealed to a wider range of readers. The *Mail* and newspapers that emulated it wished to cater to the interests of the masses. Thus, amusement and thrills were essential to the economic model Northcliffe adopted.[59] The events of the First World War and Russian Civil War provided the newspaper plenty of opportunities to accomplish this. Although the *Mail* was designed to titillate and sometimes shock readers, other popular newspapers further pushed the boundaries of good taste.

The *News of the World*

In the twentieth century, the *News of the World* was likely remembered most for two things—its sensationalism and extraordinary circulation figures. It was at one point the highest selling Sunday newspaper in the world, with a massive readership.[60] Founded by John Browne Bell in 1843, the London-based newspaper always took interest in transgression and vice. Targeting working-class readers, the *News* primarily focussed on court cases and the darker aspects of British society, both real and imagined. If the *Mail* was dramatic in its presentation, the *News* was carnivalesque. The

[58] Peter Stallybrass & Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, (Ithaca: 1986). The concepts of fascination and disgust will be explored in greater detail later.
[59] Kevin Williams, *Read All About It!* (Milton Park: 2010), pp 138, 140.
[60] Laurel Brake, Chandrika Kaul, & Mark W. Turner, *The News of the World and the British Press, 1843-2011: 'Journalism for the Rich, Journalism for Poor'*, (New York: 2016), p 3.

newspaper's sensationalism encompassed all manner drama and excess—shocking and gory crime, thrilling and tragic accidents, suicides and the deaths of children—as well as bizarre and astonishing stories that flouted assumptions of everyday life. Sex was also a significant theme in its reportage. Alison Oram observes that the *News'* narratives on sex and violence often conveyed astonishment at the unexpected physical body and its vulgar implications; they often represented an inversion of normal hierarchies and the humour and horror which that reversal entailed.[61]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the *News* was considered the least respectable mainstream national newspaper. When categorised, it was widely agreed to exist in one of its own. For instance, the Conservative MP Major Birchall did not need to identify the publication when he complained to the House of Commons in 1926 that 'one Sunday newspaper' devoted half of its reportage to 'matters of crime of every kind, very largely connected with sexual offences'. This was, he argued, material that 'degrades and pollutes the reader's mind'. One of his colleagues agreed that it was possible to single out 'one newspaper that has been wrong in this matter'[62]. Regardless, they could not argue with the newspaper's circulation numbers; to the *News'* editors, this alone was what mattered.

Adrian Bingham explains that the editors of the *News* understood their newspaper's sex and crime formula would never win over educated critics. Instead, their task was to ensure that the paper contained enough to interest and titillate working-class readers without becoming so unrespectable that too many potential buyers or advertisers were put off. Consequently, the *News* tended to be moralistic in its commentary and editorials.

Vocal support for the law, the police and conventional morality were also vital elements of the *News'* narratives. Its editors could not allow any suspicion that their newspaper condoned the behaviour which it recorded. Its reportage scrupulously described the mechanics of the judicial process, giving prominence to the comments of the judges and the sentences handed down. The

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[61] Alison Oram, 'Woman as Husband: Gender, Sexuality and Humour in the News of the World, 1910-1950s', eds. Laurel Brake, Chandrika Kaul, & Mark W. Turner, *The News of the World and the British Press, 1843-2011: 'Journalism for the Rich, Journalism for Poor'*, (New York: 2016), pp 161, 163.

[62] 200 H. C. Debs, 5s, Judicial Proceedings (Regulation of Reports) Bill, 10 Dec. 1926, cols. 2445, 2447.

newspaper's standard defence against accusations that it dwelt on the worst aspects of human behaviour was that it reported not crime but punishment, and thereby helped to teach readers what they should not do.[63] The paper's columnists and lead writers consistently called for vigorous enforcement of the law and demanded the imposition of harsh penalties.[64] This was especially true when it reported on victimised and delinquent women.

The meaning of gender and the position of women continued to be a significant point of negotiation in popular culture during a period of intense competition for markets among the popular press.[65] These press reports were not simply a modern way of communicating 'traditional' popular meanings. Newspapers both promoted and avoided sex, and the *News* did both with considerable ardour. Its reportage left just enough to the imagination, often conveying an even more grotesque image for the reader.[66] Whilst many newspapers utilised narratives that relied on fascination and disgust, the *News* depended on them the most. Unlike many publications, the newspaper made little effort to include female readership during the First World War and post-war period. It indulged in voyeuristic reportage of graphic violence against women under the guise of popular journalism, and entertained fantasies that tacitly encouraged domestic violence as carnivalesque humour. In the post-war period, its narratives on women and Bolshevism focused on transgression, immorality, violence and misogyny in the name of defending the Empire from alien peoples and ideologies. Other major newspapers repudiated this kind of reportage, claiming the press should appeal to the rationality and morality of the working-class.

Reynolds' Newspaper

Founded by George William MacArthur Reynolds in 1850, *Reynolds' Newspaper* began as a radical, post-Chartist publication. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, it was far less extreme than

[63] Stafford Somerfield, *Banner Headlines*, (Shoreham-by-Sea: 1979), p 150.
[64] Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* (Oxford: 2003), pp 128, 130.
[65] Jerry Palmer, *Taking Humour Seriously*, (London: 1994); eds. Chris Powell & George E Paton, *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*, (Basingstoke: 1988).
[66] Oram, 'Woman as Husband: Gender, Sexuality and Humour in the News of the World', *The News of the World and the British Press*, eds. Brake, Kaul, & Turner, (New York: 2016), pp 167, 174.

it had been at its founding. Under the ownership of Sir James Henry Dalziel, a former Liberal Party MP and supporter of David Lloyd George, the paper mixed British nationalism with trade unionism and socialism. Like the *News*, *Reynolds* focused much of its reportage on court cases and targeted a working-class audience. However, the nature of its coverage was much different. *Reynolds'* was supportive of trade unions and the emerging Labour Party and dedicated a section of its weekly publications specifically to unions and labour laws in the UK. It did not usually rely on sensational reportage. It instead sought to present itself as a newspaper that focused on rational discussion—although court cases were often reported on sensationally—and wished to appear politically moderate during the First World War.

Its tone was likely related to fears of censorship from the Home Office during the war. Left-wing newspapers critical of the conflict and the government were frequently raided and shut down. Despite its left-wing politics, *Reynolds* tempered its commentary with unambiguous British patriotism. Unlike most socialist publications, it was unabashedly pro-war and anti-German during the conflict. It fervently supported the February Revolution and Alexander Kerensky's socialist government in Russia, which it claimed would continue supporting the Allies. The paper, however, had nothing but contempt for Bolshevism and its adherents. *Reynolds* was a newspaper that claimed Britain could walk the path to socialism through reform and frequently condemned revolutions, especially those that emulated Lenin and Trotsky. This meant that the newspaper constructed anti-Bolshevik narratives in a different manner than its right-wing counterparts.

Reynolds' anti-Bolshevik narratives used many of the same tropes as the *Mail* and the *News*. Women were centrepieces. The newspaper represented British socialists who, as Paul Ward explains, claimed inspiration from the Magna Carta and Bill of Rights as their revolution, not Russia or France. It praised Britain's system as the most democratic on earth, merely in need of the right

representation, while Bolsheviks sought to unmake such traditions.[67] *Reynolds's* narratives utilised right-wing condemnation of the Germans and Bolsheviks—including sexual narratives—whilst remaining a stalwart champion of the working-class, socialism and gender equality, narratives it shared with other left-wing publications. Its moderate approach to these topics, along with its pro-war, nationalistic sentiments, may have stimulated its left-wing competitor and antithesis, the more radical *Daily Herald*.

The *Daily Herald*

As a newspaper, the *Herald* came closest to challenging hegemony as a British publication during the inter-war period. Its origins were at odds with most of its rivals. A product of the twentieth century, it began as a strike sheet for print workers in 1911. The following year, George Lansbury, a prominent Christian socialist, and Ben Tillett, a trade union leader, transformed it into a daily newspaper with capital of only £300. Until the outbreak of the First World War, it had a precarious existence, due to limited resources, investment and readership.[68] A stridently anti-war publication during the conflict, it was frequently investigated and censored by the Home Office. Two major events launched the newspaper into prominence: the Russian Revolution of 1917 and labour unrest in Britain following Armistice. In this context, the *Herald* found a national audience.

1917 gave the *Herald* a major cause to supplement its war resistance narrative. It was the British press's most enthusiastic proponent of the October Revolution: which in turn brought its greatest scoop, as it published the secret treaties between the Great Powers, found in the Russian imperial archives by the Bolsheviks.[69] Its reportage was not uncritically pro-Bolshevik; foreign affairs columnist Noel Brailsford, though an enthusiastic supporter of the Revolution, was an early left-wing

[67] Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the English Left 1881-1924*, (Suffolk: 1998), pp 159-160.
[68] Bingham & Conboy, *Tabloid Century*, (Oxford: 2015), p 11; Jean K Chalaby, *Twenty Years of Contrast: The French and British Press During the Interwar Period*, Cambridge University Press, p 151.
[69] George Lansbury, *The Miracle of Fleet Street: The Story of the Daily Herald*, (London: 1928), pp 102-156.

sceptic about some of their methods.[70] However, the newspaper was among the few major British publications that defended the Bolsheviks when they were lambasted by other newspapers. War resistance had always been a minority cause in Britain during the First World War, and the extent of mass British support for the Russian Revolution is unclear. However, a sizable group adhered to one or the other cause; and in the absence of alternatives, gravitated towards the *Herald*.[71] If the main function of the inter-war press was to reinforce conservative values and opposition to progressive change, the *Herald* sought the opposite.

In the febrile political atmosphere that followed the October Revolution and Armistice, with industrial disputes close to spectacular levels, the *Herald* looked like subversion made print.[72] Hamilton Fyfe, who succeeded Lansbury as editor in 1922, retold the anecdote of a railwayman sorting through discarded papers on the train: '*Daily Mail*, all lies, *Daily Express*, all lies, *Daily Herald*, all trouble.'[73] The *Herald* had a specific readership.

Whilst the *Mail* and its rivals originally targeted the lower middle-classes, acquiring readers in other classes as they grew, the *Herald*, like *Reynolds,* appealed to the unionised working-class. The *Herald* was only able to scratch the surface of this expanding audience, however.[74] Its literary style and reportage was much different from other popular newspapers during the post-war period. The language of its political and industrial reporting drew on the ethical, moralistic tradition, of which Lansbury was an exemplar. The newspaper's analyses of current events showed signs of the influence of Marxist staff members like William Mellor and Raymond Postgate. Its underlying thesis was that the state was no more than an instrument of capitalism and that Big Business (habitually capitalised for emphasis) would always attempt to drive living standards down to a minimum.[75]

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[70] F.M. Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter: H.N. Brailsford and His World*, (Oxford: 1985), p 142.
[71] Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left*, (Chicago and London: 1997), p 22.
[72] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, (London: 1965), p 262.
[73] Henry Hamilton Fyfe, *Sixty Years of Fleet Street*, (London: 1949), p 192; Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus*, (Chicago and London: 1997), p 25.
[74] Bingham & Conboy, *Tabloid Century*, (Oxford: 2015), p 12.
[75] Richards, *The Bloody Circus*, (London and Chicago: 1997) p 39.

This commentary was often dramatic. For instance, during the First World War and British intervention in Russia afterwards, war reporters were commonly portrayed as state lackeys: who slavishly followed the official agenda of the capitalists and cared nothing about informing readers about the grim realities of war.[76] This was one of many aspects of British life which the *Herald* depicted as the machinations of capitalists. Capitalist plots were similarly pervasive in its analysis of foreign affairs, which viewed much of the manoeuvring of the time as a plot against the Bolsheviks and other socialist uprisings.[77]

All capitalist parties were depicted as enemies. The Liberals were viewed in one sense as more dangerous, as they might be mistaken for friends. Although the *Herald* depicted itself as the official mouthpiece of the Labour Party, Maurice Cowling argues that the newspaper 'created an attitude towards government which made it difficult for trade unionist leaders to collaborate openly. The result was a heightening of language even when it did not mean it'. The *Herald* represented a section of the Labour movement which urged the pursuit of industrial 'Direct Action' for political ends. It helped 'to establish a body of prejudices that was taken to characterize the movement as a whole'[78]. Numerically, it did not have a readership comparable to other major newspapers, but a dedicated base allowed it to remain financially independent until 1930.

Being a paper of the unionised working-class, its readership was mostly men, older than average for other popular papers, and less well-heeled. Despite having some of the most gender progressive narratives of any British newspaper, the *Herald* generally did not appeal to women. Tony Gray explains that its inability to gain a large female audience meant it could not obtain the sort of display advertising which a mass circulation daily needed to proliferate.[79] Women were frequently discussed, though.

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[76] Bingham & Conboy, p 23.
[77] Richards, pp 40-41.
[78] Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics*, (Cambridge: 1971), p 39; Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, (London: 1984), p 383.
[79] Tony Gray, *Fleet Street Remembered*, (London: 1990), p 39.

Like other major publications, the *Herald* frequently depicted women being victimised. These narratives were often sexualised for the sake of sensationalism. The primary difference between the *Herald* and other publications was that it had different antagonists. In the pages of the *Herald*, women were abused and despoiled by capitalists and reactionary armies. This depicted the state and capitalists as the true victimisers of women, instead of Germans and Bolsheviks. However, as I will explore, the *Herald's* narratives relied on many of the same tropes as its rival newspapers, which constructed sexist and xenophobic fantasies for male readers. Although it wished to promote a social revolution in Britain, it was just as guilty of sexualised sensationalism as its competitors. Did the *Herald* truly create a challenge to gendered hegemony or did its narratives contribute to it? These questions will help us understand the role of Bolshevism, women, gender and hegemony in the popular press during the post-war period.

Historiography

Organic Crises in Britain

Along with the works of Gramsci, this thesis utilises research from several fields of history. All of them involve depictions of a crisis of the British State. Several scholars have argued that changing gender norms and their accompanying anxieties were a part of this crisis. George Dangerfield claimed the upheavals of women and working classes represented the 'death' of liberal England and Victorian social norms. This meant that the concepts of security and respectability no longer impaired marginalised groups from agitating, which resulted in a social and political crisis.[80] Other historians have analysed this crisis in Gramscian terms.

Mary Langan and Bill Schwarz argue that the crisis of the British State represented a sharp historical discontinuity from the period that preceded it. They characterise it as a 'crisis of liberalism', most acute from 1910-1926. Although they describe this process in broad social and political terms, many historians have focused on gendered aspects of the crisis for a deeper understanding of its effects on

[80] George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, (New York: 1935), p 142.

British society and culture. All interpretations rely on examining the relationship between women, nationalistic conceptions of gender and the nation state, and the patriarchal imagination.

I have used these interpretations of a crisis of the State and its relationship with women to explain how gendered hegemony was constructed in the British popular press; and described how it used these narratives to fascinate, disgust and at times mollify readers. I argue this was meant to persuade the masses and reassert the control of dominant groups in society; in this case, the control of men over women. Despite the perceived threat of Bolshevism, Britain's shifting gender issues were regarded as more important.

Crises, Nationalism, Women and the Imagination

The First World War resulted in drastic changes to perceptions of gender in Britain. The mass mobilisation of men meant women began entering numerous new professions, albeit temporarily. They became change hands, tool setters and factory supervisors with remarkable success. Women were hired in banks and businesses; they became window cleaners and plumbers, signalmen and porters, bus conductors, van drivers, shepherds and electricians. More importantly, they worked in what had been considered as men's jobs, such as the munitions industry, stoking furnaces, unloading coal wagons and building ships.[81]

The war also opened the doors for women's medical education in Britain. Many of these women took over the functions of male doctors who joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. Female physicians also insisted on serving in areas where they could care for wounded soldiers, and the War Office reluctantly allowed them to do so. More than a thousand women from all parts of the UK and its dominions served as doctors, orderlies, nurses, ambulance drivers and other support staff during the conflict.[82] Women's efforts in industry, medicine and politics during the war were critical to them gaining limited franchise in 1918. However, new roles for women were accompanied by severe social

[81] Melanie Phillips, *The Ascent of Woman*, (London: 2007), p 296.
[82] Leah Leneman, 'Medical Women at War, 1914-1918', *Medical History*, 38, pp 161, 170-171; Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, (London & New York: 2002), pp 37-38.

anxieties over female identity and its relationship to the nation state, particularly in the patriarchal imagination.

This can be separated into three groups: analysis of women, gender and citizenship during the war; depictions of women in Britain following the war; and discussions of how women were depicted in nationalist discourse. In all three analyses, women and the use of women in the patriarchal imagination are a critical aspect of nationalist discourse during a crisis of the State.

Gender historian, Nicoletta Gullace, argues that depictions of women in the British press during the First World War enabled a critical renegotiation of citizenship. As women both took part in 'masculine' work for the war effort and were also at risk of becoming casualties, newspapers began to represent them in a manner that melded concern with the safety of home and family with genres of pornography and hagiography often denied to a respectable audience.[83] More specifically, narratives on rape became analogies in the press; the feminine nation was defiled by the symbolic 'rape' of a foreign invasion. Although these narratives served as gendered propaganda to galvanise men against the Central Powers, it also allowed feminists to draw attention to the role of women as major contributors to the nation-state and national consciousness by giving birth to soldiers and sharing the sacrifices of their sons through war work, injury and even death. This allowed women to be recognised in a new way during and after the war.

Although war propaganda that lionised women in factories was later repudiated, it nevertheless facilitated a fundamental shift in the parameters of citizenship. At a moment when journalists, politicians and other patriotic citizens proclaimed support for the war to be the only acceptable political statement, the gender of political and social actors appeared to matter less. To Gullace, the apparent ideological unity of patriotic men and women made sexual diversity seem less

[83] Nicoletta Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, (Basingstoke: 2002), p 25.

threatening.[84] Her theory of sexual diversity, however, contrasts with frequent depictions of misogyny found in the popular press following the war.

Feminist historians such as Lucy Bland, Billie Melman, Susan Grayzel and Susan Kingsley Kent have written extensively on the post-war crisis in Britain and the portrayal of women in newspapers during this period. They argue that political and social upheaval, which caused massive disruptions in British society, can be attributed to misogynistic anxieties towards women by much of the British right. This was amplified by hegemonic apparatuses like the popular press, which constructed narratives on foreign invasion, subversion, class war and sex war. Women were frequently depicted as antagonists.

Bland argues that despite being praised for contributing to the war effort, women were regarded as potential 'moral enemies' in Britain during the First World War and required strict supervision for the good of the nation.[85] Cynthia Enloe and Joane Nagel explain that nationalist movements tend to view women and their bodies as symbolic instruments. This inspires both reverence and fear because women are depicted as a national resource that must be guarded. For men, to be conquered is to have their women turned into fodder for sexual fantasies.[86] This also means women are often placed under extreme scrutiny during periods when nationalism flares, such as during war and other crises. During such crises, sexualised scrutiny is often performed in the name of national, ethnic and/or cultural purity.

Melman claims that the right-wing popular press defined British national and imperial identity by exalting whiteness, Christianity and Victorian concepts of masculinity and femininity. It simultaneously defined all women who did not meet these ideals as a threat to Britishness and

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[84] Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons'*, (Basingstoke: 2002), pp 139, 196.
[85] Lucy Bland, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', eds. Carol Smart & Julia Brophy, *Women in Law: Explorations in Law, Family and Sexuality*, (London, 1985), pp. 47, 52; See also: Lucy Bland, *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper*, (Manchester: 2013).
[86] Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* vol. 21, (1998), p 244; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (Berkeley: 1989), p 44.

'traditional' values.[87] Women's increased agency and the perceived threat of their sexuality in British culture during the First World War allowed them to be depicted as transgressors. The popular press helped construct narratives of their transgressions. The press attempted to unify British society against myriad perceived 'illnesses'—such as Bolshevism—by depicting women as the reproducers of Britishness.

According to Kent, conservative perceptions of threats to the nation state often represented specific 'social illnesses': moral degeneration, miscegenation and radical politics.[88] As reproducers of the nation state, women were depicted as the body in which Britishness could be regenerated or where infections could spread. Thus, women who did not meet social standards of morality or 'purity' were portrayed as serious threats in some newspapers. Hostile characterisations were used to endorse political violence towards groups defined as 'others' in British society by the right-wing popular press.[89] These 'others' represented proletarians, socialists, communists, immigrants, Anglo-Africans and Jews. Political violence can be described as hateful rhetoric, endorsements of physical violence and state suppression.

Nationalist discourse endorsed collective Britishness, believing it would unite British people during this perceived crisis. This social and psychological unification, however, could only be obtained through the excision of certain foreign ideologies, systems and peoples.[90] More importantly, women and their morality were frequently depicted as at stake in this struggle for national purity. However, feminist historians are not as focused on the popular press so much as merely referencing it when discussing gender and crises in post-war Britain. Narratives in the popular press are more complicated than many have claimed. Press historians, on the other hand, have attempted to

[87] Billie Melman, *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, (New York: 1998), pp. 31-32.
[88] Susan R. Grayzel, 'The Enemy Within: The Problem with Women's Sexuality During the First World War', ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, (London and New York, 1999), pp 74-75.
[89] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: War and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931*, (New York: 2009), p 4.
[90] Kent, *Aftershocks: War and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931*, (New York: 2009), p 4.

analyse gender with a focus on the popular press and how its narratives reflected the anxieties of the period.

Newspapers, Fantasies and Gendered Hegemony

Dan Le Mahieu argues that reactions to women's suffrage and greater participation in politics and the press during the inter-war period were related to inarticulate fears of socialism and Bolshevism. Most of the popular press wished to preserve social order. This meant 'immoral' forces—sometimes women—became their targets. Women were still a vital market for advertising, however, and the press would not have risked ostracising them.[91] Although press barons were cynical and could even be contemptuous of their audience, as entrepreneurs, they knew better than to risk alienating an entire market. Women were prominent consumers and could not be ignored.[92] The press may have been far more interested in gaining and retaining consumers than circulating ideologies.

Jean Chalaby argues that press barons usually saw newspapers as commodities and commercial property rather than as political tools.[93] As they believed selling newspapers took precedence over politics, newspapers like the *Daily Mail* deliberately contained less politics than any other daily at the turn of the century. Northcliffe believed newspapers should captivate and tantalise readers. Dailies were amusing and entertaining, not a reiteration of parliamentary politics. This meant newspapers cared far more about fantasies than verifiable facts. Women could not be entirely alienated from these fantasies; they were, in fact, a critical component of them. Although sometimes demonised in the popular press, women were also an audience.

Bingham claims that the right-wing popular press directly advertised to women as imperial citizens. He argues that the increased presence of women in the British public sphere made the

[91] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004) p. 201.
[92] D.L. Le Mahieu, *A Culture of Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars*, (Oxford: 1998), p. 40.
[93] Jean Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism*, (London: 1998), pp 48-53.

accommodation of women's interests a necessity.[94] This does not mean that newspapers depicted women as men's equals, though.

The accommodation of women's interests in the popular press was not analogous to gender equality. Men remained dominant in all spheres of British life, and the popular press remained male-centred. Women were, for the most part, represented in a domestic context during the inter-war period. Bingham, however, traces the origins of the mass commodification of women as sex symbols to the popular press during the post-war crisis of the State.[95] Le Mahieu, Chalaby and Bingham consider that newspapers were more interested in entertaining the masses and transforming them into consumers than seeking to politicise them, but the fantasies they constructed reaffirmed a socially conservative, patriarchal hegemony.

Richard Hoggart claimed that the construction of fantasies in newspapers were the primary means of personalising news for uneducated readers. To Hoggart, the crux of successful 'personalisation' in the British newspaper was constant, considerable simplification. The reader had to feel intimately at one with a dream presented to them. They would not feel this if they had to contemplate the weight of a word, puzzle over a nuance or follow complex sentences. Although every newspaper adopted their own style, they operated under the assumption that their readers are simplistic. Thus, they communicated fantasies in the least nuanced, most dramatic ways possible.[96] However, these fantasies may not have directly affected the sentiments of the populace.

The messages and attacks which the press use to this day through the construction of fantasies is a kind of shadow-boxing or muscle-flexing under arc lights. There may be a genuine attack occasionally, but it is usually on something small and safe. The enemies conjured in the press are usually men of straw. Newspapers neither shock with their 'shocking' revelations, nor hurt with their 'straight attacks'. For all its purported 'progressiveness' and 'independence', the popular press was

[94] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004) p. 2.
[95] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, p 2.
[96] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life*, (Brunswick & London: 1957), pp 152-153.

and continues to be one of the greatest conserving forces in public life in Britain: its nature required it to promote both conservatism and conformity, especially during the inter-war period.[97] The fantasies constructed in newspapers were always based on relatable topics and emotions. These may not have converted audiences exactly, but persuaded them, especially during a crisis. Several media historians and sociologists have argued that the power of newspapers—particularly British newspapers—to persuade cannot be ignored.

James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woolcott posit that after the First World War, observers began crediting the press with the ability to overwhelm passive audiences with irrational 'persuasion.'[98] They claim 'persuasion' and 'propaganda' were linked with the emergence of modern media following the First World War and anxieties of Bolshevism spreading, where newspaper conglomerates actively manipulated audiences to suit their own agendas. The media and the popular press did not exist merely to 'preach to the converted' during this period; but were designed to spread their gospels. Stuart Hall argues that the politics of the popular press were part of a 'continuous and necessarily uneven and unequal struggle, by the dominant culture, to disorganise and reorganise popular culture'.

Put more simply, newspapers were engaged in a constant struggle for hegemony, all claiming to be the true voice of the British people.[99] If a newspaper intended to be influential, it had to partially reflect the values of its readers. Influencing readers meant newspapers had to be adaptable and reflective of what their audiences wished to see; they had to communicate popular narratives and fantasies.

The First World War resulted not only in a political and economic crisis, but also a gendered crisis. Limited enfranchisement and recognition of women in the public sphere meant that British women

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[97] Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life*, (Brunswick & London: 1957), pp 178, 182.
[98] James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, & Janet Woolcott, 'Study of the Media: Theoretical Approaches', eds. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennet, James Curran, & Janet Woolcott, *Society, Culture and the Media*, (London: 1982), p. 11.
[99] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'', ed. John Storey, *Popular Culture Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, (London: 1994), p 240.

transitioned from a politically passive to active group, resulting in a gendered crisis of authority. Attempting to defuse the uncertainty created, intellectuals of the dominant gender used hegemonic apparatuses such as the popular press to negotiate the place of women in British society. The primary means in which newspapers accomplished this was by constructing new narratives on women, which both renegotiated their place in society and reinforced the beliefs of the dominant group. These narratives, which stressed social conformity through the communication of fantasies, performed a hegemonic function by depicting the sexual nightmare of revolution. Women, being objects of these patriarchal fantasies, were an example of how hegemony is applied to gender. These fantasies often occurred within the context of anxieties over the spread of Bolshevism.

Although class and politics has been explored in the context of press theory, the influence of gender on discourse in the British popular press has yet to be explored from a Gramscian perspective that does not focus purely on class-antaongism. Gendered hegemony was a cross-class phenonon where men, as a dominant group, sought the continued subordination of women. To better understand and apply these theories regarding the popular press in Britain, the influence of the popular press and its relationship to gender needs to be examined.

Synthesising Analyses

The aim of this thesis is to synthesise feminist analyses of the inter-war period with those of Gramsci and press historians, to understand how narratives on gender and Bolshevism in the popular press reflected changing gender norms in Britain. The popular press had a tremendous amount of influence on the population but did not convey a single message. All sources examined in this thesis participated in this gendered hegemony; but did so through different means. Because gendered hegemony is not inherently tied to cross-class antagonism, but instead permeates all classes in society, my analysis is not a deterministic transposition of Gramsci's concepts cultural hegeomy onto to gender. It is a map of how different forms of hegemony can be constructed and re-constructed.

For this reason, gendered hegemony often transcends class. These concepts will be explored in detail.

The feminist analysis is related to post-war British hysteria over national identity and socialism, with Bolshevism spreading across Europe. It theorises that sensationalism and paranoia influenced the sexual politics of Britain. Women who went against conservative interests and 'common sense' were labelled as sexually degenerate and became associated with Bolshevism. Some historians believe this gendered analysis is too simplistic, arguing instead that depictions of women in the popular press were reflections of a society in flux following the First World War.

Bingham and Le Mahieu postulate an inversion of this analysis, claiming that hostility towards changing sexual norms represented anxiety over the spread of Bolshevism. Those narratives depict conservative, traditional women as patriotic consumers; and working-class, socialist women as a corruption of femininity.

Both analyses make numerous references to women's depiction as sexual objects in the British popular press. All these historians cite examples of women being coveted and shunned in the context of Bolshevism: with the popular press depicting women as either immaculate figures of nationhood who drove back barbarous Bolsheviks, or despicable murders and prostitutes in league with Bolsheviks. Both theories conform to gendered narratives of nationhood and class.

Bingham's depiction of conservative women in the popular press represents the image of civilised, moral, nurturing consumers who stood apart from the unwashed, uncouth masses. In the feminist interpretation, women were regarded as 'enemies' who had joined the unwashed, dangerous mass. Both theories discuss class and gender theories in Britain as social fears of an unformed, revolutionary mass. Both reinforce the idea of a gendered crisis of the state, and gendered hegemony changing the representation of women in British society. And both depict its construction through press narratives which catered to patriarchal fantasies that elicited fascination and disgust. To explore this fully, however, important questions on gender and Bolshevism must be examined.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony provides an important framework for examining how certain institutions reacted to major changes in society, but it is not a methodological framework on its own. For that reason, this thesis is a discourse analysis that examines narratives from the popular press and uses Gramsci's theory to partially explain why these newspapers created these narratives for popular consumption.

Chapter 1

Fascination and Disgust: Women and Luridness in the British Popular Press, 1916-1918

Narratives on women and Bolshevism in the popular press during the inter-war period cannot be understood without first exploring the former during the First World War. These narratives emerged from anxieties pertaining to political, social and sexual crises. The popular press played a major role in constructing them as a means of solidifying a sense of national solidarity – but they went on to provide a blueprint for further narrative construction on Bolshevism following the October Revolution.

Feminist scholarship has suggested the centrality of gender distinctions to nationhood. For instance, literary theorist Anne McClintock proposes that 'all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender'. Despite ideological investment by many nationalists in the idea of popular unity, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender difference.[1] Whilst women were excluded from full citizenship of the nation state and had been depicted in political theory from the ancient world through the Enlightenment as unworthy or inappropriate to assume the rights and obligations of citizenship, images of women have often symbolised the nation.[2]

Moreover, the status of women has been a central theme in nationalist discourse. Scholars have argued that nations are constructed by fraternities; usually characterised by male bonds, largely because of the significance of war (the most obviously gendered activity in which states engage) to their development.[3] Through war, symbols of femininity, new and old, were constructed for society by the popular press in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These narratives represented

[1] Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939*-1945, (Oxford: 2004), pp 5-6; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, (London & New York: 1995), p 353.
[2] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, (Madison: 1985).
[3] Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality,* p 91; Andrew Parker, 'Introduction,' ed. Andrew Parker, *Nationalisms & Sexualities*, (London: 1992), pp 6-7; McClintock, pp 352-353.

how the roles of women were changing in British society; and anxieties over how new identities for women could alter Britain's social and gendered order.

In this chapter, I identify and explore three narratives which the popular press used to represent women from 1916-1918. This period connected the First World War and the October Revolutions in Russia: with media narratives connected not least through the depiction of sexual transgressions. Indeed, all the narratives in this and subsequent chapters constructed concepts of sexual transgression.

The first narrative I explore is that of reimagined women. These were women who the press depicted as workers and patriotic militants. In this section, I will explore themes of nationalism and female militarism, the press and public consciousness, and patriarchy and hegemony in the popular press.

The second narrative is the antithesis of reimagined women, enemy women. These were women depicted as morally and sexually transgressive by newspapers. In this section, I explore themes of foreignness and female militarism, sexuality, and misogyny in the popular press.

The third and final narrative is that of victimised women. These were women who the popular press depicted as objects of violence. These acts of violence were often sexualised. This section explores themes of rape, female symbolism and horror. It also examines gender, class and foreignness.

These narratives are examined thematically. The right-wing papers discussed in this chapter are the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *News of the World*, the *Daily Record* and the *Liverpool Echo*. The left-wing newspapers examined are the *Daily Herald*, *Reynolds's Newspaper* and the *Fife Free Press*. The sections on reimagined women and victimised women have been thematically separated into subsections for clarity. As there were overlapping views between the right-wing and left-wing press, these subsections focus on the popular press and what I refer as the Labourite press (The *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds' Newspaper)*. The Labourite press often had divergent narratives from other

newspapers. However, *Reynolds' Newspaper* is sometimes mentioned when discussing the right-wing press because its views on foreign affairs were often analogous. The section on enemy women focuses entirely on the right-wing press, because this narrative was unique to the right-wing newspapers examined during this period.

Along with Gramsci's theory of hegemony and how it is used in the media, I examine Billie Melman's concept of sensationalism, as well as Stallybrass and White's idea of fascination and disgust. I explore how those concepts helped construct gendered hegemony. Melman argues that sensationalist horror conveyed by the depiction of bodies, terror and torture serves as a dark aspect of Hobsbawm's invention of tradition, portraying the destruction and mutilation of bodies when depicting Britain's enemies. Conversely, the victory of the stable British state over enemy forces conveyed order's triumph over chaos. The enactment of torture was constantly visualised in the press, which intensified images of horror. These replications paid special attention to women as both viewers and the victims of torture viewed[4]; conveying powerful emotions of fascination and disgust, they constructed hegemony for the masses by defining reality through a violent, transgressive lens.

I have adapted the theory of fascination and disgust from Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's work on the bourgeois imagination. I have also adapted Klaus Theweleit's theories on filth and sexuality in the right-wing imagination. Stallybrass and White claim that 'disgust always bears the imprint of desire', and that 'low domains… expelled as "Other," return as the object of nostalgia.'[5] Theweleit argues that disgust and misogyny prove that reactionary sentiments towards women are normal for males living under capitalist-patriarchal conditions.[6] Stallybrass, White and Theweleit's theories hold that female images of fascination and disgust are used to preserve power structures which men perceive as threatened during periods of crisis. During the First World War, the British popular press

[4] Billie Melman, 'Horror and Pleasure: Visual Histories, Sensationalism and Modernity in Britain in the Long Nineteenth Century", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 37. Jahrg., H 1, pp 41, 43.
[5] Peter Stallybrass & Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, (London: 1986), p 191.
[6] Klaus Theweleit*, Male Fantasies Volume I: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, (Minneapolis: 1987), p 26.

combined class, gender and political anxieties into narratives of fascination and disgust. As the subjects of these narratives, women became objects of lurid tales: not limited to the right-wing imagination. All newspapers examined in this chapter indulged in such fantasies about women.

I identify narratives constructed around women as patriots, enemies and victims during the First World War. Employed by the popular press to demonise the Central Powers, these were repurposed to demonise the Bolsheviks and magnify gendered anxieties in Britain.

Reimagined Women

The onset of the conflict redefined womanhood in British society. Within the first year of the war, women's paid employment increased by 400,000 in Britain and continued to grow.[7] Women gained more agency and recognition as they entered the workforce to support the war effort. The new status of women, however, was not limited to their identity as workers. It also drew attention to a new, militarised femininity. A new narrative was constructed by the popular press to accommodate the image of the patriotic female worker. Reimagined women and their femininity were linked to the national service this image conveyed. Depictions of this were vital to the reimagining of female citizenship in Britain.

According to Sandra Stanley Holton, the creation of new 'types' of womanhood entailed a simultaneous, related challenge to prevailing notions of how political life and the public sphere were constituted. These ways of conceptualising gender set up a dichotomy between the domestic sphere of women and public world of men. This was frequently used to justify women's exclusion from enfranchisement. It also ignored the reality that most women had to work for a living and of women's roles as the nurturers and educators of male voters. During women's suffrage campaigns in Britain, advocates of 'the cause' established new conceptions of citizenship: modifying the classical Liberal understanding of the public sphere, and what might constitute the 'independence' on which

[7] Gerard J. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War*, (Harlow: 1996), p 55; Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, (London & New York: 2002), p 27.

radical claims to citizenship rested.[8] This provoked a crisis of the State, which meant the role of women had to be negotiated.

One of the primary ways this was done was through organs of civil society, such as the popular press, which helped reimagine women as a patriotic force visible in the public sphere. More importantly, however, it re-established parameters which women could not transgress in British society. Narratives of women were changing, becoming more inclusive. However, those narratives created in the press were controlled by Britain's dominant groups. I have classified those who were the focus of these narratives as 'reimagined women', because their narratives were based on a reimagining of gender and femininity by the popular press.

Reimagined Women, Gendered Patriotism and Transgression

Reimagined women had a dual identity in the press, which cast them as both champions and transgressors during the First World War. They could be categorised as hard-working patriots or indolent, inept employees. The popular press had contradictory narratives for commercial reasons. Jean Chalaby claims that as the circulation of newspapers increased, press barons would no longer risk adopting dogmatic political positions. In a highly competitive market, it was financially hazardous to hold a political position too explicitly. To maximise sales, editors used multiple means of enticing the greatest possible readership. Chalaby cautions, however, that simply because a newspaper has a contradictory or depoliticised message, it does not mean it is politically neutral.[9] The discourse of any newspaper, although biased, often has social and political contradictions.

For instance, Adrian Bingham observes that inter-war newspapers, despite actively choosing what they would and would not publish, had social and political messages which were the product of a complex series of decisions. These balanced what proprietors, editors, journalists and outside contributors wished to produce, based on assumptions about what the target audience wanted to

[8] Sandra Stanley Holton, 'The Making of Suffrage History', *Votes for Women*, eds. June Purvis & Sandra Stanley Holton, (London: 2000), p 6.
[9] Jean Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism*, (Wiltshire: 1998), p 77.

read.[10] As press barons like Northcliffe wanted to attract multiple audiences, they often published articles that both supported and criticised reimagined women.

During the First World War, the right-wing popular press often depicted women positively as domestic militants who served and suffered for the nation, comparable to how male soldiers served and suffered on the front. Newspapers like the *Daily Mail*, for instance, lavished praise upon women as an organised, militant force. The *Mail* proclaimed, 'Much of their work must have involved great sacrifices, but these have been borne with wonderful fortitude, equanimity, and devotion… We all owe these patriotic women a very great debt of gratitude.'[11]

This narrative was not unique to the right-wing press. Liberal newspapers such as the *Fife Free Press* also romanticised reimagined women in the workplace.

> It says a great deal for those women who, in this national crisis, have stepped out and undertaken the work our men who have to the front fight for their liberty. Their noble step has met with the commendation of every right-thinking man. Their action is truly British in this hour of their country's need.[12]

The line between war-work and militarism was blurred in the popular press when it described reimagined women. Newspapers claimed women symbolically 'took the khaki uniform' by serving the nation. Not only did these narratives romanticise national service, but they also described women shedding 'undesirable' qualities. The *Mail* claimed patriotic women were willing to make this sacrifice. Like men, women's contributions to the nation in war-time were romanticised.

In the Northcliffe Press, reimagined women were created by women 'taking the khaki' and discovering their new selves. The *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* were most likely to praise this newly 'discovered' woman. 'Like the continent, we knew woman existed, but she has been discovered… Women, as discovered, are a by-product of the war, and everything that was said as to their place in

[10] Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004), p 11.
[11] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 4 January, 1916, p 4.
[12] *Fife Free Press*, 19 February, 1916, p 1.

creation before that era must be forgotten and fresh platitudes and formulas must be invented and promulgated'[13].

The *Mail* rationalised that the introduction of women into war work and militancy gave them a new, empowered identity. 'Every woman so engaged is showing the world the real capacity of her sex for an infinite number of new kinds of labour, and is also helping the country to progress towards a much desired goal'[14].

Female militarism was celebrated in newspapers like the *Daily Record*. It proudly reported on parades of women in khaki uniforms, such as by the Women's Social Political Union, whose suffragette agitation had been derided by the right-wing press prior to the war.

> Yesterday's procession of women war workers was by far the most spectacular display that has ever been seen in London… Women in their factory overalls; women with the respirators they wear at their dangerous occupation of shell-filling; women in the trousers and puttees they have adopted in their agricultural pursuits; women in khaki uniform; women indeed, in every garb but that of ease and indolence were in the procession in thousands.[15]

The *Record* noted an important detail:

> The demonstration was organised by the Women's Social and Political Union, whose activities during peacetime are mostly of belligerent character. London, which has in the past looked with disfavour upon the processions of the Suffragettes, turned out in its thousands to applaud yesterday's magnificent pageants.

During the First World War, the right-wing press described militant women as a compliment to the mass mobilisation of men. Although this may have served as pro-war propaganda, it also represented an attempt to give women new identities as visible patriots. This depiction of female militarism was very different from pre-war narratives of militant women suffragettes, who were critical of the British government and agitated for women's enfranchisement. This new narrative of patriotic, reimagined women challenged the older image of the suffragette agitator. In the picture

[13] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 11 April, 1916, p 4.
[14] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 17 January, 1917, p 4.
[15] *Daily Record*, Monday, 14 July, 1916, p 2.

below, for instance, women war-workers are celebrated for the contributions. They have agency, but are also praised for their looks, to remind the audience they are indeed different from men or a supposedly asexual suffragette agitator. These depictions are hegemonic because they redefined the meaning of militancy from narratives of women being rebellious and maligned to those depicting them in the service of the State.

The popular press often celebrated the contributions of women war workers.[16]

Charles Emmerson argues that the rise of pre-war female militancy in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century, both within the British labour force and among suffragettes, was viewed as a direct challenge to the stability and security of the UK by conservative and liberal forces. Social and political elites feared that increased enfranchisement, especially of the working-class, would cause national degeneration.[17] Suffragettes sometimes conducted themselves in a manner that transgressed Victorian ideas of femininity. In May 1914 Lord Curzon told the House of Lords that political militancy 'raises a doubt as to the fitness of the female temperament and character for the discharge of political functions. It gives evidence of a mental and moral instability on the part of

[16] *Daily Mirror,* Tuesday, 26 November, 1916.
[17] Charles Emmerson, *1913: The World Before the Great War*, (London: 2013), pp 436-437.

many women'[18]. Brian Harrison argues that every social trend of the Edwardian period belied assertions like Curzon's.[19] Women were mistrusted because Britain's patriarchal hegemony asserted that they were psychologically and morally unstable. Women with power were derided as unpredictable and dangerous. Such beliefs were reinforced by patriarchal narratives, with the popular press a locus.

It was common for women to be viewed as both morally superior and physically and mentally weaker than men in British culture. Melanie Phillips argues that this supposed weakness was depicted as the source of women's moral superiority, an ambiguity at the heart of the campaign for women's rights and its opposition.[20] When these women were depicted as ardent supporters of the war effort, going so far as to supplement the place of men, it added moral justification to the war in the press. This meant that narratives on women seeking enfranchisement changed dramatically during the war.

Prior to the First World War, the right-wing popular press often depicted suffragettes and other advocates of women's enfranchisement as unpatriotic and anti-feminine. The *Mail* introduced the term 'suffragette' in 1906 as a derogatory label to distinguish the militant Women's Social and Political Union from more 'respectable', constitutionalist suffragist organisations, such as the National Union of Suffrage Societies, which continued to advocate separate spheres for men and women. Critics of militant organisations continued to use the term pejoratively.[21] However, as Nicoletta Gullace observes, when women undertook war work in unprecedented numbers and even the most ardent critics of women's suffrage acknowledged the sacrifices of mothers and wives, an explicit link between national service and female citizenship was made by feminists and the popular press. Pankhurst's WSPU and the nationalist wing of Fawcett's constitutionalist NUWSS

[18] Curzon, *House of Lords Debate*, 5 May 1914, c. 28; cf. *ASR*, July 1914, p 108. See also Harcourt, *House of Commons Debate*, 24 January 1913, c. 896.
[19] Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, (London: 1978), p 194.
[20] Melanie Phillips, *The Ascent of Woman: The History of the Suffragette Movement and the Ideas Behind It*, (London: 2007), p 5.
[21] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928*, Second Ed, (Harlow: 2007), p 54.

accomplished more with their nationalistic support of the war than had been possible in the many years of constitutional and militant struggle in times of peace. As a result, the popular press suddenly had nothing but admiration for the new avocation of Emmaline and Christabel Pankhurst and groups like the WSPU.[22]

In the press, reimagined women challenged gender norms in the 'correct' way. Susan Kingsley Kent observes that the First World War effectively pacified the suffragist movement in Britain. The egalitarian message of suffragists and suffragettes was subsumed by gendered nationalism.[23] Reimagined women in the right-wing popular press served as politically sanitised suffragists and suffragettes. The *Mail* claimed, 'the imaginary barriers and obstacles we raised up are fading away before the determination to be "up and doing"… The sexes will meet on a more equal footing, and in consequence will build up more worthy lives'[24].

The newspaper asserted the difference between reimagined suffragists and suffragettes, however. The reimagined woman was not a '"militant Suffragette" thirsting for the blood of the powers that be...' but 'an ordinary, average British woman'. The *Mail* claimed this 'silent majority' of women were serving a higher purpose than a fight for enfranchisement. They had been:

> …called upon to bear bravely, have ceased to be a source of amusement, and have developed a feeling of profound disgust and contempt at the bungling of a group of men in whose hands the precious lives of our fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers are placed.[25]

In such narratives, reimagined women were depicted as Britain's saviours in its dark hour. Quiet, demure women in peacetime were transformed into patriotic militants when their country and its men needed them. Moreover, their patriotism and conservative pragmatism were conveyed as anathema to the militant suffragette.

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[22] Nicoletta Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, (Basingstoke: 2002), pp 118-119, 125.
[23] Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918', *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, ed. Frans Coetzee & Marilyn Shevin-Cotzee, (Oxford: 1995), p. 156.
[24] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 26 April, 1916, p 4.
[25] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 26 April, 1916, p 4.

For instance, the *Mail* had often depicted suffragettes as selfish, violent and crude. In contrast, it described reimagined women as a patriotic force which earned the right to enfranchisement by serving the nation in a time of war. It claimed reimagined women did this out of love for Great Britain and its high ideals. This set them apart from pre-war suffragettes, who the right-wing press depicted as agitating for frivolous, selfish reasons.

In such narratives, reimagined women's selfless dedication to the war effort made them worthy of enfranchisement. In the *Mail*, these 'khaki girls' rebuked 'idle' and 'frivolous' girls. As the cartoon below depicts, the regalia of the suffragette was set aside by women, who chose to serve a 'greater good' by becoming a Land Girl. Her clothing of revolt was literally shed to make way for her role as a new, patriotic woman in British society.

Women of the Land depicted casting aside their 'frivolous' femininity for the war effort and 'transforming into patriotic reimagined women'.[26]

The *News of the World* used a similar narrative when reporting Mary of Teck's meeting with mobilised women at Albert Hall in 1917:

[26] *Daily Mirror*, 2 April, 1917, p 5.

> As the Queen advanced to the front of the Royal Box, thousands rose to their feet and sang the National Anthem. Immediately afterwards a woman's voice, sounding weak in the vast spaces of the building, broke out from the south side of the ball: 'I am here to protest on behalf of woman suffrage' – 'It got no further, for it was at once drowned in a storm of hissing and cries of 'Order'. In less than a minute the interrupter was removed by members of the Women's Volunteer Reserve, who acted as stewards.[27]

Narratives on reimagined women depicted women purged of qualities which the right-wing press found distasteful and purified them by depicting their service to the nation state. 'Purified' reimagined women negated the 'selfish', 'uncouth' and 'unpatriotic' suffragettes. The narrative also rejected 'lazy', 'frivolous' and 'shallow' flappers and butterfly women. The *Mail* claimed this new 'identity' changed women's demeanour.

> Women's very walk is becoming different to-day. You cannot often be in a hurry without unconsciously increasing the length of your stride. Their manner is taking on a certain determination… The girl who has to look after herself develops a natural resourcefulness... It is very different to do a man's work and remain a clinging woman.[28]

The *Daily Record* made similar observations:

> The war has cleared her vision and matured her judgement... the pre-war atmosphere of feminine audacity [has] disappeared. The sickly sentimentalism of the one type and the blasé indifference of another has been replaced by a poise resulting from the steadying influence of facing realities… women do not wear their hearts on their sleeves to-day. Instead, they smile and gird the armour of those who are still left to fight.[29]

The right-wing press brought women into the pro-war cause by constructing a new kind of femininity for their readers. It created a new narrative of femininity which women should follow, allowing them to be integrated into new roles in society.

According to Chalaby, gender identities in twentieth century Britain were more assimilatory than most believe. Newly emerged gender identities were integrative rather than oppositional to existing

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[27] *News of the World*, 18 March, 1917, p 2.
[28] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 6 September, 1916, p 2.
[29] *Daily Record*, Tuesday, 14 August, 1917, p 2.

economic order. During the First World War, women were welcome to occupy new 'masculine' roles such as factory work, conducting and even as police (to police other women). This process, however, was controlled by a patriarchal society. Women were neither encouraged to create altogether new roles nor were they welcome to change or redefine the roles they occupied.[30] The right-wing press accepted new roles for women in British society because enough male readers permitted it. In any case, depictions of female militants and workers in the right-wing press were not always positive; and only remained acceptable whilst the nation was at war.

Newspapers such as the *Liverpool Echo* remained hostile to women entering the workforce. The *Echo* claimed, 'Women in the munitions factories are quite human, and not archangels specially imported from another planet'. The newspaper observed that women had been working in Britain prior to the war. The assertion was not without merit. By 1911, about 29 per cent of the officially recorded labour force was female, and this figure remained about the same until as late as 1961.[31] Journalists at the *Echo*—unimpressed by women in industry—claimed that women had 'simply transferred from the sweated industries which attracted little attention yet warped their lives'[32]. Much of the press felt the factory could 'warp' women further.

Although the right-wing press praised reimagined women, it also feared the consequences of them being masculinised. The *Record* claimed, 'The exigencies of war have created a large army of women who are taking the places of men; let us hope only for the duration of the war… matrimony is still the most natural and most sublime vocation for women'. The *Record* praised the new roles of women but insisted they should not betray their gendered identity:

> Women cannot be anything else but women. Many of them are courageous, strong, and clever, but it will be a degradation to the race if we encourage women to become masculine,

[30] Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism*, pp 75-76.
[31] Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change*, (Brighton: 1984); Gail Braybon & Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*, (London & New York: 1987), p 11.
[32] *Liverpool Echo*, 27 June, 1916, p 3.

> coarse, horny-handed, foul-mouthed, because of their industrial environment in shipyards, munition factories, etc., instead of the gentle, winning, amiable modest helpmate of man.[33]

The press encouraged female patriotism, labour and militancy. However, it also perpetuated anxieties of women becoming masculinised. Conversely, the right-wing press also accused uniformed women of stereotypically 'feminine' frivolity. 'What conceivable reason is there to bring forward for this adoption of a pseudo-military uniform by little squads of soldierettes? There seems to be no intelligible motive for the adoption of a khaki uniform except the deeply rooted instinct in nearly every woman for "dressing up"'[34].

Most anxieties regarding reimagined women stemmed from fears that work and militancy would transform women into something 'unnatural'. These masculinised women might be unsexed or oversexed. It was believed those qualities could destroy their roles as mothers and builders of the 'British race'.

> I know there is a type of women rapidly increasing, alas! To whom the word 'woman' is anathema; but let those of us who love our country do our best to preserve it, and the essentially feminine characteristics which go to make it, for it is the 'womanly' woman who make, and will make, the good mothers of future generations…[35]

The *Mail* also warned that women who adopted their new roles too vigorously risked damaging future generations.

> As one of the potential mothers of to-morrow, the woman is robbing the country of possibly useful citizens… Even if she marries and has children these will in all probability suffer for the state of their parent's health and will be puny and weakly all their lives.[36]

Whilst the *Mail* exalted women's contributions to the war effort and the workforce, it concurrently launched the press campaign, 'Save the Babies'. This was intended to reveal the 'hidden atrocity' of Britain's high infant mortality rate. The *Mail* editorialised that the physical condition of women

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[33] *Daily Record*, Thursday, 9 November, 1916, p 2.
[34] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 21 October, 1916, p 4.
[35] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 18 June, 1917, p 4.
[36] *Daily Mail*, 11 July, 1917, p 4.

(which, it claimed, was exacerbated by their participation in masculine tasks) was the main reason male infants died.

> The increasing strain, educational and industrial, which has been put of late years on our developing girls and young women has entailed an alarming increase in national defect degeneracy… When women develop masculine physique and brains they do so directly at the cost of the brains and physique of possible sons. So mortality of male infants particularly has increased of late.[37]

The press frequently lionised women but also depicted them as the cause of significant problems in British society. The *Mail* and other publications claimed that for those reasons, women should preserve their feminine trappings for the good of the British race. However, they also claimed, 'A woman who has always worn a skirt does not know what an Amazon she would be without it… Ask the land girls if they could get through the day in skirts. Every ounce of their endurance is given to their work, and that is why they can do the work of men'[38]. Both messages perpetuated the narrative that women were serving the nation, though. As the *Mail* advertised itself as a 'patriotic newspaper', Northcliffe wanted to entice both audiences.

There was also a third interpretation of reimagined women in the right-wing press. The *Mail* and *Mirror* argued that they had in fact retained their femininity. This narrative claimed that women workers and militants would, like men, demobilise when the war ended, and return to their 'traditional' identity. The *Mirror* observed:

> Many women have 'given up skirts for ever.' So they say in their new zeal for masculine 'gas-pipe' garments. But 'for ever' means, I should say, for 'the duration of the war'… Others frankly dislike breeches. They think the 'comfort' of the masculine cut of clothes vastly exaggerated.

[37] *Daily Mail*, Friday 11 February, 1916, p 4.
[38] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 15 June, 1916, p 2.

Female militants becoming 'feminine' again after the war through five stages.[39]

The *Mail* claimed that reimagined women would not be unsexed by their new identity. Northcliffe recognised that part of the *Mail's* readership believed that the 'mere mention of a uniform for women workers immediately conjures up in the minds of a very large majority the fearful spectacle of a sexless creature'. The *Mail* and *Mirror* reassured readers that the uniform, although helpful to the nation, was not 'a masculine attire, but a standardised dress that will serve not only to foster economy of expenditure and time, but also to equalise the members serving in the ranks of the great army of women workers, which is and must be composed of every social grade'.[40]

The Northcliffe press was most likely to comment both positively and negatively on female militants and workers. The *Mail* and *Mirror* depicted reimagined women as simultaneously splendid and worrisome. The third opinion adopted by the Northcliffe press posited that reimagined women

[39] *Daily Mirror*, 13 December, 1918, p 6.
[40] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 4 November, 1917, p 4.

would neither discard their whole femininity nor challenge patriarchal norms by revolting after the war. 'Far from there then being a war of the sexes when the men return from the fields of battle to the fields of labour, I think that it will be found that women will help to fulfil the idealist's dream… "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"'[41].

In the right-wing press, reimagined women were depicted as ephemeral. Even when they were regarded as something permanent, their presence was anchored to the home front. This narrative claimed women would only change as much or as little as men allowed. That anchor was eventually removed, however, as depictions of reimagined women became more militant.

In early 1916, narratives of reimagined women were usually confined to Britain. But as the war progressed, the meaning of patriotic female militants became more literal. British women who died at the front as nurses and ambulance drivers were awarded honours and sympathies like fallen male soldiers. The *Record*, for example, eulogised these women with patriotic, religious and gendered symbolism:

> Dr. Elsie Inglis, founder of the Scottish Women's Hospital, has given her life for her country, or rather for all humanity's sake… the cause of it was noble devotion to the great crusade and to the wounded who have suffered in it. Scotland will treasure her name as a bright symbol to wave before the ideals of its womanhood.[42]

The *News of the World* provided more details about women killed in the field:

> Regret will be widespread at the news that Mrs. Harley, sister of Lord French, has been killed by Bulgarian shell fire at Monastir. She was on duty with a motor ambulance unit, and a shell burst near an ambulance in which she was seated.[43]

The Labourite publication, *Reynold's Newspaper*, also valorised reimagined women who died 'heroic deaths'. It described these final acts of heroism in more detail than its right-wing competitors:

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[41] *Daily Mirror*, Friday, 30 June, 1916, p 5.
[42] *Daily Record*, Wednesday, 28 November, 1917, p 2.
[43] *News of the World*, 11 March, 1917, p 4.

> She said that she and her mother, who was a washerwoman—had taken shelter on the stairs of a building, but her mother, seeing a little boy of seven in the road, said, 'Let me bring him in'. 'She did so, added the girl, 'but as she was returning there was a loud crash. The boy ran into shelter my fell against the stairs, and I found that blood was running down my back'.[44]

During the First World War, narratives on reimagined women enabled their transformation from domestic patriots to patriotic militants. The *Free Press*, for instance, celebrated and memorialised female militants when proudly describing their contributions at the front in Romania.

> In the course of the furious fighting in the sector of Focsani, battalions of women volunteers displayed their heroic devotion and irresistible dash. The Army commanders declare that the example of women who are invariably in the front line, and whose patriotism is unshakable.[45]

The narrative of militant women reached its apex in spring 1917, during the right-wing press' short-term fascination with the all-women Russian Battalion of Death.

The *Mail* described the Battalion of Death as the pinnacle of female patriotism. Its female soldiers compensated for the weaknesses of their male compatriots.

> Commandant Botchkareva… who has already fought in the trenches and been wounded and won many medals, rode at the head of this body of Amazon. [She] joined the movement in order to shame the recalcitrant soldiery. 'If they will not protect us', she said, 'we will show them that we can protect them!'[46]

The *Mail* depicted Russian women fighting the Germans as the culmination of patriotic female militancy. Not only had these women shown they were willing to sacrifice their lives and bodies for the sake of their nation, but their dedication shamed and emasculated men whom the *Mail* claimed lacked the patriotism and courage to defeat the Germans. The *News* lauded the Battalion of Death as a 'corps of amazons' and described their sacrifice as both feminine and patriotic. The *News* shared American writer Rheta Childe Dorr's observation of the battalion:

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[44] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 15 July 1917, p 3.
[45] *Fife Free Press*, Saturday 18 August, 1917, p 2.
[46] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 7 July, 1917, p 3.

> These women have overthrown every convention and forgotten everything woman have ever been taught. You've no idea how nice women can be when they are absolutely natural and unselfish… It had never occurred to me before that women ought to go to war, but I am convinced now that in any country, under such conditions, women ought to step into the breach, guns in hand.[47]

Although the Battalion of Death, pictured below, was described as courageous and patriotic by the Northcliffe press and the *News*, the distinction between the foreign Russian military and British military was maintained in the right-wing popular press. The *Record* rationalised:

> Russia in its present fluid and undisciplined state requires primarily all the patriotic fervour it can command, and sees no reason why the sex barrier should stand in the way of providing stimulating examples of patriotic devotion.[48]


MRS. PANKHURST AND THE LEADER OF RUSSIA'S FIGHTING WOMEN.

This photograph, which has just reached England, shows Mrs. Pankhurst with Mme. Botchkavera and her women soldiers. Mme. Botchkavera, is the leader of the Women's Battalion of Death.—(Exclusive to *The Daily Mirror*.)

Pictured: British suffragette Christabel Pankhurst with Commandant Botchkareva and the Battalion of Death.[49]

The *Record*, however, reassured that the same 'fluidity' would not occur in the UK:

> There seems no likelihood, however remote, that the Western nations will follow in Russia's footsteps… women in active warfare, except in special circumstances like those of Russia, seems to be the last stroke in reducing our civilisation to a mockery.[50]

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[47] *News of the World*, 29 July, 1917, p 1.
[48] *Daily Record*, Thursday, 2 August, 1917, p 2.
[49] *Daily Mirror*, Monday, 20 August, 1917, p 1.

Newspapers like *Reynolds* mirrored the right-wing press when it claimed women were generally best suited to be nurturers, not soldiers.

> Women are prevented by sex difficulties from shouldering a rifle, and thus going into the trenches to fight side by side with their men folk, but the nearest approach to fighting in the noble and self-sacrificing work undertaken by the thousands of unselfish women who, as Red Cross nurses, daily perform tasks which, arduous and sometimes nerve-wracking, are not one whit less important to the successful prosecution of the war than the firing of bullets and cannon at a merciless enemy.[51]

Women who embraced their militancy too vigorously and became combatants transgressed patriarchal boundaries in the press. Harrison observes that although the war created new opportunities for women, it still saw them taking up mainly auxiliary, less dangerous positions. For every Nurse Cavell who died, men were dying in combat by the hundreds of thousands. To anti-suffragists, the war emphasised the truth of what they had always asserted: that the spheres of the sexes were separate but complimentary.[52] Although the Battalion of Death was an object of fascination, women who became combatants were also objects of disgust in the press.

Although sometimes critical of the government, most of the press still spoke on behalf of Britain's cultural hegemony. Britain's patriarchal society adapted itself, allowing new roles for women. Although the national character of women was reinvented, this was allowed and supervised by men. Women were a growing audience in the popular press, but the press was owned and controlled by men in a patriarchal system. Female reporters in these papers also usually reflected this world view. The popular press acted as a mouthpiece of sexual hegemony during the First World War, reinforced through representations of women. The nature of that hegemony, however, was expressed differently in particular publications, such as those in the Labourite press.

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[50] *Daily Record*, Thursday, 2 August, 1917, p 2.
[51] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 14 January, 1917, p 3.
[52] Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, (London: 1978), p 206.

Reimagined Women, War, Class Struggle and Socialist Liberation

The Labourite press frequently lauded the sacrifices made by women during the war. Their meaning, however, differed from the narratives of most of the popular press. While the latter claimed that reimagined women were a patriotic alternative to suffragettes and suffragists, the *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds' Newspaper* often depicted reimagined women as a revolutionary force. There were, however, some limitations to those narratives.

The editors of socialist newspapers in Britain lacked circulation, funding or readership comparable to right-wing editors like Lord Northcliffe or Emsley Carr in the early twentieth century. As they had fewer publications in general, there are fewer examples of reimagined women in the Labourite press. Although not as numerous, the socialist left-wing press constructed their own narratives on reimagined women: many of which subordinated women to patriachcal fantasies. Like the right-wing press, women were often relegated to symbolic roles in struggles primarily depicted as masculine.

Cynthia Enloe observes that nationalism typically springs from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope. She argues that women are relegated to symbolic roles in the context of nationalism and conflict. They serve as icons of nationhood, to be elevated and defended. Nationalism usually centres on male psyches: their freedom, their honour, their homeland and *their* women.[53] Reimagined women indeed challenged Victorian gender norms in the popular press. However, they were still narrated as an appendage of masculine ideologies. This was as true for internationalist movements on the left as nationalist ones on the right. Indeed, the Labourite press helped define this hegemony by neglecting the agency of women in socialist narratives.

Eric Hobsbawm noted how women have often been neglected in socialist and Marxist politics. As these ideologies were overwhelmingly designed and promulgated by men (with several notable exceptions), it cannot be assumed that the sex roles of women were represented accurately in

[53] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, (Oakland: 1989), p 45; Joanne Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality and the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 21, Issue 2, 1998, p 244.

socialist discourse.[54] The Labourite press was as uninterested in accurately representing women as their right-wing counterparts. During the First World War, ideologies in the popular press were largely expressed from the perspectives of men; their editors had little interest in that changing. Consequently, the inclusion of women in nationalist and internationalist left-wing newspapers was patriarchal; women were often denied agency.

That said, Labourite newspaper narratives were less uniform than their competitors. *Reynolds's Newspaper* was socialist, pro trade union, nationalistic and in favour of the war. The *Daily Herald*, in contrast, was a socialist newspaper which was consistently anti-capitalist, anti-government and thoroughly opposed to the war. Both had unique narratives on reimagined women.

The *Herald* and *Reynolds* maintained that women had long deserved the right to be recognised and enfranchised by British society. To them, women laboured for the sake of nation and the working-class.

> As everybody knows, women have been breadwinners by the million for generations, in the mills of Lancashire, in drapery stores, and, of course, as domestic servants. In some towns in England, indeed, the women earning their own living are as numerous, if not more numerous, than the men… Then the war came, and all these old ideas were revolutionized. A great new world for women has opened.[55]

Promulgating socialist ideologies, the *Herald* and *Reynolds* merged women's suffrage with class struggle, where men and women alike sought liberation. Stephen Brooke argues that socialist feminists in the late nineteenth century viewed socialism as a means of emancipating women.[56] *Fin de siècle* socialist writings such as August Bebel's *Woman Under Socialism* and Frederick Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* considered the relationship between sex oppression and class oppression. However, the Labourite press did not uniformly connect feminism

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[54] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol 6, Issue 1, 1978, pp 121-122.
[55] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 23 January, 1916, p 1.
[56] Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day*, (Oxford: 2011), p 18. It's important to note gender liberation and class liberation were not always ideological companions.

with class struggle. The *Herald*, for instance, was more likely to advocate women's suffrage and women's equality than *Reynolds's*.

George Lansbury was a major proponent of women's suffrage and considered himself an ally of organisations like the WSPU. For several years, he had attempted to form links between movements for the emancipation of women and labour.[57] His newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, was the most pro-suffrage mainstream publication during the war. The *Herald* criticised the Government's lack of action towards enfranchisement as 'mere sex prejudice'; Lansbury argued that the exclusion of women from politics in Britain was 'mean and suicidal'.[58] Unlike most British newspapers, the *Herald* depicted reimagined women as a unique force for social change in Europe. The *Herald* constructed a narrative where women did not exist only to support men.

> There is no limit to the discoveries that may be made, and announced, about woman. She is still capable of endless interpretations… it might be supposed that a woman's honour exists, and always had existed, as surely as a man's. Also that, like a man's, it is her own to define and defend as she chooses.[59]

Amira Gelblum observes the struggles and opportunities of the First World War obliged European feminists to articulate their definitions of masculinity and femininity when faced with the new division of labour in a society at war.[60] Feminists like Lansbury viewed ending the war and obtaining equal representation of women as the same struggle.

The *Herald* argued women's contributions should be recognised because women were by nature entitled to the same rights and privileges as men. To the *Herald*, women were not mere appendages of the patriarchal state in wartime. Lansbury exalted the reimagined woman as 'her own protector'. The *Herald* claimed, 'These women believe that they are just as capable of protecting themselves as

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[57] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign*, (Harlow: 2007), p 57.
[58] *Daily Herald*, 16 September, 1916, p 11.
[59] *Daily Herald*, 22 September, 1917, p 12.
[60] Amira Gelblum, 'Ideological Crossroads, Feminism, Pacifism, and Socialism', *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman, (New York: 1998), p 310.

men for, apart from the use of violence, they have the same means at their command as men'[61]. In socialist publications—and even advertisements in them like the one below—reimagined women were their own masters in the factory.

A beautiful proletarian woman showing her hair in an advertisement in *Reynolds' Newspaper*.[62]

The reimagined women depicted in *Reynolds* and the *Herald* were more likely to be lauded for their participation in labour and organised agitation than on the battlefield. *Reynolds* described the new generation of female labour rights advocates as proletarians leading the fight against capitalism. They 'demanded the same working conditions and wages, both for men and women'. *Reynolds* added, 'The women [organisers] stick together; they are champions. They show up better than the men at meetings. Our representative had ocular demonstration from more than one woman in uniform'[63].

The *Herald* was dismissive of the idea that women's participation in the workforce and war effort would ruin their femininity. It argued that such concerns were either fallacious or the product of 'sex prejudice'. In its view, criticism of women's work amounted to complaints from Victorian patriarchs and aging romantics: 'The sentimentalist is giving way to the practical idealist everywhere, in the

[61] *Daily Herald*, 26 August, 1916, p 10.
[62] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 25 November, 1917.
[63] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 9 April, 1916, p 10.

face of our common danger—the threatened destruction of civilisation. His last stronghold is the home'[64].

The *Herald* praised women's ability to organise. It incorporated those successes and sacrifices into its anti-war narratives.

> Thousands of women have now been organised, and before long they will be strong enough to demand and get fair treatment for themselves and their children… women now understand that only by the strength that comes from organisation can they compel the council to keep its promise of equal wages for equal work.[65]

Unlike *Reynolds'*, the *Herald* was wholeheartedly opposed to the UK's involvement in the First World War. It condemned the ruling classes of Britain for sending young proletarians to their deaths. It also disliked the idea of praising women for wartime contributions.

> 'By all means let honours be given to women as they are given to men. If they want them, serve them right. But if women are to be 'honoured' for work in war, why not work in peace?[66]

The *Herald* depicted reimagined women as industrial revolutionaries who swept aside old prejudices. Revolutionary women were described as mothers to all mankind; workers struggling to save civilisation from 'capitalist bloodletting'. Unlike all other newspapers discussed in this chapter, the *Herald* did not exalt women on the battlefield. Instead, it constructed narratives that claimed women were vital participants in socialist achievements like the February Revolution. According to the *Herald*, the female revolutionaries of Russia were freedom fighters. Lansbury editorialised, 'Women of Russia fought along with the men for freedom, and the names of women are as glorious in their roll of honour as the names of men'[67].

The *Herald* celebrated the February Revolution more jubilantly than any other newspaper examined in this chapter. To Lansbury, it symbolised the establishment of the first socialist republic, which also

[64] *Daily Herald*, July, 1917.
[65] *Daily Herald*, 14 October, 1916, p 5.
[66] *Daily Herald*, January, 1917.
[67] *Daily Herald*, 17 April, 1917, p 5.

meant the enfranchisement of women. The pronouncements of the Russian revolutionary government for universal suffrage would influence British politics:

> This is splendid and will, I should think, make it impossible for the British Parliament to do other than give votes to all, men and women, soldiers and civilians alike. Whether it may be the immediate result of the present upheaval, it has demonstrated that none of us should lose heart or lose hope.[68]

The *Herald* concluded that female militants who spilt their blood for the revolution enabled all women in Russia to gain enfranchisement. 'The Russian revolutionaries… honour women by placing them upon their councils…'. Unlike right-wing newspaper narratives, which held that reimagined women were earning their enfranchisement by serving the State, the *Herald* emphasised socialist revolutionaries 'are doing common justice to women by giving them the vote'[69].

Although the *Herald* did not recognise patriotic female militants in the service of the UK, it believed they fulfilled the same fundamental role. Although newspapers like *Reynolds'* and the *Herald* endorsed women's liberation, they often ignored women's causes. In the Labourite press, women and their agency were subsumed into the narratives endorsed by these papers.

In the *Herald's* narratives, female militants fought for socialist revolution and peace. They did not serve a 'warmongering State'. Instead, they were depicted as fighting to overthrow autocratic states like Tsarist Russia. However, these women were tied to 'movements'. As in the right-wing narratives, they were portrayed as having little to no agency, instead only serving as symbols to causes and fantasies dominated and directed by men. This was the *Herald's* contribution to gendered hegemony during the First World War.

Regardless of their representation, Labourite narratives on female militants and workers were subservient to ideologies which the popular press promulgated. Although occasionally the topic of concern and scepticism, female militants and workers were objects of veneration. By exalting these

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[68] *Daily Herald*, 24 March, 1917, p 5.
[69] *Daily Herald*, 9 June, 1917, p 12.

women, the popular press created an image that contrasted with undesirable, bad women. The right-wing and left-wing press fought over the identity of reimagined women by narrating their own gendered hegemonies. In the popular press, gendered hegemony was constructed through the publication of patriarchal fantasies. These influenced the identity of women in the popular press after the war, as men and women were demobilised and became crucial to the construction of gendered hegemony, which communicated women's place in a changing society.

Women who did not meet the criteria for veneration were part of a different narrative. Those depicted as immoral, unpatriotic and/or foreign combatants had a very different identity in the British popular press. They were enemy women. After the October Revolution of 1917, this portrayal became increasingly popular.

This new narrative, Bolshevik women or 'Red Women', developed as an inversion of reimagined women. To understand these depictions, narratives of enemy women in the popular press must be explored. The next section covers women classified as 'enemies'; and how fascination, disgust and luridness were used to describe them.

Enemy Women, Gendered Deviance and the Patriarchal Imagination

Depicting women as moral and national enemies was a popular horror story during the First World War. *Reynolds's Newspaper* and the *Daily Herald* normally did not depict women as enemies. Although Lansbury remarked in a *Herald* editorial that he had an 'instinctive aversion to what is often called feminism', the newspaper did not overtly demonise women.[70] The press often discussed enemy women because they symbolised gendered transgression. This was an important aspect of the patriarchal imagination in newspapers.

Enemy women transgressed gender norms. The press depicted enemy women as foreign militants, violent and sexually transgressive women. They claimed such women were a foreign and domestic

[70] *Daily Herald*, 20 October, 1917, p 12.

threat to British society and nationhood. Depictions of the social and sexual threat they represented were a crucial aspect of the gendered hegemony constructed by the popular press. During the First World War, enemy female militants were usually depicted as German. The right-wing popular press described German women as the antithesis of the patriotic British female militant; they were everything reimagined women were not. In these narratives, German women were not mobilised out of love for their country, but hatred of Germany's enemies.

The popular press often depicted these women as savage and debauched. The *Daily Mail* described German women as 'apt pupils in cruelty', who 'tortured British wounded entrusted to their care with brutality wholly unknown to civilised races'. The *Mail* used stories of German woman torturers as a national analogy for the 'German race'. While the right-wing press often described British women as mothers and nurturers of the nation and the 'British race', German women were as savage as German men.

> In truth, [German women] showed themselves in every way fit to be the mothers of Boches, and when we attempted to apportion the responsibility of outrage we must make no distinction of class and sex. All the Boches, young and old, men and women, are involved in a universal charge of wanton cruelty.[71]

The right-wing press constructed sensationalised tales of brutality by German women. In these narratives, the victims were usually British prisoners of war. The *Mail* claimed these women acted 'with a brutality which a few years ago we would have thought incredible in any women with white skins'.

> It was common amusement of these Red Cross women to tempt our men, who were in the last extremity of hunger and thirst, by holding food and drink out to them to try and make them snatch at it, and then drawing it away. Many scores of our men, begging for a drink, had coffee, or water, or soup tendered to them; and then at the last moment the gentle nurse would spit in their cup or glass… the women looked on and laughed.[72]

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[71] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 14 April, 1917, p 4.
[72] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 12 April, 1917, p 2.

The *News of the World* described violence towards British prisoners by German women in more graphic detail.

> On their way into Germany women came to their truck and spat on them, while German soldiers passing in trains fired at them, and threw any missile that came handy… In another case a German 'lady' who pretenced to desire to mother the wounded enemies, under pretence of trimming their finger nails, thrust the point of her scissors in to the quick.[73]

The *Mail* claimed that German women were just predisposed to cruelty in peacetime, and equally barbarous to their own people. It described 'Hun women' as if they too had the capability of outraging Western womanhood like any German man.

Newspapers like the *Mail*, the *Record* and the *News* published lurid tales that highlighted the savage nature of German women. In the right-wing press, their supposed cruelty was proof of their alien-ness to Western culture. In the *Mail*, the foreign militant woman presented the same sexual and racial threat to British women as foreign men. The cruelty of German women made them accomplices to sexual violence and humiliation. The right-wing press claimed German femininity had been corrupted. Like German men, they became 'Huns'. Whilst the *Mail* made the ambiguous claim German women had been 'Prussianised', the *Record* described how German women became 'Huns' in detail.[74]

The *Record* claimed that in the nineteenth century, 'Poets in France and Britain sang the virtues of Gretchen, of the tender, devoted maiden who dreamt of moonlight sonatas, but whose transcendental feelings often emerged in the *Hausfrau* or domestic drudge'. However, 'This maiden… disappeared with 1870-71, and the *Kraftfrau*, or forceful woman took her place'.

The *Kraftfrau* was everything conventional Western femininity was not. She 'professed an adoration for the Kaiser, and show[ed] it in a way which was a glorification of self'. Such women, poisoned by

[73] *News of the World*, 16 September, 1917, p 4.
[74] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 17 July, p 5.

autocracy and *Kultur* 'felt so certain of victory that they clamoured for war'. The *Record* printed the supposed effect this had on German women.

> I saw about a hundred '*Kraftfrauen*'. Dressed in what seemed to me a most hideous bathing costume. They were walking along, doing the goosestep, with a Prussian sergeant at their head… I cannot say I admired those women walking bare-headed, their fair hair bleached an ugly white, owing undoubtedly to many similar excursions… They spent sometimes days in the forest to strengthen their muscles and grow more 'fit'.[75]

The *Record* concluded that peaceable, feminine woman had been destroyed by German militancy.

> It struck me that most [German women] considered as useless luggage all those feminine virtues which had been their crown in the past… there is no doubt that instead of using their influence to safeguard peace they put forth every effort to produce war, and would willingly have played the part of those virgins of old who followed the chariot of the war lord with songs in their mouths.[76]

The press claimed German women had lost their Western identity. Their femininity was subsumed by the alien ideologies of German autocracy. They became 'Huns', *Asiatic*. British feminine militancy, in contrast, created the patriotic reimagined woman. Foreign militancy, however, transformed women into violent savages. The narrative that Western womanhood could be subsumed by the State was revisited by the popular press after the First World War, when it published lurid tales of women in Soviet Russia.

The *News* did not extensively explore the image of militant German women. It instead reported on Irish female militants during the Easter Rising. The *News* described the 'rebel amazon', Constance Markievicz, with fascination. She was 'a striking figure in the rebellion… She appeared in uniform-green tunio [sic] and trousers, and carried a rifle with bayonet'[77].

The *News* described the women who accompanied Irish rebels in more detail.

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[75] *Daily Record*, Thursday, 6 September, 1917, p 2.
[76] *Daily Record*, Thursday, 6 September, 1917, p 2.
[77] *News of the World*, 30 April, 1916, p 7.

> At the side of each man marched a woman in uniform carrying bandoliers with a plentiful supply of cartridges, while bullets whizzed in all directions warning peaceable citizens to retreat…[78]

Foreign women militants were depicted with both fascination and disgust by the British popular press. When describing German and Irish militants, the right-wing press constructed narratives that these women had been transformed. They became something ugly. Alien politics and culture erased their femininity. The loss of their femininity made them violent, brutish and sadistic. This narrative was used to suggest that the presence of aliens in Britain could influence British women to commit similar acts; and that British women could also be transformed.

The *News* was interested in the dangers of British women becoming infatuated with foreign men. Although instances of British women interacting with Germans, Austrians or Turks usually involved violence and humiliation, all foreigners were regarded as a possible threat to British womanhood in the right-wing press. Domestic crimes by British women were often attributed to the influence of foreigners by publications like the *News*.

This involved scenarios like the daughter of a Government official who committed theft because she had 'become infatuated with a Russian who had come over with the Canadian forces'[79]. It also involved more severe crimes, such as a woman arrested 'for neglecting her five little children, all under nine, the youngest being an infant… The consequences of that neglect have been terrible, and these little mites were living like pigs…' The young mother was reported to have been having an affair with a foreign man.[80]

The *News'* most lurid examples of British women interacting with foreigners, however, involved miscegenation and violence. The article, 'Little Brown Baby', described the fate of John-Carlton Lingard, a 'half-caste infant' in horrific detail. 'His body was recovered from the River Mersey, wrapped in a pillow-slip, weighted with a flatiron, with one tiny hand protruding'. The mother, who

[78] *News of the World*, 30 April, 1916, p 7.
[79] *News of the World*, 28 January, 1917, p 3.
[80] *News of the World*, 4 June, 1916, p 3.

had an affair with a foreign dock worker, was reported to have asked, 'Is the baby black? If so, kill it; I don't want it to be black like its father'[81]. The press frequently claimed that when British women were exposed to foreign men, they were capable of abhorrent acts. The *News* reported these acts in the most visceral detail permitted. British women, especially 'low-born' and of 'bad character' were also commonly depicted as violent. Thus, women and their behaviour were under constant scrutiny from the popular press; their improprieties were valuable stories in newspapers.

Lucy Bland observes that during the First World War, British women were subjected to surveillance on a previously unprecedented scale by the media. Bland argues that this was meant to identify women exhibiting attributes seen as diametrically opposed to the new, refashioned ideal of English womanhood. Patriotic moral deployment of the former suffragette was heralded as a crucial aspect of female citizenship of the future.[82] Women who did not meet these criteria generated horror stories in the right-wing press. Violent depictions of destructively unfeminine behaviour ranged from drunkenness to prostitution. All these acts were depicted as a form of violence.

Drunkenness among women was portrayed as a prelude to violence and public disorder. Michael Mason has written extensively on the connection between drinking and assumed working-class sexual immorality in the Victorian period.[83] Moral codes from the Victorian period influenced the image of working-class women. Right-wing newspapers often reported on the moral problems of drinking and violence among working-class women during the First World War. The *News* wrote of women servants who, after drinking, threatened their employers with knives, revolvers and explosives.[84] The right-wing press claimed that after drinking, women entered 'brawls and scraps'.[85]

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[81] *News of the World*, 16 February, 1916.
[82] Lucy Bland, *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper*, (Manchester & New York: 2013), p 17.
[83] Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, (Oxford: 1995), p 157.
[84] *News of the World*, 2 January, 1916.
[85] *News of the World*, 13 February, 1916, p 1.

The *Liverpool Echo* reported that drunken, violent women used weapons such as knuckle-dusters, shovels and the front forks of bicycles against one another.[86] These reports were almost always about working-class women, depicted as prone to vice and 'low behaviour' by the right-wing press. Such narratives mused that it was in the lower classes' nature to behave badly. Peter Gurney observes how depictions of immoral working-class women concealed the sexual insecurities and fears of middle-class men.[87] These depictions of 'low-born' women were fantasies which the popular press sold to male, middle-class audiences: who were stimulated reading outrageous tales of badly behaved women. Such attributes were not assigned to middle-class women in the popular press; though the right-wing press sometimes claimed that all women could be hysterical and dangerous. Worse still, they could be dangerous pacifists, and were depicted as traitors who damaged the entire nation during the war.

Whilst the *News* reported lurid tales of hysterical middle-class women slitting their own throats, the *Mail* perpetuated anxieties that women's fragile mental states made them susceptible to the appeal of pacifism, something the newspaper viewed as far more perilous than violent crime.[88]

> Pacifist speakers are now trying to organise a movement in favour of a German peace by playing to the fears of working women in villages and small towns. 'The thoughts of their sons' and their husbands' sufferings seem to haunt these women: their minds are tortured by thoughts of terrible cruelties and tragedies.[89]

The right-wing popular press usually depicted women as an asset to the nation-state. However, they were also portrayed as quarrelsome, unstable and suddenly violent. This was an inversion of a popular narrative that existed before the First World War. Prior to it, most anti-suffrage arguments were based on assumptions about sexual differences, linked to the idea of separate spheres. For instance, Violet Markham, a prominent member of the Women's National Anti-Suffragette League,

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[86] *Liverpool Echo*, Wednesday, 16 August, 1916, p 4; Wednesday, 30 August, 1916, p 6.
[87] Peter Gurney, '"Intersex" and "Dirty Girls": Mass Observation and Working Class Sexuality in the 1930s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol VIII, No 2, (October: 1997).
[88] *News of the World*, 23 April, 1916, p 4.
[89] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 14 December, 1917, p 5.

insisted women's nature had spiritual qualities which men lacked. She and those sympathetic to her feared women would lose their special qualities and sink to men's levels if they entered political life on equal terms with men. They feared that participation in decisions which entailed the use of physical force would corrupt women's spiritual nature and erode the differences between men and women.[90]

Although the popular press always expressed anxieties on sexual differences evaporating, after the war began, the right-wing press frequently depicted women as instigators of conflict rather than spiritual and demure. Instead of warning of women's corruption by male politics, it was argued that women's nature could threaten rationality in Parliament.

An editorial in the *Mirror*, for example, claimed women were quarrelsome by nature. It reasoned that this 'nature' should exclude women from holding political office. It argued, 'whatever political influence they may exercise in other ways: women quarrel so much among themselves. A Parliament of women would be a Parliament of free fights. Nothing would be done. Personalities would obscure politics till nothing else was left'[91].

The common theme of these narratives was that women's influence in the public sphere would be chaotic and disruptive. The idea of feminine disruption was tied to women's sexuality. The most unsubtle narratives were those covering prostitutes, depicted as the greatest female threat to the nation and society in all right-wing newspapers. This was connected to the perceived danger of female sexuality in British culture.

Susan Grayzel claims that female sexuality was viewed as a threat to conservative culture during the First World War.[92] The right-wing press had a special hatred for prostitutes. Although flappers were depicted as selfish and irresponsible, newspapers claimed that prostitutes preyed upon innocent

[90] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign*, (Harlow: 2007), p 29.
[91] *Daily Mirror*, Monday, 20 August 1917, p 8.
[92] Susan Grayzel, 'The Enemy Within: The Problem with Women's Sexuality During the First World War', *Women and War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, (London & New York: 1999), pp 74-75.

men with their sexuality and spread disease. In these narratives, in other words, men were portrayed as victims of the worst kind of women.

Kent observes that the right-wing press depicted male soldiers as victims of 'low-born' female sexuality. The behaviour of women near soldiers was declared a 'national shame'.[93] Many right-wing publications argued that the vile nature of prostitutes and their destructive acts against young men and soldiers justified the passage of the Defence of the Realm Act. The legislation made it possible for women of 'bad character' to be detained indefinitely. It also made infecting a soldier with a venereal disease a crime against the State. The *News*, however, was sceptical that DORA would stop prostitution. It reasoned that prostitutes were too devious to be deterred by the laws of men.

> Every experienced harlot will take care to worm out of [her male client's] name and address, and then, in co-operation with some bully, will proceed to blackmail her former customer, who will, in most cases allow his purse and his heartstrings to be wrung rather than have the chance of scandal.[94]

Prostitutes served as both a sexual and existential threat in these narratives. Bland argues that venereal disease acted as a metaphor for readers, condensing the anxieties of the period. During the war, there was widespread concern about national efficiency, as well as the physical and mental 'deterioration' or 'degeneracy' of civilians and troops. Venereal disease was considered an important factor in this 'deterioration'. Rates of infection were also read as an index of the nation's sexual morality. Venereal disease represented a lurking, undefined threat to stability, the family, the British race and the Empire. Venereal diseases have long been labelled 'moral' diseases because they were thought to be caught through prostitution and 'promiscuous' sex. [95] Thus, prostitutes were depicted as a medical, social and moral threat to the nation. Their very sexuality was regarded as toxic to the public.

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[93] *Common Cause*, 27 November, 1916; Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918', *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, ed. Frans Coetzee & Marilyn Shevin-Cotzee, (Oxford: 1995), pp 159-160.
[94] *News of the World*, 25 February, 1917, p 4.
[95] Lucy Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life: The Venereal Disease Campaign in the Early 20th Century', *Crises in the British State*, ed. Langan & Schwarz, (London: 1985), pp 192, 194.

In the right-wing press, prostitutes broke all gendered and sexual conventions expected of women by conservative society and threatened the moral character of society. They were considered as just as dangerous as the Central Powers:[96] depicted as uncouth, cruel and as barbaric as any foreign militant. Women, especially working-class women, were viewed as immoral, violent and susceptible to alien influence. The right-wing popular press depicted these 'low-born' women in misogynistic narratives. Hatred and violence towards 'low women' was sometimes justified by the press. Those kinds of narratives were common among right-wing thinkers as the First World War ended.

Klaus Theweliet argues that in right-wing, proto-fascist thought, working-class women were associated with prostitutes. The 'whore', with her 'easy, matter of fact manner' does not recognise soldiers or national struggles in wartime. She is the manifestation of women as aggressors. To the right-wing reactionary, women's liberation was an act of violence because it was tied to the image of erotic women: who existed in the far-right imagination as 'castrating whores'. They emasculated and degraded men. Thus, a revolution of women, especially of working-class women, was synonymous with national debasement. If the image of women was synonymous with the nation, a revolution of working-class women transformed the nation. It turned the mother of the race into a prostitute.[97] Anxieties over how women could degrade the nation and masculinity resulted in misogynistic, reactionary narratives in the right-wing press. And misogyny could be applied to most if not all women by the press.

Misogyny and fears of revolution manifested themselves in multiple ways in the right-wing press. Whilst newspapers such as the *Mail* and *Mirror* alluded to the idea that women were not trustworthy in politics, the *Liverpool Echo* suggested women were not trustworthy at all. It claimed, 'You can argue with clever women but you can't kiss them or flirt with them. All the clever ones…

[96] Lucy Bland, 'In the Name of Protection: The Policing of Women in the First World War', *Women in Law: Explorations in Law, Family and Sexuality*, ed. Carol Smart & Julia Brophy, (London: 1924), pp 47, 32.
[97] Klaus Theweliet, *Male Fantasies Volume I*, pp 65, 390.

have had something hard in them – like a lump of steel. Men aren't like that. They can be hard, of course, but they aren't always exhibiting their hardness. Clever women are'[98].

When the *Echo* described 'clever women', it referred to those who wished to leave the home and shape what Jurgen Habermas called the 'public sphere'.[99] The British public sphere, however, was dominated by men. The right-wing press characterised women who wished to reshape it as radical suffragettes, pacifists and anarchists; and those who broke social conventions as a threat to political and social stability. Violence towards women who threatened the nation with politics and/or sexuality was justified. This often presented itself through what the *News*, the *Times* and the *Echo* referred to as the 'unwritten law'.

The 'unwritten law' originally refers to the case of George William, a soldier who stabbed his wife multiple times for being unfaithful. The *News* reported the case in the most detail.

> 'Unwritten Law' was successfully pleaded in the case of George William, 21, a soldier who was charged at Nottingham with stabbing his wife… She admitted having committed misconduct with a man at Lincoln, for which her husband forgave her… The magistrate thought… he would be more useful in the Army than in prison, and adjourned the case indefinitely.[100]

When women became 'whores' and wronged soldiers, they disgraced the nation. Violence towards women who disgraced the nation was acceptable in the right-wing popular press. The *News* luridly reported other instances of violence against women who were unfaithful to soldiers.

> Prisoner [a Scottish soldier] said he fell in love with his wife in Aberdeen… 'but while was away she was flirting with four different men… She admitted she had taken off her wedding ring to flirt… he said that in a feeling of jealously he took out his razor as he was kissing her and drew it across her neck.[101]

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[98] *Liverpool Echo*, Friday, 21 September, 1917, p 4.
[99] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. T. Burger, (Cambridge: 1989); Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1979*, (Oxford: 2009).
[100] *News of the World*, 28 October, 1917, p 4.
[101] *News of the World*, 4 November, 1917, p 1.

Women's sexuality and politics were eyed with suspicion in the right-wing press. Both were considered a possible threat. These threats were exacerbated further by narratives on political women. Women regarded as politically radical were viewed as another enemy of the nation.

The right-wing press depicted radical women such as pre-war suffragettes as the embodiment of female violence and volatility. Prior to the First World War, members of the WSPU slashed pictures in the National Gallery and set fires in cricket pavilions, race course grandstands, resort hotels and churches. They interrupted services in St. Paul's and Westminster, forced petitions on the King at Court and engaged in struggles with police, being arrested and imprisoned. They endured starvation, invited humiliation and brutality, and were force fed when on hunger strike in prison. In 1913, when Emily Davidson threw herself under a horse in the Derby, suffragettes proved they were as willing to die for their cause as female militants.[102] In the right-wing press, suffragettes were considered a threat to political stability, gender norms and the family. To feminist agitators, their actions were powerful, effective means of challenging patriarchal power structures in Britain.

Groups such as WSPU justified their disruptive tactics by arguing that nineteenth century men's political movements had gained the vote through militant methods. As Harold Smith observes, women interrupting men's political meetings was not merely a means of pressuring politicians to grant women's suffrage, but also a conscious challenge to male authority. And as Jon Lawrence elucidates, these suffragettes wanted to undermine gendered boundaries by adopting confrontational male politics and revealing the 'brutality and misogyny' central to the existing male political system.[103] That purposeful blurring of gendered boundaries provided fodder for anti-suffragists.

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[102] Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914*, (New York: 1966), pp 381-382.

[103] Jon Lawrence, 'Contesting the Male Polity: The Suffragettes and the Politics of Disruption in Edwardian Britain', ed. Amanda Vickery, *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, (Stanford: 2002); Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign*, (Harlow: 2007) p 38.

As Harrison observes, anti-suffragists in Britain sometimes saw female militancy as a reflection of the supposed instability of the female temperament. In June 1914, Lord Curzon, arguably the most famous British anti-suffragist, claimed suffragettes 'have rendered us the service of showing how easily disturbed the mental balance of some women, at any rate, can be'[104]. Anti-suffrage MPs told Parliament that enfranchised women would disrupt political life by behaving in a like manner: 'They will act in precisely the same manner to obtain any political object', Arnold Ward declared in 1910, 'whether it be the diminution of public houses, or Free Trade, or Protection'; suffragettes were proposing 'to incorporate that hysterical activity permanently in the life of the nation'[105]. This meant that any woman, under the right circumstances, was an irrational human being and a possible threat to national stability and social norms. Moreover, political upheavals abroad exacerbated anxieties over political women in Britain and what they might do.

The February Revolution and the instability that followed made that threat even more apparent. The *Mail* warned of 'English anarchist women – thin-lipped, red-eyed shriekers of revolt who appeared to welcome Russian freedom rather as a step towards stopping the war than as a help to winning it'[106]. This can be observed in the allegory depicted in the cartoon below, where a demure, Greco-Roman woman representing 'civilisation' is contrasted by a loin-clothed woman carrying a club representing anarchism. The right-wing press often voiced concerns over which of these two women would dominate the female vote. The *Mirror* warned that the 'enfranchisement of women is almost certain to lead ultimately to an electorate in which women will predominate'[107]. The Northcliffe press claimed that if women rose to a dominant position in British politics, radicals would control the nation.

The *Mail* claimed that these radical women indulged in 'wild fantasies of international socialism'. It warned that in Russia, 'the revolution began with the demand of people for bread, which was also

[104] Curzon, in *Anti-Suffrage Review*, July 1914, p 108; cf. *H.L. Deb*, 5 May 1914, c. 28.
[105] Brian Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain*, (Oxford: 1982), pp 28-29; War, *H.C. Deb*., 12 July 1910, cc 266-267; Harcourt, *H.C. Deb*., 24 January 1913, c. 896.
[106] *Daily Mail*, Monday 2 April, 1917, p 3.
[107] *Daily Mirror*, Friday, 22 June, 1917, p 5.

the cry of the women who marched in Versailles in 1789'[108]. When radical women called for revolution, violence and atrocities followed. Like depictions of violent suffragettes, these radical women were described engaging in 'prodigious feats in window smashing' and the destruction of property.[109] When fears of women, especially working-class women, obtaining suffrage materialised, the right-wing press paeaned for a time when insolent women could be supressed with violence. This could be observed in reactions to and the treatment of women in the pre-war Suffragette Movement.

'The Decisive Moment': Russia, a male, must choose between the dignified female spirit of 'patriotism' and the savage, naked female spirit of 'anarchism'.[110]

Militant acts conducted by women aroused intense male hostility which frequently led to violence at public meetings. Suffragettes who interrupted political meetings were often pummelled by men in the audience and handled roughly by stewards. In some instances, especially outside London, suffragette meetings were disrupted by bands of young males, often with the police refusing to intervene.[111] Barbara Tuchman claimed the Suffragette Movement fostered an atmosphere of sexual

[108] *Daily Mail,* Monday, 1 October, 1917, p 4.
[109] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 30 July, 1917, p 5.
[110] *News of the World*, 29 July, 1917, p 1.
[111] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign*, (Harlow: 2007), p 40.

hatred in British culture. Suffragettes, who broke gender conventions, were subject to gendered violence, both in the press and the real world. These acts of violence towards radical women were a means of 'unsexing' them. Women who engaged in violent, immoral or radical acts were depicted as having forsaken their womanhood. As they were no longer 'women', violence towards them was acceptable. This was the 'unwritten rule'. Narratives of revolts by radical women in 1917 may have incited fearful patriarchal fantasies of barbaric, unsexed women threatening the fabric of society and the nation. Tuchman believed these narratives allowed otherwise law-abiding men to react violently towards women.[112] Confronted with the horror of political and sexual upheaval, the right-wing popular press fantasised about violence towards enemy women in 1917.

The *News* went so far as to claim, 'There was a time—some call that time the good old days—when law and custom regarded this matter differently, when a man might take his wife by the hair, drag her down, and dance with his hob-nailed boots on her head until he had reduced her to subjection'[113].

Mass violence against enemy women did not occur in Britain during the First World War or its aftermath, however. Misogyny remained a fantasy in the right-ring popular press. But it was a powerful narrative and became even more so after the war. The press also used misogynistic narratives to describe radical women in Britain and Russia during the inter-war period.

Britain was spared many of the strains and hardships experienced by continental Europe during the post-war period. Unlike Theweleit's accounts of Freikorps soldiers describing enemy women 'shaking their fists' and 'shrieking at us', there was no armed revolution for the British right to suppress within its borders.[114] Thus a desire for violence against enemy women did not materialise in Britain with the same intensity as it did in places like Germany, Austria and Hungary.

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[112] Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914*, (New York: 1966), p 382.
[113] *News of the World*, 23 September, 1917, p 4.
[114] Rudolf Mann, *Mit Ehrhardt durch Deutschland*, pp 20, 22; Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Vol I*, p 65.

Instead, portrayals of radical, violent and immoral women often focused on places abroad. In 1918, there was a transition of antagonisms in the British popular press. The savage cruelty and militarism of German women, the violent radicalism of suffragettes and anarchists, and the sexual transgression of prostitutes converged; all used to create narratives on Red Women. Like 'female Huns' and '*Kraftfrauen*', Red Women were eager to victimise and degrade Western womanhood.

As a foreign and 'low-born' force, Red Women threatened conservative British ideas of womanhood, morality and nationhood. They represented everyone a woman should not be and used for purposes of a gendered hegemonic function. The next section explores how horror and luridness were utilised in the popular press to depict the victimisation of women. Like enemy women, the portrayal of women as victims of Bolshevism cannot be fully explained without understanding narratives of women victimised during the First World War.

Victimised Women

Women were often portrayed as victims in the British popular press prior to the First World War; but during it, it occurred much more frequently. New means of mass production and a concentrated newspaper market made images of victimised women far more pervasive in the 1910s than at any time before the war. Both the right-wing and left-wing press used luridness and horror to create narratives of victimised women. How newspapers depicted this differed, however. Newspapers with different ideologies used different concepts of gendered horror.

This section provides an exploration of how women were depicted as victims in the right-wing and left-wing press. These lurid tales were later used as narratives about women victimised by Bolshevism: constructing an image of what radical change meant for society, so forming another element of gendered hegemony.

Victimised Women, Xenophobia and National Allegories

During the First World War, the press used fascination, disgust and horror to narrate stories of victimised women at the mercy of the Central Powers and entice readers. Press historian Mark Hampton considers that the popular press reflects the views and desires of its readership; that although it used propaganda to sway sentiments, sensationalism merely conveyed the opinions, wants and needs of its readers.[115] Reading about women in a sexualised manner was acceptable when narratives included elements of fascination and disgust. This enticed readers attracted to sex, violence and politics, and mirrored their fears and uncertainties about a world facing violent social and political changes. In this context, war, gender and politics could not be separated. In the patriarchal fantasies constructed by the press, women were critical components of the nationalism and the masculinity that accompanied it. German atrocity stories in the popular press relied heavily on depictions of women as national allegories.

Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias deduce that there are five common depictions of women as nationalist allegories: 1) Biological producers of members of an ethnicity, such as the 'British race'. 2) Reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic and national groups. Women do this by enacting 'proper', feminine behaviour. 'Low-born' women and women of 'bad character' are excluded and demonised. 3) Responsible for the ideological reproduction of ethnicity and nationality. In Britain, this stressed the importance of women and the home. 4) Signifiers of ethnic and national differences. Women 'rear the race' unless miscegenation disrupts that process. 5) Participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.[116] When women are abused and debased by foreign invaders, depictions of women as national allegories are disrupted. When women are harmed by foreigners, the nation is harmed.

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[115] Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, (Urbana: 2004), p 9.
[116] Floya Anthias & Nira Yuval-Davis, *Women, Nation, State*, (London: 1989), pp 7-8.

Moreover, within the wartime vocabulary of gender definitions, men are frequently portrayed as those who protect, and women as those who required protection.[117] Thus, when women are victimised, masculinity is damaged. When this occurs on a national level, men are depicted as experiencing mass humiliation; the national and cultural idea of masculinity is damaged. This can also apply to depictions of the nation's allies. This usually serves as a warning to citizens of what could happen to *their* women if the enemy were to be successful.

The victims in the popular press were usually British, Belgian and French women. White slavery was a common theme. The Oxford English Dictionary describes the white slave as a 'white person' marked by gender as well as race: she is usually depicted as a girl or young woman. Her enforced prostitution, moreover, is enacted 'abroad'. To be a white slave, according to this definition, is to be an English girl forced into sexual servitude to (it is implicit) 'foreign' men.[118] Cecily Devereux elucidates that the 'white person… who is, or is treated like a slave' is occluded here by the term's specific—and, in the late twentieth-century, much more familiar—signification, which defines it in relation to prostitution.[119] As Bland observes, only in the 1880s did white slavery come to 'connote abduction of girls and women by deception or force to brothels, including brothels abroad'[120].

Mariana Valverde has suggested the concept of white slavery as a 'construct [which] act[ed] as a condenser of anxieties about shifting race, sex, and gender relations' in Britain.[121] More specifically, the narrative depicted the possible end of imperial motherhood, where the reproducers of the nation were pilfered and despoiled by foreign influences. Devereux claims the function of the white slave narrative served as a repository for Victorian and Edwardian imperial anxiety about population

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[117] Nicolleta Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War,* (Basingstoke: 2002), p 43.
[118] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Ed, Prep. J.A. Simpson & E.S.C Weiner. 20 vols, (Oxford: 1989).
[119] Cecily Devereux, '"The Maiden Tribute" and the Rise of the White Slave in the Nineteenth Century: The Making of an Imperial Construct', *Victorian Review*, Vol 26, No 2, (2000), p 4.
[120] Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Sexuality and the Early Feminists*, (New York: 1995), p 297; Cecily Devereux, '"The Maiden Tribute" and the Rise of the White Slave in the Nineteenth Century, *Victorian Review*, Vol 26, No 2, (2000), p 4.
[121] Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: 1991), p 95.

and power. As Velverde explains, it articulates 'why white slavery, which was never proven to exist on a large scale, was so successfully invented' across competing national and imperial boundaries.[122] The narrative of white slavery was invented because it gave shape to fears about the future of 'the race' in the context of rapid expansion, and provided a rationale for the protection of white women as 'mothers of the race'[123]. In the First World War, reportage on captive women at the mercy of the enemy were incorporated into the white slavery narrative.

Following the German invasion of Belgium on August 4, 1914, the British press gained access to an almost limitless supply of material alleging brutality of the most sadistic kind. The right-wing press printed hundreds of articles on German raids in France and Belgium. These narratives described the deplorable nature of German occupation, often depicting it through a sexualised lens.

As Gullace argues, addressing such issues as the invasion of Belgium, the sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania*, and the execution of nurse Edith Cavell, British propaganda created a highly sexualised image of German monstrosity and used it to market an evocative, sentimental, deeply gendered vision of the conflict to an international and domestic public. After suffering a humiliating propaganda defeat during the Second Boer War, via Emily Hobhouse's revelations regarding the treatment of Boer women in British concentration camps, the British authorities were prepared to take the moral offensive during the First World War. In doing so, they reinvigorated an older trope dating back to the Sepoy Uprising of 1857, when the British press represented imperial insurrection in terrifyingly sexual terms; and when abused women and children became the evocative symbols of a lawless, and treacherous enemy.[124] The British popular press was one of the primary mediums for reporting sexual horror stories as wartime propaganda.

Numerous papers provided detailed accounts of sadism towards women by the Central Powers. The *Fife Free Press* gave an example of the ordeal which women faced when captured by the Germans.

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[122] Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, p 79.
[123] Devereux, '"The Maiden Tribute" and the Rise of the White Slave in the Nineteenth Century, *Victorian Review*, Vol 26, No 2, (2000), p 18.
[124] Nicoletta Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons',* pp 19-20.

> In the Place St Micael three women were bound to posts and whipped till they fell from exhaustion and pain, their children being forced to witness the scene… Ten women were so severely beaten that six died of their wounds and the others are maimed for life.[125]

The *Free Press* suggested that German aggression was in fact war on civilised womanhood, citing that in occupied Belgium, 'The treatment of women is even worse than that of men. The Germans affect an exterior politeness, but treat women mercilessly if they stand in their way'[126].

The *Mail* claimed: 'The Germans are removing the French, particularly women. Only women without children and young girls are now selected. They are taken to stations by soldiers and then conveyed to destinations which are not disclosed to the parents they leave behind'[127]. The *Mirror* described the fate of these women in more detail.

> Innocent young girls and coarse women cheek by jowl they go, surrounded by soldiers, with the band playing before them to the station, whence at evening they depart without knowing whither or for what labour they are destined… The concentration camps really look like slave markets.[128]

Reportage on rape was often worded euphemistically in the British press. As Simon Szreter has examined, most of the British press adhered to the Victorian code of 'euphemism, silence, ignorance and confusion on matters of sex and sexuality' until the 1960s.[129] Women were more likely to be described as 'outraged' or 'dishonoured' rather than 'raped' in the popular press. The right-wing press often used allusions to describe atrocities against women. When the *News* published stories on Ottoman atrocities in the Middle East, they described 'an orphanage… given up to the Turks, who turned it over to men. Its occupants were girls and young women. The condition of those not yet dead is worse than death itself'[130].

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[125] *Fife Free Press*, 6 May, 1916, p 3.
[126] *Fife Free Press*, 21 July, 1917.
[127] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 17 October, 1917, p 4.
[128] *Daily Mirror*, Friday, 18 August, 1916, p 2.
[129] Simon Szreter, 'Victorian Britain, 1837–1963: Towards a Social History of Sexuality', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol I, Issue 1 (Spring 1996), pp 142, 144.
[130] *News of the World*, 9 January, 1916, p 15.

Reynolds' Newspaper also reported on the condition of female prisoners in Belgium. It printed stories about women being 'brutally treated' and 'subjected to vile indignities at the hands of the Huns'[131]. Like its right-wing counterparts, this was a euphemism for sexual abuse.

Newspapers made it clear that women, when left at the mercy of the enemy, were subjected to numerous forms of degradation. Fates 'worse than death' alluded not only to rape but also madness and the supposed corruption of femininity. This was often described as the forced fraternisation between women of good standing and those who were low-born, foreign criminals. The *Mail* described this mistreatment of 'decent' women via contact with 'evil women' as an aspect of white slavery.

> With many other girls and young women she was taken away from her people and set to various forms of slave work under soldier taskmasters… the cruellest thing of all was that the Germans forcibly exposed us to a life in such surroundings and among so promiscuous a company of soldiers and evil women.[132]

The right-wing press claimed the forced fraternisation of decent and 'low-born' women was another element of mistreatment by the Germans; moral, 'high-born' women risked being corrupted by their immoral 'low-born' counterparts. Theweleit argues that men constructed a specific image of a high-born woman, a 'white countess'. They worshipped this female image as asexual. Meanwhile men persecuted the sexuality of 'low-born' women—proletarians, foreigners, Jews, etc. by depicting them as prostitutes. Adoration and exploitation are connected in patriarchal narratives about women.[133]

Like the right-wing press, the *Free Press* also published narratives of decent women forced to live with 'low-born' women. 'French and Belgian women were compelled to live in huts with Russian and Polish prostitutes. One of the latter has been appointed supervisor of the women's camps'[134]. The

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[131] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 8 April, 1917, p 3.
[132] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 7 September, 1917, p 4.
[133] Klaus Theweliet, *Male Fantasies Volume* I, p 367.
[134] *Fife Free Press*, 21 July, 1917.

Free Press used the same lurid narrative of white slavery. It went even further than its right-wing counterparts, claiming that innocent white women were at the mercy of prostitutes.

Although the treatment of 'low-born' women wasn't depicted as a horrendous crime by the right-wing popular press, treating decent women as if they were 'low-born' enabled their transition into white slavery. The *News* described this process in the most detail. It claimed such treatment drove decent women to madness.

> Unmarried girls of well-to-do families and girls of low moral character are taken off together haphazard, so that all may be reduced to the same level of treatment… Up to the present the girls who were seized have not all returned. Those only have been sent back who have fallen ill, have become enceinte [pregnant], or are suffering from nervous diseases. Several have become insane.[135]

The *News*, which focused on creating lurid tales, printed vivid narratives of Germans as agents of sexual slavery.

> In village after village… Germans surpassed themselves in savagery. When the Germans left Noyon they took with them 50 young French girls who, they say, were to act as officer's servants. [A French soldier] saw with his own eyes photographs taken from German prisoners of German officers sitting at dinner and being waited upon at a table by naked women.[136]

These stories included sexualised violence against women by foreign men. Sexualised violence was printed in graphic detail. One such example was the *News'* description of life in an Austro-Hungarian internment camp near the Isonzo Front.

> Cleansing [of latrines] had to be done by the ladies… Any who refused were stripped naked and flogged before the whole of the guards… women were obliged to march naked to the baths and wait, often in the snow, until their turn came. [They] were subject to all kinds of outrages, and while bathing were obliged to pose before the cameras of officers who came from Gratz to visit the camp.[137]

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[135] *News of the World*, 21 January, 1917, p 3.
[136] *News of the World*, 25 March, 1917, p 5.
[137] *News of the World*, 2 July, 1916, p 7.

Ann Stoler suggests that concern over the protection of white women intensified among European imperial entities during real and perceived crises of control: provoked by threats to the cohesion of the European communities or by infringements on their borders. Apart from national allegories, rape charges were based on perceived transgressions of political and social space.[138] The Central Powers were depicted as intruders who threatened to violate women and the national home in newspapers, stimulating anxieties among their readers.

The Germans, Austrians and Turks were depicted as marauding, sadistic and lascivious in the British press. Their lurid acts, however, went beyond threats towards French, Belgian and Italian women. These stories reinforced a narrative that foreign armies threatened to sexually degrade and humiliate British women. The popular press sold this sensationalised gendered horror story to the British public, drawing out its fascination and disgust. This was a major part of their appeal.

The greatest appeal of visual histories, according to Melman, is their sensationalism. She defines sensationalism as an attraction or appeal of the senses, particularly related to viewing and spectatorship. The term 'sensationalism' connotes 'excited feelings, exciting experience, or a strong emotion'. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, sensationalism and 'sensation' entail a 'strong impression produced in an audience or body of spectators and manifested by their demeanour'[139]. Melman argues that 'horror' is the strongest, most exciting of these sensations. This is often intensified when women and women's bodies are subjected to horror, especially in war.

Harold Laswell claims that stress can always be laid upon the wounding of women, children, old people, priests and nuns; and sexual enormities committed by the enemy in wartime. These stories yield a crop of indignation against fiendish perpetrators of dark deeds. Moreover, they satisfy certain powerful hidden impulses in the reader. Young women, ravished by the enemy, yield secret satisfaction to a host of vicarious ravishers on the other side of the border. Hence the popularity and

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[138] Ann L. Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures', *American Ethnologist*, Vol 16 No 4, (November: 1989), p 641.

[139] Art. Sensation, in: Oxford English Dictionary http ://www.oxforddictionaries.com/page/askoxfordredirect or http://dictionary.oed.eom/cgi/entry_main/50219835@query_ type=words8tquerywords=s.

ubiquity of such stories'[140]. The British popular press was a conduit for this kind of wartime propaganda during the war, such as in the cartoon below, which depicts Germany as a savage beast strangling a civilised woman. Newspapers circulated these narratives for political and commercial reasons.

The bestial German violating British womanhood as the United States and Japan watch in horror. Entitled 'Where Germany to Win', it quotes David Lloyd George, warning if that should happen: 'We should see a Germany of triumphant warrior seeking where they could devour, seeking out for fresh spheres—or shall I say—fresh hemispheres to conquer.'[141]

The popular press had political agendas and sold sensationalised propaganda. However, these newspapers also provided what British readers had historically consumed. Reading lurid acts was to voyeuristically witness them.[142] Historically, these popular visual experiences of horror paid special attention to women both as viewers and victims of torture.[143] Lurid tales were a lucrative means of selling propaganda to the masses. Susan Grayzel suggests that atrocity literature provided readers

[140] Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, (New York: 1927), p 82; Nicoletta Gullace, 'War Crimes or Atrocity Stories? Anglo-American Narratives of Truth and Deception in the Aftermath of World War I', *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zone: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth D. Heineman, (Philadelphia: 2011), p 113.
[141] *News of the World*, 30 January, 1916, p 1.
[142] Melman, 'Horror and Pleasure', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Vol 37, Issue 1.
[143] For example, see *Illustrated London News*, 30 December, 1851.

with innocent female victims with whom they could empathise, especially as they illustrated that the rape of women had broader consequences for their families and their nations.[144] However, when sexually violent narratives victimised foreign women, British audiences were also able to read lurid tales with greater excitement and less concern. Melding the discourse of pornography with the language of horror, tales of rape and mutilation both eroticised the war and, in the name of news, legitimated a discourse that on all accounts was 'unspeakable'[145]. These sensationalist narratives were even more disturbing when they involved British women, because this connected them with the nation.

The right-wing press depicted women as a representation of the nation itself. Women were the guardians of the home and reproducers of the national race. Feminised allegories of Liberty, Victory and Justice all claimed to connect these attributes to the righteousness of the nation's cause.[146] In these narratives, when women were abused and debased by invaders, the entire nation and values of Western civilisation were abused and debased.

The *Mail* remarked, 'One has always thought of France as a woman, but in these last two winters the image has inevitably become more definite. France is the woman of the house: at her fireside, in her farmyard, with ceaseless activity filling in her time while she waits'[147]. Likewise, in the advertisement below, a female avatar of Great Britain is shown: a domestic, maternal force that cleanses foreign impurities (such as the Germans) from the home with her domestic duties; in this case, the laundry. In both instances, female bodies were depicted as national, domestic objects.

[144] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, (London & New York), p 19.
[145] Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons'*, p 27.
[146] Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p 12.
[147] *Daily Mail*, 14 May, 1917, p 4.

Advertisement: Britannia 'purifying' the home of male German influence.[148]

When the *News* luridly described a father finding his daughter 'lying near the house with her brains protruding through her skull… having been struck by a piece of shrapnel' after a German air raid over south-east England, her body was depicted as a national object. In the right-wing press, the most vulnerable aspect of the nation was women and the home. The latter was the realm of domestic femininity. Women and the home were portrayed as grievously harmed by the Germans; British men failing to protect them.[149] This allegory elicited horror. When women were tainted by violent, sexual crimes, the home and the nation was tainted. The right-wing popular press used this narrative to incite horror. The fate of British women and British identity were connected.

As the war progressed, the press used narratives that directly addressed fears of foreign invasion. This excited anxieties over foreignness and sexuality in Britain. Many of these themes were linked to the idea of British womanhood being violated and destroyed. The *Mirror* described what German occupation would mean for women and British identity.

[148] *News of the World*, 26 March, 1916, p 8.
[149] *News of the World*, 27 May, 1917, p 1.

> German feminine influence... Above and around her she sees only the spirit of force… Naturally, this crushing of freedom produces in the women a feline malice which encourages all the bad qualities which tradition has ascribed to Eve.[150]

The *Mirror* added that gender norms in Germany were responsible for German aggression during the First World War:

> [German] depreciation of women has been in no small way responsible for the savagery, the frightfulness, the inhumanity displaced by Germany in the war, whether in her treatment of prisoners, or piracy on the seas, or infamous onslaughts on neutral nations.[151]

The press claimed that the aggression of the Central Powers—Germany especially—was a war on both democracy and women. Britain stood against Germany as the guardian of Western womanhood. The *Mail* reported on the deaths of British women from German zeppelin raids as though they were sacred objects destroyed by Germany's black crusade.

> At a mission room the sister of a well-known divine was conducting a service attended by 200 women and girls. An explosive dropped… Fragments went through the window, struck the lady missioner on the head, and killed her instantly while she was speaking and reading from the Bible.[152]

The *Mail* luridly added that, 'three persons were killed and a young married woman was buried in debris… she was released, with limbs badly crushed. The baby she was nursing was dead'[153]. The *Mail* depicted the Germans as defilers of Western womanhood and Christianity. It claimed that the German Army hymn had 'been defiled by being used as a "grace after meat" after the sack of Belgium and French towns and villages, including the murder of innocent non-combatants and the rape of women and children'[154].

Reynolds also employed narratives that involved the brutalisation of British women and destruction of the home. *Reynolds'* reportage of a zeppelin attack in Staffordshire used the same lurid language

[150] *Daily Mirror*, Tuesday, 6 June, 1916, p 5.
[151] *Daily Mirror*, Tuesday, 6 June, 1916, p 5.
[152] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 3 February, 1916, p 5.
[153] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 3 February, 1916, p 5.
[154] *Daily Mail*, 26 December, 1917, p 2.

as the right-wing press. It described the 'ruthlessness of the German raiders'. *Reynolds* cited that 'twenty-six innocent civilians, many of them women, little children, and even babies, were killed without a moment's warning'[155]. Like the right-wing press, *Reynolds* alluded to these women as symbols.

> A woman missionary, the wife of a well-known Vicar, was standing, Bible in hand, addressing an audience of about 200 persons, mostly women and girls, when a bomb dropped between church and the mission room… The woman missionary was struck by a huge fragment of shell and killed instantly.[156]

The *Mail* used the analogy that white women were temples which the Germans had desecrated. Such desecration of Western womanhood justified a holy war against the bestial German army.

> The Blood-men of the *Holy War* are the blonde beasts of Nietzsche. They represent the power of evil: cruelty, rape, slavery, murder. It is a truce with this of evil which our doubters work… Need we be reminded of their evil work in Belgium and France, where they have raped thousands of women and girls, transported thousands to slavery and massacred whole streets and villages of people?[157]

War against the Central Powers was a war of cultures in the popular press. Western civilisation's survival was threatened by *Kultur*. The Northcliffe press frequently used the image of women victimised by alien cultures outside of the West. This narrative often fixated on *Kultur*. The right-wing press claimed *Kultur* transgressed upon womanhood and the home. The right-wing press described it as an imminent threat to Britishness and Western civilisation.

Kultur was depicted as the antithesis of Western civilisation. It was barbaric, cruel and autocratic. British propaganda denied the Germans their Western identity: at the 'behest of their Kaiser they... have become simply the Huns of Attila'[158]. Denied their Western identity, Germans became an alien horde, a mass that threatened the future of Western civilisation. Women and the home, by contrast,

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[155] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 6 February, 1916, p 7.
[156] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 6 February, 1916, p 7.
[157] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 25 August, 1917, p 1.
[158] William Le Queux, *German Atrocities: A Record of Shameless Deeds*, (London: 1914), pp 6-9.

were depicted as the future of Western civilisation. The danger of foreignness was exacerbated when it was not Western. The press, however, also depicted women victimised within Britain.

Although the *News* published stories detailing wartime atrocities involving women and children, most of their lurid tales involved domestic crimes against women. The perpetrators of these crimes were usually portrayed as proletarians and/or foreigners. Women were constantly under threat of having their innocence and virtue destroyed by insidious forces within Britain.

These narratives also entailed British women being brutalised by immigrants. One such story involved a Belgian refugee, who attempted to murder a British girl by 'cutting her throat with a razor'. The *News* provided a detailed account of how the Belgian 'caught her by the arm, and taking something out of his pocket, slashed it across her neck'[159].

Stories of female victimisation, especially when they were atrocity stories, had pornographic elements. Narratives that brutalised, sexualised and killed women titillated readers. It stimulated audiences precisely because it was something conservative which British society claimed they should not see. Sex was not meant to be published in the popular press; but the public always consumed stories suggesting sex. When sex was paired with horror, it sold even better. In the picture below, the German's transgression against Russia is emphasised by him assaulting a woman in an alley whilst future Bolsheviks marched on oblivious. Not only did this entice readers, but it partially reflected the geopolitical aspirations of the British government.

[159] *News of the World*, 23 April, 1916, p 1.

Pictured: Germany, a man, victimising Russia, a woman. Unkempt Bolsheviks obliviously march in the background.[160]

Alan Kramer argues that although the British Government did not officially encourage media sensationalism, it profited from the popular press selling sex and horror as propaganda.[161] If British society was receptive and unconsciously desirous of sexual sensationalism and horror, the popular press was best equipped to distribute those fantasies.

Although these stories were meant to shock and horrify their audiences, Lord Northcliffe and Emsley Carr understood those emotions also excited them. Right-wing newspapers sold gendered horror stories because they knew that their audience, at least unconsciously, eagerly consumed these narratives, which warned them of the dangers Britain supposedly faced. The left-wing popular press used similar methods, and sensationalised women: but in left-wing narratives, they were often victimised by different forces.

[160] *News of the World*, 1 July, 1917, p 1.
[161] Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*, (Oxford, 2007), p. 245.

Victimised Women, Nationalism and Labourite Working-Class Sexuality

The Labourite popular press adopted many of the sensationalist tactics of their competitors during the First World War. The *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds' News* published lurid tales of violence against women by foreign men. Although the politics of *Reynolds'* were socialist, it was also a pro-war, nationalistic newspaper during the First World War. As explored earlier, those latter qualities compelled it to print narratives of women comparable to the right-wing press. The primary difference, however, was the *Herald* refused to contribute to pro-war, anti-German propaganda. Its narratives on victimised women were anti-war and anti-capitalist. Newspapers like the *Herald* constructed narratives on victimised women with very different political messages from its competitors.

The *Herald* also highlighted the abuse of women by foreign armies, but the antagonists were not the Central Powers. In 1917, it used lurid tales to describe Russian female revolutionaries victimised by the Tsarist Okhrana. The *Herald* printed these stories to commemorate the February Revolution.

> Our first thought and our last word should be of those men, women, and girls, lashed and tortured, starved and driven to suicide in verminous dungeons, shot without sentence, hanged by bungling amateurs, sent to rot in exile… these racked spirits, but at peace and exultant at last, knowing that the price they paid was not in vain.[162]

The First World War compelled newspapers to focus on events abroad. Atrocity stories involving women were also popular with British readers. The socialist press and anti-war publications like the *Herald* had commercial reasons to publish these narratives. Lurid tales attracted new readers. Most articles from the *Herald*, however, focused on British women victimised in Britain.

Most of the *Herald's* reportage on female victimisation was related to poverty and prostitution. While the right-wing press published stories of alien cruelty towards British women and *Reynolds* focused on women as victims of domestic crimes, the *Herald* depicted them as victims of British

[162] *Daily Herald*, 7 April, 1917, pp 4-5.

society. Instead of demonising Germans, Austrians or Turks, the *Herald* condemned the 'acute deprivation to the mass of working-class women'. While the right-wing press claimed women and children were being slaughtered in continental Europe, 'the price of milk means sickness and death to a great number of working-class babies' in Britain.[163] The *Herald* sold socialist narratives of working-class victimisation. Working women were the most vulnerable targets; the perpetrators were capitalism and sexism. The newspaper even argued that one of the most horrendous examples of this was prostitution.

Whilst the right-wing press demonised prostitutes as 'disease traps' for soldiers and young men, the socialist press argued that they were the victims of poverty and exploitation. *Reynolds'* reported that while venereal diseases affected 'not merely the man or women to whom the word morality has no meaning', it also 'torture[d] and kill[ed] the innocent along with the guilty, and wreck[ed] thousands of otherwise happy home[s]… most of the suffering is borne by the innocent. All child sufferers and most women are innocent'[164]. The *Herald* printed dozens of articles on prostitution and the persecution of prostitutes. It contended that they were created and victimised by capitalism and sexism.

The *Herald* also published Maude Royden's observation that British society victimised women by blaming the spread of venereal disease solely on women.

> …the fact that it is not the prostitute, but the husband, who infects his wife, they disregard. He, it is held, could not help going to the prostitute; but she, if she was infected, should have died of starvation rather than risk infecting him.[165]

The *Herald* added that, 'Stress has been laid in this review on Miss Royden's view of prostitution, because the tacit recognition of its necessity lies at the root of women's inferior status'[166]. Combined with economic inequality, this made women victims of capitalists.

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[163] *Daily Herald*, 17 November, 1917, p 8.
[164] *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 12 March, 1916, p 2.
[165] Maude Royden, *Women and the Sovereign State*, (London: 1917).

The *Herald* constructed narratives of British capitalists victimising women in a similar manner to the Central Powers. 'Rich men are able, because of the riches drained from the workers, to buy and debauch the daughters of those whose money they have stolen. Riches and poverty always mean that one section has more of this world's goods than it can decently and profitably spend'[167]. This practice was 'all part and parcel of the hideous mockery of religion in our modern life. Women are bought and sold in marriage as well as on the streets'[168]. It depicted British capitalists as a force defiling women, religion and society. This was done in the same manner as the *Mail* and *Reynolds* claimed that Germans desecrated women as religious symbols.

The *Herald* claimed capitalism was responsible for the war. This capitalist war caused the tribulations of working women: prostitution and disease.

> There is a war – a cruel, bitter, callous, brutal war. It was waging before August, 1914. It is waging now, and it claims its victims by the million. It is the war of the money-grubbers – the money-grubbers who are called capitalists, profiteers, financiers, captains of industry, and what not… And in their wake follow prostitution, disease, pestilence, and death… This war in Europe is their war.[169]

The newspaper prophesised that the 'coming revolution' in Britain would mirror the February Revolution in Russia. It would mobilise women, who would fight in the same way as (narrated the *Herald*) had in Russia. It explained that the 'mental and moral degradation of girlhood and womanhood by the system of prostitution, for which in peace time, low wages and sweating conditions are mainly responsible' would compel workers to revolt against capitalism. Afterwards, those forces would punish the system in equal measure for victimising women.

Mike Savage and Stephen Brooke argue that in early twentieth century left-wing British politics, the class identity of working-class women was framed by their sexuality, the economy and education. Sex and sexuality were a means of discussing class, constituting class identity and drawing lines of

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[166] *Daily Herald*, 1 December, 1917.
[167] *Daily Herald*, 30 September, 1916, p 2.
[168] *Daily Herald*, 30 September, 1916, p 2.
[169] *Daily Herald*, 17 March, 1917, p 6.

class difference. The alleviation of working-class economic insecurity lay at the root of formal and informal working-class politics, such as sex.[170] By criticising the persecution of prostitutes, the *Herald* was advocating for proletarians, men and women. In its narratives, the exploitative system which victimised working-class women was personified by the 'greedy capitalist'. Usually male, this figure was depicted as a predator of working-class women, and destroyer of working-class incomes. The *Herald* depicted capitalist victimisation of women in the same manner as other newspapers did with foreign invaders.

Most of the popular press demonised the Germans and claimed they must be punished for their crimes against Western womanhood. Yet the *Herald* often prophesised a socialist revolution in Britain and wished to see the 'greedy capitalist' punished. In the *Herald*'s narrative, the capitalist was more villainous than any foreigner. Like much of the press, women were often depicted as victims because they were reproducers of British identity. The difference was the *Herald* connected this explicitly with a socialist, working-class British identity. That narrative, however, belied a construction of gendered hegemony in which women were portrayed as to be closely guarded by socialist men against capitalist exploiters. If they were not, those women would be victimised by the same lurid acts depicted in the right-wing press.

During the First World War, the press depicted women as victims of alien armies which committed horrific, lurid acts. The sexual fears which the press helped instill did not dissipate when Armistice was declared in 1918. The horror of women being victimised by foreigners, capitalism, and men of 'bad character' became a crucial component of press narratives. Newspapers used these to depict women and Bolshevism after the October Revolution and First World War. Their reportage remained equally lurid, fascinating and disgusting. When the popular press printed stories of women victimised by Bolshevism, the horror of the First World War continued.

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[170] Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics: The Labour Movement in Preston 1880–1940*, (Cambridge: 1987), p 15; Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, p 8.

The next chapter explores how narratives of reimagined women, enemy women and victimised women were utilised following the October Revolution. The First World War concluded at the end of 1918, but the narratives constructed by the popular press were also used to describe the Russian Civil War, economic and political anxiety, and the changing image of women in British society.

Chapter 2

Euro-Orientalism and Revolution: Women and Bolshevism in the Popular Press

The Bolsheviks seized power in Russia at a critical moment of the First World War. The collapse of the Eastern Front and separate peace made between Germany and the world's first Soviet Republic allowed the German Army to allocate its forces to the Western Front, threatening to tip the balance of power in their favour. In most Allied media, the Bolshevik coup and Russia's eventual exit from the war symbolised not only a betrayal of the Entente, but also a rejection of its ideals. Whilst the Allies almost unanimously celebrated the February Revolution and 'Westernisation' of Russia, the October Revolution represented a volte face. In many newspaper narratives, Russia was depicted as having regressed into 'Asiatic' barbarism and adopted the characteristics of the Entente's enemies in October 1917.

Initial reportage on the Bolsheviks in 1917 was muted in British newspapers. Little was known about the new regime; reports were frequently contradictory as to how they had come to power. By 1918, however, the Bolsheviks emerged and were gradually incorporated into narratives which the British popular press had assigned to the Central Powers. By the end of the year, unique narratives for Bolshevism, Russia and women began to crystallise. This occurred whilst the press continued to celebrate and condemn women in new roles during the war. 1917-1918 represents a period in which narratives on Bolshevism remained indistinct. This chapter provides an examination of how the construction of narratives on women and Bolshevism evolved in the British popular press, connected to that of gendered hegemony.

Thus, it will explore how and why the rise of Bolshevism in Russia and the advent of the Soviet Republic influenced narratives of reimagined women, enemy women and victimised women, and impacted upon social and gendered hegemony, in the press. It is divided into three main sections. The first covers narratives on reimagined women as a regenerative force in the press: as women's

new place in society was questioned and narratives on the Bolsheviks began to emerge. The two subsections highlight the different narratives presented in the mainstream and socialist press, and how they overlapped.

The second section focuses on the concept of Euro-Orientalism and how it influenced narratives on victimised women and enemy women. I argue that Euro-Orientalism was critical in constructing narratives on Bolshevism, and in turn, constructing gendered hegemony. The final section focuses on divergent narratives on victimised women in the Labourite, socialist press. I explore the ideological rifts between The *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds' Newspaper*; and how this not only affected their reportage on gender and Bolshevism, but also represented the *Herald*'s attempt to create a counter-narrative to the hegemony espoused by the mainstream press.

The newspapers examined in this chapter are the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, the *News of the World*, the *Daily Record*, the *Liverpool Echo*, and Labourite, socialist newspapers: *Reynolds' Newspaper* and the *Daily Herald*. Although left-wing sources are less numerous, they have been explored in greater detail. There is no subsection on enemy women in the Labourite press, because it was not a prevalent theme from 1917-1918. The section on Euro-Orientalism explores how these concepts were used by the British popular press to describe Russia and the Bolsheviks.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how these narratives, established during the First World War, were adapted to fit peace and the perceived threat of Bolshevism at the beginning of the inter-war period. It explores how political narratives on women evolved as Britain's organic crisis became more nuanced at the end of the war, reconstructing gendered hegemony in the process.

Reimagined Women in the Shadow of Bolshevism

The October Revolution was widely regarded with anxiety and revulsion by most of the popular press. However, lurid narratives about the revolution and the Bolsheviks were not widely published from 1917-1918. Media attention remained focused on Germany. Throughout 1918, though, the

Bolsheviks were slowly incorporated into right-wing narratives. Like those about the Germans, they often depicted women as victims and enemies. Many of these narratives, in fact, claimed that the Bolsheviks and Germans were one and the same. The narrative of reimagined women, however, depicted women as a source of strength and hope. Although her 'place' in Britain was uncertain, reimagined women were often depicted as a purifying, regenerative force. This was part of a hegemonic function, which dictated women's changing place in British society.

Reimagined Women and the 'Purification' of Political Life

Industrial and militant women were often commended by the British press. The contributions of women towards the war effort through work and succour to the nation state were celebrated with even greater intensity than in 1917. In both the right-wing and left-wing press, reimagined women were depicted as figures who had changed Britain for the better. In the right-wing press, reimagined women were sometimes objects of national and social protection; they symbolised a moral bulwark against the perceived threat of Bolshevism. This enabled new narratives which claimed gender had been restructured in a more democratic Britain. It also mapped women's 'new place' in British society, which sought to neutralise the image of the suffragette agitator.

Martin Durham observes that prior to the First World War, the movement for women's suffrage embodied an active if volatile means of representation. After 1918, however, the forms in which women were passively *represented* by the political parties—condensed in the political ideologies of the time in a universal, but legalistic, often genderless notion of citizen—effectively contained much of what was crucial to pre-war feminism.[1] Women began their entry into mass politics; but were often depicted as 'reclaiming' their femininity as newly enfranchised citizens. One way in which this femininity was framed as being 'reclaimed', and public life 'purified', was through their returning to the private sphere.

[1] Martin Durham, '" Suffrage and After", Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century', *Crises in the British State, 1880-1930*, ed. Mary Langan & Bill Schwarz, (London: 1985), p 189.

Susan Kingsley Kent argues that prior to the war, feminists vigorously attacked the notion of separate spheres, as well as the medical and scientific discourses about gender and sexuality on which these spheres rested. After the First World War, however, many suffragists and suffragettes pursued a programme that championed rather than challenged prevailing ideas about masculinity and femininity in literature on psychoanalysis and sexuality.[2] This line of reasoning weakened, not strengthened, the image of reimagined women: because it depicted them as fundamentally 'feminine'; they were characterised as weak and inferior. Although reimagined women were often described as patriotic and powerful in the right-wing popular press, they were also portrayed as temporary figures. Despite their contributions, by late 1918, the right-wing press implied that reimagined women would inevitably return to their 'proper place' following the end of the war: meaning only a limited introduction to mass democracy.

Kevin Williams notes that the coming of mass democracy in 1918, with the extension of the vote to all men, and to women over thirty, posed new challenges to the political process. The British State had to adjust to new problems--political, social and cultural—in the era of mass democracy. Newspapers—and other forms of mass communication—presented both opportunity and threat. This was a potentially dangerous catalyst for growing political tension and a threat to the authority of the State, as well as its means to manage public discourse and mould popular taste. Mechanisms to manage the press were developed which cemented newspapers into a relationship with government when it came to gathering news. Most newspapers were happy to co-operate with the system of news management developed by the State.[3] By the end of the First World War, a sizeable portion of suffragettes had acquiesced to Britain's nationalist superstructure and were incorporated into its hegemony. The press accommodated them.

Whilst suffragists and suffragettes were perceived as a threat to conservative male hegemony in Britain, organs of civil society such as the right-wing popular press effectively neutralised their

[2] Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918', *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, ed. Frans Coetzee & Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee, (Oxford: 1995), p 155.
[3] Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A History of the British Newspaper*, (Milton Park: 2010), p 153.

perceived danger by creating narratives which incorporated them into the hegemony. This was possible because, unlike crises of hegemonies in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, Britain emerged as a definitive victor of the First World War, albeit at a high cost. This allowed elites to retain greater control then most of their counterparts on the continent. That control was exercised through consent.

Antonio Gramsci theorised that the process of changing popular opinion is directly related to information being restructured. Public opinion is strictly linked to political hegemony. It is the point of contact between civil society and political society; consensus and force. The State, when it wants it, initiates an unpopular action, and preventively creates adequate public opinion; that is, it organizes and concentrates certain elements of civil society.[4]

The threat of a gendered revolution was effectively neutralised through the enfranchisement of women on the terms of Britain's patriarchal society. Phillip Simpson claims was this was a form of hegemony:

> [It] Need not always be achieved through coercion, for it is the work of intellectuals of the directing class to persuade subaltern classes that their interests too are best served by the dominant conceptions of reality. Thus, the hegemonic relationship need not be the product of conspiracy on one side and the gullibility of the other. In a capitalist society, the dominant group—so called because of its place in the relations of production—uses its command over resources to establish and refurbish its conception of the world as all-inclusive.[5]

Women's enfranchisement had severe limitations. The overwhelming parliamentary vote for women's suffrage—previously opposed—reflected that it was, in fact, an extremely conservative measure. Despite wartime publicity about the nation's gratitude for female munitions workers, the 1918 legislation left most women vote-less, because they were under thirty. Women over thirty were thought less likely to support feminist or radical reforms than those who were younger.

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[4] Antonio Gramsci, *Passato e presentep*, p 158; Thomas R. Bates, 'Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 257.
[5] Phillip Simpson, 'The Whalebone in the Corset: Gramsci on Education, Culture and Change', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol III*, (London: 2002), p 269.

Moreover, women over thirty were more likely to be married and mothers, factors expected to make them less susceptible to radical class or gender movements.[6]

In addition to the age requirement, the vote was restricted to women who were also local government electors or the wives of local government electors. It is estimated that about 22 per cent of women aged thirty or above, many of whom were working-class and/or unmarried but employed, were excluded by this.[7] As Harold Smith suggests, because the Act gave the vote to men at nineteen if they had seen active service in the armed forces (and to all men at age twenty-one unless they had been conscientious objectors), the legislation preserved women's different and inferior statues under the law.[8]

The 'inclusivity' Gramsci described, tempered with dominant conceptions of reality, created right-wing narratives of reimagined women that promulgated their 'place' in society after the First World War. The result was the construction of a new narrative. It espoused a maternal model of women's citizenship; what Anne Summers describes as 'civic motherhood'. This narrative both legitimised and restricted women's political agency from 1918 onwards.[9]

In the right-wing press, narratives on reimagined women were part of a gendered hegemony that subordinated their enfranchised status to the masculine nation state by depicting their femininity as a weapon against Bolshevism. Helen McCarthy observes that Britain was transformed from a limited, property-based franchise into a mass democracy through the passage of the Fourth Reform Act of 1918. This signalled the opening of a new phase in the nation's political life.[10] The achievement of near universal suffrage for men and partial suffrage for women shifted the centre of gravity in British

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[6] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*, (Princeton: 1993).
[7] John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict 1915-1918*, (New Haven: 1992).
[8] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928*, (Harlow:2007), pp 88-89.
[9] Anne Summers, 'Public Functions, Private Premises: Female Professional Identity and the Domestic-Service Paradigm in Britain, c. 1850-1930', *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman, (London: 2013), p. 371.
[10] The number of parliamentary electors rose from 7 m in 1910 to 21.3m in 1918, including 8.5m women aged 30 or over (see David Butler and Gareth Butler, British political facts) (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 234, and Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain*, 2nd ed, (Basingstoke: 2000), pp. 34, 56. The 1928 Act added another 7.2 m voters, including 3.3 m women aged between 21 and 29; but also 2m women over 30, and 1.9m men who had not met the residency requirements of the 1918 Act. See Pugh, *Women*, pp. 150-1.

politics away from the problem of who should have the vote and on what terms, towards the challenge of integrating and socialising a mass citizenry.[11]

This meant that from 1917-1918, women were often depicted as a new vanguard of British nationhood. Right-wing narratives depicted reimagined women as active participants in the nation's efforts to defeat the Central Powers and Bolshevism. The *Daily Mail*, for instance, claimed the war had 'brought certain women to the front': 'They must have been in existence before, but no one noticed them. Now no one can help noticing them'. The *Mail* described this reimagined woman as the 'woman who can work with other women'.

> She is a complete revelation to men and to most women; women have always preferred to work with men because they found their own sex petty, unjust, and jealous. A type of woman has taken her place in the war who is a born leader… She adds understanding to the qualities possessed by men leaders. 'She had all the great qualities of both sexes and none of the small ones'.[12]

Reimagined women's positive contributions to the nation-state negated their opposite, described by the *Mail* as the 'woman who strides', a woman who 'always despises things feminine… smokes, calls her comrades "old man", looks after horses or a motor-car, and has nearly forgotten to wish she were a man'[13]. The 'woman who strides' was described as a social aberration by the *Mail*. Her negative contributions were depicted as almost entirely offset by the romantic ideal of reimagined women, however. Reimagined women were heroines who 'wore neither pearls nor a manner, but Government boots'; and 'in the great battle between light and darkness… stood shoulder to shoulder with [their] brothers in arms'[14]. The *Mail* claimed that, from a woman's perspective, the war had changed them for the better. In return, these reimagined women were transforming the nation into something greater than it had been before the war. The newspaper editorialised:

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[11] Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50. 4 (Cambridge: 2007), p 891.
[12] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 3 January, 1918, p 2.
[13] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 3 January, 1918, p 2.
[14] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 15 October, 1918, p 2; Tuesday, 12 November, 1918, p 2.

> If we women have done something in this war, the war has done more for us women. It has taught us to recognise ourselves, to justify our existence. Ideas that for the most part were but the almost baseless fabric of a dreamer's vision have taken form and the world is fresh and new for womanhood.[15]

Now enfranchised, reimagined women were depicted as citizens with power and purpose. Consequently, the right-wing press claimed that women's new identity would benefit the British Empire. Their hard work and new sense of political purpose would invigorate the nation and the colonies. The *Mail* also stated that ignoring reimagined women's post-war demands would have been foolish and dishonourable.

> The girls who went to the war will have changed when they come back: they will come back with definite and indefinite ideas and desires—they will want things, and it is essential to the nation's welfare that they shall not be forgotten.[16]

The right-wing press reasoned that not only had women contributed to the war effort and proven their worth through work but had also dispelled negative stereotypes that women were frivolous idlers. Reimagined women were not dependants. They were now symbols of hard work and patriotism. The *Mail* considered that this development heralded a 'new age' for women and the nation.

> We are progressing towards the electrical age, and to the age in which the arts and crafts of home-making, are valued and respected as never before, in which home life is appreciated more keenly, and yet in which women are no longer either mere parasites fattening on the labour of others, or overworked, disheartened drudges, unable to think, and that dully, of any other subject than the material needs of their families.[17]

Newspapers such as the *Daily Record* claimed reimagined women were not only worthy labourers but also a potentially powerful political force after the war:

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[15] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 12 November, 1918, p 2.
[16] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 13 November, 1918, p 2.
[17] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday 17 December, 1918, p 7.

> Women's power in politics is immeasurable. Well might the men debate for years before giving into their hands the mighty weapon of the vote. In sheer numbers alone they may overturn tremendous Imperial and home issues.[18]

The *Daily Mirror* was more circumspect. It did not profess that women entering politics was revolutionary. Instead, it claimed the development was merely a sensible decision made by an enlightened society.

> We prophetically see women in the House already: no longer veiled behind a dim seraglio sort of grating, muffled like dangerous distractions to the legislator; but actually facing him, affronting him, objecting to him, questioning him. And if in Parliament, then in the Government, ruling as well as debating.
>
> …It turns out nearly always that these "vast changes", these apparent revolutions, these ends and new beginnings, these leaps in the dark, are in reality only minor modifications.[19]

The role of the female voter, however, *was* revolutionary to the *Mirror*. The newspaper supported reimagined women's political agency because it wished to 'honour them by supposing that their chief aim and object will be the purification of public life'[20].

The *Mail* shared the *Mirror's* argument that the enfranchisement of women would symbolise the purification of British society following the war. It reasoned that women, a crucial element of Britain's militarisation, would once again act as a maternal force and vote in a manner that cleansed society of moral and political 'impurities'.

> Are the women of these modern Crusaders going to allow the efforts of our men to be whittled away by those who would grasp the hands of the blood-besmirched, unrepentant Germany? It is unthinkable.[21]

This was the primary difference between the right-wing and left-wing concepts of 'revolutionary' reimagined women in 1918. Whilst the *Daily Herald* and *Reynolds' Newspaper* depicted reimagined women as a political force who would help dissolve the capitalist system, the right-wing press

[18] *Daily Record*, Tuesday, 2 May 1918, p 2.
[19] *Daily Mirror*, Tuesday, 22 October, 1918, p 6.
[20] *Daily Mirror*, Monday, 9 December, 1918, p 5.
[21] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 8 October, 1918, p 2.

reimagined them as a force which would breathe life into a system weakened by the war. The right-wing press often reasoned that this 'purifying' woman had already proven her usefulness and valour over the course of the war. She had moved into positions of power and respect in British society. Even the *Liverpool Echo*, which often derided any form of female empowerment, conceded, 'Now that woman has proved herself something more than a doll and a plaything, and shown that she can take her place in the economic world things are somewhat changed'[22].

Thus, the *Echo* reversed its previous opinion: 'There are many women who could be uncommonly useful in Parliament'[23]. The *Mail*, however, was perhaps the most ardent right-wing supporter of women in politics in 1918, particularly Christabel Pankhurst's Women's Party.

Having supported Pankhurst's pro-war Women's Social and Political Union since 1914, the *Mail* depicted her and the Woman's Party as the embodiment of the purifying reimagined woman. In the *Mail*, Pankhurst symbolised the power and righteousness of militant, patriotic women. Pankhurst was depicted as a feminine pro-war voice in the *Mail* throughout the First World War. It lauded her patriotic pragmatism during the war's final week, when reporting on one of the 'sanest and most sensible talks' ever given.

> …[She] told us how on the Clyde they had done more than any other organisation to combat the evil influences of the Bolsheviks and pacifists who are continually sowing seeds of dissension among the workers… Everything connected with Suffrage agitation had been put on one side; the leaders realised that it was useless for women to have a vote if they had no country to vote in.[24]

During the war, the *Mail* claimed the purpose of Pankhurst and the Women's Party was to communicate patriotism to women and instruct them how to 'assist the Government in securing for the Empire victory, unity, and prosperity'[25]. When the war ended, it proclaimed that Pankhurst and the Women's Party would help secure the peace. More specifically, they would fight Bolshevism,

[22] *Liverpool Echo*, Monday, 23 December, 1918, p 3.
[23] *Liverpool Echo*, Wednesday, 23 October, 1918.
[24] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 12 October, 1918, p 2.
[25] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 5 October, 1918, p 2.

which both Pankhurst and the right-wing press cautioned was spreading throughout Europe. The *Mail* claimed the Weimar Republic was 'more dangerous than the Germany of the Kaiser': 'The Socialists were more Pan-German than the Kaiser. There was a German Socialist intrigue in concert with [Pieter Jelles] Troelstra to spread Bolshevism in Holland and other countries round Germany'. Unlike the First World War, however, the *Mail* claimed women like Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were playing a special role in confronting Bolshevism and its German sponsors.

> [Emmeline Pankhurst is] out to fight Bolshevism in this country and all over the world. The pandering to the German people was simply making for another war… Women [are] the fittest sex to fight the evil of Bolshevism, for women [are] inclined to sane methods of investigation and gradual reform.[26]

The *Echo* provided the most detailed account of Pankhurst, depicting her and the Women's Social and Political Union—which became the Women's Party—as feminine guardians of the British way of life. Their mission was to combat pacifist and Bolshevik subversion in places such as Glasgow. It reported on how the WSPU fought with Clydeside pacifists and labour agitators.

> Miss Pankhurst asked the audience to leave the Bolsheviks to the women on the platform. A number of the sturdier girls thereupon left the platform, and some distressing scenes were enacted between the men and the women, blows being freely exchanged. One man in the gallery, who sat silently observing the deplorable scenes in the body of the hall, was set upon by some sturdy car conductresses. He held on to the gallery, but the women tore him by the hair, and struck him with a cane, and finally dragged him downstairs and flung him into the street. [27]

Figures such as Pankhurst and the Women's Party legitimised patriarchal fantasies about reimagined women as a purifying force. They represented a form of feminism which the right-wing popular press could exalt in 1918. By exemplifying Pankhurst and her adherents, the press reimagined women as patriotic, militant and anti-socialist. It also characterised them as a protective, maternal force, who guarded Britain's national identity from 'alien' ideologies.

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[26] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 20 November, 1918, p 6.
[27] *Liverpool Echo*, Friday, 15 February, 1918, p 3.

As early as January 1917, the WSPU embarked on an anti-Bolshevik campaign in Scotland, the north of England and the Welsh mining districts.[28] There, the WSPU was depicted as quelling industrial unrest. Nicoletta Gullace notes that these tactics were deliberately pursued by Pankhurst and the WSPU to establish a place for women on the side of bourgeois order, patriotic vigour and military victory.

By actively sponsoring the victory abroad and condemning the threat of subversives in Britain, these militant reimagined women made the case for women's suffrage as 'a necessary war measure'[29]. By proving their patriotism to the conservative establishment, Gullace reasons that women 'finally obtained the parliamentary vote: not by throwing bombs but by making them; not by raising children but sending them to die'[30]. Women gained agency in Britain's patriarchy by earning its favour.

These perceived acts of patriotic militancy facilitated a fundamental shift in the parameters of British citizenship. The pre-war conception of liberal citizenship celebrated diversity of thought, whilst institutionalising the male body as the site of political authority. Under the 1918 Reform Bill, the voter could now inhabit a body of any sex. The cost of physical diversity during the war, however, was ideological conformity. At a moment when journalists, politicians and other patriotic citizens proclaimed support for the war—the only acceptable political statement—the gender of political and social actors appeared to matter less. Consequently, depictions of ideological unity between patriotic men and women made sexual diversity seem less threatening in 1918, because they continued to represent partners working together to solve a crisis.[31]

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[28] David J. Mitchell, *Queen Christabel: Biography of Christabel Pankhurst*, (London: 1977), p 265; *Britannia*, 7 September, 1917, p 112.
[29] Cheryl R. Joregensen-Earp, *Speeches and Trials of the Militant Suffragettes: The Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1918*, (Madison: 1999), pp 367.
[30] Nicoletta Gullace*, 'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War*, *(*Basingstoke: 2002), pp 134, 139.
[31] Gullace, p 196.

Narratives of reimagined women as political agents were acceptable when associated with conservative movements. In the right-wing press, Pankhurst negated narratives of the 'shrieking suffragette' and 'frivolous flapper'. Women were expected to remain 'pure' maternal symbols for the sake of national regeneration. Joane Nagel observes that masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another. The modern form of Western masculinity emerged around the same time and place as modern nationalism. In the West, these two concepts grew symbiotically. Nationalist characteristics are interchangeable with depictions of Western masculinity: willpower, honour, courage, discipline, competitiveness, quiet strength, stoicism, sangfroid and persistence.[32] Reimagined women such as Christabel Pankhurst and her newly created Women's Party gained access to political authority in Britain by adopting the masculine characteristics of nationalism.

By 1918, the traditionally masculine use of patriotism by women was no longer viewed as aberrant. It was instead depicted as complimentary to women and femininity. Politically and symbolically, reimagined women were partially 'masculinised', to allow them recognition and agency in Britain's patriarchal society. This 'masculinity' was rebranded as symbolically maternal. Female agency was usually presented in a domestic context. It normally did not involve overt acts of female militancy, such as depictions of female soldiers.

Abroad, however, reimagined women could still be depicted as combatants. Narratives of militant women defending their homes from aggression were still acceptable when the right-wing press described events on the continent. By the end of 1918, reimagined women overseas were depicted directly combating the spread of German imperialism and Bolshevism. The *Mail* vividly described militant heroines in its report of the Battle of Lemberg, where Polish forces repulsed Ukrainian Bolsheviks.

> The Rutherian Army [West Ukrainian Peoples' Republic] was a mob. Half the men were Bolsheviks, half persuaded to remain under arms by the payment of thirty to fifty crowns a

[32] Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethic and Racial Studies Review*, Vol 22, No 2, (1998), pp 245, 249.

> day and the promise of three acres of land… News of the resistance spread through Lemberg, and another group of boys—15 to 20 was the range of ages and the most, nearer 15—formed a second centre of resistance... Women joined the boys. I have seen quite a number of them—strong women in soldiers' clothes, for they raided equipment stores later—with their hair escaping curiously from under the heavy Austrian steel helmet.[33]

The narrative provided a valuable contrast to militant depictions of Bolshevik women. As the First World War ended, the image of militant women became more threatening in the popular press.

Sandra Gilbert postulates that the liberation of women during the war and narratives of masculinised females, along with the crisis of masculinity, emerged from the premise of the volunteer in search of fulfilled manhood. She claims that 'paradoxically… the war which so many men had gone in hope of becoming heroes ended up emasculating them'[34]. Some of these gendered anxieties were depicted in the right-wing press in 1918. As was the case during most of the war, narratives of British women serving as genuine combatants were more likely to be symbolic in the right-wing press. It went to great lengths to reassure readers that reimagined women retained their feminine identity.

Both the *Mail* and the *Mirror* considered that work and militancy had not masculinised women. Reimagined women *used* their femininity to give themselves a new identity in these forms of labour.

> We feared that they would become like men, all drab and shapeless and dull: instead, they have delicately adapted their uniforms, transformed uniformity, emerged exquisitely in the now mode of neatness… So much for the superficial aspect.[35]

The *Mail* claimed that English women retained their feminine identities thanks to their temperament and pragmatism.

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[33] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 3 December, 1918, p 2.
[34] Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War', in ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, 1987); Ilana R. Bet-El, 'Men and Soldiers: British Concepts of Masculinity and the Great War', in ed. Billie Melman, *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, (New York: 1998), p 76.
[35] *Daily Mirror*, Saturday, 2 November 1918, p 6.

> …The English girl has realised that even if she wears a uniform or overall for her work she can express her femininity and individuality in the daintiness of her *lingerie*, and she embroiders more than ever in her spare time, I am told.[36]

By claiming women had only been superficially altered by the war, their newfound roles and agency were not treated with the same sense of danger and anxiety by the popular press. However, it also meant that industrial and military contributions made by women were undermined, because femininity remained inferior to masculinity in their narratives. Mindful of the dichotomy, the *Echo* jubilantly claimed, 'Femininity—thank heaven! —is entirely indestructible. It will survive all progress and all revolutions of taste'[37].

The *Mirror* claimed this innate femininity meant women wished to leave employment as soon as possible upon the war's conclusion. In this narrative, the end of the war meant reimagined women would return to their 'proper' place in British society.

> Woman was not meant to go out into the world and work. Her mission in life is to create a just 'Home' round [sic] her, to rear children, not only to bear them and croon them to sleep in their cradles, but to guide them along the right road, lead her daughters to beautiful, pure Womanhood and her sons to honourable, strong manhood.[38]

The *Mail*, which spent most of 1918 exalting reimagined women, also claimed they still possessed fundamentally 'feminine' politics and desires. Her retained femininity was integral to narratives of reimagined women.

> Women's political outlook begins at home. That is why it is truly universal… The woman wants security for the little lives she may bring into the world… And because, holding their babies in their arms, they cannot grind little axes, they may help build a fairer, happier world, for in blindly seeking a flowery path for tiny feet they may give it to all mankind.[39]

The concept of feminine weakness remained a major narrative in the right-wing popular press. This claimed that although women had made great contributions and gained new positions in British

[36] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 7 November, 1918, p 2.
[37] *Liverpool Echo*, Thursday, 28 February 1918, p 2.
[38] *Daily Mirror*, Wednesday, 18 December, 1918, p 7.
[39] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 24 October 1918, p 2.

society, they implicitly—and sometimes overtly—wished to see pre-war gendered paradigms restored. The *News of the World* published these 'desires' in the song, 'My Ideal Husband':

> I want a man who will rule me. One with a will of his own
>
> Firm and determined to school me. He must take me and make. And shake me till my wits forsake me
>
> I want a man to command me. If need be, threaten to strike. I want one who'll
>
> Want what I want when I want it, And make me do just as I like[40]

The supposedly feminine desire to return to the home and be 'ruled' by her husband sometimes meant that women's suffrage and women's empowerment were depicted as two separate concepts.

> I know quite well what many of my sex will say.
>
> They will tell me that I am 'grotesquely old-fashioned'.
>
> …But the facts still remain. The new-fashioned women failed.
>
> …For instance: they got me the vote—to use against them. The feminine influence in politics—yes: by all means. But feminine power? That is a different matter.[41]

The right-wing press also deemed the irrevocable femininity of reimagined women as reason to marginalise their present and future accomplishments. The *Record* considered that most women, despite gaining the vote, remained politically apathetic. The right-wing press held that this was due to politics being a masculine affair. To the *Record*, this was yet another indication that most women remained frivolous.

> There are, of course, an extraordinary number of women on the register who will not be serious. They joke about having the vote, but seem to regard the ruling as a comedy rather than a vital proposition. Yet, strange as it may seem, it is these empty-headed women who are the first to grumble at any restrictions put upon them by the Government.[42]

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[40] *News of the World*, 19 May, 1918, p 4.
[41] *Daily Mirror*, Tuesday, 31 December, 1918, p 7.
[42] *Daily Record*, Tuesday, 10 December, 1918, p 6.

The right-wing press frequently questioned the 'political instincts' of women in preparation for the December 1918 election. The *Mail* initially claimed that women would vote superficially: 'In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred she will accept her husband's views on a candidate's programme, but she will adhere to her own opinion about a candidate's physiognomy [appearance], and faces not facts appeal her intuition'[43].

However, after the election produced coalition government, with major gains for the Conservative party, the *Mail* exalted women for their political contribution and shamed men for appearing less interested in voting.

> Such was the prevailing apathy of [men] in general in all parts of the country, partly because they took it for granted that the Coalition would be elected and partly because they cared little… that the great contest would have seemed to indicate the pathetic collapse of the whole system of representative government if it has not been for the keen and intelligent interest of the newly enfranchised women electors…[44]

However, this celebration of reimagined women as political agents did not mean that they acquired more social agency in the press. Reimagined women, although political in the 'right' way, were also depicted as being in touch with their 'feminine nature' and aware of their proper 'place' in society. The *News'* reaction to women's participation in the election was more prosaic. It noted women had 'taken a lively interest in the fulfilment if their duty under the franchise… great numbers of married couples went to the poll together'[45]. Its only gendered revelation on the election was that 'the women candidates fared badly'[46]. Political women were not depicted as a threat to Britain's patriarchal democracy in these narratives.

Newspapers like the *Mail* reassured their readers that enfranchised women remained maternal and within the private sphere, claiming, 'There is as yet no sign that women are neglecting their

[43] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 10 December, 1918, p 4.
[44] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 16 December, 1918, p 5.
[45] *News of the World*, 15 December, 1918, p 1.
[46] *News of the World*, 29 December, 1918, p 1.

domestic duties in favour of political meetings'[47]. This narrative constructed a gendered hegemony which promulgated that women, even as political agents, belonged in the home, not the workplace. Newspapers like the *News* mostly ignored the narrative of women as political agents, preferring to focus on more engrossing narratives of victimised women. In both cases, women remained 'feminine' in right-wing newspaper narratives. Their image as women was not fundamentally altered. And as women were depicted as having not changed on a fundamental level, their return to older roles could be justified.

The late-war and post-war narrative that women remained fundamentally feminine and inferior helped legitimise calls from the right-wing press for women to leave the British workforce after Armistice. Papers such as the *Echo* were quick to claim women were unfit for certain jobs.

> It is a poor idea to substitute girls for male carters. The weaker sex would be of no use of handling cotton or bacon, and would in many cases be unable to groom their horses. There are plenty of discharged soldiers who could do the work.[48]

The *Record* claimed femininity made women unfit for jobs they possessed during the war, now that men were returning. 'Man acts from adequate motives relative to his own interests not on metaphysical speculation'. The newspaper commented dismissively, 'Surely those women don't think that a few months at shell-filling fit them to do the work of an engineer'[49].

The *Mirror* believed that women should be demobilised as quickly as possible. 'We have (thanks to the boys and their leaders) come back victorious. Why should a Grade 3 man's war work not terminate now? If his former job was better, as he says, why not get back to it?'[50] At the end of 1918, the right-wing press began to aggressively advertise more 'appropriate' forms of employment for women.

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[47] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 4 December, 1918, p 4.
[48] *Liverpool Echo*, Wednesday, 23 October, 1918, p 3.
[49] *Daily Record*, 1 February, 1918, p 2.
[50] *Daily Mirror*, Saturday, 23 November, p 5.

In autumn 1918, newspapers embarked on a campaign glorifying women's return to domestic service. 'Domestic Service to-day is one of the best paid and most comfortable occupations. A good servant can be sure of getting and keeping a good place; she is better paid, better fed, better clothed than most other women at work'[51]. In the *Echo*, women's return to domestic service meant 'Some of the worst woes of the housewife may thus be solved for Christmas!'[52] Although the *Mirror* acknowledged that women's employment was the product of a situation in which 'thousands of men went daily to enlist, and so left vacancies that only women could fill', it agreed that women should return to their 'proper place' in British society.[53]

By the end of 1918, sentiments towards women in the workplace began to sour. Reimagined women's transformative power in British society, however, dominated their narratives. Those narratives momentarily kept the misogyny seen in previous years from dominating discourse. Glorification of reimagined women, though, began to wane once the war ended. Throughout 1918, they had been exalted as an industrial, political, and occasionally, martial force in the right-wing press. By the end of the year, their 'place' in British society was once again largely symbolic, feminine and maternal. This can be attributed to attempts to restore pre-war social and gendered norms in Britain which confined women to the private sphere.

Summers reasons that the structures and models of relationships which evolved in the Victorian and Edwardian periods in the restricted sphere of the private household - what she calls the 'domestic service paradigm'- proved highly resilient to change. The First World War did not significantly modify the occupational landscape for British women.[54] Although new employment opportunities emerged,

[51] *Daily Mirror*, Monday, 25 November, 1918, p 11.
[52] *Liverpool Echo*, Friday, 22 November, 1918.
[53] *Daily Mirror*, Friday, 20 December, 1918, p 5.
[54] Summers, pp 353-354.

the percentage of women employed outside domestic service, particularly in the manufacturing industries, remained negligible throughout the inter-war period.[55]

Kent makes similar observations about British culture's desire for restoration: contending that the upheavals and trauma produced by the First World War provoked responses meant to recreate the social, political and economic order which had prevailed prior to August 1914. In recasting bourgeois Europe along corporatist economic and political lines, conservative forces sought to re-establish stability and reassert their statuses in a world that looked and felt dramatically different from that of the pre-war period.[56] Kent believes this was most evident in the realm of gender identity and relations between men and women. Patriarchal society sought a political and economic restructuring of British society, with the symbolic act of reconstructing gender after the war.[57]

Although the image of reimagined women was conflicted in 1918, the popular press increasingly wished to recast women as something familiar to how they were perceived in 1914. Women were now enfranchised, so this was not entirely possible. Conservative society reasoned that women could be celebrated as public, patriotic symbols—but these should be confined to the private sphere. Gendered hegemony allowed women political agency, but usually in ways that continued to support Britain's patriarchal society. This hegemonic function, which negotiated the place of women as a feminine, regenerative force, was also present in the Labourite, socialist press. The role of maternalism in the public and private spheres was in fact crucial its construction.

Reimagined Women and Labourite Maternalism

Like its counterparts, the Labourite popular press went to great lengths to valorise reimagined women in 1918. They often celebrated new roles for women in British society. However, they often

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[55] Laura Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: 1995), pp 191, 198, 229.
Billie Melman, *Borderlines*, pp 353-354.

[56] Also see: Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I*, (Princeton: 1975).

[57] Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918',**)** *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, ed. Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee, (Oxford: 1995), p 153.

used maternalist narratives to argue this. Stephen Brooke observes that maternalist politics became a major component of the Labour Party during the first half of the twentieth century. Maternalism was presented as a means of empowering women in their roles as mothers. Brooke claims that maternalism acted as an engine of radical, rather than reactionary, political and social change. It was also a means of addressing the everyday needs of working-class people in Britain.[58] These maternalistic politics were also applied to the Independent Labour Party, which valorised motherhood and the home.[59] Maternalist arguments were a means through which the Labourite press constructed gendered hegemony. Women, even when depicted as liberated, remained national symbols associated with the private sphere.

Pat Thane suggests that a maternalist focus on the home and motherhood in Labour women's politics was an attempt to 'provide the base for the liberation of women rather than their insuperable bondage'[60]. By modifying nationalist allegories of women as reproducers of the nation state, the Labourite press created narratives that women were the reproducers of the working-class. Their efforts in work where the same as their efforts in the home.

In 1911, Mary Macarthur of the Labour Party argued that the maternal influence of women was vital to the party: 'Women are at heart conservative, but conservative in the best sense of the word. They desire above all to conserve the race'[61].

Whilst maternalism created a narrative that the political and social fates of women and the working-class were intertwined, Labour men fought for respectability in the public sphere whilst women could not do so on the same terms. Instead, women's entry into citizenship came through the

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[58] Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day*, (Oxford: 2011), p 9; For general overviews of women in the interwar Labour party, see Pamela Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939*, (Cambridge: 1994) and David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922-1931*, (Oxford: 2002), Ch 20 and 21.
[59] Brooke, p 18.
[60] Pat Thane, 'The Women of the British Labour Party and Feminism, 1906–1945', ed. Harold L. Smith, *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: 1990), p 129.
[61] Mary Macarthur, 'The Women Trade-Unionist Point of View', ed. Marion Phillips, *Women and the Labour Party by Various Women Writers*, (London: 1911), p 28.

gendered route of motherhood.[62] This maternal representation of women added emotional weight to the descriptions of their sacrifices in labour.

Reynolds' Newspaper argued that women made the same sacrifices in factories as men had on battlefields.

> The death of 100 women as the result of an explosion at a shell-filling factory will help bring home to us the day-to-day dangers of those who work at occupations of great peril, that our enemies may not lack the things that lead to victory. It is not only in the trenches that heroism in the face of danger is displayed. Only the public is often apt to forget the fact.[63]

Socialist newspapers like *Reynolds* and the *Herald* held that the heroic contributions of reimagined women to industry and the war effort had unequivocally proven their worth to British society. As late as September 1918, *Reynolds* continued to celebrate the military contributions of new women, depicted as proof of women's equality.

> The war has shown us that when it comes to the real test, the women of our race have courage worthy to be compared with that of the bravest of their brothers. And we should take every recognisable opportunity of recognising it.[64]

Reynolds also posited that reimagined women were entitled to new roles within British society, including the Government. It argued this was a pragmatic decision. The perceived femininity of reimagined women was often used to describe why they would benefit British society after the war. These included vague references to their experience in the home. *Reynolds* used these as evidence that women would benefit new housing schemes:

> In designing these houses, the President of the Local Government Board hopes local authorities will call to the aid some women… Women who have to live in the houses know by every day experience what is wrong with them.[65]

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[62] Brooke, p 26.
[63] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 7 July, 1918, p 2.
[64] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 29 September, 1918, p 2
[65] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 13 October, 1918, p 2.

In other instances, the 'feminine' roles of reimagined women were used more overtly by *Reynolds* to justify their place in British labour.

> It must be remembered that women and children form the very great majority of our population, and that the future of our race very largely depends upon the health of the women and children. Surely a woman Minister of Health would pay very special attention to those parts of the Health Ministry which would deal with the health of women and children?[66]

This reflected the views of British socialist thinkers, who regarded female emancipation as a critical aspect of national regeneration. Olive Schreiner, for instance, suggested female emancipation and a more progressive view of sexuality were not merely virtues in themselves, but essential to the health and regeneration of society, nation and race.[67] She considered that female 'parasitism', the refusal to grant women a productive or active role in society, led to degeneracy.[68] She argued that women became parasitic, indolent and immoral when not permitted work and place in the public sphere.

More specifically, the sexuality of reimagined women was sublimated to a maternalist 'higher purpose': namely, the greater good of society. Women's sexuality would be freed not only for its own sake, but that of everyone. Schreiner contended that ending the capitalist system of 'female idleness' would enable a new, utopian sexual and social world: 'An Eden created by their own labour and made beautiful by their own fellowship… we see a new earth; but therein dwells love—the love of comrades and co-workers'[69]. In *Reynolds'* narratives, socialism was only possible when women's labour was recognised.

Until such a society could be created, however, women and men had to organise to retain their rights won during the war. In *Reynolds'* narratives, that organisation had to be constructive and

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[66] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 21 April, 1918, p 2.
[67] Carolyn Burdett, 'The Hidden Romance of Sexual Science: Eugenics, the Nation and the Making of Modern Feminism', ed Carolyn Burdett, *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire* (Houndmills: 2001).
[68] Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labor*, (North Chelmsford: 1911), p 97.
[69] Schreiner, p 298.

within the parameters of the law. Its idea of 'responsible agitation' will be explored later in this chapter. *Reynolds* often depicted itself as more moderate and 'pragmatic' than the *Herald*.

The 'pragmatism' which *Reynolds* espoused was linked to narratives affirming that reimagined women had retained their femininity: which brought to labour, would benefit society. It argued that positions such as Minister of Health should be given to women because their maternal instincts made them more competent carers of children. More importantly, *Reynolds* stressed that women occupying such positions presented no threat to men because those positions were not masculine. Here, *Reynolds* attempted to reframe what Gramsci referred to as 'common sense'.

Gramsci argued that perceptions of common sense are constructed by elite classes in negotiation with members of subaltern groups. By claiming pragmatism, newspapers like *Reynolds* were communicating that it was common sense for women to be part of the labour movement because their feminine nature complimented men. Guido Liguori observes that if subaltern groups remain attached to common sense, they cannot launch a real outcome on a political level.[70] *Reynolds* claimed that women did not truly move from their 'place' in society without the permission of men, and thus were not a threat to men.

To *Reynolds*, the contributions of reimagined women confirmed that they were deserving of enfranchisement and political agency because they were no threat to men. The newspaper also believed that the inclusion of women would be invaluable to the Labour movement.

> Surely the logical and natural outcome of giving women the vote would be that they should have the right to sit in Parliament. The denial of this means that many of the women in the Labour movement, who for years have rendered magnificent service to the cause, will be deprived of their legitimate aspirations of standing the test of a Parliamentary contest.[71]

[70] Guido Liguori, 'Common Sense in Gramsci', ed. Joseph Francese, *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture, and Social Theory*, (Abingdon: 2009), p 128.
[71] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 21 July, 1918, p 4.

This narrative was one of the reasons why the *Herald* was so passionate about the enfranchisement of women. It believed that reimagined women's gendered influence on politics would help pacify a warmongering society and forward workers' causes.

Although the *Herald's* politics were more radical than *Reynolds*, it made similar arguments about reimagined women. The newspaper emphatically praised the new position of women, believing it was a step towards a social revolution in Britain. It claimed:

> Knowledge and freedom are fast dispelling old prejudices and bringing ideals within reach of realisation; and men and women are working together for great ends instead of approaching one another from opposite poles in search of some compromise which will serve to gloss over antagonisms.[72]

The *Herald* also regarded reimagined women as invaluable members of the Labour movement. It believed that women were 'ready converts' to the Independent Labour Party, and 'taking active part in general propaganda and party duties.'[73]

The *Herald's* narratives on reimagined women stressed that the British people were engaged in a proletarian struggle for the recognition of women as workers and equal partners to men. It directly attributed this to the Labour movement.

> Trade Unionism not only fought for its own hand during those troubled days, but also did its best to secure justice and fair dealing for the women and children who had no men of their own to speak for them...[74]

This meant that despite the power and courage of reimagined women, much of their success was linked to male-dominated trade unions by the *Herald's* narratives. Like the right-wing press, reimagined women retained a fundamentally feminine identity, which limited their capabilities in a patriarchal society. Like *Reynolds*, the *Herald* alluded to the 'maternal instincts' of reimagined

[72] *Daily Herald*, 22 June, 1918, p 2.
[73] *Daily Herald*, 20 July, 1918, p 14.
[74] *Daily Herald*, 12 October, 1918, p 3.

women: these, it insisted, were critical to their existence. The *Herald* believed that the femininity and maternalism of reimagined women made them the greatest voice for peace in Britain.

> Whether praised or blamed, most women would rather give life than destroy it, and feel it to be, though a wonderful thing to bring up a family on a pound a week… the war has brought home to us the value not only of battleships but of babies—not only of soldiers but of mothers.[75]

Unlike the right-wing press, Labourite newspapers did not create narratives about women being 'masculinised' by their work. In fact, they argued that the success of women in labour was due to their inherent femininity. Both *Reynolds* and the *Herald* claimed that femininity had an overwhelmingly positive impact on Britain. Both also described reimagined women as deserving of the respect of the British people, and that they should not be discarded when the war ended. *Reynolds* editorialised:

> It is urged that work or maintenance at fair rates should be provided for all women displaced from their employment to make way for men returning from service with the Forces or other national work; that all women employed in trades formerly closed to them should only continue to be so employed at Trade Union rates of wages; that legal restrictions on the entry of women to the professions of the same conditions as men should be abrogated; and that women should have all franchises, and the be eligible for election to all public bodies (including Parliament), on the same conditions as men.[76]

The *Herald* was more pessimistic about the future of women workers in Britain after the war. Less than a month before Armistice was declared, it warned:

> As soon as hostilities cease, munition workers will be universally out of employment. At present all that the armies of women engaged upon fuse and shell work can look forward to is a week's notice, and thereafter starvation upon the 7s. a week unemployment benefit. And even the weeks' notice is doubtful![77]

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[75] *Daily Herald*, 20 July, 1918, p 7.
[76] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 12 May, 1918, p 3.
[77] *Daily Herald*, 26 October, 1918, p 6.

By the end of 1918, *Reynolds* also gave warnings about the future of women in the workplace, cautioning, 'So many conflicting interests are to be considered that women will need to watch developments very closely lest her last state be worse than her first'[78].

The *Herald* depicted the dismissal of women as an attempt to restore unequal paradigms between men and women. It claimed that the struggles between men and women, proletarians and the bourgeoisie, were inextricably linked. Both represented struggles for financial independence and an end to exploitation.

> [Women's] service to society in making a home and rearing children remains unrecognised. She is still the unchartered servant of the future, who receives from her husband, at his discretion, a share of *his* wages… Few of us realise how constantly and subtly this half-conscious, but ever-present sense of economic dependence of the woman upon the man corrodes her personality, stunts her development and stunts her mind...[79]

In the *Herald's* narratives, women experienced the same institutional oppression through gender inequality and financial dependence that working men experienced under capitalism. Both men and women were unrecognised and alienated because they had no control over the means of production. The newspaper reasoned that once women were emancipated from the yoke of gendered exploitation, they would immediately join workers' movements because their causes were fundamentally the same. As men's equals, reimagined women were depicted as passionate trade unionists and socialists. Like all working people, their salvation was in the Labour movement and their recognition lay in revolution. The *Herald* claimed in its editorials:

> Labour fought for the political emancipation of women when all other parties were hostile; and *Labour will fight on, not merely to complete women's political emancipation, but also to secure their economic and industrial emancipation*… The women have a hard struggle before them... *Only by standing shoulder to shoulder with men, by using to the full common with men both their economic and political power, can women hope to avert these disasters*.[80]

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[78] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 13 October, 1918, p 2.
[79] *Daily Herald*, 31 August, 1918, p 6.
[80] *Daily Herald*, 23 November, 1918, p 23.

Whilst it initially remained more circumspect than the *Herald*, *Reynolds* also voiced indignation over the dismissal of women workers. By the end of 1918, it argued that mass dismissals were unreasonable and unjust:

> Women are already being discharged in scores of thousands and while the Government has generously provided temporary relief for their unemployment, what of their future! Are their years of training and experience to be wasted![81]

By the end of 1918, then, the Labourite press was constructing narratives which held that women were being unfairly dismissed from their positions and—more importantly—at risk of being returned to their inferior statuses which existed before the war. Although never explicitly stated by either *Reynolds* or the *Herald*, a precedent had been set by these narratives. For Britain to achieve a more just, socialist society, reimagined women required the same rights and recognition as men in the workforce and the Government. If capitalism could renege on its promises to reimagined women, it could do the same to all workers.

1918 oversaw both the partial enfranchisement of women and a new constitution for the Labour Party, which included the creation of a separate women's organisation. Labour also reserved places for women on the governing National Executive Committee. Individual female party members were offered women's sections to join in wards and larger borough constituencies.

The 1918 Labour Constitution created a new space for women. Brooke argues that this recognised women's formal place in the public sphere as economic and political actors, but also marked them as a discrete political category. It set in place important tensions in the relationship between the party and women throughout the entire century. Discursively and structurally, Labour, unlike its Conservative and Liberal counterparts, was now a gendered being.[82] Often, however, 'women's issues' were considered less important than class struggle. This was the main component of the gendered hegemony in the Labourite press.

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[81] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 1 December, 1918, p 7.
[82] Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, pp 43-44.

For all their contributions, women were subsumed by the struggles of trade unions and proletarians. The male world of workers' struggle continually depicted them as feminine helpers. Even in the socialist press, women could only gain what agency they had by interacting with this world, especially as the 'threats' of capitalism and reaction took precedence over gendered issues. Even though they objected to the dismissal of women from the workforce, the arguments made by the Labourite press were from a maternalist perspective; both *Reynolds* and the *Herald* placed male workers and class struggle first in their narratives. This was how left-wing newspapers helped construct gendered hegemony.

After the war ended, the threat of capitalist exploitation was once again the main antagonist in the left-wing popular press. Although *Reynolds* and the *Herald* agreed on relatively little, both considered that a greater struggle for the rights of women and the proletariat would occur in the coming years. Much like their depiction of women, however, such proclamations often seemed ornamental. Narratives in the mainstream and Labourite press both depicted women as to be celebrated in public, but that they should mostly remain in the home. As I explore in the next chapter, however, the issue of Bolshevism kept the narrative of reimagined women from being completely erased in the British popular press.

Reimagined women also remained popular because their narratives conveyed what British women were not. After Armistice was declared in November 1918, hostility towards Russia intensified and domestic anxieties over strikes and revolution captured the popular imagination, the reimagined woman remained a symbol of Britain's conservative ideas in the right-wing popular press. Reimagined women were venerated because they were depicted as unsullied by the filth of war, unrest and revolution. They were a purifying, regenerative force. These anxieties over revolution and social change were often constructed with Euro-Orientalist narratives.

Orientalism, Euro-Orientalism and the European Post-War Order

Before exploring how the Bolsheviks altered press narratives regarding enemy and victimised women, how the Bolsheviks and Russia were 'othered' by the British popular press must be examined. This involves a short exploration of the theories of Orientalism and Euro-Orientalism. Although the Bolsheviks were prescribed many of Germany's loathsome qualities by the British popular press, their depiction as Asiatic made them a more alien, barbarous entity than the 'Hun'. To understand how Russia made a sudden transition from a respected ally to an alien enemy of Britain, the nation's paradoxical identity and depiction in Western Europe needs to be discussed. Unlike Germany, regarded as European until British propaganda claimed its actions suggested otherwise, Russia's European identity had long been controversial in Western narratives. These were used to construct a cultural, political and gendered hegemony by conveying the fates which could befall Western womanhood should Bolshevism spread to Britain.

Edward Said describes Orientalism as depictions of flexible positional superiority between Western and Eastern cultures. It places the Westerner in a vast series of possible relationships with the East. These represent scenarios in which the Westerner and Western culture are depicted as superior to the Easterner and Eastern culture. Orientalism depicts Eastern culture as irrational, depraved or 'fallen', childlike and 'different'. Western culture, in contrast, is depicted as rational, virtuous, mature and 'normal'. Whilst Western society is seen as humanised, democratic, advanced and moral, the Orient is depicted as despotic, backward and barbaric.

The otherness of the Orient is not merely an object of derision or pity, however. It is also threatening to Western culture. One of the more overt threats of Orientalism is sexual: men of the East are depicted as exploiting and abusing women. Orientalism insinuates a moral and sexual danger from the East. In Orientalism, Western rationality is undermined by Eastern excess. Ergo, Westerners can be victimised or 'corrupted' by Eastern culture when exposed to it. The Orient represents a world

upside-down. Its values, especially those regarding sexuality and gender, are depicted as the opposite of what the West regards as normal and moral.[83]

Utilising Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, Said argues that Orientalism 'others' Eastern cultures, based on relationships of power and domination. Hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony, gives Orientalism its durability and strength in the West; the idea that European identity is superior to all non-European peoples and cultures. In addition to the hegemony of Western ideas about the Orient, a constant reiteration of Western superiority over Oriental backwardness is promulgated. Said contends that this typically overrides the possibility that a more independent or sceptical thinker will be able to have different views on the matter or have those views legitimised in Western society.[84]

Orientalism and otherness are not restricted to Asia and North Africa. Whilst Said's analysis on Orientalism is largely based on Western depictions of the Middle East, North Africa and, to a lesser extent, South and East Asia, Ezequiel Adamovsky's theory of Euro-Orientalism is based on hegemonic power relationships which Western cultures utilise to other and demean Eastern Europe (*Europa Orientale*) and Russia. Unlike Asia and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Russia are depicted as possessing a mixed or semi-Oriental identity; neither fully European nor entirely Asiatic. This mixed identity makes Euro-Orientalism distinct from Orientalism.

Adamovsky argues that the othering of Russia is connected to a cultural hegemony which promulgates Western liberalism as the world's healthiest, most civilised system. In the early twentieth century, Russia did not fit the mould of a liberal European nation state. Russia's lack of a Third Estate was a cliché in Western scholarship, which attempted to explain its dissimilarity to Western Europe. Russia and Eastern Europe were—and in some instances, still are—viewed as under-developed civilisations in the West. Whilst the concept that Russia was unable to become 'civilised' in the Western European sense became hegemonic, Russia and Eastern Europe can also be

[83] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: 1978), pp 7, 40, 57, 150.
[84] Said, *Orientalism*, p 7.

viewed as a promising candidate for Europeanisation in Euro-Orientalism.[85] Thus, Russia was not always depicted as a threatening other, but also as a backwards neighbour who could be guided along the path to Westernisation. During the First World War, the notion that Russia was Westernising was a popular narrative in Britain. Moreover, as in Orientalism, contrasting cultures are gendered in Euro-Orientalist discourse. Western culture is depicted as masculine and virile, while Eastern culture is characterised as effeminate and enervated.[86]

Euro-Orientalism has ebbed and flowed in Western consciousness, largely depending on international relations between Russia and the West. Prior to the First World War and October Revolution, it was waning in Britain. Martin Malia claims that following the Crimean War, Tsarism was no longer regarded as an overt threat to Western Europe. By the twentieth century, Tsarist Russia was merely perceived as disquieting. The British press occasionally printed narratives of an advancing Russian menace, such as in the Balkans in 1877-78, or Central Asia in the 1880s. However, once Russia was defeated in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, the British press began to regard it as inept rather than threatening. British concerns shifted towards Germany's growing navy. By 1914, Russia had again transformed into a European ally of Britain.

In 1914, Britain and France, Russia's oldest ill-wishers, with societies most unlike it in Europe, came to the defence of Tsarist interests in the Balkans. A shared concern for their own security led the Entente to wage war on the Central Powers without regard for the consequences for Western civilisation or claims which Russia could legitimately make once victory had been achieved.[87]

Although survival may have been the primary concern of Britain and Russia, they also shared commonalities which elicited a certain degree of affection. The Russian royal family had been integrated in European politics and were often looked upon favourably in the UK. Although not as

[85] Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism: Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (9c. 1740-1880)*, (Bern: 2006), pp 19, 83, 113.
[86] Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism*, pp 265-266.
[87] Martin Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*, (Cambridge: 2000), pp 159, 166, 242.

technologically advanced as Western Europe, creeping industrialisation and the slow growth of the bourgeoisie in Russia was met with Western approval. At the beginning of the First World War, Russia was presented as a European power in Britain. The ascent of the Bolsheviks, however, meant that identity was once again lost in most Western newspapers.

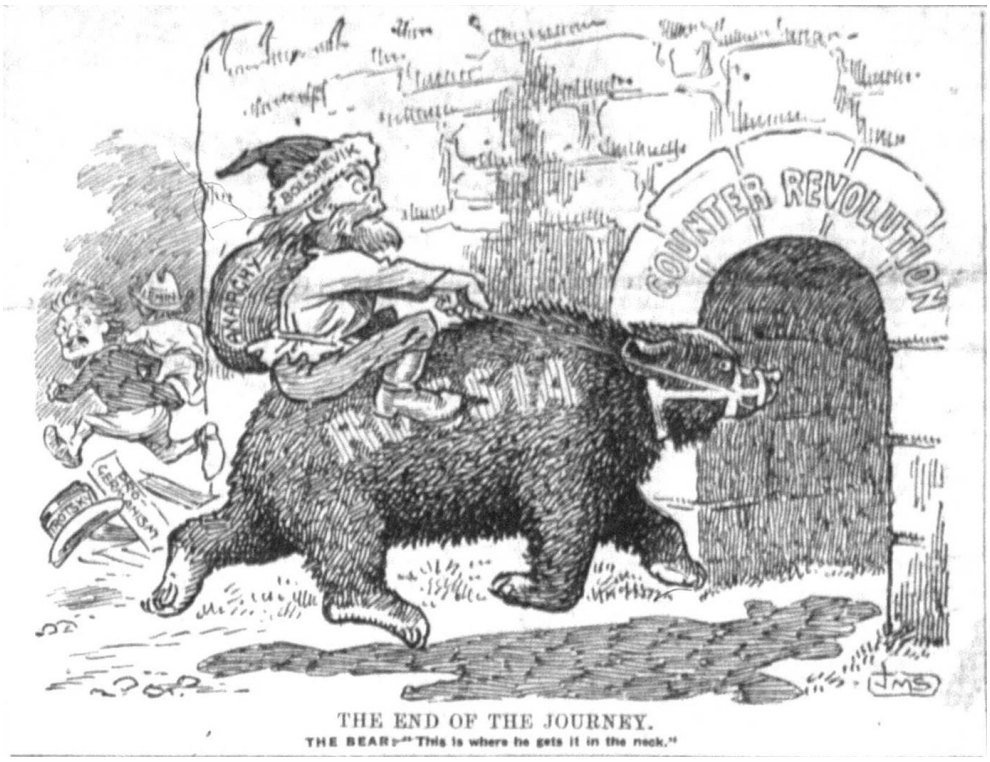
After the October Revolution, the image of Russia once again reversed course. Instead of a backward ally of the West, Russia embodied—or claimed to embody—socialism, antithetical to the capitalist system endorsed by liberals and conservatives in the West. This made Russia the continent's premier ideological power. Malia argues that from 1917-1991, Russia was judged less as a nation than as humanity's pilot socialist society.[88] On the left, this meant the advancement of the paradoxically European ideals of socialism and communism. On the right, it symbolised Russia's return to Oriental despotism and cultural degeneration.

Adamovsky deduces that Euro-Orientalist narratives have often been the primary means through which Western cultures have rationalised Russia's sudden departure from liberal democracy and capitalism. From a Western, Eurocentric perspective, the critical element of Westernisation, liberal democracy, failed to materialise in Russia in 1917. This was attributed to an absence of a middle-class. As Russia ultimately failed to meet the political and economic standards of Western Europe's ruling classes, it once again lost its already tenuous European identity. While the British popular press on both right and left depicted the February Revolution and Kerensky Government as a much-desired victory for Western rationality, that 'progress' was lost to Bolshevism and Anarchism later that year. After the October Revolution, Russia was depicted as a victim of its 'Asiatic' passions. Instead of advancing into Western rationality, it succumbed to the 'peasant mob'.[89]

This 'failure' to advance into Western civilisation in 1917 consolidated the concept of Euro-Orientalism in the twentieth century. After the First World War and October Revolution, Western powers redrew the map of Eastern Europe to separate it from the 'Asiatic' influence of Bolshevism.

[88] Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes*, p 246.
[89] Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism*, pp 223, 276.

As the cartoon below illustrates, Russians were increasingly depicted as uncivilised, barbarous and Asiatic as the Bolsheviks gained power and influence.



An Asiatic, dishevelled peasant, representing Bolshevism and Anarchy. He is steering the Russian bear away from progress.[90]

Adamovsky argues that the primary contrasts between Western civilisation and Eastern civilisation in Orientalism are comparable to Euro-Orientalism:

The West	**Russia or Eastern Europe (Oriental)**
Civilisation	Barbarity
Modernity, Development, Progress	Traditionalism, Underdevelopment, Stagnation
Freedom	Despotism or Totalitarianism
Middle-Class	Lack of Middle-Class
Civil Society or Intermediate Corps	Lack of Civil Society or Intermediate Corps

[90] *News of the World*, 18 August, 1918, p 1.

Private Property	Collective Property
Pluralism or 'Diversity'	Homogeneity
Individuals	Masses
Liberalism	Communism

These socio-historical oppositions convey implicit moral judgements: civilisation is better than barbarity; progress is preferable to stagnation. The normative ambition of Euro-Orientalism becomes more obvious in its cultural and binary oppositions:

The West	**Russia or Eastern Europe (Oriental)**
Education ('civilisation')	Cultural Handicaps
Balance	Contradictions
Normal	Deviant
Rational	Irrational
Authentic	(Fake) Imitation
Capable	Incapable
Active	Passive[91]

The dual identity which Euro-Orientalism prescribes to Russia and Eastern Europe makes it 'naturally' more pernicious and sexually threatening to Western culture. If the European East was a European entity corrupted by Oriental characteristics, other European cultures could also be contaminated. From a Euro-Orientalist perspective, the spread of Bolshevism—which the British popular press claimed was distinctly alien to Western identity—was not merely the expansion of a new ideology comparable to the French Revolution. It was given the characteristics of a foreign, cancerous culture that threatened to unmake Western civilisation. In the British popular press, this was often constructed with gendered examples and metaphors.

[91] Adamosvsky, *Euro-Orientalism*, pp 265-266.

In the same way as the Orient was depicted as a sexual and cultural threat to white womanhood, Bolshevism was portrayed as a far more aggressive iteration of that narrative. This was melded with existing narratives of German atrocities towards women in the popular press. The rise of Bolshevism signalled the continuation of the First World War and culture war in the male fantasies of the British popular press. Euro-Orientalism magnified the alien threat of Bolshevism against Western society and Western womanhood. In 1918, Euro-Orientalist fantasies were incorporated into narratives on enemy and victimised women to accommodate a cultural, gendered hegemony in Britain.

Enemy Women and Bolshevik Degeneration

From the beginning of 1918, enemy women or 'Red Women' were depicted as agents of the Bolshevik regime by the press. During this period, they were assigned Euro-Orientalist qualities. They were portrayed as part of an unclean mass which represented an uncivilised, alien ideology. Characterised as a frenzied mass, the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism were often depicted as social contaminants who inflamed the passions of the lowest members of society. When this occurred, violence always followed. They represented the opposite of individualised British reimagined women.

Asa Briggs notes that identification of the crowd with 'lower' instincts, emotions, and sensations was a particularly common anxiety among the British upper-classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'Mobs', 'multitudes', and 'dangerous classes' frequently exerted an ominous presence among British elites. The rise of mass retail, growth of socialism and emergence of mass entertainment all contributed to a heightened fear of the 'masses' and their potential manipulators.[92] In right-wing narratives, Bolshevism often represented these anxieties. Those fears were sold to middle-class audiences. Bolshevik women were part of these depictions. These

[92] Asa Briggs, 'The Language of "Class" in Early Nineteenth-Century England' and 'Language of "Mass" and "Masses" in Nineteenth-Century England', ed. Asa Briggs, *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs vol 1: Words, Numbers, Places, People,* (Urbana: 1985), pp 3-33, 34-54.

narratives were sensationalised by press barons, whose power increased at the end of the First World War.

Adrian Bingham highlights that as the First World War ended, Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, helped create an 'atmosphere of suspicion and distrust' by utilising 'great newspaper proprietors'—such as Lords Northcliffe, Rothermere and Beaverbrook, all of whom were appointed to official positions in the Government.[93] Proprietors such as Northcliffe and Beaverbrook were deeply immersed in political life. However, they were pragmatic about what their target markets would read. Rather than marginalise politics, they sought to make it more accessible, more spectacular, more relevant to everyday life.[94] This marriage of politics and sensational narratives symbolised the Government's official blessing of the right-wing popular press as an organ of civil society. Those narratives were a means of preventing an organic crisis, in which revolutionaries might become influential in Britain.

Newspapers like the *Derby Daily Telegraph* gave specific examples of what revolution and the spread of Bolshevism meant:

> Combined forces of Russians, and hordes of the lowest class of native Socialists, infected by the Bolshevik passion for murder and destruction… and spreading terror and desolation, not as warriors, but as brigands, murdering and torturing as they go.[95]

The right-wing press often depicted Soviet Russia as a nation of criminals who ruled with brutality. Russians, once Britain's noble allies, were described in Euro-Orientalist tropes following the October Revolution by newspapers such as the *Mail*. Russian civilians were also now described as barbaric and grotesque by *Mail* journalists.

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[93] Austen Chamberlain, House of Commons Debates, vol. 103, February 19, 1918, cols, 656-657. During the war, Northcliffe was Head of Propaganda in Enemy Countries; Rothermere was Air Minister; and Beaverbrook was Minister of Information.

[94] Adrian Bingham, 'An Organ of Uplift?': The Popular Press and Political Culture in Interwar Britain', eds. Sarah Newman & Matt Houlbrook, *The Press and Popular Culture in Interwar Europe*, (Abingdon: 2014), pp 14-15.

[95] *Derby Daily Telegraph*, Saturday, 16 February, 1918.

> The [Russian] townsfolk take their evening promenade. They are mostly women with their hair cut boyishly short in a barbarous fashion, which to my eyes does not add to their charm. Some of them wear white socks reaching above their boots and leaving expanse of limb revealed.[96]

Violent, tyrannical women often formed part of these narratives. The *Liverpool Echo* described how when Bolshevik men and women took to the streets in Moscow, chaos and death followed.

> A large Bolshevik procession consisting of armed soldiers, workmen, women and children, and enemy prisoners of war, was crossing the theatre-square when two revolver shots were fired from the windows of Hotel Metropole. In the panic which ensued the Red Guard and soldiers started a disorderly fire, killing and wounding men, women and children.[97]

Red Women were given special attention by the right-wing press: as antithetical to British concepts of femininity and morality. One of the primary ways in which political and gendered hegemony was constructed through the British press was through narratives that demonised and othered Bolshevik women as alien. The *Mail* described the otherness of a Red Woman in detail, when it reported on the 'Woman Judge in Petrograd':

> The chief judge is an obese Jewess, with oiled locks, who lolls on the seat while all around her press a crew of Soviet delegates… This woman normally condemns five or six officers per day, but how many deaths occur in the prisons really no one knows.[98]

The *Mail* described Red Women in a manner that negated their Western characteristics, including their femininity. Their means of adjudicating were brutal and barbaric, instead of rational and temperate. Their hair was oily and unwashed; filthy. They were obese instead of beautiful and healthy. And they were Jews, not Christians.

Anti-Semitic narratives regarding women and Bolshevism will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter. It is worth noting, however, that in 1918, the prominence of men of Jewish backgrounds in the Bolshevik revolution fuelled a new wave of bigotry. Suspicions that 'Ashkenazi' Jews worked in concert with Prussian militarists were prevalent. Adrian Gregory notes that these

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[96] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 3 August, 1918, p 3.
[97] *Liverpool Echo*, Saturday, 26 January, 1918.
[98] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 28 December, 1918, p 6.

anti-Semitic narratives were embraced by conspiracy theorists in the Entente towards the end of the war.[99]

In 1918, the right-wing press also endeavoured to symbolically connect Bolshevik and German women as anathema to Western femininity. The *Mail* claimed that German women were 'a sorry figure compared with our British women and girls… what heroic exploits she may have accomplished (if any) remain unchronicled.' The newspaper elaborated on her wickedness and degeneration:

> Of her cruelties and outrageous behaviour to our wounded we have heard some details, but nothing like all. Of any kindness or consideration shown to them we have yet to learn… After all lack of *race* is the best explanation of the German woman's inferiority. Germany is no land of Grace Darlings and Florence Nightingales.[100]

These depictions of Bolshevik and German women converged with narratives of the Spartacist woman in Germany. Even before the First World War ended, the right-wing press made dire warnings about the spread of Bolshevism in Europe, especially in Germany.

The Northcliffe Press frequently claimed that Germany and the Bolsheviks were acting in concert. Their depiction depended on the newspaper in question: sometimes as willing converts to Bolshevism, such as when the *Mirror* reported that '2,000 German prisoners in Eastern Siberia have been armed and are helping the Bolsheviks'[101]. In other cases, the narrative treated the Bolsheviks as mere puppets of the Germans, such as in reports that the Czech Legion had met 'desperate resistance' in Siberia 'from the German-led Bolshevik forces…'[102].

After armistice was declared, the *Mirror* asserted that an unholy alliance between Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Bolsheviks was responsible for civil unrest in Germany. This narrative also denied any Western identity to those the *Mirror* declared 'tainted' by Bolshevism or 'Prussianism'; these terms

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[99] Adrian Gregory, *A War of Peoples, 1914-1919*, (Oxford: 2014), p 136.
[100] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 31 December, 1918, p 4.
[101] *Daily Mirror*, Friday, 8 March, 1918.
[102] *Daily Mirror*, 21 August, 1918, p 3.

were often used interchangeably by the popular press, which claimed that German soldiers returning from the Eastern Front were 'universally tinged with Bolshevism'[103].

The supposed connection between Germany and the Bolsheviks influenced the first depictions of the Spartacist woman. In late 1918, the *Mail* depicted German women as the cruel union of the *Kraftfrau* and the Bolshevik. They dreamed of violence and schemed to bring bloody revolution to Germany and the rest of Europe.

> Tea-table talk among women just now is of reprisals they will take against surly, insolent, tyrannous tradesmen when normal supply and demand obtain once more… 'It would be a bright idea', suggested one housewife at a tea-table Soviet-Spartacus Revolutionary Committee yesterday, 'if someone would publish a little pocket hand-book for housewives with advice on meeting with desperate resistance from the German-led Bolshevik force, similar to that given to our soldiers when they enter into occupation of a defeated country'.[104]

By depicting these women as both morally and physically repugnant, the right-wing press was unsexing them, making acts of violence against both German women and Bolshevik women acceptable. Depicted as forsaking their Western and feminine identities, they were no longer entitled to 'gentlemanly behaviour'. It also served as a warning of what could happen to British women if they were radicalised. The *Mail* used this narrative to justify the deaths of female civilians in Germany during the civil unrest that followed Armistice.

> … the Spartacus group are unfortunately able to-day to make great capital of the fact that women and unarmed men were shot down, though Ebert's papers roundly assert the firing began from the Brownings on the side of the Spartacus group. The latter are now being recruited from reckless Moabit gangs with nothing to lose, refuse of [Berlin's] population…[105]

There was also a distinct narrative on class when Bolshevik women were first described in 1918. In both Russia and Germany, these women were depicted as immoral, working-class criminals. Further narratives on the Spartacist woman will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

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[103] *Daily Mirror*, Tuesday 10 December, 1918, p 3.
[104] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 10 December, 1918, p 3.
[105] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 10 December, 1918, p 5.

Anxieties of women being politically and sexually corrupted were also extended to women in Britain. These were interchangeable with descriptions of British women strikers, pacifists and prostitutes. Several newspapers claimed that the seeds of anarchy seen in Russia and German could germinate within radical women in Britain:

> Bolshevism, with its doctrines of class war and pacifism, has destroyed Russia. Let us profit by the lesson. Of course, what these syndicalists, Bolsheviks, pacifists, or whatever you want to call them, really want is that they should govern you and rule Great Britain—that is what Lenin and Trotsky really wanted. Russia gave it to them and was destroyed.[106]

The *Mirror,* citing protests by left-wing suffragettes in summer 1918, gave a more specific warning. It declared that radical female agitators could be the nation's undoing following demobilisation.

> Most of us thought the militant suffragettes 'very wrong' when, before the war, they adopted the irrelevant, and what we then though the feminine argument of breaking things because they wanted a vote… We think it a mistake to be too tolerant, any longer, to these manifestations… Otherwise we approach anarchy like that, so little admired in words and so often imitated in action, of our Bolshevik friends in fallen and Kaiser-ridden Russia.[107]

Fears of violent, radical proletarian and lumpenproletarian women became more pronounced in 1918 as labour agitation increased. The *Daily Record* reported that women strikers ferociously attacked other women in London.

> Women street cleaners began work in Holborn, London, yesterday, under police protection. Five of them were attacked by female relatives of the men strikers, who seized their brooms and beat them with them.[108]

The *Echo* reported that emboldened radical women heckled Winston Churchill after he declared, 'We want to bring back the lads who fought to clean British homes, not Bolshevist pigsties', in Dundee.[109] As Bolshevism risked infecting other nations, the right-wing press created a narrative that women in all nations, including the UK, were vulnerable to contamination; another danger which

[106] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 22 July, 1918, p 4.
[107] *Daily Mirror*, Saturday, 8 June, 1918, p 6.
[108] *Daily Record*, Tuesday, 24 September, 1918, p 3.
[109] *Liverpool Echo*, Friday, 6 December, 1918, p 4.

returning British soldiers would face. As we have noted, working-class women and prostitutes were already depicted as wicked and dangerous. As men returned home, those enemy women were, apparently, lying in wait.

The *Mail* predicted that as British soldiers demobilised, wicked proletarian women would descend upon them.

> When the demobilisation of the Army begins officers and men will do well to take special care not to get into the clutches of gangs of West End harpies and sharps who are already making arrangements to fleece them.[110]

Just as in 1916 and 1917, British soldiers were portrayed as pure and virtuous by most right-wing newspapers. Low-born women, especially prostitutes, threatened to infect and corrupt them. Symbolically, these women were treated just like Red Women. Both were dehumanised as brutal and amoral, both were regarded as a mass of low-born, unwashed criminals, and both were depicted as irrational or hysterical: the antithesis of Western rationality. These British women were portrayed as having lost their Western characteristics. This made them easy to classify as Bolsheviks from a Euro-Orientalist lens. Those criminal, monstrous women now threatened to taint British men with Bolshevism; and bring ruin to Britain in exactly the way that Red Women had done to Russia and Germany.

Red Women and those susceptible to becoming one were always depicted in contrast to reimagined women in the right-wing press. The latter retained their Western, feminine identity: individual patriots of good character who did not become part of an unwashed mass. Women who did not recognise their economic and gendered place were, by contrast, dehumanised.

Victimised Women, Bolshevism and Euro-Orientalism

Like Orientalist narratives of the East, Soviet Russia was depicted as a degenerated state which threatened white Western womanhood within its borders. Unlike the Orient, however, Euro-

[110] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 10 December, 1918, p 3.

Orientalist narratives in British press depicted Russia as a clear and present danger to womanhood in Europe. The right-wing popular press sent a clear message through its narratives about life in Soviet Russia: Bolsheviks had machinations to expand across Europe and the world. They warned that what was happening to women there could soon be happening at home. When the Bolsheviks were described as a frenzied mass, this embodied an anxiety that they could spill over into Western civilisation and forever taint it with filth. This filth was an amalgamation of anxieties which focused on class, foreignness and sexuality. This was meant to disgust the reader and compel them to adhere to the political, gendered hegemony in Britain: by evincing sexualised concept of 'filth' and claiming that the country must be 'purified' to restore itself.

Klaus Theweleit holds that the inter-war right-wing concept of filth represented contamination from left-wing terrorism, defeatism and the vulgar sexuality of working-class women. Defined simply as filth, these concepts were amalgamated into a singular threat to conservative, masculine national identity.[111] He argues that right-wing concepts of preservation and regeneration were promulgated as a symbolic act of purification. To preserve this, the British right-wing press attempted to rhetorically repulse perceived political social and sexual threats which might 'contaminate' Britain. Unlike Germany, Austria and Hungary, however, it did not incite acts of violence to purify British society—instead arguing that it must remain vigilant towards the multiple alien threats outside its borders. This defined both reimagined women and enemy women.

Narratives on Bolshevik atrocities were initially sparse. National attention remained fixated on the Western Front and the Germans throughout most of 1918. The first narratives of atrocities committed by the Bolsheviks had little differentiation from generalised accounts of German atrocities in France and Belgium. In early 1918, these atrocities lacked a sexual narrative: the Bolsheviks were merely depicted as frenzied zealots committed to killing innocents. The *Echo*

[111] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Vol I: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, (Minneapolis: 1987), p. 390.

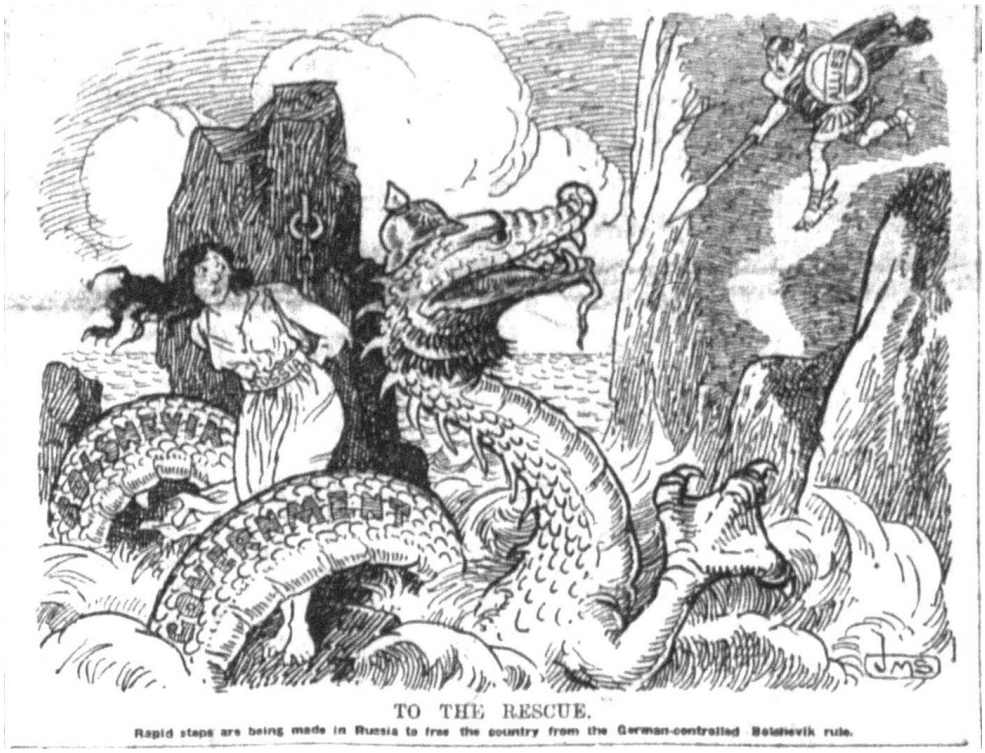
claimed that in Finland, Red Guards had 'seized all food… [and are] murdering women and children, the plan being to kill all capitalists over twelve years of age'[112].

One of the first depictions of women victimised by the Bolsheviks came from the *Daily Record*, which reported on the fate of the all-women Battalion of Death, which it had praised the previous year.

> We were told that when the Red Guard, armed by the Bolsheviks, sacked the Winter Palace, they arrested some hundreds of women who were defending it, handing them over to the soldiers' licentiousness. It is doubly sad to think that such an outrage was inflicted upon women whose patriotism compelled them to enter the fray, when we remember the great role they have played in creating a free Russia… Lion-hearted indeed they were, those noble women who in their last hour, after having drunk from the cup of humiliation and suffering to its very dregs, soared above the misery of their surroundings, because they believed in a happy and free Russia.[113]

From 1918 onwards, there would be little or no celebration or reverence for Russian women. In the right-wing press, women under Bolshevism were depicted as either victimised or degenerate. As in the cartoon below, this was often pictured through dramatic, national allegories.

[112] *Liverpool Echo*, Friday, 15 February, 1918, p 6.
[113] *Daily Record*, January 1918, p 2.



A victimised, feminine Russia held captive by the pickelhelmed (read: German) Bolshevik dragon, awaiting rescue from Western civilisation.[114]

For much of 1918, however, narratives of women victimised by Bolshevism were not published. Bolshevism was often considered unworthy of the media's attention while a stalemate in France persisted. There were occasionally accounts of Bolshevik aggression in Asia and tensions between Russia and Romania in spring and summer 1918; but much of what was occurring in Russia, China and Eastern Europe did not receive a tremendous amount of attention until Armistice was declared.

When Russia was mentioned explicitly by the right-wing press, it was done so as a cautionary tale of how revolution ruins nations and peoples. In mid-1918, the *Mail* described Russia as a once proud nation which lay in ruins and under the thrall of Germany.

> The whole of Bolshevik Russia has become a shambles in which men and women are done to death more savagely than they are in Dahomey. Civilisation has ceased to exist… The whole middle class is being wiped out. But with it the workers are perishing. They are as yet powerless to do anything but protest. The Red Guards under German officers watch them

[114] *News of the World*, 25 August, 1918, p 1.

> with machine guns; but for all that they have dared to speak… Class warfare, in fact, spells starvation and ruin for all and not for the 'bourgeoisie' only.[115]

Despite being a left-wing, socialist newspaper, *Reynolds' Newspaper* also used this Euro-Orientalist narrative. However, unlike the right-wing press, it initially refused to condemn Russia as lost to 'Asiatic despotism'. While perpetuating the narrative that Bolsheviks and Germans were working in concert to undermine democracy and Western civilisation, *Reynolds* believed that Russia was not a lost cause; it could still be saved by the West.

> Russia, whose position in becoming more and more critical, **demands Allied intervention in order to save the country from the increasing infiltration of German colonists. The moment for action on the part of all the Powers of the Entente has come**...[116]

Paul Ward notes that the British pro-war left frequently hailed Russia's deposed Minister Chairman, Alexander Kerensky, and chided the Bolsheviks as 'the vanguard of the triumphant German imperialism'[117]. In 1917 and throughout 1918, the newspaper remained a vigorous proponent of the February Revolution and supporter of Kerensky. In summer 1918, it printed a glowing but Euro-Orientalist character study of Kerensky, depicting him as a tragic hero who might have 'civilised' Russia.

> By one of those strange intuitions which are common at times of great exaltation like the present we knew that in Alexander Feodorvich Kerensky, Russia had thrown up a great man... Russia, living still in the twilight of medievalism, and intoxicated with the heady draught of Western modernism, this young man, with the sallow, Asiatic face, and infinitely sad, inscrutable eyes, took upon his shoulders that 'titan and too vast orb'. He tried to save Russia![118]

Unlike the right-wing press, *Reynolds* refused to condemn the Russians as 'savages'. It continued to view it as a dignified nation which cried out for Britain's aid against Germany and the Bolsheviks.

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[115] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday 18 September, 1918, p 2.
[116] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 23 June, 1918, p 1.
[117] Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881*-1924, (Suffolk: 1998), p 156; Labour Party, *Conference Report*, June 1918, pp. 60-61. See: *Graubard*, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, pp 57-62.
[118] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 30 June, 1918, p 1.

> Russian soldiers, who have been our faithful comrades-in-arms and the pride of our poilus, are entitled to expect that we will be faithful to them and not let their country fall under the Prussian jack-boot.[119]

Reynolds explained that it was 'standing by France' in the West and had 'no intention of abandoning Russia to the mercy of Germany' in the East.[120] It perpetuated a Euro-Orientalist narrative that Russia was too backwards to look after itself; thus, it desperately required Western intervention. It argued that if Russia was lost, it would become a German colony, and the Russian people would be condemned to 'Prussian serfdom'. As shown in the illustration below, *Reynolds'* depicted the Germans as dishonest brokers of a black peace with Russia.

The naïve, backwards Bolshevik extends peace to the German, who secretly plans for war.[121]

Allied intervention, *Reynolds* asserted, would be an attempt to liberate the Russians from this yoke. If the Bolsheviks were defeated, Russia could reclaim the democracy won by the February Revolution. *Reynolds* created a narrative that attempted to absolve the Russian people of

[119] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 7 July, 1918, p 2.
[120] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 14 July, 1918, p 2.
[121] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 3 March, 1918, p 3.

Bolshevism. As a newspaper, it repeatedly asserted that it was 'not anti-Russian, but anti-German'.[122] It consistently defended the Russians as a captive people, who could be liberated and 'redeemed' by the West.

> None of us like many of the things the Bolsheviks are doing, but they do not represent the Russian people, as it is claimed… We all want to see the regeneration of Russia and its removal from the domination of Germany, but let us get associated in their minds with reason and jiggery-pokery of all sorts, and goodbye to our chance of working in sympathy with them in the future.[123]

The newspaper depicted white Russians as dignified, 'true' Russians—a positive, yet condescending Euro-Orientalist narrative; while the Bolsheviks were assigned negative Euro-Orientalist characterisations. It claimed that the latter had 'acted… in frenzied hostilities to the British and French population [in Moscow].'[124]

The newspaper, in other words, indulged in the same narratives which insisted that the Bolsheviks represented a violent, frenzied, unwashed mass. It published fears of an Eastern mass spreading. It described its consequences through lurid tales. As with the right-wing press, women were depicted as Bolsheviks' primary victims. In fact, *Reynolds* was one of the first newspapers to report more gruesome accounts of the Bolsheviks:

> A woman selling bread at 12 roubles a pound… a Bolshevik Commissioner, without any explanation, killed her with a revolver, remarking to the spectators that it was speculation on her part, and should be punished. A crowd soon gathered, and enviously eyed the loaves of bloodstained bread which had dropped from the hands of the dead woman… An indescribable rush followed. The body of the woman was trampled underfoot, while the mob struggled for the possession of the blood-stained loaves.[125]

Although these narratives did not depict women as objects of sexualised cruelty, they sometimes narrated how they could be victimised by the social chaos created by the Bolsheviks and their

[122] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 11 August, 1918, p 2.
[123] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 11 August, 1918, p 2.
[124] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 8 September, 1918, p 1.
[125] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 22 December, 1918, p 1.

German puppet masters. As Russia degenerated, women were depicted as the main victims. This narrative become increasingly common after hostilities with Germany ceased.

After Armistice, with the threat of Germany no longer considered immediate, the press began to make wide use of gendered narratives regarding the Bolsheviks. Like narratives of German atrocities during the First World War, these were initially episodic, focusing on stories repeated throughout the press. The first of these narratives centred on what the *Echo* referred to as 'Bolshevik love':

> A decree issued by the Bolsheviks of Vladimir and published in the official state organ 'Izvestija'. It would be superfluous to comment upon this and similar measures to substitute promiscuity for marriage: —
>
> 'A girl having reached her 18th year is to be considered the property of the State.
>
> Any girl having reached her 18th year and not having married is obliged, subject to the most severe penalty, to register at the Bureau of Free Love in the Commissariat of Surveillance.
>
> Having registered at the Bureau of Free Love, she has the right to choose from among men between the ages of 19 and 30, a cohabitating husband.
>
> Men between the ages of 19 and 50 have the right to choose from among the registered women even without the consent of the latter, in the interests of the State.
>
> Children who are the issue of these unions are to become the property of the State.'[126]

The Bolshevik 'decree' that women were the communal property of the State in Soviet Russia was repeated verbatim in right-wing newspapers throughout Britain, each with their own observations. The *Mail* referred to it as the 'nationalisation of women', while the *News* declared it a 'State effort to destroy the sanctity of marriage'[127]. The origins of the story, however, were not cited.

According to David Mitchell, it originated from British propaganda pamphlets that fabricated eye-witness accounts by soldiers and reports by Soviet newspapers.[128] This information was fed to right-wing newspapers in the UK and reprinted ad nauseum. Although numerous crimes against civilians

[126] *Liverpool Echo*, Saturday, 2 November, 1918, p 3.
[127] *News of the World*, 3 November, 1918, p 1.
[128] David Mitchell, *1919: Red Mirage*, (London: 1970), pp 259-260.

during the Russian civil war were reported accurately, this story of state-sponsored sexual slavery by the Bolsheviks was purely fictitious. Its power to fascinate and disgust audiences, however, was undeniable.

By printing a narrative that women were being confiscated as property for sexual use, the right-wing popular press revisited rape narratives used to depict Germans during the war. It also employed Euro-Orientalist stereotypes. Depictions of German sex crimes were initially considered even more abhorrent because they were committed by a Western society. It led to the creation of the 'Hun', which denied Germans their Western identity. Russia, however, already had an ambiguous European identity. This allowed the British press to depict Russia through a Euro-Orientalist lens more easily than Germany or Austria.

The Bolsheviks were more easily portrayed as irrational, violent and lascivious for this reason. Narratives on the 'nationalisation of women' were comparable to Orientalist depictions of harems and white slavery. In both instances, women of status and virtue risked being abused and degraded in the most terrible ways imaginable by a culture considered fundamentally alien. Unlike the Orientalist depiction of the harem, however, Bolshevism was depicted as instituting sexual slavery on a national scale. The primary difference was that Orientalist concepts of stagnation meant that the Middle East and North Africa were not viewed as immediate threats to Europe. Russia and Bolshevism, though, were considered a threat.

This embodied two separate Orientalist concepts. In either context, however, they were viewed as a dire threat to Britishness and femininity, which needed to be contained at all costs. If they were not, British womanhood, the symbol of the maternal nation, could be tarnished forever; and the status of men as their protectors would be lost.

These gendered fears provided a means of constructing cultural and gendered hegemony in 1918. While these narratives on Bolshevism and women only emerged in late 1918, they became most dramatic the following year. The evolution of this narrative will be explored in detail in the next

chapter. Motherhood and maternal symbolism, however, were also important components of left-wing narratives on women in the popular press.

Gender, Bolshevism and Division in the Labourite Press

The Labourite press also created narratives of reimagined women and victimised women in 1918. Unlike its right-wing counterpart, however, it had conflicting narratives about the Bolsheviks. At first, due to lack of information, they were portrayed as enigmatic and nebulous.[129] Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and anarchists were often confused with one another or generalised. Stephen Richards Graubard notes that Labour delegates at the 1917 Leeds Convention knew almost nothing about Russia, the Provisional Government, or the Soviets; they understood only that the Russian people, in their troubles, looked abroad for material and other assistance. Certain British Labour groups believed that revolution would hasten the advent of peace; this provided a practical reason for otherwise gratuitous support. To be pro-Russian in these circumstances involved no sacrifice of friends at home. Among those who did attend, few understood the meaning of the term 'Soviet'.[130]

Due to these ambiguities, Labourite newspapers depicted the Bolsheviks in very different ways. The Russian Revolutions provided George Lansbury and the *Daily Herald* with a second major cause to supplement that of war resistance. Although its coverage of the Russian Civil War in 1918 was not uncritically pro-Bolshevik, the *Herald* remained an enthusiastic supporter of the October Revolution and anti-interventionist.[131] This resulted in the newspaper minimising or denying early right-wing reports of Bolshevik atrocities. It also meant that in 1918, it became less interested in narratives about enemy women. Instead, it condemned the right-wing press' narratives about Bolshevism. In contrast, left-wing newspapers such as *Reynolds'* Orientalised Bolsheviks while depicting victimised women. Its narratives on Bolshevism were comparable to the right-wing press.

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[129] Ian Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left*, (Athabasca: 2011), p 68.
[130] Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, (Cambridge: 1956), p 40.
[131] Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left*, (London and Chicago: 1997), p 22.

Victimised Women, Bolshevism and Divergence in the Labourite Press

Unlike most of the British popular press, the Labourite press was far less uniform in its depiction of victimised women in 1918. Editors like Lansbury remained staunchly anti-war throughout 1918; his newspaper, the *Herald*, remained overtly critical of Britain as a capitalist exploiter of women. James Henry Dalziel, in contrast, was an ardently pro-war, pro-union supporter of the Liberal Party. Although his publication was socialist and occasionally critical of the British Government, *Reynolds* always presented itself as a patriotic newspaper and did not use internationalist narratives. As the threat posed by Bolshevism gained prominence in the British popular press, these two Labourite newspapers published very different narratives. Whilst *Reynolds* constructed gendered, the *Herald* began attempting to create an akternative gendered narrative by expressing scepticism of Bolshevik atrocity stories.

Unlike the *Herald*, *Reynolds* did not present itself as a revolutionary newspaper. Throughout the war, it claimed its social, economic and gendered aspirations should be achieved through social reform. The newspaper endeavoured not to appear radical; and was thus less likely to be censored and/or closed by the Government, as many other left-wing publications had been in Britain during the First World War. As *Reynolds* created narratives based on reform rather than revolution, it often contributed to the cultural hegemony promulgated by the right-wing press. More specifically, this meant it still advocated English gender norms. It incorporated those gender norms into narratives of maternalism, explored earlier in this chapter. To reinforce English gender norms, it sometimes used Euro-Orientalist narratives.

It was not gendered narratives which most distinctly separated *Reynolds* from the *Herald* in 1918, however. The two Labourite newspapers had radically different narratives of the October Revolution and Bolshevism. Throughout 1918, especially after Armistice, those narratives made them unrecognisable from one another. In turn, this meant they had vastly different narratives on victimised women by the end of 1918.

Although the war was a significant topic in the *Herald*, the newspaper remained primarily focused on class issues in England. Ross McKibbin explains that due to *Reynolds'* liberal affiliations, the *Herald* 'had one indispensable quality—it was the only paper Labour had'.[132] Stephen Koss notes that this had its disadvantages: as Labour's 'only paper', the *Herald* produced 'persistently crude and strident rhetoric of class conflict'.[133] Its rhetoric on class conflict also applied to its narratives on women. In the context of class, the *Herald* depicted women as victims of capitalism. It described women as continually victimised by a system that remained unaltered by the war.

> Long have we of the working classes toiled in pain and tribulation, fettered by the powers of property and of all the skill and science that it could call to its aid... Our women folk toiled and became aged before their time, sinking to their death weary of life and knowing nothing of real value.[134]

Using narratives of class and gendered exploitation, the *Herald* often described the supposed enfranchisement of women as an illusion. The paper argued that the battle for equality among classes and sexes was still hard fought in the West.

In the *Herald*'s narratives, women were among the greatest victims of the First World War. Not only had they been victimised by all the powers involved, but they were also victims of nationalism and finance capitalism. The *Herald* opined that women had been wounded as gravely as men over the course of the conflict. Yet just as most men were indifferent to their sacrifices, ruling capitalists remained insouciant when it came to the tribulations of the working-class.

> The Government have not suffered, and have no idea what this war means to women who are only existing at home. What is the good of victory and all the women's hearts broken and homes wrecked? They are not only killing men in France, but are slowly killing the ones at home.[135]

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[132] Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924*, (Oxford: 1974), p 222.
[133] Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol II: The Twentieth Century*, (London: 1984), p 368.
[134] *Daily Herald*, 9 March, 1918, p 8.
[135] *Daily Herald*, 30 March, 1918, p 2.

This narrative was a radical departure from most of the popular press. It undermined nationalist narratives which depicted women solely as victims of the enemy. The *Herald* even published inversions of the right-wing press' narratives of German sexual exploitation. It claimed the British Army was responsible for sexual exploitation in France. The newspaper claimed such institutions, which operated under the mentality that 'sexual indulgence is absolutely necessary to men', should be closed immediately. It reasoned that they were fundamentally immoral institutions.

> It is not because licenced immorality spreads venereal disease that we demand the instant abolition of this horror, but because it is a sin against every groping instinct towards holiness of which the basest man or woman is capable; because it is a sin against the soul which is a thousand times greater than the sin it undoubtedly is against the body.[136]

Throughout 1918, the *Herald* published numerous articles on forced examinations of women allowed under article 40 D of the Defence of the Realm Act. The newspaper accused the right-wing press of perpetuating misogynistic myths that justified this treatment.

> The women of England have been pictured as sirens luring the inexperienced youth of the Colonies to shame and disease. The soldier has figured in the newspapers as 'Defenceless Adam', while Eve has been the target of the wildest and foulest charges.[137]

The *Herald* claimed sexually invasive procedures permitted by DORA were an example of the British government's sexual tyranny over women.

> The whole thing is proof of how the bodies of women are regarded by a Government which now—for election purposes – talks of equality of the sexes before the law… REGISTERED AND KEPT CLEAN! What a way to speak of flesh and blood. The Government did not repudiate the man responsible for this hideous saying. *They promoted him*.[138]

The *Herald* constructed a narrative which held that a Government that organised brothels for soldiers abroad and permitted invasive medical examinations of women's genitals at home made them comparable sexual enslavers to the Germans. This narrative, however, did not amount to

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[136] *Daily Herald*, 16 February, 1918, p 12.
[137] *Daily Herald*, 12 October, 1918, p 2.
[138] *Daily Herald*, 30 November, 1918, p 5.

German apologia. It expanded the *Herald's* already existing narrative that institutionalised misogyny was perpetuated by the British Government and right-wing press. These acts of abuse towards women were the product of the capitalism rather than a single, nefarious nation state. Capitalism dehumanised working men and women, commodifying them as faceless soldiers and prostitutes. Although the *Herald* incorporated gendered issues like Article 40 D into narratives of class struggle, it was not the only newspaper to criticise the procedure.

Reynolds was also critical of British brothels and the forced examination of British women. However, it did not adapt these issues into narratives on class struggle. *Reynolds* chose its words carefully when it criticised brothels in France. It insinuated that such places were beneath the dignity of British soldiers and an insult to their wives.

> The placing of 'tolerated houses' out of bounds in towns in France where the British Army is engaged is one of the results of the agitation for considering the new Army in a different manner from the old… Ask the wives of the soldiers what they think about it.[139]

Rather than directly criticising the Government for allowing invasive examinations, *Reynolds* argued that the policy was poorly conceived:

> We are glad to see that the magistrate declined to agree with the demand of counsel in a case against a woman that if she refuses to be examined under regulation 40D she should be considered as infected with venereal disease. If that were to be the case, any soldier could bring a charge of solicitation against any woman, and unless she submitted to a grossly offensive examination she would be branded as infected.[140]

Whilst *Reynolds* depicted women as potentially victimised by Article 40 D, it approached the controversy by attempting to create greater awareness of venereal disease to male readers. Throughout 1918, it printed numerous articles advising men to take the initiative and safeguard themselves.

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[139] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 24 March, 1918, p 4.
[140] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 18 August, 1918, p 2.

> The man who trusts his luck often says to himself: 'After all Syphilis is a very rare disease, and Gonorrhoea is not of much account'… But the man who laughs so foolishly at Gonorrhoea dreads Syphilis. If he knew that Syphilis formed, as it does, about one-sixth of all cases of Venereal Disease, he would reconsider the chances, and hesitate in face of that awful risk.[141]

Unlike right-wing press narratives which claimed that women preyed upon men and infected them, *Reynolds* placed a degree of responsibility upon men. They should not believe they were insusceptible. However, it also chastised those women it believed were proven to be prostitutes. The newspaper claimed a 'certain class of woman' was responsible for a 'great wastage of man power due to large numbers of men suffering from diseases'. Consequently, it approved of mass arrests of suspected prostitutes, rationalising: 'They are doing grave incalculable harm to the country by rendering unfit for Service members of his Majesty's Navy and Army'[142]. Whilst the *Herald* was almost always poised to attack the British government, *Reynolds* came to its defence. Like narratives on venereal disease, this dichotomy existed when the newspapers constructed narratives on the Bolsheviks as well.

A cohesive narrative on the Bolsheviks did not emerge in the *Herald* until 1919. From 1917-1918, it published contradictory depictions of Russia and the Bolsheviks. At the beginning of 1918, the *Herald* perpetuated the narrative that the Bolsheviks were a revolutionary force for peace and socialism. 'The idealism, the courage, the statesmanship of the Bolsheviks have forced an international situation in which peace, for the first time in three and a half years, seem imminent'[143]. While the *Herald* conceded that it was 'not hard to find criticisms of detail to throw at the Bolsheviks', it argued, 'no praise could be too high' for their 'main achievement':

> They, *and they alone among all the Governments of the world*, have grasped the central truth that there is one thing stronger than force, and that is an idea. They have proved that faith can move mountains. They have attempted what seem impossible and achieved it.[144]

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[141] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 5 May, 1918, p 3.
[142] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 12 May, 1918, p 4.
[143] *Daily Herald*, 12 January, 1918, p 6.
[144] Ibid.

The *Herald* published numerous articles which were less than celebratory of the Bolsheviks—but it often rationalised their actions. It claimed that their mission was a historical inevitability, the product of dialectical materialism. In this narrative, nothing the British popular press said about the Bolsheviks could prevent their movement to change the world.

> The Bolshevik regime is generally depicted as a usurpation—as a violent seizure of power by a group of fanatics or adventurers who are maintaining their grip only by terrorism and force. And, on the whole, the picture is a true one. Nevertheless, it is equally true that the growth of Bolshevism and its present ascendancy were an inevitable process…[145]

In some instances, the *Herald* openly praised the Bolsheviks as the vanguard of a global revolutionary movement. It argued that the rise of Bolshevism was comparable to previous revolutionary movements in Europe and would change the continent for the better. This led it to tacitly justify the use of violence and terror.

> The Bolsheviks are in the case in which France found herself in 1792, and they are driven to the same policy… What the French Republic did to Belgium and Holland, they are doing to Finland, the Ukraine, and Roumania… No socialist revolution can be secure until it is international.[146]

The *Herald* also argued that the Bolsheviks had bettered the lives of the Russian masses and blamed the violence on capitalists.

> The Bolsheviks have done some things, some foolish things, and some indefensible things, but remember that in the eyes of the Russian propertied class, they are guilty of one crime which overshadows all others. They broke up the big estates and gave the land to the peasants. For this crime, civil war is loosed upon Russia.[147]

By depicting Bolshevism as a proletarian force and historical inevitability, the *Herald* constructed a narrative which treated it as invincible. The purity of their cause meant that workers around the

[145] *Daily Herald*, 5 January, 1918, p 10.
[146] *Daily Herald*, 9 February, 1918, p 10.
[147] *Daily Herald*, 16 March, 1918, p 4.

world would inevitably rally to them. Yet these narratives often praised the ideals of Soviet men and ignored women in Russia.

> [The Bolsheviks] have lighted a fire in the world which will never be put out. Like their predecessors who lived and died for the commune of Paris, their faith is built upon the solid rock of the International Brotherhood and goodwill. The cardinal article of their creed is just this, that the workers of the world have no reason to fight and destroy each other, that individuals and nations can and will live in peace and harmony when they cease to exploit each other.[148]

Whilst men like Lenin and Trotsky were given admiration, women were frequently only interpreted as part of the 'workers'. The *Herald* often inserted its own interpretations of the Bolsheviks. It claimed that despite the atheism widely endorsed by Russian Bolsheviks, their message was a fundamentally Christian one.

> In [the Bolsheviks'] teaching of the International is to be found the true pure doctrine of Christianity, which is that though I love my own home, my own children, my own land, I do at the same time ask for no privilege, no service from, or power over, my neighbour, but must find my greatest happiness in the service with him and for him for the good of all.[149]

Like much of the press, the *Herald* created narratives about the Bolsheviks to suit its own social and political interests. While most of the press attempted to depict Bolshevism as fundamentally alien, often with Euro-Orientalist tropes, the *Herald* depicted Bolshevism and the internationalism it espoused as fundamentally Western and British.

> The Bolsheviks stand for everything for which Great Britain has professed to stand in this war, and for which our men have died and are dying. The Labour movement of Great Britain cannot stand by silently and see them ignored or neglected or abandoned.[150]

By assigning Bolshevism a Christian, British identity, the *Herald* created a narrative that presented the Bolsheviks as no different from British socialists in the Independent Labour Party. To the *Herald*, Britons had little to fear from Bolshevism. When the Bolsheviks were depicted as violent and

[148] *Daily Herald*, 9 March, 1918, p 6.
[149] *Daily Herald*, 9 March, 1918, p 6.
[150] *Daily Herald*, 12 January, 1918, p 7.

tyrannical by the British popular press, the *Herald* counter-attacked, claiming the press was spurious and corrupt.

> The gutter Press can scarcely refrain from open exultation at the German advance in the East [against Russia] … Wild stories of anarchy and terrorism are sedulously circulated, and the main purpose of it all is, of course, to make our flesh creep—to warn us of the terrible results of applied democracy. These lurid pictures of the Bolshevik fire are designed to make us rest quietly, if not comfortably, in our capitalist frying pan.[151]

By the latter half of 1918, the *Herald* claimed that a capitalist conspiracy to destroy the Bolsheviks was at work throughout Europe. It accused the British popular press of being complicit: 'The oligarchy to-day is under the dominion of panic', caused by narratives created by the right-wing press. The *Herald* mused that Western reactionaries had 'frightened themselves with stories of the Bolsheviks as their ancestors frightened themselves with tales of the Jacobins'[152]. In its view, condemnation of the Bolsheviks was part of a hysterical 'world-wide spider's web' meant to preserve bourgeois order. Reports of victimised women in Russia were merely a facet of an international smear campaign perpetrated by capitalists.

However, as reports of atrocities accrued throughout 1918, the *Herald* too would sometimes condemn the Bolsheviks. It did so by claiming that Bolshevism in practice was not a form of socialism because it was undemocratic.

> The Bolshevik regime is certainly in its turn a kind of despotism, 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'… The 'bourgeois' have no votes, for the Soviets are elected only by the manual workers… This is inverted class tyranny and a travesty of Socialism, but it is quite probable, as the figures of the Soviet elections show, that it has the masses and majority behind it.[153]

Regardless, by the end of the 1918, the *Herald* continued to defend Russia and the Bolsheviks, declaring that Lenin, for 'all his faults', was 'a great man' because 'he has stood up—and so far, thank Heaven! Stood successfully—against the most overwhelming combination of unscrupulous

[151] *Daily Herald*, 2 March, 1918, p 2.
[152] *Daily Herald*, 23 November, 1918, p 7.
[153] *Daily Herald*, 13 July, 1918, p 4.

capitalisms and imperialisms that the world has ever seen'[154]. The *Herald* condemned Allied intervention in Russia as an example of 'capitalists, furious with fear… leaguing against [the] Bolsheviks'.[155]

Women were entirely absent from these narratives. When reportage of atrocities against women by the Bolsheviks first began circulating in the British popular press in 1918, the *Herald* claimed they were fictitious. To legitimise the Bolsheviks, it removed victimised women altogether. *Reynolds'*, in contrast, frequently used gendered narratives to condemn the Bolsheviks. Unlike many of its contemporaries on the Left, it was openly opposed to Bolshevism and the new Russian government.

Ian Bullock observes that for the first two years or so following the revolutions of 1917, overt opposition to the Bolsheviks remained rare on the British Left.[156] However, as Jay Winter explains, the events in Russia and their repercussions in the West both heartened and frightened more conservative leaders of the British Labour movement: who by 1918 were ready to join moderate socialists to rebuild the Labour Party as a progressive, constitutional alternative to revolution.[157] *Reynolds' Newspaper* was a mouthpiece for this movement.

Reynolds went to great lengths to deride Bolsheviks and Bolshevism as un-socialist. The newspaper declared that the Entente was the home of 'true' democratic socialists, while socialists in the Central Powers had been subverted by militarism. It asserted that the Bolsheviks were the product of this 'corrupted', 'false' socialism.

> There is something fundamentally different in the position and power of Labour in France, Britain, America, and Italy from that in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria. There it may think what it pleases: power lies in something above them and antagonistic to them. Militarism reigns supreme… Allied Labour, speaking with no uncertain voice, has shown that

[154] *Daily Herald*, 7 September, 1918, p 2.
[155] *Daily Herald*, 9 November, 1918, p 1.
[156] Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution*, pp 125-126.
[157] Jay M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Policies in Britain 1912-18*, (Boston: 1974), p 276.

> the workers are at one with the soldiers in their determination that the peace aims of Labour shall be attained. For they are the peace aims of Freedom.[158]

By depicting Bolshevism as a corrupt or false socialism, *Reynolds* created a narrative that focused on rallying socialists and the Labour movement against it. Like the cartoon below, the newspaper pleaded with its readers not to be fooled by German socialists hiding behind the flag of internationalism and solidarity. They were the enemy.

A warning that socialists should not be deceived by the calls for solidarity by the Central Powers.[159]

This narrative was specifically connected to British nationalism and complicity with the State. In *Reynolds*' narrative, the Bolsheviks represented a false socialism and abortive revolution. However, this depiction also meant that it minimised the supposed threat which Bolshevism posed to the West.

Unlike many other newspapers, which often stoked fears of a red mass engulfing Europe, *Reynolds* frequently claimed that the Bolsheviks were too pathetic to be a serious threat to anyone except themselves.

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[158] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 22 September, 1918, p 1.
[159] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 10 November, 1918, p 5.

> There have lately been numerous alarmist reports regarding the size of the Bolshevik Army, but, generally speaking, they are considered grossly exaggerated… One result of Bolshevism has been to place the factories under the control of ignorant and inefficient workmen, with the result that production has practically ceased… So much for the Bolshevik Army.[160]

Reynolds also argued that British Bolsheviks presented little to no threat to Britain because the British working-class was composed of overwhelmingly sensible, civilised people.

> It is rather remarkable that so many people should fear a spread of Bolshevism to this country. It would be idle to deny that there exists a considerable number of Bolsheviks, but to suggest that that they in any way represent the working class is not only absurd, it is libel.[161]

Reynolds' minimisation of the Bolsheviks extended to other countries as well. During the German Revolution, *Reynolds* did not immediately condemn German revolutionaries as Bolsheviks. Instead, it praised them as their antithesis; socialists overthrowing the German yoke. The newspaper reprinted Kurt Eisner's declaration of a socialist republic in Munich as the embodiment of Western socialist values.

> Workers and citizens of Munich! Trust in the great and tremendous change which is being prepared [abdication and declaration of a socialist republic] in these difficult times. Let all assist, so that the unavoidable revolution may take place quite peacefully. In this time of extreme fratricide, we loathe all bloodshed. Every human life must be sacred. Keep calm and co-operate in building a 'new world'. The fratricidal struggle of Socialists is, so far as Bavaria is concerned, at an end.
>
> Long live the Bavarian Republic! Long live Peace! Long live the creative Labour of all workers!'[162]

However, after it became apparent that socialist protestors and mutineers in Germany were 'being inspired by Russia', the newspaper condemned German insurrections as an extension of Bolshevism. At the end of 1918, it noted:

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[160] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 22 December, 1918, p 1
[161] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 17 November, 1918, p 4.
[162] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 10 November, 1918, p 1.

> Reports received in Germany state that the Bolshevik menace is becoming very dangerous in White Russia [Belarus], the Ukraine and Courland [Lativa]. he [sic] Bolsheviks are advancing in the direction of the German frontier in order to join their German brothers. The German Armies are still retiring, leaving in the hands of Trotsky all the army war materials.[163]

To *Reynolds*, Russian Civil War and the threat of Bolshevism were not a new threat, but a continuation of the First World War. It delegitimised any socialist credentials which the Bolsheviks had by associating them with Prussianism. This allowed it to cast Bolshevism in the same grim light as the Germans: who were subject to portrayals of victimising women and deforming femininity. *Reynolds* constructed many of the same hegemonic functions as other newspapers from 1917-1918.

1918 represented a period of both resistance and transition for the left-wing Labourite press. The *Herald* attempted to create a counter-narrative about Bolshevism in Britain, while remaining somewhat critical of their methods. The *Herald* celebrated the ethos of the Bolsheviks; international socialism. As it was committed to this cause as a revolutionary movement, the newspaper refused to disown itself entirely; leaving women removed from the narrative altogether.

Reynolds, in contrast, attempted to create its own, unique narrative, in which Western, British socialism remained distinct from and in conflict with Bolshevism. This narrative, however, was always influenced by Britain's cultural hegemony. By the end of 1918, it largely conformed to the rest of civil society. As the inter-war period began, these two distinctly different narratives on Bolshevism and victimised women revealed a growing divide in the consciousness of the Labour movement.

Transforming Narratives on Women

Narratives on women in the British popular press were considerably different in 1918 than in previous years. The contributions of women during the war and their inclusion in mass politics led to positive depictions of reimagined women. Consequently, they were considerably more powerful

[163] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 22 December, 1918, p 1.

figures in the right-wing and left-wing press. Their primary function was to transform British society. In the right-wing press, reimagined women were depicted as a purifying force who would both regenerate Britain and prevent the spread of Bolshevism. In the left-wing Labourite press, they were inspirational members of the working-class who would champion the Labour movement. Both narratives reimagined women's power as fundamentally feminine. In most of the press, this could be described as 'civic motherhood'. In the Labourite press, it manifested itself in the concept of maternalism. That perceived femininity, however, also undermined reimagined women's power and agency.

As femininity was still viewed as inferior to masculinity in British culture, this kept reimagined women from becoming true equals to men in press narratives. This perceived inferiority not only led to calls for women's removal from the workforce as men demobilised but allowed narratives of enemy women and victimised women to continue after the war. The image of reimagined women, whether by narratives on their patriotic femininity on the right or their maternalism on the left, was altered to make them more subservient to Britain's patriarchal power structures.

Narratives of women victimised by the Bolsheviks, although not prevalent from 1917-1918, became more dramatic by 1919. Whether based on fears of the masses corrupting women or Labourite women being exploited by capitalism, both narratives became linked to Russia and the Bolsheviks by the end of 1918. They were rendered more powerful by Euro-Orientalist tropes.

By 1919, narratives about the Bolsheviks had mostly supplanted anxieties about the Germans; although the two forces remained linked in most of the British press. Euro-Orientalism and fear of the masses made Bolshevism potentially more savage and more insidious than the Central Powers. This only reaffirmed that Britain's women required protection; they would be the primary victims of radical social and political change. These newer, more fearful, more lurid narratives defined depictions of women and Bolshevism: as the crisis of the British State and the reconstruction of gendered hegemony entered a new phase.

Chapter 3

Sensationalism and Fear: Hegemony in the British Popular Press, 1919-1920

The post-war years represented a period of contradictions in British popular consciousness. The popular press often claimed 1919 to be a year of euphoria and relief, as the First World War ended, and the Treaty of Versailles was formalised. However, it also reported a pervasive feeling of fear and anxiety during 1919-1920. These were years of unstable markets, growing unemployment, labour unrest and the spectre of a future war with Soviet Russia.

As Victor Madeira notes, despite being victorious and relatively untouched by the war compared to its continental allies and enemies, Britain endured significant hardship during and after the conflict. The First World War eroded traditional British values and institutions by compressing 'half a century of political evolution into just four years'[1]. The working classes, having absorbed the brunt of the conflict, now aspired to a better life.[2] The post-war expansion of suffrage empowered millions of untrained, inexperienced voters with no party traditions. All were affected by the restlessness of the time, which further raised expectations.[3]

In the early 1920s, rising British unemployment triggered successive crises. In 1918, unemployment was at 0.8 per cent; by 1921, it was at 12.2 per cent.[4] Renewed industrial strife and 'the "poison" of class politics' were embraced by a newly enfranchised, impatient mass electorate: which further diminished prospects of a fast recovery.[5] The immediate effects of economic malaise were felt by returning soldiers. Labour historian Anne Freemantle described the situation succinctly: 'There was a

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[1] Phillip Williamson, 'The Doctrinal Politic of Stanley Baldwin', ed Michael Bentley, *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History Presented to Maurice Cowling*, (Cambridge: 1993), pp 181-203.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Neil McCrillis, *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage: Popular Conservatism, 1918-29,* (Columbus, 1998).
[4] W.R. Garside, *British Unemployment, 1919-39: A Study in Public Policy* (Cambridge: 1990), pp 4-5, Tables 1,2; Victor Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear: The Anglo-Russian Intelligence Wars, 1917-1929*, (Woodbridge: 2014), p 11.
[5] Phillip Willimanson, 'The Doctrinal Politic of Stanley Baldwin,', ed. Michael Bentley, *Public and Private Doctrine: Essays in British History Presented to Maurice Cowling*, (Cambridge: 1993), pp 181-203.

coal shortage, everyone in England shivered over fires that were tinier than usual. In London, the demoralized troops found "the streets dirty and shabby… there were holes even in the main thoroughfares…". There was a shortage of everything besides soldiers and debts'[6]. To many, this did not represent the Britain they had fought and suffered for.

Following Armistice, servicemen felt that the hardship they continued to endure was no longer justifiable. The main triggers of mutinies were the unpopular guidelines governing demobilisation and its persistent postponement for millions of men. From 11 November 1918 to 11 March 1919, there were over fifty documented mutinies and protests by British servicemen in Britain, France and Russia.[7] This was accompanied by industrial unrest in Britain, where strikes proliferated throughout the country. In continental Europe, the situation was even worse. Revolutions in Germany, Austria and Hungary, along with labour agitation in Italy and France, created anxieties that Europe may soon fall to Bolshevik sympathies. Moreover, although traditional parties retained power in Britain, the Labour Party, despite electoral defeat in 1918, had entered the political mainstream. In Gramscian terms, this represented an organic crisis; a crisis of the State.

According to Antonio Gramsci, an 'organic crisis' involves the totality of a 'historical bloc'; the structure of society as well as the superstructure. An organic crisis is manifested as a crisis of hegemony, in which the masses cease to believe the words of their national leaders and begin to abandon traditional parties or movements. The precipitating factor in such a crisis is frequently the failure of the ruling class in some large undertaking, such as war, for which it demanded the consent and sacrifices of the people. The crisis may last a long time, for, as Gramsci observed, 'no social form is ever willing to confess that it has been superseded'. In combating the crisis, intellectuals of the ruling classes may resort to forms of mystification: blaming the failure of the state on the opposing party or ethnic minorities, conducting nationalist campaigns based on irrational appeals to patriotic

[6] Anne Freemantle, *This Little Band of Prophets: The British Fabians*, (Dublin: 1960), p 226; Richard Aldington, *Life for Life's Sake: A Book of Reminiscences*, (New York: 1941), p 204.
[7] Victor Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear: The Anglo-Russian Intelligence Wars, 1917-1929 (History of British Intelligence)*, (Woodbridge: 2014), pp 11, 32.

sentiment.[8] As explained earlier, the most common means in which these mythologies are constructed are through organs of 'civil society', such as the press. This crisis allowed the popular press to create new narratives that embodied the anxieties of the period.

Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz note that the state formation which emerged in 1920s Britain was quite new, both in its internal organisation and the set of social relations in which it existed. The social, political and economic alterations which occurred during the war meant no return to older forms was possible. Ideas were challenged and redefined in the inter-war period: not only by new conceptions, but in practice and social organisation. Hall and Schwarz describe this crisis of the State as a 'crisis of liberalism'. It not only represented a crisis of government, but of confidence and continuity in practical-ideological conceptions of the State and society.

The British liberal state could no longer represent new social forces such as socialism and feminism, nor could it reproduce itself as a point of political and social stability. The issue at stake was how a new type of state could be reconstructed, capable of sustaining these new forces. However, this crisis also provided the means of reconstruction.[9] In the Gramscian theory of hegemony, crises represent how social relations are reconstituted; social norms and the idea of 'common sense' are reshaped to accommodate the new social and political order. This chapter will investigate the significant changes made to narratives of women, as a gendered hegemony and challenges to this hegemony were constructed in the British popular press. One of the primary ways in which hegemony was re-forged was through narratives of women and Bolshevism through the lens of fascination and disgust. This was part of a global phenomenon.

Adrian Gregory notes that in 1919, 'fear of Bolshevism had become a global obsession'. There were disturbances as far away as Buenos Aires: where more than 50 died and the government responded

[8] Antonio Gramsci, Note su Machiavelli, pp 42, 50; Thomas R. Bates, 'Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony', ed. James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol II*, (London: 2002), p 258.
[9] Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, 'State and Society, 1880-1930', *Crises in the British State 1880-1930*, eds. Mary Langan and Bill Schwarz, (London: 1985), pp 9, 11, 16.

by interning Russian agitators. Workers in Johannesburg seized the town hall; while in New South Wales, striking miners and seamen brought the state near to collapse. In Winnipeg, a general strike in spring 1919 caused nervousness throughout North America. In Britain, Basil Thomson, the head of the Special Branch, was convinced that Bolsheviks were behind growing industrial militancy; in Glasgow, paralysed by a general strike in February, there was a certain amount of reactionary rhetoric. Lloyd George convinced the main trade unionist leaders to negotiate through the spring.[10] Despite Woodrow Wilson's overtures, it appeared that the world had not been 'made safe for democracy'. Instead, a new threat had risen to challenge it. In British newspapers, a new kind of war could be fought, which focused on nascent anti-communist anxieties. This occurred whilst the popular press experienced tremendous growth.

By the inter-war period, the newspaper was arguably the most powerful medium of political communication and social influence in Britain.[11] The expansion of national newspaper readership was coupled with a consolidation of ownership and decline of readership of the regional and local press. Although the local press retained some influence, many provincial newspapers were bought by London press barons. Voters from Yorkshire to the Midlands increasingly received their news from London.[12] By 1921, the three Harmsworth brothers (Lord Northcliffe, Lord Rothermere and Sir Lester Harmsworth) controlled newspapers with an aggregate circulation of over six million—probably the largest press group in the Western world.[13]

The popular press grew simultaneously closer to and more independent from the British government during the inter-war period. As the First World War ended, the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was accused in the House of Commons of creating an 'atmosphere of suspicion and distrust' with 'great newspaper proprietors'—specifically Lords Northcliffe, Rothermere and

[10] Adrian Gregory, *A War of Peoples, 1914-1919*, (Oxford: 2014), p 175.
[11] Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, (Urbana: 2005), p 19.
[12] Laura Beers, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party*, (Cambridge: 2010), p 13.
[13] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*, 7th Ed, (Abingdon: 2003), p 38.

Beaverbrook, all of whom had been appointed to official positions.[14] The sheer wealth of the popular press also reduced their dependence on political parties. This newfound independence emboldened barons such as Northcliffe, Rothermere and Beaverbrook to attack the government with impunity if they desired.[15] Although most of the popular press favoured profit over politics, their ability to influence readers politically should not be dismissed.

Some historians have interpreted the relative failure of the barons to sway governments as evidence that they exercised no significant political power. Their influence should not be assessed solely in terms of winning support for changes in public policy, however. James Curran and John Seaton instead argue that the main impact of the press lay in how newspapers selectively represented the world. They tended to strengthen the mainly conservative prejudices of their readers and reinforce opposition, particularly in the middle-class, to progressive change. Moreover, most of the popular press projected imaginary folk devils into their post-war narratives. Among the most threatening and prominent of these demons were the Bolsheviks. The press, controlled by the barons, helped sustain the social order by stigmatising its radical opponents.[16] The main exception was the *Daily Herald*, which constructed counter-narratives to the popular press and British Government.

Under these circumstances, the press accommodated the Russian Civil War and the threat of Bolshevism by restructuring hegemony. Their narratives specifically focused on the prospect of the Bolshevik 'cancer' spreading throughout Europe and possibly the world.[17] They evinced fears of strikes, gender 'confusion', foreignness and rape. These fears were printed *ad nauseam* in the popular press from 1919-1920: inciting calls for a great restoration of pre-war norms.

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[14] Austen Chamberlain, House of Commons Debates, vol. 103, 19 February, 1918, cols, 656-657. During the First World War, Northcliffe was Head of Propaganda in Enemy Countries; Rothermere was Air Minister; and Beaverbrook was Minister of Information.

[15] Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain*, p 42.

[16] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain,* 7th Ed, (Abingdon: 2003) pp 46-47.

[17] Austen Chamberlain, House of Commons Debates, vol. 103, February 19, 1918, cols, 656-657, p 9.

Susan Kingsley Kent highlights how the upheavals of the First World War provoked responses that sought to recreate the social, political and economic order which prevailed prior to August 1914. In the aftermath, conservative forces sought to re-establish stability and reassert their statues in a world that looked and felt dramatically different from that of the pre-war period.[18] Nowhere was this more evident than in the paradigm of gender identity and relations between men and women. Political and economic restructuring found their counterpart—indeed, their necessary corollary—in the reconstruction of gender after the First World War.[19] This meant cultural and gendered hegemony was concurrently restructured in the popular press. Conversely, socialist political forces attempted to create an entirely new reality.

T. G. Ashplant explains how revolutionary socialists made strenuous efforts to mobilise a working-class protest war-time conditions; and if possible, generalise this into protesting the war itself. They depicted the First World War as the slaughter of working-classes on behalf of the ruling classes, in a struggle from which they could never benefit: paving the way for newer, more brutal capitalism, based on fear of the continuance of such wartime measures as the Defence of the Realm Act, suppression of a free press, deportation of political activists, dilution and conscription of labour for industry and the military. Against that, they attempted to conjure an 'alternative imagined community', the working class: first British, and then international.[20] This involved its own reconstruction of gender. [21]

Amidst these two opposing grand narratives, British newspapers attempted to reconstruct hegemony. This was also a facet of the circulation war occurring between these newspapers. In all cases, women formed a crucial component of the competing narratives.

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[18] See: Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade After World War I*, (Princeton: 1975).
[19] Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918', eds. Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee, *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, (Oxford: 1995), p 153.
[20] T.G. Ashplant, *Fractured Loyalties: Masculinity, Class and Politics in Britain, 1900-30*, (London: 2007), p 209.
[21] For more on the 'Imagined Community', see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (Revised Edition)*, (London: 2006).

By 1919, it was agreed by all but the most reactionary British newspapers that women had been irrevocably changed by the war. This was portrayed as a social and political alteration by the press. These ideas shaped narratives on women in the initial years after the war. The concept of reimagined women remained important in the popular press and will be explored in this chapter. Right-wing and left-wing newspapers constructed more lurid narratives on victimised women and enemy women from 1919-1920. More specifically, these two narratives adopted new characteristics as social anxieties shifted.

This chapter explores the significant alterations to gendered narratives employed by the popular press, and how they were influenced by labour unrest, gender 'confusion', foreignness and rape in relation to Bolshevism, and hegemony. How did the re-forging of political hegemony influence gendered hegemony in the inter-war period? These years were crucial to the creation of new press narratives. They represented an explicit attempt to present a new concept of normalcy to the British public. This should not be viewed, however, as the restoration of social and political norms which existed before the war. Significant social, political and economic changes in the UK and continental Europe had made this impossible.

Instead, most newspapers attempted to incorporate new aspects of gender and politics into their narratives of normality. More specifically, this meant British women were recognised as political agents but usually depicted in feminine roles such as wives and mothers, and occupations 'reserved' for women. Women who deviated from this were increasingly portrayed as foolish or transgressive by the press; while those who accepted this new paradigm were praised. Changing narratives on reimagined women were reinforced by narratives on victimised and enemy women. They warned of the consequences of women abandoning traditional gender roles. This was a part of hegemonic restructuring by the popular press.

These narratives took on new meanings as the First World War ended and suspicion of Bolshevism intensified in Britain. These social conflicts were part of Britain's 'reconstruction' of society; the narratives attempted to restructure gender in a changing world.

This chapter will focus primarily on the *Daily Mail*, *News of the* World and *Reynolds' Newspaper*. However, it will also explore reportage from numerous provincial publications, such as the *Nottingham Post, The Scotsman*, and the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. Main examples of counter-narratives to hegemony will be explored in the *Daily Herald*. As narratives began to change during this period and often overlapped in the right-wing and left-wing press, this chapter will be explored thematically.

The first example of gendered hegemony I will explore in this chapter involves the personalisation of victimised and enemy women. Iconic women were martyred and vilified by the British popular press. These were personified representations of victimised and enemy women. As these women were depicted as icons, they will have a section separate from victimised and enemy women, who are explored later in this chapter. These personalised narratives had unique qualities which must be explored. They accommodated a growing fascination and disgust with women and Bolshevism in Britain during the immediate post-war period.

Female Icons: Victimised Women and Enemy Women

Although victimised women already represented a common narrative in the popular press by 1919, it began to personify certain women as martyrs for their respective causes. The deaths of women they regarded as either victims of Bolshevism or a reaction to it became a powerful means of reconstructing hegemony. These depictions represented a rhetorical—occasionally literal—call to arms against Bolshevism or the capitalist system.

The identification of the crowd with 'lower' instincts, emotions and sensations were popular in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain. Fear of 'mobs', 'multitudes' and 'dangerous classes'

frequently exerted an ominous presence on the upper and middle classes. This was related to anxieties over extension of the franchise. Mass democracy, the rise of mass retail, the growth of socialism and the emergence of mass entertainment all contributed to fear of the 'masses' and their potential manipulators.[22] These anxieties existed in British society prior to the immediate post-war period and were exploited by the popular press.

The nineteenth century was marked by repeated periods of near pathological insecurity about a likely breakdown in social order and corresponding fear of the mob in British society. These anxieties were heightened by the pressure to widen the franchise prior to the First World War.[23] Those fears did not evanesce when the war ended; though mass enfranchisement was accomplished. The sentiments of the subaltern 'unwashed masses' were still regarded as a sometimes-animalistic threat to order and society by the dominant class. Dan Le Mahieu observes how inter-war Britain's upper and middle-classes often described crowd behaviour in language calculated to strip working classes of their full humanity. In its extreme form, British writers portrayed majorities as animals, children or physical objects. The brutality of these comparisons was intended to shock and caution the British reader.[24]

For these reasons, the sexual humiliation and graphic deaths of the Romanovs were nightmares come true when presented in most British newspapers. Echoing horrific depictions of the French Revolution, their narratives depicted the tyrannical, atavistic reign of the mob over the demure ruling classes. This symbolised the bloody consequences of tradition being upended and the 'natural order' being dissolved. These acts of transgression were most pronounced when featuring sexual connotations. Regal figures such as female nobles and aristocratic icons were critical to these

[22] See: Asa Briggs, 'The Language of "Class" in Early Nineteenth-Century England' and 'Language of "Mass" and "Masses" in Nineteenth-Century England', ed. Asa Briggs, *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs vol I: Words, Numbers, Places, People* (Urbana: 1985), pp 3-33, 34-54.
[23] Melanie Phillips, *The Ascent of Woman: The History of the Suffrage Movement and the Ideas Behind It*, (London: 2007) p 1.
[24] D.L. Le Mahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars*, (Oxford: 1998), p 108.

narratives, because they were regarded as pure, untouchable women and girls. Tales of physical and sexual violence against them provided a perfect story with which to entice middle-class readers.

Throughout 1919 and 1920, hundreds, sometimes thousands of women were depicted as faceless victims of the Bolsheviks by the British press. The most evocative victims of the Bolsheviks, however, were Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna and her daughters, Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia. For most of the twentieth century, the fate of the Russian royal family was shrouded by speculation and rumour. Few details could be proven and consequently, numerous, contradictory reports were printed about the demise of the Romanovs. All of them, however, utilised narratives on sex and class to sensationalise reportage.

Supposed eyewitness accounts of the death of Tsar Nicholas II and his immediate family on 16-17 July 1918 differed regarding the order of events and those involved. The already unreliable information was distorted further by the British press. Mark Steinberg and Vladimir Khrustalëv note that many of these 'accounts' were exaggerated or fictitious. Most were told to White Russian investigators by survivors from the Tsar's suite, or former guards arrested by the Whites, who were on trial during the civil war for their role in persecuting and murdering the Tsar and his family. White investigators posed questions and wrote reports which sought to adduce every possible instance of the moral suffering of the Tsar and his family at the hands of the Bolsheviks. These tales were solicited and readily believed because they confirmed the perception of Whites and their sympathisers that the revolution had delivered degenerate and resentful plebeians into power.[25] Such lurid accounts, regardless of their veracity, were highly desirable for the British press.

British newspapers conveyed this information to an audience already ill-informed on events in Russia.[26] The *Daily Mail* commented grimly that, 'Since the Dark Ages history has no record of an obliteration of a royal dynasty of such apparently assured authority as the ex-Czar's in the savage

[25] Mark D. Steinberg & Vladimir M. Khrustalëv, *The Fall of the Romanovs: Political Dreams and Personal Struggles in a Time of Revolution*, (New Haven and London: 1997), p 280.
[26] Andrew Cook, *The Murder of the Romanovs*, (Stroud: 2010), pp 151, 159.

and harrowing circumstances now placed before the world'[27]. Other newspapers provided more graphic reportage on the murder of the Romanovs.

Due to lack of reliable information and little desire for accurate reportage, stories about the Romanovs had a great deal of variation. Competing newspapers had entirely different accounts of the murders. The *News of the World*, which initially claimed that the Tsar's family had escaped the Bolsheviks in 1918, reprinted former Russian Prime Minister Prince Georgy Lvov's statement that 'each member of the family, assembled in one room, was placed in a chair, prodded with bayonets, and then murdered' in January 1919. Lvov added that, 'on the following day, the room was nothing more than a pool of blood'. The *News* elaborated that while in captivity, 'the Tsar, Tsarina, and their children were imprisoned in one room and subjected to hideous cruelties'[28].

Later that month, the *News of the World* printed a more detailed account on the fate of the Romanovs. It claimed that the Tsarina and Grand Duchesses had been 'made to suffer the worst torments of poverty, insulted and spat upon by men lower than beasts, and recruited from the lowest class of Bolshevik bullies'. The *News* also emphasised the sexual element of their mistreatment.

> 'In the evening the inhuman ruffians would carry the ex-Duchesses downstairs to rooms whose walls were covered with obscene drawings and indecent inscriptions, and, within earshot of the agonised parents, subject the innocent girls to the coarsest jests…'[29].

The *Mail* reported the Tsarina and her daughters 'wept compulsively and had to be dragged to their place of execution'[30]. *Reynolds' Newspaper* also detailed how the Tsarina and her daughters had been tortured and bayonetted while restrained by the Bolsheviks.[31] Other accounts were as dramatic as they were bizarre. The *Daily News* reported that the Tsarina and her family had been

[27] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 20 August 1920, p 4.
[28] *News of the World*, 5, January, 1919, p 4.
[29] *News of the World*, 19, January, 1919, p 3.
[30] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 27 January, 1919, p 5.
[31] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 5 January, 1919, p 5.

forced into a funeral pyre by a mob of soldiers, sailors and peasants. The newspaper described the medieval fate of the Romanovs, particularly the women.

> The Grand Duchess Tatiana tried to escape three times from the flames. She was pierced through and through [by bayonets], and at last collapsed at the foot of her executioners. The Empress and her son, side by side, walked with a firm step into the fire and perished in a column of smoke.[32]

Although accounts of the Romanovs' demise were varied, their mistreatment and death shared the same themes in most of the popular press. The Tsar was usually the centrepiece of these narratives. However, his end was often described in the least detail. Lurid attention was almost always focused on the Tsarina and the Grand Duchesses. Their last days were usually described as an ordeal of rape and cruelty, followed by the destruction of the Romanov family. The deaths of these women and annihilation of the family unit provided a sadistic spectacle. The foreignness and 'low status' of the Tsarina's and Grand Duchesses' killers was also emphasised. Although some of the executioners were identified as Russian agents of the Bolsheviks, the majority were typically depicted as Lettish, Chinese or Jewish in the popular press. Narratives of foreignness, Orientalism and anti-Semitism in the British press will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

Foreignness, especially when it alluded to Orientalism and Jewry, increased the luridness of these narratives. Women of the 'highest' birth were molested, profaned and brutally killed by the basest, most 'alien' men. Narratives were intentionally printed in this manner to fascinate and horrify British readers. It fomented fears of class uprising and foreign invasion reaching the bedrooms of civilised people. That the Romanovs were commonly reported to have been executed in their bedroom emphasised this intimidate intrusion. The violation of Russian female nobility by the Bolsheviks was frequently recapitulated by the press too. This resonated with class anxieties and their moral/sexual connotations. Such narratives were common in the years following the First World War.

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[32] *Western Times* [Reprinted in the *Daily Press*], Monday, 19 July, 1920, p 4.

Klaus Theweleit argues that during the revolutionary struggles of the early twentieth century, members of the bourgeoisie depicted political and social battles against revolutionary forces as moral battles. These struggles were described as the 'preservation of values' and 'maintenance of morality'. For this reason, political narratives often became sexual narratives; moral narratives. This is best represented with the image of the immaculate noble woman as the 'White Countess'. Patriarchal narratives construct the image of the high-born woman and revere it as asexual. She represents a maternal image of the nation and is anathema to the image of the 'Red Woman', depicted as a violent, low-born prostitute.[33] The image of the White Countess is representative of social and political stability. Her violation represents a psychic sexual attack upon national stability and morality. In most of the British popular press, the Tsarina and the Grand Duchesses were depicted as quintessential White Countesses. They were the highest, most untouchable of women, defiled by the lowest multitude of men. This narrative was partially applied to other noble women in the popular press as well.

An inordinate number of stories were printed in the popular press under the context of riveting tales of bourgeois, aristocratic women who either escaped the Bolsheviks or suffered a monstrous fate at their hands. These fates were usually depicted as luridly as possible. For example, when *The Scotsman* described the condition of Russian aristocrats, particularly the women, after their bodies were discovered in a mass grave, 'their dresses were removed by the Reds. Some of the victims tried to escape the rifle bullets and jumped the ditches, but were engulfed alive in the pestilential slime'[34].

These White Countesses provided a useful narrative for British newspapers. Regardless of whether these women were real or media fabrications, their class made these accounts more respectable and horrifying to the British public. That they were noblewomen also made the nature of the crimes which they witnessed and endured more horrendous and engrossing to the British reader. It projected a scenario in which a Bolshevik revolution might take place in Britain, where British

[33] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Volume I: Women. Floods, Bodies, History*, (Minneapolis: 1987), pp 366-367.
[34] *The Scotsman*, Tuesday, 26 May, 1919, p 3.

noblewomen could experience the same abuse. The White Countess stands as a contrast to Bolshevik revolution.

However, although these women were symbols of the old regime and feminine nobility, they did not serve the same purpose as the German concept described by Theweleit. Whilst the German White Countess existed on the frontline, often providing a rallying cry for right-wing reactionaries, the survival stories communicated to British readers are removed from violence. Rather than a call to reaction, these narratives usually promoted isolation. They reminded readers of Britain's stability whilst cautioning them of the dangers of alien peoples and ideas. Narratives of female atrocities were often accompanied by isolationist narratives, warning that Bolshevism was spreading throughout the continent with no signs of abating. This provided the British interpretation of the White Countess with a less militant, more voyeuristic quality. British narratives were also usually more sexualised than their German counterparts.

The narrative of the White Countesses' demise was presented as a terrible spectacle in most of the British press, specifically because of its political and sexual connotations. These narratives described how female nobles like the Tsarina and the Duchesses, after weeks of humiliation at the hands of the Bolsheviks, were bound and penetrated to death. This fit the violent, sexualised narratives often reported in newspapers like the *Mail* and the *News*. It merged the lurid details of a domestic crime story with international politics. The *Daily Herald* was among the only publications that challenged this narrative.

The *Herald*, which frequently defended the October Revolution, printed a counter-narrative. The socialist, anti-war newspaper described Alexandra as 'the evil genius' behind the late Tsar, whom it depicted as a brutal autocrat throughout the First World War. In a newspaper where working-class, revolutionary women were celebrated, the image of the White Countess was an abhorrent symbol of the exploiter. The noblewoman was portrayed as a cruel mistress who lived in luxury while the majority toiled and starved. The *Herald* attempted to dispel the Tsarina's victimisation by declaring

her death a hoax in spring 1919. It claimed that, despite the reportage of other newspapers, Alexandra, 'together with the Grand Duke Nicholas and other members of the Royal Family', had 'embarked on board the British warship "Marlborough" during the evacuation of Jalta'.[35]

This counter-narrative was meant to delegitimise sexual narratives about the Romanovs' demise; and reassert that the British government was lying to its people and succouring tyrannical leaders around the world. The lurid details were depicted as nothing more than a cynical fabrication by the capitalist press intended to inspire sympathy for autocrats. From the perspective of the October Revolution's supporters, monarchs and aristocrats could only be portrayed as villains.

Reportage on violence towards female icons like the Tsarina was either refuted or minimised by the *Herald*. Even had it not declared her death false, the narrative it constructed had a misogynistic element which implicitly justified violence towards noblewomen. This was an effort to create a narrative that challenged gendered hegemonic ones on gendered Bolshevism: in which the destruction of conservative icons did not result in the upending of culture and morality. Instead, it meant a new culture and morality was being born. These narratives meant to challenge cultural hegemony, however, were incomplete and borrowed heavily from existing narratives. For example, newspapers sympathetic to revolutions across Europe spent less time explicitly justifying the murder of nobles, and more time constructing their own icons of female martyrdom.

The *Herald* sought to memorialise slain female revolutionaries such as Rosa Luxemburg, arrested and illegally executed by German Freikorps members in the aftermath of the First Spartacist Uprising in Berlin in January 1919. Luxemburg was one of several female revolutionary socialists praised by the *Herald* before she was killed. Along with figures like Sylvia Pankhurst, she was regarded as an example of female political agency forwarding the socialist cause. Depictions of her death, however, were not analogous to that of the Tsarina and the Grand Duchesses. Despite referring to Luxemburg as a 'fearless leader', 'added to the long roll of martyrs', the *Herald* described her as a supporting

[35] *Daily Herald*, Friday, 2 May, 1919, p 2.

figure in the German Revolution. It gave nearly all credit and memorialisation for the uprising to Karl Liebknecht. In their dual obituary, George Lansbury devoted most of his praise to Liebknecht. He only provided an honourable mention to Luxemburg:

> Karl Liebknecht, the great son of a great father, swore in his childhood a 'Hannibal's oath' against Kaiserism and Capitalism. His life was given to the fulfilment of that vow: and Rosa Luxemburg was worthy to be his comrade.[36]

Even in the guise of revolutionary martyrdom, women were confined to feminine supporting roles in the *Herald*. It did not create narratives which depicted women, even those it admired, as the centrepiece of spectacles. This inadvertently undermined the *Herald's* challenge to hegemonic narratives on women. It reinforced traditional gendered norms instead of challenging them. Compared to gendered icons like the Tsarina, the *Herald* either did not or could not use the same kind of sensationalism to attract British readers. Its competitors, on the other hand, depicted Luxemburg's death with a different kind of sensationalism.

Although newspapers such as the *News*, the *Mail* and *Reynolds* also attributed most Spartacist agitation to Liebknecht, all provided lurid, apocryphal accounts of Luxemburg's death. The *News* described Luxemburg as the antithesis of a noble woman; she was a Red Woman in authority. Instead of beautiful and elegant, she was described as 'a cripple, waddling in her movements, and standing hardly 5ft high'. Instead of temperate and demure, she was 'full of fire, vigour and hatred'. She was described as a 'famous woman terrorist' and 'a Jewess of obscure origins… more Bolshevist even than the German Spartacists'[37]. The *Mail* wrote that Luxemburg 'invariably projected her hate and her Radicalism into [German politics]… she had few supporters because of her grotesque extravagance of views and methods'[38]. The *News* reported with vindication that 'her fate [was] no less terrible… indeed more terrible, than Liebknecht's':

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[36] *Daily Herald*, 25 January, 1919, p 9.
[37] *News of the World*, 19 January, 1919, p 5.
[38] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 18 January, 1919, p 5.

> She was… killed in a motor-car in which she was being taken to prison. Infuriated crowds attacked the car and almost succeeded in lynching her, despite the efforts of the guards. When almost torn to pieces an unknown man lifted himself into the car and shot her dead with a revolver… The next moment a crowd jumped into the motor-car and brought out of it the body of Rosa Luxembourg.[39]

Other newspapers also gave violent, contradictory reports on Luxemburg's death. The *Mail* described how 'the crowd stormed [the car]' and 'dragged Rosa Luxemburg's body out, and disappeared with it in the darkness'[40]. *Reynolds* claimed Luxemburg was 'seized and beaten with sticks and generally maltreated. Left half dead on the ground, she was picked up and then taken to a neighbourhood canal, where soldiers drowned her'. The newspaper added: 'Much gratification is expressed in Berlin political circles over the Spartacus rout…'[41].

The right-wing press' depiction of Luxemburg unsexed her. Her politics and views were described as though they mirrored her physical deformities. With this language, she was no longer depicted as a woman. For these reasons, her violent death was considered justified by these newspapers. *Reynolds* was a minor exception, being slightly more sympathetic to Luxemburg than the *News* or *Mail*. It claimed that Luxemburg's brutal death was 'tragic', but that description may have alluded to her being a woman, rather than a socialist.[42]

In these narratives, Luxemburg represented the personification of enemy women, Red Women. For her political and gendered transgressions, her violent death was depicted as a justified spectacle. Although the popular press claimed that women should be viewed through a different lens, in narratives that described crises, an older gender dichotomy was used. Women were either feminine victims or unsexed monsters. Even the *Herald*, which challenged political and gendered norms in Britain, was unable to escape this dichotomy.

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[39] *News of the World*, 19 January, 1919, p 5.
[40] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 18 January, 1919, p 5.
[41] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 19 January, 1919, p 1.
[42] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 19 January, 1919, p 1.

Socialist newspapers such as the *Herald* did not give women complete political agency. Despite the perceived gains of reimagined women over the course of the war, narratives of victimised and enemy women became more prominent because they reaffirmed traditional gendered narratives, without overtly refuting those which reimagined women. Despite attempts to challenge hegemony at the beginning of the inter-war period, the gendered hegemony espoused by much of the press was far more pervasive.

As I will explore in the following section, this gendered hegemony was extraordinarily important when examining the concepts of victimised women during the inter-war period. While new narratives were being constructed for women by most of the popular press, newspapers such as the *Herald* were only capable of attempting to refute them. As the British press printed myriad stories of Bolshevik atrocities against and involving women, the *Herald* would continue to refute this. The newspaper constructed its own narrative on victimised women; its challenge to the hegmony of the right-wing press.

Rape, Regicide and Spectacle: Victimised Women and Bolshevism

Although figures such as the Tsarina and the Duchesses had symbolic significance in the British press, most female victims of the Bolsheviks were depicted as middle-class or 'ordinary'. More specifically, as if they could be someone the reader might know if Bolshevism came to Britain. From 1919-1920, most newspapers demonised the Bolsheviks with narratives on their mistreatment of women in Russia. This restructuring of hegemony, however, had less to do with supporting a war with Russia than it did with mobilising Britons—particularly women—against Bolshevism; and what was perceived as Bolshevism at home.

Using Orientalism and Euro-Orientalism, these narratives asserted that Bolshevism and its adherents were fundamentally 'Eastern', atavistic and cruel. Like depictions of German atrocities during the First World War, narratives which highlighted Russian barbarism usually had sexual connotations. 'Oriental' and 'Jewish' Bolshevik violence towards women elicited fascination and disgust from the

British reader in the same manner as German atrocity stories had done. However, they served a purpose which their German counterpart had not. Rather than act as pro-war propaganda, they promoted the 'regeneration' of conservative British culture and politics, as well as opposition to all things labelled 'Bolshevik'.

Britain was less likely to be characterised as a crusader against tyranny, unlike during the First World War. Instead, it was described as the 'bulwark of civilisation': which depended on an economic, gendered order. As the 'Red Wave' supposedly washed over Europe, the popular press characterised Britain as if it were standing resolute, cautiously isolated from the chaos of the continent. However, these papers also warned that Britain's safety and relative stability would end if its people indulged in dangerous, foreign ideas.

This section will examine how numerous press mediums adapted the narrative of victimised women to Bolshevism in the immediate post-war period. It will specifically focus on narratives printed by the *Daily Mail*, the *News of the World* and *Reynolds' Newspaper*. It will also examine newspapers from the provincial press, such as the *Nottingham Evening Post*, the *Sunderland Echo and Gazette*, *The Scotsman*, and the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*. Despite wide ideological differences, the three major newspapers examined in this chapter featured similar depictions of women when it came to Bolshevism. The only major exception was the *Daily Herald*, which attempted to negate and minimise narratives demonising the Bolsheviks. However, the *Herald* eventually utilised the same tactics as its rivals, to create sexual horror stories involving reactionaries and White Terror.

In both cases, these papers restructured the idea of normality. Revolution or counter-revolution symbolised disorder and cruelty, constructed through sexual narratives. Such narratives were meant to symbolise everything Britain was not and fixated on foreignness and rape. Although focusing on women, they were often designed for a response from men.

Joanna Bourke observes that in war narratives, rapists literally invade and attempt to conquer the sexual terrain of their victims. By transforming her 'no' into his 'yes', they strive to triumph over

their social territory. Women victims are often erased from these rituals of violence. Rapes in wartime are primarily concerned with aggression against a *male* enemy. Gillian Mezey, for instance, defines rape in wartime as 'an attack on the male adversary'; Stephanie Audoin-Rouzea describes wartime rape as a particularly 'masculine trauma'.[43] Similar to reportage on German atrocities during the First World War, these narratives symbolised an affront to British masculinity by threatening women.

They were meant to incite fascination and disgust in male readers. Just as with German atrocities, it was suggested this would be the fate of British women should the Red Wave spread westward. This phenomenon threatened to emasculate men in the worst way possible. It also served as a marketing device for newspapers. Northcliffe aptly remarked, 'Sex things' are 'always news'; and as Adrian Bingham observes, 'few in Fleet Street disagreed'[44]. This was true (if not truer) when sex was reported as horror and politicised. These atrocity stories communicated the cost of a Bolshevik 'war on capitalism' to the British reader in the most disturbing, titillating way possible. Nicoletta Gullace notes that even when they depicted as horrific, reportage on rape stories

> …Yield a crop of indignation against the fiendish perpetrators of these dark deeds, and satisfy certain powerful hidden impulses. A young woman, ravished by the enemy, yields secret satisfaction to a host of vicarious ravishers on the other side of the border. Hence the popularity and ubiquity of such stories.'[45]

In most British newspapers, the rise of Bolshevism on the continent symbolised the terrible results of rebellion against capitalism and liberal democracy. Reports on the Red Terror were received with revulsion in the West. Many of these reports came from Russian emigres, mostly aristocrats and dispossessed businessmen who had lost everything, were bitter and biased. They found a receptive

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[43]Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to Present*, (London: 2007), pp 7, 386; John Hawthorn and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, (New Haven: 2001), p 200.
[44] Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life and the British Popular Press, 1918-1979*, (Oxford: 2009), p 1; Norman Angell, *After All: The Autobiography of Norman Angell* (London: 1951), p 120.
[45]Nicoletta Gullace, 'War Crimes or Atrocity Stories? Anglo-American Narratives of Truth and Deception in the Aftermath of World War I', ed. Elizabeth D. Heineman, *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, (Philadelphia: 2011), p 113.

audience in Western Europe: especially among investors in France, Belgium and Britain, who sustained heavy financial losses when the Bolsheviks cancelled all foreign debts, including government bonds; and nationalised property and industrial and commercial enterprises without compensation. Russian emigres coupled their anti-Bolshevism with anti-Semitism, which chimed with the views of many influential figures and most of the press, who claimed that the Bolshevik Revolution was a Jewish plot financed by Germany. These factors allowed rumours and fantasies on Bolshevism to proliferate.

Throughout 1919 and 1920, fantastical rumours about the Bolshevik regime flourished and were accepted without question. Women were being 'nationalised' and regarded as communal property; several American newspapers reported that the Bolsheviks had set up an electrically operated guillotine in Petrograd, capable of chopping off 500 heads an hour. Rather less was heard in the West, though, of atrocities committed by the Whites and the Cossacks on hosts of workers in general; Jews, in particular.[46]

The most sensational reportage on Bolshevism involved stories on the 'nationalisation of women'. This narrative became an analogy for white slavery and mass rape in the British popular press. In most newspapers, this was described as nothing less than bestial: men and women reduced to the state of animals. The *News* claimed that women had been 'degraded to the level of cattle' and were living under the 'farmyard morality' of the Bolsheviks. 'Respectable women have been flogged for refusing to yield'[47]. David Mitchell's research finds that the 'nationalisation of women' story can be traced to the Reverend R. Courtier-Foster, a British clergyman and officer in the British Military Mission in south Russia. The former British chaplain in Odessa wrote of how Bolsheviks bayonetted and wounded, tore men and women apart with winches, and scalded them to death. 'Week by week, the [Bolshevik] newspapers published articles for and against the nationalization of women'.

[46] Anthony Read, *The World on Fire: 1919 and the Battle with Bolshevism*, (London: 2008), pp 22-23.
[47] *News of the World*, 5 January, 1919, p 1; 19 January, 1919, p 9.

Northcliffe and the *Mail* used Courtier-Foster's letter—which was never verifie—to embark on an entire press campaign, reprinted in other newspapers. [48]

The *Mail* described 'nationalisation' as 'a new Bolshevik word for universal compulsory prostitution'. It concluded that: 'Bolshevism is not a political system but politically organised crime… The least that should be done is to lay the Bolsheviks under a ban and outlaw them, at the same time giving all possible material and moral to support of the anti-Bolshevist forces'[49]. These narratives were euphemistic. They were sensational—yet left much to the imagination. As 1919 progressed, however, accounts of 'nationalisation' became more lurid. The provincial newspaper, the *Sunderland Echo and Shipping Gazette*, claimed:

> A few days after the Soviets' decree, which women unanimously ignored, two outsiders known to nobody arrived in the town, and seized the two daughters of a non-bourgeois comrade, declaring that they had chosen them as wives, and that the daughters, without any ceremony, must submit, as they had not observed the registration rule. Comrades Yabionovski and Guriakin, who sat as judges in this claim, decided that the girls must submit, and the girls were carried off, and have not been seen since.[50]

The *Sunderland Echo* also claimed: 'Enthusiasts for nationalisation, naturally all males, raid whole villages, collar the young girls, and demand proof that they were not over 18… many of the girls are carried off, and there have been suicides and murders as a result'[51]. The *Nottingham Evening Post* provided even more graphic accounts:

> In Odessa bands of Bolsheviks seized women and girls and carried them off to the port, the timber yards, and the Alexandrovsky Park for their own purposes. Women used in this way were found in the mornings either dead or mod or in dying condition. Those found still alive were shot. One of the most awful of my own personal experiences of this new civilisation [in

[48] David Mitchell*, 1919: Red Mirage*, (London: 1970), p 259.
[49] *Daily Mail*, 7 March, 1919, p 4.
[50] *Sunderland Echo and Shipping Gazette*, Wednesday, 2 April, 1919, p 3.
[51] Ibid.

> Odessa] was hearing at night from my bedroom windows the frantic shrieks of women being raped to death in the park opposite.[52]

Left-wing, socialist newspapers also indulged in sensational reportage of violent acts by the Bolsheviks. Labourite newspapers such as *Reynolds' Newspaper* also reported on the nationalisation of women, claiming, 'The nationalisation of women is becoming quite general. The Bolsheviks have declared war on family life'. *Reynolds* reported that 'unbelievable orgies and indecencies take place' because of the policy. However, its greatest condemnation was that 'the women themselves have accepted their "nationalisation", and very little protest is made. This applies in every case'[53].

This served two purposes. Explicitly, it othered Russian women through Euro-Orientalist tropes. Depictions of their acceptance of barbarousness and slavery was proof of how alien they were to Britain. *Reynolds'* implicit message to its readers, however, was that if the Russians could learn to accept such deplorable acts, it might be possible anywhere. This meant that what was occurring in Russia and the continent was a potential threat to British culture too. As in the cartoon below, Bolshevism could place women all over the world in bondage for its perverse uses.

[52] *Nottingham Evening Post*, Wednesday, 3 December, 1919, p 1.
[53] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 30 March, 1919, p 5.

Lenin, depicted as a torturer, keeps the young women, democracy and freedom of speech, shackled in the dungeon of Bolshevism. Lenin remarks: 'Bah! Soviet Russia has no need of such people as you!'[54]

Newspapers on the right and left depicted the 'nationalisation' of women as an assault on womanhood, femininity, masculinity and the family itself. The 'revolution' which these newspapers described was violence of the worst kind upon the institutions that defined Western civilisation, particularly the patriarchal family. The result of these transgressions was unbridled barbarism and insensate brutality. In these narratives, the nationalisation of women was yet another example of Bolshevik violence towards womanhood and civilisation itself. This was sometimes expressed in political cartoons such as the one shown above. They depicted how ideas such as freedom and democracy could be romanticised as female symbols, then subjected to acts of brutality by the Bolsheviks. This also reflected the lurid accounts of female victimisation throughout the popular press.

Bolshevik violence towards women was often illustrated in graphic detail. The *Mail* vividly described the account of Madam Bruskurin, who claimed she saw a Russian girl 'bound with ropes and her feet… placed on a red-hot stove until the roasted flesh fell from her bones' by the Bolsheviks, who

[54] *News of the World*, 20 June, 1920, p 1.

also forced her mother to watch.[55] The *News* described how the wives of White officers were 'used for persecution and torture by the [Bolshevik] emissaries. These unfortunate women were separated from their children and taken away to courts of inquiry, where they were stripped, tortured, and killed'[56]. The provincial press wrote the account of Madame Munstrum, who detailed the mass kidnapping of women by Bolsheviks in Estonia.

> The Bolsheviks took as hostages the wives, daughters, and sisters of men fighting against them in the Estonian ranks or who had fled the Red Terror. Some of these were taken away by the Bolsheviks and some shot. The fate of many is unknown… At Narva 30 people were murdered en masse, chiefly women. Stones were hung around their necks and they were thrown into the water. Before their retreat the Bolsheviks seized 10 girls, who they took away with them.[57]

Perhaps the most infamous reportage on Bolshevik atrocities, however, was the account of Major Wynter, who served in the British Worchester Regiment in South Russia. A letter he posted to his wife was forwarded to the media. He claimed that the Bolsheviks had 'abducted several hundred Cossack girls… and, after making them dig a trench, violated them'. He added that, 'When the Cossacks attacked, the Bolsheviks put the girls before them and mowed them down with machine guns'. *The Scotsman* reported that among Wynter's accounts, he had included a picture of 'a woman with her head and shoulders and one breast cut off' in his correspondence.[58] The *News* described the letter in more vivid, grotesque detail.

> Most of the photos are of women. Women with their breasts cut off to the bone. Women with their bodies cut open. One woman with her stomach cut open and unborn twins half dragged out… Those who struggled were killed quite early on. The rest, when used and finished were mutilated and thrown, dead and dying, into the two small rivers flowing through Ekaternodar.[59]

The image of women with their breasts cut off was evocative of anti-German atrocity propaganda printed *ad nauseum* in the popular press during the First World War. The message about the

[55] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 20 December, 1919, p 5.
[56] *News of the World*, 27 April 1919, p 2.
[57] *Lancashire Evening Post*, Wednesday, 26 February, 1919.
[58] *The Scotsman*, Thursday, 6 November, 1919, p 7.
[59] *News of the World*, 16 November, 1919, p 3.

Bolsheviks was, in this regard, very much how the press had previously reported on the Germans. Like Germany, the Bolsheviks were an alien force who sought to violate women in every conceivable way, thus desecrating Western womanhood and threatening civilisation itself. The goals of the Bolsheviks were described in similar terms to those of the Germans; in some instances, they were depicted as one and the same. As the *News* explained when it published Wynter's report:

> 'The Boche is still fighting us, through the Bolshevik, but in a subtle way, and by underground means which it is hard to counter… Since the Armistice they have not lost hope or interest in Russia. They continuously organise Bolshevism and Bolshevik propaganda in Allied countries.'[60]

Throughout the initial post-war period, the British popular press published the narrative of German-Bolshevik collaboration. How they collaborated often differed depending on the author. Sometimes the Bolsheviks and the Red Wave were described as the by-product of Prussian scheming. The *Mail* claimed:

> The Bolsheviks have their own schemes… They want to start a world-wide revolution, since that is the only way they can retain power for themselves. But this does not alter the fact that they started business as agents of Berlin and have so continued. Since the armistice German staff officers have been going over to assist in the organisation of the Red Army, and latterly this process has been speeded up.[61]

In other narratives, newspapers suggested that German-Bolshevik collaboration was overt. *Reynolds' Newspaper*, for instance, warned it was 'certain that when all is ready and the Germans come to Paris, that there will not be anything except Soviet republics with which to negotiate. The Bolshevist idea is spreading westward with surprising rapidity…'[62]. The *News* occasionally claimed that Bolshevism was nothing more than a German plot to continue its war against the Entente.

> Germany is employing a multitude of agents, masquerading under false names, adapted to meet the particular country conceded, whose work consists in stirring up industrial unrest

[60] *News of the World*, 16 November, 1919, p 3.
[61] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 11 June, 1919, p 4.
[62] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 13 April, 1919, p 2.

> among the workers, indiscipline in the public services, and ill will between classes. In Russia the bait they offered the ignorant soldiers was the land for the people, to the workers high wages and more food, and to the dregs the proportion of the wealth of others.[63]

Equating Kaiserdom with Bolshevism was a useful narrative. It allowed former atrocity narratives to be recycled. Atrocity stories about women being forced into prostitution, civilians having their breasts cut off by bloodthirsty soldiers and innocents being crucified[64] were effective reproductions of anti-German propaganda.

This provided two important messages to the British reader. First, it communicated that the Bolsheviks were as dangerous to democracy and world peace as Germany had been. The Red Wave, in this respect, was no different from German imperial aggression. These narratives held that the fate of Western women would be the same under Kaiserdom or Bolshevism. Second, narratives on Bolshevik atrocities, like those regarding their German counterparts, allowed the media to ascribe a foreign identity to them. German atrocities allowed British newspapers to question the Western identity of Germans. Unlike Germany, however, the press rationalised that no Western culture could partake in acts as barbaric as the Bolsheviks. This supposed 'loss' of Western identity was usually described through Orientalist, Euro-Orientalist and anti-Semitic tropes.

It was common for the right-wing press to depict the Bolsheviks as the personification of everything un-European. The *News* claimed that the Bolsheviks were 'raising all non-Christian races against the Christian countries':

> The Bolsheviks form about 5 per cent of the population of Russia—Jews (80-90 per cent of the commissaries are Jews), Chinese, Letts, Germans, and certain of the 'skilled labour' artisans… In towns captured by the Bolsheviks the only unviolated sacred buildings are the synagogues, while churches are used for anything, from picture-shows to 'slaughter-houses'.[65]

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[63] *News of the World*, 9 February, 1919, p 2.
[64] See: *News of the World*, 16 November, 1919, p 3.
[65] *News of the World*, 16 November, 1919, p 3.

The *Mail* claimed the Bolsheviks were 'alien to Russia—a mere gang of foreign adventurers who have seized power and retain it owing to the passivity of the Russian character'. It reported that the Bolshevik Red Army had few Russians within its ranks. Instead, it asserted, 'the only elements in them that can be trusted are some thousands of Chinese, Letts, and Finns, who may fight to the death because they have endangered their necks by their numerous horrible atrocities'.[66] The right-wing press often attributed the worst atrocities to the 'non-Western' elements of the Red Army. The *Mail* claimed that the 'Chinese are used to shoot men of European blood and to drive the wretched conscripts, who are being taken up at the age of 55, into the firing line'[67].

The Chinese were usually depicted as the muscles of the Red Army in these narratives. The *News* claimed, 'The sole mainstay of the Bolshevik Government are the Chinese and Lett Regiments'. It elaborated that most executions were carried out by Chinese Bolsheviks: 'The shooting was done by the Chinese battalions, who received 600 to 400 roubles for every officer shot, and 200 roubles for every soldier shot. The same Chinese shot every fifth man of the troops which had refused to carry out the execution'[68].

The *Nottingham Evening Post* exaggerated the Orientalist dimension of these narratives further, reporting that in Ukraine, the 'wholesale deportation of women to the Chinese centres [to be "nationalised"] is enforced in all the here towns mentioned, but the inquiry is worse in Odessa than elsewhere'[69]. Adding the threat of miscegenation made an already horrific narrative even more transgressive, because it represented a racial threat to the British Empire. Ann Stoler notes how white European women were essential to notions of empire and the solidification of racial boundaries. The positioning of these boundaries within imperial politics was powerfully reinforced at the turn of the century by a metropolitan bourgeois discourse, intensely concerned with notions of 'degeneracy'. Middle-class morality, manliness and motherhood were perceived as endangered by

[66] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 27 March, 1919, p 4.
[67] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 7 March, 1919, p 4.
[68] *News of the World*, 30 March, 1919, p 5.
[69] *Nottingham Evening Post*, Saturday, 4 September, 1920, p 1.

intimately linked fears of 'degeneration' and miscegenation in scientifically construed racist beliefs.[70] This meant that Bolshevism threatened to politically, cultural and physically destroy British perceptions of whiteness. In such reportage, however, the Chinese were only depicted as the arm or muscle of the Red Army. The most hostile anti-Bolshevik narratives were reserved for Jews.

The British press repeated anti-Semitic claims from White Russians that Jews were the masterminds behind Bolshevism. The *Mail* stated this most succinctly, claiming that Jews were 'the largest non-Russian contingents among the Bolshies, and the most intellectual'. The Chinese, in contrast, acted 'more as executioners and torturers'[71]. The *News* reported that '80-90 per cent of the commissaries are Jews'; and asked, 'if… a commissary steeped in murder, with torture and rape, with mutilation, happens to be a Jew, as most of them are, should he receive exceptional treatment?'[72] Josephine Inigo Jones, a frequent contributor to conservative newspapers on women's issues, wrote in the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*: 'The leaders of Bolshevism are either Jews or Germans, mostly officers, and are brutal, cold-blooded murderers, and wild beasts'. Jones added: 'I once loved and admired the Jews, but not now, after what I have seen'[73]. Demonising narratives of Russian Jews was common in Western Europe at the time.

Matthew Hendley observes how many British conservatives were receptive to anti-Semitic narratives provided by Russian emigres and amplified them in the British press. Far-right newspapers such as the *Morning Post* readily latched onto conspiracy theories linking Communism to a Jewish plot of world domination. This theme was especially highlighted when an English translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—an anti-Semitic fabrication created by the Tsarist Okhrana which claimed Jews were plotting world domination—appeared in Britain at the height of its intervention

[70] Ann L. Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures', *American Ethnologist*, Vol 16 No 4, (November 1989), p 643; George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, (New York: 1997), p 82.
[71] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 17 November, 1919, p 10.
[72] *News of the World*, 16 November, 1919, p 3.
[73] *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, Thursday, 8 January, 1920, p 3.

in the Russian civil war.[74] Some of the right-wing press also pursued a strong anti-Zionist campaign, which they linked with anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism.[75]

Consistent characterisations of foreignness both undermined the Bolsheviks as the legitimate government in Russia and made their reported acts of sexual transgression more grotesque to the British reader. Theses narratives illustrated the collapse of Western civilisation to a foreign, Oriental, Jewish ideology. This reflected the xenophobia which permeated British culture at the end of the war. The Bolsheviks lacked the resources to attack the UK directly. However, they could infiltrate Britain with 'foreign agents' and incite revolution. This made immigrants—'foreign ideas' and 'foreign cultures'—especially suspect.

Britain experienced an intensified fear of aliens, immigrants, ideologies and sexualities during this period. Bolsheviks and Jews were both common targets. The former was often depicted as less of an ideological force than as a foreign body, threatening to infect or pollute Britain. MP R. Carter warned the House of Commons that foreign, Bolshevik machinations were the cause of national discontent:

> The unrest that at present is prevailing in this country has a very great deal to do, to my mind, with the alien enemy. You never hear of disturbance, rioting, or anything of that kind without a fair sprinkling of aliens. Bolshevism, of course, is introduced to England almost entirely by aliens.[76]

Equating Bolshevism, anarchism and other discontented labour movements with foreignness provided a useful rhetorical device. Conservative and Liberal MPs claimed that socialist, labour and union organisations were appendages of foreign influence, co-opted by invasive conspirators and undesirable aliens. Anti-Semitism was easily incorporated into these narratives. Conflating Bolsheviks with Jews was common discourse in the British press.[77] Jews were often perceived as a

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[74] Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain, and the Russian Revolution*, (London: 1992), p 11.
[75] Shmuel Almog, 'Antisemitism as a Dynamic Phenomenon: The "Jewish Question" in England at the End of the First World War,' *Patterns of Prejudice* 21, 4 (Winter 1987), pp 3-18; David Cesarani, 'Anti-Zionist Politics and Political Anti-Semitism in Britain, 1920-24,' *Patterns of Prejudice,* 23, 1 (Spring, 1989), pp 28-45.
[76] House of Commons, *Debates* (23 October 1919), col. 189.
[77] House of Commons, *Debates* (23 October 1919), cols. 198, 209-210.

people prone to vice in conservative society. They were also depicted as potential carriers of disease; sick in mind, body and spirit. Bolshevism was sometimes equated by conservatives as the ideological product of a malign people. This often involved using Orientalist and Euro-Orientalist narratives.

MP Pemberton Billing, for instance, used his political influence in the Commons to accuse Eastern European Jews of introducing white slavery to Britain.

> The white slave traffic, unnatural vice, the exploitation of English girls whom they marry, and then live upon the proceeds of their prostitution; the brothel keepers who are too clever to be caught, because the keep in the background; the people with gambling hells [*sic*] who lead young men to destruction, and who bring in such horrible practices as doping and unnatural offences—that is the sort of atmosphere that has been introduced into this country by these [Jewish] people.[78]

Anti-Semitic narratives on vice and white slavery were easily incorporated into narratives on Orientalism and xenophobia. These were all characteristics of anti-Bolshevik narratives in the post-war period. More specifically, they focused on the potential defilement of English women. The British press was sure to warn that this phenomenon was spreading.

The *Post* provided a dire warning to its readers. 'If by Easter [1919] the wave of Bolshevism should have swept further west, culture and civilisation would be buried for decades, perhaps even centuries'[79]. *Reynolds* claimed it had received information that the 'Secret Communist Committee' had met in Constance and 'decided that a world revolution should start on June 15 [1920]'[80]. Based on the examples provided by the press, if Western, Christian society fell to Bolshevism, women would be the first, greatest victims. Thus, newspapers frequently used narratives on foreignness and the vulnerability of Western women to justify militant resistance to Bolshevism.

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[78] House of Commons, Debates (15 April 1919), col. 2778; Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931*, (New York: 2009), p 63.
[79] *Nottingham Evening Post*, Monday, 20 January, 1919, p 2.
[80] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 30 May, 1920, p 1.

The *Mail* declared that while 'hordes of Chinese, Letts and Finns were advancing, violating women as they went… There can be no peace till Bolshevism is overthrown'[81]. However, all newspapers analysed in this chapter fell short of compelling Britain to declare war on Soviet Russia or any other Soviet state. The *Mail* stated emphatically that containing Bolshevism was the 'work for Crusaders', but only called for 'all possible material and morale to support the anti-Bolshevist forces'[82].

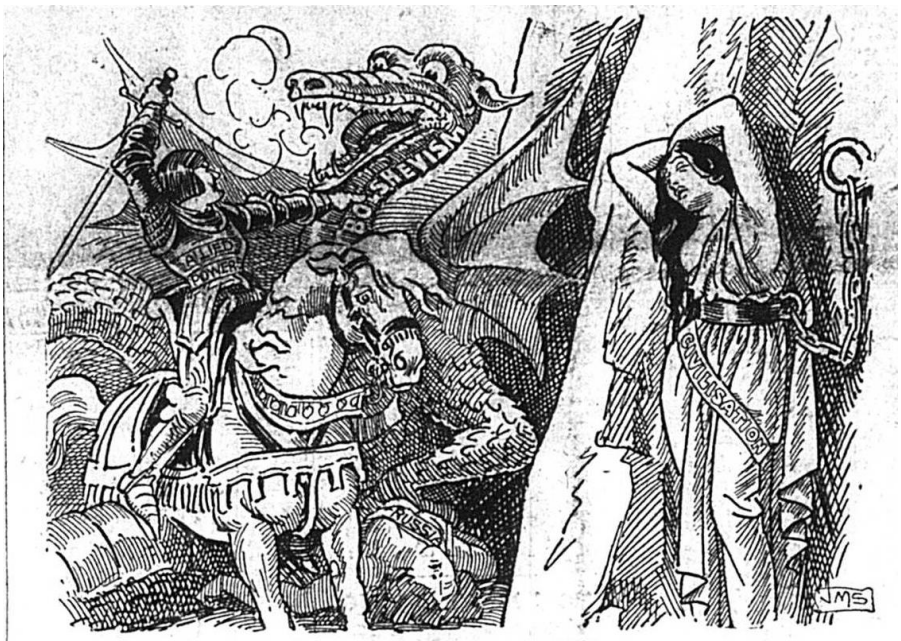
British contempt for the Bolsheviks may also explain why the 'call to crusade' did not entail the same kind of war as the one against Germany. Although the Germans were derided as 'Huns', during the war, they were a European industrial power. Euro-Orientalist depictions of Russia denied that identity to the Bolsheviks. Despite economic and human factors which would have made declaring war impractical, Stephen Richards Graubard contends that, 'were Russia a civilised society, Britain would have considered war [no declaration of war was ever declared], but Russia was not civilised, and her aggressions required different handling'. Although most of the British press did not call for a world war against Bolshevism, they also fulminated that, '"Staggering humanity" would never accept Bolshevik barbarism'[83].

Britain's involvement in Russia, however, remained limited. Relatively few soldiers were deployed to the Russian Civil War's numerous theatres. Neither the government nor the public appeared to have any conviction or interest in the campaign. Evan Mawdsley notes that although Britain had been an enthusiastic political and financial backer of the White Russian forces, by late autumn 1919, the flow of British arms had begun to dry up, and a winter of military disasters in Siberia and the Kuban seemed to prove that the Whites had no future. With that realisation, Britain wanted to normalise relations with Moscow, and sought to impose itself between Reds and Whites.[84]

This stance also reflected the desires of the post-war populace. To a war-weary population, the distant, far less intimidating threat of Russian rebels could not provoke the same fervour which anti-

[81] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 27 March, 1919, p 4.
[82] *Daily Mail*, 7 March, 1919, p 4.
[83] Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, (Cambridge: 1956), p 66.
[84] Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, (Boston: 1987), p 267.

Germanism had during the First World War. Newspapers provided fantasies more than anything else. In the *News*, cartoons (pictured below) of chivalrous British knights saving the manacled women of civilisation from the beast of Bolshevism depicted a struggle against the Red Wave which many Britons may have supported; but were unwilling to undertake. Britain might depict itself as St. George, ready to fight the dragon of Bolshevism and save the ravaged woman of civilisation, but that was mostly symbolic. The fantasy of a crusade was more powerful than any legitimate desires for a new war in Europe.



A FIGHT TO THE DEATH.

Entitled 'A Fight to the Death' the knight, St. George, is fighting the Bolshevik dragon, who keeps the feminine spirit of civilisation in tattered robes and bondage. Under its talons is the corpse of another woman, Russia.[85]

After the British government announced its intention to withdraw its expeditionary forces from Russia by the end of 1919, the *News* claimed, 'His Majesty's Government have considered that it is their duty to offer means of refuge to all those Russian who, having compromised themselves by helping us since we landed in north Russia, might now otherwise find themselves **exposed to Bolshevist vengeance**'[86]. *Reynolds* supported Prime Minister Lloyd George's decision to withdraw,

[85] *News of the World*, 6 April, 1919, p 1.
[86] *News of the World*, 14 September, 1919, p 2.

arguing that he was pressing 'forward towards the only solution which promises to save Russia from interminable horrors'[87]. However, socialist newspapers were critical of the British government, claiming that British intervention was fundamentally against the interests of working-class Britons and the formation of socialism in Britain.

> The present anxiety of the authorities to assist and support any anti-Bolshevik, appears to the workers of this country as an indication of a fixed determination on the part of certain sections of the community to use Bolshevik excesses, real or imaginary, as a reason of preventing at all costs the free development of Socialistic enterprises. So long as this policy of intervention in Russia is pursued there can be no question of disarmament, and the alleged need for retaining conscription in this country will remain. If the Government count on being able to bluff the workers indefinitely on those lines, they will be sadly disillusioned.[88]

Bolshevism, despite its sensationalised reportage, was depicted as a distant, existential threat instead of a tangible, immediate one. The popular press was likely aware that a war-weary population was disinterested in yet another conflict. This was especially true during the first half of 1919, when peace between the Entente and former Central Powers was not yet finalised. Mawdsley explains that allied intervention in Russia, although a strain on the Bolsheviks, lacked serious commitment. An alliance with the White Army was based more on the possibility of their victory and a stable government in Russia than aversion to communist rhetoric on world revolution. Although, Britain, the US, France, Greece and Japan all took part in intervention –ultimately prolonging military operations of the First World War—its conclusion was what kept those same campaigns reticent.

Supporters of intervention, such as Winston Churchill, were harshly criticised by newspapers and political rivals for recklessly involving Britain in a new conflict with no definitive end. Lloyd George, in contrast, warned: 'Has anyone reckoned up what an Army of Occupation would cost in Russia? I would rather leave Russia Bolshevik until she sees her way out of it than see Britain bankrupt. And

[87] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 16 November, 1919, p 1.
[88] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 29 June, 1919, p 9.

that is the surest road to Bolshevism in Britain'[89]. Although the government and most of the press sought to inculcate a profoundly negative view of the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism into British readers, gaining popular support for another war was both unrealistic and economically imprudent.

In this respect, the use of atrocity narratives which depicted women as victimised by Bolshevism served a far different purpose. Unlike anti-German propaganda, which ultimately sought to fuel support for British involvement in the First World War, anti-Bolshevik propaganda was a critical tool of post-war reconstruction in Britain and, to a certain extent, justified British intervention in Russia. While most British newspapers expressed reticence to engage in open war with the Bolsheviks, the *Daily Herald* was most vehemently opposed to British intervention. Consequently, it constructed unique narratives on victimised women and Bolshevism.

Negation and Displacement: The *Daily Herald* and Victimised Women

While Labourite newspapers such as *Reynolds' Newspaper* expressed opposition to overt British involvement in Russia against the Bolsheviks, the *Daily Herald* was the only major publication which often sympathised with the Bolsheviks in Russia and throughout Europe. The *Herald*'s narratives on victimised women and Bolshevism were a combination of Bolshevik apologism, hostility towards the British popular press, and atrocity narratives focusing on White Terror in Europe.

The *Herald* underwent an aggressive transformation during the immediate post-war period. The way in which it conveyed information to its readers was altered. Mark Hampton argues that the critique of the left-wing press during the inter-war period drew on the belief in 'educating the masses'. Ernest Bevin articulated his view of the *Herald*'s purpose in 1919:

> Labour's press must be a real educational factor, provoking thought and simulating ideas. In addition it must not be full of the caprices of princes, lubricities of courts and the

[89] Mawdsely, *The Russian Civil War*, (Boston: 1987), p 130; Christopher Dobson & John Miller, *The Day We Almost Bombed Moscow: The Allied War in Russia 1918*-1920, (London: 1986), p 24; DNFP, ser. 1 vol. 3:310.

> sensationalism produced to display the sordid. All these things are but passing phases and are products of the evil system which is rotten at the base.[90]

Northcliffe and his contemporaries sold sensationalism in newspapers. The *Herald* adapted similar methods, albeit in the name of dispelling the 'lies' of the capitalist 'poison gas press'. This was not presented as sensationalism, but as the 'truth' which the capitalist press wished to suppress.

Women were defended by the Labourite press, yet these newspapers argued that their main contributions to Britain and socialism were maternal. As political agents, women were confined to their social and biological expectations. Like in the right-wing press, reimagined women were also political instruments. They were subordinated by labour and socialist movements. Their identities in these movements were often provided little more than lip service in the Labourite press, which remained overtly supportive of working men. Women who objected to this were accused of sabotaging the movement. This reconstruction of gendered hegemony in the popular press was often connected to left-wing narratives on Bolshevism.

George Lansbury, who converted the *Herald* into a daily newspaper in March 1919, made Russian affairs one of his chief interests. His editorials were remarkable for their acidity. The *Herald* lambasted those who seemed prepared to support intervention.[91] According to Huw Richards, the newspaper could be described as 'subversion made print' with its anti-interventionist, anti-capitalist, anti-government and ambiguously pro-Bolshevik reportage.[92] Andrew Williams elaborates that a 'love-hate' relationship existed between the Labour Party and the Soviet Union. Moderates like Ramsay MacDonald and Phillip Snowden prepared to argue for 'fair play'—a powerful concept in the ethical tradition—as a reason for not isolating the USSR.[93] Lansbury and the *Herald*, on the other hand, were unquestioningly at the affectionate end of the 'love-hate' axis; the newspaper's

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[90] Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left*, (London: 1977), pp 12, 47, 50.
[91] Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, (Cambridge: 1956), p 70.
[92] Graubard, p 25; Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, (London: 1965), p 262.
[93] Andrew J. Williams, *Labour and Russia: The Attitude of the Labour Party to the USSR, 1924-34*, (Manchester: 1989), pp 8-24.

communist sympathies were a cause for concern among the Labour leadership.[94] This made the *Herald* the only major British newspaper which provided tacit support to the Bolsheviks in the initial post-war period.

Bolshevik atrocity stories remained prolific in the popular press. While narratives on women victimised by the Bolsheviks became common in Britain, the *Herald* actively attempted to neutralise them. It sought to accomplish this through two narratives of its own making. Most commonly, the *Herald* published counter-reports, claiming prominent stories on Bolshevik atrocities were false. The newspaper assured its readers that volunteers in Russia refuted these claims.

> We knew of course, in Russia, that rather wild stories were current in England concerning the nature of the Bolshevik rule—of a perennial Red Terror, of daily massacres, of troops running amok in the streets of Petrograd and Moscow; killing children, violating women, stories of the nationalization of women… But that is not the situation I find. I find that these wild stories printed have been oriented for months, day by day, in your most reputable papers…[95].

The *Herald* forwarded the reassurances of Georgy Chicherin, Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, that the use of Chinese troops for 'purposes of repression' and the use of torture by the Bolsheviks were 'pure invention'[96]. It also devoted attention to dispelling narratives on the 'nationalisations' of women. It lambasted the popular press for forwarding a story which, it claimed, was an utter fabrication. 'It is now admitted, even by those responsible for the dissemination of the story, that it is a gross falsification, and never had the faintest foundation under any law or act of the Soviet Government. But no publicity is given to the disproof'. Rather than citing evidence, however, the *Herald* attacked the concept of 'nationalising' women itself.

> A moment's reflection should have condemned this stupid story of nationalisation of women by internal evidence. One of the main tenets of Bolshevism as a political theory is the equality of men and women—equality social, economic, political. Whereas this supposed edict;

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[94] Allen, Memorandum on the *Daily Herald* 17, September, 1925, LPDH 464, Citrine to Mellor, 31 October 1928, TUC 788.61; Henry Hamilton Fyfe, *My Seven Selves*, (London: 1935), p 254.
[95] *Daily Herald*, Thursday, 3 April, 1919, p 2.
[96] *Daily Herald*, Friday, 11 April, 1919, p 1.

> converts women into chattels, and runs directly counter to every principle for which Bolsheviks stand. The whole thing makes nonsense to anyone who has taken the trouble to give five minutes' unprejudiced study to the ideas underlying the present system in Russia. [97]

The *Herald* was never able to actively refute accusations from the British media. Instead it claimed Bolshevik atrocity stories were part of concerted effort by the British government—with the popular press as silent partners—to justify a new war in Europe. This war—like all wars before it—would be designed to benefit the ruling classes. It referred to renewed aggression as 'the sinister new war': 'The Allied Government are now openly conducting a war against Socialism. Wherever, by means of Soviet Government, the workers attempt to take matters into their own hands, the Allied troops intervene and suppress them'[98]. The newspaper asserted that the landowning classes of the Entente, along with Germany, Hungary and Russia, were collaborating to prevent a socialist revolution. It prophesised full capitalist and autocratic collaboration after the fall of Hungarian Soviet Republic in spring 1919.

> For months they [the Allied Powers] have been deliberately plotting for the restoration of the self-same monarchical, militarist, tyrannical dynasties whose destruction was declared to be our only object of entering the war… Not only communism and Socialism, but political democracy and republicanism, are deliberately destroyed… it will merely be the beginning: the restoration of Hapsburgs in Hungary by the means of Allied bayonets will be followed by the restoration of the Romanoffs in Russia by the same means.[99]

To negate narratives on Red Terror, the *Herald* published counter-narratives which both minimised Bolshevik atrocities and focused on the crimes of the former Tsar and perpetrators of White Terror. While claiming that Allied intervention sought to 'bolster the tyranny of Tsardom' by aiding the White Armies, it endeavoured to depict the Bolsheviks as less violent than their enemies. Lansbury went so far as to interview Vladimir Lenin on the topic. Lenin explained to the *Herald*, which explained to British readers:

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[97] *Daily Herald*, Wednesday, 9 April, 1919, p 5.
[98] *Daily Herald*, Saturday, 3 May, 1919, p 1.
[99] *Daily Herald*, Saturday, 9 August 1919, p 4.

> 'After the revolution of November 7, 1917, we did not even close down the Capitalist newspapers, as there was then no question of terror. We set free not only ministers of Kerensky, but even [Pyotr] Krasnoff, who made war upon us. It was only after the exploiters and the Capitalists began developing their resistance that we on our part began to crush their resistance, applying even terror. It was the answer of the proletariat to such actions of the bourgeoisie as conspiring jointly with the capitalists of Germany, England, Japan, America, France for the restoration of the power of the exploiters in Russia…'[100]

With the British press saturated with stories on Bolshevik atrocities and injustices, the *Herald*'s lacklustre attempts to explain 'where the Bolshevist power is atrocities are least'[101] failed to gain the sympathy of the British population. Its readership was too small, and its counter-narrative lacked the sensationalism necessary to fascinate readers. In the face of depictions of the worst crimes imaginable, simple refutation appeared prosaic and underwhelming. Its more effective counter-narrative came from its equally sensational reportage on White Terror against women.

Although the *Herald* may have inadequately sanitised the Bolsheviks, its narratives on White Terror fed into the same sensationalism as its competitors. It provided an alternative to Red atrocities instead of attempting to negate them. When describing how, 'Over 200 women were taken out early one morning in the second week of May… and mown down in a bunch with machine-guns', it stressed emphatically, 'No, the foregoing is *not* an account of Bolshevik barbarities… [it is] related to the White terror.'[102]

The *Herald* claimed White Terror was responsible for 'systematically torturing men and women… The tortures inflicted in the Spanish Inquisition period are as feeble rushlights beside these devilries'[103]. The newspaper made use of its own violent narratives on women. It described how the end of the Soviet Hungarian Republic resulted in atrocities against women by the Romanian Army. It described how the Romanians stripped Hungarian working women naked and had them publicly flogged. In this narrative, violence against women combined with violence against the working-class.

[100] *Daily Herald*, Tuesday, 5 August, 1919, p 3.
[101] *Daily Herald*, 11 January, 1919, p 3.
[102] *Daily Herald*, Monday, 21 April, 1919, p 2.
[103] Ibid.

Women were depicted as casualties of anti-union suppression from reactionaries. 'When the miner's union at Petrogen [Hungary] was suppressed, the leaders and their women folk were stripped and flogged—flogged until their backs were raw, and then turned over and flogged in front. Many of them died under the lash'[104]. The most prevalent gendered themes of White Terror were analogous to those reporting on Red Terror in most of the popular press. Both narratives focused on rape and fear of miscegenation.

The *Herald* devoted a significant amount of reportage to the suppression of German Soviets and French occupation of the Rhineland. These narratives focused on the brutality of French colonial troops, who took part in the police action. More specifically, they centred on sexualised violence against white women committed by African troops. The *Herald* described the forces of reaction in the Rhineland with sexual euphemisms. Dubbed the 'Black Scourge of Europe', it accused France of setting 'sexual horror loose on the Rhineland' to suppress socialism.

> The French militarists are perpetrating an abominable outrage upon womanhood, upon the white race, and upon civilisation. Not content with using hundreds of thousands of primitive African barbarians in the war, who stuffed their haversacks with eye-balls, ears and heads of the foe, they are over-running Europe with them to-day.[105]

The *Herald* described the use of black troops by the French—who it claimed were 'psychologically inferior'—as the purposeful use of terror and degradation on the humiliated German population. Socialist activist, E.D. Morel, claimed:

> The presence in Germany of 38,000 African troops, powerful, muscular men separated from their womenfolk, meant subjecting thousands of European women to sexual intercourse with them. The essential infamy was that the French Government, knowing this, had deliberately added to the hardships of military occupation a horror that could scarcely be described.[106]

Black men, depicted as virile and sexually bestial, were described as 'a terror and a horror unimaginable to the countryside, raping women and girls'. The *Herald* also asserted that 'the raping

[104] *Daily Herald*, Monday, 21 June, 1920, p 3.
[105] *Daily Herald*, Wednesday, 28 April, 1920, p 5.
[106] *Daily Herald*, Wednesday, 28 April, 1920, p 5.

of a white woman by a negro is nearly always accompanied by serious injury and not infrequently has fatal results; spreading syphilis, murdering inoffensive civilians, often getting completely out of control'[107].

It constructed its own narrative on nationalised women, reporting that the French occupation had transformed working women into prostitutes for African soldiers through destitution. Like the rest of popular press, the most outrageous aspect of these sexual narratives was that white women were forced into sexual congress with foreign men. In this context, victimised women in the *Herald* had few differences from those in other British newspapers. The *Herald* ignored or minimised Red Terror and Orientalist narratives and constructed narratives on White Terror and Black Peril (referring to the professed dangers of sexual assault on white women by black men).[108] In both narratives, sexual violence and miscegenation were depicted as the tools of nefarious governments, which sought to subjugate the world.

While the *Herald* may not have reached audiences as effectively when attempting to cast the Bolsheviks in a more favourable light, it could gain the sympathy of the reader, regardless of their political inclinations, by depicting victimised women and villainising the forces of reaction in Europe. In both narratives, gendered hegemony was constructed. This undermined the agency of women. Women, unable to defend themselves, became objects of outrage to a largely male readership. These narratives fixated on the masculine insecurities of white Britons, whether on the right or left, who feared the defilement of the female body. The depiction of women and their victimisation became the means of perpetuating patriarchal politics.

The *Herald*'s narrative on black men also served the same function as racial, anti-Bolshevist narratives in the right-wing press. African men were often portrayed as potentially violent sexual predators. Asian men were also described as sexual predators. Using well-entrenched stereotypes of

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[107] *Daily Herald*, Wednesday, 28 April, 1920, p 5.
[108] Ann L. Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures', *American Ethnologist*, Vol 16 No 4, (November: 1989), p 641.

the 'Oriental', the latter found themselves depicted as mysterious, devious individuals who seduced white women by trickery or drugs. In both instances, readers were advised that 'half-caste' children would inherit 'the worst characteristics of both parents'.[109] The *Herald* published the same racial anxieties about gender to combat anti-Bolshevik narratives. The major difference was merely its politics. Although it constructed a challenge to hegemonic narratives on Russia and the Bolsheviks, it too was part of Britain's gendered hegemony: depicting women in the same manner as other organs of civil society.

As shown in the image below, women were often portrayed as symbols of an alternative imagined community, which the *Herald* believed represented proletarian men resisting the reactionary forces of militarism. As in nationalist narratives, she was usually depicted as a victim in need of masculine protection.

[109]Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* p 102, 103; *Sunday Chronicle*, 23 Mar. 1919, p 3.

The feminine spirit of freedom prostrates herself before the proletarian so that he may face the forces of militarism.[110]

The popular press, the *Herald* included, constructed compelling narratives by depicting women as sexual victims of foreign, tyrannical forces on the continent. Women and girls were generally conceived as helpless, awaiting a masculine saviour. These narratives also depicted the horror and disgust of women being subject to violence by ethic and cultural others. However, unlike during the First World War, the press sought to galvanise women against the Bolsheviks and European intervention. Women were now more commonly reimagined as political agents who fought for or against Bolshevism. To understand this, the shifting narratives on reimagined women must be examined.

[110] *Daily Herald*, Monday, 12 April, 1920.

Reimagined Women: Romance and Obsolescence in the Post-War Press

The First World War and the attainment of suffrage afforded women tremendous praise from the popular press. In the aftermath of the war, this praise continued for a time, but began to dissipate by 1919. The purpose of reimagined women in post-war society was continually scrutinised by newspapers as soldiers returned to Britain. On the one hand, reimagined women were revered as a political and industrial force to be reckoned with. On the other, their new identity was framed within the confines of Western femininity. Narratives on femininity and its supposed inferiority to masculinity meant that reimagined women were depicted as unwelcome in many respects in post-war society.

As Gail Braybon observes, when the war ended, the press dramatically changed its tone over working women. 'Superficial praise changed to spiteful criticism in many newspapers'.[111] In February 1919, Mary Macarthur told a meeting of the National Federation of Women Workers that, 'with the coming of the Armistice, these women, who had worked 12-hour shifts, days and nights, Saturdays and Sundays, had, according to British newspapers, become shirkers and slackers'.[112] This shift in tone defined the changing identity of reimagined women in post-war Britain; they were simultaneously accomplished and unwelcome. Gendered hegemony was constructed in a manner that depicted women as politically liberated but socially unequal to men.

The accomplishments of reimagined women were romanticised. The *Mail* praised their wartime contributions: 'The war has brought many changes and innovations in its wake, and one of the most striking has been the manner in which it has opened up ways and byways to women, giving them the opportunity of "making good", often along paths never before penetrated by frailer sex'[113]. The

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[111] Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, (Abingdon-on-Thames: 1989), p 186. This is repeated by others, including Billie Melman, *Women and the Popular Imagination in the Twenties: Flappers and Nymphs*, (Basingstoke: 1988), p 17; Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959*, (New York: 1995), p 77. Pugh notes that, 'where recently they [the press] had heaped praise on women they now began to identify them in a threatening light as a section of the population lacking true public spirit'.
[112] *Daily Herald*, 22 February, 1919, p 12.
[113] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 4 February, 1919, p 7.

News lauded women's political agency, noting that 'women electors were in preponderance at the polling stations' at the LCC election in spring 1919. 'In the morning [women] were almost the only voters'[114]. Both right-wing and left-wing newspapers offered praise to women as political agents. However, it was often laced with condescension.

The *Mail* mused that Britain would soon enter a new age of democracy, but claimed women had to 'learn' how to be citizens first. 'Until women were enfranchised, that matter did not trouble them'[115]. *Reynolds' Newspaper*, despite considering that enfranchisement of women 'could not have come at a more fateful moment', also observed: 'It seems somewhat unfair that man, having reduced the world to such a terrible plight, should now seek feminine assistance to help put it right'[116]. The *News* declared, 'Women have their rights as well as men… and if they do their duty properly at home in keeping the house clean and having the dinner ready, that is as much as a man has a right to expect'[117]. For all the progress which newspapers insisted that women had made, they were still depicted as domestically and politically subservient to men's interests. In the immediate post-war period, newspapers adapted narratives on reimagined women as tools for their political ambitions. Newspapers often did this whilst maintaining women's implicit inferiority to men.

This meant that reimagined women 'represented' many different camps from 1919-1920. In this section, I will explore how reimagined women were romanticised by the popular press while simultaneously derided by it. By exploring this duality, I will examine how the press' use of gendered hegemony took ownership of female political agency and undermined it. One of the primary ways in which newspapers did this was by communicating anxieties on Bolshevism or reaction to it. Newspapers depicted women as political and social agents in favour of or opposed to socialism, within the confines of a feminine sphere.

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[114] *News of the World*, 9 March, 1919, p 1.
[115] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 11 September, 1919, p 9.
[116] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 5 January, 1919, p 2.
[117] *News of the World*, 30 March, 1919, p 6.

As the First World War ended, criticism of women's place in the workforce increased in all newspapers examined. In some cases, narratives on female employment and militancy were conveyed as mostly positive but ultimately, obsolete. Women were conceived as having been transformed, but this also determined how drastic that transformation could be. As Bingham observes, the press reinforced the contemporary belief that the First World War had transformed women. It dramatized the debate between those who celebrated women's (perceived) new freedoms, and those alarmed at the prospect of 'masculine women' invading male preserves.[118] During the post-war period, the reimagined woman was both exalted for her wartime contributions and increasingly 'encouraged' to return to the private or 'feminine sphere'.

When the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was disbanded, *Reynolds'* described it as a 'successful experiment', commenting that it was 'disbanded at the end of 1919 with a fine tradition of service willingly and splendidly rendered'[119]. The *Mail* provided the WAAC with a heartfelt goodbye in 1919.

> We went to France… with the good wishes ringing in our ears, and months later returned, scarred and beribboned, to find them [W.A.A.C.s] very willing to serve and make us feel at home again. It was their way of showing how much they appreciated the little bit we had done. And now they are going. We still can't quite believe it. Never again shall we hear the 'Kiss Trot' or 'Roses of Picardy' from the busy pantry each morning! Good-bye to you, little ladies in green, and *thanks most awfully*![120]

These narratives, although positive, communicated that the place of reimagined women was not permanent. The new identity of British women was described as one made by necessity. When that identity was no longer considered necessary, female employment in industry and the military was presented negatively. This was usually constructed by claiming that women occupied jobs meant for soldiers, either enlisted or demobbed. The *Mail* explained that although women had 'won generous admission from the men' and 'applause from their sister-women' for their industrial and military contributions during the war, this was only for its duration. Their labour was done, for the most part,

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[118] Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004), p 19.
[119] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 4 January, 1920, p 4.
[120] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 5 March, 1919, p 4.

'in safety… it was well paid, and the war workers returned in most instances to their comfortable homes when their day's task was done'. Men, by contrast, had endured: 'Death, mutilation, broken nerves, wrecked lives, ruined prospects. That was our soldiers' and sailors' share of the war... Who is to have the work, the women or the returned soldiers and sailors?'[121] The tribulations of women during the war never received the same kind of attention or sympathy from the British press or public.

Kent argues that censorship obfuscated the suffering and death which women workers endured during the war. The Defence of the Realm Act meant that explosions in British factories and cases of working women maimed and killed by them often went unreported. Imperfect industrial technologies sometimes resulted in grievous injuries to working women, just like their male counterparts. Machines removed fingers and ripped off scalps if women's attention was divided whilst working.[122] Grayzel highlights how the experiences of British women on the front, such as ambulance drivers, were not known until 1930: when the diaries of Winifred Young and Evadne Price were adapted into the fictional novel, *Not So Quiet: Stepdaughters of* War. Until then, Young and Price's accounts of the noisy, filthy, disturbing nature of a war which did not keep women safe remained unsaid.[123] Suppression of such incidents helped preserve the genteel image of British women. It also helped construct the narrative that women had not made comparable sacrifices to men during the war; and that they now occupied positions meant to reward male tribulations.

Reportage from the *Mail* asserted that women lived in luxury from wartime jobs which they refused to vacate and continued to live well off the severance pensions provided if they were dismissed. This was depicted as an act of selfishness on the part of working women. The newspaper explained that for Britain to become a 'home fit for heroes', sacrifices were expected from women.

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[121] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 11 March, 1919, p 4.
[122] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918-1931*, (New York: 2009), pp 16-18.
[123] Jane Marcus, 'Afterward: Corpus/Corps/Corpse: Writing the Body In/At War', in Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet…Stepdaughters of War*, (Reprint), (New York: 1989); Susan Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, (London & New York: 2002), pp 56-57.

> This war has meant to a very large extent the emancipation of women, but one must remember that one man's meat may be another man's poison, and that as, at the outbreak of war, men cheerfully gave up their homes and comfort and everything that they held dear to serve their country, it is now time for the women to give up something in return.[124]

More specifically, the *Mail* mused in its editorials, 'I decline to have thrust upon me an Eve whom the war has made superlatively self-sufficient. If I cannot find that unspoiled, feminine girl, the race may perish where I emerge from the sacred state of bachelordom'[125]. In newspapers like the *Mail*, women, despite being celebrated as emancipated, were portrayed as having strayed too far from their feminine identity. It argued that women should leave the workforce and return to the private sphere: not simply for the sake of working men, but that of the British race itself. Fear of female emancipation destroying the British race was reiterated in multiple newspapers.

The *Mail*, the *News* and *Reynolds* all took interest in narratives on Britain's 'surplus women'. This was based on Dr. C. W. Saleeby's assertion that due to casualties inflicted by the war and child mortality rates—which the press claimed more adversely affected boys—there would be three million more women than men in the British Isles. Saleeby described this scenario as 'outrageous, unprecedented, infernally unhealthy, and a grave obstacle to monogamy'. The *News* commented, in relation to working women: 'We talk of increased production, but we are not producing the producers. It all hinges on the social problem of motherhood'[126].

The *News* claimed that the reasons for the sex imbalance were due to social issues rather than the war or infant mortality. While it acknowledged male losses because of the war, it claimed that 'sex preponderance' among women 'seemed to be almost wholly injurious' and had 'little compensating advantage'. This resulted in 'female excesses', which men would have been able to curb had they survived the war. It also argued that changing gender roles meant that the nation had been deprived of critical mothers.

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[124] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 30 May, 1919, p 6.
[125] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 22 March, 1920, p 4.
[126] *News of the World*, 16 February, 1919, p 6.

> Female preponderance resulted in a large and increasing number of the physically and intellectually fittest women in the country being forced into the labour market, while less provident women of the unskilled workers' class married and had large families. The nation was thus deprived of the best potential mothers, and the birth-rate was smallest in the best elements of the population.[127]

In many of these narratives, the glorification of female emancipation was eclipsed by anxieties over the future of the 'British race'. Anna Davin notes that a powerful ideology of motherhood emerged in relation to populations and gendered problems in the early twentieth century, but it was firmly rooted in nineteenth-century assumptions about women, domesticity and individualism. In the post-war Empire, motherhood was given new dignity in many narratives: it was the duty and destiny of women to be the 'mothers of the race', but also their great reward. This responsibility always superseded any other task.

Davin explains how moral blackmail over the concept of motherhood, exploiting the real difficulties and insecurities of many mothers, underpinned their new status. Their elevation in the home and workforce did not mean an end to subordination in patriarchal society.[128] Women could always be criticised for having 'essential' duties they could be attending to instead of being in the workforce. This narrative negated the wartime accomplishments of women as mere temporary necessity, not women's 'true calling'. This meant that women's emancipation was sometimes depicted as both positive and potentially perilous.

Narratives in the press suggested that female emancipation in the workforce, although ostensibly positive, was also damaging. Women had been deprived of male supervision during the war and once again required patriarchal guidance. It warned that if this did not occur, the social consequences would be severe. A feminised nation, a weak nation, could not defend itself from alien threats such as Bolshevism. Anxieties over this supposed 'feminisation' meant that women entering 'masculine' realms of the economy and society were treated with open derision.

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[127] *News of the World*, 2 February, 1920, p 2.
[128] Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, No 5, (Oxford: 1978), p 13.

Sally Alexander sets out how women who gained a semblance of economic independence were targets of hostility in inter-war Britain. These women blurred the boundaries of gender and challenged the idea of fundamental differences between men and women. In turn, this challenged men's sense of virility and their egos, already damaged by the war. It was not the loss of work itself which made men bitter and ashamed, but public exposure to their plight which emasculated them. It was a plight which the press was sympathetic to.

In contrast, women were the shock troops of industrial change. Their nascent power and social ubiquity made them objects of ridicule and insult, further provoking fears that Britain was becoming feminised.[129] Although left-wing, socialist newspapers such as *Reynolds' Newspaper* and the *Daily Herald* were usually more sympathetic to women workers, they also expressed doubts on whether women should have the same place in industry as men.

The *Herald*, which advocated suffrage and women's equality before most British newspapers, appealed to working men who feared competing with women for employment. Writing for the *Herald*, Sylvia Pankhurst criticised women's 'reluctance' to leave wartime jobs. Claiming this obstructed the goals of unions and socialists, she observed, 'It seems to me it is the duty of women to support the movement for the reduction of the working week to forty or, if necessary, to thirty, or less, in order that all may be employed'[130]. Like the right-wing press, Pankhurst believed women's emancipation came second to the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism. While the *Herald* acknowledged women's inequality in the workplace and society at large, it framed unionisation and social revolution as the best means to ameliorate these inequalities. 'If men were to do women's work, bear women's pain and worry, women's unceasing responsibility, there would have been a revolution [by] now'[131]. But women could only change their position in society by

[129] Sally Alexander, 'Men's Fears and Women's Work: Responses to Unemployment in London between the Wars', *Gender and History*, Vol 12 No. 2, (July, 2000), pp 403-408; Sally Alexander, 'Becoming a Woman', ed. Sally Alexander, *Becoming A Woman: And Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History* (London: 1995), pp 204-224.
[130] *Daily Herald*, 15 February, 1919, p 6.
[131] *Daily Herald*, Monday, 5 April, 1920, p 8.

collaborating with male-dominated unions. Its main commentary on women's involvement in unions was that it represented 'a move in the direction of industrial Unionism'.

Women were indeed active in these movements. Barbara Wilson and Temma Kaplan contend that the invigoration of revolutionary socialist movements at the end of the First World War altered the mindset of numerous socialist feminists in Europe. Wilson finds that communal uprisings in Europe united workers and women in working-class neighbourhoods. Rebellion was not only about conditions of work, but also consumption. Women came out onto the streets and met in the marketplace and the courts of apartment blocks; they were major participants. They operated a different kind of women's movement, which Kaplan describes as 'female consciousness'. These women not only demanded political equality with men; but as working-class women, access to resources. Unlike the feminism seen in liberal-democratic movements, which claimed individual rights, these movements of 'female consciousness' based their demands on collective social needs.[132]

The First World War, the Easter Rising and the Russian Revolutions transformed the thinking of left-wing feminists such as Sylvia Pankhurst. By 1918, she no longer described herself as a socialist suffragette, but a revolutionary dedicated to the struggle for socialism.[133] Pankhurst and others like her began to stress the needs of the movement over those of women. This fit the narrative of the Labourite press, which stressed the importance of socialism and trade unionism over the 'lesser issue' of feminism. As in the illustration below, this was the idealised depiction of the socialist woman; an icon who put class struggle and 'the people' before her interests. It also meant women within the movement could be more easily ignored or silenced.

[132] Barbara Wilson, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism*, (London: 1996), pp xiv-xv.
[133] Wilson, pp 103-104.

Woman, the spirit of socialism, leads the march of the British proletariat towards a new day.[134]

Despite occasional nods of recognition, women's unique contributions to unions and workers' movements were often ignored in these newspapers. When women criticised unions for this, they were portrayed derisively by the Labourite press. *Reynolds* claimed, '[Trade Unions are] in danger at the present moment of being misrepresented by the women themselves'. The newspaper claimed that accusations of sexism in unions made by women 'savour strongly of the fertile and biased mind which does not realise the harm it is doing [to the union's cause]'[135].

As in the *Herald*, the concerns of women were dismissed in favour of the movement. *Reynolds*, dismayed by what it considered the disloyalty of working women, observed, 'Strange, then, why certain women's organisations are up in arms against us. But from the methods and weapons they are employing in their attacks, I can clearly see that they do not in the least understand the

[134] *Daily Herald*, Thursday, 1 May, 1919, p 3.
[135] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 18 January, 1920, p 2.

importance or significance of modern Trade Unionism'[136]. The newspaper's narratives on reimagined women reflected both a defence of women in the workplace, but a lingering distrust of them as political agents.

Reynolds was more sympathetic to women workers. It argued that women were fit for many, if not all, professions in Britain.

> Setting aside those trades in which the lesser physical strength of the average woman sets her at a disadvantage, and the small group of processes dealing with certain poisonous materials from which women are normally excluded, there remain a body of industries and operations offering a houseful field of fresh employment for women, where their war experience can be turned to account and should prove a national asset of great value.[137]

Reynolds asserted that working women had no desire to keep demobbed men out of work, arguing that 'women have to live just as men have… it should be remembered that had it not been for them many trades could not have been successfully carried on during the war.'[138]

However, *Herald* and *Reynolds* often had contradictory narratives on reimagined women, work and morality. Whilst the *Herald* extolled the Labour Party Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment's 'training for new callings of women who have suffered financial disability during the war', it usually feminised the issue of women's work and prosperity. The *Herald*'s women's page, 'Home Rulings'—the last page of the paper—normally only mentioned domestic tips, fashion and sales. Laura Beers argues that Home Rulings represented a perfunctory nod to female readership: 'It is hard to imagine an overworked mother, let alone a modern young girl, eagerly reaching across the breakfast table for the Home Rulings page'[139]. Although popular newspapers produced 'women's pages' and serial stories, the *Herald* did not become popular among women readers.[140]

Home Rulings did not mention women in the workplace. Instead, it observed:

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[136] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 18 January, 1920, p 2.
[137] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 2 February, 1919, p 3.
[138] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 13 July, 1919, p 2.
[139] Laura Beers, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party*, (Cambridge: 2010), p 94.
[140] Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*, (Oxford: 2004), pp 18-19; Tony Gray, *Fleet Street Remembered*, (London: 1990), p 39.

> A woman who lets her husband work for wages, takes the wages and spends them on a bad quality of goods, be it food, or clothes, or amusement, is unfaithful. The unfaithfulness of morality is as nothing in its effect on the nation compared to the unfaithfulness in duty to the man who makes the money.[141]

Reynolds also had concerns over the immorality of women. 'In the past men have been obsessed by the idea that women, by reason of their sex, were unfit to undertake work outside the home. The record of things achieved by women during the war should suffice to dispel the illusion'[142]. However, like other newspapers, it also believed that women had not been changed entirely for the better by the war.

Reynolds reasoned that there was a fundamental difference between men and women. 'Man rarely plays with fire as woman does—he is more honest with himself. If he gets burnt it is because he knows he had deliberately walked into the flames… Woman… often selfishly stirs up the fires… She may not realise how unfair she is, but then thoughtlessness in such matters amounts almost to cruelty'[143]. *Reynolds* sometimes claimed women's 'selfish' and 'excitable' nature undermined their status as equals in British society. It claimed that the influence of the war was partially to blame for the 'selfishness' of reimagined women. 'Girls… had been swung off their feet by emotional excitement as a result of the war. There was a glamour of everything connected with the Army, and girls were unable to resist the attractions'[144]. *Reynolds* explained that the 'echo of war' stimulated undesirable traits in women, such as sexual impropriety, drug use and gender 'confusion'. Like the right-wing press, it stated:

> The girl that is wanted to-day to stimulate the progress forwards and upwards of our bit of the world is the feminine one, her sweetness tempered by a strength that is soft and fine, and as different to that of a man as a silken cord is to a hempen rope. The girl that is emphatically not wanted is the masculine self-assertive one, a replica of man, who emulates his attributes

[141] *Daily Herald*, Tuesday, 27 April, 1920, p 2; Monday, 4 August, 1919, p 8.
[142] *Reynolds Newspaper*, 26 October, 1919, p 2.
[143] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 12 October, 1919, p 2.
[144] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 8 June, 1919, p 4.

> thereby losing her own, and pits herself against him in the arenas of work and home, instead of uniting with him.[145]

Like right-wing newspapers, reimagined women in the left-wing, socialist press were subservient to the ideologies of men. Women who resisted this paradigm were depicted as malcontents and obstructionists. Whether in the workplace, trade unions or the home, men dictated how far the liberation of women would go in press narratives. Those who went 'too far' were ignored or shunned. Apart from the *Herald*, all newspapers examined in this chapter had the same conclusion on how rebellious, 'mannish' women should be dealt with.

Reimagined women who did not conform to changing expectations were not labelled enemy women. The popular press, however, considered that they were not welcome in Britain. It instead suggested that 'adventurous women' should relocate to the colonies. The *Mail* reasoned, 'Many of our splendid girls need a broader, freer outlook on life than the old country affords them for the wider range of vision and aspiration which they have gained during the war'[146]. The *News* argued that locales such as New Zealand were an 'El Dorado for women'. The opportunities they advertised, however, were limited: 'There is, at present, a great demand there for females capable of fulfilling various household duties, particularly single-handed helpers, cooks, waitresses, housemaids, and daily domestic workers'[147].

Despite arguing that this was a beneficial suggestion for reimagined women, these same papers reasoned that the emigration of 'surplus women' was an important means of adjusting Britain's sex imbalance. The *Mail* explained:

> Within the United Kingdom there is a large excess of female population—considerably larger since the war. Within the Dominions, on the contrary, there is a preponderance of male population over female. It is an essential part of the post-war reconstruction programme that we should distribute out material for the national and imperial development so as to secure

[145] *Reynolds Newspaper*, 27 June, 1920, p 2.
[146] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 30 June, 1919, p 7.
[147] *News of the World*, 19 September, 1920, p 6.

> throughout the Empire as far as possible an even balance of our resources... Merely an adjustment of weight, the better to balance the whole. Also an adjustment of supply and demand.[148]

In the popular press, women were often depicted as objects or 'materials' of the nation. When reimagined women became 'obsolete', newspapers recommended they be 'redistributed' elsewhere to strengthen the Empire. Reimagined women deemed useful, however, were still regarded as valuable tools to the nation, particularly in politics. Women were now valuable political assets in Britain, and political movements incorporated them accordingly.

As Helen McCarthy observes, the Conservative, Liberal and Labour parties all formed or extended their women's sections in the post-war period. They also extended non-party bodies for women, such as the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, Women Citizens' Associations and the Townswomen's Guilds. These organisations introduced thousands of British women to the processes of committee work and helped them put their political power to effective use. Women campaigned on issues ranging from equal pay and birth control to slum clearance and women's representation in local government: aided by improvements in housing and labour-saving devices, giving housewives more leisure. These acts constituted what James Hinton calls a 'female public sphere', in which a 'specifically feminine public culture' was nurtured.[149] Women were politically mobilised in the same manner to oppose and support intervention in Russia, depending on the newspaper in question.

The *Mail* proclaimed that British women were a tremendous force of opposition to Bolshevism. It published the words of Beatrice Harding at an anti-Bolshevik rally: 'Now is a chance for the great women leaders who were ready to suffer all things for freedom for women to throw all their energies into such a cause. Let there be a self-denial week for every woman in the land—there are none so poor who cannot give their mite [sic].[150] Writing to the *Mail*, Mona Smith claimed that: 'It is

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[148] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 30 June, 1919, p 7.
[149] James Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War: Continuities of Class*, (Oxford, 2002), pp 2, 33; Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 50, 4, (Cambridge: 2007), p 894.
[150] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 20 November, 1919, p 10.

now the duty of women of Britain and other nations to respond… Strong and prompt action is wanted, not talk, to stop these devils from torturing helpless women'[151]. Unlike the First World War, however, the *Mail* claimed that no women volunteers were required in Russia.[152] Women would only be mobilised domestically. Depictions of militant women also changed during the post-war period.

Although British women had been told to 'take off the uniform' at home, the popular press continued to depict foreign women as militants. The *Mail*, for instance, ran several articles on yet another 'Battalion of Death' in Poland fighting Bolshevism. 'Eight battalions of the Polish women's corps are now under arms in Poland, most of them recruits… A major tells me that they held out even when men ran away. Many committed suicide rather than surrender'[153]. However, positive narratives on female militants, even those fighting the Bolsheviks, became less common.

A degree of admiration was given to these female militants because they were not British; and thus, were not subject to the same social expectations. However, depictions of Slavic women became increasingly negative during the post-war years. Subjected to Euro-Orientalist tropes, these women were often associated with the savagery of Red Women, explored in the next section. Previously revered female militants such as Maria Botchkareva were characterised as savage by the same newspapers which previously exalted her. The *Mail* referred to her as a 'wild woman', and voiced its distaste for her biography. 'The portrait of Maria Botchkareva is so unpleasant—she has a cruel, sensual face, and the first passage upon which my eye lighted, a passage describing how she bayonetted a man almost made me throw the book away in disgust'[154]. Images of female militants were considered a relic of the war. Only foreign, Eastern women could retain the mantle, but only under the stipulation that they were represented through a Euro-Orientalist lens, such as in images

[151] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 20 November, 1919, p 10.
[152] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 10 April, 1919, p 5.
[153] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 6 August, 1920, p 5.
[154] *Daily Mail*, Friday, 8 August, 1919, p 8.

of the Polish Legion of Death. Having partaken in such violent acts, these women were depicted as having nothing in common with British ladies.

POLAND'S WOMEN SOLDIERS.—We still have our W.A.A.C.'s, W.R.A.F.'s, and W.R.E.N.'s, but Poland has her women soldiers. The photo shows them at the funeral of a French officer at Lemberg. They took part in the defence of the town against the Ukrainians. Several of them have followed the prevailing fashion, and have bobbed their hair.

The Polish Legion of Death. The *News of the World* made efforts to distinguish these 'women soldiers' from British female militants such as W.A.A.C.s and W.R.A.F.s.[155]

Foreign militant women, then, were portrayed as violent and threateningly sexual. Newspapers such as the *Mail* believed the best way to prevent this violent, foreign sexuality from corrupting British women was to encourage women to 'reclaim' their femininity in post-war Britain. Reimagined women were often politicised as the voice of reason or the 'voices of wives and mothers' in the press. For instance, the *Mail* commonly utilised women as the voice of its anti-waste campaign. Creating a narrative that criticised inefficient government spending, the newspaper used women, particularly wives and mothers, as the primary agents of change. The *Mail* described the anti-waste march as a renewed call to 'save the babies'.

> About 1,000 women, carrying babies, marched in procession though the crowded streets to the Council House, where they handed a petition to the Lord Mayor protesting against the

[155] *News of the World*, 28 September, 1919, p 5.

> high price of milk fixed by the Food Ministry. Failing reduction of price, they pressed for municipal milk depots. The procession carried banners inscribed, 'We want cheaper milk' and 'God save the babies'.[156]

The *Mail* used women in a similar manner to counter industrial action, which the newspaper often depicted as the machinations of Bolsheviks. It noted that while working men impertinently engaged in labour agitation, their wives opposed them.

> Wives of men in the mining areas are talking against the strike. Their argument is simple: rates of strike pay have not gone up; the cost of living has… In the railway centres the feeling is the same… A Triple Alliance strike, hoped for by Mr. Smillie, which would involve all the transport workers, will make the position of the home-keepers even more desperate. It is a women's war, in which the women have more to lose than any other calls of community.[157]

Although women were depicted as political agents in these narratives, they were also described as victims. They were victimised as mothers and wives, whether by government waste or intransigent striking husbands. Their political agency was fundamentally tied to motherhood and the home. In the *Mail's* narratives, feminine motherhood was one of the nation's greatest defences against revolution. The *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* conveyed a similar narrative: that women were appointed to this role for society's greatest benefit.

> The women of England wanted peace, law, and order, so that they might bring up their children to be useful citizens, and as for the Red Army and the revolutionaries, it must not be forgotten that when upheavals occurred, such as we saw in Russia, the heavy casualties were always on the side of women and children.[158]

While newspapers cried that revolution threatened to abolish the family, traditional motherhood was depicted as a means of keeping British society pure and orderly: in stark contrast to the blood and chaos of the continent. In left-wing publications, such as *Reynolds*, the political agency of women was also largely tied to motherhood. Motherhood was described as a socialist defence against Bolshevism abroad and against the small, nascent Communist Party of Great Britain, which

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[156] *Daily Mail*, 28 October, 1919, p 5.
[157] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 25 August, 1920, p 5.
[158] *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Thursday, 9 December, 1920, p 8.

was founded in 1920 and sought affiliation with the Labour Party, much to the latter's consternation.[159]

Reynolds believed that the best way to cure society's ills and inoculate itself against Bolshevism was to increase social welfare. It argued that women's 'natural' maternalism made them ideally suited for this task. To rebuild the nation and rebuke immoralities associated with the Bolsheviks and Germans, women needed to occupy roles dedicated to welfare.

> The war has hindered Nature's work for it has devoted to untimely death hundreds of thousands of young and healthy men, who would otherwise have been happy fathers of babies. The German philosophers, with their usual blundering folly, have evolved the conclusion that the Germans are to make up their losses by polygamy and other immoral means. That will not do for us. We appreciate too strongly the danger of sexual immorality to give it any countenance… As with food, the best is, of course, that with which Nature supplies the mother.[160]

Reynolds posited that the feminine instincts of women would improve society for the better when applied to 'feminine' aspects of society, such as health, hygiene and maternal care. 'The women of the country are the section of the community primarily interested in health. Maternity, the care of infantile life, child life, are indisputable fields for women'[161]. The feminine instincts of women made them ideal political agents in multiple political fields. *Reynolds* praised the role of policewomen, because it believed their maternalism made them better suited to caring for women and children.

> Offences against women and children in our large towns are uncommonly frequent, to say nothing of the hundreds of young girls who are apt to become victims of unscrupulous and evil-minded men. Therefore, the need for employment of additional policewomen is most urgent, and ought to be proceeded with at once. It is no reflection upon the ordinary police-constable to say that there are instances where a policewoman is better fitted to deal with members of her own sex.[162]

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[159] Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain: 1881-1951*, (Stroud: 1997), p 100.
[160] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 19 January, 1919, p 2.
[161] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 9 March, 1919, p 2.
[162] *Reynolds Newspaper*, 15 August, 1920, p 2.

Reynolds argued that the injection of maternalism into British politics, albeit in the 'proper' professions, was the nation's greatest defence against Bolshevik subversion. 'While it is true that women are generally more progressive than men, their innate sense of tidiness leads them to the conviction that progress must be along the lines of order, and makes the vast majority of them antagonistic to revolutionary doctrines'[163]. This reflected the overarching narrative of *Reynolds' Newspaper* on Bolshevism: achieving a patriotic, British socialism required a moral, ordered transition. Revolutionary methods, in contrast, lead to tyranny and alien leadership. Newspapers such as the *Daily Herald* also believed that women were important for establishing socialism in Britain. Unlike *Reynolds*, however, it often depicted reimagined women in internationalist, anti-war narratives.

The *Herald* regarded the growth of revolutionary socialism as an opportunity for women to become political agents. Like *Reynolds*, it feminised the role of reimagined women in politics. It was 'the solemn obligation… [of the] Congress of Women—namely, the obligation that International Social Democracy will never again suffer the outbreak of a war'[164]. It also printed the words of Clara Zetkin: 'A meeting of the leading women of the Socialist movement in all lands is a demonstrable necessity… it must be independent, taking its stand firmly on the ground of International Socialism'[165]. A prevailing sentiment among feminists prior to the First World War was that, as women and mothers, it was natural for women to oppose war.[166] The *Herald* revived the concept of feminine pacifism and applied it to their narratives of reimagined women. This was a construct of gendered hegemony, effectively returning women to 'feminine' political functions.

In the *Herald*, reimagined women were symbols of International Socialism and anti-imperialism. They were supporters of trade unions, who condemned British intervention abroad. The *Herald*'s

[163] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 5 December, 1920, p 2.
[164] *Daily Herald*, Thursday, 14 August, 1919, p 3.
[165] *Daily Herald*, Saturday, 6 September, 1919, p 3.
[166] Richard J. Evans, 'Women's Peace, Men's War', ed Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism, and Pacifism in Europe, 1870-1945*, (Sussex: 1987), pp. 122-124; Amira Gelblum, 'Ideological Crossroads: Feminism, Pacifism, and Socialism', ed. Billie Melman, *Borderlines: Genders and Identity in War and Peace 1870-1930*, (New York: 1998), p 307.

symbolic reimagined women were often intellectual or abstract concepts with no clear identity. Theses narratives were constructed by the male editors as some example which British women should follow.

In other instances, the *Herald* praised Soviet women as an example of revolutionary progress. Unlike narratives from other British newspapers, it claimed that women in Soviet Russia had lives far more prosperous than they could have hoped for under Tsardom. This was a sign of 'brighter days' to come in Russia. Its foreign correspondents described Bolshevik-controlled Russia as idyllic. 'Everywhere reigns perfect order without the apparent use of police. I sat in a park at Saratoff and watched the parade of pretty girls in white… and almost thought to myself in a prosperous English city'[167].

Despite the *Herald*'s apologia towards the Bolsheviks, however, it also used Euro-Orientalist narratives. Its interpretation of Euro-Orientalism amounted to an inversion of the narratives constructed in other British newspapers. It claimed that Bolshevism was in the process of civilising Russia, which it depicted as economically and morally backward under the Tsar and White Armies. That civilising process meant reimagined women could emerge in Russia and possibly inspire British women to follow them into socialism. As with other newspapers, women were given examples to follow as if unable to make decisions of their own. Reimagined women in the *Herald*, like in the picture below, still fought for maternalist causes, such as saving starving children from the Allied blockade of Russia. The contributions of reimagined women remained limited by their gender.

[167] *Daily Herald*, Wednesday, 9 June, 1920, p 5.

WOMEN'S EFFORT TO SAVE EUROPE'S STARVING CHILDREN.—A deputation of women marched from Bow to Downing-street, yesterday, to urge upon Mr. Bonar Law the immediate Raising of the Blockade.—(Photo "Daily Herald.")

Women socialists and trade unionists protesting the British blockade of Soviet Russia. The *Daily Herald* described it as "Women's Effort to Save Europe's Starving Children".[168]

Although all newspapers explored in this section continued to praise reimagined women in the immediate post-war period, the narrative was subject to major alterations. Newspapers on the right and left expressed their gratitude towards the contributions of reimagined women during the war, but also made it clear that they were not expected to make these contributions in the future. Right-wing newspapers such as the *Mail* and the *News* increasingly depicted reimagined women as a valuable, domestic political force, who had overstayed their welcome in the workplace and military. Although the agency of women was not denied by these publications, they treated those women viewed as trespassing on male territory with hostility. This is well represented by the song, 'In Days When Knights Were Bold', published in the *News*.

> In the days when knights were bold and barons held their sway,
>
> The girls threw roses to ye noble scion
>
> And the little boys shouted 'Any old iron!'
>
> … If his wife went giddy, get divorce? Not he!
>
> He'd lock her in a castle and he lost the key.

[168] *Daily Herald*, Thursday, 8 May, 1919, p 1.

In the days when knights were bold, and barons held their sway,

If his wife she dar'd to disobey,

He put her on the rack three times a day,

If ma-in-law commenc'd to scold,

He simply got a battle-axe and busted her 'bazooka',

In the days when knights were bold.[169]

Judy Giles explains how male violence, whether physical or verbal, could be legitimised in inter-war Britain as an extreme manifestation of male authority. This was endorsed by the husband's role as the primary breadwinner, in return for which he was owed work by his wife. The failure of wives to carry out their side of the marriage 'contract' provided full justification for being beaten: so much so that, at least superficially, many women seemed to accept this.[170] Right-wing newspapers in Britain, despite their use of women for political ends, such as condemning Bolshevik violence towards them, also retained misogynistic views: which became more visible as narratives of reimagined women began to unravel.

Right-wing narratives on women sometimes appeared violent, as they were intended to reassert patriarchal authority. This reflected contemporary views during the period and was true in both the private spheres of Britain and the battlefields of continental Europe. Robert Gerwarth notes that in the case of White Terror—which the right-wing press usually ignored or marginalised—violence against 'politicised women' by paramilitary units and their supporters was not perceived as deviant behaviour, but as a 'legitimate' response to restore 'order' and 'discipline' women they considered a threat to 'healthy' gender relations and society as a whole.[171] When reporting rebellious or 'unwanted' women, the right-wing press permitted a degree of cruelty. Although the Labourite press was more sympathetic to women in the workforce, its narratives had many of the same themes.

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[169] *News of the World*, 9 July, 1920, p 6.
[170] Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50*, (New York: 1995), p 36.
[171] Robert Gerwarth, 'Sexual and Nonsexual Violence against "Politicized Women" in Central Europe after the Great War', ed. Elizabeth D. Heineman, *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, (Philadelphia: 2011), p 126.

The right-wing press argued that women would be removed from 'improper' places by violent means if necessary. These violent narratives unsexed undesirable women and rejuvenated the ego of their male attackers. In the Labourite press, women were instead provided 'special' place in a movement which both empowered and marginalised them. They were afforded space, but it was separate from men.

Stephen Brooke argues that the Labour Party's 1918 Constitution created a new space for women within the party, recognising their formal place in the public sphere as economic and political actors. However, it also marked them as a discrete political category. Women were identified with the home, men with the workplace. Women lacked an organisational basis for this identification. These different sites produced different kinds of class formation: with the trade union important for men, and the home for women.[172] Consequently, women's influence in Labour politics was often restricted to 'feminine' causes and excluded from larger projects. Keith Laybourn believes there is little evidence to suggest that Labour contextualised women's issues into gradualist approaches to socialism during the 1920s. Rejecting communism was considered a matter of greater importance.[173] However, even radical left-wing parties like the Communist Party of Great Britain emulated the concept of 'separate spheres'. The Labour Party—and the communist party that unsuccessfully attempted to shadow it—functioned as 'male-dominated preserves', with women's activities confined to their own subordinate political sections.[174]

Like the right-wing press, reimagined women in the Labourite press were idealised as silent on matters considered irrelevant by men. That is to say: they were celebrated as liberated citizens and political agents, while being ejected from positions which previously empowered them. As the war

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[172] Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day*, (Oxford: 2011), pp 8, 44.
[173] Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain*, (Stroud: 1997), p 104.
[174] Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, & Michael Flinn, *Communists in British Society 1920-1991: People of a Special Mould*, (Chicago: 2007) p 64; Chris Williams, '" The Hope of the British Proletariat": The South Wales Miners 1910-1947', eds. Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, & David Howell, *Miners, Unions and Politics 1910-1947*, 1996, pp 138-139.

became more distant, the popular press grew increasingly hostile to the idea of women remaining in what were perceived to be masculine spheres.

However, it is important to recognise, as Bingham notes, that the press backlash towards women was more complicated than a simple volte-face. There were indeed aggressive voices demanding the expedited removal of women workers. This was negotiated during the war by the unions, and later became government policy through the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act in 1919. Opposition to women in the workplace was reported in the popular press. The *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Express* wanted to stand up for the 'war heroes': The *Mail*, for instance, advertised itself as the 'Soldiers' Paper'.

Bingham, however, argues that popular newspapers were more restrained than previously thought. An article by a regular *Mail* columnist, G. Ivy Sanders, written two weeks after Armistice, gives a sense of the characteristic tone. 'In the interests of the country in general, and of the women workers in particular, every encouragement should be given to the women to return to their pre-war employment until such time as normal peace conditions are resumed'. Yet nevertheless, 'war has created entirely new and improved conditions of service in every sphere of labour. Women were in a position to demand fair wages and treatment from their pre-war employers'[175].

This, however, does not take the erosion of women's agency into account. Joane Nagel notes how gender exclusion in national narratives minimises the value of women's agency in the creation and reshaping of nations and states.[176] This asserts and reasserts male power or, at times of social change, gendered hegemony. Although women received certain accommodations which they would not have enjoyed prior to the war, their depiction in the British press was undeniably changing by 1919. Reimagined women could not be entirely denied agency: they were enfranchised citizens who

[175] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press*, (Oxford: 2004), p 60; *Daily Mail*, Friday 29 November, 1918, p 4.
[176] Joane Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 21, No 2, (Abingdon: 1998), p 243.

had contributed greatly to the war effort. Instead, newspaper narratives were altered to make reimagined women compliant to the social and economic desires of men.

Reimagined women received the most praise as political agents in the struggle for or against Bolshevism. It was in the context of Bolshevism where they were often depicted as most empowered—but only because it fit the political agenda of editors. On the left and right, conservative and revolutionary, women were subjected to this gendered hegemony. By adapting to a new 'proper' role, they only reinforced constructions of heroic women found in the popular press. The newspapers juxtaposed an altered image of women: what they should not be, and even what was villainous. The narrative of the enemy woman became overtly Bolshevik and revolutionary.

Enemy Women: Brutality, Deviance and Bolshevism

Cruelty, violence and the abandonment of femininity defined narratives on Red Women in the British popular press. These were applied to women on the continent. The main anxiety conveyed was that British women could be infected by Bolshevism and become as monstrous as Red Women in Russia and mainland Europe.

The only major newspaper examined in this chapter which did not explore this narrative of enemy women was the *Daily Herald*. This was due both to its tacit support of the Bolsheviks, and its general disinterest in discussing women as political agents. Consequently, the *Herald* will not be discussed in this section. All other major newspapers had their own narratives on enemy women, however, and had numerous commonalities that will be examined. Feminine violence was by far the most prevalent theme in all narratives on Red Women.

Women were typically depicted in the popular press as transformed; but there was a dual nature to this transformation. Although women were portrayed mostly as having been changed for the better thanks to the war, an inverse narrative claimed they could possibly change for the worse. Whereas women were sometimes depicted as innately conservative, socialist or progressive (depending on

the publication), other narratives suggested some women were cruel by nature. Writing for the *Mail*, Alfred Edye mused:

> It is impossible to deny that in a considerable number of women there exists a strong grain of cruelty. Women in power often display a capacity for cruelty that exceed the most fiendish devices of man. History of the annals of crime are full of examples, from Delilah and the Roman Empresses to women of modern times. Some of the most cold-blooded of murders have been committed by women, and the horrible crime of vitriol-throwing to blind the victims is a peculiarly feminine device.[177]

More specifically, Edye suggested that feminine cruelty and violence became most apparent when women obtained excessive power and agency.

The popular and provincial press frequently depicted women as foot soldiers of the Red Army. Although some newspapers reported that Russian women had joined the Bolsheviks merely to save themselves from starvation[178], others wrote they were like-minded sadists. The press claimed that Red Women were as vicious as their male counterparts. 'The Bolshevik women are quite as brutal as the men. The fiendishness of one of them particularly was directed against officers, whom she began by shooting in the knees and then in the shoulders'[179]. The *Times* described how: 'The only richly dressed women were the "communist battalion", who walked about with guns, acting partly as a kind of police, partly as spies, taking a particularly active and ferocious part in domiciliary visits and arrests'. The correspondent claimed, 'I never saw such malignant, low, truly wicked faces as those of these "gallant Red Amazons"[180].

The *Mail* reported how Red Women had massacred civilians in Riga. 'Many deaths are taking place in Riga itself and the Bolsheviks have employed women to fight against the Estonians. These women, it is stated, have not been behindhand in committing outrage'[181]. The *Nottingham Evening Post*

[177] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 4 May, 1920, p 6.
[178] *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, Wednesday 9, April, 1919, p 5.
[179] *The Scotsman*, Monday, 29 September, 1919, p 7.
[180] Reprinted in the *Nottingham Evening Post*, Thursday, 30 November, 1919, p 1.
[181] *Daily Mail*, Saturday, 10 May, 1919, p 5.

described how in Riga, 'young girls, elegantly dressed, volunteered as executioners, and, coquettishly promenading up and down with rifles, fired at the unfortunate prisoners'.[182]

These violent Red Women were frequently depicted as prostitutes. They were described as morally and sexually degenerate. In the same manner as it demonised prostitutes during the First World War, the right-wing press claimed that they represented the most repulsive form of Bolshevism.

> The worst were the Letts and the women Bolsheviks. These were Lettish servant girls or prostitutes. They would tell the Bolsheviks where their employers had hidden any valuables, and under promise of social equality, &c., committed some of the most terrible things, which are really too terrible to describe. Any girls of our class whom they considered too well dressed or too good looking would be insulted, raped, and disfigured at the whim of the beasts. Nobody was safe.[183]

Reynolds described the horror of the sudden reversal of social standards in Russia, where servants and prostitutes gained the status of noblewomen. 'Bolsheviks robbed the poor and rich alike. A lady of her acquaintance had a servant who attended a dance in her mistress' evening gown. The mistress dared not remonstrate as Red Guards plundered wholesale, people who objected being shot without ceremony'[184]. Such characterisations of immoral, debauched Red Women were common. Gerwarth observes that during the Red Terror, White Terror and Red Scare descriptions of female violence accompanied stereotypes of 'politicised' Bolshevik women as short-haired, hysterical and dressed in rags. The reader could visualise the 'typical' Bolshevik woman as savage and sadistic. She was presented as a legitimate target for the 'forces of law and order'[185]. This was a narrative in which asserting patriarchal dominance, even violently, was deemed necessary by the right-wing popular press.

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[182] *Nottingham Evening Post*, Monday, 22 September, 1919, p 1.
[183] *Nottingham Evening Post*, Thursday 3 July, 1919, p 1.
[184] *Reynolds Newspaper*, 17 August, 1919, p 3.
[185] Gerwarth, 'Sexual and Nonsexual Violence against "Politicized Women" in Central Europe after the Great War', ed. Heineman, *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the era of Human Rights*, (Philadelphia: 2011), pp 135-136; Cecile Tormay, *An Outlaw's Diary*, *Revolution*, (London: 1923).

Although female Bolshevik militants were thoroughly demonised, the press expressed even greater contempt for high-ranking female Bolsheviks. *The Scotsman* reprinted Major Wynter's account of meeting an imprisoned female commissar in Odessa: 'A girl in the twenties, who, he had been told, had shot 700 anti-Bolshevik captives in the cellars where they were confined… She burst into vehement denial [at the accusation], denouncing her calumniators, and at the end of her protest, declared that "it wasn't more than 500"'[186].

The *Dundee Courier* described another female commissar as 'a notorious murderess' and career criminal. It gave a detailed account of her preferred method of execution.

> Her particular field of labour had been the killing of 'White' officers, and she was said to have murdered several hundred with her own hand. As a usual thing she stood her victim up against the wall, and then then started shooting with the revolver, beginning with his feet, and working up his legs and body until he was wounded in many places, and only when he was in a state of collapse would she finally dispatch her victim.[187]

Like low-ranking Red Women, these female commissars were often depicted as prostitutes. A *Yorkshire Evening Post* correspondent claimed:

> I have heard… that certain pro-Bolsheviks in this country claimed as one of the true virtues of Bolshevism that loose women are no longer to be found on the Petrograd streets. This is only partially true, for what has really happened is that these women have been, as it were, promoted into high places in Soviet offices.[188]

These narratives conveyed a simple message: fallen women in power commit atrocious acts. The British press attempted to delegitimise Bolshevik rule by depicting its members as violent criminals and claiming that they revered the worst kind of women. Claims of the elevation of female murderers and prostitutes to power exploited narratives which undermined femininity, the family and Western civilisation.

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[186] *The Scotsman*, Thursday, 6 November, 1919, p 7.
[187] *Dundee Courier*, Friday, 24 October, 1919, p 7.
[188] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 15 August, 1919, p 6.

The *Mail* went so far as to suggest that the Bolshevik regime was under the influence of a single woman. A girl named Olga Gorokhoff, it wrote, had 'unbounded influence' over Lenin and was secretly pulling the strings of the Bolshevik regime. It described Gorokhoff as a 'Red Rasputin' who lived in a 'luxurious suite of rooms in the former Convent of the Virgin', and claimed that she 'holds high court, and requires Soviet commissaries to kiss her hands'. She was a powerbroker: 'As a reward for… obeisance… she pushes the political interests of ambitious bureaucrats'[189].

Reynolds made a similar claim. It asserted Karl Liebknecht had embarked on the failed Spartacist uprising after being radicalised by a Russian woman:

> It appears that Liebknecht was twice married. The first union was a very happy one until Liebknecht became connected with Russian anarchism, when disagreements arose between the revolutionary leader and his wife which led to divorce. Shortly afterwards Liebknecht married a Russian woman… who is described as a political fanatic of very radical views. This marriage… surely had a large influence in leading Liebknecht along the path which brought him ultimately his tragic end.[190]

Red Women in power were always described with more antipathy than their male counterparts. When the *News* reported that Madam Jacobleva, the 'female dictator', had been executed by the White Army, it declared that the 'tyrant in her turn meets her doom'.[191] Violence towards Red Women was not only considered justified because they transgressed gender norms, but also because they were depicted as far more dangerous than their male contemporaries if in power. If Red Women were regarded as an insidious force behind Bolshevik men, they were also the carriers of Bolshevism that infected others.

The popular press repeatedly cautioned its readers about the growing influence of Red Women in Europe. In Finland, Germany and Hungary, the *Mail* claimed, 'Many women fought in the cellars alongside the Reds in defence of the short-lived dictatorship[s]'. The newspaper claimed that these

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[189] *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 30 November, 1920, p 8.
[190] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 19 January, 1919, p 1.
[191] *News of the World*, 23 March, 1919, p 6.

women took hostages and mutilated corpses.[192] A camp mutiny in Britain was blamed on the 'conspiracy in Bolshevik interests' of 'Ten Russians, including one woman'[193]. *Reynolds* reported that Red Women 'have been known to be working amongst the many war prisoners passing through Copenhagen from Germany, and the plan of campaign of these men appears to be to invite soldiers into cafes, or to make brief excursions, and then, endeavour to win them over to Bolshevism'[194].

These enemy women were often depicted through an Orientalist or Euro-Orientalist lens. They were exotic and sensual, but cruel and savage. Already portrayed as prostitutes, the press' narratives claimed they sought to entice young men into acts of madness and barbarism. Like sirens, they could lead men to their deaths.

Red Women, however, were not always foreign. The *News* and *Mail* described how Sylvia Pankhurst and her associates were ejected from the public gallery of the House of Commons in spring 1919.

> A fresh-complexioned young woman, hatless, who had been sitting at one end of the front row of the gallery, was standing and was crying out, 'You are murderers! You have not finished one war and you are leading our men into another war'. In a moment, plain clothes police and the attendants in the gallery had seized her and were hurrying her out… Some of her half-smothered phrases were
>
> 'You're a gang of murderers'.
>
> 'We shall have no peace until we get a Soviet'[195].

The *News* reported, 'In the possession of one of them was found a red flag of triangular shape bearing in white letters the words: "Bring our boys back"'[196]. Unlike Red Women on the continent, however, Pankhurst and her associates were not depicted with the same amount of dread or hostility British newspapers often used when describing enemy women abroad. Instead, newspapers minimised them in the same manner as they had with suffragettes prior to the First World War. The

[192] *Daily Mail*, Monday, 5 May, 1919, p 5.
[193] *Daily Mail*, Thursday, 14 August, 1919, p 3.
[194] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 12 January, 1919, p 3.
[195] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 16 April, 1919, p 5.
[196] *News of the World*, 20 April, 1919, p 7.

Mail labelled them as little more than 'shrieking women'. The *News* claimed they had merely 'created a scene'.

Without the element of foreignness, female Bolshevism lost a degree of its horror. When the *News* reported on events such as the Teashop strike, where women tea servers engaged in industrial action for better pay and treatment, it described women agitators as a nuisance rather than a threat to public order. No allusions were made to Bolshevism, which the right-wing press often made when describing male strikers.

> The strikers themselves claimed to be nearly 6,000 in number, but by Messrs. Lyon's estimate was a much lower figure. From the first it was apparent the strike was only partially successful. Every shop remained open, and the only inconvenience to the public was that they had to wait a little longer than usual to be served.[197]

When women were involved in strikes during the post-war period, they were generally not associated with Bolshevism, and not considered threatening in the press. When women were described as Bolsheviks, it was often meant as an insult to their character. Although the *Mail* claimed there was a 'feminine conspiracy' to Bolshevise women, it had nothing to do with political agitators. This was instead a criticism of women's supposed extravagance at the expense of men, while the British economy soured.

> It's a conspiracy to feed men on minced rabbit in order that women may have diamond tiaras… But every economy is arranged to hit a man where it will hurt, whereas every extravagance is for the benefit of women… Women would never do these things of their own volition… They are lured and deceived into these things by the Bolshevik conspiracy of the women who write for women. Dark and dirty work![198]

Although this narrative was misogynistic—depicting women as selfish and wasteful—it was probably not intended as a cautionary tale about genuine Bolshevik subversion. It was instead merely a reflection of narratives on enemy women in the post-war period. The popular press regarded these

[197] *News of the World*, 22 August, 1920, p 2.
[198] *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 9 July, 1919, p 4.

women as destructive to British masculinity and used this to smear other women. The few British Red Women mentioned in British newspapers were described as an annoyance, not a legitimate danger.

In any case, Bolshevism did not have the same support in Britain which it enjoyed in nations such as Germany and Italy. For all the reportage of their atrocities, Red Women remained a distant sexual nightmare for British readers. According to the press, Britons needed only to remain vigilant to combat Bolshevism's malign sexual influence. That influence was linked with Orientalist, Euro-Orientalist and anti-Semitic concepts on otherness.

This faraway danger, however, was always depicted as slowly advancing towards Britain. These enemy women were even more savage than Germany's militant women. They were foreign in every sense of the word: alien, unfeminine, possessing a strange ideology, Jewish. In the press, they represented two anxious narratives: first, everything which the English woman was not; second, more worryingly, something all women could possibly become.

Gendered hegemony was partially constructed by narratives on Red Women by using them as an example of what women could become if they grew too powerful, too radical. Although the British press often claimed this was a matter of concern, it undermined that narrative by assigning almost all Red Women foreign qualities. British women were almost never Red Women in these newspapers. The few British Red Women who existed were given little attention and regarded as hysterical and foolish instead of legitimately dangerous. This sense of separation from Red Women on the continent was part of this hegemony. The depiction of alien Red Women contrasted with the civilised depiction of British women. This conveyed to men and woman that Britain was indeed a 'bulwark of civilisation'; and its gender norms had helped it remain relatively safe from the ethnic, cultural and ideological otherness which represented the Red Wave.

The Red Wave Recedes

By the end of 1920, the threat of Bolshevism was already losing relevance in the British popular press. The withdrawal of British troops from Russia in the winter of 1919-1920 and the military victories of the Red Army in 1920 consigned Britons to the reality that Bolshevism would not inevitably collapse. Right-wing newspapers who called for a 'crusade' in 1919 soon altered their narratives to fit new realities. This meant accepting Bolshevism's continued existence while expressing a determination to remain isolated from its 'armies of the East'. The *News of the World* rationalised:

> Bolshevism in Russia is a matter for the Russians. If they like it let them enjoy it. We are concerned with a matter of life and death for Britain. Our easy-going people are not easily interested in abstract ideas preached by Continental visionaries. In this case the visionaries have reduced half of Europe and about a third of Asia to a state of chaos. Under Bolshevik inspiration the whole East, with its countless millions, is stirring ominously. Let it be remembered that civilisations that stood as proudly as ours have before gone down before the barbarians of the East.[199]

Anxieties of Bolshevik subversion and expansion continued but in the latter half of 1920, media attention turned increasingly to issues in Ireland and on labour agitation. Although Bolshevism was occasionally connected to these narratives, they generally did not include women. As gendered hegemony was re-constructed, narratives on women became increasingly irrelevant. To the British press, the threat of Bolshevism was neither as tangible nor prolonged as the threat of Prussianism. Narratives on victimised and enemy women and Bolshevism thereby began to lose popularity by the end of 1920. Narratives on reimagined women also began to lose relevance as the threat of Bolshevism, supported by narratives on victimised women and enemy women, waned. This did not mean, however, that women became irrelevant to the popular press. They were now an essential demographic.

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[199] *News of the World*, 1 August, 1920, p 1.

Adrian Bingham argues that popular newspapers recognised that they could no longer afford to ignore or alienate female readers. He notes that a range of enticements were provided for women.[200] However, these usually relegated women to 'feminine interests' and the private sphere. The reality of sexual difference pervaded the press; men and women had their own pages, were pictured differently in photographs and fitted into contrasting stereotypes in reports. Women also remained subject to male gaze: fashion accounted for the largest portion of 'women's material', and beauty was the most important criterion for selecting photos of women.[201] Although newspapers acknowledged women existed and that they were political agents, they seldom included them in political discourse outside of 'feminine' issues such as child-rearing. Discussing women in 'masculine' roles became increasingly unacceptable after 1919.

Kent explains that women entering previously masculine spheres during the First World War experienced a backlash after Armistice. The social base of masculinity and femininity gave way to a biologically determined, innately male and female sexuality in Britain. It was conveyed to women that they must act differently to protect themselves and society from the aggression unleashed by war. The rhetoric of separate spheres became infected with that of war. The power of psychologised separate spheres, the extent of the psychic and linguistic internalisation of military occupation by the women of Britain, ensured that all the parliamentary reforms in the world would be of little avail to those seeking equality with men.[202]

The narratives on social and sexual threats constructed by the popular press helped ensure that major gendered reforms after 1918 were either ignored or treated with suspicion. With British society still in a mindset of war, narratives like the threat of Bolshevism were used to justify men and women returning to their 'proper' roles. Women who impugned on these depictions of biological determinism were depicted as either unwelcome or monstrous.

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[200] Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War*, (Oxford: 2004), pp 18-19.
[201] Ibid, p 21.
[202] Kent, 'Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1918', eds. Coetzee & Shevin-Coetzee, *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War*, (Oxford: 1995), pp 171-172.

Once celebrated as citizens transformed, women were increasingly criticised for trespassing into masculine spheres. Although utilised as political agents on both right and left, women were increasingly confined to the private sphere. In other examples, reimagined women existed only to support the ideologies of men in Britain. The result of women claiming too much agency was narratives on Red Women, who represented nearly every misogynistic stereotype previously utilised by the popular press. Although newspapers such as the *Herald* constructed revolutionary socialist counter-narratives to challenge this, it used these same narratives to justify the use of gendered hegemony: denying women their full agency. All major newspapers examined in this chapter, despite their politics, engaged in this. Civil society began to redefine women: restoring a semblance of pre-war 'normalcy', and diffusing feminist identities. This specifically involved the reintroduction of separate spheres for the genders, regardless of their political agency.

Anne Summers observes how the structures and models of relationships which evolved in the Victorian and Edwardian periods in the restricted sphere of private households proved highly resilient to change. These constituted the 'domestic service paradigm'. As will be explored in the epilogue and conclusion, the First World War did not seriously modify this occupational landscape.[203] Despite the advances of women, both as heroes and villains in newspapers narratives, the popular press gradually began to return them to older paradigms.

As Gramsci noted, however, this 'restoration' was constructed through narratives on women and Bolshevism: most of which were intended to convey what would supposedly happen if those roles broke down. They denoted both the importance of women's new position as partially enfranchised citizens, and the need for their 'traditional' place in society to be maintained. These narratives renegotiated the role of female citizenship and reinforced gendered hierarchies. The nature of the renegotiation meant that the progress of women was only allowed to move so far. The perceived

[203] Laura Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, 1995), pp 191, 198, 229; Anne Summers, 'Public Functions, Private Premises: Female Professional Identity and Domestic-Service Paradigm in Britain, c. 1850-1930', ed. Billie Melman, *Borderlines: Genders and Identity in War and Peace 1870-1930*, (New York: 1998), pp 353-354.

threat of a gendered revolution which could change Britain's gendered, ethnic and political order had to be eliminated from the popular, patriarchal imagination. The popular press, one of the main distributors of patriarchal fantasies, were among the principal architects of these changing narratives. This was how a gendered hegemonic function, aimed at diffusing a crisis of hegemony, was carried out.

Epilogue

Aftermath

As British assistance in the Russian Civil War diminished and it became increasingly certain that the Bolsheviks would secure victory, newspapers and popular culture turned its attention elsewhere. Despite Euro-Orientalist narratives of cultural and gendered terror, the Communist 'East' was geographically and politically isolated from Europe by the time of the Soviet Union's formation in 1922. With the Red Wave having crashed before it could envelope Western Europe, and a Western crusade to 'save Russia' having ended in failure, British newspapers could no longer sensationalise the Bolsheviks with the same enthusiasm. The threat which Bolshevism represented to Britain no longer seemed convincing, so the media became concerned with more immediate conflicts, such as rebellion in Ireland. Newspapers even sometimes claimed that the threat of Bolshevism had already ended.

The *News of the World* printed David Lloyd George's argument in the House of Commons that although Bolshevism had not been defeated as prophesised in the press, its revolutionary period, which inspired anxiety, fascination and disgust in the West, was coming to an end.

> The wild extravagant Communism of a year ago was passing away. Lenin had changed his views, and had recognised that the Soviet system was an impossibility… Lenin was beginning to realise that Russia had got to trade. He thought he could run the State on the theories of Karl Marx, but, instead, he found starvation and famine, and his railways completely out of repair… The moment the Russians began to realise they could not run their country except upon the same principles as those upon which any other country had prospered, they would begin to realise that the only way to bring prosperity to Russia was to put an end to wild schemes. [George] had never doubted for a moment that Lenin and other Russian leaders were able men.[1]

Although not all reportage was as optimistic about future relations with Soviet Russia, a sense of normalcy had been restored in press narratives in the early 1920s. The possibility of a Bolshevik

[1] *News of the World*, 27 March, 1921, p 7.

invasion of Western Europe had always been fantastic; but the reality of post-war Russia and continental Europe meant few forces could truly threaten the British people or nation for the time being. Even if Bolshevism was a threat, it was a distant one, of greater concern to Britain's non-white colonies than Britain itself. Moreover, domestic left-wing organisations remained marginalised. The Communist Party of Great Britain only had 3,000 members—though its paper, *The Communist*, sold about 50,000 copies; and even Willie Gallacher, one of the party's founders, lamented that it had missed an opportunity[2] in 1919.[3]

By 1921, most readers believed they could rest easier about Bolshevik threats to British womanhood. The political and sexual threat of Bolshevism was increasingly marginalised in the press. Society could return to 'normalcy' and women to their 'proper' places.

With the First World War over and the threat of a future war with Russia subsiding for the time being, women were no longer a necessary component of labour. Although women indeed gained more rights and recognition for their contributions during the war, they were encouraged to practice 'civic motherhood' in the private sphere, where they were told they belonged. Women's place in politics changed now that some were enfranchised, but little else changed for them in the inter-war period. Throughout the 1920s, it was estimated that only one in every fifteen employed women had the vote.[4] Moreover, as Keith Laybourn has observed, that women over thirty received the vote in 1918 was woefully inadequate when compared with the forced mass unemployment of women that followed, thanks to the revival of the idea that they should return fully to their former place in the home, and the unskilled and semi-skilled work which they had performed before the war.[5]

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[2] It was highly unlikely that a revolutionary movement would even have taken root in Britain in 1919, much less succeeded. Gallacher, frustrated with the CPBG's lack of success, was merely being nostalgic.
[3] Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881*-1924, (Suffolk: 1998), p 152; Morton H. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labour 1917-1921*, (New York: 1984), pp 156-157.
[4] Harold L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928*, (Harlow: 2007), p 91.
[5] Keith Laybourn, *Unemployment and Employment Policies Concerning Women in Britain, 1900-1951*, (Lampeter, Lewiston & Queenston: 2002), p 56.

Demobilisation and the honouring of the Treasury Agreement (a deal struck between the Government and trade unions to restore 1914 employment practices) soon disabused the women's movement of the idea that they would obtain economic citizenship. Women made unemployed had no interim insurance benefits, no training programmes and no prospect of alternative employment. In summer 1919, the Pre-War Trade Practices Act excluded women from pre-war trades they had moved into and participating in new wartime developments in trade. By the end of 1919, the Government had established some of these developments as standard practice; by 1921, it removed married women from local council employment.

Some women's organisations, such as the London Society for Women's Suffrage, interviewed women and sought jobs for them.[6] However, the parlous state of the trade union movement, unable to protect the wages of its members during a depression in which the registered unemployed figure rise to 1,376,768 (with 395,000 out of benefit by 1922), ensured that little was done to tackle women's unemployment.[7] At least optically, women had been returned to their 'proper' place. The politics of British women were once again practiced mostly from separate spheres.

Although the press remained fixated on the spectre of futre conflicts, its scale and perceived threat was greatly reduced by the end of 1921. With the First World War over and the threat of Britain becoming entangled in a war with Russia decreasing, it was less believable that women and femininity were in 'immediate danger' from an external threat. Without a prominent external threat to capture the imagination of the masses, supposed internal, subversive threats to femininity appeared less acute. Constructing narratives on sensational conflicts in the press became less important as gendered hegemony solidified and the supposed 'threat' of radical women subsided. This meant that although women where no longer subject to the same kind of vilification in the press, they did not receive the same sort of praise either. Like soldiers, these narratives on women were largely demobilised.

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[6] London Society for Women's Suffrage, *Annual Report*, 1922, pp 11-12.

[7] Laybourn, *Unemployment and Employment Policies Concerning Women in Britain, 1900-1951*, (Lampeter, Lewiston & Queenston: 2002), pp 55-57, 61-62.

The Collapse of the *Daily Herald* and the End of the Hegemonic Counter-Narrative

Despite the *Herald* being the most widely read left-wing newspaper in Britain, it did not have a comparable circulation to its right-wing competitors. Moreover, while *Reynolds'* remained prosperous, the *Herald* became the victim of its own success after its circulation increased. The newspaper could only maintain itself as a modest publication which contoured itself to its trade unionist audience. When it grew, it imperilled itself.

James Curran and Jean Seaton explain that radical newspapers could only survive in the new economic environment by moving upmarket to attract an audience desired by advertisers; or remaining in small, working-class ghettos, with manageable loses which could be offset by donations. Once they moved out of the ghetto and sought a large working-class audience, they courted disaster. If they sold at the competitive prices charged by their rivals, they made a loss on each copy, due to lack of advertising. If they increased their sales, they incurred greater losses and moved more heavily into debt.

This fate befell the *Herald* when it was re-launched as a daily in 1919. It spent £10,000 on promotion: a small amount by comparison with its main rivals, but enough to ensure that it sharply increased its circulation. 'Our success in circulation', Lansbury lamented, 'was our undoing. The more copies we sold, the more money we lost'. The situation became increasingly desperate when, aided partly by unexpected attacks on the *Herald* from leading members of the government, who alleged that it was financed from Moscow, its circulation continued to rise in 1920. 'Every copy we sold was sold at a loss', mourned Lansbury. 'The rise in circulation, following the government's attacks, brought us nearer and nearer to disaster'[8].

By Christmas 1921, both the *Herald*'s board and debenture holders declared that they were unable to maintain the paper, so offered it to the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress. Not all the

[8] James Curran & Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*, 7th Ed, (Abingdon: 2003), pp 31-32; George Lansbury, *The Miracle of Fleet Street*, (London: 1925), p 160.

leadership wanted the *Herald*, however. Its narratives of Bolshevik apologism and ambiguous endorsements of revolution in Britain not only alienated much of the British population but left some in the Labour Party viewing it as a politically toxic. It was far from the ideal cherished by a largely moderate Labour leadership, but as Ross McKibben has pointed out: 'The *Herald* had one indispensable quality; it was the only paper Labour had got'[9].

After the Labour Party and TUC acquired the *Herald*, the style changed. Political policy became much more reformist and deferential to party leadership. From 1922 onwards, the *Herald* of the immediate post-war period effectively ceased to exist.[10] With it gone, Britain no longer had any major publications attempting to construct narratives that challenged hegemonic ones on politics or gender. Only reformist publications like *Reynolds'* remained. Lansbury's 'revolution' and everything it entailed was over.

By 1922, the *Herald*, like all other newspapers explored in this thesis, headed in new directions: because the reconstruction of gendered-hegemony had mostly been completed. It simply could not compete against far larger, better organised newspapers and their ability to mass produce fantasies critical to reconstructing hegemony.

[9] Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily herald and the Left*, (Chicago: 1997), p 44; Ross McKibben, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-24*, (Oxford: 1984), p 222.
[10] Richards, *The Bloody Circus*, p 52.

Conculsion

There is no way to quantify whether the opinions expressed in the popular press contributed to women's ejection from labour. However, the press was a critical component of Britain's civil society. It was vital to the reconstruction of cultural and gendered hegemony following the First World War.

The primary argument I have made in this thesis is the popular press used narratives of threats towards women and womanhood—which also damaged masculinity—to shape social change in Britain and end its crisis of the State. Although many of those threats were exaggerated or imagined, they required a degree of verisimilitude; conflict in the context of war and invasion. When those threats were longer depicted as plausible, the reconstitution of social relations and reconstruction of hegemony meant that women were supposed to return to the private spshere and only mentioned in that context.

Fantasies and the Construction of Gendered Hegemony

The objective of hegemony is to re-establish equilibrium between dominant parties and the dominated. This is not accomplished by force, but by consent. This consent is influenced—or manufactured—by organs of civil society such as the media. Re-establishing equilibrium during a crisis does not mean that the previous status quo is restored; but that cultural dominance and 'proper' social realtions are maintained. Societal change occurs, but these changes are made on the terms of dominant parties. For example, women were given more social praise than ever during the First World War. This praise continued during the post-war Bolshevik 'crisis'. Women were depicted as civic, fully political beings for the first time in British history. However, limits to their political power were constructed by Britain's patriarchal society.

Although British patriarchy operated for the benefit of men, women frequently helped construct it for men and women in organs of civil society such as the popular press. Patriarchy was a critical component of the construction of cultural and gendered hegemony in Britain during the immediate

post-war period because the press relied heavily on patriarchal fantasies which resonated with readers. The popular press was largely built around appeasing male audiences, who consumed and were often alarmed by patriarchal fantasies; but importantly, women often consumed and legitimised them too. These fantasies frequently conveyed the importance of traditional gender roles. They either venerated these roles or depicted nightmarish inversions of them and their horrible consequences. Much of what the popular press reported was either inaccurate or untrue, but fidelity was never its purpose. Its mission had always been to entertain first and inform second. It was not information which gave the press power, but the fantasies it propagated. Such fantasies encouraged social conformity by creating narratives that vilified ideological dissenters, women included.

Every one of the major newspapers examined in this thesis had their own narratives of these fantasies: all of which resulted in a unique message for their readers. And in each newspaper, gendered hegemony was reconstructed in one way or another. This was influenced both by the politics of these newspapers and the economic forces which drove them. It created an illusion of choice where women were almost universally depicted as a threat to masculine power in some manner. The newspapers I've examined this thesis utilised this hegemonic function in different ways but, ultimately, they all constructed narratives that stressed the need for society to stabilise and prosper by placing men's social and political needs before women. Although the primary ways the narrative earchtypes of women were constructed and communicated to the masses, with the intent of shaping social consciousness, was through the villianisation of supposed threats and dissentors and by creating the illusion of choice, they are better explained through the themes of degeneration and 'common sense' used by newspapers.

Empire, Regeneration and Degeneration

Editors such as Northcliffe and Emsley Carr, who were always great admirerers of the British Empire, oversaw the construction of narratives that focused on the greatness of Britain and the myriad

dangers confronting it. Often using dramatic flair, a primary component of the right-wing press' narrative was its focus on heroism and danger. Most reports could easily be separated into accounts of heroic British citizens at odds with dangerous foreigners and/or subversives. During the First World War and post-war period, women were a lynchpin of these narratives, frequently depicted as heroes and villains. They also walked a precarious line between the two.

Throughout the war, newspapers like the *Mail* exalted women as essential to the war effort and victory. Following the conflict, it often depicted them as critical to the nation's regeneration. It frequently conveyed women's 'inherent' femininity, conservatism and Britishness as a means of returning the nation to normalcy and strengthening its growing Empire. In the *Mail*, British women complimented masculinity—a critical component of nationalism—by sustaining and repairing it. This meant that women's accomplishments were tied to men and patriarchy. Despite this celebration of British women, their agency was always limited. Foreign women, in contrast, often represented darker images of womanhood, and were usually victims or villains.

Those negative depictions of women were fantasies of what could happen to British femininity if society changed too radically; the nation would become essentially alien. Yet it was not changes in society which spoke to the anxieties of *Mail* readers, but fears that their traditional British identity—and the ideas of gendered identities—would be lost and their world would become something wholly unrecognisable. Those fears were constructed from something as innocuous as small changes to gender roles or extreme as anxieties over culture being subsumed by a great, filthy, foreign mass. The constant in those fears and fantasies, however, was British identity. Newspapers constructed the narratives of a conservative, patriotic British citizen: an object of both veneration and anxiety. Her purity made her sacrosanct; fears of her being tainted were a cause for endless alarm.

Whilst the *Mail* constructed a fantasy that inspired both optimism and dread, other right-wing newspapers focussed on darker fantasies of violent degeneration. Although the *News* shared the *Mail's* support of the Empire and fear of social and cultural change, its narratives of those hopes and

fears were different from the Northcliffe press. The *News* always focused on darker aspects of current events. Its depictions of murder, war and sex more closely resembled theatre or vaudeville in the newspaper than legitimate news. Although the *News* was obsessed with threats to Britishness and femininity, it usually did not share the *Mail* or *Mirror*'s optimism. It instead concentrated on the modern grotesquery of crime, conflict and sex. Although the *News* was always political, it was far more interested in attracting readers with lurid tales. Of all the newspapers examined in this thesis, the *News* relied most heavily on fascination and disgust to influence readers and help reconstruct gendered hegemony.

With its intense focus on violence, particularly towards women, the *News* helped construct nightmarish images of what Britain might look like if it lost power over the world. This hegemony was layered. It represented political hegemony of the Empire, social hegemony of the status quo and gendered hegemony of the patriarchy. Loss of these power structures would, or so the message conveyed, result in horrific displays of violence and debauchery. These narratives not only helped construct a warning to the masses, but also allowed them to indulge in semi-pornographic fantasies about sex and violence.

In these lurid narratives, the place of women was often rigid. Narratives of reimagined women were always outnumbered by those of victimised and enemy women. Moreover, despite the tacit approval of reimagined women, right-wing newspapers were replete with narratives which sought the regeneration of society through a return to traditional gender norms. In newspapers like the Mail, this meant advocating that more 'masculine' women seek employment in the colonies; whilst the *News* pined for a 'simpler time', when male dominance could be asserted through violence against women. Under the guise of choice, newspaper narratives repeatedly suggested to readers what the 'right' choice was regarding women's future.

Although many of these pronouncements should not be taken too literally, the *Mail* and *News* gained wide circulation by catering to such fascinations, desires and chauvinisms among their

audience. They represented some of the best examples of hegemony constructed through newspapers, relying on the desires of their readers to influence them. By relaying their own views and fantasies, they reinforced their image of the world and ensured they did not open themselves to radical new ideas. More importantly, however, graphic fantasies, vulgar though they sometimes may have been, allowed these newspapers to retain a wide audience, eager to explore these through an acceptable medium.

Left-wing newspapers also relied on the fantasies and desires of readers, albeit less luridly than the *News*. As many of those fantasies were nationalistic and/or patriarchal, they made a significant contribution to reconstructing social, political and gendered hegemony in Britain in the immediate post-war period.

'Common Sense', Fantasies and Gendered Hegemony

Ideas in the Labourite press were far less homogenous than their counterparts. Apart from their mutual interest in socialism, *Reynolds' Newspaper* and the *Daily Herald* had little in common. Throughout the First World War and initial post-war period, *Reynolds'* cast itself as a staunch defender of Great Britain as well as labour and the trade unions. It had a unique place in the British popular press as the only major publication which endorsed a nationalistic form of socialism. Throughout Britain's crisis of the State in the early twentieth century, it was critical of the government but never overtly opposed it. Heavily influenced by liberal politics, *Reynolds* usually endorsed reform and advocated 'common sense' on socialist and labour issues. This was also apparent in its narratives on gender.

The *Herald*, by contrast, was the only newspaper which attempted to create an alternative imagined community and the narrative challenge to hegemony. It was by far the most partisan mass publication on the left in Britain during the period in question. It openly challenged the government, called for the overthrow of capitalism and endorsed the full emancipation of women. However, it never succeeded in constructing narratives that enabled this hegemonic challenge.

Despite their differences, both socialist newspapers contributed to the construction of gendered hegemony in Britain. Although they frequently defended the rights of women and openly advocated for gendered reforms, by 1920, they increasingly sided with working-class labour prejudices against women; for example, the belief that women were in danger of diluting the power of trade unions. Although women and their struggles were praised, the struggle for socialism and liberation always took precedence. Both the *Herald* and *Reynolds* made it clear that this was a men's struggle first and foremost, so their needs came first. Although *Reynolds* never openly argued that women should leave the workplace, its narratives sided with 'the workers' (which meant men). It also declared that it was 'common sense' that men, who were in the workplace and trade unions first, fought and died in the war, should be accommodated before women. Maternalism and the betterment of the home were depicted as more 'natural' causes of women. This was described as 'common sense', providing the illusion of choice to readers: it was *their* decision, not the newspaper's.

Reynolds' narratives on common sense, which legitimised male favouritism, were a major component of its construction of gendered hegemony. Its narratives on British women were not as dramatic as the right-wing press. Instead, as an ally of left-wing, working-class men which catered to them first and foremost, despite overtures made to women, it merely considered this as the sensible thing to do.

Yet when *Reynolds* depicted victimised women, it relied on the same sensationalism as the right-wing press. This involved Orientalist and Euro-Orientalist depictions of sexualised cruelty towards innocent women by the Bolsheviks. Like right-wing publications, these narratives provided a warning of what could occur in Britain if Bolshevism spread westward. Championing the 'socialism of the Magna Carta', Bolshevism was often described as a destructive, alien ideology in *Reynolds*. Despite its left-wing politics, it constructed remarkably similar narratives of Bolshevism to those in right-wing publications.

By relying on narratives which depicted men as protagonists of war and labour and women as victims, it relied on masculine concepts of the nation state and appealed to patriarchal fantasies. Its reliance on these helped reconstruct political and gendered hegemony in Britain. Like the right-wing press, fantasies were male-dominated. It constructed narratives which allowed women to change, but only when it did not make men uncomfortable. Socialist, pro-trade union readers had to look to other publications if they sought radically different narratives on women and Bolshevism.

The *Herald* was the only major publication which attempted to refute mainstream narratives about Bolshevik violence towards women. Although it praised the February Revolution and Kerensky Government, and was mildly critical of the Bolsheviks at times during the First World War, it was an unwavering supporter of the Bolshevik government by 1919. By the post-war period, it appeared less interested in independent journalism than in providing counter-narratives to the mainstream British press. Ironically, many of the *Herald*'s narratives on Bolshevism and Russia were as transparently propagandist as those made by its right-wing competitors. The newspaper attempted to create alternative narratives with the same tools as its competitors. It began to exploit the fascination and disgust of sex and violence to influence audiences.

The *Herald*'s narratives on rapes committed by French colonial soldiers against white women in the Rhineland served the same purpose as Orientalist and Euro-Orientalist narratives on Bolshevik violence towards women did in other publications. In both, the enemy threatened to destroy ethnic identity by defiling women. This appealed to male fantasies that women were the property of the masculine nation and needed to be protected from defilement and corruption at all costs.

The primary difference between the *Herald* and other British newspapers was that finance capitalism, imperialism and reactionary forces were depicted as the true victimisers of women and the white men who sought to protect them. That narrative, however, relied on patriarchal fantasies which emphasised women's helplessness and fixated on female bodies as objects of violence. Although the *Herald* did not perpetuate what Klaus Theweleit classifies as male fantasies, despite its

egalitarian rhetoric, it relied on fascination and disgust to attract a readership which was overwhelmingly male. Like other papers, women were used as objects of veneration and horror intended to compel and retain readers. Although the *Herald* attempted to create counter-narrative to cultural hegemony by espousing its socialist views, it reinforced gendered hegemony in a similar manner to *Reynolds'* and the right-wing press. Moreover, as it sought to compete with national newspapers, the *Herald*'s attempts to create a political altnerative to this hegemonic narrative failed.

Closing Remarks

Fantasies are among the most effective means of social and political communication. They convey peoples' deepest desires and fears, both of which share a social consciousness and are linked to the imagined community of the nation state. The popular press relied on fantasies to attract and retain readers. In many cases, the social and political narratives constructed reflected popular mindsets, allowing these newspapers to proliferate. These fantasies had very little to do with objective reportage or 'facts'. Instead, they spoke directly to the emotions of readers with images which frightened and entertained them.

It would be erroneous, however, to claim that the British popular press cynically peddled fantasies to the public solely for financial gain. Although ideas in newspapers are not uniform, they are still subject to the prejudices and world views of journalists and editors. And either consciously or unconsciously, all major newspapers examined in this thesis desired a return to normalcy following the First World War and the post-war Red Scare. These anxieties represented not only war, but also the crisis of the British State which first manifested itself at the end of the nineteenth century.

Women entering the workplace during the First World War and the Representation of the Peoples Act of 1918 were often depicted as an end to this gendered crisis by most mainstream newspapers. Freedoms were expanded, but on the terms of dominant groups. Hegemony was re-constructed; women gained a new, important place in British consciousness as political beings, but were mostly

permitted this identity on condition they returned to the private sphere. This limited progress created the illusion of choice and maintained social order. Doing otherwise represented disorder and crisis. Patriarchal fantasies on this crisis of the State were best represented by depictions of Bolshevism in most of the popular press.

Those fantasies incorporated elements of anti-German propaganda from the First World War, as well as Orientalist and Euro-Orientalist narratives, to 'other' Russia and depict it as an alien threat, particularly to Western/English womanhood. They embodied the hegemonic concept of dissenters that existed to be demonised by civil society. These were crucial elements of gendered hegemony constructed in most of the popular press. Newspapers sensationalised that under Bolshevism, women were raped, tortured, or became violent criminals and prostitutes. These lurid tales were meant to convey what might happen to Britain if its crises continued following the war. Even newspapers like the *Herald*, which often defended the Bolsheviks, perpetuated narratives of how women would be victimised by an ongoing crisis of war and poverty. In all major newspapers examined, women and their sexuality were portrayed as the most horrific causalities of global disorder.

Thus, even if through radical change—like the *Herald* espoused—women and their virtue was conveyed as something which should be protected at all costs. This task, of course, was most often deferred to men. Men were the protagonists in these male fantasies: which compelled a restoration of order and 'decency' after a chaotic, 'indecent' time. Women, as symbols and assets of the nation, were best placed in the private sphere.

Although women were active readers of the popular press, they had few options but to engage in these patriarchal fantasies, because they were conveyed by a patriarchal society. In some cases, women contributed to gendered hegemony by valorising themselves as reimagined women or opposing the corrupting influence of Bolshevism. Through fantasies of women and Bolshevism, the press—even when it did not necessarily mean to—constructed a gendered hegemony: in which

women were depicted as being at their best when embracing new, limited roles given to them by the patriarchy; and their worst when victimised or corrupted by the social and moral chaos represented by Bolshevism.

For most readers, the message was clear. The new normalcy of post-war Britain, both politically and sexually, had to be defended at all costs, lest it be corrupted or destroyed by a foreign, unclean mass. This message placed women at the centre of these anxieties as reproducers of the State. For these reasons, the construction of gendered hegemony in the press frequently conveyed the need for women to exist as political beings because of their depiction as a conservative or maternalist force critical to national regeneration. However, it also promulgated the need for women to remain unequal; and be confined to the private, domestic sphere, for the continued benefit of men. This was depicted as the rational choice or 'common sense'. An illusion of choice was created: an ultimatum between disorder and decency was frequently given by press narratives and they made it clear decency won the day.

Although there are parrells that can be drawn between the changing—or unchanging—gender norms in Britian during this period with the Gramscian concept of hegemony, it is important to recognise that depictions of gender in the popular press were organic, not designed. Unlike Gramsci's concept of intellectuals actively manipulating the populace to contune the dominance of the ruling classes, however, gendered hegemony in the popular press was the product implicit biases the massives, journalists and editors had towards women and feminity as well as the impetus of an industry that relied on preptuating itself through fascinating and disgusting narratives that appealed to nationalistic nightmares about women, gender and sex.

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