BUSINESS UNUSUAL

Art in Britain during the First World War, 1914-1918

This dissertation was submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 31 July 2009

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BUSINESS UNUSUAL: ART IN BRITAIN DURING THE FIRST
WORLD WAR, 1914-1918

JAMES FOX

ABSTRACT

The cultural consequences of the First World War have been debated for decades but a fully satisfactory account of its effect on British art is still wanting. Art historians' privileging of modern over traditional, front line over home front and dissenting truth over prevailing opinion has resulted in bombastic, unrepresentative and inadequately historicised interpretations of the subject. This thesis supplements and challenges this prevailing picture by focusing on the home front rather than the front line; on a wide cross-section of artists, collectors, dealers, critics and institutions rather than a handful of progressive war painters; and on the social and cultural changes brought by war rather than the stylistic shifts that still dominate scholarship.

The thesis is divided into three parts, each comprising two chapters. Its first two sections constitute a social history of British art in the period. Section I, Identities, describes war's adverse effects on societal perceptions of art (Chapter 1) and the debilitating social and psychological obstacles to artists' continued production of it (Chapter 2); Section II, Institutions, expands its scope to show that these problems were no less damaging for exhibiting societies (Chapter 3) and the art market (Chapter 4). Section III, Functions, adopts a cultural history approach, and explores how popular war art shaped civilian attitudes to the conflict (Chapter 5), but how, conversely, some artistic output enabled them to escape and overcome it (Chapter 6).

The resulting dissertation discusses a vast range of artistic activity – and an equally large quantity of primary material - that has previously been considered unworthy of study. It thus illuminates a neglected sector of an important period in British art, but also contributes to the social history of the home front and the cultural history of the Great War. The thesis concludes that the material disruptions of war represented its most profound cultural consequences, and offers a new materialist reading of the famous rappel à l'ordre. However, it generally argues that war was more of a temporary artistic hiatus than the cultural watershed it is often taken to be. Nevertheless, it does maintain that war did - if temporarily - transform the relationship between British art and British society.
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PREFACE

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. It does not exceed the word limit of 80,000 words.

NOTE ON PRIOR WORK

This thesis is very much the logical continuation of my M.Phil thesis ‘From Vortex to Vacuum: The First World War and the British artworld, 1914-1918’, which was completed between 2004 and 2005 at the University of Cambridge. Some of the sources drawn on here (under 10 per cent) were originally used in that dissertation, but the structure and arguments of the two theses are very different and in no cases have passages or even sentences been directly transposed from one to the other. Two parts of this thesis have, however, appeared elsewhere. The final section of Chapter 1 was adapted to form an article (‘Traitor Painters’: Artists and Espionage in the First World War, 1914-1918) in the British Art Journal (spring 2009), and parts of Chapter 6 draw on an essay (‘Peace Pictures’: Optimistic Art in the First World War) in Murrin and Eastham’s catalogue for the exhibition Optimism at the Hannah Barry Gallery in 2008. Both are cited in the bibliography.

NOTE ON REFERENCES

Because this dissertation’s word-count includes footnotes and because I have drawn on such a large amount of primary material, it has been necessary for the purposes of brevity to employ an ‘author-date’ footnoting system as recommended by the Faculty of History at the University of Cambridge. All authored sources (including those created by government committees and online articles) are referred to in this way in footnotes and then in full in the bibliography. Sources without titles are cited in full in footnotes and bibliography. Unpublished sources are also cited in full both in footnotes and bibliography, except for individual letters, which are cited in footnotes only. Unauthored, untitled articles (usually brief notes or reviews in contemporary newspapers) are also only cited in footnotes. Throughout the thesis, simplicity and clarity of referencing has been sought.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and assistance I was fortunate enough to receive between 2006 and 2009. My thanks must first go to my supervisor Duncan Robinson, whose generous laissez-faire approach perfectly suited my working methods, and gave me the confidence and liberty to explore what I felt was relevant to this subject rather than following an artificial and prescribed route through it. I am also grateful to my advisor Jean Michel Massing, who has been ever on hand to amuse, inform, and produce references with alarming speed!

I have been fortunate to receive advice from a legion of scholars who made the time to offer suggestions that helped shape (and more often, re-shape) this work. Thank you to Sally Woodcock, Grace Brockington, Mark Clarke, Sue Malvern, Anna Gruetzner Robins, Jay Winter, David Peters Corbett and Leslie Carlyle. I am particularly grateful to Michael Walsh for reading through one of my chapters and allowing me to read the excellent introduction to his forthcoming work; and to Cecilia Holmes for sending me her PhD thesis on Charles Sims.

My work relied heavily on primary sources, and thus also on the competence and helpfulness of their custodians: Simon Fenwick at the Royal Watercolour Society; Mark Pomeroy at the Royal Academy; Sandra de Laszlo and Caroline Corbeau at the de László Foundation; Monica Grose-Hodge at the Art-Workers’ Guild; Emmanuel Minne at the Royal Society of British Sculptors; Emma Pearce at Winsor & Newton; Alan Crookham at the National Gallery; and the women at the Artists’ General Benevolent Institution and the Professional Classes Aid Council who opened their offices to me. My thanks also go to the staff of the British Library and Cambridge’s University Library. I am also indebted to the Arts & Humanities Research Council for funding this PhD and the MPhil that precipitated it; and to the Kettle’s Yard Travel Fund, which subsidised several research trips I undertook during my doctoral research.

Finally, I must thank my friends and family: to Jessica Berenbeim and Tom Stammers for offering advice on the banalities of writing up; to my father for proof-reading the whole thesis in search of gratuitous adverbs; to my brother Joshua for his sterling advice on prose style; to my sister Charlotte for her obstinate refusal to discuss it at all; and to my obsessively tidy mother, who somehow coped with a dining table littered for the best part of three years with photocopies, library books and laptop leads.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAD</td>
<td>Archive of Art &amp; Design, Victoria &amp; Albert Museum</td>
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<td>AGBI</td>
<td>Artists’ General Benevolent Institution</td>
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<td>AWG</td>
<td>Art-Workers’ Guild</td>
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<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<td>British Library of Political and Economic Science</td>
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<td>De László Foundation Archive</td>
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<td>IAL</td>
<td>Imperial Arts League</td>
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<td>LMA</td>
<td>London Metropolitan Archive</td>
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<td>LTM</td>
<td>London Transport Museum</td>
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<td>NG</td>
<td>National Gallery</td>
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<td>PCAC</td>
<td>Professional Classes Aid Council</td>
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<td>RBS</td>
<td>Royal Society of British Sculptors</td>
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<td>RE</td>
<td>Royal Society of Painter-Etchers &amp; Engravers</td>
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<td>RWS</td>
<td>Royal Watercolour Society</td>
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<td>TGA</td>
<td>Hyman Kreitman Research Centre, Tate Britain</td>
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<td>UCL</td>
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INTRODUCTION

ON 4 AUGUST 1914 crowds thronged London’s principal public spaces to celebrate – or in some cases denounce – the imminent outbreak of the European war. In Trafalgar Square (which had been conceived to commemorate Britain’s victory in the Napoleonic wars a century earlier) the maffickers’ chants were so resonant that they were allegedly still reverberating off the surrounding buildings twenty minutes after they had been sung.1 One of those buildings was the National Gallery, a ‘temple’ to peace, beauty and a common European spirit that had for decades occupied an uneasy relationship with its bellicose and schismatic surroundings.2 But as the war crowds ambushed its steps and transformed them into makeshift grandstands for their demonstrations, that relationship had never been more uncertain.

For the many commentators who spent the autumn speculating on art’s likely place in the ‘amplified’ and ‘simplified’ society that they believed was about to be forged on the anvil of war, the scenes in Trafalgar Square might have suggested a number of possibilities.3 While pessimists considered them prophetic of the delicate world of art being crushed by waves of philistine ‘war fury’, for optimists they presaged a new and powerful unity of art and society – a return of the long-estranged cultural domain right back into the heart of heroic human affairs.4 For the realists, however, the very fact that the National Gallery’s doors had remained closed to the public all week (because of the threat posed by suffragettes) indicated that the two spheres would remain as obstinately discrete as they had been before the war.5

Initially, the optimistic view – which was emphatically the most popular – appeared also to be the most accurate. It was the onset of war that precipitated an amnesty for the suffragettes and allowed the National Gallery to reopen to the public (on 20 August) for the first time since May.6 Once inside, its wartime visitors would

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1 The Times (3 August 1914): 9. Scholars have recently shown that by no means was the ‘war frenzy’ that featured so loudly in Trafalgar Square universal in scope or consistent in timbre. See Gregory 2003, and Lawrence 2007: 282-88.
2 For the symbolism of Trafalgar Square, see Mace 1976: 15-22. For the establishment of the National Gallery there, see Taylor 1999: 29-66.
3 Jacks 1915: 78.
4 ‘War fury’ is Caroline Playne’s term. Playne 1933: 241.
5 For more on the suffragettes and museums, see Kavanagh 1994: 22-4.
have seen in Uccello’s *Battle of San Romano*, in war pictures by van Huchtenburgh, Weier and Wouwermans, and in a set of newly acquired Napoleonic battle paintings by Vernet, centuries of proof that great art and great wars were two sides of the same coin. At the very same time, critics were assembling grand art-historical trajectories—from the origins of art ‘where artist and warrior were one’ through ancient battle reliefs, the military works of Leonardo and Michelangelo, and the modern war paintings of West, Goya and Verestchagin—to confirm that, as one declared, ‘never does genius flourish as it flourishes in times of disaster’.

Most of these essays relied heavily on a passage in George Moore’s *Modern Painting* (1893):

The Greek sculptors came after Salamis and Marathon; the Italian renaissance came when Italy was distracted with revolution and was divided into opposing states... Art came upon Holland after heroic wars in which the Dutchmen vehemently asserted their nationhood... Art came upon England when England was most adventurous, after the victories of Marlborough. Art came upon France after the great revolution, after the victories of Marengo and Austerlitz, after the burning of Moscow.

All, however, including Moore, were ultimately shaped by John Ruskin’s 1865 exposition of a ‘creative and foundational war’ in *The Crown of Wild Olive*, which (if ever forgotten) was now being seared into public consciousness by a patriotic press:

All the pure and noble arts of peace are founded on war... There is no great art possible to a nation but that which is based on battle... As peace is established or extended in Europe, the arts decline... All the great nations learned their truth of word, and strength of thought, in war; that they were nourished in war, and wasted by peace; taught by war, and deceived by peace; trained by war, and betrayed by peace – in a word, that they were born in war, and expired in peace.

At the core of Ruskin’s formulation and all those that reiterated it lay the abiding conviction that War’s fundamental relationship to Art was as its muse. This persuaded many artists to enlist in order to ‘strengthen their art by physical and

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7 Vernet’s pictures were bequeathed by John Murray Scott in 1914. Similar thoughts might have been invoked by the recollection of the celebrated public exhibition of Mantegna’s battle series, *The Triumphs of Caesar*, at the Victoria & Albert Museum earlier in the year.

8 Mais 1915: 208. For other surveys, see Taylor 1914, Whitley 1915, and Wyndham Lewis’s own effort in *Blast* 2 (1915): 25-6.

9 Moore 1893: 46. Contemporary awareness of Moore is evidenced in Grundy 1915a: 195. Some essays even appeared to derive their phrasing from Moore. See Delville 1916: 229. The relevant passage is quoted in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

moral courage and... adventure, risk and daring', and convinced cultural commentators that 'a true Renaissance of Art might be brought about under the stress of a noble and all-pervading emotion'.

The nature of this 'Renaissance' predictably depended on each prognosticator's aesthetic predispositions. Reactionaries like A.C.R. Carter (editor of *Year's Art*) maintained that the conflict would obliterate the noxious currents of modernist experiment. He wrote: 'It will sweep away cant and insincerity, the slip-shod and the shirk, above all the fumbling worship of strange gods in the mad camps of the mungo inventors of epileptic distortion and fungoid colour'. Radicals conversely believed that it would finally scuttle the moribund traditions that had stifled cultural progress for decades: the English painter C.R.W. Nevinson declared that the war would represent a 'violent incentive to Futurism' because there was 'no beauty except in strife, and no masterpiece without aggressiveness'. Reactionaries and radicals nevertheless concurred that whether a 'sovereign disinfectant', 'a cleansing purge', a 'purifying fire' or 'the world's only hygiene', the war would be a remedial cultural force. 'The medicine is severe', concluded one contemporary, 'but we have no fear of its destroying the body along with the pimplies'.

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11 Nevinson 1915; 'Artists and the War', *The Times* (5 May 1916): 9. Wyndham Lewis similarly wrote: 'You must not miss a war, if one is going! You cannot afford to miss that experience'. Wyndham Lewis 1937: 114. The idea of art as a muse was one of the most ubiquitous tropes in the early cultural discourses of the war. Dora Marsden, editor of *Egoist*, wrote: 'Security in life has a deadening effect on art. The absence of risk, this monotony of service in our fat, rich, and peaceful civilisation, cannot even enforce itself under such advantageous conditions... Science prospers in peace, but knowledge of images which are furnished by heightened heart-beats must needs wait until thinkers' own hearts beat high. Great philosophies can come only from lives greatly lived'. Marsden 1914: 323. There were countless other examples of this argument. The critic Arthur Clutton Brock wrote: 'At worst [war] has always been a great experience; and, like all great experiences, it has had the power of setting the human spirit free... It was inevitable, then, than the greatest war of all time should call out the poets'. Clutton Brock 1914: 448. Another influential critic was convinced that 'Art will benefit if the war be great enough to engrave the world's mind deeply'. Collins Baker 1914: 220. And the *Studio* wrote: 'Consider the self-sacrifice, the devotion to duty, the cheerful and uncomplaining endurance, and the earnest patriotism that are being displayed by all classes of the community in this struggle for national existence, it seems impossible that art should remain untouched. After all, art reflects the spirit of the nation by which it is produced'. 'On the Artistic Inspiration of the War', *Studio* 63 (September 1914): 76.


13 Gosse 1914: 313; Image 1914: 19; Colton 1916: 200; Marinetti 1909. Marinetti's celebration of war is often considered radical, but it here appears a conventional development of the Ruskinian position. It is ironic considering Marinetti's contempt for the 'deplorable' and 'utterly ridiculous' Ruskin. Banham 1960: 123-4. For an excellent discussion of the 'cleansing' vocabulary, see Hynes 1990: 17-19.

14 'War Notes', *Poetry Review* 3 (September 1914): 140. For more on artists' and intellectuals' 'manic bellicosity' in their reception of the war, see Stromberg 1982: 1-13.
Not everyone was convinced that the war would leave ‘the body’ unscathed, and while optimistic commentators assembled historical surveys to demonstrate that war and art were age-old allies, pessimists like C.J. Holmes (director of the National Gallery) composed alternative narratives of wartime looting and destruction to suggest that they were actually age-old adversaries. Holmes and the pessimists were soon vindicated. Just five days after he had reopened the National Gallery to the public, German forces sacked the town of Louvain and destroyed numerous cultural treasures there including the University Library and its 230,000 books, 800 incunabulae and 950 manuscripts. In the following weeks numerous architectural masterpieces – including Reims Cathedral – were damaged or destroyed, and there were even reports of widespread looting of art collections – some allegedly perpetrated by none other than the German Crown Prince.

When news of these and other ‘German atrocities’ filtered back to Britain, it triggered (as it was intended to do) a public outcry. The art world responded quickly and vehemently: articles condemned the destruction of cultural landmarks; a ‘Protest of British Art-Lovers’ was sent to the Belgian and American embassies; and in October 1914 the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings even composed an ill-conceived letter to Lord Kitchener seeking assurances that British forces would not replicate the German transgressions. The cases of Louvain and Reims moreover had two major intellectual implications. First, they shattered the illusion initially harboured by many aesthetes that ‘Culture’ – as the Hague Peace Conference of 1907 had legislated - would be exempted from the exigencies of the war; second, they indicated that those exigencies would be deeply damaging for art.

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16 Holmes cited Napoleon’s cultural looting, and the Franco-British destruction of Peking’s Summer Palace in 1860 during the Opium wars with China. Holmes 1914.
18 During the battles of the Marne and Aisne, Crown Prince Frederick William allegedly looted the Chateau de Baye. One witness wrote: ‘Breaking all the very numerous plate-glass windows which adorned the gallery of forty-five metres in length, [he] pillaged everything. He stole arms, unique jewellery, medals, precious vases, cups of chased gold.... In the museum of 1812 he stole splendid icons, tapestries, miniatures, etc. He carried off souvenirs, the things most dear to the heart. He caused to be packed up the rarest furniture and pictures, chosen with a power of selection which is astonishing in a vandal’. Anon 1915: 174-5.
20 When SPAB requested the RA’s support, its president Edward Poynter was horrified by the plan and called the letter ‘an impertinent insult’ before ‘declining absolutely’ to endorse it. ‘Council Meeting’ (22 October 1914), Council Minutes 23, 1913 - 1918 (RAA/PC/1/23).
21 In the Burlington Magazine’s first war issue (September 1914) its authors held out the hope that art would remain untouched by war. By its second issue (October 1914) however, Roger
It is a cliché of the First World War that as 1914 receded and 1918 approached, naïve optimism was replaced by disillusioned pessimism. Yet this was the evolution of most cultural attitudes, and as the real implications of the war became apparent the Ruskinian paradigm came under increasingly sustained attack.\textsuperscript{22} Twelve months into the conflict in an essay called 'War and British Art', Reginald Grundy (editor of \textit{Connoisseur}) contradicted the notion that artistic excellence coincided with periods of war: 'Art', he wrote, is like a house of cards, built up slowly and laboriously in the prosperous times of peace, and blown down almost instantly by the rude breath of war and adversity.\textsuperscript{23} Even George Moore himself had reneged on his 1893 formulation: when one correspondent stumbled across him in Chelsea in July 1916 and asked 'What effect will the war have on Art?' Moore replied: 'None whatever. Art is dead'.\textsuperscript{24} By the middle of the war the optimism of 1914 appeared to have been so comprehensively discredited that one journalist could conclude thus:

The war is a failure. It was supposed to revivify the art and literature of the world. Instead I think that almost without exception it has temporarily stopped the art impulse in Europe... The theory that the war is stimulating art and literature in any way seems to be utterly absurd.\textsuperscript{25}

In the aftermath of war that optimism was in hindsight not just intellectually unconvincing; it was ethically unacceptable. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles coincided with the centenary of John Ruskin’s birth, and in the spate of publications that commemorated his life and work the ‘creative and foundational war’ model was consistently and passionately condemned. In \textit{The Harvest of Ruskin} John Graham Fry (the journal’s editor) admitted that art could no longer ‘be regarded outside the range of conflict’. Fry 1914: 40. The Hague Convention declared that: ‘In sieges and bombardments all necessary steps must be taken to spare, as far as possible, buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not being used at the time for military purposes’. ‘Peace Conference of 1907’, Section II, chapter I, article 27, in Brown Scott 1908: 220-1.\textsuperscript{22} A February 1916 lecture by Lawrence Haward (director of the Manchester Art Gallery) represents a thoughtful rumination on the problem. He concluded: ‘There is no reason for supposing that the present war will differ from others in its effects and will give birth to masterpieces as some are expecting it to do. It is much more likely to nip them in the bud by bringing about conditions unfavourable to the artist and his work and by killing those who might have produced them’. Haward 1916: 30.\textsuperscript{23} Grundy 1915a: 195 (my italics). A similar position was articulated in the \textit{Studio}: ‘War is a destructive process, and among the things which it destroys first are...the subtleties of civilisation. Art is one of those subtleties, and, like all the rest of them, it can only flourish in times of peace... Art can only flourish when a nation is quiet and prosperous’. ‘On Art and War’, \textit{Studio} 63 (October 1914): 80.\textsuperscript{24} Balderston 1916: 165.\textsuperscript{24} ‘War Has Stopped European Letters and Art’, \textit{New York Times} (5 November 1916): 8.
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24 Balderston 1916: 165.

described it as 'appalling', 'fallacious', 'retrograde and barbaric',\textsuperscript{26} while in his essay 'Ruskin the Prophet' the measured remarks of Charles Masterman (director of the government's official war artists' schemes) were even more damning:

In a time when his great influence and the influence of his successors might have been used to avert the destruction of a civilization, I cannot feel that those who admire him profoundly and who are humble disciples of him like myself, can altogether deny that this great prophet to his generation did not in some sense betray the cause of humanity.\textsuperscript{27}

As the events of the war receded into memory, the pessimistic view became further entrenched. Recalling the conflict in 1933 the critic Frank Rutter unequivocally proclaimed: 'Art is creative. War is destructive. It can do nothing for artists but kill them'.\textsuperscript{28}

This preliminary discussion has briefly indicated the shape, extent and intensity of contemporary debates surrounding the First World War's implications for British art. From the unfounded optimism of 1914 to the perhaps equally unreliable pessimism of 1933, artists and critics generally disagreed over whether its effects would be (or had been) productive, destructive, progressive or regressive in nature. Today, almost a century later, scholars seem as compulsively drawn to grand and bombastic diagnoses of the Great War's cultural consequences as their predecessors had been, and moreover, their debates still break down along the very same lines.\textsuperscript{29} The remainder of this introduction will describe and evaluate these chief historiographical tendencies.

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The artistic footprint of the First World War is singularly familiar.\textsuperscript{30} This is the result of the many novel ways that art was implicated in what was arguably the first 'total war', but it is primarily due to a scholarly preoccupation with propaganda.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{26} Graham 1920: 204-5.
\textsuperscript{27} Masterman 1920: 54.
\textsuperscript{28} Rutter 1933: 161.
\textsuperscript{29} For an excellent summary, see the introduction to Roshwald & Stites 1999: 1.
\textsuperscript{30} For broader surveys of art and war, see Paret 1997; Brandon 2007; Harvey 1998; Foot 1990, and Harrington 1993.
\textsuperscript{31} A novel collaboration of art and war is camouflage, and it has generated significant scholarly interest, See Kahn 1984; Dagen 1996; Kern 2003: 287-313; Atterbury 1975, and Behrens 1999. In recent years another fascinating trend has emerged from the field of archaeology concerning what is called 'trench art'. See Saunders 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007.
Discussions of British ‘official war art’ have a long pedigree, and important monographs – although themselves propagandist – were published on C.R.W. Nevinson, Paul Nash, John Lavery, Muirhead Bone and Eric Kennington from as early as 1916.32 In war’s aftermath more ambitious studies discussed other war artists and codified broader relationships between modern art and modern conflict.33 Academic interest in the many official artists’ schemes has persisted, with Meirion and Susie Harries’ The War Artists and Maria Tippett’s Art at the Service of War (both 1984) still informative, and recent monographs, such as Paul Edwards’ books on Wyndham Lewis (1992; 2000), Michael Walsh’s studies of Nevinson (2002; 2007) and Jonathan Black’s work on Kennington (2002) shedding new light on paradigmatic artists’ experiences of war. This particular trend undoubtedly culminated in Sue Malvern’s comprehensive 2004 account of the British war artists’ schemes, Modern Art, Britain and the Great War - the summa of her work on the subject since the 1980s.34

Malvern’s title reveals another, more recent trend in the historiography of the field. Since the 1970s the most influential interventions have originated from scholars concerned not exclusively with the conflict but rather with the development of British modernism in the period. This shift of emphasis has coincided with the appearance – beginning with Paul Fussell’s The Great War and Modern Memory (1975) and continuing with important works by Modris Eksteins (1989), Samuel Hynes (1990) and Vincent Sherry (2003) - of highly influential modernist-focused cultural and literary histories of the war.35 In art history, chief early promulgators were Richard Cork and Charles Harrison. Cork’s work on the subject climaxed with A Bitter Truth: avant-garde art and the Great War (1994). In that volume, and in his studies that preceded and followed it, he codified what subsequently became the doctrinal formulation of the war’s artistic impact.

Cork articulated his position most concisely in two essays for Susan Compton’s 1987 exhibition catalogue, British Art in the 20th Century. He commenced both with a rhapsodic survey of the flourishing modernist movements (particularly the newly

32 These texts originate from the ten-part series The Western Front (published between 1916 and 1917), and in the four volumes (on Nevinson, Nash, Kennington and Lavery) of British Artists at the Front (1918). See also Konody 1917, and Crawford Fitch 1918. All were issued by the Ministry of Information (subsequently the Department of Information) at Wellington House. 33 See Konody 1919; Gallatin 1919, and Rothenstein 1931. 34 For her earlier work on the subject, see Malvern 1986; 1996; 2000; 2001. For a comparable study to Malvern 2004 on the Second World War’s official art schemes, see Foss 2007. 35 For an historiographical survey of some of these texts, see Winter 1992.
established Vorticist faction) in England in 1914 and described how the war (and the enlistment and death that accompanied it) dismantled the fragile group unity on which they had briefly depended. Following the enlistees (Nevinson, Wyndham Lewis, Edward Wadsworth, David Bomberg, William Roberts, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Paul Nash and Stanley Spencer) into combat, he argued that they were all 'profoundly altered' by 'prolonged exposure to the carnage'. When this inward change was combined with the conservative demands of their official patrons, the artists were left with no choice but to reject 'the avant-garde language [they] had explored with such hot-headed zeal in the pre-war period':

Many were now pausing, taking stock and wondering whether they should return to more traditional ways of seeing. The waste and tragic nullity of the war years bred among them a profound mistrust of militant extremism. There was a widespread looking for order.

The result, argued Cork, was an obsolescence of modernism and a 'quiet' post-war decade of aesthetic 'retrrenchment' in Britain, albeit one that neatly mirrored the Europe-wide rappel à l'ordre.\(^36\) Cork's model was compelling and convincing, and if it did not tally with literary and cultural historians' assertions that war had instead 'modernizing' cultural effects, it did accord with their conceptualisation of 'disillusionment' as a motor of that aesthetic change.\(^37\)

In recent years a new generation of scholars working on British art of the period has made amendments to this tidy formulation.\(^38\) Malvern, for instance, has shown that official patrons did not necessarily impel artists to relinquish experimental

\(^{36}\) Cork 1987a: 71. See also Cork 1987b, 1989 and 1994b. This model is ubiquitous. For Charles Harrison: 'Radical modernists were forced by the actual experience of war to adopt more naturalistic styles'. 1981: 131; for Frances Spalding: 'The widespread destruction in Europe suggested that their own destruction of long-standing traditions in art had been, in some way, callous and inhuman. They, too, began to reject fragmentation in favour of the static, the solid and whole... Artists felt a need for a return to order...[and]...a widespread return to traditional methods of representation and traditional subjects'. 1986: 57-61; and for Denis Farr: 'After the turbulent decade of ferment, war, and revolution, some slackening of tension and consolidation might be expected... There was a noticeable return to the classical virtues of order and stability in the visual arts... The 1920s in Britain were [a period] if not of actual stagnation, at least of uncertainty'. 1978: 231, 248. For the European 'call to order', see Green 1976: 119-35; Cowling & Mundy 1990, and Prendeville 2000.

\(^{37}\) Paul Fussell (1975) initiated this trend, arguing that the servicemen's angry despair triggered a revolutionary ironic literary mode called 'modern memory'; Samuel Hynes in his A War Imagined (1990) similarly claimed that soldiers' need to oppose a 'war myth' and accuse its establishment authors precipitated radical cultural change in the form of a dissenting 'aesthetic of direct experience'; for Modris Eksteins (1989) the war did not merely have modernising effects; it was itself a product of modernism. In all, as in Eric Leed's No Man's Land, 'disillusionment' is essentially understood as a 'modernizing experience'. 1979: 95.

\(^{38}\) For an early summary of this new scholarship, see Getsy 2001.
methods – they often encouraged them to retain them; and Peters Corbett, Edwards and Michael Saler have contended that the interwar era was not quite the artistic ‘hiatus’ than it has previously been taken to be. Moreover, a number of scholars have tackled the subject with new methodologies: Peters Corbett (1997), Brandon Taylor (2002), Paul Peppis (2000) and Kenneth Silver (1989) have examined the impact that reactionary cultural and political discourses had on modernism in the war years, while others have explored the development of the era’s art in the context of literature and philosophy (Edwards 2000); capitalism (Comentale 2004); gender and urban space (Beckett & Cherry 2000); and landscape and national identity (Beckett 2000; Malvern 2001; Peters Corbett 2002; Gough 2003).

In spite of these alterations, Cork’s basic formulation – that the war’s artistic significance lay in its triggering what Benjamin Buchloh called the ‘collapse of the modernist paradigm’ – is still largely intact. Edwards and Peters Corbett both essentially agree that the war generated an ‘enforced moratorium on modernism’; Malvern commenced her 2004 study with a juxtaposition of Jacob Epstein’s belligerent modernist Rock Drill of 1915 and its emasculated 1916 successor to similarly symbolise how the war ‘cut short, dismembered, victimised and rendered defenceless’ the radical modernist project in England; and Walsh’s forthcoming London, Modernism and 1914 is altogether premised on Cork’s elegiac descriptions of the ante-bellum avant-garde’s wartime disappearance. Moreover, where once this sat uncomfortably with the conclusions of cultural histories, now a new generation of historians led by Jay Winter is likewise claiming that ‘far from ushering in modernism, the Great War reinforced... traditional modes of seeing’ and classical, religious and romantic tendencies in the arts.


42 Malvern 2004: 1.

43 I am grateful to Michael Walsh for furnishing me with this volume’s introduction.

44 Winter 1995: 221.
Despite this new scholarship and its emboldened consensus, a fully satisfactory account of the war’s effects on British art is still wanting. The principal shortcoming of existing art-historical studies is their narrow and skewed scope of inquiry. The majority remain confined to the evidential boundaries established decades ago by focusing almost exclusively on the artists who witnessed the war first-hand. The result has been an abundance of writing on a small number of unrepresentative official war artists but a neglect of the vast majority who (due to their gender, age, or health) did not visit the front, and were not fortunate enough to obtain official commissions. It has also resulted in an almost exclusive focus on ‘war art’. War art, however, was not the only kind of art that was produced in wartime, and scholars have thus overlooked the enormous quantity of contemporary artistic output that was profoundly influenced by the conflict but did not take it as its subject.

Scholarly preoccupation with modernism has had a similar effect. The vast majority of art-historical accounts of the period remain concerned, like Cork and Harrison, with the war’s effects either on the Vorticists or other progressive artists and their styles. Most artists, however, were not modernists, yet only a few serious scholars have investigated this vast field of output: Peter Harrington (1992; 1993) has examined academic artists’ responses to the challenge of modern war and Stuart Sillars (1987) has explored the function of popular art in 1916, but they have been criticised for even approaching such material. Admittedly for most scholars modernism rather than the war was their principal subject, and it would thus be unfair to criticise them for neglecting that which they never considered within their scope of inquiry. Nevertheless, the dominance of such accounts has meant that the extensive and varied impact of the war is too often read solely – and inadequately - through the prism of modernism.

45 Malvern reports that at least forty-two artists who applied, or were considered for official commissions were ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining them. 2004: 189-92.
46 In a Burlington Magazine review, Julian Freeman wrote that Sillars’ ‘late twentieth-century assumption that anything created by human hand qualifies as “art”’ rendered it ‘unacceptable’. Freeman 1988: 473. There have been other (unscholarly) attempts to address this neglected output. See Johnson 1978; Laffin 1991, and Gosling 2008.
47 Most art historians have taken war as a ‘plot-point’ or chapter in broader accounts of individuals, themes or styles. This has militated against comprehensive coverage of the event. Its status as a cultural watershed has often ironically even rendered it absent from such surveys, and many studies have figured its outbreak in 1914 as a natural end-point to their inquiries: Tillyard 1988; Gruetze Robins 1997; Tickner 2000; Holt 2003; Peters Corbett 2004, and Walsh 2009/10 all end in 1914.
48 An article by Sarah O’Brien Twohig is a typical example of this shortcoming. She wrote that the three ‘fundamental’ questions for art historians concerned with the war are how
The issue of modernism has introduced a further, interpretive problem in evaluating the cultural impact of the war. While this thesis does not concur with Vincent Sherry that the *modernism-war* model is 'wholly rhetorical... has established no solid scholarship, no language of factual basis and rational elaboration, no thickness of intellectual resistance', it does believe that the debate has militated against an even-handed discussion of the war.\(^49\) Analyses have too often been anchored not only to highly selective bases of evidence but to criteria whose terms (or even existence) are not universally accepted (such as 'modern' and 'progressive'). Moreover, these criteria have unhelpfully coloured evaluations of the art discussed: a number of art historians have revealed little but their own aesthetic preferences when they condemn traditional war art as intrinsically inferior to its modernist counterparts and describe the wartime collapse of the avant-garde as a tragic development that was essentially symptomatic of a failure of the English imagination.\(^50\)

Existing accounts are also undermined by their methodological limitations. The most significant is a corollary of the front-line model discussed above. Influenced by the memoirs of Nevinson (1937), Wyndham Lewis (1937) and Roberts (1974) and the war letters of Nash (1949) and Spencer (1978), art historians have generally explained the war's artistic impact through the prism of individual artists' traumatic combat experiences. This has led to a neglect of the changing social, political and commercial conditions in which and through which they worked. It has also led to unconvincingly unmediated causal connections between personal experience and stylistic change. Most studies still hinge on interpretations maintaining that 'prolonged exposure to the carnage' precipitated a return to 'more traditional ways of seeing', to 'more naturalistic styles', or to a rejection of 'fragmentation in favour of the static, the solid and whole'.\(^51\) However these are patently unsound explanations both of the determinants of artistic change and the full extent of the cultural consequences of 'total war'.

\(^{49}\) Sherry 2003: 7.
\(^{50}\) For a discussion, see Peters Corbett 1997: 4-5.
\(^{51}\) Cork 1987a: 71; Harrison 1981: 131; Spalding 1986: 57-61. This approach is clearly evidenced in John Gledhill's recent essay on Matthew Smith's Cornish landscapes of 1920. Gledhill argued that Smith's experience of war is the 'dominant theme' of the pictures, and that the 'effects of pain and suffering are uppermost in the expressive distortions of colour'. Yet even Smith himself denied that the works had anything to do with the war. Gledhill 2003: 97-8.
This thesis intends to rectify these shortcomings. First, it makes several fundamental reorientations of scope: it avoids the prevailing focus on the front line and turns instead to examine the home front. It also jettisons the issue of modernism and investigates the whole spectrum of artistic production, irrespective of style, subject-matter, medium, or quality. The war’s consequences were not, after all, aesthetically selective, and amateur watercolourists, popular illustrators, jobbing portraitists, provincial engravers and esteemed Academicians are all part of its story. Finally, the thesis adopts a more robust and materialist methodology than many of its predecessors. Believing that most have not adequately contextualised artists and their work, it stresses the role that public discourses, governmental legislation, institutional activity and market forces played in the development of art in the period.

To effect these methodological changes, this thesis will transcend the boundaries of art history and assimilate approaches pioneered by the many social and cultural histories of the war. Although social historians have discussed the arts rarely (and when they have, they have generally done so poorly) their work has been invaluable here - and not only because they have shown that a study of the home front is as important as one of the front line.52 Superb studies of class (Waites 1987); labour (Grieves 1988); conscientious objectors (Rae 1970); anti-Semitism (Holmes 1979); enemy aliens (Panayi 1991); urban life (Winter & Robert 1997); rural life (Dakers 1987); critical discourses (Stromberg 1982; Wallace 1988), and even museums (Kavanagh 1994) have suggested that if artists and their institutions are similarly conceptualised as social realities – as sociologists of art have long maintained - they too can be explored with more rigorously materialist methods.53

The thesis has also appropriated the methods of cultural historians, who according to Jay Winter have for nearly two decades represented ‘the pioneering sector of research on the Great War’.54 While art historians have generally evaluated wartime art either according to stylistic change or its capacity to report the ‘bitter

52 Alfred Marwick’s seminal The Deluge (1965) devoted just four pages to art. More recently, Gerard de Groot (1996) allocated two paragraphs of his three hundred pages to the subject. Some (Briggs 1983; Bourne 1989) do not mention art at all, while others (Stevenson 1984; Beckett 2001) simply replicate the shortcomings of art-historical accounts.

53 Like Janet Wolff, this author believes that an integration of sociology and the humanities is possible and fruitful. She writes: 'What sociologists can contribute to the project of cultural analysis is a focus on institutions and social relations, as well as on the broader perspective of structured axes of social differentiation and their historical transformations-axes of class, status, gender, nationality, and ethnicity'. Wolff 1998. See also Tanner 2003: 1-26.

truth' of the conflict, cultural historians have examined it and other forms of cultural output (including graffiti, toys, postcards, photographs and public memorials) through the richer lens of 'culture de guerre' – what Winter and Antoine Prost have neatly defined as 'the mental furniture men and women draw on to make sense of their world at war'.\(^{55}\) They have thus explored how all were implicated in the wartime transformation of social and psychological identities; occupied roles in the provision of entertainment, education, consolation and remembrance; and consequently assumed an active role in processing and even constructing contemporary understandings of the war.\(^{56}\)

The resulting thesis is divided into three sections, each comprising two chapters. Sections I and II together constitute a social history of British art in wartime. Section I, *Identities*, situates artists within the unique societal conditions of war. Influenced by French cultural historians' studies of social imagery (what Roger Chartier has called the 'social imaginary'), its first chapter investigates the myriad of public, private and official discourses to reveal how the inflamed climate of the home front dangerously transformed perceptions of art and artists.\(^{57}\) It argues that the outbreak of war precipitated a widespread questioning of both the social value and ethical legitimacy of all activities associated with art, and led to the demonisation of artists as shirkers, outsiders, and ultimately enemies of the national community.

Chapter 2 continues this social inquiry into the wartime experiences of 'stay-at-home' artists, but swaps the discursive evidence of its antecedent for more quantitative material – a French 'history of mentalities' for a German 'history of everyday life'.\(^{58}\) It investigates the many war-related obstacles to artists' continued

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56 For postcards, see Laffin 1988, and Huss 2000; for graffiti, see Becker 1999; for toys, see Audoin-Rouzeau 1993; for photographic memorials, see Moriarty 2005; for public memorials, see King 1998; for entertainment, see Fuller 1990; for the 'trivialization' of the war, see Mosse 1990; for consolation and bereavement, see Winter 1995. For the war's impact on experience and representation, see Dagen 1996, Hüppauf 1993, and Kaes 1993.
57 Chartier 1988. French scholars have broadly described this as *l'histoire des mentalités* – an approach pioneered in the 1960s. For all its weaknesses – indeed many scholars now prefer to avoid its original term and use *représentation* or *l'imaginaire social* – it is a fruitful way to connect the history of ideas with social history. For a discussion, see Burke 1997: 162-82. It could be argued that in Tillyard 1988; Peters Corbett 1997; Peppis 2000, and Taylor 2002 a similar approach has been pioneered in examining the British reception of modernism.
58 The 'history of everyday life' (Alltagsgeschichte) has been thriving in German scholarship since the 1980s. A 'history from below', it privileges the experiences of 'ordinary people', and the quotidian factors in their lives. See Lüdtke 1995. Healy 2004 is a notable such intervention into the historiography of the First World War. She addressed families, food, coffeehouses, entertainment, and fears of outsiders as crucial factors in home-front life.
production that have hitherto been considered beneath art historians' range of inquiry: the inability to acquire materials; to access models; to distribute artworks; and to find sellers for their wares. This chapter argues that these routine inconveniences were nevertheless as debilitating as their front-line counterparts.

War did not, however, only affect artists, and artists of course do not operate in vacuums. Section II, Institutions, attempts to rectify these implicit assumptions in much of the historiography and turns its attention to what the sociologist Howard Becker has helpfully termed the 'art world'. Chapter 3 examines the highly influential – but hitherto understudied – exhibiting societies in Britain. These organisations effectively regulated the production, display and consumption of much of the nation's art in the period. Understanding how they responded to war thus goes a long way to understanding the true nature of its full artistic impact. Drawing on the archives of more than half a dozen groups the chapter explores the war's destructive effects on their administrative activity; their group solidarity; the size, quality, regularity and success of their exhibitions; and their overall financial health.

The financial dislocation engendered by war was perhaps its most widespread consequence, yet art historians have been unwilling to devote more than a few lines or footnotes to it. Chapter 4 is the first attempt to describe how war affected the British art market. It shows how taxation, inflation and the collapse of investments decimated the purchasing power of the art-buying classes, and how this led to suspensions of auction sales and a precipitous depreciation of the value of art that was only reversed towards the end of the war by the appearance of a new class of collectors. It also builds on the few studies of pre-war dealerships to explore how the logistical and financial exigencies of war affected the countless art dealers around the country, leading the weaker establishments to close and the more resourceful ones to adjust to the changed circumstances.

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59 Becker (1982), like many sociologists of art (Griswold 1994; Kadushin 1976; Luhmann 2000 and Peterson 1976), has argued that art is a 'social system' involving not only artists, but critics, dealers, buyers, teachers, audience, artisans and institutions.

60 Scholars have devoted significant attention to these institutions in the Victorian period (Codell 1995; Gilmore Holt 1982, 1990; Gillett 1990; Meacock 2006), but few have explored beyond this, perhaps because of the twentieth-century hegemony of modernist trajectories.

61 Malvern's comprehensive account of the institutional framework of the official war artists' schemes devotes just one footnote to the war's many consequences on the broader art market and its related institutions. 2004: 202-3 [note 40].

62 The only precedent is Malcolm Gee's article on the Parisian avant-garde. Gee 1979.

63 The best account of British art dealers before 1914 is Gruetzner Robins 1997, but it restricts its analysis to those establishments that promoted modern art in the period.
If Sections I and II can be described as social histories of British art in wartime, Section III, *Functions*, adopts approaches more typically expected of cultural history. Drawing on cultural historians’ concept of ‘culture de guerre’, it investigates some of the unique functions that images were called on to serve between 1914 and 1918. Chapter 5 examines the perennially popular subject of war art, but it does so in unfamiliar ways. First, unlike its art-historical predecessors it focuses not on the official war artists but rather on the popular illustrators whose images of war reached vast audiences via the pictorial press; second, it evaluates this output in the context of other forms of representation – particularly photography; and third, in line with the rest of this thesis, it interprets the pictures through the prism of the home front rather than the front line.

Chapter 6 explores an artistic trend that was in many ways antithetical to war art (although it could simultaneously be defined as such, so directly did it respond to the conflict). Instead of analysing how artists represented the events across the Channel, it analyses how they negated them. Heavily influenced by cultural historians’ discussions of psychological survival (Watson 2008), mourning (Winter 1995) and memorials (King 1998; Moriarty 2005), it shows how pastoral landscape paintings came to provide escapism for both soldiers and civilians; how portraiture played an important if understudied role in consoling the bereaved and in memorialising the fallen; and how in some quarters all artworks – and indeed the aesthetic itself – could potentially ‘cure’ individuals of the traumas of war and offer the promise of redemption for post-war society.

In sum, this thesis maintains that the privileging of modern over traditional, front line over home front and dissenting truth over prevailing opinion in most art-historical accounts has led to an unbalanced and historically emaciated picture of British art during the war. To overcome these shortcomings it draws on a vast range of primary material, combines a number of robust historical methodologies, and focuses on a large field of British art that has not before been deemed worthy of study. In the process, this social and cultural history of British art in the war years hopes to contribute to the social history of the home front; the cultural history of the Great War; the history of British art; and to tentatively challenge the hegemony of modernist readings of the event. At the very least, it hopes to be a useful reservoir of primary material for future excavations into the field.
It is briefly necessary to outline the areas, issues and approaches that this thesis will not cover, and why. First, it will confine its discussions to Great Britain. This is not because a comparative approach is not considered useful – it would be highly enlightening – but simply because there has not been space here to discuss such a vast amount of material with any satisfactory clarity. Second, it restricts itself to the war years themselves, and generally avoids memorials even conceived during them. It is widely understood that cultural responses to the war outlived it and indeed blossomed after 1918; however by opening up this terrain an entirely new thesis would have been born with impossibly fluid boundaries. Moreover, this dissertation’s role as a supplement to existing accounts means that the major issues of, for instance, memorials and propaganda – both discussed so extensively elsewhere – need not appear within its pages at length.

It must also be emphasised that this thesis makes no claims to be comprehensive: much material has not been possible to include here, and more research is still to be done on the subject. There are records of countless exhibiting societies, galleries and artists that remain untouched; further chapters could have been written about art criticism and arts publications; about women artists; about the Belgian artists who emigrated to England during the war; about art’s many connections to charity in the period; or even about the international reception of enormously successful popular war pictures like James Clark’s The Great Sacrifice. Nevertheless, what does follow is an attempt to address a broad cross-section of key issues that have not previously been discussed about art on the home front, and to produce a materialist supplement – and at times also a corrective – to existing accounts of the Great War’s impact on British art.

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64 Comparative cultural histories include Winter & Robert 2007, and Roshwald & Stites 1999.
65 For an excellent study of British war memorials, see King 1998. An important contribution to memory and the war is Gregory 1994.
66 For more on propaganda, see Haste 1977, and Sanders & Taylor 1982.
67 For Belgian artists in Britain, see Buschmann 1914; Rowan & Stewart 2002: 91-124, and Fraser Jenkins 2003. For the experiences of another Allied alien artist based in Britain during the war, Ivan Meštrović, see Clegg 2002.
SECTION I: IDENTITIES
CHAPTER ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF ART

I. 'NO TIME FOR ART'

On 29 July 1914 a newly appointed parliamentary committee met to consider a root and branch overhaul of the British government's policies towards art. It promised an increased grant to the National Gallery, a state-run school of fine art, and even, it was mooted, a Ministry of Art. However when Britain declared war on Germany six days later its members were called away on more urgent business and their initiatives were jettisoned because, as they informed the Royal Academy, 'in the present exceptional circumstances it would be difficult to devote adequate attention to the question' of art. It was a discreet and largely unnoticed development, but it was emblematic of how - despite the optimistic predictions of commentators - Britain's mobilisation for war led to a prompt marginalisation of non-essential activities like the arts. The author John Galsworthy (1867-1933) perhaps put it best in September 1914: 'Bag and baggage', cultural life was to be 'thrown out a world that has for a time no use for [it]'.

Galsworthy's diagnosis was quickly proved accurate. In November, the government cancelled museums' purchase grants at its first war budget, and in January 1916 it proceeded to close all national museums because they were deemed to be 'not absolutely necessary for the purpose of beating the Germans'. This cultural marginalisation, however, was not solely governmental, and a range of institutions all but replicated Whitehall's own streamlining: Oxford University suspended its Slade Professorship of art (an endowment that had been founded in 1869) in order to

1 See Year's Art (1915): 6, 86-7.
2 'Board of Education to RA' (15 June 1915), read at 'Council Meeting' (1 July 1915), Council Minutes 23, 1913 - 1918 (RAA/PC/1/23). The Royal Society of British Sculptors received a similar rebuttal: it had written to the Earl of Crawford to request that he read a paper at a political assembly in 1914. He had initially agreed but following the outbreak of war 'weightier matters in connection with the war had engaged his Lordship's attention'. 'Council Meeting' (19 October 1914), Minutes of Council Meetings 2 (RBS).
3 Galsworthy 1916: 187 (the essay was originally published in Scribner's in 1914).
4 Hylton, Parliamentary Debates, Lords 20 (27 January 1916): 1105. For more on the government's museum policy, see Committee on Public Retrenchment 1916a, and 1916b. There was considerable opposition to the measure: the Nation wrote: 'It is the gesture that counts. If we must begin somewhere, it says emphatically let us start by starving our brains'. This article, like others, also queried the financial benefits of the decision, calculating that the annual savings would amount to just 1 per cent of a day's fighting. 'Closure of Museums', Nation (29 January 1916): 628-9. For more, see Kavanagh 1994: 22-51.
'appropriate its stipend for other purposes'; dozens of public schools dropped art classes in favour of additional cadet drills; and around the country art commissions, subscriptions, sales, exhibitions and events were cancelled because they were deemed to be 'out of harmony' with the nation's thoughts.

Art's disappearance from the national agenda was particularly apparent in the press: in 1914 and 1915 the conflict alone commanded three-quarters of all news-space while exhibition reviews and arts essays disappeared from it. This process was compounded by the curtailment, suspension and cancellation of many cultural publications: the *Athenaeum*, which had appeared weekly since 1828, went monthly; Frank Rutter's (1876-1937) plans to release a review called *Arts and Letters* in autumn 1914 were 'scotched'; Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* failed to continue past a second issue; the *New Weekly* (which had only been established in March 1914) abandoned its attempt to 'keep ideas alive in the world of action' at the end of the year; and *Poetry and Drama* bowed out with this editorial: 'The attention of the public must inevitably remain fixed on one issue only - the preservation of National Liberty... The suspension of this periodical is designed to last until we have been fortunate to regain...leisure of mind'.

*Poetry and Drama*'s editorial indicates that the marginalisation of art was not solely financial or institutional; it was also psychological. The war acted like a prism that 'refracted' perspectives on all activities and identities, and through this prism public perceptions of art and artists were adversely transformed. The most pervasive new opinion described the arts as a risible triviality with little right to endure past August 1914. This attitude is best represented by two comments from 'the man in the street', published by the *Studio* in 1916 and 1915:

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5 The decision, wrote one journalist, 'implies that art is useless when the times are out of joint, and may be put aside as a small private matter in the life of a great University'. 'The Slade Professorship of Art at Oxford', *Saturday Review* 122 (22 July 1916): 78.


7 'Annual General Meeting' (18 March 1915), *AGM reports and Supplementary Minutes* (LMA/4054/A/01/002): n.p. This process - what John Horne called 'self-mobilization' - is often considered a defining characteristic of 'total war'. Horne 1997: 3-6.


11 *Poetry and Drama* 2 (December 1914): 322. For 'little magazines', see Pound 1930, and Martin 1967.

12 See Jacks 1915.

13 The prism metaphor is from Healy 2004: 3. Contemporaries also utilised the prism metaphor: in 1914 the Museums' Association president wrote that war's 'distant blaze throws into relief the vanities of life, and the flames as they approach shrivel up mere fripperies till only that which is truly necessary has the strength to stand firm'. Bather 1914: 121.
I cannot see that art is anything but a superfluity, a sort of embroidery of our existence, something that we can do perfectly well without; and, if it comes to that, something that nowadays certainly it would be a sheer extravagance to maintain.  

Art is a luxury and a product of peaceful and luxurious times. Its purpose is only to amuse; and necessarily it disappears when people are faced with the serious facts of life and have neither money to spend on luxuries nor time to give to amusement... Art has had a very good innings, and we have wasted a good deal of time and money on it. For the future we shall have to do without it; it goes the way of most of our other luxuries.

'The man in the street’ had long believed that art was an extravagant triviality (England after all was renowned for its traditionally unsympathetic attitude to visual culture), but the war changed three characteristics of this opinion. First, it increased the social influence of ‘the man in the street’s’ perspective; second, it politicised his previously sub-political prejudices; and third, it caused the demographic deploying these criticisms to expand significantly and often unexpectedly.

Most surprising of all was the fact that in the war’s early months even established supporters of the arts accepted, endorsed and contributed to the public opprobrium. The music critic Ernest Newman (1868-1959) confessed that ‘in the face of the extreme realities of life, art – even to artists and lovers of art... suddenly took on an almost ludicrous air of insignificance’. He continued:

In times of crisis one begins to understand the Philistine point of view that art is merely a plaything for the idle hours. [To discuss the arts seemed] as absurd as for a family to be quarrelling a whole day about the relative merits of the humming of this insect or that in the garden, while inside the house someone was dying in slow agony... That frame of mind requires a certain ease in life, a certain abstraction from life: and the value of our recent experiences is the proof that artistic emotion cannot exist in the soul at the same time as an overwhelming emotion derived from reality.

Arnold Palmer (1885-1944), critic and editor of the New Weekly, was somewhat less circumspect:

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16 Just before the war Nevinson and Marinetti’s ‘Vital English Art’ manifesto remarked on the peculiarly ‘English notion that Art is a useless pastime, only fit for women and schoolgirls’. Reprinted in Nevinson 1937: 58-60. For more on British ‘philistinism’, see Saler 2001: 11-12.
17 D.H. Lawrence described this phenomenon as ‘the unspeakable baseness of the press and the public voice, the reign of that bloated ignominy, John Bull’. 1923: 12.
18 Newman 1914: 605.
It is hardly worth while to utter a plea for the artist... During the peaceful years we have got into the habit of talking about the artistic needs of the people. Now we shall see that they hardly existed, that there is nothing more than a faint curiosity, which, in times of plenty and prosperity, people allow themselves the luxury of satisfying. The nation sheds art like a garment, with an ease and a rapidity which artists, whether they practice or not, will never come to understand. And even those of us who have come to think that we cannot live without some kind of beauty to appreciate are shaken by the cataclysm.19

It is difficult to discern whether these new positions were simply an attempt to avoid being branded unpatriotic or reflected a genuine change of opinion on the part of their authors. Either way, the result was clear: from 1914 previously staunch supporters of the arts appeared to be competing with each other over how truculently they could withdraw that support. Numerous cultural critics now described painting as 'the sport of fools', 'entirely frivolous and futile' and 'mere daubing', and labelled artworks 'trivialities' and 'fripperies'.20 Even the devout Ruskinian Selwyn Image (1849-1930) used his first art lecture of the 1914 Michaelmas term at Oxford University to contribute to these critical patterns. He condemned art's stimulation of 'men's frivolity, their absorption in sumptuousness and luxury, their over-attention to trivialities and curiosities, their morbid excitement after titillating novelties, their resultant shallowness of judgement and sane appreciation'.21

Scholars of modernism have noted similarly deprecating patterns in the discourses that surrounded the avant-garde.22 Vorticism, for instance, may have generated outrage and excitement in the summer of 1914, but a year later it could induce nothing but disdainful ennui:

Their reputation as amusing creatures and puzzle painters might, in normal conditions, have carried them through another season. But Life decreed that something serious should come to the rescue of a costive world... In August, to our horror, we were tipped right into things that really mattered. And now, when we have opportunity to look again at those old ingenious notions, our nerves still tingling with the impact of reality, we simply wonder what on earth was up with us that we should ever have been entertained by them.23

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19 Palmer 1914: 290.
20 Symon 1915: 519; Taylor 1914: 46; Anderson 1914: 3; Bather 1914: 121; Bennett 1919: 847. See also Rothenstein 1915: 9; Ross 1914: 367; Evans 1914: 272, and Storer 1914: 615.
23 Collins Baker 1915a: 44. Percy Wyndham Lewis, leader of the Vorticists, was aware of the reasons for the shift in interest: 'The Press in 1914 had no Cinema, no Radio, and no Politics: so the painter could really become a "star"... Pictures, I mean oil-paintings, were "news."
Exhibitions were reviewed in column after column'. Wyndham Lewis 1937: 36, 40.
Its author, the critic Charles Henry Collins Baker (1880-1959) had admittedly never approved of Vorticism, and would have continued to condemn it regardless of war. However, pro-modernists like Alfred Orage (1873-1934) were now similarly criticising the avant-garde: his journal the New Age renamed Futurism 'Futile-ism'; described Vorticism as 'incomparably feeble'; Imagist poets as 'simply idlers, hiding from one reality in pretence of another'; and instructed that progressive aesthetes should retire 'into a monastery' or at least adopt the 'monastic gift of silence'. What is notable here is that regardless of their aesthetic predispositions, critics were deploying a staggering of critical terms to belittle the arts. Moreover, the grammar of this opprobrium was not a unique response to modernism; it was the way by which all non-essential activities were trivialised by war.

Perhaps the most prevalent derisory metaphors likened artists to commercial entertainers: they were variously described as 'monkeys on sticks'; 'pretty-pretty babblers'; 'marketplace' performers; 'purveyors of comic interludes'; 'performing dogs', and 'self-advertising mountebanks'. It is a revealing strand of discourse because it reflected a view increasingly taken by the authorities that art was at its core simply an expensive amusement. In April 1916 the government introduced Entertainments Tax, which levied a duty on tickets for all entertainment events. Art exhibitions, like cinemas, circuses, sporting fixtures, fairgrounds and variety shows, became liable to the tax. The decision left the Royal Academy astonished ('We do not consider ourselves an entertainment in any way. We say we are not an entertainment at all') and other supporters disappointed. The Imperial Arts League Journal wrote:

After centuries of dreaming about his lofty mission as a moral influence, an historian, or teacher, the artist has been put finally in his proper place among the purveyors of amusement... Fit only to rank with the other clowns who posture for the amusement of the crowd.

The debilitating financial consequences of Entertainments Tax will be discussed later, but its importance here is symbolic: the war's alteration of national attitudes to art

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24 De Fonseca 1914: 216.
26 Chancellor Reginald McKenna believed it would raise almost £22 million per annum (most of which would derive from cinema-goers) by charging ½ d on entrance fees up to 2d, and rising from there. McKenna, Parliamentary Debates, Commons 81 (4 April 1916): 1058.
28 Baldry 1916: 31. For a similar response, see Studio 68 (June 1916): 53.
had become so entrenched that they were now reinforced by fiscal policy. This was not a case of culture trivialising war; this was war trivialising culture.  

Some aesthetes mobilised what they called ‘Art’s Counter-Offensive’. In 1916 the Royal Scottish Academy’s president James Guthrie (1859-1930) delivered a stirring speech to the Scottish Artists’ Benevolent Association in which he argued that art was ‘one of the essentials of life’, that it was never more essential than during war, and that it needed to reclaim its rightful place at the heart of social affairs. He was repeatedly interrupted by thunderous applause, but his words were barely heard outside the hall in which he was speaking. Ignored by the public, belittled by the press and persecuted by the government, most embattled aesthetes came to view the war as a conflict not against Germany but against Art itself. In October 1915 Clive Bell (1881-1964) published an essay called ‘Art and War’ in the *International Journal of Ethics*. In it he reminded his readers that he had long believed that for most people art was merely ‘an elegant amenity’. ‘War’, he continued, ‘has put my opinion to the proof and I am shocked to discover how much I was in the right... From every quarter comes the same cry, “This is no time for Art”’.  

Bell’s position, however, was becoming increasingly difficult to defend, and in part because of his very own pre-war brand of hermetic Aestheticism. Just months before the outbreak of hostilities in his book *Art*, he had asked: ‘Why should artists bother about the fate of humanity?’ As the conflict unfolded, politicians, critics and the public could (perhaps justifiably) retort: ‘Why should humanity bother about the fate of artists?’ For all the initial talk of War stimulating a national renaissance in Art, in most quarters there was instead developing an antagonistic conceptual relationship between the war effort and the cultural sphere. When the government faced a barrage of protest from curators over the proposed closure of museums in 1916, Prime Minister Asquith declared:

We are at war... It takes the first place, and must take the first place... We must accept as one of the conditions of war and of our ability to prosecute the war to a

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29 For culture ‘trivializing’ war, see Mosse 1990: 126-56.
30 Pickard 1918.
33 Bell 1915: 1.
34 Bell 1914: 241.
successful and triumphant conclusion these discomforts and limitations upon... our literary and artistic life.\textsuperscript{35}

Asquith’s remarks were in many ways fatal to the pro-art lobby because they irrevocably politicised the debate over the arts: a choice had been established between Art and War; between self and community; between luxury and victory. To choose the former could now be viewed as a betrayal of the latter.

\section*{II. ‘Fiddling while Rome is Burning’}

The conception of art as an adversary to war often transformed it from being trivial, childish and pointless into being unethical, unpatriotic and even treacherous. A case in point surrounded its status as an amusement. Such a categorisation trivialised art, but with the development of a wartime ethics of enjoyment it also demonised it. Here, ‘amusement’, ‘play’ and ‘leisure’ were figured as antitheses to ‘work’, sacrifice and ‘patriotism’; all were unproductive, distasteful and unethical, and all demonstrated an unfeeling disregard for the sufferings of others.\textsuperscript{36} ‘While the blood of Europe was being poured out’, declared one critic, indulgence in aesthetic pleasure was nothing less than ‘as callous as to be fiddling while Rome is burning’.\textsuperscript{37}

Such criticisms were admittedly not directed solely at the arts: commentators also rebuked ‘lavish feasting’; those who showed ‘undue excitement’ over sporting events, or persisted with ‘conspicuous philandering and loud junketing’.\textsuperscript{38} However, unlike these kinds of ‘play’, art could additionally be condemned as a luxury.

Like many other activities domestic consumption became politicised in the war years. A National Savings Committee was quickly established to reduce individual consumption and divert private liquidities towards the war effort through government bonds, loans and securities. Thirty-five thousand local associations,

\textsuperscript{35} Quoted in \textit{Museums’ Journal} 15 (April 1916): 335, 338. See also Witt 1915: 344.
\textsuperscript{36} A representative example is the 1914 article ‘War and Play’: ‘It is not that we desire to see the public plunged into abnormal gloom or obsessed with the war. But we do nevertheless insist that there is a decency to be observed at this time, and that a rebuke is especially necessary to that small majority of the public whose imaginations are as yet untouched by what is happening in France and Belgium’. \textit{Saturday Review} (5 September 1914): 262.
\textsuperscript{37} Newman 1914: 605. The adage originated in an apocryphal description of Nero playing his fiddle during the great fire of Rome in AD 64. The resonance of the phrase is enriched here by the semantic ambiguity surrounding the word ‘fiddle’, which indicates a homology between artistic, and generally unproductive, activity. See Francis Gyles 1947.
\textsuperscript{38} ‘War and Play’, \textit{Saturday Review} (5 September 1914): 262. For a defence of amusement, see Palmer 1914b, and Du Maurier 1915. For more on entertainment, see Rüger 2007: 112-14.
200,000 volunteers and saturation advertising brought its message to the doorstep and through the letterbox of almost every British subject, and seventeen million people – a third of the nation's population – subscribed to it.\textsuperscript{39} That message centred on what was termed a 'morality of consumption'.\textsuperscript{40} This called on consumers as nothing less than a 'civilian army' for whom saving became 'a duty' analogous to the sacrifice performed by soldiers at the front: 'Let the nation', commanded one pamphlet, 'place its comforts, its luxuries, its elegances, on a national altar, consecrated by such sacrifice as these men have made'.\textsuperscript{41}

Art was one of these luxuries, and this is why one journal described the National Savings Movement as 'the most deadly foe of the British Fine Art Trade'.\textsuperscript{42} The continued acquisition of artworks was here described as an activity indulged in by selfish, wealthy and 'useless spendthrifts'; it was a 'serious evil'; a 'wicked thing'; 'cost blood'; and even, the committee claimed, 'helped the Germans'.\textsuperscript{43} Unwilling to be vilified for cultivating unpatriotic extravagance, dealers, exhibiting societies and auction houses either closed their doors or attempted through charity sales or war-themed exhibitions to prove that they too were behind the war effort. Most buyers, meanwhile, abandoned buying art altogether: 'The intensity of the war fervour', wrote one alarmed collector, 'is such that those of us who buy a picture or a piece of bric-a-brac, see a play or indulge in a game of golf, are in danger of being dubbed unpatriotic'.\textsuperscript{44}

The notion of art as a luxury and luxuries as socially degenerative was also articulated in government legislation - particularly in the Luxury Duty of 1918.\textsuperscript{45} After seventy meetings, one hundred-and-fifty interviews and three months of

\textsuperscript{39} Schooling 1920: 201-2. See also Blackett 1918: 68, and Strachan 2004: 115-160.
\textsuperscript{40} The term 'morality of consumption' is from Sydney Webb, 'A Woman's Appeal', in 'Pamphlet 14', National Savings Committee Papers (BL): i.
\textsuperscript{41} 'Pamphlet 21', in War Savings Handbook (1916), Ibid: 55-60; see also 'Pamphlet 136', Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{42} Fine Art Trade Journal 11 (September 1915): 232.
\textsuperscript{43} Withers 1917: 626; 'Pamphlet 2', National Savings Committee Papers (BL); n.p. One pamphlet commanded that all luxuries 'should be avoided'; that the teaching of extra subjects like music and dancing be 'stopped'; that spending on food, drink and tobacco be curtailed; that all expenditure on amusements - including sports clubs, gentleman's clubs, theatre-going, hunting, and 'entertaining of all sorts at private houses' and restaurants be 'entirely abandoned'; that 'the giving of presents on all sorts of trivial occasions should cease', and 'the purchase of jewellery should be disconantenced'. Why we Must Save and How (1915), Ibid: 13-16. Even journals that had relied on a promotion of luxuries printed that articles that read: 'No man or woman (apart, of course, from invalids, old people, and children) should have the right to consume any material objects other than those strictly necessary for their health and for the efficacy of the social function they fulfil'. De Maetzu 1915b: 34.
\textsuperscript{44} Quoted in Connoisseur 40 (October 1914): 113.
\textsuperscript{45} See Parliamentary Debates, Commons 105 (22 April 1918): 716-17.
fraught deliberation (in which three members and one sub-committee resigned), it
decided that ‘pictures, paintings, mosaics, drawings, sculptures, statuary, bronzes’
would become subject to the duty whatever the prices paid.\textsuperscript{46} They were thus now
equated with jewellery, perfumes and yachts: all were classified as ‘unnecessary’,
‘superfluous’, ‘wasteful and extravagant’.\textsuperscript{47} Furthermore, indulgence in them was
explicitly diagnosed as a ‘moral’ as well as an economic problem: it was a ‘form of
self-indulgence which shuts a man off from the mass of his fellow-men’,
‘incompatible with hard work and a useful life’, ‘demoralising to the individual and
the nation’, and ‘unjustifiable in a community where many lack what is necessary for
a civilised existence’.\textsuperscript{48}

These adverse perceptions were further intensified by the conflict’s societal
consequences. Social historians have shown that while the war flattened class
differences it inflamed class awareness, and art became one of the sites in which this
developing social confrontation was played out.\textsuperscript{49} Working-class newspapers like \textit{John
Bull} and \textit{The Star} described it as both a symptom and cause of a social rupture
between ‘the average decent British citizen’ - who was sacrificing his income,
pleasure, and often his life for the good of the community - and the ‘unpatriotic
extravagance’ of a wealthy and degenerate metropolitan elite.\textsuperscript{50} This concern often
focused on the issue of profiteering.\textsuperscript{51} Patriotic papers described profiteers
extravagantly investing in expensive artworks; published cartoons of artists tricking
the public into buying overpriced pictures of spurious war subjects [figure 1]; and
frequently reported ‘despicable’ cases like that of a memorial sculpture firm sending
advertisements to families of servicemen before they had even died.\textsuperscript{52}

While artists – unlike dealers and collectors – were able to sidestep some of the
criticisms concerning a ‘morality of consumption’, they were unable to evade the
debates concerning a ‘morality of production’. Supporters may have argued that the

\textsuperscript{46} Select Committee on Luxury Duty 1918: 46. \textit{The Times} wrote that ‘no select committee in
Parliamentary history was ever entrusted a more ungrateful task’. (26 June 1918): 7. Luxury
Duty was inspired by French and German precedents, although luxury was defined
differently on the Continent. In Germany, artworks were only classed as luxuries when their
price exceeded 300 marks. For a comparison, see Lennard 1918.

\textsuperscript{47} Select Committee on Luxury Duty 1918: 45, 60.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid: 67-9. For a response, see Quinn 1918.

\textsuperscript{49} See Waites 1987.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{John Bull} (5 July 1919): 10; \textit{The Star} (26 May 1917): 4. For a discussion, see Saler 1998.

\textsuperscript{51} For the representation of wartime profiteers, see Robert 1997, and Boswell & Johns 1982.

\textsuperscript{52} ‘Business as Usual: Shocking Taste of Tombstone Sculptors’, \textit{John Bull} (10 October 1914): 8.
artist was ‘as important to the state as is the lawyer, the engineer, or even the farmer’, but with millions enlisting the majority saw stay-at-home artists as ‘slackers’, ‘idlers’, ‘workshy’ and, above all, ‘shirkers’ from national duty. For able bodied men and women to be employed in the production of mediocre pictures while the call is for service of pressing national importance is assuredly a criminal and disgraceful thing’, wrote one businessman in 1917. Many artists were encouraged to take up more ‘useful’ careers: the Professional Classes Aid Council announced in 1915 that it would only assist artists if they placed their ‘services at the disposal of the country’, and in 1917 the government introduced the invidious and ineffectual National Service Bill, which included artists in a schedule of non-essential industries and impelled them to take up more ‘productive’ work.

The public image of artists as shirkers was further damaged by an abiding identification of them with effeminacy and homosexuality, and also by the disproportionately high number of conscientious objectors drawn from the profession. Popular opinion on the issue was most zealously expressed in June 1917 after the famous modernist sculptor Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) was temporarily exempted from military service on the grounds of ‘national interests’. The news triggered an avalanche of comment in newspapers and journals: in the Evening Standard the painter Philip Burne-Jones (1861-1926) wrote:

I do not believe that any artist... is entirely indispensable at home while his country is engaged in a life-and-death struggle... Art cannot take precedence over the moral rights of mankind while the issue of civilisation or barbarism is being decided once for all.

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57 ‘Restricted Industries/Occupations Order’, The Times (2 March 1917): 3. The National Service Bill proposed that men aged between 17 and 61 could not, without consent, work in non-essential industries. For the ‘Primary Trades’ for which they were encouraged to work, see The Times (22 February 1917): 7. See also Allen Browne 1918, and Grieves 1988.
58 For the ‘feminization’ of art, see Tickner 1994: 47. With regard to pacifism, many artists associated with the Bloomsbury circle, including Duncan Grant and Mark Gertler, were conscientious objectors. In an interview the artist John Nash described how one of his artist friends suffered such brutality that he did not ‘think he ever recovered’. Nash, J (1974), ‘IWM Interview’, from Artists in an Age of Conflict (IWM 323): Reel 2. For more, see Rae 1970.
60 Burne-Jones 1917: 5.
G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) questioned the principle that ‘because a man is a great artist he should not share the ordinary responsibilities of citizenship... Real national need is of annihilating superiority to any art’.\(^6\) The *Pall Mall Gazette* inquired: ‘Ought the genius have an advantage over the plain man in matters of public duty?’\(^6\) And Collins Baker asked: ‘Is art so frail and rare that her ministers should be preserved from... the more immediate responsibilities of mankind?’\(^6\) Despite their variety of tone, the denunciations of Epstein were underpinned by one embittered conviction: that artists considered themselves separate from and superior to the rest of society, and consequently exempted from duties that every other subject was obliged to fulfil.

Epstein’s German name, Jewish faith and bombastically Continental sculptural style rendered him a uniquely susceptible target, but the belief that artists were outsiders was both much older and much broader. In the decades before the war Aestheticism and subsequently modernism (and the bohemianism associated with both) had increased the perceived cleavage between artists and society.\(^6\) The war contaminated that estrangement, and in its early months commentators repeatedly denounced ‘art for art’s sake’ and its representatives - particularly Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) and James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) - in light of its events.\(^6\) The invocation of Wilde and Whistler was also designed to trigger a certain set of public associations: dandyism and charlatanism; the defiantly elitist conviction that art was for the few rather than the many; and in Whistler’s case the famous trial with John Ruskin in which he was accused of ‘flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face’.\(^6\) In all, the intention was as it had been in the discourses surrounding Epstein: to define artists as figures who certainly did not belong to the community, and were perhaps even adversaries to it.

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\(^6\) Chesterton 1917: 4.
\(^6\) ‘The Artist and the War’, *Pall Mall Gazette* (7 June 1916): 4. Another commentator wrote: ‘If art is of such importance at the moment, I trust the authorities will see their way to returning these men from the firing line in order that they too may sit and hope’. *Daily Mail* (11 June 1917): 4. See also ‘A National Treasure! Epstein the Sculptor too Precious to Fight’, *Daily Express* (7 June 1917): 3.
\(^6\) Collins Baker 1917b: 44.
\(^6\) For a provocative account of this process, see Carey 1992. Andrew Stephenson wrote that this trend caused them not just to be at variance with public norms but with a “naturally” invested, seamlessly reproduced, racially discrete, culturally conservative and resolutely heterosexual “English” patriarchy befitting the nation’s imperial destiny’. 2000: 147.
\(^6\) For criticisms of ‘art for art’s sake’, see ‘On Art and Affectation’, *Studio* 63 (July 1916): 130; *Colour* (May 1915): 156; Galsworthy 1915: 934; Palmer 1914a: 173. In another article, Palmer wrote that ‘It will be a long time before we see another Jimmy Whistler’ (1914b: 290) and in the *Egoist* R. de Maetzu wrote: ‘The world of Gautier and Wilde is dead’. De Maetzu 1915a: 641.
The clearest way that artists were identified as outsiders was of course by national identity - a previously vague concept in Britain that was virulently codified under the political strain of war. In this climate attention was drawn towards the cosmopolitanism and internationalism that had long characterised the art world. Scholars have already shown how modernism came to be viewed as a Germanic virus (Kultur) that was compromising the integrity of English civilisation (most famously when The Times denounced the London Group’s 1915 exhibition as ‘Junkerism in Art’), however, the allegations were not restricted to modernism. The whole art world, irrespective of style, was saturated with foreign influence: William Orpen and John Lavery were Irish; John Singer Sargent, like Whistler and Epstein, was American; Philip de László was Hungarian; and others - like Mark Gertler, Jacob Kramer, David Bomberg, the Rothenstein brothers, the art dealer Asher Wertheimer and the collector Sir Julius Wernher - had German or Jewish names.

This internationalism was not even confined to high-profile ‘high art’; when one contemporary observed in August 1914 that the London art world had ‘for a long time been very largely in the hands of Continental firms, chiefly German’, he was referring to the many German art supply businesses (including A.W. Faber, L.C. Hardtmuth, William Müller, H.L. Sterkel and Günther Wagner) operating in London at the time. This realisation had a variety of cultural consequences: it caused all of these named firms to be forced closed by 1916; most alien members of art organisations to have their memberships annulled (see Chapter 3); some - like Gertler - to have work defaced with xenophobic comments, and others - like Epstein - to find their studios raided by xenophobic vigilantes. However, another set of discourses that characterised artists as suspicious alien presences was even more

68 ‘We can only call them Prussian in their spirit. These painters seem to execute a kind of goose-step... Perhaps if the Junkers could be induced to take to art, instead of disturbing the peace of Europe, they would paint so and enjoy it’. The Times (10 March 1915): 8. For its impact on critical responses to modernism, see the excellent works by Peppis 2000: 96-130, and Taylor 2002. For further material on the issue, see Poetry Review 4 (October 1914): 150-68.
69 Albert and Charles Rothenstein Anglicised their name to Rutherston in 1916. Only William, at the very last moment, retained his original name. Lago 2004.
71 A member of the public appended the note ‘Made in Germany’ to Gertler’s Creation of Eve in 1915. Woodeson 1972: 186.
72 Epstein wrote that it was ‘due to private detective work on the part of the other tenants, who imagine I’m German’. Epstein to Quinn (November 1915), quoted in Reid 1968: 203.
pernicious, and convinced many that they were not just 'fiddling while Rome was burning'; they were fanning the flames.

III. 'TRAITOR PAINTERS'

In August 1914 fears concerning the presence of secret agents in Britain erupted into an epidemic of 'spy mania'. Espionage had been a highly marketable subject for more than a decade, with the writers William Le Queux (1864-1927) and Erskine Childers (1870-1922) establishing successful careers on the issue, and spy films reaching growing audiences. But fantastical curiosity soon gave way to debilitating wartime paranoia and Le Queux, like others, amplified the public concerns into highly profitable hysteria. In his book *German Spies in England* (reprinted six times in just three weeks following its February 1915 publication), Le Queux declared that: 'Among us here in Great Britain... are men - hundreds of them - who are daily, nay hourly, plotting our downfall'. Extraordinarily, it was artists – with barbers, waiters and commercial travellers – who were the most suspected of 'plotting' Britain's 'downfall', and although the suspicions were generally unfounded the combination of governmental policy, inflammatory press coverage and public paranoia meant that, unlike the preceding patterns of hostility, the connection of artists to espionage assumed a uniquely potent social reality.

This unlikely identification partly stemmed from contemporary understandings of espionage techniques. At the beginning of the war several semi-official sources stressed the role that secret pictorial codes played in the communication of information via enemy intelligence networks. Robert Baden-Powell (1857-1941), who had served at length in the British army, described in detail how spies would pose as artists in order to produce these codes unsuspected. He revealed that many English agents on the continent were using such disguises, confessed that he had done so himself (with considerable success), and printed a series of plans disguised as innocent artists' sketches as examples [figures 2 & 3]. Le Queux similarly maintained that the spy was 'usually a man who has received thorough instruction in sketching' and reiterated Baden-Powell's explication of the pictorial code technique.

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73 See French 1978; Felstead 1920: 41-44; and Fox 2009. For spy literature, see Trotter 1993: 167-80; for cinema (thirty spy films were made in 1914-15 alone), see Baker.
74 Le Queux 1915: 72.
76 Le Queux 1915: 66, 69-70.
The method was even discussed, in great depth, by the popular press. On 7 October 1914 the *Illustrated War News* published a feature [figures 4 & 5] dominated by two adjacent landscapes of the same scene – one loose and sketchy; the other schematic and topographical - that illustrated how a plan could masquerade as an innocent sketch and its producer pose as an innocent artist:

The illustration on the first of these two pages... shows an apparently innocent drawing of a landscape made by a spy. Were he caught with it in his possession, he might pose with comparative safety as an artist who had been sketching for his own amusement... In point of fact, however, his sketch would have been made in accordance with a secret pictorial code known to the Government in whose interest he was spying... The landscape, received by the spy's Government, is read in accordance with the code, and the result is a plan. In this code a windmill, for example, would represent a lighthouse; a plantation of trees, a fort; a single farmhouse or cottage, a group of buildings; a group of houses, a town; a church, Admiralty offices or a Town Hall; double lines (ostensibly roads), railways tracks, and so on...  

This formulation – in which the artist was a secret agent and his artwork one of his ‘many insidious devices’ – is perhaps not the most reliable account of espionage techniques (indeed it was famously mocked in *Punch* [figure 6]), but it nevertheless convinced the vigilant authorities that their activities should be rigorously restricted. One week into war the government passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), which abolished many of the basic liberties that Britons had long considered their birthright. 

Informed by a new conception of artists as potentially dangerous individuals, one of DORA’s regulations instructed that:

No person shall without the permission of the competent naval or military authority... make any photograph, sketch, plan, model, or other representation of any naval or military work, or of any dock or harbour, or with intent to assist the enemy, of any other place or thing.

Its effect was to render much artistic activity illegal.

Across the country countless artists began to be confronted, interrogated and arrested for working *en plein-air*. On the first day of the war police apprehended the

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78 The purpose of this legislation was twofold: first, to prevent people communicating with the enemy; second, to secure all areas ‘necessary to safeguard in the interests of the training or concentration of any of His Majesty’s Forces’. ‘Defence of the Realm (no. 2) Act, 1914; a Bill to Amend the Defence of the Realm Act, 1914’ (Bill 383), in *Bills, Public 1* (1914): 937.

American artist Henry A. Mathes in Sunderland for painting the city's harbour;\(^{80}\) and over the following weeks John Lavery (1856-1941) at the Firth of Forth; Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942) in Dover; Augustus John (1878-1961) in Galway and Arthur Severn (1842-1931) in Cornwall were all arrested while painting.\(^{81}\) Alexander Wallace Rimington (1854-1918) was prosecuted for painting the Menai Strait,\(^{82}\) and some were not even safe on private land: in Somerset a resident was arrested and interrogated by a London detective for sketching the foot of his garden, and in Dover a lady was summoned to her local court for drawing at her window.\(^{83}\) The legislation, as Chapter 2 will show, had severe logistical and financial consequences for landscapists, but it was the resulting change in their public image that is of concern here.

From the start of the war civilians had driven rather than followed governmental action on espionage: indeed, in the conflict's first month they had reported nine thousand (overwhelmingly unfounded) cases to the authorities.\(^{84}\) The combination of this irrational suspicion with an older distrust of artists, the press's promulgation of the 'pictorial code' technique, and the witnessing and reporting of numerous public arrests of painters caused them to become chief targets in a vitriolic witch-hunt. It was for this reason that most confrontations to artists originated not from the authorities but from 'busy-bodies who see a German spy in every painter'.\(^{85}\) A survey of the press reveals innumerable accounts of artists being challenged and often abused by a paranoid public. In the *Studio* one recalled that while sketching he was 'arrested by a posse of villagers... armed with pitchforks and other lethal weapons'. He subsequently found it difficult to persuade them that he 'was really a harmless if, perhaps, unnecessary artist with no evil intentions at all'.\(^{86}\) In Scotland the artist

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\(^{82}\) 'Cutting' (n.d.), *Sketching and Painting in War-Time*, (LMA 4054/A/06/001).  
\(^{83}\) 'IAL to Schofield' (6 September 1915), *Ibid*; 'Cutting' (n.d.), *Ibid*. There are countless other examples: Lucy Kemp-Welch was called in for questioning because two of her students were caught sketching Watford Bridge. Wortley 1996: 122. Another 'prominent artist, who was observed sketching a tree near Hatfield, was arrested when he entered that town for tea. He was locked up for three hours, and tea was indefinitely delayed'. *Colour* (October 1916): 112-13. A Scottish journalist wrote that he was visited by 'a well-known English artist, his moustache bristling and eyes blazing, and... a smudged canvas in his fingers. "I was sketching merely a bit of bush and a hill top and the sheep on your damned Braid Hills when I was arrested by your soulless military as a German Suspect"'. *Fine Art Trade Journal* 12 (April 1916): 122. See also the *Weekly Dispatch* (23 September 1917): 3.  
\(^{84}\) *Parliamentary Debates, Commons* 66 (9 September 1914): 564.  
\(^{85}\) Rimington 1916: 6.  
\(^{86}\) *Studio* 63 (January 1915): 240. For a similar account of an artist being captured by 'a row of natives with specials, pitchforks, dogs', see *Imperial Arts League Journal* (November 1914): 3
Hugh Thomson (1860-1920) was touring Galloway and Carrick while illustrating a *Highways and Byways* volume. However, wrote The Scotsman:

He has been subjected to much annoyance and hindered in his work by the "German spy" craze. He was arrested at Maxwelltown, and at Auchencairn the police were called in to interview him, and "the hostile and suspicious attitude which is general" is most uncomfortable. I do not write in order to throw ridicule on those who have thus obstructed an innocent artist who is as sound a patriot as anyone can be, but to express hope that in future anyone who detects an unknown gentleman making sketches of old bridges, ruined castles and abbeys, pastoral villages, and bits of pretty scenery may not at once conclude the worst.  

Even artists who were not caught painting outdoors provoked the public's distrust. One British artist and his wife faced a barrage of abuse after renting a cottage in the West Country. Soon after the outbreak of war the local community became suspicious of them. Residents repeatedly lodged complaints and sent reports to the police alleging that they were German agents. They paid nocturnal visits to the couple, threatened them, vandalised their property and ultimately assaulted them. The police called in the artist for questioning and released him shortly afterwards. It appeared the only grounds for the suspicions was the couple's bohemianism: the local schoolmistress stated: 'If he is not a spy, why does he wear a hat like that?'

Many of these stories were admittedly amusing, and the pictorial press delighted in lampooning them [figures 7 & 8]. In one cartoon [figure 9] a harmless middle-aged lady is shown daubing away with her watercolours while in the background alarmed villagers look on, terrified children hide, and a policeman urgently hurries towards her: it was entitled 'The Suspect'. Nevertheless, artists were evidently affected by the change in public perceptions, and art journals even began to publish advice about how to evade suspicion:

Keep to districts where [you] are well known, and in which people are used to [your] ways... When [you] go to strange places and prowl about in what seems to the local idea a suspicious aimless fashion [you] are asking for trouble and [you] must not be surprised if [you] get it.

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88 Playne 1931: 267. Rolf Jonsson, a Swedish artist working within the artists' colony at Newlyn in Cornwall was court-martialed at the beginning of 1915 for 'signalling from his house' at Mount's Bay on the nights of the 18 and 19 January that year. The foundation of the arrest was nothing more than 'a certain amount of local gossip and stories about spies', and letters that 'had been spread broadcast by an old lady'. Jonsson was found not guilty and released. 'Signals from the Shore', *Scotsman* (27 February 1915): 13.
89 'On the Risks which Artists Run', *Studio* 63 (January 1915): 240.
Despite the ubiquity of the reports, interrogations and arrests, artists were very rarely convicted of espionage.\(^9\) Just one was found guilty, and painting was not even his *modus operandi*. Alfred Hagn (1882-1937) was a young Norwegian Futurist painter who had consistently failed to secure any significant remuneration from his work. In 1916 he was offered money by two Germans (one of whom was also a painter) to enter Britain posed as a Norwegian journalist and report back to them whatever he could. He arrived in London in October 1916 and was arrested seven months later when his suspicious behaviour led to the discovery of invisible ink in his Bloomsbury hotel room. After confessing, he was convicted in August 1917. The court sentenced him to life imprisonment rather than execution (although his subsequent hunger strike led to his eventual extradition to Norway).\(^9\) While Hagn's case was the only one that offered any concrete evidence of artists' connections to espionage, it was not the most injurious to their reputations. If any case confirmed the conviction that artists were in fact traitors, it was that of the famous portraitist Philip de László.

Hungarian by birth, Philip de László (1869-1937) had become a naturalised British subject immediately following the outbreak of war in 1914. Many considered this proof enough of his disreputableness: Le Queux warned his readers that aliens became naturalised 'for the sole purpose of blinding us, and of being afforded opportunities to pursue their nefarious calling'.\(^9\) The fact that de László had undertaken naturalisation as recently as he did, and also that his profession entailed mixing privately and at length with the rich and influential only compounded the suspicions that he was an informant. Debate circulated concerning his status as a British subject, and many argued that he, like other aliens, should be immediately interned.\(^9\) His nationality started to have unfortunate professional consequences: commissions were cancelled, galleries decided that his pictures would no longer be welcome at their exhibitions, and his membership to several art societies was annulled.\(^9\)

By the middle of 1917 rumours surfaced that he was a spy, and that summer de László's wife was misinformed that her husband had been taken to the Tower of

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\(^9\) In the US a German spy was arrested when dynamite was found in his home. He had been posing as a landscapist and had 'carefully drawn plans of the Pacific Coast defences and the municipal works of the chief towns of California'. *The Times* (5 April 1917): 5. An artist in Switzerland was imprisoned for two months, *New York Times* (1 April 1916): 3; and another expelled from Newfoundland, Canada, for similar acts. *New York Times* (28 October 1918): 5.

\(^9\) Felstead 1920: 256-63.

\(^9\) Le Queux 1915: 181.

\(^9\) For the treatment of enemy aliens, see Panayi 1991.

London and shot.96 The news was not, however, so far from the truth. For some time he had been investigated for sending information and money to his family in Hungary - often through illegal diplomatic channels. And when, on 17 July 1917, he unwisely offered assistance to an escaped Hungarian prisoner of war, he initiated a chain of events that ultimately led to his arrest, on 21 September 1917. De László was charged for being of 'hostile origin', for corresponding and trading with enemy countries, and for rendering assistance to an escaped Prisoner of War. The authorities concluded that 'he cannot be regarded as otherwise than a disloyal British subject' and 'a potential danger to the public safety and the Defence of the Realm', and he was ultimately interned under DORA regulation 14b for two years.96

The news of de László's arrest was received with great public interest and his face emblazoned the front pages of most Sunday newspapers on 23 September 1917 [figure 10].97 It had significant personal implications: in January 1918 his golf club annulled his membership,98 and a month later the headmaster of his son's school wrote that he 'had a great deal of trouble with a large number of the parents', before informing him that it would 'be wiser for [his son] Patrick to pass on to a boarding school' when the term was over: 'I need not tell you', he concluded, 'how ashamed I feel at being forced to write in this way, but I am sure you will understand my position'.99 The writer Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927) tried to rally other artists to his defence: 'If we don't help each other no one else has any feeling for us!', he remarked. However the art world generally refused to help and condemned Jerome for even attempting to do so.100

The public response quickly turned to confusion and anger. The sustained ambiguity surrounding the case - and the decision to intern de László like an enemy alien rather than try him for treason like the British subject he had become - created a suspicion that he was at the heart of a much larger conspiracy. Newspapers called for the details of the case to be made public, and questions in the House of Commons and Lords were asked.101 The press intensified their campaign against him. They

95 Lucy de László, 'Notes' (15 August 1917), (DLA).
96 Rutter 1939: 310-18.
97 See, for instance, the Weekly Dispatch (23 September 1917): 1.
98 'Secretary, Hankley Common Golf Club to de László' (16 January 1918), (DLA).
99 'Wagner to de László' (25 February 1918), Ibid.
100 'Jerome to Solomon' (17 and 21 March 1918), Ibid.
101 See Daily Express (12 October 1917): 2; National News (7 October 1917): 2. Sir Richard Cooper MP spoke of a 'mysterious influence protecting this particular man' and asked: 'Why is he not
stressed his foreign origin: that he had been elected to Austrian nobility in 1912; that he possessed numerous German and Austrian honours; and that he was ‘very popular in Berlin and Vienna... frequently the guest of the Kaiser’. The People called him ‘The Enemy in our Midst'; The Evening Standard described him as one of ‘the Most Dangerous Spies’ of the war; and dubbing him ‘the traitor painter’ John Bull labelled his story ‘one of the most amazing cases of enemy perfidy revealed during the war’. On the street, meanwhile, rumours surfaced that he was signalling to zeppelins with his cigarette lighter in Piccadilly Circus, and at one point demonstrations outside his house had to be dispersed by police.

Significantly, most discourses connected his activities as a spy to his activities as an artist. They cited his pre-war portraits of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister Leopold von Berchtold as evidence of his intimate connection with enemy policy-makers, and argued that his position as what was effectively a court painter in Britain enabled him to gather information:

The distinguished character of de László’s clientele would have afforded him fine opportunities for obtaining first-class information if he had really been desirous of getting it... Cabinet Ministers... are such busy people that they frequently go on working while the artist plies his brush... King George... walks about the room and dictates to his Secretaries while he is “sitting” for his portrait.

He is a friend of the exalted and the rich; he has painted half of the Cabinet and nine-tenths of Society; he was a welcome guest in the houses of the great; he used his position to worm out our military secrets and convey them by letter - nearly fifty of them - to the enemy.

Particular controversy surrounded Lord Curzon (1859-1925), who had sat for de László while a member of the war cabinet. Curzon was forced to respond publicly to the news: ‘I am not aware that there would be anything discreditable in being painted, even in war time, by an eminent artist who had made his home in England

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102 The Times (24 September 1917): 8.
103 People (4 November 1917): 2; Evening Standard (1 November 1917): 3.
105 Personal communication, Sandra de Laszlo. This anecdote promises to be included in Duff Hart-Davis’s forthcoming biography of de László, which is currently in draft stage.
106 Rutter 1939: 333.
107 Bristol Times (28 September 1917): 2.
for many years, and had become a naturalised British subject’. The next day it was discovered that Curzon had not sat for de László since 1913, but the belief that the artist was extracting information from important sitters was enduring: in June 1919, after nearly two years incarcerated without conviction, de László appeared in court to defend himself against the state’s decision to revoke his citizenship. In preparation for the case, both legal teams sent questions to his character referees asking if he had ever interrogated them about the ‘state of the nation’ during portrait sittings.

There was a further twist in the de László case. At one point Scotland Yard acquired a letter addressed to him from Geneva, dated 14 June 1917. The letter appeared to confirm that de László was attempting to resume his Hungarian nationality and that he had indeed been spying for his country of birth. It read:

Your report of yesterday confirms what I have said of you for a long time. You have in you the stuff of which diplomats, clever businessmen, and journalists are made. The Report is of the highest importance, and gives a splendid picture of the true situation in England.

Commending him for the ‘important services’ he had rendered to Austria-Hungary, the document (and a further telegram) appeared to confirm that de László had made nearly forty reports on ‘the exact losses of British ships, statistics relating to the critical condition of the mining industry, and views held at Court’. De László was incredulous, and was convinced that the documents had been ‘made up at Scotland Yard’ in a massive secret service conspiracy designed to frame him:

The letter is most clumsily composed by a 3rd rate man and certainly to compromise me here in this country, and I am sorry to say, [it]... has succeeded. It is so stupidly done, that I can only wonder that any sane and honest man can take it seriously.... I have come to the conclusion that the letter was fabricated.

Although it is not the place of this dissertation to comment at length on de László’s guilt or otherwise, his ultimate release without charge and the decision to uphold his British nationality in 1919 seem to have been justified. De László’s activities were undeniably illegal, but they were not intended as hostile. Nevertheless, his case – and

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111 All referees (who included the Earl of Selborne, the Duke of Portland and Lord Devonport) rejected the suspicions. ‘Character Witness Statements’, *Naturalization (Revocation) Committee (1919), Internment Papers (DLA).
his eventual 'whitewash' - had captured the public and the press’s imagination, and had in the process appeared to corroborate broader suspicions of artists discussed in this chapter. It had also mobilised numerous arguments concerning art’s role in a deepening social confrontation during the war, and working-class newspapers emphasised how he was implicated in a secret collusion between the elite, Jewish internationalist art world and the ‘Society sycophants’ that it catered for (often referred to as the ‘Hidden Hand’) at the expense of the ordinary British citizen:

The case of this Society petted painter is a solemn warning to us to be wary of those in high places who are now ready to whitewash the Hun... It must make the average decent British citizen sick to see how the fashionable personages hurried to the Law Courts to bolster up the case of this Hungarian traitor who, when it suited him, became naturalised - and, when it suited him, broke and defied the laws of the country whose protection he sought and on whose money he waxed rich.114

De László’s career did recover following his vindication, but he remained a symbol of the art world’s essentially corrupt, elitist and unpatriotic character. Indeed, for over a decade the term ‘Laszloism’ was in common usage to describe a high society criminal absolved of his guilt by powerful allies.115

De László was one of the many victims of wartime social changes. The conflict politicised countless activities and identities that were previously sub-political and in the process polarised their societal implications. No longer understood as a discrete activity, art was transformed into an unethical entertainment in the face of unprecedented suffering, a focus for profligacy in a climate of self-denial and an act of ‘unprofitable dreaming’ when only ‘productive labour’ was required. Artists, meanwhile, were identified as profiteers rather than patriots, shirkers rather than soldiers, bohemians rather than ‘ordinary men’, and ultimately traitors to the realm rather than its loyal defenders.116 In every case, art was formulated as a binary opposite to what was acceptable, what was valuable, and what was commendable. These may have been representations rather than realities; but representations, as Roger Chartier has argued, are themselves ‘constituents of social reality’, and they here represented very real challenges for ‘stay-at-home’ artists.117 They were, however, by no means their only challenges.

CHAPTER TWO: ARTISTS

IN AUTUMN 1914 many commentators predicted that war would diminish the ‘great multitude of painters’ that had proliferated in the excesses of pre-war prosperity. As the months progressed it became clear that the conflict was not just politely pruning the lesser artists; it was seriously undermining the foundations of the whole profession. In statements of alarming similarity, newspapers, charity organisations and official bodies concurred about the state of the damage. Critics wrote that ‘no class of professional workers’ was ‘suffering more acutely’, had been ‘more severely hit’, and was feeling ‘the sharp edge of privation more quickly’; aid councils declared that ‘the ARTISTIC PROFESSIONS’ were the ‘HARDEST HIT of all’; and even the Board of Trade reported that artists were ‘among the worst hit of the professional classes’. This chapter will examine the singular combination of psychological, practical and financial pressures that so incapacitated artists between 1914 and 1918.

I. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Chapter 1 described how the war adversely altered societal perceptions of art in Britain. These changes had inevitable implications for the nation’s many practising artists. The more belligerent individuals absorbed the relentless criticisms that had been directed at them. They too came to consider it ‘a criminal waste of time’ to be sketching ‘in the sun on a canal bank’ when other men were fighting, dying, healing and manufacturing for the good of the country, and they professionally realigned in

1 ‘Whence this great multitude of painters?’ is the title of an 1892 essay by Marcus Huish complaining that there was ‘hardly a household of which one member does not belong either professionally or as an amateur, to the artistic community’. 1892: 720. Examples of critics believing that war would rectify this are: ‘The artistic profession will automatically be purged of many members who remain in it, without real vocation, from mercenary motives. There should be fewer perfunctory exhibitors’. ‘Art After Armageddon’, Athenaeum (12 September 1914): 269; and: ‘The only thing that can be said without fear of being wrong is this: it is all over now with the false artists who attracted attention to themselves only by the bluff of eccentricity and succeeded in fooling certain scatter-brained critics’. Salmon 1915: 8. See also Aldington 1914, and Year’s Art (1915): 8.
2 Sunday Times (15 November 1914): 5; Scotsman (22 October 1914): 5; Art News (24 August 1914): 241.
3 ‘Chairman’s Note’ (May 1917), Arts in War Time Committee Annual Report 1917 (1918), (PCAC): 3. See also Charity Organisation Review 39 (February 1916): 85.
order to render themselves more valuable to the war effort. Others withdrew from public life and even felt compelled to downplay or conceal their real vocational identities. The least resilient of all, however, found the prevailing public sentiment nothing less than socially crippling. In 1915 one painter wrote: ‘In an era like this the artist is in despair... He has to cast about in his mind how to justify his very existence... I am afraid that not only have I nothing to do, but that I have no right to exist’.

The abiding incompatibility of artists and the community ran deeper than damaged public reputations; it also threatened the mental foundations on which they worked. Through 1914 and 1915 numerous commentators maintained that creative endeavour was not just unjustifiable in a society at war; it was impossible in it. The scholar Gilbert Murray (1866-1957) was one of them. He described a deep-rooted psychological antagonism between ‘herd instincts’ on the one hand and ‘individual emotions’ on the other. War, he wrote, always ‘intensified those [emotions] which are only felt in common, but... deaden[ed] and shut down those which are only felt by the individual’. Artists, of course, greatly depended on ‘individual emotions’ and it soon became apparent that these were indeed being stifled by collective sentiment. As the poet Richard Aldington (1892-1962) unequivocally claimed in 1914 (before joining the army): ‘We are all too much engulfed in “group psychology” to be artists’.

Although creative figures did not abandon their vocations overnight it was certainly true that the events of August 1914 had struck many down with what one called an epidemic imaginative ‘atrophy’. This phenomenon is well documented as

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5 These comments are by the painter Robert Spencer (1879-1931), quoted in Phillips 1918: 35.
6 Colour’s art critic described their usual behaviour: ‘So-and-so did paint pictures, of course, but then he was really a cricketer, or a motorist, or at any rate a public school man; or his pictures were of a sort that appeal to the man in the street. There was nothing of the long-haired crowd about him’. Marriott & “Tis” 1919: 6-7.
7 Quoted in Lennard 1915: 769. Caroline Playne also eloquently described this despair: ‘Thoughtful people, people of artistic temperament, felt the war years to be a long-protracted, acute form of nightmare. They felt themselves held up from constructive tasks; and, at the same time, falling apart from civilised standards, divided, estranged from their own ideals. The goodness they might have pursued evaded them, whilst regard for beauty vanished, as it seemed for ever. The faith that might have upheld them, being constantly trampled in the mud, ceased to function’. Playne 1931: 373.
8 Murray 1915: 34.
9 Aldington 1914: 326. There were many other similar comments. John Palmer wrote: ‘There are no artists today; we are all men together’. Palmer 1915: 85; Reginald Lennard asked: ‘What does England want in her hour of need except the bull-pups, confident and strong?’ Lennard 1915: 768.
10 Ibid.
it pertains to writers. Countless authors described a sudden inability to focus on creative activity. Thomas Hardy could only 'sit still in apathy';¹¹ Henry James found 'concentration an extreme difficulty';¹² D.H. Lawrence entered 'a sort of coma';¹³ E.M. Forster could 'do nothing'; Edmund Gosse found that the war 'immobilized' his mind,¹⁴ and Ford Madox Ford felt 'absolutely and helplessly unable' to write.¹⁵ It was not however, solely a literary experience: all creative professionals - composers, musicians, actors, theatre directors and even philosophers - maintained that it was they who had been silenced the most definitively.¹⁶ In the early months of the war the oft-repeated Ciceronian adage 'inter arma silent musae' ('the muses are silent in wartime') had never seemed more apposite.¹⁷

Visual artists were particularly susceptible to this creative paralysis. Indeed, in September 1914 one critic wrote that 'the majority' were 'given over to idleness and depression'.¹⁸ It was in part due to a simple preoccupation with war news; but it was also the symptom of a gravely undermined professional confidence. Collins Baker described it evocatively in his November 1914 article 'A Painter's Confession'. It documented, somewhat melodramatically, how a minor landscapist's priorities had been 'completely upset' by war. He was painting in the hills above his studio when his wife informed him that the crucial Belgian fortress town of Namur had fallen.¹⁹ Absorbing the information, he glanced down at his canvas and, in Collins Baker's words, felt that he had been 'suddenly and once and for all assured that [art] was wanting if not actually irrelevant'. He then gazed back up to the hills and questioned 'why he'd ever wanted to paint them... They simply did not seem to matter'.²⁰

The most extended account of this process is located in an invaluable series of hitherto unstudied letters by the landscapist Frederick Milner (1863-1939). More than fifty years old in 1914, Milner could not enlist with the forces, so he endeavoured to

¹¹ Hardy to Cockerell (28 August 1914), in Hardy 1985: 45.
¹² James to Gosse (15 October 1914), in James 1984: 720.
¹³ Lawrence to Cannan (14 June 1918), in Lawrence 1962: 558.
¹⁴ Quoted in Charteris 1931: 365.
¹⁵ Madox Ford 1914: 334-5.
¹⁷ The phrase is a bastardisation of Cicero's 'Silent enim leges inter arma' ('The laws fall silent in wartime'). Cicero 1980: 4: 11.
¹⁸ Taylor 1914: 46.
¹⁹ Namur was the last obstacle to German access to the River Meuse and into France. It fell two days after the Germans bombardment commenced on 20 August 1914. The news was reported by the Press Bureau on 24 August 1914 and in The Times on 25 August 1914.
²⁰ Collins Baker 1914: 556.
persist with his career as a painter. Like others, a fascination with the conflict’s early stages initially shook his concentration. Just a week into the war he wrote:

> I find it difficult to do any work, as one’s mind is full of the serious outlook. I do not know what I am going to do… I am afraid it is a bad look out for artists, as this war I am afraid will unsettle everything for a long time, but the only thing is to go on with one’s work as usual.21

Milner’s determination to go on with work ‘as usual’ was optimistic. Two weeks later he wrote that ‘everything [was] upside down’ and confessed that he was still unable to ‘settle down to anything’.22 For the remainder of 1914 he continued to visit his studio daily but once there would sit in silence, producing nothing.23 He moved around the country and even considered emigrating to America in order to revive his imaginative energy and reignite his career.24 Creative impotence soon gave way to debilitating depression. Describing everything as ‘rotten’, he was overcome with a sense of futility that was not alleviated by the dormancy of the art world: ‘What is the use’, he asked in February 1915; ‘one does not even know whether there will be an RA exhibition this year’.25 The next month he wrote: ‘I should have liked to have shown in London again, but what good, in fact as far as painting is concerned, what good anything… I have not been doing any fresh work, it is hard to settle to anything where thought is required’.26

Milner’s letters unfortunately trail off after 1915, but they illustrate how the early stages of war posed an acute psychological challenge to artists’ continued production. His experiences were not unrepresentative: Roger Fry (1866-1934) similarly wrote of a sudden ‘terrible lack of confidence’ in his art; David Bomberg (1890-1957) felt that ‘the urge was gone’ to create, and Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) found it ‘impossible to settle down to work’. He asked: ‘How could all this be entered into wholeheartedly when war came?’.27 Some translated this crisis of confidence into professional action: C.R.W. Nevinson (1889-1946) withdrew from an important one-man show at the Doré Gallery in 1914 because of ‘a feeling of futility’, and in January 1915 the cartoonist Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) cancelled his forthcoming Leicester Galleries exhibition

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21 ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (13 August 1914), Fredrick Milner Papers (TGA 9511/17).
22 ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (31 August 1914), Ibid (TGA 9511/18).
23 ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (12 November 1914), Ibid (TGA 9511/21).
24 ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (24 September 1914), Ibid (TGA 9511/19).
25 ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (9 February 1915), Ibid (TGA 9511/24).
26 ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (14 March 1915), Ibid (TGA 9511/25).
because the war was ‘the only matter in present and in the near future’ and his works would thus be ‘an offence against decency’.  

It might be instructive to speculate how severely this crisis of confidence affected artists. The painter Louis Wain (1860-1939) famously developed schizophrenia during the war years. Although its onset is often dated to his falling from an Omnibus on 7 October 1914 it actually developed in the second half of the war in response – so his acquaintances believed – to the ‘acute anxiety’ that he had experienced on its account. Moreover, in the early months of war two well-known artists committed suicide. Henry Hopwood (1860-1914) experienced a chronic case of insomnia and on 27 September 1914 was found dead in his studio, ‘a revolver with an empty chamber having been found in his hand’. Two weeks later the ‘blazing genius’ John Currie (1884-1914) shot himself in the stomach after murdering his mistress. He was just thirty years old. Their invocation here is not to suggest that war was the sole reason for their deaths (Currie’s suicide had other personal motives), but this does not mean that the psychological and financial hardships engendered by war did not contribute to them.

What can be certain is that for some artists – like countless other people around the country – the bereavement that was so often the product of war did have a lasting effect. After Stanhope Forbes’s (1857-1947) son Alec was killed in action in 1916 he abandoned painting for the remainder of the war in order to locate his body and create a memorial for him (it was a development that was most famously paralleled by Rudyard Kipling’s response to the loss of his only son John a year earlier). Academicians Benjamin Williams Leader (1831-1923) and Charles Sims (1873-1928) also had sons killed in the war. Sims certainly never recovered from the loss: he committed suicide in 1928. His other son Alan remained convinced that the traumatic memories of war were responsible for his death.

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28 Nevinson 1937: 71; Beerbohm is quoted in Brown 1968: 189.
31 The ‘blazing genius’ is Michael Sadler’s term. Sadler 1949: 255-6. For Currie’s death, see the Scotsman (13 October 1914): 3. Currie’s suicide was fictionalised by Gilbert Cannan in his novel Mendel (1916), with Currie represented by the character Logan. For a brief biography, see the introduction to John Currie: paintings and drawings 1905-14, Stoke-on-Trent: City Museum and Art Gallery (1980).
32 Forbes’s endeavours can be investigated further at the Tate in his diary (TGA 9015.1.2), and letters (TGA 9015.4.1).
33 See also Sims 1934: 192. For more on Sims, see Peters Corbett 1997: 200-8, and Holmes 2005: 145-85.
II. PRACTICAL FACTORS

Artists’ problems were not always so tragic. Indeed, their most frequent concerns were usually banal and quotidian. The inability to acquire materials, for instance, gravely disrupted their patterns of production. Most art materials had typically been imported from Germany, but the conflict discontinued that supply. A number of German pigments, like alkali blues and lead white, subsequently became ‘unobtainable’ in England from the end of 1914. Pencils too, which were usually produced in Bavaria or Austria, ceased to appear in shops and forced Winsor & Newton to devise their own alternative, the Winton. Even items that did not originate in enemy nations became scarce. William Orpen complained to the colourmen Roberson & Co. of the difficulty in finding his favoured Belgian canvas after invading German troops ‘knocked out’ the factory that produced it: ‘I am perfectly willing to pay quite a sum of money to get this canvas on the market again and would make a lot of use of it. I cannot find any canvas at all like it at present. I also know several well known British artists who would certainly give big orders for it’.

These difficulties were exacerbated by the exigencies of the war effort. The copper, tin and lead on which sculptors and engravers depended and the mercury from which vermilion paint was made both went into the production of ammunition, while green pigments were required to dye uniforms khaki. Munitions firms thus purchased them in bulk before they even reached art retailers’ shelves. The government’s control of civilian use of certain materials made them yet harder to obtain. The Paper Restrictions Order regulated the supply and use of paper, confining most draughtsmen and painters to working with small quantities of high cost, low quality paper. Sculptors meanwhile were hampered by the Ministry of Munitions’

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34 The only discussion of the practical impediments to artists in war is Gough 1996, although he focuses on front-line issues.
35 England imported £750,000 of German painters’ colours in 1912 and £180,000 of picture-frame materials in 1914. The British printing industry imported 50 per cent of all its materials from Germany alone in 1914. Journal of Royal Society of Arts 63 (30 April 1915): 566; British Printer 27 (October-November 1914): 196-204; Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (November 1914): 315.
38 ‘Orpen to Roberson’ (29 November 1914), (ROB MS 529-1993). See also Orpen 1921: 66.
39 My thanks go to Dr Sally Woodcock for this information.
40 Paper Restriction legislation from 1917 controlled the ‘purchase, sale, distribution, supply, transport or storage’ of paper. It also prohibited excessive paper use, such as posters larger than a specified size, and the distribution of catalogues, price lists and advertising circulars.
decision to release only 10 per cent of the nation’s metal supply to civilians.\textsuperscript{41} To make matters worse, a Priority Department (from August 1915) ranked artists’ demands as so ‘non-essential’ that they were rarely granted access to any of this small allocation.\textsuperscript{42} The department was keenly aware of artists’ unlicensed use of metals: it warned the Royal Academy that ‘any bronze sculpture exhibited’ at Burlington House had to be ‘cast with the necessary certificates of permission’ or faced confiscation.\textsuperscript{43}

Art societies received so many complaints from their members that in May 1917 the Imperial Arts League invited a painter, sculptor, engraver and craftsman to its council meeting to discuss the issue. They concluded that the ‘supplies necessary for continued art production were in the hands of commercially interested authorities’ who were not releasing them to individuals, and that a committee be appointed to approach ‘the controllers of these supplies’.\textsuperscript{44} Meanwhile the Royal Society of British Sculptors surveyed its associates to discover how much material they required, and just thirty-six respondents requested over five tonnes of copper and bronze, a ton of piping, and a ton of wire.\textsuperscript{45} Together with the Royal Academy it eventually obtained from the Ministry of Munitions a ‘ration of a definite though limited amount of requisite materials’, but this agreement was not finalised until the spring of 1918 - some three-and-a-half years into the war.\textsuperscript{46}

Sourcing materials was only part of artists’ problems because once located inflated prices rendered them unaffordable. By the end of 1915 ink houses reported that milori and bronze blue had risen by 200 per cent; zinc oxide by 170 per cent; red lakes by 125 per cent; whites and ultramarines by 75 per cent; oils by 90 per cent; gums by 80 per cent; while copper and tin had doubled in price.\textsuperscript{47} Paper had more

\textit{British Printer} 30 (April-May 1917): 40. One art trader was almost bankrupted for the unlicensed importing of seven cases of postcards from the US. ‘Raphael Tuck and Paper’, \textit{Fine Art Trade Journal} 13 (November 1917): 252.

\textsuperscript{41} Aluminium became controlled in December 1915; copper in December 1916, and tin in April 1918. Ministry of Munitions 1922 VII: 106-13.

\textsuperscript{42} The Ministry of Munitions had four levels of need: ‘Direct War Work’, ‘Indirect War Work’, ‘Necessary Work’ and ‘Non-Essential Work’. Artists’ use fell into this final category. \textit{Ibid}: 45. In some cases the Ministry attempted to extract materials from civilian trades: in December 1917 it tried to obtain 25,000 tonnes of lead from the printing industry. \textit{Ibid}: 97.

\textsuperscript{43} ‘Priority Department to RA’ (3 April 1917), \textit{Secretary’s Letters} (RAA/SEC 9/1/23).

\textsuperscript{44} ‘Council Meeting’ (24 May 1917), \textit{Council Minute Book} (LMA: 4054/ A/02/001).

\textsuperscript{45} ‘Council Meeting’ (18 December 1917), \textit{Minutes of Council Meetings} 2 (RBS).

\textsuperscript{46} ‘Annual General Meeting’ (15 March 1918), \textit{AGM reports and Supplementary Minutes 1911-1920} (LMA/4054/ A/01/002).

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{British Printer} 28 (December-January 1915-1916): 195. See also ‘Art by Weight’, \textit{Burlington Magazine} 32 (June 1918): 243. Gilbert Bayes had to postpone casting two bronze equestrian
than quadrupled in cost, and one journal even joked that printers should use gold leaf instead ‘because paper was dearer’. Art supply firms like Winsor & Newton dispatched circulars to retailers almost daily to inform them of increased wholesale prices, and artists became so angered by the changes that the companies had to publicly defend themselves against allegations of profiteering:

Hog-hair brushes are very dear because there are a few or practically none of British manufacture to be had owing to the scarcity of the raw material which was formerly imported, while the foreign brushes are very expensive. With regard to colours... the prices of our oil and water colours remained at a pre-war standard... [but] cost of labour... has risen enormously. Owing to the great demand of the Government for all kinds of flax and cotton, canvas, both of good and school qualities, has risen enormously in price, but this was a matter quite beyond our power to alter, and as prices of raw cloth advanced so we were obliged to advance ours. Our catalogue would compare favourably with that of any other manufacturer in any other trade.  

The increased prices meant that some artists became indebted to their suppliers. Both Mark Gertler (1891-1939) and Dora Carrington (1893-1932) encountered ‘black abuses, and threats’ from the Gower Street supplier Percy Young. Moreover, many grew reluctant to purchase expensive materials in the production of artworks that were not guaranteed to find buyers. This led artists to abandon ambitious projects and concentrate instead on more modest output. Gertler sidelined his large works in favour of ‘small saleable things’ that cost less to produce, and numerous sculptors focused their energies on diminutive plaster statuettes rather than large bronzes.  

War generated a further practical difficulty for artists: access to models. Copyists and miniaturists, for example, both customarily worked from pictures in situ or within the study-rooms of museums, but their closure by the government in 1916 

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48 Quoted in British Printer 27 (October-November 1914): 204. The journalist R.D. Blumenfeld remarked in 1917 that he could not buy paper ‘as cheaply as I can purchase, say, a diamond brooch’. Blumenfeld 1931: 81. There were many reasons for this increased cost. Previously manufactured from German pulp, producers became reliant on expensive Swedish alternatives following the outbreak of war, until in 1916 Sweden banned exports of the material. British Printer 29 (April-May 1916): 11. In addition, chemical pulp had trebled in price; mechanical pulp had doubled; coal needed to manufacture paper had doubled from 12s to 25s per tonne. Necessary chemicals required were also up in price. British Printer 29 (June-July 1916): 89. For more on the plight of paper producers, see the O.W. Paper & Arts Company records held by the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS B228 and B254).  

49 Imperial Arts League Journal (November 1919): 187-8. For the full extent of the changes, see the company’s ‘Master catalogue, 1914’ (W&N).  


51 Ibid: 224; Bradshaw 1975: 6, 60.
effectively meant 'the stopping of access to materials for the study of their craft and the earning of their livelihood'. These inconveniences were not confined to those who depended on public institutions. The absence of men, the increased employment of women, and the general rise in pay demands left many figurative painters unable to rely on their usual models. Even those who did not work from human models experienced problems: the equestrian painter Alfred Munnings (1878-1959) had his horses requisitioned by the War Office for the cavalry.

The Defence of the Realm Act also limited artists’ subject matter. A sizeable constituency of marine painters – many of whom had operated quietly for decades and thrived from the public interest in the Navy at the start of the war – saw their profession become instantly unviable on 27 September 1915 when the Admiralty ordered that:

Photographs, profile outlines, drawings or silhouettes of any of H.M. ships... that might in any way assist enemy agents in the identification of H.M. ships, must... under Regulation 18 of [DORA]... not be exposed for sale; and dealings in such articles, whether by sale or otherwise, should no longer take place during the continuance of the war.

Chapter 1 has shown how DORA also prohibited artists from painting outdoors. Its implications were not however confined to growing public suspicions; they also seriously frustrated artists’ attempts to work. Although the restrictions were initially confined to coastal regions they soon applied to much of the country. As one artist explained:

No sketching or painting whatever is allowed within four, and in some cases seven, miles of the coast. Sketching should also be avoided near any defensive works, estuaries, or towns which are fortified or entrenched; aerodromes, wireless stations, railways, waterworks, reservoirs, or bridges of any importance. Even though the subject of the sketch may be a group of trees, a cathedral or a paintable cottage, the rule applies strictly.

Nowhere was this more stringently enforced than in Cornwall, which also hosted the three largest artistic colonies in the country – Newlyn, St Ives and Lamorna – most of

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54 Munnings 1950: 296.
55 Quoted in Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (December 1914): 344. See also Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (October 1915): 262.
whose pleinairist members relied on access to the countryside in order to work. Difficulties were reported across the county. At Newlyn Laura Knight wrote that artists ‘were forbidden to work out of doors at all’; at St Ives the ‘regulations [were] so stringent’ that ‘one [could not] sketch anywhere without a permit’; and at Lamorna Alfred Munnings ‘dared not be sketching out of doors in the country’ at all.57

For some this was simply distressing – Frederick Milner found that the regulations restricted his already diminished creativity: ‘I want to get out to nature, & here we are so limited at present... One gets after a time stale with studio work and wants fresh inspiration’.58 For most, however, the consequences were more concrete. According to one Cornish artist:

The Act affects us artists in St Ives especially... We cannot paint even inland. It will be very hard on the many landscape painters here who work entirely out of doors... Their livelihood is taken from them... If... they are debarred from working out of doors for any length of time it will mean ruin to them.59

The Imperial Arts League received letters complaining of similar problems nationwide, and decided to approach the military authorities to obtain sketching permits for its members. Its request was instantly dismissed. However with artists’ complaints arriving daily and a number of major art organisations willing to collaborate, formal collective action was decided on.60 Backed by the Imperial Arts League, the St Ives group sent a petition (signed by, among others, Harold and Laura Knight, Alfred Munnings and Stanhope Forbes) to the government in September 1915. It read:

The regulation is so worded as to exclude the right of any artists whatever to paint anywhere except inside their studios and houses... Is it that those painters who are unable actively to serve their country should be unable to continue their profession and keep in their employ those dependant on them in time of peace... Artists are faced with the prospect of ruin and bankruptcy if the war is of long duration.61

The petition was joined by a document from the Imperial Arts League and a personal appeal to Lord Kitchener from the Royal Academy that demanded a cache of red

57 Knight 1936: 205; ‘Milner to Brumfit’ (4 July 1915 and 14 March 1915), Frederick Milner Papers (TGA 9511/31 and TGA 9511/25); Munnings 1950: 296.
58 ‘Miner to Brumfit’ (4 July 1915), Frederick Milner Papers (TGA 9511/31).
59 ‘Moffat-Lindner to IAL’ (5 September 1915), Painting and Sketching in War-time (LMA 4054/A/06/001).
60 ‘IAL to Schofield’ (6 September 1915), Ibid.
61 ‘St Ives Petition’ (3 September 1915), Ibid.
permits for the artists who needed them. When combined with a further appeal in *The Times*, the government finally relented in February 1916 but it still refused to issue permits in bulk to organisations, and their acquisition remained so convoluted that a number of legitimate artists (including Roger Fry) never procured them.

Artists' practical difficulties did not cease once they had succeeded in producing work: its subsequent distribution was just as problematic. From the start of the war railways had operated restricted, unreliable and expensive services that made the transportation of non-essential items difficult and sometimes impossible. When sending work to London exhibitions from provincial studios painters had pictures (particularly if framed) refused by service operators, and sculptors were very rarely allowed to take up valuable munitions space by sending bulkier objects. If accepted, all balked at the 'high rates charged by Railway Companies for the carriage of works of Art'. All services were, in addition, highly unreliable: many artworks either did not arrive at exhibitions in time for consideration or were damaged - often unforeseeably - on the way: a case of Louis Wain's painted cats was destroyed when the ship carrying them was torpedoed on route to the United States.

Censorship generated further problems. The damage that Inspections inflicted on objects made many artists reluctant to risk exposing their delicate creations to them. Max Beerbohm, for instance, refused to send a package of his work to the novelist Edith Wharton because of his fear that it would be 'injured by the frantic fingers of the openers and shutters' of censors. Many innocuous items did not even pass the censors' 'frantic fingers'. This repeatedly frustrated John Quinn's (1870-1924) plans to

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63 ‘At a time like this, when painters are hard put to find any sale of their work, the authorities must give permits to artists’. *The Times* (11 October 1915): 4.
64 After two years of negotiations Fry had not succeeded in obtaining one: 'It now requires endless formalities so that I've only done still life'. Fry to Bell (5 August 1916), in Fry 1972: 400. See also *Colour* (October 1916): 112-13.
65 For railways in wartime, see Hamilton 1967.
67 ‘Council Meeting’ (21 December 1914), *Minutes of Council Meetings* 2 (RBS).
68 For complaints about late arrivals, see ‘RA to Great Western Railway Traffic Manager’ (29 March 1917), *Secretary's Letters* (RAA/SEC 9/1/23). For Wain's loss, see Dale 1968: 115. Damage to artworks was rendered more likely by the scarcity of appropriate packing materials. When C.J. Holmes arrived in Paris to purchase objects for the National Gallery from the Degas sale, 'no packing cases could be had for love or money. The great packing-case magnate of Paris finally came, top-hatted and frock-coated, with two assistants in blue blouses, to explain with much bowing and hand-waving that the thing was impossible'. Holmes 1936: 339.
build a large collection of Vorticist work in New York. In March 1916, for instance, the Post Office in London prevented Ezra Pound (1885-1972) from sending him a number of Gaudier-Brzeska's works on paper because, so he informed Quinn, officials thought that they could have 'betrayed seven empires'.

III. FINANCIAL FACTORS

How this war will affect English art... is chiefly... a question of how people's pockets will be affected.

This chapter has heretofore described the psychological and logistical difficulties faced by artists between 1914 and 1918. However, their most crippling wartime problems were unquestionably financial. Art historians have typically excluded routine pecuniary matters from their accounts of the conflict - a tendency epitomised by their recurrent severance of Wyndham Lewis's famous comment 'the War has stopped art dead' from its succeeding sentence 'I have no money at all' - but artists like most other individuals had one paramount concern: to ensure the survival of themselves and their families. This of course depended on their continued ability to sell their work, but it was this very requirement that was jeopardised by war conditions. As buyers became unwilling and unable to invest in expensive non-essentials the conflict inhibited the market for all luxury goods and services. This commercial dislocation was, as the Studio unequivocally put it in September 1914, 'nothing short of disastrous' for artists of all kinds.

The ubiquity of financial distress is compellingly evidenced in the Artists' General Benevolent Institution's (AGBI) applicants' book, filled as it is with repeated captions like 'difficulties directly attributable to war', 'hardship due entirely to war' and 'distress caused by war'. Applications reveal figure painters complaining of 'the impossibility of selling pictures'; illustrators suffering because 'no illustrated books

70 Quoted in Reid 1968: 251.
72 See, for example, Peters Corbett 1997: 45.
73 Studio 62 (September 1914): 302. One charity explained this situation well. Artists, it wrote, had been 'promptly and severely affected by the dislocation of business, and by the sudden, unexpected cessation of the demand for luxuries. In fact the professions which depend upon the conditions of peace and the fluency of the market are practically at a standstill, and the creative and artistic professions... have been seriously crippled. All these rely upon the conditions of peace and the demand for luxuries, and that demand is gone'. 'War and the Professional Classes', in Professional Classes War Relief Council: Aims and Objects (PCAC): 6.
74 'Various Entries', Applicants Book 5 (AGBI).
had been published since the war'; topographers experiencing a 'stoppage of all sales'; stained-glass window designers witnessing a 'total paralysis of all work'; printmakers reporting a 'cessation of demand for important engravings'; sculptors struggling because of the 'total disappearance of major public projects'; and a number of esteemed painters who were adversely affected by the 'near-total closure of international markets for art goods'.75

'Studio-painters' - whose work derived principally from direct patronage - were particularly affected by the changing patterns of consumption. Even the two most celebrated portraitists of the period saw their commissions dwindle to almost nothing.76 Philip de László's studio files reveal patrons cancelling ('I do not think that I ought to permit myself the luxury at present'); postponing ('You will understand how very busy my life is just now. Munitions give me no time'); or requesting 'war discounts' on existing commissions ('Although... anxious indeed to have it done, it is still Wartime, and I cannot afford to pay full before the War prices'),77 while in William Orpen's studio book amounts of £500 and £700 were struck out, and brief notes - 'off because of war', 'not paid because of war', and 'returned because of war' - were scrawled over the details of dozens of projects. The inevitable result was declining income: where Orpen took £8509 in 1913 he turned over just £500 in 1917.78

Artists who sold through intermediaries arguably found the situation even worse. Unlike established studio-artists they could neither depend on personal savings nor the possibility of the odd but remunerative commission for survival. They were entirely reliant for the sale of their work on the shows mounted by exhibiting societies (to which they were still paying subscriptions) and art dealers. However, exhibitions no longer guaranteed such sales. Many were cancelled because their organisers became unwilling to incur the costs required to mount them. In the instances where they were mounted, attendance figures and sales plummeted so

75 Ibid: 14, 17, 23, 94, 14, 87, 46.
76 'Portrait painters who in normal times are rarely without a commission, find themselves idle owing to commissions being cancelled in consequence of financial disturbance, and a large number of artists who depend for a livelihood on work of a more or less "commercial" character are having a hard time'. Studio 62 (September 1914): 302. See also: 'The studio-painter is feeling the pinch. The war...has cut off his income. Patrons, he tells us, are scarce nowadays; strict war economy forbids picture buying'. Colour (December 1915): 173.
77 The first statement is from Benson to László (20 October 1914), (DLA 053-0122); the second and third are respectively from Winfield Sifton and Beryl Stanhope. Quoted in Bailey 2004: 56. Two further cancellations were made by the Earl of Shaftesbury, and the Countess of Kerry.
78 See Arnold 1981: 422.
precipitously that writing in December 1916 Frank Rutter knew many ‘more than one painter well-known as an exhibitor in London and Paris who has not sold a single picture in the twelvemonth’.79

All artists were forced to reduce their prices to secure even the possibility of commissions or sales. It was reported that many distinguished portraitists had been left with no choice but to slash their July 1914 rates by up to 75 per cent as early as August 1914.80 The more modestly priced works of exhibitors depreciated to a similar degree. Statistics show that at the Royal Watercolour Society’s exhibitions the average picture that fetched £40 in 1914 was worth just £16 a year later.81 The organisation began to broker reduced deals between buyers and painters. Ernest Waterlow (1850-1919) - who resigned his presidency of the society in 1914 - was obliged to accept just £39 for one of his watercolours: ‘He desires me to say’, the society’s secretary informed its buyer, ‘that his price for a drawing of this size in normal times is never less than sixty guineas’.82 Sometimes the demands were just too aggressive: in November 1916 Charles Sims refused one purchaser’s offer of £40 for a picture priced at £50 because ‘in view of the present conditions’, that price had already come down from £100.83

Most artists, however, found it difficult to refuse any offers, and their generosity exacerbated their already grave financial woes. War discourses had left many with the desire to prove that they were ‘a no less patriotic asset to the nation than the members of any other profession’, and they thus gave widely and indulgently to charity sales.84 Noble as this was, it certainly did nothing to alleviate their difficulties. A critic in the Sunday Times wrote that:

79 Sunday Times (31 December 1916): 5.
80 Salis 1916b: 45. De László, as shall be seen in Chapter 6, was forced to reduce his honoraria dramatically – in some cases to just 50 guineas – to not appear to be profiteering. Ambroise Vollard recalled that depreciation was even more severe in France. Portraits by the famous Léon Bonnat that reached 30,000F before the war ‘sold with difficulty at 600’ during the conflict. Vollard 1978: 289.
82 ‘RWS to Anon’ (19 April 1916), Secretary’s Letters (RWS L7).
83 ‘RWS to Anon’ (1 November 1916), Ibid.
84 ‘Annual General Meeting’ (5 May 1916), Minute Book, Annual General Meetings, Balance Sheets & Council Reports 1911-20 (LMA/4054/A/01/003). At the first charity sale (for the Prince of Wales’s National Relief Fund in 1914), twenty-six Royal Academicians; eight Scottish Academicians; fifty-six members of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers; forty-six Royal Society of British Artists; forty-five members of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters; sixty-four from the two main watercolour societies; and thirteen from the International Society and New English Art Club donated 414 pictures. Studio 63 (November 1914): 296.
No professions have suffered so acutely from the present state of affairs as those connected with the arts, and yet from none seemingly is more expected. We do not hear of auctioneers, bankers, merchants, and manufacturers giving free, gratis, and for nothing their professional time and labour for various charities... Actors, artists, musicians, and the like are continually being asked to do this, and unfaillingly respond in every appeal. I can only repeat that it is extraordinarily generous, for the artist realises - if the public does not - that each picture sold for the benefit of a charity means a picture the less sold for the benefit of an artist... If everybody is receiving a quid pro quo, then the artists may fairly complain that they are being exploited and not only for the benefit of charities.85

When the depreciation and often disappearance of revenue from the sale of artworks was combined with rising costs incurred in their production (plus across-the-board increases in the cost of living) all but the most fortunate artists were driven to the brink of ruin. By November 1915 one draughtsman was even in prison for not paying his council rates.86 Elsewhere, Mark Gertler described his position as ‘really terrible’ (‘I haven’t a penny to my own and no prospects of earning any’);87 his teacher from the Slade, Henry Tonks (1862-1937) was anticipating ‘starvation’;88 Jacob Epstein doubted he would even ‘pull through the summer’ of 1914;89 Augustus John was on the verge of bankruptcy,90 while of the Vorticists Fredrick Etchells (1886-1973) was ‘destitute’, Wyndham Lewis debt-ridden, and William Roberts (1895-1980) found money ‘conspicuous by its absence’.91 Such financial crises were not, as we have seen, restricted to modernists: in fact a cartoon by Bert Thomas [figure 12] joked that avant-garde artists were more immune to the financial dislocation than their commercial counterparts because they had ‘never sold anything’ even before the war.

Many artists were left with no choice but to appeal for benevolence. Some, like Isaac Rosenberg, pleaded with their benefactors. In a letter to his occasional patron Eddie Marsh (1872-1953), Rosenberg wrote:

I’m very sorry to disturb you at such a time with pictures. But when one’s only choice is between horrible things you choose the least horrible. First I think of enlisting... then of manual labour - anything - but it seems I’m not fit for

85 Sunday Times (31 January 1915): 4. One critic similarly wrote that ‘artists and art dealers are among the greatest sufferers from the war, and that they have a right to claim the support of the well-to-do public on their own account’. Connoisseur 41 (January 1915): 54.
87 Gertler to Brett (autumn 1914), in Woodeson 1972: 149-50.
88 Quoted in Hone 1939: 111.
89 Epstein to Quinn (19 August 1914), in Rose 2002: 92.
90 John to Quinn (10 October 1914), in Reid 1968: 205.
91 Pound to Quinn (18 April 1915), in Materer 1991: 26; Pound to Quinn (17 December 1915), in Reid 1968: 204; Roberts 1974: 1.
anything. Then I took these things to you. You would forgive me if you knew how wretched I was... Thank you for your cheque, it will do for paints.92

The less well connected used more public forums, like newspapers’ letter pages:

Before three months of the war had passed all my work was stopped or put off until "after the war" on the plea of "no luxuries until after the war had ended." Will, therefore, some of those who can afford it consider commissioning work now – a picture or a stained-glass window? I should be glad to show the work in my studio to any patron applying through The Times.83

Artists also applied to the various benevolent institutions that existed or had been formed to help them.94 Calls on the funds of the AGBI were ‘very largely increased’ following the outbreak of war: in 1913 just 137 applicants had been awarded a total of £4041; two years later the number had nearly trebled to 337 with the institution distributing almost £10,000. 95 Yet with donors increasingly parsimonious the AGBI found it increasingly difficult to meet the need, and it introduced certain qualitative criteria to filter the applications. Artists’ submissions were ranked from one down to five, and then allocated assistance based on their rating. The evaluations were evidently not aesthetically generous: David Bomberg’s near abstract submissions were categorised as ‘inadmissable specimens’ and he was refused aid.96

Artists were among the more regular applicants to larger charities like the Professional Classes War Relief Council (PCAC).97 Although the art department kept no records until October 1915, more than five hundred artists and craftsmen applied in the war’s first year. By the end of 1915 they represented 8.8 per cent of the thousands of wartime claimants – second only behind musicians at 9 per cent.98 The PCAC initially strove to help artists remain in their profession. Its general committee provided loans, grants and education and rental subsidies, while its art committee

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94 For more on these organisations, see Sanderson 1916, and Darwin 1917.
95 ‘Council Meeting’ (9 November 1914), Minute Book 1907-1916, (AGBI): 374-5. Henry Tonks wrote in September 1914 that ‘already people are making application to the Artists’ Benevolent Society’. Tonks to MacColl (19 September 1914), in Hone 1939: 111. For the applicant numbers, see Year’s Art (1916): 384. To accommodate such demand, sacrifices had to be made: the AGBI’s 1915 Annual Dinner was to go ahead ‘without champagne, cigars and all other luxuries’. ‘Council Meeting’ (24 November 1915), Minute Book 1907-1916 (AGBI): n.p.
96 ‘Council Meeting’ (7 October 1914), Ibid: 290.
97 The organisation became the Professional Classes Aid Council after the war. Because all records pertaining to its predecessor are at the PCAC, it will hereafter be referred to as this to avoid confusion.
organised exhibitions that offered artists opportunities to sell their works without the burden of fees. Some benefited considerably from the PCAC’s initiatives. Its first annual report recounted the case of one fortunate applicant:

An artist had £400 worth of commissions in hand at the outbreak of War; all with the exception of one for £50 were cancelled. Two boys were at school, aged 14 and 15½, and would have had to be withdrawn. The reduced fees at which the headmaster consented to keep the boys were paid by the Council. Hospitality and home education was found for the youngest girl, and the artist himself introduced to some potential collectors. The Artists’ General Benevolent Fund [is also] making a grant for pressing financial needs.99

However while the PCAC could assist artists with their expenses, it found it difficult to increase their income, and the same absence of buyers that undermined other exhibitions caused its shows to result in a total of just five hundred sales and sixty commissions: ‘Not sufficient’, it confessed, ‘to meet the problem of distress among artists’.100 In July 1915 exhibitions were abandoned and a permanent art department was established to connect artists to ‘the public who have commissions to give in art work which they are willing should be carried out by those in difficulties owing to the war’. It was only marginally more successful than its predecessor, resulting in £800 of sales by end of 1916.101

The PCAC’s other tactic to keep artists involved in artistic forms of labour was a community service scheme. A number of mural projects were undertaken by applicants, including one in the Central Hall of Devons Road School in Bow, London, to help children ‘realise more vividly the conditions of life in the various parts of the Empire’; and another in an elementary school in Harrow Road (comprising of two 26-foot long panels and six single figure panels), which, entitled The Arts of War, depicted the range of labour that went into the war effort.102 The committee also offered employment to four artists in designing and making banners, stage curtains, decorative panels and friezes for YMCA huts in France.103 For some this work was invaluable. One wrote:

102 ‘Arts in War Time’, Annual Report 1916 (1917), (PCAC): 9-10; ‘Arts in War Time’, Annual Report 1917 (1918), (PCAC): 5. These projects were completed with the support of the Education Committee of the London County Council.
103 Ibid.
Please send me some work soon... I don't want to be always worrying you but things are so difficult and I do try hard to have the grit to keep on... One thing I know I feel that all your kindness and help to me will not be in vain as I mean to accomplish something. With many, many thanks for past kindness.¹⁰⁴

It was nevertheless becoming clear that changes in the labour market meant that the most financially sensible and ethically acceptable strategy was to encourage artists to leave their professions altogether until the war had ended.¹⁰⁵ In 1915 the PCAC declared that: ‘Every individual in the community must place his services at the disposal of the country... No work outside the range which is definitely set by these conditions [military service, administrative war work and production] is permissible in the existing crisis’. Many artists were subsequently encouraged to enlist with the armed forces, volunteer for other forms of national service, work in munitions factories or at the very least take up subsidised employment in community-focused work.¹⁰⁶

IV: War Work

At the clamour of the bugle in that fateful August of 1914, the artists of London were among the first to answer the dread call. The sculptor flung aside his chisel, the painter his brush, the writer the pen, the musician his instrument, the actor the buskin. They held out their empty hands for rifles and flocked to learn the soldier’s trade which hitherto they had almost despised.¹⁰⁷

Artists’ experiences of conflict have overwhelmingly been articulated through an evocative narrative of heroic if naïve enlistment followed far too frequently by premature and pointless death. The fates of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915), Gerard Chowne (1875-1917), Henri Doucet (1883-1915), Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918) and Henry Samuel Teed (1883-1916) – just some of the British-based artists killed in action – are thus representative of a much broader ‘lost generation’ myth.¹⁰⁸ A particularly moving such instance is contained in a letter from a young student of the

¹⁰⁴ ‘Extracts from Letters: selected from those received from day and day and showing the scope of the work’, Ibid: 9.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid: 7-8. Almost 90 per cent of applicants for subsidised employment were engaged in clerical work (at the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Eugenics Education Society, the Archbishop’s Library at Lambeth and the Lincoln Record Society); the remainder did visiting work for the Soldiers and Sailors’ Families Association.
¹⁰⁷ Potton 1920: 1.
¹⁰⁸ For the ‘lost generation’ myth, see Wohl 1979. On a European scale, the artists Umberto Boccioni, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Antonia Sant’Elia and Franz Marc were killed, and others, like Filippo Marinetti, Luigi Russolo and Georges Braque, were seriously injured.
Royal Academy schools called Charles Gordon Paramore. As he enlisted in September 1914 he wrote: ‘So it’s all off with the old life... I am looking forward to the great time when this damned war will be over. I think people will be far happier and contented than ever they were before’. It is moving because Paramore died exactly a year later, the very first officer killed at the Battle of Loos.109

Evocative as such accounts may be, they are nonetheless empirically problematic because there is not enough evidence to establish how many artists actually joined the forces and how many subsequently died.110 That which exists does not necessarily support the dominant view that a whole population of artists promptly ‘laid aside the brush... to wield the sword’.111 Although, for instance, the 14,000-strong Artists’ Rifles regiment is assumed to have been dominated by patriotic painters and sculptors from the start, evidence suggests that they were actually ‘conspicuous by their absence’, and when Adrian Hill (1895-1977) enlisted in November 1914 he was apparently the first professional artist to join.112 The rolls of honour compiled by the art world are more helpful: the Studio recorded over five hundred, and the Imperial Arts League over six hundred artists serving with the forces by the end of 1915.113 They are not of course comprehensive, but neither are they particularly large considering that the 1911 Census counted almost 17,000 artists operating in the country.114

Even if a quantitative approach to the issue remains unsatisfactory, for the artists who enlisted the conflict was if not permanently destructive at least extremely disruptive; precipitating if not physical death then very often its professional equivalent.115 Many, for instance, were wounded: ‘Few realise’, wrote one critic, ‘that the slightest touch of his right arm or hand and his livelihood may be gone forever,'

109 ‘Paramore to RA’ (20 September 1914), Correspondence from members’ files 1867-1986 (RAA/SEC/10/74/1). Rudyard Kipling’s son John was killed at the same battle.
110 Just over 5½ million men (a third of the pre-war male labour force) enlisted. Artists are not included in the statistics, although two similar occupations - ‘Professions’ and ‘Entertainment’ - reveal above average enlistment rates (calculated as a July 1918 percentage of a pre-war male labour force) of 63 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. Dewey 1984: 201-6.
111 Frayling 1987: 86.
114 Census (1911) 10. ‘Occupations of persons, males and females, aged 10 years and upwards, distinguishing for females the unmarried, married, and widowed, 1911: Painters, Sculptors, Artists’: 2.
115 Jacob Epstein in 1917 described enlistment as his ‘decease as an active artist’. Quoted in Silber 1986: 36.
and not only his livelihood, but all chances of ever expressing those dreams and visions'.\footnote{116}{\em New Witness} (11 May 1916): 45. The painter and illustrator Harold Cecil Earnshaw (1886-1937) had his painting arm amputated in 1916 after an injury sustained at the Somme. He admirably trained himself to paint with his left hand but his career struggled and he died, aged fifty-one, from complications associated with his wounds.\footnote{117} Likewise, in 1914 James Bateman (1893-1959) was a highly promising young sculptor, having that year won a prestigious scholarship to the Royal College of Art. He sustained serious injuries while serving and on his return was consequently forced to give up sculpture in favour of the less physically demanding act of painting.\footnote{118}

Artists did not have to serve on the front line to find the war years professionally disruptive. Many - including Percy Bradshaw (1877-1965), James Pryde (1866-1941) and John Hassall (1868-1948) - became special constables and were left with little time for art;\footnote{119} conscientious objectors like Harold Knight (1874-1961) and Duncan Grant (1885-1978) reluctantly devoted themselves to agricultural labour; some like William Roberts undertook time-consuming munitions work; and well over a thousand artists - a veritable 'Roll of Fame of English Art' - joined the domestic volunteer corps the United Arts Rifles and subsequently found their days dominated by drills, exercise regimes and community work.\footnote{120} In all these cases, war may have not been traumatic or dangerous but it was (to quote Wyndham Lewis) a 'sheer loss of time'; an irritating disruption to a precarious career that required both technical and social persistence:

The War robbed me of four years, at the moment when, almost overnight, I had achieved the necessary notoriety to establish myself in London as a painter. It also caught me before I was quite through with my training. And although in the 'post-war' I was not starting from nothing, I had to some extent to begin all over again.\footnote{121}

Wyndham Lewis was able to 'begin all over again' but, as Reginald Grundy (1870-1944) of the \em Connoisseur\ predicted in 1915, 'most of those who are thus lost to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[116] \em New Witness\ (11 May 1916): 45.
\item[117] Cuppleditch 1994: 91; Gosling 2008: 146.
\item[118] Chamot, Farr \& Butlin 1964 I: 25.
\item[120] John Lavery, George Frampton, Solomon Solomon, Charles Shannon and Derwent Wood were members. Potton 1920: 3. See also \em New York Times\ (1 November 1914): 6.
\item[121] Wyndham Lewis to Quinn (14 June 1920), in Rose 1963: 120; Wyndham Lewis 1937: 213. The sentiment was shared by many artists: Stanley Spencer wrote that his work was developing 'in fine order when along comes the war and smashes everything'. Quoted in Rothenstein 1956: 164-5. Mark Gertler concurred, writing at the news of his conscription in 1918: 'You can't imagine what important discoveries I have been making for myself lately, and now I have to leave it all in the middle and go and do God knows what!'. Woodeson 1972: 253.
\end{footnotes}
art will not return, as an interruption of this kind in an art career generally implies its termination.\textsuperscript{122} It was generally not easy to return to peacetime professions, and there were many instances of artists struggling to readjust to post-war conditions.\textsuperscript{125} Philip Boydell had just commenced a studentship at the Manchester School of Art in 1914 when war broke out. In his unpublished 1977 memoir he called the conflict ‘a damned nuisance as getting in the way of my following a course I cared very much about’. He was abroad for almost five years, recommencing his studies – at the Royal College of Art – in 1919. However he and the other ex-servicemen present (all at least four years older than the other students) found it difficult to reintegrate. Boydell ultimately abandoned the programme and changed career altogether.\textsuperscript{124}

Boydell’s case, like Paramore’s, suggests that the war was perhaps more destructive to aspiring rather than practising artists. It annihilated the nation’s art student population. Halfway through the war the Royal Academy noted that 146 of its students – ‘very nearly all’ of them – had enlisted;\textsuperscript{125} the Edinburgh College of Art reported that ‘almost every student of military age’ was fighting;\textsuperscript{126} the Royal College of Art’s male students had dropped from 162 in 1914 to just twenty-three;\textsuperscript{127} and the Central School reported a ‘considerable shrinkage’ of its usual 2000 students.\textsuperscript{128} The war also brought the Slade School’s legendary golden era to an abrupt end: by 1919 it had just sixteen male students (135 were serving) as opposed to over two hundred in 1914.\textsuperscript{129} In light of these statistics the cartoon [figure 13] showing artists streaming out

\textsuperscript{122} Grundy 1915c: 130.
\textsuperscript{123} The sporting artist Lionel Edwards, who had spent much of the war with the Army Remount Service, recalled that ‘the end of the war presented a new problem to me, as it did to most others. Four years without practising one’s trade put one at a disadvantage’. Edwards 1947: 36. The exhibiting register of the Royal Society of British Artists reveals a similar story; of the many painters who ceased to exhibit during the war, many took more than a decade to submit new post-war works. Bradshaw 1975: 19, 57, 70.
\textsuperscript{124} Boydell, P (1977). ‘We Spend our Years as a Tale that is Told’ (TS memoir), in Private Papers of P Boydell (IWM 3642 85/28/1) I: 51, 109.
\textsuperscript{125} ‘Council Meeting’ (8 February 1916), Council Minutes 23, 1913 - 1918 (RAA/PC/1/23)
\textsuperscript{126} Scotsman (25 November 1916): 6.
\textsuperscript{127} Frayling 1987: 86. There were now fourteen fee-paying students instead of thirty-five, fifteen free studentships instead of fifty, and forty-three scholarships awarded as opposed to 135 in 1914. Furthermore, examination of the demographics of the students reveals that the male-female ratio had toppled massively in favour of women between 1914 and 1917: before the war, 162 men and fifty-eight women made up the numbers; after it, merely twenty-three men and forty-nine women. Year’s Art (1919): 48-9, and Year’s Art (1915): 75-6.
\textsuperscript{128} Studio 64 (April 1915): 222-3.
of art schools and into machine-gun barrels is particularly apt. Many of them never returned. By only November 1916 the Edinburgh College of Art announced that thirty-four of its students had died, thirty-four had been wounded, three were missing and three were prisoners of war;130 fifteen of the Slade’s students had been killed during the war; 131 and the Royal Academy schools’ register was littered with the scribbled words ‘Killed in Action’; ‘Killed in Great War’; and just ‘Dead’ next to its students’ names.132

It seemed that those commentators who in 1914 predicted that the war would offer a cleansing purge of an overpopulated profession had to some extent been unhappily vindicated, and the 1921 census revealed four-and-a-half thousand fewer artists in the country – 26 per cent less - than in 1911.133 This diminution had in part been caused by the enlistment, injury and death of many practising and prospective artists; but it had also been caused by the exigencies of the home front: there, artistic professions became subject to profound public hostility; to a coalition of debilitating practical obstacles; and to a deeply unfavourable – and at times insurmountable - financial climate. Although art colleges plastered publications with advertisements claiming that the war would provide ‘golden opportunities’ and ‘small fortunes’ for ‘capable and energetic artists’, the truth was that most artists had little choice but to put their peacetime careers on hold and take up new forms of work that were more remunerative, more productive and more politically acceptable.134

131 Year’s Art (1918): 142.
132 ‘Various Entries’, Register of admission of students 1890-1922 (RAA/KEE/1/1/4).
133 The number dipped from 16,729 to 12,318. Census (1911) 10, ‘Occupations of persons, males and females, aged 10 years and upwards, distinguishing for females the unmarried, married, and widowed, 1911: Painters, Sculptors, Artists’; 2; Census (1921) 10, ‘Occupations, by sex, of persons aged 12 years and over, distinguishing, for males in England & Wales, marital condition, industrial status and, certain occupations, those working at home, 1921: Painters, Sculptors, Engravers (Artists): 18.
134 ‘The Practical Correspondence College’, Colour (October and November 1914): n.p. The wartime collapse in artists’ esteem (compared with the improved status of women in the same period) is neatly expressed in a 1917 Punch cartoon [Figure 11]. On the left, the artist of the ‘past’ is a broad, masculine womaniser, well-dressed, wealthy and socially confident; on the right, the artist of the ‘present’ is a miniature effeminate wimp, cowering in fear from the haughty village maid above him, and labouring over a canvas so small it is virtually invisible.
SECTION II: INSTITUTIONS
CHAPTER THREE: EXHIBITING SOCIETIES

A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC of pre-war British art was its proliferation of exhibiting organisations. From the establishment of the Royal Academy in 1768 to the inception of Vorticism in 1914 artists’ groups associated with every form, medium, style, genre, gender and geographical origin of artistic output had been crucial to the professionalisation of the discipline and at the outbreak of war still very much dictated the practices and products of British art. Their exhibitions regulated the production, display and consumption of a vast quantity of the nation’s artistic output, and their marshalling of artists, collectors, dealers, publishers and critics was instrumental in generating a metropolitan art world and shaping both artists’ styles and public taste. These many functions therefore make them decisive constituents of any serious account of the war’s artistic consequences. Drawing on hitherto unstudied archival sources, this chapter investigates the principal challenges that war presented to these groups, and how they set about meeting them.

I. MEMBERSHIP

All art societies were driven by the desire to ‘bring together’ artists, and they provided a range of facilities (libraries, function rooms and studios) and events (lectures, dinners and balls) to expedite that goal. Indeed, they depended on a sizeable and active membership – and the income that derived from it - for their very existence. However, the war, as Chapter 2 showed, drew artists away from the art world and away from each other. Some cultural consequences of this process are deeply familiar: art historians have, for instance, repeatedly described how the Vorticist faction disintegrated under the centrifugal effects of war, leaving Ezra Pound to memorably describe himself as ‘the only person of interest left in the art world, London’. The London art world, however, was not solely modernist, and

1 Walter Crane described the pre-war period as ‘the age of societies’. Cited in Codell 1995:169.
2 Lists and brief descriptions of the major art societies, and many of the minor ones, were published annually in the Year’s Art. For more on art societies in the Victorian era, see Allen 1995; Gillett 1990; Fyfe 1986; Gilmore Holt 1982; Codell 1995, and Meacock 2006. There have been few if any studies of such institutions in the early twentieth century – a consequence of scholarly preoccupations with modernist trajectories.
3 Year’s Art (1883): 162.
the many art societies that coexisted with the avant-gardes experienced comparable crises of membership.

Organisations dominated by the young were most severely affected. Before the war the Allied Artists’ Association’s (AAA) democratic, jury-free composition was arguably alone in offering genuine exhibiting opportunities to unproven or otherwise unaffiliated artists, but it was for this very reason that it suffered from the war ‘more than any other society’. By 1918 two hundred of its members were serving or had been killed – a number that included its artists’ committee chairman (Henri Gaudier-Brzeska), its secretary, two members of its management committee, and ultimately its talismanic president, Frank Rutter. The Junior Art-Workers’ Guild represented even younger individuals than the AAA, and a year into the war it reported that it had lost so many members to the armed forces that it even anticipated ‘difficulty holding successful meetings’ in the forthcoming months.

It was not just the more youthful societies that felt the effects of war work. The Royal Society for Painters in Water-Colour (RWS), whose average member was aged 58.8, also received letters from associates resigning due to national obligations. Just weeks into the war the RWS had lost its housekeeper, who was serving with the Fleet, and its secretary Reginald Hunt, who was employed as an interpreter for the British Expeditionary Force. The Royal Society of Painter-Etchers & Engravers (RE) also lost its secretary when he was commissioned by the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He was one of seventeen of the group’s members engaged on military service, with many others involved in other war work. The pattern was replicated in virtually every

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5 *Sunday Times* (21 June 1917): 6. The Allied Artists’ Association was established in 1908 along the lines of the French Salon des Indépendants. Its first exhibition, at the Royal Albert Hall, exhibited 3,000 items (including work by Kandinsky, Brancusi and Wyndham Lewis).

6 *Year’s Art* (1919): 75-6.

7 ‘Committee Meeting’ (2 October 1915), *Junior Art-Workers’ Guild Council Meetings Minute Book 1914-1918* (AWG).

8 *Average Age of Members 1806-1986* (RWS). Herbert Alexander explained that ‘military duties’ kept him from taking part in the RWS’s upcoming exhibitions; D.Y. Cameron asked to be relieved of office ‘on account of the difficulties of travelling and of his various war duties’. ‘Council Meetings’ (17 October 1914 and 3 January 1917), *Minutes of Council Meetings 1905-1920* (RWS/A26).

9 For the loss of its secretary, see ‘Council Meeting’ (15 November 1917), *Council Meetings Minute Book* (RWS/RE 3). For the full list of serving members, see ‘Annual General Meeting Report’ (27 March 1917), *Annual General Meeting Reports* (RWS/RE 198). Sculptors were particularly liable for munitions work. Mr Pibworth informed the RBS that ‘owing to his being engaged in munition work he had temporarily ceased to practice as a sculptor and was not in a position to subscribe’ ‘Council Meeting’ (27 March 1917), *Minutes of Council Meetings 2* (RBS).
group: the Royal Institute of Oil-Painters (RIOP) lost fourteen of its small number; the Chelsea Arts Club saw 23 per cent of its members join the colours; the International Society lost almost 15 per cent of its membership, and the Art-Workers’ Guild (AWG) counted sixteen members serving abroad, fifteen undertaking munitions works, and four, including Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), serving with the Red Cross.

Disappearances were not solely due to war work. With a general dislocation of business reducing or even obliterating artists’ incomes, the prospect of annual subscription payments to societies for what were at best loss-making and at worst non-existent exhibitions seemed an unnecessary and unaffordable expense, and many artists tendered their resignations even if they were not abandoning their careers. The Royal Society of British Artists (RBA) and Royal Society of British Sculptors (RBS) were particularly depopulated by such decisions. Beginning in September 1914 the RBA received a steady stream of resignations, and processed approximately two at every meeting it held in the conflict’s first year. The majority of authors explained that their decisions were, as G.E. Collings confessed, ‘owing to the financial difficulties caused by the war’, or as Mervyn Lawrence wrote when resigning from the RBS, ‘owing to other calls upon his resources’.

The effect on these societies was not merely that the vital income derived from subscriptions was diminished but also that there were simply not enough associates to transact business. Many trustees did not wish to waste their time in meetings, and for those based outside London the restrictions on train travel (and increasingly the fears of zeppelin raids) were disincentive enough to avoid making the journeys to attend them. This no doubt affected the RBA: before the war its general meetings were attended by an average of sixty members; in 1915 that number had plummeted to fifteen, and at times they were cancelled because no more than three members

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11 ‘General Meeting’ (15 June 1917), General Meetings Minute Book 2 (AAD/2000/5/2).
13 Year’s Art (1918): 99.
14 ‘32nd Annual Report’ (1915), Annual Reports 3 1913-1933 (AWG): 15-16. In early 1916 the retiring master, R.H. Hope-Pinker, addressed the subject: ‘We have lost five Brethren in this unparalleled War... We have many away in consequence of the War, either in making ammunition or helping in other ways, and we bear ourselves with such calmness as we can, looking forward to the time when we shall welcome those who are left to return to us again.’ ‘Address’ (14 January 1916), Ibid: 6.
15 Read at ‘Council Meeting’ (7 September 1914), Council Minute Book 1910-1916 (AAD/1997/8/13); Read at ‘Council Meeting’ (18 January 1915), Minutes of Council Meetings 2 (RBS).
appeared. At one meeting the absentees included the president, the vice-president and even the secretary. This prompted some to complain:

On at least one occasion Mr Parsons had come all the way from Worcestershire to attend a Council Meeting, to find that there was not a quorum of members to meet him to transact the business of the Society. A society like this did not run itself by any means, and its success had been not a little due to the energy and sense of duty placed ungrudgingly at the Society’s service by their present and former Presidents... It was surely incumbent upon the Members to see to it they were equally prepared to do their duty in supporting him.16

General and council membership rosters were now so bare that some societies were even willing to invite artists who were previously personae non gratae to their lists. In a letter to William Strang (1859-1921) and David Cameron (1865-1945), the RE wrote:

In the circumstances now prevailing - when the need is greater than ever for men of all professions to sow an unbroken front - an earnest and brotherly effort should be made to heal old differences and that you be invited to resume your most valued and helpful association with the Society... It cannot be denied that the absence from its Council of such distinguished etchers as... yourself is a serious hindrance to any action that may be needed from time to time in the fulfilment of the Society’s purposes and in the true interests of our Art.17

Both artists declined.18 With money scarce, travel difficult, little prospect of financial remuneration from group exhibitions and the expectation that some form of war service could soon be demanded of them, it is not surprising that artists chose to put themselves before their societies.19 The RE may have expressed the paramount need for an ‘unbroken front’, but ironically other fronts - both domestic and abroad - had served to shatter the artists’ front to which it referred.20

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16 ‘Parsons to RWS’ (30 November 1918), in General Meetings Minutes 1904-1942 (RWS/A10).  
17 ‘RE to Strang’ (11 February 1915), reproduced in Council Minute Book (RWS-RE 3): 650. It is not known why Strang and Cameron were previously unwelcome, but the society’s council minutes reveal that their invitation was controversial.  
18 ‘Strang to RWS’ (15 February 1915), and ‘Cameron to RWS’ (20 February 1915), Ibid.  
19 It was a symptom expressed by Wyndham Lewis’s volte-face from the dogma of Vorticism in 1914 to the announcement with the formation of Group X in 1920 that ‘each member sells his own boat’. Wyndham Lewis 1920: 3. He later wrote: ‘I had tried the group game, in the art-racket: I had found it more trouble than it was worth’. Cited in Harrison 1981: 160.  
20 This was just one artistic consequence of a war whose key ability was, as Roger Fry put it, to ‘separate and destroy’. Fry to Berenson (21 April 1916), in Fry 1972: 396. The disappearance of what Richard Aldington called ‘the old camaraderie’ (1968: 150-1) was perhaps most apparent in artists’ meeting spaces. The Café Royal in London had been instrumental in fostering collaborative creative activity before the war, but enlistment, price-rises and early closing legislation had both emptied and changed it. See Deghy & Waterhouse 1935, Pigache 1934, and Frewin 1965.
II. ALIENS

The RE’s endeavour to ‘heal old differences’ is particularly ironic considering the treatment of enemy aliens by art societies - a factor that further undermined the collaborative spirit of already depopulated groups. The irony is most trenchant in the case of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, which had been formed in 1897 on the basis of one conviction: the ‘non-recognition of nationality in Art’. Presided over by figures such as James McNeill Whistler and Auguste Rodin and boasting an honorary membership that included Puvis de Chavannes, Emile Bernard, Edgar Degas, Arnold Böcklin, Gustav Klimt and Adolph Menzel, it aimed to create and nourish bonds between European, British and American artists. However, the war’s ossification of previously fluid national borders and its inflammation of patriotic sentiment immediately transformed its internationalist agenda into a chimera of the pre-war past.

The trend was most apparent in its exhibitions: its autumn show of 1915 was condemned by the Studio for having ‘very little of an international character’; and the following year, having seen ‘hardly a foreign work in the exhibition’, a critic in the Burlington Magazine even questioned the society’s right ‘to retain any longer the word international in its title’: it should, he argued, ‘at least modify its title while European conditions prevent its shows having an international identity’. Realising that its aims were in vain, the International Society in May 1917 ‘agreed to make abatements of all overseas subscriptions’. It was a reluctant decision, but it was only part of the story: back in September 1914, the Irish painter William Orpen had raised the delicate issue of the ‘status of German members’, and soon afterwards the council unanimously voted to expel all enemy aliens from its register. The ‘non-recognition of nationality’ credo had evidently failed to survive the early months of war.

Even a nominally national society like the RBA stumbled through the war amid a storm of inflammatory and potentially destructive debate concerning its ‘foreign’ members. The controversy was ignited when the sculptor George Frampton (1860-1928) requested that his name be withdrawn from its list of honorary members ‘on

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21 Dundee Advertiser (11 February 1898): 3.
22 Studio 66 (December 1915): 204.
23 Martin Wood 1916: 343.
24 ‘Council Meeting’ (30 May 1917), Minute Book of Council Meetings (TGA: 738.3.156).
25 ‘Council Meeting’ (24 September 1914), Ibid.
grounds of the continued presence in the Society of several natives of enemy
countries'. When the society replied that the foreigners he opposed were actually
naturalised British subjects, he wrote:

Your answer to my first letter has certainly given me a great shock, coming as it
does from a Royal Society composed of British Artists (?). Your attitude, to my
mind, suggests great weakness and a lamentable want of patriotism, and it is
quite impossible for me, as a patriotic Englishman, to be associated with a Society
that places its interests before the honour and safety of its Country.

The council was thrown into disarray by the belligerent remarks of such a respected
figure and Frank Brangwyn's (1867-1956) abrupt resignation of his post as president
was doubtless connected to 'the unrest in the Society' that Frampton had caused. A
general meeting was called, and the RBA was ultimately compelled to write letters
that would be amusing were they not so alarming to all of its 'foreign-sounding'
members: 'Your name unfortunately suggests foreign origin', the letters read, 'and we
should be so glad to have proof that you are quite English, so that we may be able to
support your position'. Those who could not prove their Englishness were then
asked to voluntarily retire until the war was passed, to defer from using any of the
privileges attendant with their membership, and to grant permission to have their
names deleted from its exhibition catalogues. How these artists responded to such
requests is open to speculation, but all those with 'foreign-sounding names' had
disappeared from the RBA's membership list before the spring of 1915.

George Frampton launched a similar offensive against the Art-Workers' Guild (of
which he was also an honorary member and a past master). This time his opprobrium
was focused on an individual - Karl Krall, a German-born member who had been a
naturalised English subject for over a decade. Brandishing police papers, Frampton
exclaimed that 'Krall being of enemy alien birth be asked to resign'. When the Guild
defeated his proposal by a vote (seventeen to ten) Frampton himself resigned, and
asked for his portrait to be removed from the hall and his name erased from all
printed matter so that:

26 'Frampton to RBA' (9 January 1915), read at 'Council Meeting' (11 January 1915), Council
27 'Frampton to RBA' (6 February 1915), read at 'Council Meeting' (8 February 1915), Ibid.
28 'Council Meeting' (8 February 1915), Ibid.
29 Read at 'Council Meeting' (5 February 1916), Ibid. The Royal Academy sent out similar
letters to twenty-five of its members holding suspiciously Continental names. See Secretary's
30 'Council Meeting' (2 August 1916), Council Meetings Minute Book 1914-1918 (AWG).
Future members shall never know that I belonged to a society in which, even during war... placed the interests of a member of enemy alien birth before those of our own countrymen, and more especially those brave and noble souls who are sacrificing their lives and everything for Right, King & Country.  

Krall was so unsettled by the debates that he also voluntarily resigned, and asked never to be contacted by the Guild again. A tone of quiet desperation pervades the group’s minute books in the period; a symptom of the ‘considerable anxiety to all concerned in the management and in the welfare’ of the institution, and clear evidence that the ‘alien question’ was not only injurious to aliens but to the organisations that supposedly harboured them. All of these societies, and guilds in particular, were founded on mutual support and unity of purpose; war was replacing that with mutual suspicion and internecine strife.

Outside suspicions also contributed to exhibiting bodies’ difficulties - particularly, it seems, from proprietors of exhibiting spaces. The most infamous example was William Marchant’s ultimatum to the London Group, which insisted that ‘no enemy aliens, conscientious objectors or sympathisers with the enemy were permitted to exhibit in his Galleries... Should the Group contain any of these’, Marchant wrote, ‘his walls would be closed to them’. The London Group ‘unanimously agreed that politics should be kept out of the domain of Art’ and rejected Marchant’s demands, but it was left without a venue until Ambrose Heal offered his new Mansard Gallery. The London Salon of Photography was issued a similar reprimand by Reginald Hunt, secretary to the RWS (whose Pall Mall premises were being rented by the Salon):

Am much astonished to see that the London Salon of Photography comprises among its exhibits a number of photographs by German and Austrian subjects. Will you allow me to express the opinion that in view of the existing state of affairs, which does not even yet seem to be fully realised in this country, the inclusion of German and Austrian works held in the Galleries of this Society is wholly undesirable.

Hunt then insisted that the committee ‘remove all Exhibits by German and Austrian subjects from [the] Exhibition at the earliest possible moment’. It is not known if the
salon acquiesced, and perhaps it does not matter. What matters is that the war's inflammation of national identity had direct and material effects on artists' societies, generating a destructive mixture of internal animosities and external pressures that severely challenged the unity of purpose on which they had been founded.

III. EXHIBITIONS

The impact of these membership crises most gravely affected what societies were designed to deliver: exhibitions - of regularity, quantity and quality; all directed at the goal of maximum profit. The result, after 1914, was the opposite: the war led to fewer, smaller, weaker, and less lucrative shows. The first issue was whether exhibitions could or should be held at all: "'To be or not to be,'" wrote the Western Press in 1914, "is the question which those responsible for organising art exhibitions are asking themselves". Many organisations cancelled their autumn and winter 1914 exhibitions out of respect for the political situation, but the motives were essentially financial. In August 1914 RIOP sent a circular-poll to its members on the matter. It read: 'Under the distressing circumstances at present existing, if we open to the public we shall inevitably have to meet a very heavy loss... If we close the Galleries, we shall save a considerable portion of the loss - probably over £100'. A week later the results were in, and its respondents were overwhelmingly opposed to the prospect of a winter exhibition (sixty-two voted against it; just nine voted for).

A number of organisations, like the International Society, were still cancelling shows a year later ('largely owing to the very small gate & lack of commission on sales'); some, like the Senefelder Club and the Landscape Exhibition, could no longer afford even to rent gallery space; and others, like the AAA and London Group, lost their exhibiting spaces altogether and had to go through the disruption of moving. For all of these reasons, 'many societies', as Colour disingenuously put it in 1918, ended up 'taking a rest during the war'. Those 'resting' were generally the

36 Western Press (7 November 1914): 3.
37 For a discussion, see 'Council Meeting' (17 October 1914), Minutes of Council Meetings 1905-1920 (RWS/A26).
38 'Council Meeting' (13 August and 21 August 1914), Council Meetings Minute Book 3 (AAD/2000/5/10).
39 'Council Meeting' (15 September 1915), International Society Minute Book of Council Meetings (TGA. 738.3.156).
40 The AAA moved from the Royal Albert Hall to the Grafton Gallery - 'a change of venue which did not wholly help it'. Connoisseur 154 (April 1916): 234.
smaller groups: the Hampstead Art Society, the Pencil Society, the New Society of Water Colours, the Old Dudley Art Society, and the Black Frame Sketch Club – all of whom did not exhibit once during the hostilities.\textsuperscript{41} The weakest of these, such as the Southwark & Lambeth Free Loan Picture Society and even ultimately the AAA (it terminated business in 1920) did not completely survive the war.\textsuperscript{42} In short, it looked as though London had quickly gone the same way as Paris: there, art exhibitions were allegedly ‘as rare as char-a-bancs’.\textsuperscript{43}

Although many societies were incapable of holding exhibitions and others felt it advisable to suspend activity until political and commercial conditions improved, they nonetheless realised that prorogation would mean the renunciation of income earned through commissions, and could, they feared, cause members to cancel subscriptions and move elsewhere. After the initial disruption of autumn 1914, most groups that could stage exhibitions therefore did stage them. The results, however, were predictably poor. Contemporary reviews suggest that the two principal criteria – quantity and quality – were the supreme victims of the war. Quantity, although now an unfashionable measure of merit, was then regarded as the most identifiable sign of a society’s vibrancy. Critics were therefore disappointed to see that the RWS’s 164\textsuperscript{th} show was ‘one of the smallest that has been seen of recent years’,\textsuperscript{44} and that at the RBA’s 1915 winter display the majority of its members ‘were unrepresented or represented by unimportant works’.\textsuperscript{45}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{41} \textit{Colour} (May 1918): xviii.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} \textit{Year’s Art} (1918): 99.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{The Times} (16 April 1915): 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} \textit{Connoisseur} 165 (May 1915): 52;
  \item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Connoisseur} 172 (December 1915): 252-3.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} \textit{Connoisseur} 166 (June 1915): 121; \textit{Connoisseur} 178 (June 1916): 117; \textit{Connoisseur} 202 (June 1918): 109.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} \textit{Allied Artists’ Association Catalogue to the 8th Salon}, London (1916): 7.
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\textsuperscript{47} Allied Artists’ Association Catalogue to the 8\textsuperscript{th} Salon, London (1916): 7.
the war: it exhibited 634 pictures in 1917; a substantial increase on the 413 it hung in 1914.48

Declining quantity was accompanied by, and perhaps led to declining quality. Reviews claimed that exhibitions across the board were 'somewhat weaker than usual'; 'distinctly below the average', or displayed 'far fewer [works] than usual that attained distinction'.49 The lack of new work compelled many groups to resort to retrospective exhibitions, repeat-showings or minor displays of their permanent collections.50 Those that persisted with shows of original pictures found that fewer artists were producing less ambitious work: there was a 'falling off in both the number and in the importance of contributions' at the Society of Scottish Artists; a disappearance of 'the most interesting members' of RIOP; and at the New English Art Club (NEAC) 'too many of the stronger members were represented only by sketches'.51 Societies like the NEAC, which had built its reputation on the dynamic work of ambitious young professionals, found that war impacted on its exhibitions with singular harm: according to Connoisseur, the group had 'fallen on evil times': 'When most of the rising men have been caught up in the mesh of war, the Club suffers far more severely than societies more keenly desirous of showing only work painted largely for the joy of painting it'.52

Groups with progressive agendas also suffered, because the more innovative work tended to come from the young, and it was the young who were serving with the forces. The London Group, which had been formed in 1913 as the most radical exhibiting body in the country, witnessed its 'extremism' evaporate as its Vorticist members became unable to contribute. Sixteen of its elected members (half of its total number, including David Bomberg, Wyndham Lewis and Edward Wadsworth) were not represented in its third show in November 1915.53 To sustain the group, compromise was required: at its next exhibition the committee invited ten non-members, including older and more conservative painters (such as Walter Sickert and

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49 Connoisseur 160 (December 1914): 231; Connoisseur 203 (July 1918): 170-1; Connoisseur 188 (April 1917): 228.
50 The Modern Society of Portrait Painters, for instance, undertook 'the first retrospective exhibition in the society’s history'. Connoisseur 163 (March 1915): 167.
51 Scotsman (18 November 1916): 8; Studio 66 (December 1915): 206; Connoisseur 166 (June 1915): 253.
52 Connoisseur 204 (August 1918): 238.
53 One reviewer observed that the exhibition featured work by moderate 'Cubists, but no Vorticists'. The Times (2 December 1915): 11.
Nina Hamnett) to exhibit solely in order to fill the Goupil Gallery’s walls. The result, wrote Frank Rutter, was an ‘almost complete disappearance of the extremists’, and a marked transformation of the group’s original aesthetic.

The London Group even started to be praised by rearguard critics: the *New Statesman* remarked that ‘either by accident or otherwise’, it had ‘purged itself of several of its most violent components, and... settled down to business’, and *The Times* wrote: ‘There is hardly a foolish or vulgar picture there, hardly one that would not seem remarkable in the Academy’. War had stealthily dismantled the London Group: it had forced realignments and coalitions that would never have been made before 1914 and that resulted in aesthetic compromise. It was clear that, as with the International Society, the social and political consequences of the war not only made staging satisfactory exhibitions problematic; it also rendered any attempt to develop and sustain a cohesive group identity or agenda all but impossible.

**IV. PREMISES**

Smaller, less established groups that did not possess their own premises found their existences particularly precarious in the war. Often unable or unwilling to risk the expenditure on renting exhibiting space for their shows, they were far more likely to disappear from public view than their more distinguished counterparts. Moreover, the experiences of the London Group and the Salon of Photography had demonstrated that they ultimately remained dependent on the changing financial and political priorities of their landlords. However, it was no easier for these landlords. It could in fact be argued that those institutions that possessed premises encountered even more problems than their nomadic equivalents because the conflict caused large properties in central London to become inexpedient, expensive and at times dangerous liabilities.

Their principal concern was the threat posed by aerial attacks. This necessitated a number of preventative and protective measures that became significant burdens to the societies. In the early weeks of war local councils distributed letters instructing owners or leaseholders of properties in the capital to obtain anti-aircraft insurance:

the RWS in Pall Mall paid over £37 on their £15,000 valuation, and the RA paid £150 to cover its building and contents. In the RA’s case this was just the start. In October the Office of Works wrote:

In view of the possibility of an attack on London by hostile aircraft, the Government think it right to suggest that the RA should consider the advisability of taking precautions, if they have not already been taken, for the protection of the works of art or objects of special value... It is hoped that the danger is remote, but in view of what has happened in France and Belgium, the danger cannot be disregarded especially where works of art of priceless value are concerned.

After much negotiation the government agreed to oversee the protection of the artworks concerned and thirty-two ‘works of national importance’, including Michelangelo’s only sculpture in Britain, a cartoon by Leonardo, and paintings by Reynolds, Hogarth and Gainsborough were removed to a government safe deposit box under the General Post Office.

The government’s other method of safeguarding London property was through the restriction of electric light in the evenings. This was particularly frustrating for exhibition societies because their shows typically admitted the greatest concentration of visitors after working hours. Some were unable to gain exemption from the ‘Shops Act’ altogether, but even those that did encountered problems. The RWS asked if ‘it would be necessary to cover the glass roof of the Gallery when the electric lights were in use, as set out in the Police Orders governing the reduction of lights in London’. When instructed that indeed it would be necessary and informed that the cost of blinds would amount to £20, it decided instead to evade the problem by closing the winter exhibition of 1915 at dusk - a resolution that further diminished its already reduced admissions.

But aerial attacks themselves presented the biggest hazards, and they were not as infrequent as might be thought. In September 1915 a zeppelin bomb fell in the garden of Queen Square and damaged the headquarters of the Art-Workers’ Guild; in October 1917 the RWS’s controversial glass roof was smashed by shrapnel; two
months later the attendees of an RBS council meeting were dispersed by an air raid siren; but it was the RA that suffered the most severe damage: on 24 September 1917, at 8:57pm, a bomb fell directly on to gallery IX in Burlington House, breaking windows and destroying a number of casts. Fortunately the RA’s decision to insure itself against such risks resulted in a successful claim of almost £5000 for repairs.\(^{62}\)

The other issue that had to be contended with was the potential loss of their premises.\(^{63}\) The need for office space in the capital’s centre necessitated governmental commandeering of many large properties, and society headquarters were natural targets. At the very beginning of the war the RA offered its extensive public galleries to the War Office. Within two years, galleries VII-XI, the architecture room, lecture room and refreshment room had been occupied by the United Arts Force; other galleries were being used for postal censorship; several studios housed Norman Wilkinson and his dazzle camouflage team; and some rooms were being employed for army uniform manufacturing.\(^{64}\) The RA’s atmosphere had fundamentally changed: now it appeared to be an institution of war rather than an institution of peace.

Burlington House has been for weeks the headquarters of the United Arts Force, whose members drill in the quadrangle and use... the exhibition galleries for canteen and other purposes... In the galleries the atmosphere was no less warlike, for the Academy students have responded nobly to the country’s call for men, and many a stalwart youth in khaki was to be seen in the crowd that discussed the merits of the competition works before the distribution of the prizes.\(^{65}\)

This kind of disruption was hardly conducive to institutional activity, as the RWS was keenly aware. It was justifiably concerned that its Pall Mall premises would follow the same path that Burlington House had taken:

Many... inspections of the Society’s premises had been made by various Government officials with the ultimate view of their possible requisition; [we] had an interview with Captain Owen of the Lands Office of the War Department, at which...[we]... explained... the Society’s serious and difficult position in the event of their premises being requisitioned, and the unnecessary hardships which it would entail upon the members collectively and individually.\(^{66}\)

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\(^{62}\) ‘Council Meeting’ (18 December 1917), Minutes of Council Meetings 2 (RBS); ‘De Cruchy to RA’ (5 October 1917), Council Minutes 23, 1913 - 1918 (RAA/PC/1/23).

\(^{63}\) The RBA’s lease required renewal in 1917, but ‘in view of the war and the general unsettled state of things’ the Crown refused it a long lease, offering it an expensive short-term contract instead. ‘Council Meeting’ (20 February 1917), Council Minute Book 1916-1923 (AAD/1997/8/14).

\(^{64}\) ‘Council Meeting’ (8 October 1914), Ibid; ‘Wilkinson to Poynter’ (28 June 1917), Royal Academy correspondence from non-members 1879-1963 (RAA/SEC/6/52).

\(^{65}\) Studio 63 (December 1914): 317.

\(^{66}\) ‘Council Meeting’ (8 May 1918), Minutes of Council Meetings 1905-1920 (RWS/A26).
The war had transformed societies’ greatest assets into perhaps their gravest liabilities. Rising costs of electricity, gas and insurance had made them more expensive than ever to maintain, while they no longer guaranteed the income on which their owners had come to depend. The RWS, for instance, had traditionally generated much of its revenue by sub-letting its galleries to other exhibiting groups. Following the outbreak of war, all six of its tenants (including the NEAC, the RBS, the London Salon of Photography and the Society of Women Artists) requested that it charitably reduce its rates by 50 per cent. The RWS reminded them that it too ‘felt the war strain quite as much as all other Art Societies’, but it had no choice but to accept their demands. Nevertheless, some (like the Sennefelder Club) still chose not to lease the space at all, and others (like the Landscape Exhibition) permanently failed to pay the rates they owed.67

V. FINANCES

It is becoming clear that if any single factor had the capacity to destroy exhibiting societies, it was financial. They were after all driven by commercial aims, and for those aims to remain viable a delicate balance between income and expenditure had to be maintained. Exhibitions were the engine of financial sustainability; not only because sales reaped lucrative sums from commissions (usually between 10 and 12½ per cent) but also because they justified the all-important annual subscription payment from members. Together, the income derived from subscriptions and exhibitions (which comprised commission, admissions receipts and catalogue purchases) was used to fund the shows themselves (costs for which included gallery rental, electricity bills, catalogues, staffing and advertising), while the surplus covered miscellaneous expenses and sustained the society throughout the year. The cyclical system was neat, but it was - as the war quickly proved - also fragile.

Subscriptions, as one contemporary explained, were fundamental to organisations’ financial survival:

The societies, large and small, long established and newly created, exist only because they are maintained by their members, whose annual contributions pay the gallery rent and the many other serious expenses incidental to the holding of a show which has to be hung and arranged by a staff of skilled workers... The art

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67 ‘Council Meeting’ (11 January 1915), Council Minute Book 1910-1916 (AAD/1997/8/13). For the London Salon of Photography and the Landscape Exhibition, see ‘Council Meeting’ (7 October 1914), Minutes of Council Meetings 1905-1920 (RWS/A26); for the Sennefelder Club, see ‘General Meeting’ (16 July 1917), General Meetings Minutes 1904-1942 (RWS/A10).
exhibition is run by the artists themselves, is paid for out of their own pockets, and depends upon them for its existence.  

However, they only represented a reliable source of income if there were members to pay them, and war, as has been seen, reduced those paying members. This diminution had three causes: first, there were the straightforward resignations of associates wishing to make their own economies; second, there were those artists who remained members but, struggling financially, fell behind on their payments; and finally, there were those who enlisted. Societies could clearly not penalise these individuals, and all waived membership charges for serving members. It was an expensive decision: for RIOP it represented a 'very serious loss' of £305.

The subscription issue was also potentially political, as it challenged how societies and their members conceived of their relationship to each other. The waiving of subscription charges for enlisting members had brought to light a very difficult question: should societies prioritise themselves or the artists they represented? Should they waive subscription fees for all in order to help their benighted members, even if it was at the risk of their own bankruptcy? The RWS, for one, could not decide. Soon after the outbreak of war the council decided to suspend Law 113a, in which affiliates were obliged to pay five guineas annually. It was an attempt to bolster dissipating group loyalty and to enable artists to continue producing for exhibitions - but it could not last long. In 1916 it reinstated the charge 'in order that... finances... should continue solvent'. The council explained: 'There was no desire to be hard upon members, but neither did it do to be too tender-hearted'.

If the RWS initially believed that it should sacrifice itself for its associates, other groups were convinced of the opposite. Desperately debt-ridden, the AWG appealed to its members for higher contributions than usual: voluntary subscriptions of up to 10s.6d from town, country and even retired members, in addition to single donations of money and assets. It was, they insisted, 'a remedial measure - purely temporary', but it failed to have the desired effect: sixty-eight members contributed, but some sixty-five refused. Likewise, RIOP 'felt that it was impossible... to “carry on” in the present state' and requested supplementary contributions of a guinea (or donations of

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69 'General Meeting' (13 October 1919), *Minute Book* 3 (AAD/2000/5/3).
70 'General Meeting' (30 November 1914), *General Meetings Minutes* 1904-1942 (RWS/A10).
pictures) in order to pay off its debts. Its members however were also experiencing financial difficulties, and very few responded to the appeal.\textsuperscript{72}

Equally debilitating was the depletion of exhibition revenue. The war inhibited artistic consumption, and societies found it found it increasingly difficult to sell their work. RIOP's 1915 autumn show, for instance, turned over just £200 where its 1912 exhibition had brought in £892,\textsuperscript{73} and the RA's 1915 summer display took £2500 less than its 1914 counterpart.\textsuperscript{74} The more affordable contents of the RWS exhibitions faced the same public indifference: reviewing its winter 1915 show, one journalist observed that 'instead of about half of the works having found purchasers by the second day, as is usual, one sees a lamentably sparse sprinkling of little "sold" labels' next to the pictures.\textsuperscript{75} The show had actually sold less than sixth the value of artworks as at the corresponding exhibition two years earlier, and between 1913 and 1915 the society had seen its overall picture sales drop by two thirds, its revenue from commissions, admissions and catalogues sales fall comparably, and its total income from exhibitions halve [graphs B & C].\textsuperscript{76} Faced by these problems, some organisations, like the Royal Cambrian Society, were forced to make the unprecedented decision of placing signs outside their shows that read 'Offers for Pictures'.\textsuperscript{77}

The financial viability of exhibitions then received another blow: Entertainments Tax. Chapter 1 described the symbolic consequences of the duty for all who harboured a vested interest in the arts, but for exhibiting societies it represented a very real financial concern.\textsuperscript{78} The tax represented a 2p charge on the usual shilling admission to exhibitions; a small amount that had great implications. Societies were

\textsuperscript{72}‘General Meeting’ (15 June 1917), General Minute Book 3 (AAD/2000/5/3).
\textsuperscript{73}‘Council Meeting’ (29 October 1915), Council Minute Book 3 (AAD/2000/5/10).
\textsuperscript{74}‘Council Meeting’ (22 July 1915), Council Minutes 23, 1913 - 1918 (RAA/PC/1/23).
\textsuperscript{75}British Journal of Photography (6 November 1915): 58.
\textsuperscript{76}See 'Annual Reports 1913-1918' (RWS B163-167).
\textsuperscript{77}Imperial Arts League Journal (June 1915): 70.
\textsuperscript{78}The most useful evidence of Entertainments Tax’s impact on societies is located in a folder that the RA devoted entirely to the subject (RAA/SEC/17/14). Exhibitions were definitively included in the government’s definition of ‘entertainment’ (‘any exhibition, performance, amusement, game or sport which persons are admitted for payment’). Although exemptions were listed in Clause 5, none could strictly be applied to art shows: they were not free; they were not ostensibly charitable; they were not ‘wholly educational’; they were not designed for the ‘amusement of children’; they did not boast a ‘religious, political or propagandist character’; they did not feature ‘lectures or speeches’, and they did not have a non-profit educational or scientific function. ‘Finance Bill’, Parliamentary Debates: Commons 81 ((17 April 1916): 2116-46.
left with one of three options: levy the fee from attendees at the turnstiles; absorb the expense themselves; or eradicate all admissions charges in order to evade the duty. The first would have further reduced already dwindling audiences; the second would have caused societies to incur debilitating extra expenses, and the third would have cut off an important source of income. And thus following the passing of the Act on 19 April 1916 the Imperial Arts League and the RA, backed by every major art society in the country, signed a joint complaint to the chancellor on the ground of the ‘injury which will be done to art’ by the ‘vexatious and injurious’ measure.79

The RA’s deputation stressed that the institution was already being run ‘at a loss, a loss which would inevitably be increased by the imposition of the proposed tax’.80 It described at length how many art societies ‘were barely able to make both ends meet, and might be obliged to give up altogether’ because the tax would result in diminishing attendances to their exhibitions which would in turn result in diminishing revenues from receipts.81 The duty, it argued, would:

Very seriously cripple the educational work of the Royal Academy, whether the Duty were paid (as would probably be the case) by the Royal Academy or by the public attending the Exhibitions; in the former case it is obvious the Duty would be a serious burden on the Academy’s funds, while in the latter case an increase of the long-established price of admission would immediately reduce the attendance and therefore our receipts... It is true that the public pays an entrance fee for admission to such exhibitions, for the fees are, in general, the principal if not the only means of support of such Institutions; but the fee is universally 1s/0d, where it is not a smaller sum. The public are accustomed to pay this 1s/0d, and will probably so resent having to pay more that the receipts will be vitally affected... I venture to think that this tax would very seriously hamper the work of quite a unique Institution.82

The government dismissed all of the RA’s objections, and the chancellor himself remarked that he did not ‘think it would be practicable or desirable... to introduce amending legislation specifically exempting the Royal Academy from the operation of the tax’.83

The RA subsequently prepared a long and important document for the Board of Customs & Excise stressing its educational (and thus tax-free) relevance, but it was

82 Ibid: 3-4, 8-9.
83 ‘Board of Customs & Excise to RA’ (1 May 1916). Ibid.
five months before it received a response. In the meantime the RA had, perhaps disingenuously, failed to collect the duty on its 1916 summer show, so that when in October 1916 Customs House finally decided that it would not be exempted, it was forced to pay £1000 in the tax immediately. A series of desperate meetings resulted in the Board of Customs & Excise offering the RA the opportunity to unofficially submit a statement to the Board of Education, who would ultimately decide whether its exhibitions were educational or not. The RA submitted an eight-point statement, but in a typically bureaucratic denouement the Board of Education refused to pass judgment on the issue, and the situation continued into 1917 with no resolution. It was not until the middle of the year that the RA finally gained exemption from its 1916 summer show, but it was warned that 'it was not applicable to Art Exhibitions generally' and remained obliged to pay the tax on its winter exhibition of that year.

It was the only society to achieve even this modest success.

Losing income and powerless to rectify it, societies had one palliative strategy remaining: economising. By summer 1915 Thomas Jackson at the RA had formed a Committee of Ways and Means ‘to… draw up a scheme… for dealing with the whole system of income and expenditure, with the object of securing a satisfactory balance’. This included, in line with many other organisations, the cancellation of all social events (soirées, banquets and balls); a reduction in the number and size of publications; and a closure of its schools. The RBA meanwhile discontinued its relief-stamped stationery in favour of a cheaper replacement; limited itself to two advertisements per week in The Times, Morning Post and Telegraph during exhibition season (rather than daily in all the major papers); and generally economised on hanging, postage, salaries, electricity, gas and sundries in their premises. However

84 ‘Suggestion for a Memorandum to H.M. Commissioners of Customs and Excise on The Educational Value of the Royal Academy Exhibition’ (1916), Secretary’s papers, 1834-1958 (RAA/SEC/17/25).
85 ‘Young to RA’ (25 October 1916), Papers Relating to Entertainments Tax (RAA/SEC/17/14).
86 ‘Council Meeting’ (22 May 1917), Council Minutes 23, 1913 - 1918 (RAA/PC/1/23).
87 ‘Minutes of Committee to consider ways and means for securing a satisfactory balance between income and expenditure’ (8 July 1915), Council records of committees 1851-1948 (RAA/PC/6/8): 4. Virtually every society cancelled extravagant members’ events at the outbreak of war out of respect to the conflict. Events that continued were not as they had been in the pre-war period: ‘At the threshold one missed the bank of flowers that always adorned either side of the wide staircase; and within the rooms there was no crowd – certainly not one-third of the number of visitors there used invariably to be. Moreover those who were present were garbed with a more commonplace plainness and quietness that contrasted strongly with the show of happier days, when this was the first of the great society gatherings of the season…’ In the Royal Academy Private View’, Illustrated London News (May 1918): 121.
they were all but neutralised by increased prices of paper, printing, insurance, hanging, transportation, facility bills and salaries that resulted from the war.

With it proving as difficult to reduce expenditure as it was to increase income, art organisations spent much of the war on the verge of financial ruin. The AWG wrote that ‘the financial question has become vital... Our income is not at present large enough to meet our expenses’, and RIOP considered closing down completely - holding on only in the hope of a post-war trade boom. 89 The RWS wrote:

We depend on the shilling paid at the door to pay our rent at Pall Mall. Besides that we have to pay a commission on the sale of our works of 12½%, in order to keep going, and besides that an annual subscription of £5 a year. Owing to the destitution amongst artists and many of our members, the subscription has been knocked off, and I am sorry to say we are running the place at a loss... Then of course there is a great diminution in the attendance, and the consequent gate money. 90

But the most revealing account of this financial crisis is provided, once again, by the RA:

One would not wish to make it too public, but as a matter of fact last year we were £2,000 on the wrong side in our accounts, and have been for some years. That of course has to come out of our capital, and we are paying the £2,000. This year I am afraid it will be more, because the continuation of the War will naturally reduce the number of visitors that we have. The maintenance of our schools involves an expenditure of over £4,000 a year; and we give in charities and pensions something like £3,000 a year. The profit on the exhibition of last year, after the cost of arranging it had been deducted, gave us £5,300. Of course in years gone it was more, but that is what it was last year, and I am very much afraid it will be considerably less this year... [we expect]... a further loss of at least £1,000 a year; and that, with our deficit at the present time of £2,000, would make it £3,000, and we should no doubt lose as well a certain number of attendances which would be another £500. 91

In light of this information, one can doubtless concur with Joseph Duveen’s diagnosis of the ‘stupendous’ impact of war on art groups: ‘The extinction of these, and many smaller artists’ societies, was not due to artistic but to purely economic reasons. Artists were poorer than ever, while the rents for Exhibition galleries had immensely increased. It became hopeless for any body of artists to meet the expenses of a large exhibition’. 92

92 Duveen 1930: 95.
VI: PROSPECTS

Faced by a host of pressing challenges, art societies had evidently stumbled from one crisis to another during the war years. Their foundations had been so dangerously undermined that many felt radical rethinking was necessary to simply ensure survival. In a confidential pamphlet addressed to the RA’s council entitled ‘Considerations on the Policy and Position of the Royal Academy’, the architect Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942) argued that ‘the time seems to have come for the overhauling of our position and policy by ourselves, before that process is undertaken by outsiders with little understanding of our circumstances, and no sympathy with our difficulties’. Blomfield maintained that the war had proved that the RA was ‘not adequate for [its] purpose’ and had to reform every aspect of its activity - its exhibitions, schools, its council and its policy on associates. The conflict, he wrote, had also caused the organisation to lose the confidence of the public, and it had to reengage with them or perish: ‘We are, in fact, a great State institution’, he concluded, ‘and instead of shrinking from that position, we ought surely to accept it to the full with all the responsibilities it entails’. His points were well heard; in 1918 a committee was formed to enquire into his suggestions, and by the end of the year a report had been issued that appeared to promise genuine change.

A more eloquent elucidation of the critical condition of art societies - and their future prospects - was voiced by Harold Speed (1872-1957) when he became master of the AWG in January 1917:

Before these stupendous events our work here looks very small and our meetings have necessarily been overshadowed. But we have a duty to fulfil and these terrible times have presented us with an opportunity which we have not had before. This devastating war, as nothing else could have done, has shaken us out of the smug complacency against which it has been so difficult to make any headway in the past. Reconstruction is in the air, a desire for new and better conditions of life. And we are not content that the work we do and the ideals for

93 The RBA encountered ‘unrest in the Society’. ‘General Meeting’ (12 April 1915), Minutes of General Meetings (AAD 1997/8/4). For the RWS they were ‘anxious times’. ‘General Meeting’ (30 September 1917), General Meetings Minutes 1904-1942 (RWS/A10). RIOP’s council wrote of ‘very bad times’ in a ‘period of darkness’. ‘General Meeting’ (26 November 1915), General Meeting Minute Book 2 (AAD/2000/5/2). For the AWG it was an era of ‘considerable anxiety to all concerned in the management and in the welfare of the Guild’. ‘33nd Annual Report’ (1916), Annual Reports 3 1913-1933 (AWG): 5.
95 ‘General Assembly Meetings’ (27 June 1918 and 6 November 1918), Ibid.
which we stand shall remain as they are at present, a mere interesting backwater of the life of our country, having little influence on the main stream of its productions.96

Speed, then, also harboured a post-apocalyptic optimism; a conviction that war had asked the question of these Victorian institutions, and found them wanting. But he saw the conflict as a series of violent but necessary reminders that reform was needed if they were to remain relevant in post-war Britain. He for one was convinced that they would. On the same day, however, a past master was more equivocal:

I have sometimes wondered... whether all artistic societies... are to be regarded as encysted, reactionary, retrogressive developments in a body which has no use for us, from which body to-day we are being rightly removed by the surgery of war; or whether we are a genuine gestation in the womb of England, about to be brought to birth by the Kaiserean [sic] operation, because the mother has been too inert to complete her proper function?97

His first suggestion was the more accurate. As much as some saw the war as an opportunity, and as much as institutions like the RA endeavoured to become newly relevant in its aftermath, the war had damaged them too gravely for that hope to be quickly realised. In four difficult years, all had shrunk and many had disappeared; they had seen their exhibitions - if they continued to hold them - grow smaller and weaker; they had watched their identities - so finely honed in ante-bellum - gradually mutate into entirely different identities; they had been bedevilled by internal divisions, crippled by government persecution, ruined by insurmountable debt and paralysed by logistical obstacles. And, considering the central role that they occupied in determining the nature of British art, the conflict's impact was doubtless not confined to their council chambers.

97 'Address', Ibid: 17.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE ART MARKET

IN AUGUST 1914 politicians and businessmen were optimistic about the opportunities that war would bring. Both believed that unabated commercial activity would help defeat Germany by capturing its trade. The policy of 'business as usual' thus seemed to represent a propitious combination of profit and patriotism in which both business and the business of war would be mutually reinforcing aspects of national success. The art trade emphatically shared this confidence: the cover of the August 1914 issue of the Fine Art Trade Journal brashly declared: 'Motto for the British Empire: "Business as Usual" for selling subjects during War-Time', and inside articles claimed that if art traders continued to operate as they had done in peacetime the conflict promised to be a major boon to trade. Their predictions could not have been more wrong. Within weeks the war economy had sabotaged conventional business patterns and the art market was rapidly and acutely affected by the changed financial conditions.

I. 'THE NEW POOR'

A vibrant art market depends on a sizeable community of collectors that is both affluent and profligate, but the war's transformation of economic and social life in Britain profoundly challenged all of these requirements. The development of a 'morality of consumption' as described in Chapter 1 had made the wealthier members of society reluctant to purchase anything other than war loans for fear of appearing

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1 See Chiozza Money 1914: 482.
3 All businesses were hit by the uncertain economic climate, a moratorium on all debts that stifled the movement of credit and a wartime web of licences and permits. Art dealers, who relied on foreign clientele, also suffered from the Trading with the Enemy Act: the Piccadilly Arcade Gallery was wound up by the Board of Trade for selling to foreign collectors. Fine Art Trade Journal 12 (August 1916): 242. Another reason for the art trade's susceptibility was expressed in 1914 by the Goupil Gallery's William Marchant: 'Everyone is urged, during the war, to act as far as possible on the principle of "Business as Usual"; but if it is only to be applied to the every-day necessities of life, then it surely was superfluous to invent and laboriously propagate such a motto, as the war would hardly stop people from using soap or drinking cocoa'. Sunday Times (15 November 1914): 5. For 'business as usual', see Lawrence, Dean & Robert 1992; French 1982; McDermott 1989, and Broadberry & Howlett 2005.
4 Britain had traditionally been condemned for not possessing that constituency. According to Wyndham Lewis: 'Almost alone amongst the countries of Europe she has proved herself incapable of producing that small band of wealthy people, who are open to ideas, ahead of the musical comedy and academics of their age, and prepared to spend a few hundred pounds a year less on petrol or social pyrotechnics, and buy pictures'. Blast 2 (1915): 11.
unpatriotic.\(^5\) They were not just less willing to purchase luxuries; they were also less able to do so. War conditions quickly reduced the number of ‘the rich’ (those classed as possessing £10,000 or more) in Britain by two thirds (from 4000 to just 1300).\(^6\) The art market was particularly affected by this development because the principal suffers – the metropolitan middle classes and the landed aristocracy – were those from which it had traditionally drawn its buyers. To understand how the war affected the art trade it is thus first necessary to understand how it affected these groups.

The disposable income of the middle classes was predominantly undermined by the government’s wartime fiscal policies, with many of its members claiming that they were ‘being taxed out of existence’.\(^7\) Six incremental tax hikes had caused their standard income tax rate to rise from 5.8 per cent to 30 per cent, and by the end of the war many were also liable to pay supertax, which was levied on salaried professionals earning above £2500 at up to 52 per cent.\(^8\) This measure was insult added to injury because high inflation (220 per cent by the end of the war) had already decimated the spending power of generally unchanged salaries.\(^9\) Businessmen, meanwhile, saw inflation and indirect duties significantly increase their overheads, and Excess Profits Duty - which in some cases brought their combined tax burden to 77 per cent - eradicate their ability to make up for them.\(^10\)

The middle classes (or ‘new poor’, as they were now often described) began to experience what Charles Masterman later called a ‘semi-starvation of their standard of life’.\(^11\) Their members were forced to cut all extravagances, and most ‘paying pleasure’ – in this case art collecting - went the same way as domestic staff and private education. A representative example is found in a letter from a typical middle-class patron of Philip de László. Despite commissioning a portrait of his

\(^5\) ‘Is it right’, wrote *The Times*, to collect ‘when two nations at least are stricken to death with poverty and disease, and when for lack of money helpers of all sorts, anxious to go, are waiting idly and impatiently at home?’, ‘The War Time Collector: Some Sacrifices’, *The Times* (6 October 1916): 9. R.D. Blumenfeld captured this social attitude to spending neatly: ‘Two years ago we were all vying one with the other in our efforts to spend the most money in the most useless fashion. I can now pass a print shop after having looked for two minutes at the window and satisfied my artistic taste with a glance at the pictures in the window. I was never able to do that before’, Blumenfeld 1931: 73.

\(^6\) Bowley 1930: 77. See also Bowley & Stamp 1927: 57-9.

\(^7\) Quoted in Stoddard 1925: 96.

\(^8\) Daunton 2002: 47.

\(^9\) *Ibid*: 75. A department head at the civil service had seen a 25 per cent salary rise between 1914 and 1920 - a mere tenth of the rate of inflation. Lawrence 1997: 237.

\(^10\) Stamp 1932: 154. See also Strachan 2004: 72.

daughter before the war, Robert Benson’s deteriorating pecuniary position forced him to renege on the request in October 1914:

As to the sketch of my little daughter... Honestly I do not think that I ought to permit myself this luxury at present. The unprecedented financial position, which is yet far from being cured, makes it imperative that we, business men, should look to every sixpence that we find, until better times come. Every bit of surplus that I can put together must go to the needs of those around me.12

The wealth of the other traditional collecting group – the aristocracy – had in fact been declining since the agricultural depression of the mid-nineteenth century, but the war is widely believed to have accelerated its demise.13 Aristocrats, like the middle classes, felt the increased burden of taxation – particularly death duties, which doubled to 40 per cent - but their main concern was the decimation of their usual sources of unearned income. The uncertainty of the markets and the Rent Restriction Act of 1915 had caused their rental income to fall by 60 per cent; the revenue derived from their estates to halve, and their shares to depreciate by an average 40 per cent in the war years.14 Lord Knaresborough in a letter to The Times outlined some of the problems they faced:

The country gentleman is hit in every possible way; he receives no more rent; he has to pay death duties and enormously increased income-tax and supertax; everything he buys has risen immensely in price, including labour and the cost of all materials for necessary repairs on his estate. His tithes have gone up, and the interest on any money he may have borrowed or be obliged to borrow. [Aristocrats] are now being obliged to sell their most cherished possessions in the way of pictures of their ancestors, old furniture, silver and whatever works of art they may have, in order to keep their heads above water.15

‘Country gentlemen’ had actually been disposing of their possessions since the Hamilton Palace Sale of 1882, but the war led to what The Times called ‘a superabundance of sales of family treasures’.16 The first was the liquidation of Sir Walter Gilbey’s 8000-acre estate at Elsenham Hall, Essex, in June 1915. Of the innumerable sales that followed, the most famous were of Lord Sydney’s estate at Chislehurst, the possessions of Sir Francis Montefiore at Worth Park, and the Wigan, Baker, Barratt, Hope, Joseph, Jardine and Poynter sales in the years that followed. It

12 Benson to László (20 October 1914), (DLA 053-0122).
13 For a survey, see Thomson 1963: 269-345.
14 See Lawrence 1997: 244-5.
15 The Times (14 June 1918): 10.
was evidently the case that if the upper classes were to be found at the art market between 1914 and 1918, they were not there to buy; they were there to sell.\textsuperscript{17}

The war dispersed as well as impoverished the collecting classes. Before the conflict the vibrancy of the London market had been founded on its ability to regularly attract domestic and international figures to its auction houses and commercial galleries. After August 1914 many foreign buyers either returned to their native countries for political reasons (like Princess Lichnowsky) or abandoned wartime London for more commercially vibrant markets: the Duveen brothers closed their Bond Street residence and moved to the United States because the British, they wrote, had ‘ceased to amass collections such as are being acquired in America and on the Continent’.\textsuperscript{18} Many British collectors also found themselves drawn from London: Michael Sadler’s (1861-1943) ‘truly reckless phase of collecting’ was disrupted by his being stationed in India between 1917 and 1919,\textsuperscript{19} and the harsh realities of war encouraged other wealthy collectors to abandon London in favour of the comparative tranquillity of their country homes:

This air raid stunt can hardly be described as a stimulus to the London Fine Art business... In fact many dealers say it drives buyers to the country... This sort of thing rattles people. It chokes them off buying anything (except pocket emergency rations and flashlamps).\textsuperscript{20}

Some major collectors never returned to the market: William Lockett Agnew (1858-1918), Asher Wertheimer (1844-1918), Edward Hazell Vicars (1853-1918), Thomas Barratt (1841-1914) and Joseph Beecham (1848-1916) died, while Hugh Lane (1875-1915) and Edgar Ezekiel Gorer (1872-1915) were killed when the Lusitania was sunk on 7 May 1915. Lane’s death in particular represented what Frank Rutter called an ‘irreparable and irreplaceable’ loss to the art world.\textsuperscript{21}

Individuals were not the only acquirers of art objects. Before the war museums had boasted modest collecting capacities (the National Gallery received an annual purchase grant of £5000 from the government that if unspent had to be returned to

\textsuperscript{17} Cannadine 1990: 97-102. The situation was elegantly expressed by Ezra Pound in his \textit{Pisan Cantos}: ‘Is it all rust, ruin, death duties and mortgages, / And the great carriage-yard empty / And more pictures gone to pay taxes...?’ Pound 1948: 93.

\textsuperscript{18} They believed the reasons for this were ‘the heavy burdens of late imposed upon Englishmen by taxation’. \textit{Art News} (24 August 1914): 236.

\textsuperscript{19} Sadleir 1949: 226.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Fine Art Trade Journal} 14 (February 1918): 30.

the treasury) but a combination of savings, endowments, investments and donations had enabled them to expand their collections.\textsuperscript{22} The first war budget however suspended virtually all museums’ purchase grants and despite rare acquisitions (the National Gallery paid £9000 for Masaccio’s \textit{Madonna and Child} in 1916), most institutions subsequently found it difficult to raise even small sums.\textsuperscript{23} It was this development that prompted the trustees of the National Gallery to propose the controversial ‘National Gallery Bill’ in 1916, which essentially empowered them to sell parts of its collection in order to raise funds for new works.\textsuperscript{24} The measure was roundly vilified: officials described it as a ‘monstrous proposition’, a ‘grotesque little Bill’, and as something that would transform the ‘permanent resting-place for the nation’s pictures’ into ‘an occasional auction mart’.\textsuperscript{25} It was ultimately rejected, but Lord D’Abernon’s defence of the bill in the House of Lords revealed how seriously the war had undermined such institutions’ abilities to buy:

The circumstances of to-day are in no way the similar to those which existed previous to the war... Before 1914 the trustees were in possession of a grant of money which no longer exists. They were also in the position of being able to go to the Treasury with a demand for additional funds, or go to the public with a request that further funds might be added to any which the Treasury might supply... To-day any such course would be most unlikely to meet with success; and I do not think it would be reasonable now to go to the Treasury with a demand for a large grant for the purchase of pictures.\textsuperscript{26}

Similarly debilitating obstacles were encountered by the National Art-Collections Fund, which had been formed in 1908 to raise money through memberships and subscriptions in order to help museums acquire artworks. In the first year of the war

\textsuperscript{22} See Committee of the Trustees of the National Gallery 1916.
\textsuperscript{23} See Kavanagh 1994: 97-9; Cust 1915: 11, and Witt 1915.
\textsuperscript{24} ‘The Bill has been prepared... to deal with a new situation created or accentuated by the war... It is not a “war emergency” measure, but it is a measure of which the urgency has been greatly increased by economic changes resulting from the war’. D’Abernon argued that if ‘a certain number of works were disposed of and the funds applied to the purchase of some masterpieces, something would have been done to retain in this country a better representation’ of great art. He was doubtless referring to the 20,000 Turners that dominated the 23,000-strong collection of the National Gallery, in order to raise funds for works by artists (like Giotto, Giorgione, Vermeer, Bosch and van der Weyden) who were not well represented. D’Abernon, \textit{Parliamentary Debates, Lords} 23 (21 November 1916): 539-41. The National Portrait Gallery did actually dispose of a duplicate picture to raise funds, ‘60th Annual Report of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery, 1916-1917’, 1918 (cd. 8644), in \textit{Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors and Others} 17 (1917-1918): 20.
almost 10 per cent of its members (120 individuals) cancelled their memberships
[graph D]: income from subscriptions fell by a fifth; overall donations plummeted from £856 to just £173, and its resulting expenditure almost halved. Moreover, its committee felt that given the prevailing political sensitivities they should not ‘press... claims quite so urgently in the face of even greater matters’. The organisation deserves credit, however, for mobilising extraordinary support from its members when it raised half of the £9000 required by the National Gallery for Masaccio’s *Madonna and Child*, and a similar sum for a collection of William Blake drawings two years later; these were isolated examples of institutional prodigality in the straitened climate of war.

II. PICTURE SALES

‘When a great war breaks out unexpectedly the first effect is like an earthquake’, explained one pamphlet in 1914. If the outbreak of war was anything like an earthquake, its tremors had shaken the art market before even a shot was fired. Although historians’ usual formulation involves the conflict ending a long prosperous period with an ‘immediate collapse of the art market’, the reality is somewhat more complicated. The oft-cited boom of the pre-war years - in which an apparently insatiable demand for luxuries resulted in record-breaking auction prices - actually drew to a quiet close in early summer 1914. The number of pictures reaching the benchmark 1400 guineas at auctions had already more than halved over the preceding year, and, moreover, a comparison of pictures sold and re-sold at auction in the period [table E] indicates that *pre-war* 1914 prices consistently failed to match their preceding seasons, with the selected eight pictures losing almost half of their total value by July 1914.

In part, the market had become a victim of its own buoyancy. The inflated prices at the big sales of 1911, 1912 and 1913 had left dealers ‘full of stock’ of unsustainable value. But the international uncertainty following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 had a decisive impact on market confidence. Not only did the political anxieties militate against the international travel that had

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27 For the complete figures, see National Art-Collections Fund 1914-1920.
29 J.C.E. 1914: 8.
31 *Year’s Art* (1915): 387.
contributed to the pre-war boom; with investments unreliable, income unpredictable and credit unobtainable they induced buyers to withdraw from the market until stability returned, and dealers and sellers to wait until satisfactory sums could be guaranteed for their wares. The few who purchased at *ante-bellum* prices soon found themselves in serious difficulties. Hugh Lane had bought pictures at a pre-war premium at the Grenfell Sale on 26 June 1914 (just two days before the Sarajevo assassination), but was subsequently unable to find buyers to match anything like his outlay. Moreover, the banks’ unwillingness to offer him credit in the period brought him to the verge of a hitherto unthinkable bankruptcy.

When the war itself did break out, just eleven days after the close of Christie’s sale season, its impact was nonetheless immediate and acute. Buyers were absent from the market but sellers too, as A.C.R. Carter observed, ‘showed a natural diffidence’ in submitting their possessions to auction. Some were even reported to have abruptly withdrawn their belongings from sale to avoid fetching low prices. Faced with the crisis, Christie’s, Sotheby’s and other major auction houses (including Manson & Woods, Knight, Frank & Rutley, Robinson & Fisher, Foster’s, Phillip’s, Neale’s, and Wilkinson & Hodge) cancelled their winter sales season, and the majority did not hold any further auctions for at least six more months. It was a commercial phenomenon that was, observed the *Burlington Magazine* in April 1915, completely ‘without precedent’.

1915 initially appeared to show little improvement. Christie’s did not receive one work for conventional sale in the whole year and the firm considered permanent closure. Sotheby’s, meanwhile, did recommence business in the spring but listed just twenty-eight sales in all, compared with 108 in 1913 – although it could probably not have coped with more given its severe staff shortages. The clearest demonstration, however, of the collapse of the art market is found again in the 1400

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32 The director of the National Gallery recalled that he found it ‘exceedingly hard even to get a sight of pictures which passed through the London market. The dealers generally were shy of exposing their treasures to the long-drawn discussions, the rumours, the semi-publicity and the almost inevitably refusal to which offers of pictures for purchase had been exposed’. Holmes 1936: 334.
34 *Year’s Art* (1916): 387.
38 Marillier 1926: 150.
39 Lacey 1999: 59.
guinea threshold. Just four pictures reached the price in 1915, a tremendous decline even from the poor 1914 figure of thirty-eight [Graph F]. This statistic is owed both to the absence of high quality pictures offered for sale at the start of the conflict and the fact that buyers were reluctant to invest in expensive artworks at such an unstable time. This depreciation of art was so dramatic that it was even mocked by the pictorial press: a cartoon in Punch [Figure 14] depicted an auctioneer desperately attempting to sell a painting with the line “‘What! No advance on three shillings? Why, the picture by itself is worth that!’”.

Although 1915 is often seen as ‘sheer unmitigated disaster’ for the art market, it was not an altogether unqualified catastrophe. One cause for optimism was the Red Cross Sale. The ‘auction sensation’ lasted a fortnight in April and its 1867 lots raised £37,383. It thereafter returned every year with progressively greater financial success, raising a total of £330,000 for the charity and in the process rallying an otherwise moribund market. Its sales, however, were in no way representative of ordinary business. Indeed, Lance Hannen (1870-1942) of Christie’s allegedly urged buyers ‘to bid as though [they] were giving to the Red Cross Fund rather than... buying works of art’. Moreover, the sales’ charitable nature meant that they brought no financial remuneration for the artists, auctioneers, dealers and sellers involved in them. According to a correspondent for the American Art News:

While Press and public wax enthusiastic over the merits of the Red Cross Sale and the generosity of the donors, Bond Street looks on the matter in quite a different light... After the last sale many collectors spent, in connection with it, such large sums, which would otherwise have been expended with the dealers, that it took the trade quit six months to recover from the slump.

The first Red Cross sale was nevertheless symbolically significant because it proved to executors of art collections that ‘confidence was regained in the art market’. Buoyed by this new confidence, the market tentatively improved in the middle of

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40 For two examples of this: ‘Buyers of large and expensive...paintings...have been very scarce... The market has been favourable to little fish only’. Sunday Times (31 December 1916): 5; ‘The outbreak of the war saw the disappearance of all but a few potential buyers with wall space for outsize productions’. Sadleir 1949: 223.
42 See Marillier 1926: 150-9.
47 Year’s Art (1916): 393.
1915 as sellers who had hitherto refused to part with their belongings now felt confident (or desperate) enough to submit them for sale. This was, of course, bad news for them, but it was excellent news for the auction houses administering the sales, and they started to run a number (like the Gilbey and Sydney) at the estates themselves rather than in the increasingly empty West End. Far from the commercial void of 1914 and 1915, now the art market reported a 'long procession of sales' and nothing less than 'an abnormal stir of business in the auction rooms'. The reason was clear: 'The national demand for money' had turned auction houses into 'clearing-houses for the purposes of the war'.

III. 'THE NEW RICH'

While the impoverished landed classes were selling their possessions and professionals were absent from the market, another group of collectors was beginning to buy. American collectors had been active in the British art market for some time - to the great distaste of domestic commentators, who estimated that between 1880 and 1914 some four hundred 'masterpieces' had left England to cross the Atlantic. The war intensified that process as American citizens who were 'fortified with war profits' and inured from the hardships of the Continent sought to exploit the gap in the European market, and became fiercely acquisitive. Between 1915 and 1916 British art exports to the United States doubled to $10 million; by 1917 they had doubled again to $21 million, and they increased exponentially in the years that followed. Moreover, in 1916 it was estimated that some 60 per cent of the London art and antique dealers' sales were to American buyers, and that demand 'was growing every week'.

American buyers also ensured 'undiminished' activity at auction: they dominated the Worth Park and Joseph sales, and at the Gilbey sale they paid more than half of the £18,000 that was spent there on pictures. At the Sydney sale in June 1915 a New York champagne merchant called George Kessler paid a formidable 6600

48 Year's Art (1918): i.
50 There were reports of 'secret shipments' of artworks across the Atlantic (such as the Duveens' purchase of Gainsborough's View in the Mall, St James's Park from the Neeld Collection and its sale to the Frick Collection, in New York) in order to avoid punitive taxation. Year's Art (1917): 6.
guineas for Vigée le Brun's self-portrait to celebrate his survival of the sinking of the Lusitania just four weeks earlier.\textsuperscript{53} The result of this transatlantic activity was a virtual maintenance of pre-war values, and sometimes their advancement.\textsuperscript{54} Attitudes to these foreign buyers also changed. The much-maligned shipment of artworks to the 'New World' was now seen as 'of national service in helping to redress, in a small way, the deplorable depreciation' of British 'trade exports'.\textsuperscript{55}

However, the social and economic changes that Britain was experiencing also had a transformative effect on the art market. It is widely understood that, as Jon Lawrence writes, 'the lottery of wartime economy offered the prospects of great riches for some alongside crippling losses for many others'.\textsuperscript{56} While the upper and professional middle classes suffered from war taxation and the depreciation of their capital, for another social group the war created what one contemporary called 'an orgy of wealth arising from inflated wages and war-contracts'.\textsuperscript{57} Buoyed by remunerative national commissions, industrialists' trading profits rose by 100 per cent in the first year of the war and by its end Britain's number of £5000 - 10,000 incomes had also doubled.\textsuperscript{58} In October 1915 the Fine Art Trade Journal predicted that with this 'new distribution of money caused by the war' it was 'not unlikely that quite a new class of picture-buyer will come into being'.\textsuperscript{59} It was to be proved correct.

Partly in search of material evidence of their new wealth and partly because the depreciation of savings, stocks and shares had rendered artworks ever more secure investments, this new plutocracy decisively entered the art market. A number of collectors, like the Scottish shipping magnate William Burrell (1861-1958), started to buy with a rapacity few established collectors could have rivaled: in 1914 he had spent just £42 on art; three years later he purchased £15,422 of fine art goods.\textsuperscript{60} Burrell was not alone: William Schooling of the War Savings Committee remarked

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} \textit{Year's Art} (1916): 4-5, 393. See also £6,930 For a Portrait: Lusitania Survivor's Purchase', \textit{The Times} (8 June 1915): 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} \textit{Year's Art} (1917): 382. At the Joseph Sale (30 September 1916) J.H. McFadden, of Philadelphia, paid high prices for British pictures. \textit{The Times} (23 October 1916): 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} \textit{Year's Art} (1916): 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Lawrence 1997: 229. Between 1914 and 1924 there was an 'elimination of much of the poverty of prewar England, a redistribution of national income in favour of the salariat and manual workers, a narrowing of working-class wage differentials and middle-class salary differentials, a reduction of some of the large incomes derived from wealth and some redistribution of that wealth'. Waites 1987: 279.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Marillier 1926: 150.
  \item \textsuperscript{58} Waites 1987: 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} \textit{Fine Art Trade Journal} 125 (October 1915): 249.
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Marks 1983: 90-1. See also Vainker 1983.
\end{itemize}
that a 'number of people who were making large profits out of war contracts' were spending them 'with ostentatious extravagance'. He concluded: 'The best shops in the west end of London and elsewhere experienced a great change in the character of their customers and gradually began to cater for the extravagant and vulgar tastes of the *nouveaux riches*. 61

Schooling's point was important. Taste, as Pierre Bourdieu has argued, is socially generated, and a new social group's domination of the market precipitated a perceptible shift in the art that sold. 62 Variously described by art journals, somewhat disparagingly, as 'decorative', 'Victorian and passé', 'atavistic' and characterised by 'themes of less ambitious purpose and more homely interest', 63 the typical taste of these buyers was diagnosed at length by the *Fine Art Trade Journal* in an article entitled 'The New Collector':

[He] brings less knowledge to the business, as his indiscriminate buying in the saleroom occasionally bears witness... He is a new and interesting figure at the picture sale, and until recently an entire stranger to the high-class art shop. But he is frankly unpretentious... The taste of the new collector inclines largely to the art that is sentimental, the picture with a story, the literal landscape, especially if it recalls familiar scenes; the humble interior, especially if it recalls grandmother. 64

The sales in the second half of the war proved that grandmothers notwithstanding, the kind of art described above was now reaching consistently high prices that 'in nearly every case' exceeded those 'paid in times of peace and prosperity'. 65 Pastorals and 'old-fashioned' genre pictures' were bought with particular 'avidity'. 66 In May 1916 at the Barratt sale Edwin Landseer's *The Monarch of the Glen* and David Cox's *The Vale of Clwyd* together made a staggering 9600 guineas. 67 In the following summer, the Beecham sale of British art saw just seventy-nine pictures make a highly impressive £59,000. Significantly, all of the highest prices

61 Schooling 1920: 197. Officials opposed such consumption: 'The man who is now making twice or three times his normal income is under a great temptation to spend part of his surplus on some long-desired object... We can all sympathise with him, but it is lamentable that the people who are in the best position should set a bad example by enlarging their consumption'. Quoted in *Charity Organisation Review* 39 (January 1916): 88.
64 *Fine Art Trade Journal* 14 (April 1918): 76.
65 *Year's Art* (1918): 288.
66 *Year's Art* (1918): 291.
there were paid by 'new collectors'. A 'novus homo from the north' called A.H. Smith paid a combined 11,500 guineas for a landscape by John Crome and Constable's Salisbury Cathedral (a picture that had been bought by Beecham only a year earlier for half that price); an industrialist called Robson purchased George Morland's The Benevolent Sportsman (now in the Fitzwilliam Museum) for 5200 guineas; and the whisky distiller Thomas Dewar paid an unprecedented 24,200 guineas for a portrait by Henry Raeburn.

The new collectors did not only buy high-end art. As the Fine Art Trade Journal reminded its readers, 'for every individual sufficiently enriched by the war to be able to buy original paintings there must be at least a thousand with spare cash enough, saved from war earnings, to buy reproductions, and it is safe to assume that their taste is much the same'. The war years consequently saw a boom in the collecting of more modest artworks. Large oil paintings on the whole lost out to small watercolours, sizeable sculptures lost out to 'reproductions of small pieces of sculpture', and in general original pictures lost out to cheap prints, etchings and mezzotints. Many started to write of a 'Revival of the Print', and dealers began to stock smaller, cheaper products like engravings, postcards and 'curios' in order to supply the demand. To more fully understand the war's impact on the art market this chapter must now therefore turn to its dealers.

**IV. DEALERS**

Surveys undertaken by the London Intelligence Committee through the autumn of 1914 demonstrate the extent of, and the reasons for, the commercial dislocation experienced by London's 275,000 private traders following the outbreak of war. No less than nine out of ten firms surveyed by the researchers reported that their businesses had been adversely affected. When asked to account for these problems, 24 per cent cited a lack of materials; 21 per cent specified logistical difficulties; 16 per cent complained about the stoppage of exports (evidence that, despite expectations,
war had not facilitated a ‘capturing’ of international enemy trade); and almost a third confessed that their inability to secure credit to support them in the period had impeded their progress. But the most regularly reported hindrance – some 64 per cent cited it – was the disappearance of buyers.75

Art dealers, who were private traders themselves, had similar experiences.78 In February 1915 the Fine Art Trade Journal published the results of a nationwide survey of their first six months of war. From every region the news was the same: in Manchester a firm’s trade was down 75 per cent; in Torquay sales had halved; in the West Country there was a ‘serious diminution of business’; in Bradford war had ‘killed all good work, such as gilding and the sale of engravings of any value’; in Oldham a dealer wrote that ‘in the first month [of the war] nothing was done at all, and very little has been done since’; in Portsmouth a firm’s usual customers had departed for naval service; and for a dealer in Newcastle there was quite simply ‘no fine art business’ at all. For all, buyers had simply disappeared. The evidence was emphatic, and the journal concluded that there was ‘complete agreement as to the actuality of the loss which had been suffered in consequence of the war’.77

Over the following months journals and newspapers were filled with accounts of art dealers’ hardships: in Sheffield one company that boasted a turnover of £3000 in 1913 was by December 1914 losing £57 per month;78 in London, Tooth & Sons saw its annual turnover of £10,000 become a deficit of £9785 by March 1915;79 elsewhere it was reported that in the first three months of war one dealer had only sold ‘a ten-guinea proof and a guinea etching’ and another had done nothing but replace ‘a sheet of plate glass in a frame’.80 In January 1915 one art retailer wrote:

I started... sixteen months ago with about £200 to £250 in cash, tools and value. Did well up to the war, but immediately dropped to practically nothing for six to eight weeks. This improved slightly, enough to keep us, but not to clear off what we owed... Every week I am being threatened unmercifully. I spend much less now in food, and practically nothing in pleasure and clothing, yet I cannot get along.81

76 Oliver Brown of the Leicester Galleries wrote that ‘it was no easier for those trying to carry on an art gallery than for people engaged in other peaceful occupations’. Brown 1968: 46.
78 Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (December 1914): 360.
79 The Times (3 March 1915): 3.
80 Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (November 1914): 320.
A number of dealers terminated their businesses. In South Kensington alone in just one week in November 1914, fifteen had reportedly ceased trading.\(^{82}\) Newspapers carried bankruptcy notices of major London figures like Raphael Bialogowski (English Fine Art Co.) and Alexander Tooth (Tooth & Sons),\(^{83}\) windings-up of minor provincial traders like E.L. Airey in Blackburn and F.W. Miller in Fakenham;\(^{84}\) terminations of partnerships; temporary suspensions of business, and even news that some were changing trades altogether: realising that ‘fine art [was] taboo’ Phillips & MacConnal in Liverpool abandoned picture sales and launched instead into ladies’ millinery.\(^{85}\) Most art-historically significant was the disappearance of many of the galleries that had been so instrumental in bringing modern art to Britain before the war: the conflict forced the closure of the Grafton, Stafford, Doré and New galleries, and the controversial collapse of Robert René Meyer-See’s Sackville and Marlborough galleries.\(^{86}\)

The Grosvenor Gallery offers illuminating evidence of London dealerships’ difficulties because its fate was assiduously recorded in its director’s letter-book.\(^{87}\) Francis Howard immediately faced diminished sales and in January 1915 applied for a reduced income tax liability (from £1000 to £500) ‘on account of the depreciation of the value of business resulting from the conditions of war’.\(^{88}\) As 1915 progressed he became ‘badly in need of money’, was unable to pay his expenses and faced a deficit

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82 Daily Mirror (23 November 1914): 12.
83 For Bialogowski’s bankruptcy, see Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (December 1914): 360. For the Tooth bankruptcy, see Fine Art Trade Journal 11 (March 1915): 64.
84 Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (September 1914): 268.
85 Fine Art Trade Journal 12 (February 1916): 42.
86 The Grafton Galleries had hosted Manet and the Post-Impressionists in 1910; the Stafford Gallery exhibited the work of Cézanne and Gauguin in 1911 and Picasso in 1912; the Doré, Sackville and Marlborough showed Futurist work in 1912, 1913 and 1914, and the Doré also hosted the first Vorticist exhibition in 1915. It had closed by 1917. For more, see Gruetzner Robins 1997, and Mullen 1980: 7-16. Regarding the controversies surrounding Meyer-See: he was the director of both the Sackville and Marlborough galleries. Since the war he had become ‘subject to a certain degree of financial pressure... selling very few pictures’. Repayment of his debts was postponed when he was called up for military service, but he was involved in a suspicious lawsuit that may well have been an attempt to raise cash. In June 1915 he reported the theft of several pictures and went to court to claim over £3000 in damages. The theft however was somewhat dubious, especially given the depreciation of the value of art during the war (Meyer-See himself stated that ‘works of art were almost valueless, and they were better lost’). The court awarded him victory but believing that the ‘defendant underwriters were fully justified in being suspicious’, it withheld the sum he demanded. ‘Meyer-See vs Mountain’ was reported in The Times (25 February 1916): 3, and The Times (3 March 1916): 3.
87 The gallery controversially adopted the name of the most esteemed gallery in Victorian England when it opened at 51a Bond Street in October 1912. See The Times (15 October 1912): 9, and The Times (16 October 1912): 9. Its papers are held by the Tate (TGA 737).
88 ‘Entry’ (2 February 1915), Letter Book 3 (TGA 737/12): 203.
of £600. He informed his tenants (including the International Society) that 'owing to the disorganisation caused by the war' it was 'impossible...to make arrangements for next year', and attempted to dispense with his lease. His inability to find a taker compelled the gallery to continue operating through 1916, and although attendances benefited from the disappearance of the Grafton Galleries (its closest competitor), spiralling debt and the introduction of Entertainments Tax led to a record loss on trading for the year of £1000. Howard described his financial situation as 'very serious' and predicted he would 'any day have to close'. The Grosvenor Gallery ultimately did close its doors in December 1919.

The collapse of the Grosvenor, Grafton, Tooth, Doré, New and Stafford galleries indicates, perhaps surprisingly, that high-profile establishments – many of which had inhabited St James's for many profitable decades - were not exempted from the commercial difficulties arising from war; indeed, it appears that they were singularly susceptible to them. In August 1915 the Fine Art Trade Journal had observed that 'the lower we get down the grade of Art dealt in, the less we find the business affected'. The reasons for this were clear: the expensive goods that high-end dealers sold had been the first to be abandoned by economising buyers; their high and rising overheads became ever harder to meet, and unlike more modest firms that were not so preoccupied with their artistic reputations, they were less willing to freely adjust to the rhythms of a changed market.

The enterprising dealers and publishers that adjusted to the changed market found that war did offer opportunities – particularly with the exploitation of public

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91 'Entry' (29 February 1916), Ibid: 399-400.
93 In November 1919 luminaries including Herbert Asquith, Winston Churchill and Jacob Epstein signed a petition to save the 'essential element in London's artistic life'; they required £7500 but 'force majeure' compelled Howard to retire the gallery the following month. The Times (6 November 1919): 8.
94 Perhaps the most prestigious art business of them all, Bruciani & Co. - which had been producing casts for the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum for the best part of a century - teetered on the verge of ruin in 1915 and thereafter failed to ever recover (it closed in 1922). The RBS recorded 'the serious condition in which Messrs Bruciani found themselves in consequence of the war... It was feared that they would have to close their business, and the very valuable collection of casts which they had accumulated during 70 years would be dispersed and lost to Artists and to the nation. It was suggested that the Government should take over the collection and carry on the very valuable work that Messrs Bruciani had been doing'. 'Council Meeting' (11 October 1915), Council Minute Book 2 (RBS).
curiosity in the conflict through the ‘production and sale of subjects having a patriotic or naval or military interest’. Soon after the outbreak of war they marginalised their normal output in favour of war-themed work: portraits of generals and admirals; battle pictures; patriotic and religious allegories; depictions of Belgian cities; illustrated war maps; and other topical postcards, prints and mounted photographs. These items were frequently exhibited together in shop windows surrounded by union flags and a prudent choice of patriotic phrases, with a percentage of their sale often being donated to war charities. The ‘war-window’, as it became known, proved highly successful. Trade journals wrote that the firms employing it had ‘large crowds gather round their windows’ – as a photograph of a Liverpool dealership shows [figure 15] – and, moreover, that a ‘substantial percentage’ of those crowds were ‘induced to enter and make purchases’.

Influential London dealerships (like the Leicester and Goupil galleries) that had promoted progressive work before the war through pioneering one-man shows likewise adjusted their approach to wartime circumstances. Realising that the establishments who persisted with a shilling admission charge to an exhibition of a largely unknown artist experimenting with form would remain ‘empty’, they withdrew financial support from their less commercial artists and abandoned the high-risk strategy of one-man shows in favour of topical exhibitions hosted for ostensibly charitable purposes. The results were generally condemned: Reginald Grundy denounced the products as ‘merely catchpenny productions, which will be forgotten when the conflict is over’, while Robert Ross (1869-1918) voiced concern over the exhibitions’ charitable dimensions:

96 The Fine Art Trade Journal encouraged dealers to make ‘special shows of war pictures, and to encourage patronage offer a percentage of all sales to either the National or the local war funds’, 10 (September 1914): 265-6. See also ‘A Trade Opportunity during the War,’ Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (August 1914): 250-2, and ‘Selling Subjects for War Time,’ Ibid: 254-55.

97 Most dealers wrote that their initial war losses were compensated by war business. According to Hollam’s, in Norwich, they ‘helped considerably’; another wrote that ‘the chief business arising out of the war has been the sale of topical pictures and naval photographs... of which [they had] sold many thousands’. Fine Art Trade Journal 11 (February 1915): 42-3.

98 Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (September 1914): 263.

99 The Goupil Gallery reported in November 1914 that ‘friendly advice has not been lacking as to the advisability - not to say uselessness - of our continuing to hold exhibitions. Our friends may have been right’. Art News (30 November 1914): 10.

100 See Art News (31 October 1914): 271-3.

101 ‘The one-man show epidemic has been abated for the moment’. Art News (30 November 1914): 10. Mark Gertler recorded in 1914 that ‘Knewstub [of the Chenil Gallery] writes and tells me that he cannot let me have any more money’. Cited in Woodeson 1972: 149-50.

Modern art exhibited for charity is always a little suspect... You are generally prepared for watercolours of the church-bazaar school... or for the studio-sweepings of eminent painters who are always ready to see the hitherto unsaleable realise large prices on behalf of a good cause.\footnote{Burlington Magazine 29 (June 1916): 135.}

It was doubtless the case that as the war progressed it became increasingly difficult to find aesthetically adventurous exhibitions in commercial galleries.\footnote{For exhibitions, see Goebel 2007.} Nevertheless, topical exhibitions appeared to offer all fine art retailers the only financial compensation for an otherwise comprehensive loss of business.

Topicality, however, could be financially remunerative only as long as public interest in the war remained. It did not. Fortunately, as that curiosity waned the art market began to recover some of its pre-war buoyancy. Although historians usually view 1916 as the war’s \textit{annus horribilis}, it was in the winter of that year that the trade, as this chapter has previously maintained, turned a corner. By November 1916 the \textit{Fine Art Trade Journal} announced that ‘dealers in art treasures were finding no difficulty in disposing of their wares at prices favourably comparing with those prevailing before the war’.\footnote{Fine Art Trade Journal 12 (November 1916): 308.} Towards the end of the conflict some were writing that pictures were regularly reaching prices of more than four times their pre-war value, that some dealers were turning over thousands of pounds a week, and that several journalists were already ‘shaking their heads over the lavish expenditure on art under present conditions’.\footnote{‘Boom in Modern Art,’ Fine Art Trade Journal 14 (April 1918): 66.} Bond Street appeared to be not merely ‘back to itself’: many dealers were in agreement with auctioneers and critics that they were in the midst of a wartime ‘boom’ in contemporary art.\footnote{Fine Art Trade Journal 14 (July 1918): 136.}

However, the perverse logic of war meant that despite the market improvement, dealers continued to struggle against a coalition of new complications. They were most severely incapacitated by the disappearance of their workforce. By just 1915 the Fine Art Trade Guild already reported that three hundred of its seven hundred members were on national service: this number included twenty from Maple’s Art Department, sixteen from Agnew’s, six from the Fine Art Society, five from Duveen’s (including two of the Duveens themselves), two from Colnaghi, and all four partner-brothers from W.C. Price & Co.\footnote{‘Fine Art Trade Guild Roll of Honour’, Year’s Art (1915): 430-44.} Many of these individuals had been integral parts...
of such businesses for decades. When the Edinburgh-based Doig, Wilson & Wheatley lost nine of its employees, it lost with them an extraordinary combined service of 365 years. Many such skilled staff could not (particularly in wartime) easily be replaced, and some were never replaced: by the end of the war two hundred members of the art trade had been killed.

Dealers were also confronted with the very same business problems that had plagued both artists (Chapter 2) and exhibiting societies (Chapter 3). Like artists they depended on the availability and affordability of art materials - required as they were to clean, mount, frame, glaze, pack and print for their customers on a daily basis – and thereafter on the ability to transport those goods. But the shortage of materials and the dislocation of delivery services challenged these principal commercial practices. Like exhibiting societies, London dealers also saw their premises become problematic. It was not only that air raids had scared potential collectors away from the West End in which they were usually based; early shop closing legislation and the restricted lighting ordinance (which made it ‘more and more difficult to attract customers by their window displays’) had reduced the opportunity and inclination for buyers to enter their galleries. Moreover, they too were affected by government requisitioning. Both the French Gallery on Pall Mall and J.F.E. Grundy on Adam Street were commandeered for national purposes.

Art dealers’ gravest problems, like those of artists and exhibiting societies, were financial. The rising costs of rent, insurance, electricity bills, stock and salaries had challenged all retail businesses in the war years. But dealers in art were particularly susceptible to these developments. Many - based in grand West End properties - paid exorbitant rents in the first place; their insurance rates were considerably higher than those paid by other traders; they were compelled to pay both Entertainments Tax and the prospective Luxury Duty; and their goods – principally imported from

110 Year’s Art (1918): 345-9.
113 ‘A walk along Bond Street... one can see dozens of establishments connected with either modern or retrospective art, the rents of which range from hundreds to thousands of pounds a year. No government measure has yet been passed to absolve the proprietors from paying rent or taxes. In many instances the dealers have partially financed their businesses with loans from their banks and elsewhere. They have not been released from the obligation to pay interest on these. Close up these various galleries and shops, and the result will be ruin’. Grundy 1915b: 57.
the Continent – had increased in price more dramatically than most other products.114 But the real problem for art dealers was that unlike many other retailers they could not raise prices in order to cover these expenses. Their goods were not necessities, and if prices increased they would simply not be bought (if anything, buyers were demanding discounts). The situation was neatly summarised by The Fine Art Trade Journal: ‘Rates, taxes, wages, carriage, packing; all his expenses are “up,” yet his sales are down - often badly so - and, unlike the butcher or baker, he cannot raise prices - except for frames, material, and work done’.115

This brief account has demonstrated that the art trade was singularly vulnerable to the political and commercial challenges that arose from war. It faced many of the problems that other retail businesses faced between 1914 and 1918: rising overheads, lost staff, material shortages, delivery difficulties, increased economic regulation and closed foreign markets. Moreover, it additionally witnessed the clients on which it had depended for decades grow unwilling and unable to support it; it was attacked for ‘encouraging useless luxury’;116 it became a principal victim of the government’s fiscal policies, and it never had the ability to neutralise its losses. However, all of this did not mean – as most art historians have claimed – that it simply disappeared during the war years. Indeed, the examples of auctions’ charity sales and dealers’ ‘war-windows’ suggest that it was arguably forced to develop a more public face than it had ever possessed before.

The war’s most far-reaching consequence for the market was, however, intimately related to the social changes that the nation was itself undergoing. While the conflict undermined the spending power of Britain’s established collecting

114 The implications of Entertainments Duty have already been discussed, taxing dealers – as it had done exhibiting societies – for charging admission to exhibitions. Luxury Duty alarmed dealers to such an extent that they called an emergency at Robinson, Fisher & Co. in St James’s on 14 May 1918 to discuss the matter. The Times (14 May 1918): 9. Their resolution is unknown, but its attendees must have agreed with the parliamentary art committee that five days earlier had warned that the duty would cause ‘much hardship’ to dealers. Quoted in The Times (9 May 1918): 7. Reports from France of the devastating impact of Luxury Tax on Parisian trade had only compounded these fears: one correspondent reported that five out of six customers of Parisian drapery stores refused to complete their transaction when informed that they had to pay the duty, while the art dealer Jacques Seligmann announced that the tax (he calculated it at 24.5 per cent) was virtually obliterating the art market there. The Times (4 June 1918): 9; The Times (9 May 1918): 5. Dealers’ principal concern, however, was that the duty would encourage sellers and buyers to bypass ‘middle-men’ like dealerships and auction houses in order to evade the levy. Select Committee on Luxury Duty 1918: 62.


116 Grundy 1915b: 54.
classes it enriched a new group of industrialists who began to purchase artworks—many sold by the impoverished aristocracy—in abundance. The art market thus became one of the sites in which the nation’s wealth changed hands: ‘Peter helping Paul to pay Caesar’, wrote the Year’s Art, ‘is a summing up of the whole matter’.117 These new buyers brought with them new tastes, and these tastes—for art that was English, pastoral, traditional, modest and middle-brow—fundamentally changed the aesthetic orientation of the British art market. Whether this change had enduring artistic implications is outside the scope of this chapter. Taken together, however, one conclusion seems certain: war had transformed ‘business as usual’ quite emphatically into ‘business unusual’.

117 Year’s Art (1918): 1. The most notable site of such a phenomenon was land. Between 1917 and 1921 it was calculated that the break-up of old estates caused one quarter of England to change hands. Thomson 1963: 332.
SECTION III: FUNCTIONS
CHAPTER FIVE: WAR ART

There is no war, then, without representation. 1

The outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 activated an intense public curiosity in the European war. 'War fever' (as it was often known) had widespread cultural implications, but its most salient consequences were felt in the domain of visual culture. 2 The public's overwhelming desire to 'see' the war caused audiences that were 'bewildering in their immensity' to flock to war films and exhibitions, pictorial journals to rapidly reach huge circulations, and topical prints to be published and purchased in their millions. 3 It was these phenomena that proved to the government that there were 'millions of voters... for whom the demand for war pictures is unlimited', and ultimately led Charles Masterman to establish a pictorial propaganda unit at the Ministry of Information (Wellington House) in April 1916. 4

Wellington House became responsible for commissioning what remain the most celebrated and studied British paintings of the war. Produced by Bone, Kennington, Nevinson, Nash and others, they doubtless deserve the scholarly attention that has been lavished on them. They were not, however, the only representations of war that artists made between 1914 and 1918, and for society as a whole they were emphatically not the most influential. 5 Most civilians 'saw' the conflict not in the elite galleries of the West End or in expensive official publications, but rather in the daily

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2 The war, for instance, caused national expenditure on newspapers to treble between 1914 and 1918. Prest & Adams 1954: 133. For more on the conflict's impact on the press, see Clark 1918, and Cook 1920. There are numerous discussions of the public's ' scopophilia': 'The public, since it cannot body forth pictures for itself, insists on having them put before it in increasing measure. It wants coloured illustrations; it revels in picture papers; it fills the cinematograph every day', 'Pictures and Real Drama', Saturday Review 122 (23 September 1916): 290.
4 Cited in Malvern 2004: 38.
5 For a discussion, see Sillars 1987: 154-7.
illustrations provided by the pictorial press and in the cheap commercial prints that they themselves possessed. Art historians have consistently rejected this branch of war art for being either unreliable evidence or bad art, but it nevertheless performed an important function in shaping how the home front viewed the front line.

I. Truth

It is of vast importance to humanity than the truth shall be told about war.  

The public was generally drawn to images in search of an authenticity that was considered unobtainable through the written word. This was partly the result of a gradual loss of trust in the traditional print correspondents and partly the product of a conviction that considered language itself incapable of communicating the unprecedented reality of modern war. Not all images, however, were equally reliable, and numerous paragonal debates emerged about the advantages and disadvantages of different modes of visualisation in relaying the truth about the war. It was clear to contemporaries, initially at least, that photography alone embodied infallible mimetic primacy: its ‘superiority over all other forms of graphic record’, declared one writer in 1916, was altogether ‘incontestable’.  

This common assertion was grounded primarily in what is now understood as the ‘indexical’ quality of photographic images. According to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the index is ‘a sign of its object by virtue of being connected with it as a matter of fact… It may…identify its object and assure us of its existence and presence’. In other words, the photograph’s direct, ‘causal’ relationship to its subject rendered it uniquely reliable evidence of that subject. Its reliability was further enhanced by the mechanical nature by which it was generated – a process that removed the ‘fallible’ human intermediary that had long undermined the objectivity

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6 Bullard 1914: viii.
7 For the loss of faith in correspondents, see Knightley 1975, and Farish 2001. For the inadequacy of language, see the introductory passage to a lantern slide lecture on the war: ‘Language utterly fails to describe the glorious feats and magnificent heroisms of the great War, and I find words entirely inadequate to convey more than a faint impression of the greatness and glory of the deeds performed by thousands of men’. A Lantern Lecture on Heroic Actions and Daring Deeds of the Great War, London: Newton & Co. (1916).
8 See Malvern 2004: 37-49.
9 Gower, Jast & Topley 1916: 2-3. See also Salis 1916d.
of other representational methods. Finally, some writers (most famously Ernst Jünger (1895-1998)) believed that this very objectivity was thematically suited to depicting the dehumanising nature of mechanised warfare. Taken together, most were thus in agreement that when it came to depicting modern conflict, the 'properly adjusted camera' was nothing less than 'completely truthful'.

Contemporaries were nevertheless aware of photography's shortcomings. As one correspondent for *The Times* observed: 'The weak point of the fixed camera is that it can only record single moments; and single moments, as experience shows, are never their complete and eloquent selves without the moments before and the moments after.' This deficiency, however, appeared to be persuasively neutralised by photography's ontological offspring, the cinematograph. The cinematograph was barely two decades old in 1914 but was widely believed to be 'climbing out of contempt into honour' through the war years. Instrumental in its rehabilitation was the 1916 official film *Battle of the Somme*, which seemed to confirm that the lens was indeed the sole guarantor of authenticity in representations of the conflict.

Released in August, seen by tens of millions of Britons within weeks and backed by scores of official personnel, critics maintained that *Battle of the Somme*'s value lay above all in its unique realism. The *Manchester Guardian* delighted at witnessing 'the real thing at last'; the *Daily Express* praised its 'sheer realism'; and the *Daily Mirror* described it as a completely 'true picture'. One journalist who had visited the front even made the staggering confession that the film seemed more real to him than the

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11 An influential later exponent of this argument was André Bazin: 'No matter how skillful the painter, his work was always in fee to an inescapable subjectivity. The fact that a human hand intervened cast a shadow of doubt over the image... The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture making... The photographic image is the object itself'. Bazin 1967: 12.
12 'The photograph stands outside the realm of sensibility. It has something of a telescopic quality: one can tell that the object photographed was seen by an insensitive and invulnerable eye. That eye registers equally well as a bullet in midair or the moment in which a man is torn apart by an explosion. This is our characteristic way of seeing, and photography is nothing other than an instrument of this new propensity in human nature... The description of the most minute psychic events will be replaced by a new kind of precise and objective depiction.' From 'War and Photography', cited in Kaes 1993: 109. See also Dagen 1996: 51-80.
16 See Reeves 1986, and 1996.
war itself. Most importantly, all would have agreed with The Times that such an accurate vision of the conflict was obtainable ‘by no other means’.

It was in this critical context – where the mechanical image was believed to be ‘worth much more than a sketch by a draughtsman who is trying to produce a pretty picture’ - that artists and their advocates (gallerists, publishers and patrons) attempted to demonstrate that they too were legitimate chroniclers of war. Their principal strategy was simply to appropriate the indexical authority of photographic images. The War Pictorial (an official publication with a global, propagandist function) was reluctant to use illustrations at all, but when it did it deliberately obscured their graphic nature. In a pair of pictures of soldiers going ‘over the top’ [figure 16] the illustrator consciously emulated photographic characteristics: an awkward low viewpoint; abrupt cropping; a suppression of the painterly; an imitation of focal length differentials and, of course, the absence of a signature. The War Pictorial was effectively forcing ‘iconic’ images (to again employ Charles Sanders Peirce’s terms) to function in indexical ways. The strategy was reinforced by captions that encouraged readers to look through the pictures as though they were ‘transparent’ photographs rather than at them as though they were artworks.

Less official sources like the Graphic, the Illustrated War News, the War Illustrated and the Sphere also emphasised the indexical quality of their illustrations - but in different ways. From the beginning of the war they advertised for ‘witness images’: the Graphic wrote that it would ‘pay liberally for any Sketches or Photographs sent either by officers or men at the front…dealing with striking episodes in the field’.

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21 ‘The Icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness… The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established’. Peirce 1932: 299.
22 For the ‘transparency’ of the photograph, see Walton 1984. This policy was even adopted by publications that were evidently illustrated by graphic images. In Wellington House’s British Artists at the Front series, the timbre of C.E. Montague’s catalogue entries transformed the pictures from representations of objects into the very objects they represented. His discussion of C.R.W. Nevinson’s Inside Brigade Headquarters read: ‘A typical advanced headquarters in a well-built dug-out. Except in cases of special good fortune, work must be done by candle-light, the air is not exhilarating, and you must be careful not to bump your head against the ceiling. A deep dug-out of this kind gives almost perfect shelter, though the sound of any shell bursting near it is curiously loud’. Dodgson & Montague 1918 I: n.p.
23 Graphic (17 October 1914): 543.
When they did arrive, pictorial journals celebrated them as embodiments of infallible first-hand authenticity: they were advertised widely and given headlines like ‘Real Sketches by Real Soldiers: Reproduced just as they came from the fields of battle in France’; ‘Sunday, August 23rd, 1914 – drawn in the trenches’, or ‘Facsimile Sketch made during the action by the Commander of one of the British Destroyers’.24 Even when the illustrations were produced by in-house professionals (as the majority continued to be) captions like ‘drawn on the spot’, ‘from direct camera pictures’, ‘from men who have been there’ and ‘from notes by an eye-witness’ remained adjacent to them to provide confirmation that, like the photograph, they were causally connected to the fighting.25

This desire for indexical legitimacy precipitated a changing aesthetic in the pictorial press. Before the war readers had responded most enthusiastically to highly finished professional illustrations. During the war however, such images were no longer considered credible. In response to this, while some journals (as has been demonstrated) made artworks appropriate a photographic aesthetic, others adopted a strategy that on the contrary stressed the uniquely graphic nature of the sketch, believing that a hurried, amateur style was more likely to be the spontaneous product of direct experience. They encouraged many of their professional illustrators to cultivate this new style. In mid-August 1914, the Graphic’s Gilbert Holiday abandoned his customarily artful output in favour of work that enlisted agitated or wild lines, largely unfinished areas, crumpled or stained paper, and rapidly scrawled captions to render implausible compositions – live cavalry units charging at the picture plane – appear as though they had been made in unrehearsed terror during the heat of battle [figure 17].

Journals continued to publish more finished illustrations, and while these could not reasonably profess that they had been produced under fire at the front, they too made their own claims for authenticity. Of this type, Fortunino Matania’s (1881-1963) contributions to the Sphere were the acme. Although clearly contrived and bombastic, the journal nonetheless repeatedly ‘guaranteed’ them as ‘a perfectly truthful and accurate presentation’ of the war, and an account of Matania’s working methods

25 Illustrated War News (2 September 1914): 11; Sphere (29 August 1914): 3; Graphic (28 November 1914): 743; Graphic (22 August 1914): 315.
suggests that they were doubtless produced with that intention. He visited wounded troops who had witnessed skirmishes, taking with him a map of the battlefield and a box of toy-soldiers: ‘Bit by bit, with the skill of a cross-examining counsel’, he extracted information of the event from his subjects:

First of all, the disposition of the troops is settled, by consultation with the wounded Tommy and the manoeuvring of the toy soldiers. Then one comes to questions of detail... “How many pillars? Was there one on either side of the door? Any smaller pillars inside the door? What was the rough shape of the opening? Was the door studded with big nails or iron hinges? Did you notice what the handles were like?”

Matania also visited battlefields himself, built a reconstruction trench in his garden at Potters Bar, and was even supplied with military equipment by the War Office to ensure that technical details were ‘to-the-letter’ correct. His resulting illustrations may have possessed neither the directness of photographs nor the emotional authenticity of official war artists’ work, but in the synthetic manner by which he reconstructed details of events his images arguably possessed an even deeper, empirical truth. Soldiers at least thought so: awed by the ‘amazing realism’ of his images, he invariably received ‘congratulatory letters’ from those who ‘were present’ and were ‘absolutely convinced’ that he must have been so too.

A significant strategy in the legitimisation of art stressed the importance of authorship as a guarantor of veracity, a claim generally denied of photography. The first issue of the Illustrated War News in August 1914 proudly announced that its ‘special’ artists (Frederic Villiers, Sydney Adamson, H.C. Seppings Wright, Julius Price and George Lynch) were ‘AT THE FRONT’. It proceeded to establish their pedigree with portraits and mini-biographies [figure 18] that together framed them as intrepid British adventurers risking their lives in the ‘battle for truth’.

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29 Bradshaw 1917: 4-5.
30 Towards the end of the war, discourses surrounding photography also began to stress the importance of authorship: ‘These pictures are being taken not by a mere machine, but by six adventurous young men, who risk their lives day out at day in for our stay-at-home sakes’. McClandish Smith 1918: 576.
31 Prigg 1964: i. Seppings Wright had served in the Navy, Adamson had fought, Lynch had been wounded and captured in the Boer War, and Villiers had ‘twelve English and foreign war medals, clasps and decorations’. Illustrated War News (12 August 1914): iii. The prolific correspondent Philip Gibbs (1877-1962) similarly recalled confrontations with generals, hideous experiences of suffering and death, and dispatches written ‘in white heat, wrung from
reports persistently stressed their own perceptual and moral superiority to the impassive transcription of the lens: comments would often be appended to sketches that read: ‘I saw the devil’s work with my own eyes. It was far beyond the reach of a camera’. The resulting representation’s truth-content was therefore not vested in the image itself but in the attestation of its creator. Here the artist was no longer the fallible intermediary; he was the uniquely dependable eyewitness.

The most explicit example of the ‘special’ artist’s function is seen in the representation of the correspondent Frederic Villiers (1851-1922). Villiers consciously cultivated his image as the public’s own heroic, anti-establishment, scrutinising gaze. His pictorial reports were always accompanied by a swashbuckling provenance: how their creator had adopted disguises to evade the authorities; furtively gained access to secret locations; and smuggled his evidence back to the home front in defiance of the censor. Even portraits of him were saturated with the iconography of ‘the seer’. In one depiction of a bombardment on the western front Villiers included himself in the bottom-right corner, observing the action through a periscope [figures 19 & 20]. In doing so, the image was forced to perform a reciprocal authentication. It authenticated Villiers by rendering him bravely present at the front, a reliable proxy for the nation. Yet that identity in turn authenticated the scene behind, his presence offering a personal guarantee that it did actually take place. The two, in short, acted as witnesses for each other, and the representation was transformed into a testimony.

The critical framework that surrounded the special correspondent informed Wellington House’s employment and deployment of official artists from 1916. Its publications likewise introduced them with portraits and brief biographies that established their credibility as reliable witnesses. Unlike the pictorial press, however,

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the heart’. Prigg 1964: i. Being a correspondent, he wrote, ‘put a tremendous, and sometimes almost intolerable, strain upon our nerves and strength... Before battle we saw the whole organization of that great machine of slaughter. After battle we saw the fields of dead... The effect of such a vision, year in, year out, can hardly be calculated in psychological effect... We trudged through the trenches, sat in dugouts with battalion officers, followed our troops in their advance...explored the enemy dugouts, talked with German prisoners... walked through miles of guns, saw the whole sweep and fury of great bombardments... climbed into observation posts, saw attacks and counter attacks’. Gibbs 1929: 242-3.

32 Graphic (31 October 1914): 620.
33 This formulation was, of course, not new: war correspondents had been presented this way for decades. See Bullard 1914, and Matthews 1957.
34 Villiers 1921: 308-19.
35 In most photographs of Villiers optical devices (particularly binoculars) are as ubiquitous as saintly attributes.
36 My gratitude goes to A. Langley for drawing my attention to this image.
this credibility was constructed through the complex relationship of two seemingly incompatible identities. The first democratised the artist, and was derived from his social position as a soldier; the second individualised him, and was derived from his social position as an artist.\(^3\) The resulting conflation – the ‘soldier-artist’ – could therefore claim to speak on behalf of all men but with a perspicacity and eloquence denied to but a few of them. The ‘soldier-artist’ also embodied a crucial independence (often of the dissenting variety) from his official employers. Discussions of Nevinson for instance repeatedly stressed that he was ‘uncorrupted’, had ‘preserved his integrity as an artist’, and had ‘jealously’ guarded his ‘own artistic vision’.\(^3\) It was only the social position of the artist, as Sue Malvern has argued, that could embody this complex and credible independence; ‘photography, lacking social and cultural status, was unable to fulfill this function’.\(^3\)

The construction of the artist as a visionary intermediary introduced a further set of claims for the truth-content of art – claims that involved fundamental redefinitions of Truth and Reality themselves. A number of commentators argued that artists alone had the capacity to discern and communicate a ‘deeper truth’ than the superficial empiricism of the lens.\(^4\) In an important 1918 (official) essay on Nevinson, J.E. Crawford Flitch wrote:

> Appearance is not reality. Appearance may be observed, but reality, to be known, must be experienced. That is why the report of the official artist has more value than the report of the official photographer. For the camera observes everything and experiences nothing. It is inhumanly impartial and cannot speak the language of the spirit. Concerning the things that we most wish to know it is dumb. We ask for the truth, the whole truth, and it gives us nothing but the facts.\(^4\)

In this formulation the artist and the camera were no longer competing to represent the same reality; they were promising the viewer access to qualitatively different realities. As one commentator remarked: ‘One does not see with the eyes alone, but with the brains and nerves too’;\(^4\) and thus while the camera might have been able to

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37 In an official exhibition of Eric Kennington’s work, Robert Graves (1895-1985) argued that Kennington was not ‘the embarrassed visitor in a strange drawing room nor the bewildered old lady at her first football match: he is a soldier, at home in trench and shell hole’. Graves 1918: 6. See also ‘Lord Beaverbrook on Art in Propaganda’, The Times (2 March 1918): 3.
38 Crawford Flitch 1918: 9.
39 Malvern 1986: 510. Nevinson’s necessary appearance of independence was most clearly dramatised in his censorship controversy of 1918. See Nevinson 1932.
41 Crawford Flitch 1918: 7.
42 Montague 1918 III: n.p.
accurately show how the war looked, only the artist – particularly the artist who had been to the front himself – could reliably represent how it felt.\footnote{For a discussion, see Salis 1916d.}

The words of servicemen were then enlisted (as they had been by the popular press) to reinforce the claim that the visual records on view were absolutely genuine – even if sometimes the comments themselves were not. In one suspiciously vernacular evaluation of Paul Nash’s war paintings, ‘Lieutenant John Turner’ wrote:

Show these to any fellow who has inhabited a dug-out. Pass them round any Mess in France or Flanders. Ask the man next to you in hospital in Town what he thinks of them... You will hear ‘Good heavens! – he has got home there right enough’. ‘Ah!!! Absolutely it! Sight of it makes you feel queer.\footnote{John Turner (Lt., Royal Warwickshire Regiment), quoted in the \textit{Saturday Review} (25 May 1918): 510.}

Soldiers’ responses – particularly to idiosyncratic art like Nash’s – would have probably more closely approximated the dismissive bewilderment captured in a \textit{Punch} cartoon \footnote{Salis 1916b.} than the sympathetic approval quoted here. But for those involved in the production, exhibition and distribution of war art, they served their purpose: by having witnesses validate such images they sought to convince a curious and exacting public that the art they were viewing was indeed ‘the real thing’.\footnote{O.R.D. 1916: 2.}

Not all artworks, however, were equally authentic, and soon old debates over artistic style were incorporated into new debates over wartime veracity. Their most salient feature was the consistency with which commentators – even conservative commentators – argued that it was now progressive art that had the monopoly on truth. In the aftermath of Nevinson’s 1916 exhibition of Cubo-Futurist war pictures at the Leicester Galleries, hitherto reactionary voices suddenly altered their critical positions: the traditional \textit{Westminster Gazette} wrote that such ‘modern artistic tendencies’ were ‘extraordinarily well adapted to the pictorial representation of war’,\footnote{Clutton Brock 1916. Official sources made similar claims: ‘In drawing strange places so strangely, Mr. Nash contrives to bring back to the mind the strange things felt by men who were there, at moments of stress’. Montague 1918 III: n.p. For an excellent discussion, see also Hynes 1990: 163-4.} and the reactionary Clutton Brock in \textit{The Times} declared Nevinson’s Cubism ‘justified’ because he believed its mechanomorphic qualities uniquely capable of illustrating the alienating effects of mechanised warfare.\footnote{Clutton Brock 1916.}
The corollary of this formulation was a condemnation of traditional methods of representation as 'wholly inadequate for the interpretation' of such a 'tremendous conflict'. This kind of war art became identified with old Royal Academicians mainly 'seeking inspiration second hand' from the comfort of their studios [figures 22 & 23], or the commercial illustrators of the pictorial press cynically intensifying patriotic sentiment (and sales) through a brazen misrepresentation of the events across the Channel. Both were roundly pilloried as the embodiments of anachronism, ignorance, artificiality and, ultimately, untruth. Of the countless reviews that condemned these artists' attempts to represent the war, here are just three:

The inane stupidity of our illustrations and Academy pictures proves that those stay-at-homes - who, after all, can only be old men, unfit, or our conscientious objectors - cannot grasp what war is. Only he who has lived through the horrors of an intensive bombardment, only he who has known the lust and terror of a bayonet charge, only he who has scattered Germans in fragments with bombs, only he who has escaped death by millimetres can know what these things really mean.

Their producers have at best a facile but limited technique and novelette imaginations. Wide-eyed heroics and cinema gestures pass for life with them... Their horses and men are obvious "properties" that have never been nearer Spion Kop or Arras than St. John's Wood. Why, their very guns and rifles are Drury Lane furniture... To read of Belgian and French peasants streaming down the roads, escaped from ravaged villages, to engage a few suitable models suitably dressed up, and paint them in procession, is not enough to make your picture live.

The journalistic mind, for all its bravado of realism, is at bottom a conventional and sentimental mind, and therefore shy of reality. Hence it is at times strangely unmodern. It persists in regarding the War of to-day through the brightly coloured glasses of romance. It has assented to a certain loss of picturesqueness and reconciled itself to the camouflage of khaki, but it obstinately refuses to recognize all the consequences of the conditions of modern warfare and the changed spirit of the personnel... War is still the glad adventure of the adventurous soul or the willingly imposed duty of the patriotic heart.

The resulting binary opposition - 'untruthful' traditional war art versus its 'truthful' progressive counterpart - has continued to frame scholarly evaluations of the First World War. Perhaps the most influential accounts of the conflict – by Paul

49 Collins Baker 1915b.
50 Salis 1916b. See also Salis 1916a.
51 Collins Baker 1917a.
52 Konody 1917: 10.
53 Sue Malvern produced an excellent discussion of this interpretive problem. Reviewing Cork 1994 and Rother 1994, she wrote, critically: 'The mass media and avant-garde art are separated
Fussell, Samuel Hynes and Richard Cork are themselves constructed upon its implications. Fussell juxtaposes the obsolescence of an ‘essentially feudal’ ‘high diction’ with the emergence of a defiant ‘modern memory’; Hynes’s central proposition is that an ‘aesthetic of direct experience’ led to the emergence in 1916 of a new war art that employed modernist methods to create ‘visions of war that were truth-telling’;54 while Cork rejects traditional war art altogether as ‘risible’ and ‘reprehensible’, arguing that only modernists were capable of communicating the conflict’s ‘bitter truth’ and ‘rebarbative reality’.55

This critical model however is deeply flawed, and not merely because it rests on an untenable prejudice that generally favours modernist cultural output over its less innovative equivalents. More problematic is the logocentric confidence with which it has assumed that ‘direct experience’ could be the guarantor of a ‘true’ representation of the war. Such faith is profoundly challenged both by current intellectual uncertainties concerning the ontological validity of Truth and by a vast quantity of contemporary evidence. Indeed, the war is widely believed to have dismantled the very integrity of individual experience.56 For artists this crisis of experience was accompanied by what Bernd Hüppauf has termed a ‘crisis of representation’.57 The few artists and correspondents who were granted access to the battlefield consistently

by the ideological partiality of the one and the authenticity and truth-telling status of the other’. Malvern 1996: 308.
54 Fussell 1975; Hynes 1990: 159, 166.
55 Cork 1994: 125. Even the few art historians who have examined more traditional war pictures have adhered to such evaluations. Peter Harrington asserted that he was ‘not condoning’ traditional art, and proceeded to argue that it was instead ‘a new breed’ of young modern artists who captured ‘the realities of the carnage on the Western Front’. Harrington 1993: 303-4. Likewise, Stuart Sillars in his book on popular war art still claimed that ‘it is not easy to forgive the perpetuation of clean-cut heroism for so long after the darker reality was clear’. Sillars 1987: 162.
56 Walter Benjamin noticed that ‘at the end of the war... men returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience?... For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body’. Benjamin 1999a: 83-4. For Theodor Adorno the ‘mechanical rhythm [of modern warfare] completely determines the human relation to [it], not only in the disproportion between individual bodily strength and the energy of machines, but in the most hidden cells of experience... The body’s incongruity with mechanical warfare made real experience impossible. No-one could have recounted it... The long interval between the war memoirs and the conclusion of the peace is not fortuitous: it testifies to the painful reconstruction of memory, which in all the books conveys a sense of impotence and even falseness, no matter what terrors the writers have passed through’. Adorno 2005: 54.
57 Hüppauf 1993.
found that the nature of the combat – nocturnal, diffuse and tediously deadlocked - rarely left them with anything of interest to see, let alone represent. This 'fog' of war (to quote Winston Churchill) often rendered front-line war work as futile as its home-front counterparts [figures 24, 25 & 26].

The distinction between front line and home front war art is also problematic. C.R.W. Nevinson, for instance, has traditionally been viewed as the epitome of the front-line artist, and the paragon of Hynes's 'aesthetic of direct experience'. However a recent essay by Ben Jones has persuasively argued that Nevinson based many of his most famous paintings of war on photographs he had seen at home in the pictorial press rather than on incidents he himself had witnessed. It is in short becoming clear that although veracity was a decisive marker by which artists, publishers, official patrons and critics claimed validity for their representations of war, it is nonetheless a misleading category in the evaluation of war art. The second half of this chapter will argue that a different set of critical approaches is necessary if we are to more clearly understand the nature and function of war art between 1914 and 1918.

II. BEYOND TRUTH

As Whistler said, one does not sit upon the keyboard of the piano, wholesale; one selects the notes to strike.

In conceptualising artists as noble messengers sacrificing all in order to bring back the 'rebarbative reality' of the front line to civilians, scholars have misrepresented how and why they set about producing 'war art' in the first place. For most, the maintenance of professional continuity was more important than the disruptive requirements of Truth, and they simply incorporated war into their existing output. A number pragmatically amended the titles or contents of works that

58 For an extended discussion of the invisibility of the war, see Dagen 1996: 81-139.
59 Quoted in Johnson 1978: 167. The photographer Frank Hurley's comments are particularly revealing here: he had 'tried, and tried again, to include events on a single negative but the results have been hopeless. Everything is on such a wide scale. Figures scattered, atmosphere dense with haze and smoke - shells that simply won't burst when required'. Quoted in Bickel 1980: 61.
60 For an excellent monograph, see Walsh 2002.
61 Jones 2007. Nevinson was not alone: photographic precedents can be found for Roger Fry's German General Staff (1915) and John Singer Sargent's Gassed (1918-19) among others. For Fry, see Cork 1994: 79-80.
had been largely produced before August 1914 in order to register the event in time for the exhibitions that followed it [*figure 1*].63 Those making new works tended to represent the conflict through the prism of their prevailing artistic interests: Walter Sickert’s *The Integrity of Belgium* (1914) and *The Soldiers of King Albert the Ready* (1914), Vanessa Bell’s *Triple Alliance* (1915), Gertler’s *Merry-Go-Round* (1916), Walter Bayes’ *The Underworld* (1918), and Nevinson’s Cubo-Futurist war pictures (as much as the traditional battle paintings it apparently rendered obsolete) were all, as the *Athenaeum* complained, ‘picture-making on familiar lines for which the war has been utilized as a pretext’.

Artists of all kinds did not, then, adjust their output to accurately represent war; they adjusted the war to accurately represent their output – a professional decision to which Truth was rarely admitted.

For many war artists the ‘bitter truth’ was not only inconsequential; it was also undesirable. In the *Studio* one artist exclaimed:

War as it really is! Good Lord! Pray Heaven that no one will ever attempt it... I should be ashamed to paint war as it is... The sights that are put before you in war are not fit for pictorial treatment, and the man who tried to represent them would degrade himself and the people to whom he showed his work.

The painter Lady Butler (1846-1933) echoed these remarks, claiming that had she ‘seen ever a corner of a real battlefield’ she ‘would never have painted another war picture’. The artist, she declared, ‘should be careful to keep himself at a distance, lest the ignoble and vile details under his eyes should blind him irretrievably to the noble things that rise beyond’.66 And *Tatler* wrote: ‘The tragedy of war we all realise. It needs no illustration’.

For all of these commentators the war was too monotonous, confusing and sordid to be represented as it actually was, and it was for precisely this reason that John Salis – the very critic who had persistently condemned the artificiality of traditional war paintings - argued that ‘the artist objective’ was no longer an appropriate chronicler of modern war.

63 Charles Sims added a bloodstain to the scroll of the muse of history in his 1913 RA diploma picture *Clio and the Children* following the death of his son in 1915. His amendment fundamentally changed the picture’s meaning, retroactively transforming it into war art.

64 *Athenaeum* (9 January 1915): 362.

65 *Studio* 71 (June 1917): 40.

66 Quoted in Tylee 1990: 23.


68 See ‘What the Public Want’, *Fine Art Trade Journal* 10 (September 1914): 266.

69 Salis (identified by Sue Malvern as Jan Gordon) preferred ‘analytic’ and ‘humourist’ artists. Salis 1917: 447.
The artist's divergence from experiential reality was therefore not always his most telling liability; it could be his most valuable asset. Although pictorial journals consistently stressed the indexical quality of their visual coverage, artists' illustrations were employed precisely because they could represent events that could not have been directly witnessed or photographed. This crucial difference was tacitly admitted in the journals themselves: when an advertisement for the Graphic read 'Mapped by Morrell - Illustrated by the Camera - Pictured by Artists', its use of the verb 'to picture' suggested that artists did not merely 'illustrate' the war like the camera, but could imaginatively, symbolically or pictorially reconstruct it. The act of reconstruction was itself ideological, and was governed not by the metaphysical needs of Truth but by the political and psychological needs of society. The following paragraphs will show that if war art was indeed indexical, its causal connection was not to the front line; it was to the home front.

Philip Dadd's (1880-1916) depiction of the German bombardment of Belgian forts Boncelles and Barchon on the 5th and 6th August 1914 [figure 27] is a revealing preliminary example of how images deviated from objective truth in order to perform multiple domestic functions. Its first was explanatory or even didactic. Dadd collated multiple testimonies and organised them into a synthetic, legible account of the event for the benefit of civilian understanding. The picture's expository nature was further aided by a high viewpoint and the deployment of a foreground figure that gestures instructively to the narrative beyond. The image's second function was dramatic. Dadd enriched the scene with numerous spectacular, decorative or symbolic motifs (a glowing moon, a blood-red sky, a profusion of multi-coloured explosions, and the resonant detail of church spires going up in flames) to achieve a pictorial and iconographic density designed to capture his viewers' attentions and stimulate their imaginations. Its third function was essentially political or even propagandist. Dadd included a figure group in the foreground (a Belgian couple pray

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70 The Times (5 April 1918): 8. The online Oxford English Dictionary defined 'to picture' as to 'represent through a symbol or sign'; 'figure, betoken, or symbolize', or even 'imagine'. http://dictionary.oed.com (last accessed: 25 June 2009).
71 Stuart Sillars has argued that these functions included the 'recording of complex reality; offering guidance and a way of coming to terms with apparent defeat; providing a cathartic release for emotion; generating manageable myths; relating all to a familiar or historic context'. Sillars 1987: 9.
72 Sphere (7 December 1914): 20-1. Dadd was killed in action in France on 2 August 1916. Despite initial doubts concerning his ability as a soldier, he had joined the Queen's Westminster Rifles in December 1915.
for mercy and a man grasps his head in horror) to act as an ethical and emotional barometer of the horror meted out in the ‘German atrocities’ unfolding beneath it. Taken together, Dadd’s picture may have bore little resemblance to the event it represented, but it did successfully clarify, dramatise and moralise it for his audience.

Dadd’s employment of multiple sources and an omniscient high viewpoint reveals an important expository capacity of artistic representation, and one that deviates profoundly from Hynes’s ‘direct experience’ formulation. Here the image is not the intimate visualisation of personal experience; its value derives precisely from its ability to transcend that subjectivity and construct a larger, synthetic picture of battle that was essentially indiscernible to any one individual. In this regard it more closely approximated the function of the print correspondent’s report than it did the photograph. As the prolific correspondent Philip Gibbs wrote:

The private soldier and the battalion officer saw the particular spot which he had to defend, knew in his body and soul the intimate detail of his trench, his dugout, the patch of No-Man’s Land beyond his parapet, the stink and filth of his own neighbourhood with death, the agony of his wounded pals. But we saw the war in a broader vision, on all parts of the front, in its tremendous mass effects, as well as in particular places of abomination.73

Perhaps the most famous visual example of this ‘broader vision’ was Frederic Villiers’s four-page pullout panorama of the Battle of the Aisne, which was published to fanfare by the Illustrated London News in October 1914 after Villiers had smuggled it to England in his boots.74 Villiers adopted the same high viewpoint as Dadd, but he also included arrows and inscriptions like ‘the British are in this direction’, ‘German and French constantly firing here’ and ‘German Infantry Entrenched in Woods’. These additions suggest that war art was not merely expository; it was also pedagogical.

The pedagogical function of the image was quickly recognised by the armed forces themselves. Many artists were employed to produce both landscape targets for rifle training, and precise, captioned topographical sketches of battlefields to assist their commanders with tactical planning.75 Images were valued because they were

73 Gibbs 1929: 242-3.
74 Illustrated London News (3 October 1914): i.
75 Cornelius 1918. See also Carline, R (1975). ‘IWM Interview’, from Artists in an Age of Conflict (IWM 671): Reel 2. Adrian Hill made almost two hundred observation drawings at the front. He was regularly asked by officers to record the peculiarities of the terrain and once, while his battalion was under sniper fire he was instructed to crawl into no-man’s land and record the
seen as ‘a form of report without the ambiguity of language’. Such a conviction also underpinned many popular images of war: the Sphere employed a team of artists solely to create multimedia visualisations that distilled and clarified the complicated aspects of battle for the benefit of civilians. In their first ‘pictorial map’ (of the Marne and Aisne) the graphic image organised, contextualised, interpreted and explicated the whole, while its photographic supplements were called on simply to present details within that whole. The camera showed; the illustration interpreted. It was no surprise, then, that in a 1919 review of war art P.G. Konody paraphrased Ruskin thus: ‘The book of a nation’s deeds would be meaningless, or at least indecipherable, without the book of art which supplies the key.’

The second function of Dadd’s illustration was to dramatise the war. Here the graphic image was invaluable. The practical difficulties associated with witnessing the conflict meant that photographs – while accomplished at recording the build up to or aftermath of the hostilities – were almost completely incapable of depicting the battles themselves. Most were, complained one uninspired observer, ‘either tame bare landscapes with no sign of war in them or wayside incidents’. It became artists’ duty to fill the dramatic narrative lacunae that other representational media could not

exact location of the sniper with a sketch. ‘I made a very careful drawing’, he recalled, ‘it did go back to the batteries; and they were very precise in their shooting. And that was that. And they thanked me very much indeed and said I’d done a good job’. Hill, A (1975). ‘IWM Interview’, from Artists in an Age of Conflict (IWM 561): Reel 1. Another artist, Harold Wyllie, was employed by the Royal Flying Corps to sketch trench positions and gun locations from the air. His visual reports proved similarly useful. In January 1915 he showed one to his commanding officer: ‘He was delighted with the information contained in the sketch as it showed some gaps and a parallel being pushed out by the enemy which they did not know of. I was thanked by the general and he said the information was most important... He would give orders to have the parallel knocked out at once’. Wyllie, H. ‘Private Log Book’ (23 January 1915), Private Papers of H. Wyllie (IWM RAF 84/5/1): 19.

76 Newton 1916: 8. See also R.F.C. 1916.

77 This included the way that zeppelins, grenades and the trench system functioned; how uniforms differed between regiments and nations; the size and position of different armies, and how battlefield strategies unfolded.

78 Illustrated London News (3 October 1914), supplement: ii-iii.

79 Konody 1919: 5.

80 Tilney 1914: 866-7. Many photographers and cinematographers adjusted or ‘enriched’ their images for greater dramatic content. Insidiously touched-up, painted-in or rubbed-out photographs were ubiquitous in the pictorial press; so too were (in both the print and cinematic media) altogether staged combat scenes. See Jolly 1999, and Smither 1993. In rare cases such synthetic approaches were applauded (Frank Hurley’s extraordinarily ambitious composite photographs, for instance), but public awareness of these practices generally led to a loss of faith in the infallible truth of the photographic medium: ‘Even to-day the man in the street is becoming a little suspicious of the belauded truth of the camera’, wrote a correspondent in the British Journal of Photography 62 (15 January 1915): 46. For a broader discussion of the ‘deeply problematic’ relationship between the photographic image and its subjects, see Tagg 1988: 2.
fill. The provision of drama was also a crucial way to engage the public’s interest and encourage support of a distant and expensive war. As far as they were concerned the ‘theatre of war’ was still theatrical, and they demanded vivid images of nocturnal bombardments, soldiers going over the top at night, cavalry charges, aerial dogfights, zeppelins plummeting to the ocean and hand-to-hand combat in no-man’s land. They knew that many of these scenes might not have represented the truth of the war, but as one contemporary remarked, ‘of what value is the literal truth...if it cannot stir the feelings?’ Even servicemen apparently preferred melodramatic representations to realistic ones. The New Statesman wrote: ‘Once they have passed through the horrors of the thing, they prefer...to think of it in terms of the romantic and the theatrical’.

Popular illustrators were particularly adept at dramatising the conflict for civilian consumption. Although it rarely featured on the western front, the cavalry charge was a preferred theme - probably because the public responded most enthusiastically to pictures that showed decisive, swashbuckling acts of heroism from allied soldiers. Fortunino Matania (the Sphere), Richard Caton Woodville (Illustrated War News and Illustrated London News) and C.M. Sheldon (the War Illustrated) specialised in stirring compositions in which British cavalry units, French cuirassiers or Russian Cossacks overwhelmed terrified German gunners. They employed a myriad of techniques to dramatise the scenes. Matania viscerally engaged his viewers from the outset by consistently puncturing the picture plane with action, and then depicted that action with violent chiaroscuro, overwrought impasto, and hyperbolised poses, gestures and facial expressions. Matania’s genius, however, lay in his explosive deployment of incidental detail: every compositional element – agitated clouds, hats flying through the air, horrified expressions of onlookers, and

81 ‘During the Boer War photography was used to illustrate the military episodes... People thought that at last they had the real thing, and scoffed at the memory of the “special artist’s” imaginations in the past. But when the mind had become accustomed to this actuality it began to tire of it and wish for the spirit rather than the letter of these thrilling episodes. In the present war we find that the best weeklies are giving drawings which bring home to the spectator the important truths of the war – the horror and stress of it’. Tilney 1914: 886.
83 Tilney 1914: 886-7.
84 ‘War and the Imagination’, New Statesman 3 (8 August 1914): 554. Public demands had perhaps been shaped by the illustrators themselves. As early as 1890 a journalist observed that illustrators’ pictorial ‘cleverness’ had ‘created a fashion and a demand from the public for something which is often elaborately untrue’. Blackburn 1890: 213-24.
85 For cavalry in the war, see Badsey 1996.
86 See, for instance, Caton Woodville’s “Straight at the Guns the Lancers Rode”: The Charge of the 9th Lancers at a German Battery Near Mons’, Illustrated War News (2 December 1914): 28.
smaller confrontations within the whole (in figure 28 a soldier reaches across to plunge his fingers into his rival’s eyes) – is calculated to amplify the pictorial tension. This was essentially war art as entertainment, and it doubtless contributed to the increased readerships of the journals that published it.

Popular illustrators’ dramatisations of war were essentially humanistic. In a conflict that was widely considered to be dehumanising and where photographs and progressive war works showed man either mechanised, miniaturised or altogether absent, they instead made him the emotional and dramatic nucleus of events, and gave civilians a visual focus for their attention, their sympathy and their admiration. Artists were commissioned to illustrate the many wartime books that celebrated real acts of allied heroism in the field. Deeds That Thrill the Empire (1917) commissioned dozens of artists to produce almost a thousand illustrations of the narratives recounted within. They showed officers crossing no-man’s land to capture enemy flags, pipers rallying soldiers on amid gas attacks, and infantrymen attacking machine-gun posts single-handedly. The most recurrent trope depicted soldiers carrying wounded comrades to safety [figures 29-34]. The artists J.H. Valda, A. Pearse and W.S. Bagdatopulos rarely departed from set compositional formulae: in the foreground the hero approaches the picture plane (close enough for his face to be seen) carrying an anonymous soldier on his shoulders. In the background (against which the figures are silhouetted against or haloed by) is a chaotic scene of shellfire and gas. Its success was grounded in its satisfying combination of excitement and pity; individual heroism and collective suffering.

Artists’ interpretations of the events across the Channel were of course inherently ideological, and even those that were not ostensibly propaganda were designed to generate moral, religious and political meanings for the war. Particularly pertinent is

87 ‘Cossaks of the Russian Army Charging the German Death’s Head Hussars between Korschen and Bartenstein in East Prussia’, Sphere (3 October 1914): 12-13.
88 Such illustrations were predictably popular with younger readers. See Paris 2004.
89 This gained added importance in light of the discourses that identified German society as mechanising the individual: ‘God made man in His own image, high of purpose, in the region of the spirit. German civilization would re-create him in the image of a Diesler machine – precise, accurate, powerful, with no room for the soul to operate’. Quoted in Jones 2004: 320.
90 See Hynes 1990: 196. For the body and the machine, see also Foster 1997, and Bourke 1996.
91 For the visual immortalisation of John Travers Cornwell, see Sillars 1987: 39-47.
92 The images however (from their prominence and heavy captioning) were clearly designed to function independently of the main text.
93 From the very commencement of the August crisis artists visualised (often in cumbersome ways) the implications of the European struggle: on 1 August 1914 the front page of the
the way that illustrators (in a manner evidently debarred to photographers) were able to employ allegory, symbolism or stereotype to establish and entrench resonant identities of the combatant nations. In the Graphic's early war issues Germany was repeatedly represented as a giant armoured soldier, a fist or scavenging eagle flattening Europe;94 Britain was represented as Britannia, usually perched on a warship and surrounded by representatives of her Empire;95 Belgians were personified by women and children (to emphasise their nation's military helplessness), and Serbs and Russians were typically characterised by a primitive but noble piety.96

Artworks were additionally capable of articulating the rightness of the allied cause and the wrongness of its enemy's while masquerading as objective pictorial reportage - ideology disguised as narrative. Matania's depictions of the German occupation of Belgium were particularly potent: his illustration of German forces in Liège transformed incidental detail into its core message: soldiers are shown looting, robbing, drinking, and in the foreground brutally kicking a dog while to the side a diminutive Belgian boy defiantly sticks out his tongue at them.97 Frank Dadd (1851-1929) similarly produced a number of paintings for the Graphic that showed Germans looting, pillaging and bullying: in one, a German's attempt to kidnap a Red Cross nurse is frustrated by 'a knight-errant in the shape of a Cossak' who, 'riding full-tilt at the Prussian, pierced his heart with his lance and rescued the distressed damsel'.98

The Graphic's archaic use of language was not rare.99 Battle pictures frequently became sites on which an attempt to establish a long and heroic lineage for the unfolding conflict was established. Medieval or mythical themes dominated: illustrations depicted 'Ancient Belgian Archery' being employed to fire letters across

*Graphic* printed a portentous charcoal by Ralph Cleaver (called 'The Fear that is in All Men's Minds') that showed Prime Minister Asquith in the House of Commons with a spectre of war over his head. *Graphic* (1 August 1914): i. Three weeks later, G.F. Morrell depicted the planet with flames running down eastern and western Europe, the smoke rising up into the forms of clashing soldiers. *Graphic* (22 August 1914): 309.


95 For an representative example, see E.T. Reed's 'Ready!' *Graphic* (8 August 1914): 239.

96 In Arthur Garratt's 'The First Act of War', a Serbian soldier 'confessed his sins, prays to his saints, and leaves a candle before the sacred ikon', *Graphic* (8 August 1914): 235. In other pictures Orthodox priests were even drawn leading soldiers into battle. *Graphic* (14 November 1914): 782. In the *Illustrated War News* Frederic de Haenen specialised in battle pictures of Russian piety. See (4 November 1914): 24-5, and (2 December 1914): 24-5.

97 *War Illustrated*, art supplement (22 May 1915): n.p.

98 *Graphic* (19 December 1914): 845.

99 For more on Medievalism during the conflict, see Goebel 2006.
the Dutch border; described motorcyclist dispatch riders darting nimbly on the backs of their ‘fiery steeds’ through a forest of German ‘lances’; and a series of sixty oilette and photogravure prints issued by Raphael Tuck & Co. early in the war (‘intended to appeal to the patriotic feelings of the Nation’) showed soldiers dressed as Arthurian knights going into battle. Relatively recent historical events were also used to legitimise the conflict. In the Illustrated London News a cavalry picture by Richard Caton Woodville [figure 35] was captioned: ‘The most dramatic battle incident at Waterloo, the subject of Lady Butler’s world-famous picture, “Scotland For Ever”, is stated to have repeated itself, practically in all its details, in the battle at St. Quentin’. Archaisms here was not, as detractors opined, a mere failing to keep up with the times; it was part of a broader strategy to connect the conflict to a noble, reassuring (and victorious) tradition.

This brief survey has shown that while veracity ostensibly appeared to be war art’s sole function (and remains the benchmark of most scholars’ evaluations of it), it was certainly not the only function that it was called on to perform. Although contemporary critics and current scholars have repeatedly attacked the sentimental, anachronistic and artificial academic or popular representations of war, the wartime public consistently praised those images that were ‘symbolical’, ‘sympathetical’; made ‘a stirring appeal to the emotion and the imagination’; were ‘Spiritual and Poetic’, and were able to take ‘the sordidness and misery out of the conflict’ and place it ‘on the highest plane of human endeavour’. Works that accomplished this were the greatest commercial successes in wartime, and they were successes (as the compliments make clear) because of their deviation from veracity. To therefore approach a fuller understanding of war art, scholars must in the future investigate it not as a transparent record of the front line but as a discursive product of the home front.

100 Illustrated War News (24 February 1915): 39.
101 Illustrated War News (21 October 1914): 24-5.
102 Fine Art Trade Journal 10 (October 1914): 304.
103 This was the motive behind the Leicester Galleries’ 1915 solo show of Lady Butler, which featured her masterpiece Scotland for Ever! and twenty-five other war pictures to commemorate the centenary of the battle of Waterloo. See Harrington 1993: 306-7.
105 Duncan Phillips usefully described the function of art in war as to: ‘Clarify our understanding of the ever-changing situations of the conflict... To help us create a single mind out of the many minds which confuse our country... To sustain us in pursuing a single minded and unchanging purpose to the war’s successful conclusion’. Phillips 1918: 26.
**CHAPTER SIX: ART AS ANTIDOTE**

We need the pleasure which the beauty of art can bring to refresh us when we are tired and to cheer us when we are dispirited and discouraged. Men cannot keep on keeping on at an alternately menacing and monotonous business, enduring hardships, facing death, without some relaxation of mood… At all times and in all ages art, like play and worship, may be a refuge.

THE ‘WAR FEVER’ of 1914 and 1915 that provoked the cultural production described in Chapter 5 did not last. In fact, from the very start of the war - but intensifying as it progressed - there existed a public demand for cultural experience that if anything diverted them from the conflict. This desire drew them (with ‘an avidity and feverishness’ that one select committee considered ‘not normal’) to absorbing fantasy and adventure novels; to escapist theatrical productions like *The Bing Boys, Chu Chin Chow* and *Peter Pan*; and as film audiences trebled between 1914 and 1917, to screen comedies and romances that jettisoned the subject of war altogether. This ‘hyperaesthesia’ was not confined to popular culture: at the very start of the war trade journals encouraged artists and art publishers to also exploit the public’s demand for ‘the sunny side of things’. The resulting pictures may not have absorbed as protractedly as novels, entertained as explosively as the stage and cinema or temporarily abstracted from realities quite like music; but they nonetheless proved that art could play a significant role in providing distraction, consolation and redemption for British society at war.

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2 Cinema Commission 1917: 1. In 1916 the London Palladium staged over 1000 performances for more than three million viewers (46 per cent of male viewers were in uniform). *The Times* (22 January 1917): 11. Peter Paul’s success lay in its ability to enable ‘the onlooker to forget the worries of everyday life’. *The Times* (26 December 1914): 9. The pattern was the same at the cinema. Although it has been seen that *Battle of the Somme* reached extraordinary audiences, the public soon lost interest in war films, and its attention was more consistently drawn to fantasies like *The Awakening Hand* (1915), romances like *Sally Bishop* (1917), and the comedies of Charlie Chaplin. See Low 1973. Indeed, the massively increased popularity of the cinema in the war years (there were one billion annual cinema visits by 1917) was arguably due largely to the public’s escapist needs. Robb 2002: 167.
3 ‘Hyperaesthesia’ is George Bernard Shaw’s term. 1919: xxvii. Many argued that classical music was best placed of all to help audiences ‘get away from the newsboys’. Runciman 1914b. Another critic wrote: ‘Music, luckily, cannot remind us of reality…[It] is the art which satisfies us best in war time, when realities press heaviest upon us’. *The Times* (16 June 1915): 9. The second quotation concluded: ‘In the days of doubt and difficulty…our thoughts should turn to thoughts of brighter aspect. Anything which distracts our attention from scenes of sadness ought to be welcomed by us… A special opportunity occurs here for the picture as well as for the picture postcard to assert its influence’. *Fine Art Trade Journal* 12 (January 1916): 30.
I. PEACE PICTURES

In the months following August 1914 many art critics expressed concern that painters had ‘almost unanimously... made up their minds to ignore the existence of the war’.4 Even those who had experienced combat first-hand - as a Leicester Galleries exhibition of the Artists’ Rifles demonstrated – invariably chose to represent pictures of peace rather than pictures of battle.5 The most popular peace genre was landscape, and despite Samuel Hynes’s contention that the war ‘annihilated... the whole tradition of Romantic landscape’ there actually appeared to be a wartime upsurge in the genre.6 Landscape pictures increasingly dominated the RA’s summer displays and were consistently described as the most admirable works on show,7 exhibiting societies with pastoral output suffered less grievously than other groups, and while most artworks depreciated during the war, traditional landscapes significantly appreciated, with pictures by Edwin Landseer, Fred Walker, David Cox, Myles Birket Foster and George Morland reaching consistently high prices that if anything advanced those fetched in peacetime.8

The trend was partly due to the emergence of new collectors with atavistic tastes (as described in Chapter 4), but market forces were emphatically not its sole cause. Reviews of the RWS’s landscape-dominated exhibitions demonstrate that their appeal for all social groups was grounded in the same psychological processes that inspired the concurrent popularity of escapist novels, musicals and films.9 Critics variously wrote that the work they saw there was ‘one of the few things which make you forget the war for an hour two’ (Yorkshire Post),10 that it facilitated ‘a little-forgetting’ (Daily Telegraph); provided a ‘welcome change and rest’ (Nursing Times), and that it represented a ‘pleasing oasis in a world of strife’ (Builder).11 Lady’s Pictorial commended its capacity to help viewers ‘forget the cruelty of an east wind and the depressing quality of leaden atmosphere’, and the Architect confessed that it was ‘pleasant...to turn now and again from thoughts of what is taking place across...the

8 Year’s Art (1918): 288.
9 The reviews were compiled in its Press Cuttings Book (RWS/P8). The following quotations derive from this cutting book and thus lack page references.
10 Yorkshire Post (4 November 1914).
11 Daily Telegraph (3 April 1916); Nursing Times (15 April 1916); Builder (3 May 1917).
Channel...to satisfy art-loving proclivities by the inspection of pictures which, with rare exceptions, have no relation to the world-cataclysm'.

Such comments – which were so common that they seem to have been all but mandatory in critical responses to landscape - confirm that distraction and escapism were not solely provided by popular culture. Indeed, much anecdotal evidence suggests that the public visited landscape exhibitions as though they were forms of popular entertainment. Newspapers made regular reference to officers on leave deriving the same ‘relief and solace’ from pictures like ‘A Dairy Farm, Somerset; A Pergola, Sussex; or Old Barns and Cherry Trees, Buckinghamshire’ as they did from the music halls, and some remarked that groups hitherto unseen at art exhibitions (particularly the working classes, women and the elderly) now flocked to them not for ‘picture-gazing’, intellectual stimulation or in order to purchase, but rather for sheer straightforward enjoyment - as ‘part of their daily penance’. The question remains as to why precisely landscapes were so singularly adept at offering relief, solace and pleasure to their viewers.

In seeking an answer, it must first be understood that Nature itself was an integral component of the broader cultural response to war. Scholars dispute the manner, novelty and extent of this phenomenon (some, for instance, view it as a Europe-wide tendency; others as symptomatic of a peculiarly British ruralism), but all agree on the motives that underpinned it. George Mosse argued that the ‘appropriation of Nature’ helped ‘to mask the reality of war’ from both soldiers and civilians during the conflict and in its aftermath, and Paul Fussell maintained that ‘recourse to the pastoral’ was a ‘mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them’. For both, the appeal of Nature was grounded in the ability of the pastoral - ‘essentially a discourse of

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12 Lady's Pictorial (24 April 1915); Architect (11 May 1917).
13 For a discussion of landscape as popular culture, see Inglis 1987.
14 Queen (13 February 1915), Press Cuttings Book (RWS/P8). The named works were by Alfred Parsons RA and sold for £25 4s, £22 1s, and £39 18s respectively at the RWS’s Red Cross Sale at Christie’s on 5 February 1915. Art Prices Current (1914-15): 8, 20.
15 Lady’s Pictorial (2 December 1916), Press Cuttings Book (RWS/P8).
17 Fussell 1975: 235. See also Grieves 2008. Soldiers’ enlistment of Nature to relieve their concerns took many forms: they adopted interests in ornithology or botany, and subscribed to magazines like Country Life. John Nash’s letters also indicate a conception of Nature as a counterpoint to war: ‘Nature is uninterrupted.... I noticed on the parapet in front of me where I stood shivering with cold and wet and not a little fear – a very small fly seated stupidly tranquil on a clood of earth. It seemed such a tiny atom and yet... it appeared to out do all this spectacular din by the intensity of its stillness’. Quoted in Blythe 1999: 116.
retreat' - to facilitate a temporary imaginative escape from life at war.\textsuperscript{18}

The most explicit mode of retreat provided by landscape paintings was into an idyllic pre-war past. In the first two years of the war elegiac pastorals proliferated to such an extent that they were classified as a genre in themselves: the 'Peace Picture'.\textsuperscript{19} 'Peace pictures' were, it seems, highly effective: critics wrote that they successfully 'recall[ed] a time of peace' that seemed 'so far distant in the past', convinced them that they had 'got back to the days before the war', and reminded them 'of a past happiness which [they] never enjoyed as it deserved'.\textsuperscript{20} Unfortunately few 'peace pictures' survive, but a reproduction of Benjamin Williams Leader's (1831-1923) \textit{Peace} - which was exhibited at the RA in 1915 - makes abundantly clear how they were implicated in the cultivation of nostalgia and in the fabrication of one of the most enduring myths of the war [\textbf{figure 36}].

Leader's picture depicted a family picnic in an English riverside cornfield on a glorious midsummer day. In this regard it was not unlike much of the bucolic work he had been producing for decades.\textsuperscript{21} However, it was deliberately designed to respond to the psychological demands of wartime society. Both its title and inscription - 'Yellow the cornfields lay although as yet/Unto the stucks no sickle had been set' - precisely located it in the summer of 1914.\textsuperscript{22} The inscription - a misquotation of William Morris's \textit{The Earthly Paradise} - crucially established its historical locus as preceding the August harvest, and also its tragic equivalent - the human harvest of the imminent war.\textsuperscript{23} Like other 'peace pictures', it was doubtless

\textsuperscript{18} Gifford 1999: 46.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Daily Chronicle} (29 October 1918): 4. Notable examples are Byam Shaw's \textit{When There Was Peace} (exhibited at the RWS in 1915, and discussed in \textit{The Times} (30 March 1915): 12); A.S. Cope's \textit{Where Peace Reigns} (exhibited at the RA in 1918, and reproduced in \textit{Royal Academy Illustrated} (1918): 34); R.W. Stewart's 1914 and Osmard Moser's \textit{Peace} (both exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1918, and discussed in \textit{The Times} (7 May 1918): 9); Arnesby Brown's \textit{In June} (exhibited at the RA in 1917, and discussed in \textit{The Times} (10 May 1917): 9); and Gerald Moira's \textit{A July Day} (exhibited at the RA in 1915, and discussed in \textit{The Times} (26 May 1915): 11.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Morning Post} (13 November 1914), and \textit{Yorkshire Post} (4 November 1914), both \textit{Press Cuttings Book} (RWS/P6); \textit{The Times} (7 May 1918): 9.
\textsuperscript{21} In 1915 Leader produced an almost identical landscape to \textit{Peace} called \textit{A Woodland Pool}. See Lewis 1971: cat. 663.
\textsuperscript{22} The location of numerous works of art and literature in summer 1914 is in itself a fascinating trope of the cultural history of the First World War. Kathy Brzovic offered one explanation for it in her discussion of Austrian literature of the period: 'When history delivers a shock to the social system, the storyteller goes to work depicting the point of impact on the human psyche as it seeks to fathom it, to banish it, to neutralize it, to overcome it, or, in some instances, to welcome it'. Brzovic 2004: 2.
\textsuperscript{23} It should read: 'The yellow cornfields lay, although as yet/Unto the stalks no sickle had been set'. Morris 2002 I: 430.
successful in transporting its 1915 viewers back twelve months to when families were
together, life’s pleasures were untarnished by suffering, and the war was just a quiet
concern in the Balkans.24

Leader’s picture did not have to be viewed as an elegy. For the Londoners who
saw it at Burlington House in May 1915 it was as much an escape to a desirable place
as it was to a peaceful time. It is well known that war made home-front life an
exhausting, disorientating and dangerous experience. City-dwellers found their lives
dominated by ‘war mania’, restricted by emergency legislation, divided by war work,
and increasingly threatened by air raids.25 An escape from the city therefore became
interchangeable with an escape from the conflict, and landscape was peculiarly
capable of embodying both the object of that escape and the mechanism for it. This
dual function is explicit in wartime transport posters. In one 1916 image designed by
Charles Sims an incandescent Elysium, replete with putti and shepherd, is
transformed into a stop on the underground 15½ miles from London called ‘Arcady’.
‘Alight here’, its train sign reads, ‘for Air, Sun, Winds, Flowers, Birds’ [figure 37]. In
another, an adventure in the countryside legitimises an otherwise unacceptable
disregard for the war: children play in the woods at dusk above the text: ‘Why Bother
About The Germans Invading The Country? Invade It Yourself’.26 Both, like Leader’s
work, demonstrate that artists were instrumental in stimulating and then satisfying
what Jay Winter has called ‘metropolitan nostalgia’.27

For civilians the landscape usually operated as an escape from home, but soldiers
abroad more frequently invoked it as an escape to home – a process of course that
more accurately approximates the etymological origins of the word ‘nostalgia’.28
Artists were regularly commissioned to produce illustrations that would - as the brief
for one scheme read - ‘awaken thoughts of pleasant homely things’ in the minds of
servicemen.29 Predictably, they deployed English pastoral scenes to accomplish this.

24 Leader’s celebration of the family soon acquired a tragic resonance: a year after its display
his son, as mentioned in Chapter 2, was killed at the Somme. Wood 1998: 104-6.
25 See Winter & Robert 1997. The countryside was also not immune from war. See Dakers 1987.
26 Brothers Warbis, Why bother about the German invading the country, published by
28 Soldiers did not solely rely on art to alleviate their homesickness. One became obsessed with
a railway map of his home region: ‘It’s like counting the beads on a rosary; station after station
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26 Brothers Warbis, Why bother about the German invading the country, published by Underground Electric Railway Company Ltd (1915), (LTM 1983/4/601).
28 Soldiers did not solely rely on art to alleviate their homesickness. One became obsessed with a railway map of his home region: ‘It’s like counting the beads on a rosary; station after station will remind him of journeyings to and fro in the land and bring back adventures which made them memorable to him’. Koch 1917: 14.
What was remarkable was their iconographic consistency. Virtually all combined the same armoury of visual tropes: village greens, parish churches and thatched cottages; women and children sitting, eating, dancing or playing; and an abundance of wild flowers. All are present in George Clausen’s (1852-1944) A Wish [figure 38] (sent to France and Belgium in 1916);30 they are also present in the illustrations made by Alfred Robert Quinton [figure 39 & 40], Charles Edmund Brock, H.L. Richardson and J.A. Symington for kit-books like Ernest Rhys’s The Old Country (a pocket-sized ‘golden remembrancer’ for servicemen);31 they even inhabit poets’ writings: in his ‘book of Consolations for Homesick soldiers’ Siegfried Sassoon’s ‘dream gallery’ likewise included a ‘grey church-tower’, ‘a rose grown porch of some discreet little house’, ‘fields of flowers’, and a ‘a girl in a print dress’.32 The uncanny similarities in these visions of home indicate that such scenes were collectively imagined rather than individually observed and, moreover, that they were integral wartime components in what Jane Beckett has called the ‘inscription of nation’.33

Recent scholars have claimed that landscape must be viewed ‘not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process through which social and subjective tendencies are formed’.34 In this light, ‘peace pictures’ were discursive sites on which wartime ideas of Englishness were constructed. The images we have seen did not just represent an England immediately prior to the war; they typically represented a mythical ‘Old England’: a place unsullied by industrialisation, a custodian of local traditions, and a realm overseen or even pantheistically infused by the benign spirit of a Christian God.35 This was not new: the conscription of rural England as an antidote to the disorientating consequences of modernity was decades old.36 However the war caused it to acquire new ideological meanings that both counteracted and

30 See Sillars 1987: 133.
31 Rhys 1917: viii.
33 Beckett 2000: 197.
35 Vogue (1 December 1916): 56-7. For the image of the English countryside as a guardian of tradition: ‘It is the past which has made England of to-day... prehistoric trackway, ancient village, sleepy town, the farmhouse in the hollow, the sheepfold on the hill – all have rendered their share in the making of England, and the building up of that race whose sons are emulating on the battlefield the deeds of their forefathers set forth in quaint inscriptions on the walls of many a village church or in the moulding records of ancient boroughs’. Pulbrook 1915: ix. For examples of religion, see Frank Walton’s Some of Us call it Autumn, but Others Call it God, reproduced in Royal Academy Illustrated (1916): 57, and Alice Fanner’s And God Said, Let There Be Light, reproduced in Royal Academy Pictures and Sculpture (1918): 110.
36 The theme has been discussed in considerable detail by scholars. See Williams 1973; Marsh 1982; Howkins 1991, and Holt 2003.
reinforced the conflict from which they were generated. In the context of war discourses the lush, sacred, pre-industrial Eden was not merely an antithesis to urban England; it was an antithesis to the bleak, ‘godless’, mechanised topography of the front line, and a cultural counterpoint to the modern, urban, post-religious upstart of Germany - English Nature versus German Kultur. In the process the countryside became interchangeable with the nation, and became both the idyllic escape from war and the reason it was being fought in the first place. One review in the right-wing Morning Post posited that:

These very pictures suggest war. For are our soldiers not fighting that all the people of these islands may enjoy as freemen the tranquillity, the charm, and the romance of the actual scenes so skilfully and feelingly represented? Therefore the Minister of Information’s attention should be drawn to such pictures, which would far better serve propaganda purposes...than misrepresentations of our heroic soldiers and of battle scenes on the Western Front.

Its author was preaching to the converted. From the start of the war numerous recruiting posters had deployed the image of the English countryside as a stimulus to patriotism. In one famous example [figure 41] a soldier gestures to the fields, hills and village behind him and exclaims ‘Isn’t this worth dying for? Enlist now.’

The same function is discernible through the prism of gender. Most ‘peace pictures’ were categorically feminine. Besides the ‘effeminate’ topographies themselves (undulating home-county hills, neat productive fields, domesticated gardens and modest, pretty cottages), the women and children inhabiting them embodied an antithetical cultural configuration to the image of men killing and dying at the front. For serving soldiers they could become families left behind; but they also represented peace and innocence against war and guilt; fertility in the face of death and abundance in the face of deprivation. Women inhabit such pictures as guarantors of fecundity and often even saviours. This may have been symptomatic

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39 Morning Post (22 April 1918): 6.
41 Sue Malvern has similarly argued that ‘through the Great War a complex gendering of “Englishness” was worked out in landscapes’. Malvern 2001: 48.
42 For fecundity, see John Lavery’s Madonna of the Lakes (1917) and Frank Cadogan Cooper’s Our Lady of the Fruits of the Earth (1917), both discussed in The Times (5 May 1917): 9; for women as saviours, see George Clausen’s Renaissance (1915) and William Orpen’s Harvest (1918). Clausen’s picture is discussed and reproduced in Brinton 1919.
of what has been called the war’s ‘overfeminization of women’, but it was also symptomatic of the overfeminisation of the nation itself. Both, of course, were feminised by their identification with the countryside. The old adage ‘Female is to Male is as Nature is to Culture’ is particularly appropriate here, because artists often exploited this very connection. In George Wetherbee’s Fair England (1917) [figure 42] viewers are deliberately confused if the ‘fair’ England they should be admiring is the landscape in the background or the woman in the foreground.44 ‘Peace pictures’ were emphatically not new in British art.45 Indeed, the most successful were reissued prints of Victorian pictures.46 The war however imbued old artworks with new meanings and resonances, and it was these that made war landscapes so appealing. Between 1914 and 1918 landscape did not simply distract its viewers from the war; it became an active site on which a range of antithetical values to war were combined. It thus conformed to Michel Foucault’s definition of utopias and heterotopias as spaces able to ‘suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relationships that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect’.47 The landscape could invoke a peaceful past against a troubled present; a lush, pantheistic Eden against a devastated, godless front; the continuity of tradition and regenerative seasonal cyclical anti against the perceived historical rupture engendered by the war; and the innocent communion of children and mothers at home against the image of estranged men killing and dying abroad.48 In it, England, Home, the Past, Nature, Family, and God became interchangeable and mutually reinforcing visual tropes. It was for these reasons that, as Lewis Hind remarked in 1924, the war undoubtedly revived the genre of ‘lyrics for the small householder’,49 and it was also for these reasons that, as this chapter will later show, they could do more than simply provide an escape.

45 For a discussion of similar pre-war output, see McConkey 2002. It remains out of the scope of this chapter to argue whether, as Sue Malvern maintains, it was the war’s alteration of English attitudes to the landscape that led to the dominance of the genre in the interwar period (‘the idea of English landscape altered profoundly...as a direct consequence of the Great War’. Malvern 2001: 60), or whether, as Ysanne Holt has argued, it ‘simply concentrated attitudes and developments already in place by 1914‘. Holt 2003: 151-2.
46 Bibby’s Annual re-issued nineteenth-century landscapes throughout the war because they offered comfort ‘to those enduring the sharp stern struggle of existence’. Bibby’s Annual (1916): 181, cited in McConkey 2002: 69.
48 For the historical rupture, see Hynes 1990: ix-xii.
49 Hind 1924: 316-31.
II. ‘A Miracle of Consolation’

In January 1916 Raphael Tuck & Sons published a picture by the prolific illustrator Harold Copping (1863-1932) called The Consoler [figure 43]. It depicted a woman weeping over the news that her husband had been killed at the front while behind her Jesus leans forward to offer reassurance. Its subject (as confirmed by the biblical inscription ‘I will not leave you comfortless’) was the consolatory power of religion, and like religion in the war years the print proved popular with the public: Raphael Tuck recorded ‘unprecedented demand’, and within a month it occupied a full front page of the New York Times. The image’s success is itself evidence that art—as well as its subject here, religion—could console the bereaved (the print’s intended audience). Nevertheless, its content alludes to another way by which visual culture comforted estranged families. In the background, above the bed-head, a framed portrait of the uniformed husband gazes out at the viewer from the shadows. Portraits like this occupied an important yet hitherto neglected feature of war culture, and this section will describe that despite scholars’ recent work on monumental memorials and the public rituals of remembrance associated with them, countless memorials assumed domestic forms.

The early months of the war witnessed a surge in the public demand for portraiture. The trend was motivated by the desire to celebrate husbands, brothers and sons as they prepared to undertake an heroic adventure, but also by the need to secure the permanent image of a loved one who, its patrons feared, might never return. It was not a new practice—Pliny the Elder located the origin of art in the act of Butades recording the features of her lover departing for battle—but it represented a much-needed commercial boon to struggling painters and photographers in 1914 and 1915. The PCAC reported that ‘hardly a day’ passed without orders for ‘portraits

50 The image was commercially available in four different grades, rising from a basic India print at just over 10 shillings to a hand-coloured signed artist’s proof at 42 shillings. Fine Art Trade Journal 12 (January 1916): 19.
51 The quotation is from John XIV: 18.
53 The same trope can be seen in C.R.W. Nevinson’s He Gained a Fortune but He Gave a Son (1918), University of Hull Art Collection.
54 For public memorials, see King 1998, and Gregory 1994. Many contemporaries, however, preferred private memorials. In 1919 Lady Cecil wrote that they were more satisfying to the public than their public counterparts: ‘The bereaved desire consolation from personal tributes to their dead, not from well drilled patterned-uniformity’. The Times (23 December 1919): 4.
55 For scholarly alternatives to the public memorial, see Moriarty 2005.
56 Pliny 1991: xxxv, 151, 36.
and miniatures, being done from photographs' by artists. Moreover, trade papers stated that the 'ENORMOUS DEMAND' for 'portraits of those going abroad' had single-handedly kept frame-makers in business through the difficult autumn of 1914. Established artists were also the beneficiaries of this trend: many took to painting young enlistees as part of what they considered a patriotic service, and Philip de László was soon commissioned to make nearly eighty portraits of departing officers at reduced wartime rates, beginning with Viscount Castlereagh in August 1914. De László was so prolific that in 1915 his wife joked that he should don a khaki uniform himself 'as being the first portraitist to the Expeditionary Force!'.

De László's portraits offered great psychological succour during extended familial estrangements: Knightley Fletcher Dunsterville's mother wrote: 'We like my son's portrait more & more & it is a great comfort to me now as he is away & in danger', while Lord and Lady Buxton confessed that they were 'extremely glad' to have the portrait of their son Denis because it was 'going to be the greatest pleasure and comfort' while he was away. For many, such pictures provided merely temporary comfort – they were valuable always, but invaluable merely until their subjects returned. However, several of the sitters did not return: James McEwen died at the Somme (on 12 October 1916) a year after his portrait; Bryan Guinness died two years after his 1915 portrait; and Cecil Molyneux was killed (aged sixteen) near Jutland (in May 1916) ten months after his. Made from life only days before they permanently parted with their families, these images now attained great importance for the bereaved. Lady Lansdowne wrote that following her son's death her only solace was the possession 'of something which perpetuates the features which we all loved so much', and Lord Rothermere (who lost both his sons, Vere and Vyvyan) directed his grief at de László's 1916 portraits for the rest of his life, hanging them at the end of his bed and speaking to them daily before he went to sleep.

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58 *Fine Art Trade Journal* 10 (September 1914): 275, 278.
59 Quoted in Bailey 2004: 56.
60 'Dunsterville to László' (22 January 1916), (DLA 044-0095).
61 'Buxton to László' (10 May 1917), (DLA 055-0138); 'Buxton to László' (25 January 1917), (DLA 055-0142).
62 Unlike photographs, portraits were made as farewell rituals whose sittings the whole family would attend; the resulting image was therefore not just a memory of the sitter; it was also a memory of the final days spent with the sitter.
63 'Lansdowne to László' (December 1915), (DLA).
Portraits were also commissioned after the death of their sitters. There is little surviving evidence of the custom of posthumous portraiture (the private nature of the commissions militates against easy access), yet it was clearly a widespread practice. The painter Allan Stewart (1865-1951) recalled that following the outbreak of war artists’ only guaranteed market would be ‘the rather lugubrious job of painting men killed at the front, from photographs for relatives’,65 and Frank Salisbury (1874-1962) similarly observed that artists were in demand solely because ‘war was leaving gaps in many homes’. Salisbury, like de László, had painted a number of men who were subsequently killed in action, and was commissioned by Lord St David to paint his son (the poet Colwyn Phillips) because he ‘had a premonition he would never return, and he never did’. He was also commissioned by Lord Bethell to work from photographs on a full-length portrait of his eldest son, also killed at the front.66 Perhaps the most moving example of posthumous portraiture involves the Anglo-Australian artist Sir John Longstaff (1862-1941), who painted his own son’s portrait in 1916 following his death in France. The picture (the back of which still bears the words ‘Not for Sale’) was a private act of devotion and an attempt to produce a lasting memorial to him; Longstaff’s connections to spiritualism might even suggest that the picture was employed to help him communicate with his dead son.67

Philip de László was commissioned to produce at least seven posthumous portraits, and his studio records provide the clearest illustration of why they were commissioned, how they were made, what they cost, and how effective they ultimately were. Scholars have until now neglected these paintings both because they are accessed with difficulty, and because they are perhaps inferior in quality to the rest of his output - an inevitable consequence of de László’s inability to work from life. Instead, he was reluctantly impelled to rely on photographs. His first posthumous portrait was ironically commissioned before its sitter had even died [figure 44]. Arthur Rosdew Burn’s lack of leave from the army necessitated, wrote his grandfather, de László’s working from a photograph instead. De László initially refused but when it emerged that Burn had been killed near Ypres (aged twenty-two) the day before his grandfather had first written to him, he had no choice but to agree

65 Quoted in Harrington 1993: 304. Many posthumous portraits were made for more public reasons, such as James Quinn’s picture of Captain Okill Massey Learmonth (1918), which celebrated his posthumous receipt of the Victoria Cross. Konody 1919: XXIV.
to the demands and, further, to sympathetically reduce his honorarium to just fifty guineas. With a poignant new interest in his son’s memorial, Burn’s father now took over the commission. He wrote that his wife would send ‘the photo she likes most’ and would instruct on colouring, and insisted that it arrive for Christmas 1914. When it did arrive, she wrote: ‘I am so delighted to have it. Lord he looks just as he did before the war began... Thank you again a thousand times’. De László received a similar commission from Lord and Lady Maxwell of Cardoness in March 1916:

Sir William and Lady Maxwell have had the misfortune to lose their only son, killed in action at the Dardanelles, and are very anxious to have a portrait of him done in oils... They... are anxious to get a valuable painting as far as they can go... Lady Maxwell regrets there is only a good photograph to go upon. De László once again agreed to a reduced honorarium (two hundred guineas) and Lady Maxwell subsequently sent him a set of photographs from which he could work with a tender description of her late son: ‘He was good, & pure & true – brave and fearless with a deep earnestness which shone in his eyes... Excuse these words, but I think... the character of the person being painted, must be help’. When the picture finally arrived, five months later, she wrote:

Lord William is delighted with it... Grateful thanks for giving us such a beautiful and truthful representation of our dear boy – the expression is so exactly his own... It was more than skilful and wonderful, the way you have brought out the likeness when you had never seen him! Even when I saw your work from years ago, I have desired a Portrait, but never thought it wd. be a posthumous one! This is all we have of him to leave to our younger generations.

De László also made posthumous portraits of Prince Maurice of Battenberg - commissioned by Princess Beatrice after he was killed on 28 October 1914 near Mons [figure 45]; Baron Bruni von Schröder, who was painted shortly after being declared missing on the Eastern Front in 1915 [figure 46]; Geoffrey Gunnis, Robert Palmer [figure 47]; and Major Lord Charles Nairne, who had been killed at the end of October 1914 near Ypres.

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68 ‘Burn to László’ (1 December 1914), (DLA 075-0118).
69 ‘Burn to László’ (n.d.), (DLA 054-0116).
70 ‘Maxwell to László’ (7 March 1916), (DLA 047-0002).
71 ‘Maxwell to László’ (14 March 1916), (DLA 047-0004).
72 ‘Maxwell to László’ (20 August 1916), (DLA 047-0003).
All of de László’s posthumous portraits are stilted and formulaic, and in them he employed a more conservative, self-effacing style than in the rest of his oeuvre. Although some subjects are depicted in civilian dress and others in uniform, none deviates from a rigid half-length format, and all (with the exception of Geoffrey Gunnis’s portrait - which utilises a dawn sky to suggest a heroic tone of spiritual resurrection) are set against plain, dark backdrops. The visual formulae were doubtless dictated by the photographs that de László was expected to effectively transcribe. To condemn these works, however, for aesthetically underachieving, is to miss the point: he was not after all commissioned to provide a dazzling display of paintmanship; his brief was to produce as precise a likeness as possible. Moreover, letters suggest that his pictures fully succeeded in providing consolation to the bereaved. Lord Selborne described the portrait of his late son Robert Palmer as a ‘miracle of consolation’; one correspondent wrote that ‘the amount of pleasure’ de László’s pictures provided was ‘unequalled by anyone else’; another confessed that in such times of ‘sorrow and anxiety... it is one of the bright spots to think of how many hearts are gladdened by your skill’; and yet another wrote: ‘Your wonderful talents and your sympathetic feeling... have helped the stricken hearts and homes more than ever you know’.

De László’s portraits, of course, were denied to all but the noblest and wealthiest strata of British society, but consolatory artworks still reached the wider public in abundance. Arguably the most widely celebrated picture of the war performed precisely this function. In November 1914 the Graphic offered free with its Christmas Number (priced at one shilling) a large foldout colour print of a painting called The Great Sacrifice (also known as Duty) by James Clark (1858-1943). Described by the Graphic as ‘the finest picture that the war has yet produced’ [figure 48], it showed a dead British serviceman slumped peacefully next to the crucified figure of Christ. It was evidently designed to help those who had lost relatives in the opening months of the war: it is a flagrant idealisation of death (a discreet spot of blood on the soldier’s temple is the only indication of mortality), and a conspicuous - even grotesque - attempt to justify that death by analogising the ‘gallant young soldier sacrificed on the altar of duty’ to Christ’s own sacrifice. The original was donated to the mourning

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74 Rutter 1939: 304-5.
75 Graphic (23 November 1914): i.
76 Graphic (21 November 1914): iii.
77 See Bourke 1996: 213.
Princess Beatrice (who had also commissioned de László to paint her dead son Prince Maurice), and it still hangs in a chapel devoted to his memory on the Isle of Wight. Clark’s intentions, however, were more inclusive than this, and unlike the precise individual likenesses that de László laboured over, he deliberately gave the soldier generic British features. It thus enabled its many viewers to see their own relatives in his face, and allowed the image to provide a qualitatively private form of consolation on a quantitatively public scale.

*The Great Sacrifice* was quickly made available to all. In early 1915 the *Graphic* offered it for sale at a variety of prices (ranging from a simple unframed colour print at 1/- to a framed facsimile oil print at £1 11 6) so that individuals of all classes and institutions of all types could possess it and benefit from it. Prints were soon seen ‘in every shop window in the country’ and subsequently entered homes, churches, schools and hospitals in Britain and abroad. The public response was extraordinary: the *Graphic* received 15,000 letters of approval from around the world (whose authors, the periodical asserted, included thirteen bishops and one cardinal); and clergymen and ministers of all denominations preached sermons on it. It is difficult to gauge what relationship individuals had with the image in their own homes, but a vicar’s comments in his parish magazine offer a clue as to its consolatory appeal:

The Great Sacrifice seemed to me to speak a message so striking and so full of teaching and of comfort as to deserve a place in the Church during these sad and terrible days... The picture is surely beautifully symbolic, and full of comfort to those who die and to those who mourn.

Clark’s sequel to *The Great Sacrifice* - *The Great Reward* - was even more ambitious than its predecessor. It depicted the same soldier being led towards a new and incandescent afterlife [figure 48] and in the process suggested that art could conceivably be implicated in redemption from the sufferings of war.

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78 The picture hangs in the Battenberg Chapel in St Mildred’s Church, Whippingham.
79 ‘As a gift to churches, schools, soldiers’ institutes or missions, this picture is a valuable addition’. *Graphic* (6 February 1915): 183.
80 Pym & Gordon 1917: 175-6. Its iconography was then transmitted around the world. For its spread in Canada, see Vance 1997: 40-1. There is both a copy of the picture (1918) and a stained glass window based on it (1924) at St George’s, Malvern, Australia. See also the stained glass window of the image (1919) at St Mary Magdalene Church, Enfield.
81 *Graphic* (21 August 1915): iii.
82 Quoted in *Graphic* (17 April 1915): iii.
83 A comparable success was Hillyard Swinstead’s *The White Comrade*, published by F.R. Britton & Co. in 1915. It was described as the ‘War picture of the Year’. *Fine Art Trade Journal* 11 (December 1915): 320.
III. ART AND REDEMPTION

After more than a year serving in extreme danger on the front line, John Nash returned to England in 1918 to fulfil his obligations as an official war artist. He acquired a studio in Buckinghamshire with his brother Paul, and there produced his monumental war pictures *Over the Top* (1918) and *Oppy Wood* (1918-19). Feeling that ‘the strain became too much doing nothing but war paintings’, they made a rule that after six o’clock they would explore the countryside and each make a ‘peacetime landscape’ for their own pleasure. For John, the result was *The Cornfield* (1918) [figure 49]. It was his first ‘peace picture’ following demobilisation, and can be considered an explicit visual counterpart to his concurrent war pictures. The monochrome midwinter of *Over the Top* is replaced with the flaxen warmth of late summer; the harsh rectilinear matrix of *Oppy Wood’s* broken tree-trunks is substituted for a lush, organic roundness seen from a benevolent high viewpoint; and in what appears to be a cathartic act of expulsion *The Cornfield* is banished of those human figures that had so massacred his landscapes of war: the hunched figures that stumble into the no man’s land of *Over the Top* are transfigured into a row of haystacks - the human harvest returning to its regenerative pastoral equivalent.

*The Cornfield* could be considered a conventional ‘peace picture’; the harvest was, after all, one of the genre’s most recurrent motifs. However it was not a straightforward retreat to the peace before the war; it was rather an attempt to find a visual vocabulary commensurate with the peace after the war, and, furthermore, a tool in Nash’s own psychological recovery from the conflict - both a ‘thank-you’ for survival and - produced in order to ‘forget the war paintings’ - a device to exorcise his war memories and start again. Nash was not unique; many artists enlisted painting as a means of spiritual recovery from war. Laura Knight had never seen

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84 In one offensive Nash was involved in on 30 December 1917 sixty-eight of eighty officers and soldiers were killed. Freer 1993: 14-15.
86 For Nash the theme also represented an attempt to return to his pre-war harvesting imagery. See *A Gloucestershire Landscape* (1914), Ashmolean Museum; and *Haymaking* (1913), Courtauld Institute.
88 For other images addressing the theme of recovery, see Charles Sims’s *The Stork that Brought the Olive Branch* (1916), reproduced and discussed in Liss Fine Art 2008: cat. 8; George Clausen’s *Renaissance* (exhibited at the RA in 1915); his 1918 murals *Golden Age*, and *Morning* (see Willsdon 2000: 329); Gerald Moira’s *War Allegory* (1916) and No. 3 Canadian Stationery *Hospital at Doullens* (1918) (see Watkins 1922); and, in the post-war period, Stanley Spencer’s *Travoys arriving with Wounded at a Dressing-Station at Smol, Macedonia* (1919, IWM).
combat but at the same time she too was producing a monumental vision of an idyllic post-war world in Cornwall [figure 50]. *Spring* (1916-20) is a dense compendium of symbols of peace, hope and renewal: under a rainbow and the passing of storm-clouds, apple blossoms, returning birds, newborn lambs and two of Knight’s friends are brought together in a sacred union of mankind and nature. Knight considered the work to be therapeutic in function: she called it her ‘Nepenthe in a holocaust of hate that engulfed young, life and hope’.  

Knight’s description of *Spring* as her ‘nepenthe’ is revealing. By analogising it to an Homeric drug that exorcised grief from its sufferers’ minds she was claiming that art too could act as a psychological cure. Although it might appear a somewhat hyperbolic declaration, it was emphatically not uncommon. Indeed, a chief characteristic of wartime discourses surrounding both the creation and contemplation of art was the explicitly remedial nature of their vocabulary. Artworks of all media were consistently described as ‘antidotes’ to the horrors of war, and reviewers of art exhibitions regularly invoked curative themes in their evaluations: the *Lady’s Pictorial* described pictures as a ‘positive boon’ to ‘nerves that are a-gangle’; the *Daily Telegraph* reported that they provided ‘moments of soothing calm and contemplation’ for the ‘heartsore and weary’, and a number of writers instructed their benighted readers that the contemplation of art would ‘instantly dispel’ depression and ‘banish’ ‘the blues’ ‘of a war-time mood’. It was a trend that caused the American collector and critic Duncan Phillips (1886-1966) to announce in a speech at the end of the war that art was essentially the ‘mental branch of the Red Cross’. 

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*Resurrection, Cookham* (1924-7, Tate), *The Resurrection of the Soldiers* at Burghclere (1928-9); and Lord Lytton’s mural cycle – particularly *Spes* (1924) at Balcombe (see Willsdon 2000: 195-201).  

89 Knight 1936: 205-6. Charles Sims is another example. Although his Royal Academy diploma picture *Clio and the Children* (1916) is often seen as representing a comprehensive loss of hope following the death of his son (he himself wrote that it was ‘not the time for romantic adventures in the Land of Fancy’. Cited in Holmes 2005: 149), he continued to produce whimsical pictures celebrating themes of resurrection and renewal, and later argued that his paintings represented symbols of his hope in the future of humanity: ‘I see a world where all patterns are perfected, man and his surroundings, in perfect development, perfect health; all institutions, marriage, birth and death, accepted as items of a game to be beautifully played; a world of beauty, fitness, distinction, where all men are finely bred and live in the open air. It is a definite achievement to create a world after patterns in one’s own mind. Earth is Heaven’.  

Sims 1934: 93.  

90 See Marwick 1965: 185, and Clarke 1919: 36, 40.  


94 Phillips 1918: 35.
On the front, this role was intensified. Stanley Spencer wrote at the outbreak of war that he would only serve on one condition (‘I can have Giotto, the Basilica of Assisi...& Fra Angelico in one pocket & Masaccio, Masolino & Giorgione in the other’).\(^{95}\) but many less aesthetically-sensitive servicemen also took up an interest in art in search of a psychological restorative. Prisoners of War filed requests for ‘oil and water-colour painting, pastel, drawing, and perspective printing’ manuals,\(^{96}\) and the Press Art School recorded that its number of enrolled sketching pupils rose from 600 in 1913 to over 3000 in 1916. The director of the institution reported that aesthetic creation was ‘a means of cheering, comforting and helping’ them all and ‘a positive God-send’ to some. A British lieutenant on the scheme wrote that sketching from nature had ‘healed many of the wounds’ of combat, and a Canadian captain said it had afforded him ‘indescribable comfort’, filled ‘a gap which it is hard to describe’, and kept him ‘from going mad on several occasions’.\(^ {97}\) Even back in England ‘the Muse of Painting’ came to the ‘rescue’ of Winston Churchill in May 1915 (and stayed with him for life), as he battled the frustration of being removed from his duties at the Admiralty.\(^ {98}\)

The clearest example of art’s involvement in psychological recovery was the Kemp Prosser Scheme. Howard Kemp Prosser was an artist and as the war progressed became convinced that colour could prove ‘beneficial to men whose nerves have become unstrung’. He offered to implement, at his own expense, a scheme in any amenable ward: ‘If there’s anything in this theory’, he wrote, ‘here is a good opportunity to give it a real, practical trial’.\(^ {99}\) Prosser finally debuted his scheme at the McCaul ward for officers at St John’s Hospital, Welbeck Street. There he painted the ceiling blue to ‘open it out’; the walls yellow to simulate sunlight; chose violet (a ‘powerful curative’) for the curtains; primrose for the floor, and green for the woodwork.\(^ {100}\) Like Laura Knight, Prosser’s imagery was essentially vernal: he believed that ‘nerve patients do not want to be surrounded by autumn, they must be in the spring’, and hung one painting of that very season in the ward, inside a lemon-
yellow frame.\textsuperscript{101} The scheme appears to have been successful: the hospital reported 'excellent results' and was 'fully convinced' of its efficacy,\textsuperscript{102} and in 1919 the British Journal of Nursing called for more like it to be implemented.\textsuperscript{103} Prosser's project represents a neglected initial stage in the development of art therapy – a practice developed for traumatised soldiers in the Second World War by another artist of the First, Adrian Hill.\textsuperscript{104}

Practical demonstrations of the curative abilities of art like Prosser's were accompanied or even underpinned by a strand of intellectual discourse that stressed the redemptive qualities of the aesthetic. The origins of this view predated the war and were ironically grounded in the Aestheticist argument that art and life should be discrete entities. It was a conviction that before 1914 became in the hands of Walter Pater, James McNeill Whistler, Oscar Wilde, George Moore, Charles Ricketts and Laurence Binyon the dominant progressive way of thinking about British culture.\textsuperscript{105} Clive Bell's Art, which was published just months before the outbreak of war, can perhaps be considered the ante-bellum summa (although certainly not the most sensitive example) of this particular intellectual trend. Bell insisted that art's value was principally derived from its 'absolute abstraction from the affairs of life'.\textsuperscript{106} Aesthetic experience, like religious experience, could thus transport its subjects from quotidian reality to a 'world of aesthetic exaltation'.\textsuperscript{107} It could in the process provide its participants with a 'refuge' from their lives and at the same time 'leaven' and 'redeem' them.\textsuperscript{108}

The outbreak of war politicised the implications of this formulation. For critics (as Chapter 1 has shown), the cleavage between art and life that Bell and others insisted on was the reason it could and should be jettisoned by society; for its advocates however it was that very cleavage that now rendered it so invaluable. For

\textsuperscript{101} Carrington 1919: 91-3.
\textsuperscript{102} Flight (14 February 1918): 166.
\textsuperscript{103} 'A study of the influence of colour should enter far more into medical therapeutics than is at present the case'. British Journal of Nursing (4 October 1919): 212.
\textsuperscript{104} Hogan 2001: 132-59.
\textsuperscript{105} For Aestheticism, see Dowling 1996, and Lambourne 1996. For Binyon, see Peters Corbett 2005.
\textsuperscript{106} Bell 1914: 266.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid: 25. In 1910 Laurence Binyon wrote that 'art exists, not for a temporary and ever-shifting set of conditions, but for an ideal order. Its relation to life is the ideal life'. Binyon 1910: 229-30. See also Binyon 1918a: viii.
\textsuperscript{108} Bell 1914: 292, 276. Compare this to Walter Pater's description of art as a 'cloistral refuge from a certain vulgarity in the actual world'. Pater 1889: 110.
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them the aesthetic realm was now not a binary opposite to life, but (like landscape) a binary opposite to war: a symbol of individuality in the face of mass opinion; spirituality in the face of materialism; beauty in the face of brutality, and creativity in the face of destruction.\textsuperscript{109} It was precisely art’s identity as antithetical to war and uncorrupted by war that its supporters believed now endowed it with unique reparative properties.\textsuperscript{110} This was the reason that many, like the designer W.A.S. Benson (1854-1924), argued that the arts were ‘likely to be, not the result, but the means of bringing about better conditions of life’,\textsuperscript{111}

Its supporters did not simply believe that art could help individuals recover from war; they believed that it could help society recover from war. In January 1916 John Deville argued:

The time has come to penetrate Society with Art, with Ideal, with Beauty. Society to-day, that which has created the terrible moral chaos whence has proceeded the enormous and frightful war of this moment, tended too much to fall into instinct, it was saturated with materialism, with realism, with sensualism, and commercialism... From the monstrous womb of this present war will be born a new era which will see develop a generation of men more accessible to the moral beauties of life as well as to the aesthetic... Let us hope that, as with the heroes of Marathon and Salamine, the heroes of Liège, of the Yser, of Mons and the Marne, also will have fought for a purer social idea which will produce a generation of artists more capable of helping art in its great mission in the life of humanity.\textsuperscript{112}

Delville’s convictions were finding institutional expression. In May 1915 the Design and Industries Association was formed to make beauty a guiding force in the country’s commercial and industrial survival during and after war;\textsuperscript{113} in 1916 a group of high profile artists and designers (including George Clausen, Clutton Brock, John Lavery, Selwyn Image, W.R. Lethaby and William Rothenstein) formed the Civic Arts Association to ensure that artists and craftsmen would reconstruct the monuments of post-war Britain (from war memorials and shrines to public parks and city centres) as aesthetic ‘beacons which will send from hill to hill heartening messages’.\textsuperscript{114} And, in the same year the eleventh exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society opened at the RA, its catalogue promising that artists would ‘again take their place as

\textsuperscript{109} For an excellent compilation of such opinions, see Atkin 2002. See also Witt 1915: 241; Scotsman (23 March 1916): 6; Warren 1916: 123; and Galsworthy 1915.

\textsuperscript{110} Phillips 1918: 23.

\textsuperscript{111} Cited in Saler 2001: 14.

\textsuperscript{112} Delville 1916: 228-9.

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\textsuperscript{114} Rothenstein 1916: 15.
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\textsuperscript{109} For an excellent compilation of such opinions, see Atkin 2002. See also Witt 1915: 241; Scotsman (23 March 1916): 6; Warren 1916: 123; and Galsworthy 1915.\\textsuperscript{110} Phillips 1918: 23.\\textsuperscript{111} Cited in Saler 2001: 14.\\textsuperscript{112} Delville 1916: 228-9.\\textsuperscript{113} See Saler 2001.\\textsuperscript{114} Rothenstein 1916: 15.
\end{flushleft}
Towards and after the end of the war the debates surrounding Reconstruction supplemented, developed and expanded the argument that art was a key to the post-war recovery of Britain. In 1919 the Ministry of Reconstruction published a pamphlet entitled *Art and Industry*, which argued that a successful post-war Britain had to rely on 'the restoration of a broader meaning of art'. The argument was reiterated in many quarters. It could be encountered in non-governmental manifestos like Hayward and Freeman’s *The Spiritual Foundations of Reconstruction*, which, supported by legions of diplomatic and cultural luminaries including W.R. Lethaby ('Many... are feeling a need for the rediscovery of some deep wells for the refreshment of national life') and Laurence Binyon ('We want to recover natural pleasure of art as a function of life'), argued that the aesthetic should play a crucial role in the education of a new generation of post-war children. It could even be found in religious or philosophical tracts, with H.S. Langfeld’s *The Aesthetic Attitude* (1920), Trystan Edwards’s *The Things Which Are Seen* (1921), and Ernest Newlandsmith’s *The Temple of Life and the Mission of the Arts Therein* (1919) all advocating that the arts should occupy the centre of a new and utopian world order.

Newlandsmith’s (1875-1957) treatise is particularly illuminating because although it had first been published in 1911 the post-war second edition included material that rendered it pertinent to the issue of Reconstruction. Most notable was the new volume’s frontispiece, which depicted a group of artists playing music to a crowd as the Lamb of God brings about a new world [figure 51]. Its inscription read: ‘We await the coming of the new Orphean Artists...that the souls of thousands may be re-born in a day’. It had a virtually identical message to Charles Shannon’s (1863-1937) more famous coloured lithograph [figure 52] for the Ministry of Information’s portfolio *Britain’s Efforts and Ideals* (1917) that represented an angelic embodiment of the Arts, complete with golden halo, rising from the deluge of war and holding aloft an olive branch – symbol of peace – to a celestial illumination. Both maintained (like

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117 Hayward & Freeman 1919: xii, lx.
118 'The beautiful is inseparably united to the good and the true... The history of the race has shown that at the height of materialistic success, the desire for artistic enjoyment has been a potent factor in bringing a people back to the higher ideals which underlie a peaceful intercourse between nations'. Langfeld 1920: 3-4.
so many of the writers discussed here) that amid the horror of war only art had the ability to rejuvenate a spiritually bankrupt world.

Perhaps the most extraordinary example of this position came from the Arts and Crafts stained-glass designer Reginald Hallward (1858-1948). In 1917, the same year as Shannon’s lithograph, he wrote The Religion of Art. Taking Dostoevsky’s maxim ‘Beauty will save the World’ as its catchphrase and linking Art and Beauty to Truth and Faith, Hallward was convinced that man could be ‘redeemed’ and society ‘restored’ by Art. 119 In one of the final chapters, Hallward takes a morning walk and reaches the rhapsodic climax of his text:

Pitiless war-clouds, I saw them enveloping the world, and my heart crushed down, sank back within me. What if it all were but mockery and illusion? What trick had my sick brain played upon me, that I could believe in a world become so monstrous and horrible?... We had accepted the alternative teaching of experience, and of the world, and had trod the whole length of that bitter pathway which had at last led us down to hell. Is it possible that the soul of a people may live again? And I looked, but not in vain; for I found redemption lying in the heart of the poet and the artist. In a world in which religion is dead they remain the believers! 120

Hallward’s idiosyncratic position was hardly shared by the vast bulk of British society, and perhaps not even by those who like the founders of the Civic Art Association also believed that the arts could be instrumental in the broader job of social Reconstruction. However, both – and others like John Nash, Laura Knight, Howard Kemp Prosser and the countless civilians and servicemen who in art found their own private restorative – agreed that, in a fundamental inversion of the cultural predictions of 1914, war was no longer a ‘great remedy for art’; art was one of the only remedies for war. 121

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119 Hallward 1917: 56.
120 Ibid: 113.
121 Blast 2 (1915): 33.
CONCLUSION

IN 1968 THE HISTORIAN Arthur Marwick first proposed an influential theoretical framework concerning the social impact of total war. Marwick posited that war's effects could be categorised according to 'four dimensions': the destructive-disruptive dimension (damage, dislocation and disruption of peacetime patterns of behaviour); the test dimension (the challenge that war posed to society and its institutions and how they set about meeting it); the participation dimension (the way that hitherto underprivileged social groups engaged with and benefited from the conflict); and the psychological dimension (the nature and repercussions of the 'emotional experience' of war).1 His 'four-tier model' had numerous flaws, not least because it confined cultural developments exclusively to its psychological dimension, but if art is evaluated according to all four of Marwick's dimensions his model can facilitate a rich and robust understanding of the war's cultural impact.2 It is for this reason that the 'four-tier' framework will be here employed to organise and evaluate the principal findings of this dissertation.3

Marwick's destructive-disruptive dimension has run like a leitmotif through all of these chapters, but it is best understood through the experiences of artists as described in Chapter 2. War conditions produced a debilitating cocktail of disruptions that frustrated every aspect of their professional lives. Their ability to produce art was rendered problematic by the difficulties associated with acquiring materials, the government's restrictions on outdoor painting, and the often unavoidable duties of enlistment or other forms of war work; the distribution of their output was jeopardised by the expensive, unreliable and sometimes hazardous wartime delivery services; opportunities to display their work became increasingly scarce as art dealers and exhibiting societies cancelled exhibitions, ceased staging one-man shows, or altogether closed; and, most important of all, their ability to sell work was severely challenged by the war's swift dislocation of normal consumption

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1 In his initial 1968 formulation Marwick wrote of 'four modes' through which war affected society (12-17); by 1974 he termed his 'working hypothesis' the 'four-tier 'model' of the inter-relationship between war and society' (11). He developed the model further in 1988: xv-xvii.
2 For two criticisms of Marwick's framework, see Smith 1990: ix, and Beckett 2001: 344-5. For Marwick's theoretical location of the arts, see 1974: 13.
3 Marwick's model has to my knowledge been applied to the arts (of the Second World War) just once before. See Weingärtner 2006: 8.
patterns, which caused commissions to be revoked, projects to be postponed, and made collectors unwilling or unable to purchase luxuries.

When these findings are understood through the prism of Marwick’s first dimension, they suggest two important alternatives to prevailing scholarly views of the war. First, they indicate that the most marked wartime disruptions to the arts were unquestionably material in nature. Art and cultural historians have generally been reluctant to admit the banalities of paint prices, transportation difficulties and picture sales to their accounts of the war. They have instead interpreted most changes through psychological, intellectual or formal prisms. Artists, however, were not exempted from the pressures faced by the rest of society, and like the rest of society material survival rather than aesthetic principles remained their priority. A picture has here been established that is far removed from the bombastic image of artists’ disillusionment, trauma and death in the trenches. Its findings instead imply that most artists experienced the war as a series of quotidian ‘disruptions’ to their professional lives that were not qualitatively different from those encountered in peacetime.4

Second, they challenge the view held by most scholars that these disruptions were so profound as to bring about a ‘paradigm shift’ in culture.5 Most artists considered war to be an inconvenient caesura in their careers rather than a life-changing epiphany. John Nash and Philip de László, for instance, both had peculiarly traumatic experiences of the war, but on their respective returns from active service and incarceration neither even contemplated changing his style on its account. This ‘disrupted continuity’ is most evocatively evidenced in the case of Stanley Spencer. He was forced to abandon his picture Swan Upping (1915-19) in July 1915 when he enlisted with the Royal Army Medical Corps. On his return more than three-and-a-half years later he simply took the canvas out of storage and in the summer of 1919 quietly finished what he had left unpainted in the summer of 1915.6 This evidently

4 The most famous evidence for this approach is Paul Nash’s vivid and vivid exposition of the disillusionment engendered by trench warfare (and one that is cited by most scholars dealing with the subject): ‘Sunset and sunrise are blasphemous, they are mockeries to man, only the black rain out of the bruised and swollen clouds all through the bitter black of night is fit atmosphere in such a land… It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless. I am no longer an artist interested and curious, I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on forever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls’. Nash 1949: 210-11.
does not support the 'paradigm shift' model; if anything it supports the position regularly articulated by post-war critics that war had 'no more effect upon art than the fall of a runner who picks himself up and hastens towards the goal'.\(^7\)

Artists were not the only victims of the war's destructive disruptions, and the art institutions discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 also struggled for survival after 1914. Auction houses suspended sales because of an absence of buyers, sellers and staff; exhibiting societies became so depopulated they could barely transact business, were bedevilled by internal schisms, and struggled to stage exhibitions; art dealers saw their sales plummet and their expenses (rent, bills, materials, insurance and tax - including Entertainments Tax) soar; and public institutions like museums were the victims of the government's cancellation of their purchase grants, the requisitioning of their premises, and their forced closure in 1916. It is here that Marwick's second dimension - the *test dimension* - becomes pertinent. The war challenged these institutions in unprecedented ways, and faced by this 'fiery ordeal', many were found wanting.\(^8\) Dealerships went bankrupt, art societies ceased to exist, and many of the cultural publications that had promoted the arts before 1914 suspended business.

Some adapted to new conditions.\(^9\) Resourceful art dealers exploited the public interest in war by staging topical or charity-themed exhibitions infused with patriotic rhetoric, and many discovered that once the initial disruption of the conflict had been overcome the second half of the war and its aftermath offered the prospect of excellent business. Some art societies – particularly the Art-Workers' Guild and the Royal Academy – were 'shaken out of the smug complacency' that had hampered their progress in the past and considered the war a salutary reminder that reforms were needed if they were to thrive in the post-war period.\(^10\) Museums, meanwhile, fundamentally rethought their social purpose: the chairman of the Museums'
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Museums, meanwhile, fundamentally rethought their social purpose: the chairman of the Museums’

7 Hind 1924: 43. Frank Rutter made a similar conclusion in 1933: ‘It did nothing for Art. During and after the war the direction of art was not changed by a hair’s breadth. When it was all over, the various schools of painting and sculpture went on developing exactly as each had been developing prior to August 1914... War could, and did, arrest the development of many artists; it did not alter art’. Rutter 1933: 162.

8 Bather 1915: 10.

9 Many of the trade papers encouraged such adaptation: ‘In these times, those who can adapt their skill and enterprise to changing conditions, will find many outlets for topical work. Conditions which obtained before the war are now changed beyond recognition. A new era is dawning and with it comes a demand for new work... The need for commercially-applied Art will be greater than ever... The artist, like the journalist, must trim his sails to catch each breeze as it comes’. ‘War Map Posters: A Timely and Practical Suggestion, from one of Mr. Chas. E. Dawson’s Recent Lessons to his Students’, Art News (28 September 1914): 261-2.

Association instructed curators that they could no longer be ‘a refuge for cloistered learning’ but rather ‘a centre of energising force… an arsenal of tools and weapons, a treasury of vital knowledge, responsive to the pressing call of our country’s danger’ and instructed them to ‘throw away the black cloak of respectability and don the blue overalls or the serviceable khaki’.11

In addition to its material consequences, the war’s impact was, as another of Marwick’s dimensions made clear, psychological. The conflict transformed mentalities on the home front as well as the front line, and Chapter 1 described how those changes were often deeply detrimental to art. The public initially lost interest in art as their attention was drawn towards the conflict, but soon the cultural politics of war caused it to be condemned as an unethical extravagance. The most potent animosity was directed at artists, and in the public imagination they were quickly constructed as a conflation of imagined Others - shirkers, profiteers, foreigners and ultimately enemy agents. Representations, of course, are as real as realities, and in art organisations’ exclusion of foreign members, landscapists’ fears of being caught painting outdoors, Philip de László’s two-year internment and the crises of confidence that artists experienced, they were also clearly as debilitating as realities.

The psychological consequences of war offered opportunities too, and Chapter 6 showed how artists responded to the disorientation, distress and despair that were experienced by society as whole. Landscape art was well equipped to offer civilians and servicemen a comforting and revivifying refuge from the exigencies of the war, and portraiture – particularly of the posthumous variety – acted as a ‘miracle of consolation’ to the many bereaved families. Moreover, it seemed that art had an even more potent psychological function: in the optimistic landscapes of John Nash and Laura Knight, the boom in public interest in amateur sketching, and Howard Kemp Prosser’s colour scheme in a London ward for shell-shocked officers, aesthetic production and contemplation were enlisted as psychological restoratives for the war’s traumatised participants, in the process becoming what Duncan Phillips called ‘the mental branch of the Red Cross’.12

Marwick’s remaining dimension – participation – is the richest of them all. He was referring to the ways that the war politically, socially and economically enfranchised

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11 Bather 1915: 10, 3.
12 Phillips 1918: 35.
hitherto underprivileged groups. This process, as Chapter 4 showed, had important implications for the art market. As the traditional collecting classes (the aristocracy and metropolitan professionals) were hit by inflation, war taxation and the collapse of investments, they ceased to purchase luxuries - and in many cases started to sell them. At the same time, a new community of collectors – most of whom had become wealthy from war contracts – entered the art market for the first time. The richest industrialists paid unprecedented prices for high-end pictures, while countless other workers who benefited more modestly from the changes in the labour market sought to consolidate their new status by voraciously purchasing less expensive artworks like engravings, reproductions and watercolours.

This new class’s participation in the art market had significant artistic repercussions. These buyers had different tastes to their predecessors: they were drawn to art that was, as the trade papers recorded, ‘decorative’; ‘Victorian and passé’, ‘atavistic’, ‘less ambitious and more homely’, and dominated by bucolic rather than metropolitan imagery.¹³ This led to significant rises in prices for traditional English landscape paintings in the auction rooms and prompted dealers and artists – more inclined than ever to respond to market imperatives - to adjust their output accordingly to meet the demand.¹⁴ This might well be the embryo of a new materialist reading of the widely discussed rappel à l’ordre. Art historians have long considered the war to have precipitated the subsidence of modernist activity in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. But while they have argued that ethical, psychological or political factors underpinned these artist-driven aesthetic changes, this material suggests that crude financial forces were just as important, and that they were driven not by art’s producers but by its consumers.

Participation, however, can also describe the many ways by which the art world contributed to the war effort. Indeed, one critic observed in 1918 that ‘never since the Middle Ages, when the church taught its lessons by means of pictures...has art been called upon to serve in so many ways’.¹⁵ Motivated partly by patriotism and partly by self-preservation, artists donated their works and societies their profits to charity

¹⁴ Mark Gertler’s letters reveal how financial difficulties enforced compromise. In May 1916 he wrote: ‘If one has no money the purity of one’s art studies are spoilt, because one can’t help thinking of what the stupid buyers would like, as one must live. That is my trouble... If an artist is poor he simply has to please’. Gertler to Strachey (May 1916), in Woodeson 1972: 223-4.
sales and benevolent funds; museums and art dealers devised exhibitions or displays that were designed to 'arouse the feelings and stiffen the resolve of the nation'; and artists were employed in great numbers to produce posters and propagandistic images for official patrons. They even participated in curiously martial ways while serving with the forces. Artists worked within camouflage and counter-camouflage units; produced topographical sketches for artillery training or reconnaissance purposes; and some, like the sculptor Francis Derwent Wood, deployed artistic skill to construct new faces for mutilated soldiers.

Chapter 5 described a more fundamental way that art participated in the war effort. Its study of popular 'war art' (which reached millions of Britons daily and many more worldwide) showed that while artists' representations of the conflict ostensibly competed with the veracity of photographs, they actually performed a far more important function than simply recording its events transparently: they shaped civilians' understanding of them. Fortunino Matania, Philip Dadd and Frederic Villiers' war images interpreted, educated, entertained, justified and judged. In the process they emboldened civilian support for the war but also constructed the war for which that support was marshalled. This constitutive function evidently endured. As late as 1965 John Rothenstein recalled that 'even for those of us who never saw it' the image of the war 'was as familiar as our own back yards; it remains in my own memory more indelibly than any scene of bomb devastation inflicted on London

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16 Bather 1915: 3.
17 Bert Thomas's cartoon Arf a Mo!, Kaiser! in the Weekly Dispatch in 1914 became arguably the war's most famous image and raised £250,000 for the newspaper's tobacco fund. Thomas was later made official artist for the government's War Bonds campaign and in 1918 was commissioned to design a series of War Loan Posters – one of which was seventy-five feet long and thirty feet high, painted in oils, completed on scaffolding outside the National Gallery and showing Francis Drake facing the Spanish Armada. Thomas produced further posters for the Royal Exchange, and in Glasgow, Manchester and Cardiff. In June 1918 he was awarded an MBE for his contribution to the war effort. See 'Mr. Bert Thomas: Obituary', The Times (7 September 1966): 16, and Bryant 2004. Many others profited from the government's poster commissions. The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee produced 164 different posters by the middle of 1916, with a total print run of 12 million. Some of their designers, like Frank Brangwyn (who designed at least fifty), Bernard Partridge, Spencer Pryse and the equestrian painter Lucy Kemp-Welch could never have envisaged their work reaching such audiences. See Sanders & Taylor 1982, Wortley 1996: 120, and Hardie & Sabin 1920.
18 'Although war in all its chaotic miseries robs art to a great extent of that atmosphere which infuses a spirit of romance... at the same time...the Army has produced artists, and the art world especially in the present campaign has produced soldiers'. R.F.C. 1916: 44-5.
19 For camouflage, see Peixotto 1917; Solomon 1920; Kahn 1984; and Tippett 1984. The most famous British example of artists' involvement in camouflage is Norman Wilkinson's development of dazzle painting, See Wilkinson 1969, Atterbury 1975, and Behrens 1999.
during the Second World War, of which I was a continuous witness'. The reason for that vividness, of course, was the potency with which it had been represented.

The concept of ‘participation’ is the key to reaching a unifying conclusion about the war’s impact on British art, because if the conflict changed anything, it changed the relationship between British culture and British society. As the war tightened its grip on all aspects of national life the discrete sphere that art had previously inhabited came under direct challenge, and artists and their institutions were forced to continually (and unsuccessfully) compete with the war effort for the same social terrain. This process is most apparent in the debates over whether men be artists or soldiers; whether museums (and other art institutions) remain open or be occupied by war workers; whether material resources go to luxury trades or munitions; whether people’s money be spent on art or saved for the nation; and whether the public’s attention be focused on aesthetic pleasure or national survival. In each, art was understood as an adversary both to the war effort and to society as a whole.

On the other hand, these new conditions brought the art world into a more symbiotic union with national life than it had perhaps ever embraced before. Under pressure to prove that they were not the war effort’s enemies, its individuals and institutions self-mobilised to raise morale and recruit; to inform and entertain; to console and commemorate; and of course to fight. This cultural collaboration - one far removed from the hermeticism of pre-war aesthetic thought - underpinned the formation of institutions and organisations like the Design and Industries Association, the Civic Arts Association, and the Imperial War Museum - all driven by the conviction that the arts had an active and constructive role to play in forming a better society. This thesis does not argue that these changes were permanent, but William Rothenstein was certainly correct when he remarked that between 1914 and 1918 ‘the gulf between life and art, which had widened steadily for more than a century, momentarily disappeared’.

21 Rothenstein 1965b: 40.  
22 This manifested itself in wartime criticisms of Aestheticism. For a particularly trenchant example, see De Fonseca 1914.  
23 Michael Saler argued that it was ‘unlikely that the social function of modern art would have become a national preoccupation, involving the government, teachers, artists, and media pundits, without the onset of war’. 2001: 62. John Galsworthy’s evocative remark is also of interest here: ‘The utility of art, which in these days of blood and agony is mocked at, will be rising again into the view even of the mockers, almost before the thunder of the last shell has died away. “Beauty is useful,” says Monsieur Rodin. Aye! It is usefull’. Galsworthy 1915: 927.  
24 Rothenstein 1931: 21
The most resonant example of this transformation could have been witnessed at Burlington House at the end of 1916. There, in a remarkable and perhaps unthinkable rapprochement, the RA had agreed to host the eleventh exhibition of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society. As its visitors climbed the stairs from the entrance hall and emerged at the centre of its first gallery they would have seen, surrounded by murals, textiles, ceramics and furniture, a scale model of Trafalgar Square. This was not the Trafalgar Square that had greeted the outbreak of hostilities on a balmy day just over two years earlier; this was a Trafalgar Square transfigured by artists into what the catalogue called a 'National Campo Santo' - the paradigmatic centrepiece of a new civic society infused with the values of the arts. The vision would never of course be realised, but it was indicative of a profound if temporary transformation in the relationship between art and national life. Back in August 1914 the National Gallery had remained diffidently closed in the face of the square’s war crowds. In 1916 the ‘battalions of art’ were reaching out to remake that square altogether.


26 The term ‘battalions of art’ is from Pickard 1918: 19.
**Graphs and Tables**

**Graph A**: Royal Academy: number of pictures exhibited at summer exhibitions, 1914-1919 [source: Royal Academy Illustrated (1914-1919)]
Graph B: Royal Watercolour Society: revenue (£) from picture sales at exhibitions, 1913-19 [source: RWS B163-7]

Graph C: Royal Watercolour Society: income (£) from exhibitions, 1913-19 [source: RWS B163-7]
Graph D: National Art-Collections Fund: membership numbers, 1914-19 [source: NACF Annual Reports, 1915-1920]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Pre-1914 (£)</th>
<th>July 1914 (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. Reynolds</td>
<td>1500 (1911)</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Raeburn</td>
<td>800 (1911)</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Uccello</td>
<td>2100 (1911)</td>
<td>1450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Rousseau</td>
<td>110 (1912)</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Constable</td>
<td>200 (1912)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Corot</td>
<td>380 (1912)</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Crome</td>
<td>80 (1912)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Ansdell</td>
<td>90 (1913)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>£5260</strong></td>
<td><strong>£2748</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E: Prices paid for selected pictures, pre-1914 and summer 1914 [source: Year's Art (1915): 390-2]
Graph F: Number of pictures reaching 1400 guineas at chief auction rooms, 1913-19
[source: Year's Art (1919): 270]
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*Frederick Milner Papers* (TGA 9511)
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Francis Howard Letter Book 3 (TGA 737/12)

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1.16  **UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON ARCHIVE (UCL)**  
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Slade School of Art Papers (SS)

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1.17 **WINSOR & NEWTON (WN)**

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- Art News
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- Connoisseur
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IV. WEBSITES


ILLUSTRATIONS
Figure 1: Morrow, G., ‘How the Cubist, by a mere alteration of titles, achieved a ready sale of unmarketable pictures’, *Punch* (14 October 1914): 325.
Figure 2: Baden-Powell, R., ‘Plans of Forts disguised as a sketch of a stained glass window’, in Baden-Powell 1915: 54.

Figure 3: Baden-Powell, R., ‘Plan of forts disguised as sketch of an ivy leaf’, in Baden-Powell 1915: 53.
Figure 4: 'An Apparently Innocent Landscape', *Illustrated War News* (7 October 1914): 28.

Figure 5: 'A Plan of a Harbour and its Forts', *Illustrated War News* (7 October 1914): 29.
"So vast is Art, so narrow human wit."

Cubist Artist (who is being arrested for espionage by local constable). "My dear man, have you no aesthetic sense? Can’t you see that this picture is an emotional impression of the inherent gladness of Spring?"

Constable. "Stow it, Clarence! D’yer think I don’t know a bloomin’ plan when I sees one?"

Figure 6: Briscoe, E.E., ‘So vast is art, so narrow human wit’, *Punch* (9 June 1915): 441.

Boy Scout, "Searching the harbour’s not allowed."
Artist, "Confound you! My name’s Cadmium Brown, and——"
Boy Scout, "Great stuff, then. We’ve got orders to shoot you as marines."

Figure 7: Stampa, G.L., ‘Cartoon’, *Punch* (5 July 1916): 12.
"'E didn't ought to be 'lowed to sketch the old castle!"

"Why not? 'E ain't got it nothin' like!"

Figure 8: Brook, R., 'Cartoon', *Punch* (1 September 1915): 194.

Figure 9: Shepard, C.U., 'The Suspect', *Punch* (9 September 1914): 222.
Figure 10: ‘Philip de László’, Illustrated Sunday Herald (23 September 1917): 1.

Figure 11: Bateman, J., ‘Cartoon’, Punch (30 May 1917): 356.
Friend. "Well, how's the war affecting you?"
Post-Cubist-Impressionist Sculptor. "Not a bit, old chap. I never sold anything before it started—and I haven't since!"

Figure 12: Thomas, B., 'Cartoon', Punch (11 August 1915): 125.

Figure 14: Morrow, G., 'Cartoon', *Punch* (22 September 1915): 255.

Figure 15: 'Crowds around a War-Window at R. Jackson & Sons' Moorfield Branch, Liverpool', in *Fine Art Trade Journal* 10 (September 1914): 265.
Figure 16: Anon., ‘Over the Top’, *War Pictorial* (September 1916): 9.
Figure 17: Holiday, G., 'Facing the Foe to the Very Last', Graphic (12 September 1914): 389.

Figure 18: 'At the Front', Illustrated War News (12 August 1914): iii.
Figure 19: Villiers, F., ‘View of Trenches on the Western Front, 1914’, in Villers 1921: 318-19.

Figure 20: ‘Detail’ of Figure 19
"WAR PICTURES."

The Mother: "Of course I don't understand them, dear; but they give me a dreadful feeling. I can't bear to look at them. Is it really like that at the Front?"

The Warrior (who has seen terrible things in battle): "Thank heaven, no, Mother."

Figure 21: Reynolds, F., 'War Pictures', Punch (31 July 1918): 71.

Figure 22: Stampa, G.L., 'Cartoon', Punch (4 July 1917): 4.
Figure 23: Thomas, B., ‘Cartoon’, Punch (1 January 1918): 15.
Figure 24: Morrow, G., 'The War Artist', *Punch* (15 November 1916): 353
The Artist—Then—

—and Now

Figure 25: Elcock, R.K., 'The Artist—Then and Now', Bystander (13 June 1917): 553.
Imperial Patron of Art. "Don’t trouble about architectural details; just get a broad effect of culture."
[A well-known battle painter of Düsseldorf has been commissioned by the Kaiser to make studies of the present campaign.]

Figure 26: Morrow, G., ‘Scene - Louvain’, Punch (11 November 1914): 401.
Figure 27: Dadd, P., ‘The Sky over the Forts was Absolutely Lurid-Blood-Red’, *Sphere* (7 December 1914): 20-1.
Figure 28: Matania, F., ‘Cossaks of the Russian Army Charging the German Death’s Head Hussars between Korschen and Bartenstein in East Prussia’, Sphere (3 October 1914): 12-13.
Figure 29: Bagdatopulos, W.S., 'Corporal James Upton Dragging a Wounded Comrade to the Trenches', *Deeds that Thrill the Empire* (1917) I: 129.

Figure 30: Bagdatopulos, W.S., 'A High Explosive Shell Killing a Wounded Man whom Corporal Upton had Rescued', *Deeds that Thrill the Empire* (1917) I: 130.
Figure 31: Bagdatopulos, W.S., ‘Corporal Stirk Falls Wounded in the Head After Lifting a Wounded Man on to Private Caffrey’s Back’, *Deeds that Thrill the Empire* (1917) I: 318.

Figure 32: Bagdatopulos, W.S., ‘Acting-Sergeant Broderick Carrying Back a Wounded Officer to the British Trenches under Heavy Fire’, *Deeds that Thrill the Empire* (1917) I: 386.
Figure 33: Valda, J.H., ‘Private J. Mackenzie Rescues a Severely Wounded Man from in front of the Enemy’s Trenches’, *Deeds that Thrill the Empire* (1917) II: 673.

Figure 34: Valda, J.H., ‘Second Lieutenant E.K. Myles Carrying in a Wounded Officer under Heavy Fire’, *Deeds that Thrill the Empire* (1917) II: 841.
Figure 35: Caton Woodville, R., ‘The “Stirrup-Charge” of the Scots Greys and Highlanders at St. Quentin’, *Illustrated London News* (12 September 1914): 392.
Figure 36: Leader, B.W., *Peace* (1915) oil on canvas. Whereabouts unknown (reproduced in *Royal Academy Pictures and Sculpture* (1915): 20).


Figure 40: Quinton, A.R., *The Village Wain* (1917), in Rhys 1917:128.
**Figure 41:** Anon., *Your Country's Call* (1915), Parliamentary Recruiting Poster no. 87. Imperial War Museum (PST: 0302).

**Figure 42:** Wetherbee, G., *Fair England* (1917) oil on canvas. Whereabouts unknown (reproduced in *Royal Academy Illustrated* (1917): 104).
Figure 44: De László, P., *Arthur Rosdew Burn* (1915/16) oil on canvas (73.7 x 55.9 cm). Private collection.
Figure 45: De László, P., H.S.H. Prince Maurice of Battenberg (1916) oil on canvas (80 x 55.8 cm). Private collection.
Figure 46: De László, P., Baron Bruni von Schröder (1915) oil on canvas (dimensions unknown). Private collection.
The War's Greatest Pictures

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All Post Free.

Although THE GREAT SACRIFICE has been everywhere acknowledged to be the greatest of all the pictures inspired by the war, in publishing THE GREAT REWARD the proprietors feel convinced that they have succeeded in securing a worthy companion picture to it.

Figure 48: Clark, J., *The Great Sacrifice* (1914) and *The Great Reward* (1915), *Graphic* (15 September 1917): 339.
Figure 49: Nash, J., *The Cornfield* (1918) oil on canvas (68.6 x 67.2 cm). Tate.

Figure 50: Knight, L., *Spring* (1916-20) oil on canvas (152.4 x 182.9 cm). Tate.
Figure 51: Newlandsmith, E., ‘Frontispiece’, in Newlandsmith 1919: i.
Figure 52: Shannon, C., *The Rebirth of the Arts (Britain’s Efforts and Ideals)* (1917) colour lithograph (74.3 x 49.5 cm). Imperial War Museum.