Palgrave Studies in the History of the Media

Comics and the World Wars

A Cultural Record

Jane Chapman,
Anna Hoyles, Andrew Kerr
and Adam Sherif

Mining comics and cartoons as historical sources, this is an innovative, theoretically sophisticated study that crosses national and geographical boundaries. It makes a pioneering contribution to print, labour, gender and new cultural history and the expanding field of humour studies, through a captivating series of case studies from both World Wars.

– Bridget Griffen-Foley, Macquarie University, Australia

This study's focus on homefront and front-line comics from the two world wars brings welcome attention to texts generally ignored by scholars of history and comic art alike. Its argument for the significance of these largely overlooked comics as valuable source material opens the doors for further studies in these two fields and beyond.

– Gene Kannenberg, Jr., Northwestern University Library, USA

This book establishes the significance of comics as a cultural record, with lesser-known and forgotten titles giving important insights into everyday lives and mentalities across the English-speaking world in times of war. Comics are an exciting addition to the repertoire of sources that inform commemorative activities in the twenty-first century as well as historical studies of the period.

– Sarah Lloyd, Director of Everyday Lives in War, *an AHRC-funded First World War Engagement Centre, UK*

I found particular value in the close readings of comics of William Haselden, more obscure artists from the left-wing press in America and Australia and soldier artists from the trench papers. The authors tackle issues of gender representation, and certainly Kathleen O'Brien's *Wanda the War Girl* comic warrants closer attention.

– Ian Gordon, National University of Singapore

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Comics and the World Wars

A Cultural Record

Jane Chapman, Anna Hoyles, Andrew Kerr and Adam Sherif
University of Lincoln, UK

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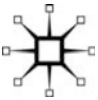

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Contents

Illustrations

Figures

Tables

Foreword

In recent years, there has been a surge of scholarly interest in graphic narrative. To a significant extent, this new wave of comics scholarship reflects the concerns of researchers in literary studies, media studies and cultural studies – the contemporary-minded wing of the humanities, broadly speaking. As *Comics and the World Wars* makes abundantly clear, however, comics and cartoons offer a rich socio-cultural resource for historians interested in the intersection of cultural expression, political communication and key junctures and crises over the past two centuries.

The focus of this volume, of course, is on graphic narrative and the two world wars. In different ways, each of the book's chapters presents a compelling case for incorporating the study of comics and cartoons into the professional toolkit of the modern historian. The authors draw on ideas and concepts developed by prominent writers on historical methods to help reconsider and expand the palette of primary source materials; in doing so they engage in a dialogue with a New Cultural History that has already provoked serious rethinking across the humanities on a range of topics and issues. Even as the book's authors investigate from a methodological standpoint the uses of comics as historical sources, they provide numerous examples of ways in which individual wartime comics reflected and to some extent shaped the social contexts within which they were created, disseminated and consumed. Taken as a whole, the book's chapters provide a fresh way of thinking about what historians and others often describe as 'the cultural record' and the ways in which comics and cartoons constitute a neglected but salient aspect of this record.

While the present study opens up new lines of enquiry for scholars interested in the cultural and social history of the First and Second World Wars, it also raises useful questions for researchers in the fledgling and interdisciplinary field of 'comics studies'. It is worth emphasising the rapidity of the field's growth and maturation: while at the end of the twentieth century the number of serious books on comics could fill a bookshelf, the more recent outpouring of monographs, biographies, edited collections and theoretical investigations could easily furnish a couple of large bookcases. And yet, while the term 'comics' encompasses a diverse array of formats, practices and

genres, comics scholarship has mostly fixated on a narrow subset of themes, creators and eras. The new scholarship tends to privilege autobiography and adventure stories above humour and parody; US above non-US Anglophone comics; and comic books and graphic novels above newspaper and magazine cartooning. Most importantly, from the perspective of the present study, the field exhibits a much stronger sense of engagement with contemporary rather than historical cartooning. The literature on nineteenth-century cartooning is much smaller than the literature on twentieth-century cartooning, and the literature on late twentieth-century cartooning is far larger than the literature on early twentieth-century cartooning. There are exceptions to these general trends; a determined researcher can find material on delightfully obscure corners of cartooning history and culture. It nevertheless remains the case that a select number of present-minded topics and approaches receive far more consideration than others.

The present volume is thus an outlier from the standpoint of the state of the field. At the moment, there is very little being published on the kind of short bursts of graphic humour explored in chapters 3 and 5, or the type of combative political cartooning profiled in Chapter 8. Australian, Canadian and New Zealand-based cartooning receive far more scrutiny in these pages than is customary, and in general there is not a lot of comics-related research that criss-crosses national and regional boundaries in the way that this volume does. The use of comics and cartoons as historical sources, a methodological issue that is carefully addressed in Chapter 2, has not to date received sustained attention elsewhere, nor have the ways in which modern states have mobilised cartoon imagery for propagandistic purposes, which Chapter 6 investigates. Furthermore, the book's highlighted cartoonists – George Baker, Bruce Bairnsfather, George Dunstan ('Zif'), Hugh Farmer, Jimmy Friel ('Gabriel'), Fred Guardineer, William Haselden, Syd Miller, Kathleen O'Brien, Ernest Riebe, Dan Russell, Ryan Walker, the anonymous Hob-Nob and so on – are pretty much invisible from the vantage point of contemporary scholarship. All of this should serve as a reminder of how little we really know about cartooning in the twentieth century, let alone the nineteenth, despite appreciable advances in scholarly knowledge and infrastructure.

Not surprisingly, wartime cartooning has received minimal attention in the secondary literature. While there are reprint resources, such as Matgamna (2014), Minear (2001), Schiffrin (2009) and Yoe (2009), scholarly commentary on the subject is not exactly abundant. A review of the literature reveals a much greater level of investment in comics

about past wars, and graphic reportage about wars in remote settings, than comics generated within the crucible of interstate violence. Yet neither comics about historical warfare nor graphic narratives about present-day conflicts that are written and drawn by journalists should be grouped under the 'wartime comics' label. By definition, wartime comics are comics incubated within particular contexts and time frames. Whether issued by government agencies, for-profit companies or political organisations, these kinds of visual narratives are rooted in, and necessarily reflective of, particular times and places. To write about wartime comics is therefore to confront the problem of connecting what is depicted on the page to what was happening on the ground. This suggests that the study of wartime comics speaks to the core preoccupations of professional historians in a way that the study of comics about war does not. Contemporary non-fiction comics about war in other times and places admittedly constitute a kind of cultural record, in the sense that they are suggestive of the context within which they were created. But the researcher who sets out to produce an essay on non-fiction comics about, say, ancient warfare is presumably more likely to use that opportunity to talk about such matters as aesthetics, formal devices and storytelling strategies, rather than what the comics might reveal about fighting in the ancient world, or what their pages disclose about our own cultural moment. There are, we can assume, more straightforward ways to document and investigate the contemporary cultural record.

While the phrase 'wartime comics' denotes a quite specific set of meanings, and should not be conflated with the broader nexus of war and comics, the more familiar term 'war comics' should also be disentangled from similar-sounding phraseology. If wartime comics can be defined as comics directly produced under wartime conditions, war comics can be defined as comic books, comic strips and reprint collections that invoke and recycle stereotypical battlefield scenarios for young adult audiences. War comics, like horror comics, romance comics and superhero comics, constitute a genre, whereas wartime comics can incorporate a variety of genres, from kids' comics and humour comics to political comics and government propaganda. War comics tend to be romantic in their treatment of military conflict, with an emphasis on good guys versus bad guys, and tidy story resolutions, and they are almost always temporally disconnected from the historical periods that they portray. Over the years, for example, the 'big two' US comics companies, DC and Marvel, published such generic titles as *G.I. Combat* (1952–87), *Our Fighting Forces* (1954–78) and *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* (1963–81), while British publishers brought

out black-and-white anthologies such as *Battle Picture Weekly* (1975–88), *Commando* (1961–93) and *Warlord* (1974–91). Every one of these titles, along with numerous others that are broadly similar in tone and format, postdate the events they depict. It would obviously be a category error to treat them as primary historical documents.

Unlike war comics, and most comics about war, wartime comics are not necessarily centred on the chaos and din of the front line. The 'Home Front' – a term that dates to the First World War – represents as meaningful a subject for wartime cartooning as the battlefield. In this context, 'wartime comics' refers to depictions of everyday life in factories, hospitals, coal mines, pubs and restaurants, and private homes as well as military settings. The consumer who purchases a war comic has every right to expect guns, tanks, fighter planes and explosions; by way of contrast, the consumer of a wartime comic does not bring these kinds of generic expectations to the table. The cultural charge or resonance of a specific wartime comic may be greatest at precisely that moment when it eschews any explicit reference to the trappings of war. A three- or four-panel strip in which a shop-floor worker shares a barbed joke may be just as revealing of deeply rooted complexities and contradictions as official reports or journalistic narratives. To write intelligently about war comics, and comics about war, requires some background knowledge about how comics work as well as about other comics in the same vein. To write intelligently about wartime comics requires knowing something about the social and cultural matrix within which the comic was generated and circulated. Broadly speaking, the study of war comics points in an 'interior' direction – towards comics, whereas the study of wartime comics points in an 'exterior' direction – towards wartime itself.

As it happens, this book points in both directions. The authors have a great deal to tell us about comics and the two world wars. In addition to recovering the efforts of successive generations of twentieth-century cartoonists, as well as the print cultures that sustained them, they convey a powerful sense of the world wars as discrete sociocultural episodes. They remind us about such things as nose art, pin-ups, wizz bangs, potato mashers, air raid shelters, disparagement humour, chauvinistic slurs, toy rifle promotions, industrial syndicalism, small box respirators, trench and troopship newspapers, gullible workers and Field Service Post Cards. The chapters make a lucid and persuasive case for the claim that comics and cartoons can be as valuable from the standpoint of historiography as other primary documents, such as letters to the editor or popular movies. Far from merely filling a hole in the secondary literature, *Comics and the World Wars: A Cultural Record* represents an exciting

point of scholarly departure on comics and twentieth-century history. It also provides a necessary corrective to the formalist, presentist and sociological preoccupations of much of what gets promulgated under the banner of comics studies.

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Professor of Political Science
Marymount Manhattan College

Preface

This book represents one of the fruits of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) collaborative research grant also entitled 'Comics and the World Wars – A Cultural Record' and was written by the content team for that project. One essential prerequisite for the project application was interdisciplinarity, and that feature has remained embedded in team thinking. The aim has been threefold: firstly, in the spirit of New Cultural History, to take up the challenge to extend the palette of sources available to historians by proposing a methodology to view comics from the past as a source that, if consulted, can serve to expand the skill set of research techniques. In the process of elaborating this, the book also develops new insights into how to approach content analysis of media sources more generally. Secondly, the project has aimed to persuade the nascent field of comics studies, as it continues to grow, to look outwards, in order to break new boundaries. Finally, the study aims to fill a gap in scholarship for the fields of media history and cultural studies, where comics, despite their enormous popularity in the past, have been a neglected communications platform in their own right compared to television, film, radio and newspapers more generally.

The overarching thread of this book is to establish the potential of this previously somewhat maligned medium as a serious primary resource, by providing insights into how sequential visual narratives function as evidence through an exploration of the type of record they may be said to constitute. The task is to illuminate where the real, or then-present, is reasonably discernible in the narrative and how, finally, this might be verified and validated.

The reader can best judge how successful this mission is likely to be.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, our thanks go to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which funded Jane Chapman as principal investigator of a four-year collaborative research grant 'Comics and the World Wars – A Cultural Record', from which this book is one of the outputs. In addition, the AHRC has given support to our team of co-authors in various other ways: through their communications team, led by Philip Pothen, and most notably through their International Placement Scheme, which provided fellowships for the research by Adam Sherif and Andrew Kerr at the Kluge Center, Library of Congress in Washington. For this scheme, we extend our thanks also to Mary Lou Reker and Georgia Higley, who were both so helpful and encouraging. Back in the UK, and throughout the entire trajectory of this project, Dan Ellin has provided extensive support as project consultant. His numerous talents have been invaluable at all stages of our journey.

This study could not have happened without the primary sources that we have recuperated from various collections worldwide. In particular, the collections of Cambridge University Library have been central to our research process; thus we extend our thanks for advice, copyright and reproduction to the Syndics, to Ed Potten, Rachel Roe and Grant Young. We are also grateful to Intellect Books and to the *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*, the place of original publication of material on *Wanda the War Girl*, researched with support from the National Archives of Australia. Equally, the journal *Round Table* (of the Royal Commonwealth Society) – a Taylor and Francis title – has kindly allowed us to reproduce material from an original article on trench publications. For reproduction of images, we must also thank Monash University Library Rare Books Collection, the Barr Smith Library of the University of Adelaide, Mirrorpix, the Marx Memorial Library, the *Morning Star* and DC Comics.

Throughout this project, Lincoln University has helped the authors in every way possible – especially Rebecca Hewson-Heathorn, David Sleight and Katie Dorr, along with our colleagues in the School of English and Journalism. Wolfson College Cambridge and Macquarie University have continued to support Jane Chapman and we are grateful to the Cartoon Museum, Comics Forum and Orbital Comics for their collaboration.

The staff and editorial board members for this series at Palgrave have provided valuable insights and guidance, especially Clare Mence, Angharad Bishop and Emily Russell, as well as copy editors and other marketing and production staff. Finally, thanks to all our friends and families who have tolerated the long-term obsession that it takes to produce such a study.

1
Introduction

This study is original in two ways, firstly in the recuperation and presentation to the reader of many long-forgotten and currently overlooked sources, and secondly in the way these sources are approached methodologically and interpreted. By and large, the comics mentioned in the pages that follow represent new material for media history.[1] This book adopts the premise that, as fresh sources, they also require an original approach, one that has been labelled 'comics as a cultural record'.

'More than any other art the comic holds a mirror to 20th century society, sometimes distorted as some mirrors are, but more often surprisingly and shockingly true' (Paymans: 1976, 219). It is important to understand how textual and narrative forms enter into the production of knowledge about the past, an endeavour that is at least as important as establishing historical facts. Yet the wider inclusion of fact-based comic strips into the corpus of representations that are used to analyse how knowledge is constructed and transmitted still remains a challenge, despite the fact that comics offer a popular interpretative insight into the very elements of human experience that most academic history does not emphasise. Addressing this point, the proposal here is that comics can be used as a historical source.

Comics and new cultural history

To fulfil this function comics must be shown to be bearers of verifiable historical content. Influenced by the school of New Cultural History and drawing on the work of R. G. Collingwood, E. H. Carr, Geoffrey Elton and Jacques Derrida, the approach that this book takes is to offer a methodology by which the historian may deconstruct them and

determine the historical content. First, however, the intellectual roots and premises of New Cultural History need to be revisited, if only to establish how comics as a cultural record can dovetail into and, in the process, extend that philosophical movement.

Central to New Cultural History is the democratisation of history, with an emphasis on the non-elites in the reconsideration of the nature of evidence. In his seminal work *The Great Cat Massacre*, Robert Darnton states that 'world views cannot be chronicled in the manner of political events, but they are no less "real" ' (1984, 23). A focal point, therefore, of New Cultural History has been the history of *mentalités*, that is, questions of opinion, attitude, discourse and mode of thought. These significantly broaden the criteria for what may be considered a historical source. Thus a contemporary representation of, say, domestic attitudes towards US involvement in the Second World War through the dialogue of characters in *Superman* or *Action Comics*, is useful historical content for the historian concerned with holistic questions of discourse and *zeitgeist*.

The processes of the selection and evaluation of sources are of course central to the researcher's task. In 1935, Collingwood stressed the importance of critical analysis and put forward the theory that the work of the historian must be active and referential. The deciphering of possible truth and meaning must come through interaction and relativity, not the fact that 'a statement is made by an authority' (1935, 9). No source is a 'sacred text' beyond reproach (Collingwood: 1935, 7).[2] Sources must be harnessed alongside, and in the context of, other sources in order for meaning to be discerned or confirmed as a process of narrative construction. Yet mediation of the present, in structure, content and the rendering of narrative, is rarely a uniform process. Therefore the task is to illuminate where the real, or then-present, is reasonably discernible in the narrative and how this may be verified and validated.

It is also crucial to understand the context of a source's creation. Studies of book publishing and reading have shown that the artistic endeavour of an individual writer is only one factor in a published work; the economic, political and cultural systems of the surrounding environment, along with the interaction between reader, publisher, distributor and author, all play decisive roles (Darnton: 1990, 111). With comics this process is arguably at times even more pronounced, with writers and artists often acting as conduits for commercial and ideological forces, especially during wartime when material and ideological changes occur in an accelerated and more perceptible manner than during peacetime. Comics studies as a field has come to recognise the importance of

context. Joseph Witek, for instance, acknowledges that there is a recent tendency to connect 'the textual specificities of the comic form to the embeddedness [*sic*] of comics in social, cultural and economic systems' (1999, 4).

The world wars as subject location

There are three significant reasons for choosing the two world wars as the time location for analysis of comics as a cultural record, namely appropriation of the format by an adult market,[3] the needs of 'total war' and the extensive use of comics as propaganda. One of the most important changes in the market for comics during the First World War was their production for, and enjoyment by, adult audiences. Previously in many countries, including Britain, the main market for comics before the First World War had been children. Furthermore, the characteristics of total war meant that communications more generally, and comics specifically, were likely to provide good indicators of *zeitgeist* and context. In London, the Ministry of Information stated: 'whether we are in uniform or not, we are in the war. And no matter how young we are or how old we are there are jobs we can do for our country.' Churchill also gave a similar speech to the House of Commons in 1940.[4]

States could only mobilise for war by assuming a broader role than hitherto, but in Britain the government was afraid that this new sense of collectivism would not come naturally to the British population and that 'few would look beyond their own homes and families' (Grayzel: 2012, 299). A great deal of effort was expended in promulgating propaganda, which included popular culture, to depict an ideal nation in which everybody contributed. Publishers' support for the war effort was not necessarily simply a commercial decision, but also a genuine wish to support the Home Front. This occurred in the First World War as well, when publishers had, as Janet Potter's study shows, 'a commitment not only to commerce – to profit – but also to country and their own consciences' (2007, 11). Total war meant the intrusion of 'individual self-sacrifice and grief' into commercial ventures (Potter: 2007, 11). It also meant that many organisations, social groups and institutions used the comics format for their own communications.

In the two world wars, comic strips and comic books (both of which this study analyses) proved to be an ideal tool for the distribution of propaganda by both governments and organisations, a fact that the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or 'Wobblies'), for instance, had grasped some 30 years earlier (see Chapter 5). Several other examples

of this potentially close relationship are explored in later chapters: why the US administration sponsored its own comics during the same period; how elsewhere, the concept of the 'gullible worker' was used to spread socialism and promulgate opposition to militarism; how the *Daily Worker*'s comic strip 'The Front Line' disseminated propaganda favourable to both the British and Soviet governments.

As part of the war effort, the publication of comic strips was not restricted to mainstream organisations, and was extensive during both wars. The selection of examples in this study gives the reader a flavour of this trend. With their popularity, established position with the working class (both as characters and as audience) and ease of assimilation, comic strips were an ideal vehicle for propaganda. In 1941 the historian, and later diplomat, Latimer Hadsel seemed to believe he was stating something new when he argued just that:

> nowadays people are becoming so much more aware of propaganda that it is essential to catch them off guard. The vogue of the serial comic, moreover, induces the reader to return regularly to the same strip and the ideas there expounded accordingly have a better chance of taking root in his mind.
>
> (1941, 366)

This book focuses on comparisons amongst the Allied nations, and there are instances in some of these countries where the comics characters in wartime assumed a national significance, simultaneously serving to bridge the gap between youth and adult audiences. In Australia it is generally accepted that if there had not been a war, there would never have been a local comic book industry (Gordon: 1998, 10). This was mainly due to import licensing regulations and economic sanctions that restricted American imports during the Second World War; by 1948 the industry had grown to such an extent that there were 38 local and imported (mainly British) comics titles available each week (Stone: 1994, 72; Ryan: 1979, 197). However, when import restrictions were lifted, American products flooded the market to such an extent that in the post-war period, 80 per cent of comics circulating originated in the United States (Lent: 1999, 22).[5] Despite the heavy competition, or maybe because of it, the popular characters produced in local comics have a social significance as part of the nation's cultural heritage.

In the United States, comic books were avidly read by adults; reportedly 25 per cent of magazines shipped to their troops overseas were comics, and the GIs' voracious perusal of them 'struck many European observers as further evidence of American immaturity and

unsophistication' (Wright: 2002, 31). They were not solely read by GIs, however; Geoffrey Trease was disgusted to learn that adults in Britain read such things when, during the war, he was offered comics by his landlady's daughter, who informed him that all the soldiers she had met enjoyed reading them, including her father, who Trease 'happened to know, was a qualified pharmacist, with claims to a kind of university education' (Trease: 1948, 75).

Methodology

Given the contemporary popularity of comics, the overarching thread of this proposal, as Chapter 2 states, is to establish the potential of the medium as a serious resource for study of the past, to provide insights into how sequential visual narratives function as evidence and what types of record they may be said to constitute. In this study the comic strip or book will be made to interact both with other sources of its kind and with relevant historiography, by focusing principally on the techniques of deconstruction and close reading to identify subjectivity, narrative, subject location or position, followed by cross-reference. Categories for analysis are outlined in the next chapter: this chapter introduces some of the concepts underlying them.

The diversity of audiences and of types of comics means that sources are rich. Accordingly, this variety requires a methodology that caters for diversity of cultural record. Thiery Gröensteen contends that comics are 'well and truly a language', evidenced by factors such as their range of content (not just fictional), varying from autobiographical to propagandist, publicity, political, educational, journalism and testimony, all of which, he contends, demonstrates a 'plasticity' (2009, 124–131).

The choice of examples from the war periods is ample, so readers may well point to others that have not been selected. Criteria for those that have been chosen are dictated by perceptions of gaps in existing scholarship, in comics studies, cultural studies and history. This book is not a general history of the medium and does not attempt to fulfil that function. With the exception of *Wonder Woman* in Chapter 2, and some mention of *Superman* in Chapter 6, priority elsewhere has been given in the selection of sources to the recuperation of lesser-known and forgotten titles.

Because a work of narrative is constructed by an individual subjective consciousness, it follows, then, that the position of the subject is of prime importance when analysing a source. Chapter 2 makes the point that 'ultimately, subjectivity determines that even the most stringently crafted source that strives towards objectivity, must be interrogated and

ultimately recognised as a work of narrative'. The inherent subjectivity of comics, including the significance of subject location, in processes of creation and narrativisation becomes the entry point in the desired transition from product of the past to document of history. The position in time and space or 'subject location' (of the subject at the time of writing) is a prime concern for any analysis of the source. Without knowing this, the researcher cannot examine the source within its proper context. So, for instance, to study Quality Comics, published 1939–45, we need to know that they were published in the United States during global war.

The form of subjectivity inherent in comics is rather different to other media subjectivities, based as it is on the combination of words and images, itself touching on conceptual binaries (or relativisms) of language/art and realism/symbolism. Is it the case that the subjectivity of the genre overcomes the limitations? It is only possible to answer this question by further elaboration of the categories of cultural record that emerge from the main case study chapters. These are presented in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 tests the 'cultural record' premise to its limits by arguing that, despite being ostensibly fictional works in most cases, even works of apparent fantasy are nevertheless inherently likely to hold some mark, some degree, of the 'real' within their pages. Comics are the perfect format for transforming images into narrative: the form is uniquely placed to explore the space between reality and representation, because the visuals operate mainly as iconic translations and this is reinforced by the narrative structure (McCloud: 1994, 24–25). Thus, the chapter proposes that although *Wonder Woman* books are not rigidly accurate or factual, the matriarchal society of Amazons depicted in *All Star Comics #8* can be seen as a repudiation of the conventional Western patriarchy of the United States of the 1940s. Contextual information, in this case the date and location of publication, allows for the drawing out of this trace of contemporary American society present in the work. Use of comic strips in context, juxtaposed with photographs, can further dissolve the boundary between fantasy and reality presented within wartime comic strip and book publications more generally. Within each chapter, comics sources are compared and contrasted according to criteria of various definitions of cultural record. Some narratives will follow alongside and adjust to or replicate developments of real events. Yet these can provide dynamic, sustained records, comprising a range of contact points, even though comic books have an ambiguous and potentially unpredictable relationship with time.

In order to render a comic book 'document' for the purposes of study, the influence and refracted record of the 'real' present (now historical) must be brought forth and verified. Factual record can consist of real stories or events, dates or people. A story depicting aerial combat in the Pacific published during the Second World War can be metaphorically apt even if it is not claiming to document a specific event. Events may not have happened precisely in that way, in that they may be contemporary depictions of known events featuring non-real detail, but they still reflect reality with metaphorical aptness, and can thus contain some degree of 'truth'.

The type of narrative agents and authorities used are likely to reflect the age; Thucydides cited great statesmen, Marston and Peter used a colonel. In the case of a work that is not an explicit record or conventional source, the 'trace', as defined in Chapter 2, is a mark of the 'real', and consequently the final element in the transition from product of the past to document of history. According to post-structuralist theory, a source must contain some record: this could be implicit or explicit, singular or as a multiple reflection of the circumstances and context of its creation.

Other examples provide the reader with what is called in New Cultural History *mentalité* (or *zeitgeist*), amounting to non-tangible attitudes of a section of society or from a period of time. New Cultural History approaches our own civilisation in much the same way that anthropologists study alien cultures, taking into account opinion, attitude, discourse and mode of thought. Our chapters show the range and scope of *mentalité* in different contexts. Chapter 3, for example, on the British pioneer artist Haselden, provides insights into the *mentalité* of a significant proportion of the British population at the Home Front and amongst servicemen. As Haselden's *Daily Mirror* cartoons were extremely popular, accuracy as an immediate snapshot of the *mentalité* of the time is likely. More precisely, the record shows how the British population chose to see itself during wartime, from 1914 to 1918, when ridiculing the enemy was seen as an essentially British ploy.

Communal humour

During this early period in the history of British comics, what we now consider to be the conventions of comic art and comic book heroes had yet to be established. Many contemporary wartime comics were produced anonymously, but there are occasions within this book where the role of the artist is stressed; the chapter on Haselden

examines changes in content, form and focus in the newspaper comic strip through the prism of his wartime work. Haselden articulately deployed cultural shorthand in his *Daily Mirror* comic strips, whilst simultaneously acting as the first artist to provide ongoing stories on consecutive days.

Anonymity was the norm in the case of multi-panel cartoons from the trenches that are revealed through scholarship for the first time in Chapter 4. Here the authors are largely unknown, or their identity is not important, because a collective consciousness assumes greater significance. The way the men used the format has been hitherto unrecognised, yet the chapter's interpretation expands our definition of the ways in which citizens' journalism can be historicised and adds to the historiography of the comic strip by introducing 'proto comics', produced transnationally at grassroots level.

These indicate the *mentalité* of the common soldiers, providing an alternative to Home Front propaganda and jingoism because they are drawn by and for citizen soldiers, that is, by the men themselves, making the nature of the source both democratic and immediate. Proto comic strips by armed forces originating from different parts of the British Empire give the reader an insight into day-to-day experiences of trenches, and into soldiers' thinking on everyday subjects. Views on cultural difference can be compared to memoirs, whilst views on food and drink, for instance, can be cross-referenced with conventional sources such as reports to the British war cabinet on the matter. Trench publications were influenced by oral culture, drawing on music hall songs; the humour acted as a cathartic substitute for direct protest. The newspaper voice allowed soldiers to make sense of their new environment, while their disparaging satire encouraged a sense of endurance amongst armed forces readers. Multi-panels cemented collective identity even if their message appeared as grumbling anti-authoritarianism.

The humour analysed in Chapter 5 is similarly disparaging. The 'gullible worker' represents a direct inversion of the 'heroic worker'. The concept as it appeared in the First World War labour movement newspaper strips was a derisive and very unheroic figure, yet one which in various, but very similar, guises was to prove of enduring popularity on both sides of the Pacific. The gullible worker was a deluded and downtrodden representative of the working class, who believed that he lived in the best of all worlds where the newspapers, politicians and employers were always right. This proved to be the perfect communications tool, as arguments made in editorial articles could be distilled into an entertaining yet still educative form. Characters like Block, Simple,

Dubb and Mug epitomised those transnational working class men who were, to the chagrin of the Wobblies, not class conscious and therefore without the understanding of what trade unionism truly meant (Figure 1.1).

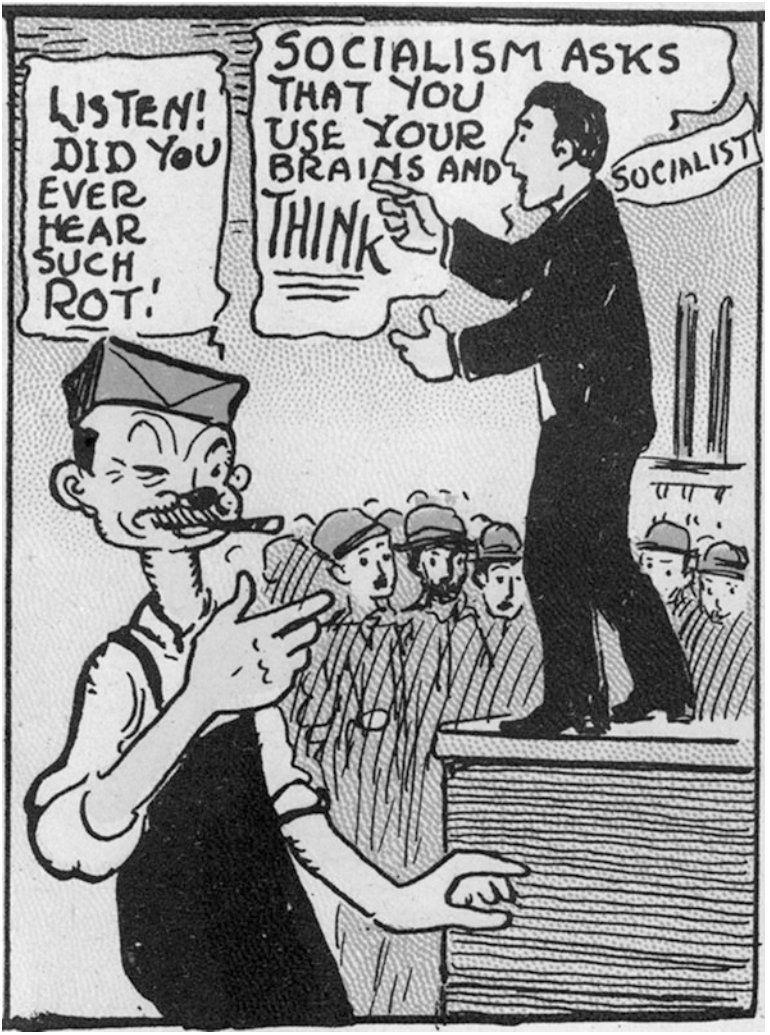

Figure 1.1 The gullible worker, Henry Dubb, refuses to listen to a socialist activist
Source: Walker, R. (1915) *New Adventures of Henry Dubb: Cartoons* (Chicago, IL: Socialist Party).

As with trench publications, communal humour cemented cohesion but also acted as a prescriptive social corrective. The cultural record in this case is one of subjectivity framed to show how the gullible worker reacted towards activists and capitalists. Strips repeated the major themes of movement publications, such as the deceptions (false consciousness) of the mainstream press, capitalists and courts. For the researcher, they provide a fresh way to examine the causes and effects of war through the eyes of the left, with potential for cross-referencing with movement songs, articles, poems and chalk talks.

Comics as propaganda

Chapter 6 demonstrates how the authorities attached great importance to comics and their use in propaganda during the Second World War. Advertisers and the US government used them for the same reason gullible worker publications did: to educate, to persuade the public of the rightfulness of their cause and to reach the illiterate. Again, they employed humour to drive home informational themes. The chapter illustrates not only the important role of comics as they were actively used in the war effort to influence hearts and minds on the Home Front and in the military, but also how they fed upon popular and cultural attitudes and contributed to them. It also indicates the editorial stance of the editors and publishers and provides an insight into the emotions of the audience.

One interesting trend in *mentalité* is the patriotism that can be evidenced in both children's and adults' comics. Clearly this sold well. Not only did *Radio Fun* and *Knockout* cater for children, but children also formed an important focus for the US Office of War Information's (OWI) informational campaigns and drives, demonstrated by the single-panel 'Kid Salvage' cartoon. The target demographic for war-themed Magazine Enterprises publications quite swiftly underwent an obvious shift from children and adults to exclusively adults and service personnel, as indicated by the change in content and advertising – for example the disappearance of 'Krak-a-Jap' toy rifle promotions.

Some comics presented in Chapter 6 display absolutely no ambiguity; every GI is a hero, and the enemy is 'other', brutal and corrupt, depicted through real events and photo realism, with extreme violence, accurate uniforms and military equipment. Claiming to depict real-life events accurately, and clearly aimed at an adult audience, using cultural references to popular music such as 'Tarawa Boom-de-ay' – a music hall

song that has been altered to reference the island battle – we can also perceive change in types of heroes and villains.

Whilst Charles Atlas represents a metaphorical truth concerning the unprepared-for war of the United States, we also notice that prior to US entrance into the war, enemies tended to be spies, saboteurs and greedy, industrialist war profiteers (that is, 'enemies within') and heroes were vigilante detectives defending the common householder. After Pearl Harbor, heroes were members of the military, especially in the Pacific, and the enemy was Japanese or German. Meanwhile the armed forces of the United States became the largest institutional customer for sales of comics.

The role of women at war – A transnational record

Chapter 7 focuses on the roles of women at war. Examining the insights comics can offer relative to discussions of contemporary attitudes towards the presence (and action) of women in the theatre of war, their contribution as cultural record is assessed in relation to historiography on the theme. The chapter contributes discursively to academic understanding of women as pin-ups, in combat and in other war efforts. The representation of women and the role they play varies according to the intended audience and purpose, once more a function of subjectivity.

As a transnational record, we perceive the *mentalité* of US armed forces and of Australian and British home fronts. All these strips served the needs of wartime in different ways. 'Wanda the War Girl' is significant as a record of the changing role for women in the Second World War because this was the first time Australian servicewomen existed. The fact that Wanda as a character was necessitated by the war provides evidence of a new attitude towards women and a social trend for women to work for the war effort. Although she is exaggerated, the personification is based on the reality of war and reflects a female point of view. In contrast, pin-ups demonstrate male thinking at the time. There was a difference in the role of women as pin-ups in comics aimed at the US Army; female characters such as Wanda and Jane in mainstream newspaper strips; and characters such as the American journalist Lola Thomas and the un-named female Red Army soldier in 'The Blue Tracer', a feature in the comic book *Military Comics*, as well as Thérèse Bonney in 'Photo-Fighter', a feature in *True Comics*. Methodologically, the chapter traces these differences first through interpretation and examination of *mentalité*, then by establishing how women's position

in society determined representation, and finally by connecting examples to the historical record of action. This trajectory is paralleled by a movement in the chapter from construction of women as objects to portrayal of women as actors/agents.

The 'everyman' and democratisation

Chapter 8 uses examples of the comic strip to act as a prism for the analysis of communists' priorities during the Second World War. Through their influence as the USSR's representative in Britain, the spread of their literature and culture over the previous decades which had culminated in the Left Book Club, and above all their power in the engineering unions, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) had an impact far exceeding its small membership, a membership which peaked during the period covered by 'The Front Line'. In this lost world of British communism that emerges most clearly through the *Daily Worker* strip 'The Front Line', a focus on the heroics of the ordinary person became paramount, such as civilians being bombed or mechanics in a factory winning the war through their collective contribution. 'The Front Line' took seriously its part in lobbying for the Second Front and carried a score of strips on the subject, utilising a wide range of storylines. 'The Front Line' is imbued with humour, a form of relief from the often serious pages of the *Daily Worker* and from the war as a whole. This chapter is timely, for it reaffirms the importance of labour history at time of resurgence of interest in class in mainstream society (Todd: 2014; Jones: 2012).

Exploring issues connected to the relationship between social movements and humour, we discover that communal humour played a significant role in cementing cohesion and drawing the uninitiated into support and then activism. Whilst the cultural record is characterised by an embodiment of collective feeling, subjectivity allows extensive cross-referencing to further test this concept. Subjects in the strip can be safely matched with articles in the *Daily Worker*, for the strips clearly communicate the party line; CPGB campaigns for greater productivity, for increasing readership and for better air raid shelters all appear in the strip.

For the labour movement, the democratic and practical aspects of comic strips and cartoons were salient features: comic strips made the organisations' message accessible, they were a way into the movement, and therefore crossed boundaries between activists and mass consciousness. Within them, characters were frequently presented as part of the

'everyman' concept, exploited by both trench proto comic strips and labour movement examples. The sense of anti-authoritarianism that hovered over comic strips, the fact that several artists made the leap from political editorial cartoons to comics, and that they were considered low-brow reading matter for the working classes, all combined to give a sense of dissidence to the comic strip. In addition, the Left introduced the concept of the everyman and changed the labour movement's image of the worker from heroic to pathetic with the gullible worker, a new stereotype and alternative 'everyman'.

The everyman character representing humanity (in male form), a figure with whom we can identify and empathise, and who can educate us, has existed for over 500 years. While he started off as a relatively noble figure, featuring in morality plays and pious books such a *Pilgrim's Progress*, by the end of the nineteenth century everyman was also a figure to be mocked. Consequently he was admirably suited to the medium of cartoons and comic strips. Although he was usually hapless and downtrodden, he was an ambiguous figure; he could be both a font of common sense (the man in the street) and a font of utter stupidity.

Homer Simpson, of the cartoon series *The Simpsons*, is perhaps the finest example of the current incarnation of everyman. As a working-class everyman, he is easily recognisable as the stock character directly descended from one of the most famous and earliest comic strip characters, Ally Sloper. In Australia, *The International Socialist*, a Sydney-based weekly, ran a strip entitled 'The Adventures of William Mug', a main everyman character, on its front page from July 1913 to September 1914. Other similar comic strips appeared in socialist and trade union papers published in the United States, New Zealand and the UK before and during the war. H. M. Bateman's first published cartoon, in *Punch* October 1916, 'The Boy who Breathed on the Glass at the British Museum', was actually a commentary on society and war. The British Museum sequential cartoon was a satire on the stupidity of the diligence in guarding dead things at the museum while men were being slaughtered in the war (Bateman: 2013).

The way that comics acted as a democratic format that was accessible, low-brow and aimed at ordinary people is a main thread that runs through this study. It actively contributes to the process of history by arguing for their use as a source, and the reader is presented with a process that could be described as democratisation within democratisation. This study introduces many examples that are not well known, yet are significant as a cultural source. There are, of course, limitations to the approach, as conversely the form communicates the inadequacies of

any representational strategy. As it is also both relational and relativist, the case studies are of necessity geared towards specific historiographical areas. There are other historiographical areas in both world wars that may well deserve attention, but the chapters that follow start the process of making the case for, and filling gaps in, scholarship that includes comics as a cultural record.

2

A Proposed Theory and Method for the Incorporation of Comic Books as Primary Sources

Taking as its imperative the democratisation of the discipline and the reconsideration of the nature of evidence, both central tenets of New Cultural History, and in conjunction with an understanding of the task of the historian as derived from the seminal theories of Robin Collingwood and Edward Carr, this proposal determines to argue for, and demonstrate the potential of, the inclusion of comics as record, document and evidence in the process, or discipline, of history. What follows is the presentation of a theory which centres on ideas of subjectivity, narrative and, crucially, subject location or position, to suggest that comic books, here contemporary comic books and strips of the First and Second World Wars, are liable to contain actual historical content. Despite being ostensibly fictional, even works of apparently pure fantasy, these comics are nevertheless likely to hold some mark, some degree, of the 'real' within their pages. The second part of this chapter will detail a proposed methodology by which the historian may determine this historical content. The approach, consisting of close reading and cross-reference, derives from a consideration of the deferential nature of truth and historical meaning. The principal influences here are Collingwood and Jacques Derrida. Finally, before its deployment in the case studies which succeed this chapter, a demonstration of the methodology akin to a scientific 'control' experiment will be provided. Whereas the case studies will be conducted within the confines of particular historiographical contexts, this control, focused on the first adventures of the All-American Publications (and later DC Comics) character, Wonder Woman, will simply seek to draw out and categorise the record of historical content residing in the comics.

While it should not be contentious to consider comics as products, or works, of the past in a cultural, artistic or even literary sense, it remains

to be seen whether these or indeed any other comic books will be taken into serious consideration more widely by historians.[1] For these creative works of sequential narrative to be addressed ultimately in evidential terms, as primary sources, they must be shown to be bearers of verifiable historical content. The inherent subjectivity, including the significance of subject location, in the processes of creation and narrativisation is the entry point in the desired progression from product of the past to document of history.

Sources – Subjectivity and narrative theory

As noted in Chapter 1, the processes of selection and evaluation of sources are central to the task of the historian. No individual document is ever assumed to be either reliable or useful by default, but must be 'always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible' (Thucydides: 2014). Sources challenge the historian in numerous ways and the question of authorship, for example, is typically a universal concern. Discussing the origins and objectives of a source, for example, Geoffrey Elton outlines the binary that 'what survives from the past was put together either by someone who wished it to survive, or by someone who had a purpose to serve in which the prospect of the historian's interest played no part' (1967, 101). In both cases, the author retains significance, necessarily a mediator of the past. In analysis of a source which has been brought into existence as the product of the human mind, subjectivity is an innately crucial element for consideration.

Arguing for his relativistic approach to the writing of history, Carr puts it that information on the past, historical content, is never pure or absolute precisely because it has always been 'refracted through the mind of the recorder' (1961, 16). And so seriously did Collingwood stress the subjective nature of sources that he famously declared 'all history is the history of thought' (1946, 317), in the sense that access to the past is granted solely through the subjective consciousness of the authorities the historian chooses to consult. Ultimately, subjectivity determines that even the most stringently crafted source that strives towards objectivity must be interrogated and ultimately recognised as a work of narrative.[2]

Since the 1970s historians in the Western tradition have paid increasingly significant and sustained attention to processes of narrativisation and construction. The work of theorists on narrative has focused both on construction within sources and, more pointedly, within the writing of history itself.[3] Narrative theory, as espoused by the likes of Louis Mink, Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit, explores certain aspects of

earlier theorisations, amongst others those of Collingwood and Carr, but in the post-structuralist, Derridean context of the instability of meaning, historians have been unable but to fixate on such discussions, particularly in the self-reflexive aspect. Indeed, narrative theory, like deconstruction, has become somewhat pre-eminent in recent and contemporary discussions of the theory and practice of history.

Importantly here, although much of the theoretical writing on narrative does speak explicitly to the writing of history, it must also be taken more widely to be representative of the development of historical understanding of narrativity at large, precisely because it seeks to tackle and redress the exemption from narrative or literary criticism the discipline had historically enjoyed. Where history had once been implicitly afforded 'a privileged status of knowledge production because it is in part factualist' (Munslow: 2013, 5), narrative theory urges instead a sense of critical responsibility. Not least because of the integral role of subjectivity in the formation of lines of inquiry and the marshalling of sources, and the use of the *a priori* imagination in acts of deduction, focal points in the works of Carr and Collingwood respectively, historians have arrived at a point at which 'it is well known if not always well understood that histories are fictively construed and fabricated expressive structures' (Munslow: 2013, 4).[4] Historical writing, as a process of narrative construction, is pushed into line with other non-historical works or productions. As Alun Munslow summates, historical writing 'has no privileged access to reality through reference because its overall constitution makes it no different – *in the process of that constitution* – from fiction' (2007, 88). History, for all the diverse approaches and purposes involved, is writing.

Relevant to the evaluation of sources and the question of record, then, theories of narrativity in history emphasise the processes by which accounts are made, and the structures therein. Central here are such concerns as the mediation of the present, and the uniquely fluctuating binary and interplay of deliberate artifice and subconscious pervasion. The rendering of coherent narrative, such as the multi-panel sequential narrative of the comic book, must invariably entail a degree of mediation of various present paradigms, both in terms of structure and content. Authors are to some extent bound, in their selection and use of structural narrative strategies, by the social, intellectual and cultural frameworks of their present surrounding reality.

Narrative agents

By way of example, in order to bring about 'purposeful accounts of continuous events', as M. C. Lemon defines narrative (Lemon in Roberts:

2001, 107), authors must typically deploy one or more narrative agents, generally human beings, to effect change within the story space. Intelligible continuity, as opposed to mere chronicling, requires discernible 'agents which are active, which, in responding to states of affairs, are *responsible* for their temporal sequentiality' (Lemon in Roberts: 2001, 114). In the use of such agents, authors must, whether to perpetuate or reject, draw from the established frameworks of their surrounding present. Historians of antiquity, as a case, operated within cultural confines in which it was typically assumed that men of high rank were the most reliable and likely of agents. This is often reflected or visibly adopted in the content of their accounts, as with Suetonius in his work on the lives of the Roman Caesars (2014).

Similarly, in the pages of *Sensation Comics* in the 1940s, Colonel Steve Trevor is a narrative device, an agent whose crash-landing arrival on Paradise Island brings about progression within the story space as the Amazon community learns of the global war. This officer of the US Air Force sets in motion the events which will lead Princess Diana to leave her isolated homeland and take up the mantle of Wonder Woman, in support of the Allied war effort.[5] Whether the decision to utilise Trevor as a principal agent in this way was taken consciously or was the result of external influence, as writer, William Moulton Marston has nevertheless here mediated one of many 'pre-existing emplotment strategies' (Roberts: 2001, 10) and determined its content through reference to the established paradigms of his surrounding present.

There are, of course, numerous further examples of the 'narrative-making decisions and turns' (Munslow: 2007, 138) an author may need to address, ranging from tense to voice and beyond. The point here, however, is that construction of any sort invariably entails engaging with a wealth of contemporary structural and strategic choices, a mediation of present paradigms. So too in the selection or creation of content do authors invariably maintain a relationship with, and navigate, their present. Accounts or works are unable, for example, to encompass or explore every potential development within the story space as 'narration irreducibly entails selecting the events to be included in its exposition' (Carroll in Roberts: 2001, 247). Even the issuing of stream-of-consciousness narrative which sees a diminishing role for deliberate and conscious artifice, as is sometimes seen in poetry, is unable to lay claim to being representative of any truly inclusive channelling of potential content, both because of the incumbent place of subjectivity in its production and because its very pursuit is itself a modal narrative choice.

It is important, therefore, to underscore that the mediation of the present, both for structure and content, in the rendering of narrative is rarely a uniform or predictable process. The dynamic interaction of the deliberate and the subconscious is a permanent concern in the analysis of any work. As Munslow points out, 'narrative is the product of a substantial-range complex and (in varying degrees) (un)self-conscious choices' (2007, 138). Although narrative is constructed, the process is carried out by the subjective individual consciousness and therefore subject also to the pervasion of the subconscious and the external. Fortunately, for the purposes of evidential analysis and the assertion of record here there is no obligation to determine the relative ratios of deliberate artifice and subconscious pervasion in the formation of a work. Instead, the task is to find where the real, or then-present, is reasonably discernible in the narrative and how, finally, this might be verified and validated.

Subject location and Derridean trace

The crux of the matter when moving towards the distinction of 'record' is the notion of subject location. Because a work of narrative is constructed and its construction can only be rendered, its processes mediated, by an individual subjective consciousness, it follows that the position of the subject at the time of writing must be a prime concern for analysts of any potential source. Denoting the precise spatial and temporal confines from which a creator produces, or writes, subject location is an indispensable element in the recovery of the real within a document. As Carr points out, the individual and specific 'conditions of human existence' (1961, 19) are of paramount importance for an author. As the subject can only write from his/her own particular position in space and time, the work produced has, therefore, an exact genesis and context.[6]

Consideration of the origin and purpose of a work, of 'how and why did this come into existence', is a customary and critical cornerstone of evidential analysis (Elton: 1967, 100). But whilst it might not be viable fully to reconstruct the precise conditions of production, what matters to the historian interested in verifiable historical content is that they are discoverable to an extent which might make possible a measured and thoroughly researched interrogation of the work. Without an understanding of the location of the subject at the time of writing, the historian is unable to examine the work in its proper context.

In the case of the comics in question, books and strips produced during the wars, these works were produced in Entente and Allied countries

with the wider contextual backdrop of the global conflicts. In analysis of these sources, though, it will also be important to ascertain more specific contextual detail in order best to assess potential historical content. Before moving to outline the methodology here, it remains to highlight that the notion of subject location, as coupled with an understanding of processes of narrativity and the inevitable role of subjectivity therein, must produce a result in the work itself. Because the rendering of narrative invariably entails subjective action, including the mediation of the present, the position of the subject in space and time must invariably bear some influence. Whether mediated consciously or subconsciously, subject location, to use the language of post-structuralism, leaves a trace.

Although there is not space here to cover the entirety of the extensive discussions and scholarship on the notion of the trace, this Derridean concept is nevertheless particularly pertinent here. Positioned alongside and in some regard a composite part of *différance*, with its dual emphasis on difference and deferral as the means by which meaning and understanding are both generated and received, the trace is effectively expressed in the idea that 'each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself' (Derrida: 1982, 13). No intelligible presence or apparent singularity is, on analysis, genuinely autonomous. The concept of nationalism, for example, can only be truly understood when taken in context of a wider spectrum of political positions from which nationalism differs. By its very definition, the term includes traces of the values aligned to those other positions it rejects, traces of what it is not. In this way, nationalism is both reflection and record of numerous other concepts with which it maintains indispensable, enduring relationships. As Derrida affirms, 'one is but the other different and deferred' (1982, 18). In semiotic terms, any single sign or signifier must, in order to mean, contain reference to another, lost presence. The trace is the necessary retention of this loss, its mark. Although the basic semiotic premises here are derived from the influential work of Ferdinand Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics*, their radical expansion and development by Derrida, including the formulation of the revolutionary methodology of deconstruction, were focused in equal measure on entire texts (Saussure: 1959). His response to the work of James Joyce is a particularly striking literary example (Derrida: 1992).[7]

So, because subjectivity is operative in the rendering of narrative, some mark of the position of the subject at the time of writing is essentially inevitable in the resultant work. In short, just as the individual is not a free-standing entity, defined or realised in isolation, nor can

any work, as selfsame, be devoid of relation to the conditions of its origin. The 'inevitable trace of the other that resides in the selfsame' ensures that a source must contain, implicitly or explicitly, identifiably or irretrievably, some record, singular or multiple reflections of the circumstances and context of its creation (Belsey in Bowman: 2003, 24). In the case of a work which is not an explicit record or conventional source, the embedded trace, where identifiable and verifiable, is a mark of the 'real' and consequently the final element in the transition from product of the past to document of history, the requisite record of historical content.

A trace in a work might equally reflect a minor detail of the 'real' or at best, for the historian, 'it may record a real event' (Elton: 1967, 102). An especially common example of the trace as discernible in the writing of history can be found in the use of inappropriate organising concepts. Anachronistic use of particular nation states for the provision of coherent narratives is commonplace. *A History of Germany, 1815–1945* by William Carr (1969) deploys 'Germany' in varying measure prior to its political formation in 1871. Armed with the contextual information that Carr was writing in the late 1960s, it becomes possible to determine traces both of the post-1871 context in which Germany was a recognised political nation, and also of a pre-1949 environment before the formalisation of the separate states of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Returning to comic books, a tidy case of the trace on a greater scale, with the other resident in the selfsame, the fictional setting of the first Wonder Woman stories contains an obvious contextual record. The matriarchal society of Paradise Island Marston and Peter present as the homeland for Princess Diana and her fellow Amazons, first depicted in *All Star Comics #8*, is distinctive and notably innovative within contemporary mainstream comics publishing.[8] Its repudiation of, and therefore relation to, the conventional Western patriarchy of the United States of the 1940s is unquestionable. Contextual information, in this case the date and location of publication, allows for the drawing out of this trace of contemporary American society present in the work.

All coherent, narrativised writing, then, whether accounting for present or past or whether indeed constructing deliberate fantasy, is mediated by the subject and from a distinct and inescapable subject location, and is therefore, like its author, subject to external influences and conditions. These influences may be obvious or remain impenetrably hidden. They might be channelled actively or infiltrate the work pervasively. In order to render a comic book 'document' for the purposes

of the historian, the influence and refracted record of the 'real' present (now historical) must be brought forth and verified. In the case of the comics published during the wars, so often set very consciously in the time and space in which they were created, the issue to consider is to what extent the inexorable 'real world' has filtered into the comic book. In order to see to this, an approach must be put in place rigorously to examine these potential sources and discern verifiable historical content.

Methodology

Moving towards a methodology, then, this proposal suggests a principal focus on the techniques of close reading, deconstruction, and then cross-reference. This direction emanates from a consideration of the deferential nature of truth and historical meaning, analysing in turn the conclusions of Collingwood and their curious coalescence with the later post-structuralist discourse and critique of Derrida with the attendant notions of *différance* and the aforementioned trace. In short, the intention is to evaluate the sources finely and thoroughly in order to note potential historical content, those textual elements which, in their depiction, reflection or capture of data from the then-present, might be records of the 'real', before subjecting them to a verification process in line with established historiographical consensus. Relational and relativist, this approach should not only enable the determination of the import and contingent veracity of certain marks within the sources, but also the uncovering of various means by which comic books may be said to be recording. The case studies will be geared towards specific historiographical areas, but the overarching thread of this book will be to establish the potential of the medium as a serious resource for historians and to provide insights into how comics function as evidence, what types of record they may be said to form. Some preliminary notes for the categorisation of record will follow this discussion of the methodology.

The role of the historian – Collingwood, Carr and Elton

Collingwood's outline of the task of the historian in *The Historical Imagination* is a key element in the imperative behind this proposal. The conceptualisation of a 'web of imaginative construction' and the emphasis on the duty of 'supplementing and consolidating the data of perception' (Collingwood: 1935, 14) are indispensable contributions to the theory and practice of history, and prime motivators here. His discussions on truth and meaning, furthermore, are central legitimations

for the proposed methodology in this investigation. Speaking in 1935, Collingwood disavowed the prevailing 'common-sense theory' of history, rejecting the doctrine that 'historical truth, so far as it is at all accessible to the historian, is accessible to him only because it exists ready-made in the ready-made statements of his authorities' (1935, 6). Recalling Thucydides, he stresses the importance of critical analysis and necessary interference on the part of the historian, affirming that no source is a 'sacred text' beyond reproach (1935, 7). Crucially, he also puts forward the theory that the chores of the historian must be active and referential, precisely because historical truth, or meaning, is itself referential. While he accepts that sources may indeed be accurate or truthful, as equally as they may lie or misguide, Collingwood explains that the deciphering of possible truth and meaning must come through interaction and relativity, that 'the criterion of historical truth cannot be the fact that a statement is made by an authority' (1935, 9). Interpolation between the statements of authorities, an act which is necessarily subjective and, for its use of the *a priori* imagination, imaginative or creative, is central in determining historical meaning. At its simplest, 'it is this activity which, bridging the gaps between what our authorities tell us, gives the historical narrative or description its continuity' (Collingwood: 1935, 13). Essentially, sources must be used alongside, and in the context of, other sources in order for historical meaning to be either perceived or confirmed.

Although they differ regarding the correct practice of history in other aspects, it is worth noting that there are clear moments in which both Elton and Carr adopt a measure of this line set out by Collingwood. The less surprising perhaps, Carr attests to the active and partial nature of the work of the historian and the importance of source interaction as part of both criticism and deduction.[9] Paralleling Collingwood in his derision of the notion of the 'reverent historian' who approached his sources 'with bowed head and spoke of them in awed tones', Carr denounces the belief that 'if you find it in the documents, it is so' (1961, 10). Instead, suggesting that history itself is the 'continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts', he advocates similarly in favour of an active role, not solely because he considers objectivity a misguided fallacy, but also because he supports a plurality of sources as a necessary element in the pursuit of meaning (1961, 24). Insofar as historical truth exists to Carr, it emerges between sources. Individually, 'no document can tell us more than what the author of the document thought' (Carr: 1961, 10). Despite a firm belief in an absolute historical truth, Elton likewise is allied in some measure on its co-relativity. Before proceeding

to insist that an *ad fontes* (to the sources) approach 'provides a manifest and efficient safeguard against the dangers of personal selection of evidence' (Elton: 1967, 88), a position which is now both unfashionable and untenable, he does implicitly agree that meaning is contextual, relative between documents. 'Historical research does not consist, as beginners in particular often suppose, in the pursuit of some particular evidence which will answer a particular question; it consists of an exhaustive, and exhausting review of everything that may conceivably be germane to a given investigation' (Elton: 1967, 88). Sources must be contextualised by one another and it is their interaction, as conducted by the intervening historian, which permits the emergence of truth and meaning. Addressing a single, isolated piece of evidence, meaning is deferred, destined only to arrive when a plurality of documentation is introduced, when the historian is able to interpolate between.

Here, the proposed primary source, the comic book, will be made to interact both with others of its kind and, most importantly, with relevant historiography. It should be underscored at this juncture that the historiography will serve as a means of indirect access to other types of evidence already examined and deployed by historians. In this way, the comic books will be made to interact with established data to see what emerges from this dialectical process and consequently what they can contribute to specific subject areas. The use of historiography in this way, as reference point for the examination of the comic books, approximates the idea of making use of the wealth of other primary sources already accepted and validated as documents of history. In short, the historiography will be the measure by which the apparent historical content of the comics is considered and their potential status as record is either granted or rejected. This approach consequently adheres to a perspective which respects the importance of consensus in the body of knowledge created by historians in order for the discourse to progress.

Derrida's *différance*

Alongside the philosophy of historical truth and meaning provided in the work of Collingwood, the notion of *différance* as espoused by Derrida has also been a significant influence in the development of this approach to the harnessing of comic books. An exception to the principle of drawing most firmly on discussions of the theory and practice of history, his vastly influential post-structuralist discourse and critique, particularly his radical and uninhibited attitudes towards the notion of meaning, correspond very well with Collingwood, providing a somewhat more recent touchpoint for this pattern of thinking. His works

relevant in varied and numerous subject areas and his own choice of subject matter diverse by design, it could be easily argued that Derrida is both interdisciplinary and beyond simple categorisation. His philosophical and methodological tenets, which strive to avoid prescription, are in effect generalised strategies for careful and considered mediation in any linguistic or communicative pursuit.

For Derrida, the generation, transmission and reception of meaning are contingent on relativity. With a dual function or emphasis, the notion of *différance* is designed to unite the ideas that signs must be differential in order to function coherently, and that signification itself is deferral. Much like the 'web of imaginative construction' and 'fixed points' between which the historian determines narrative and meaning (Collingwood: 1935, 14), 'the system of signs is constituted solely by differences in terms' (Derrida: 1992, 10). Signs function through their difference, whilst signification itself is an act of deferral. The sign is indicative of a presence which is absent.

> The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, 'thing' here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the presence in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence.
>
> (Derrida: 1992, 9)

The determination of meaning, in this way, requires an active interference and must be brought forth by the consultation of other terms. Derrida illustratively refers to these interactions as acts of playing, citing that 'every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences' (Derrida: 1992, 11). Similar to Collingwood, this structural assessment is also useful because it alludes to variability or instability and moves discussion away from notions of objectivity or absolutism. Indeed, akin to the accenting of the ongoing nature of processes of supplementation and consolidation of the past by the historian in *The Historical Imagination*, Derrida frames a permanent process without a singular *telos*, which readily accepts that 'no transcendent truth' will manifest itself, and instead offers a path towards more, further and nuanced meaning through 'calculations without end' (Derrida: 1992, 7).

These core Derridean elements, of differential spacing and deferential temporisation, highlight that meaning is neither fixed nor located in a single locus. Instead, meaning emerges relatively, between, and is always *a venir*. Meaning comes through *différance*, as orchestrated by a subjective mediator, just as the historian is required to interpolate between documents. Source interaction, ultimately, is the mandate. Here, following close analysis and structural assessment, comic books will be made to interact with relevant works of historiography in order to decipher and determine potential historical content. Whilst necessary to establish firmly the theoretical grounding for this method in the works of Collingwood and Derrida, the premise is, in a sense, quite simple. After combing through the comic books for potential historical content, the historiography will be used to confirm or negate the results of this data analysis.

In developing this methodology for use with comic books, it has also been necessary to consider a methodological and analytical framework for the categorisation of different types and characteristics of record. As mentioned above, a broader evidential focus on the medium itself will be the overarching thread through the different chapters and case studies of this book. The aim here is to set out means by which to discuss comic books as evidence, including specific structural consideration of how they function. What follows is an outline of principal questions or concerns and some suggested conceptual and terminological responses which are the result of both historiographical reading on the subject of evidence and prolonged consideration and consumption of the medium of comics.

Examining comic books as record, a logical starting point is to consider what sort of historical content has been captured in the pages of the issues in question. Factuality is the most obvious sense of record here. This could be asserted in cases where contemporary data, now decipherable historical facts, have been accurately logged within the narrative of the comic book. A clear example of comic books as factual record would be the series *True Comics*, a constituent of the Quality Comics Group case study sample which concerns itself with the presentation of real stories, both contemporary and historical, using sequential narrative. These factual records feature real events, dates and actors.

Metaphorical aptness and *mentalités*

Factuality is not the only permissible recorded content, however. A work might well contain some degree of truth in the unquantifiable sense of metaphorical aptness. The notion of truth in a more rounded,

metaphorical sense, as a means of assessment besides literal factual accuracy, is also another element which has emerged in the discourse of narrative theory, discussed earlier. White puts it that in their narrativisation, '*all* stories are fictions which means, of course, that they can be "true" in a metaphorical sense and in the sense in which any figure of speech can be true' (White in Cohen: 1989, 27). Here, as with the notion of the trace, fictionalisation, or even fantasy, can begin to be evaluated as record for the purposes of the historian. Contemporary depictions of known events featuring non-real detail are useful when the historian is able to confirm that 'a similarity exists between two objects in the face of manifest differences' (White: 1973, 34), where those objects are the literal past and its fictionalised presentation, and crucially where that similarity can be affirmed as appropriate. Scenes of aerial combat in the Pacific in the pages of *Military Comics*, for example, played out by invented protagonists and published during the course of those events, are records whose content is a valid metaphorical truth. Events may not have transpired in exactly the manner depicted, but the aptness of their presentation is nevertheless discernible historical content.

A similar further option, what is captured within a source might be concerned with concepts of *mentalités*. As established in Chapter 1, the history of *mentalités* takes serious account of questions of opinion, attitude, discourse and mode of thought and 'treats our own civilization in the same way that anthropologists study alien cultures' (Darnton: 1984, 3). In common with metaphorical aptness, it is important to distinguish *mentalités* from factual accuracy. Instead, it can provide a sense of the non-tangible, such as *zeitgeist*. For example, character dialogue in *Action Comics* might supply contemporary representation of domestic attitudes towards US involvement in the war. As serialised products that were sold on news stands, comic books are perhaps well positioned as potential markers of *mentalités*.

It follows to consider, especially as regards aptness, how these different elements of record might be positioned within the text, and two particular dichotomies emerge which permit further and more nuanced categorisation.

Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude broadly correlates with the idea of context, while precedent is attached to narrative or action. When examining the intratextual context of a comic book, the setting of its story, the historian can evaluate its verisimilitude in order to assess its potential status as record. Where the narrative of a story has been obviously localised, for

example geographically or temporally, and where its realisation is sufficiently orientated towards the presentation of the 'real', the source may be termed a contextual record. In the case of a strip whose story takes place with the visible backdrop of occupied France, published during the course of the conflict but without discernible temporal contact points, the 'real world' has filtered clearly into the pages, as context. Such a document might then be referred to as a firm geographical contextual record and a looser temporal record, where the latter is based on the cover date and perhaps the wider time frame of French occupation.

With narrative and action, particularly in fictive works, the notion of precedent is key. Interrogating the narrative of a comic book with a view to finding and analysing historical content, it is necessary to highlight potential developments or events for which there may be some historical and verifiable precedent. In order to judge the aptness of the action depicted in a story, the historian might then make an appeal to precedent, to consider whether what is presented in the comic book in question and appears to be plausible except for, say, its fictional actors, can be legitimately corroborated. For the events of fictionalised narratives to be metaphorically apt as a record, there must be some known historical precedent. As a basic example, a story which features an Allied invasion of France might be confirmed as record through reference to the known landings of D-Day. Events and action can be tried by considering whether or not there is a plausibly relevant, known precedent. Whether or not the apt marking of such a precedent in the text was a deliberate and conscientious choice on the part of its creators is, if the book is a contemporary document, irrelevant in some measure to the historian attempting to discern historical content. This, in turn, emphasises the importance of interaction and corroboration by other sources and the harnessing of canonical knowledge of the past. The aptness or validity of some apparent verisimilitude or precedent within a comic book must necessarily be determined by reference to other documentation. The historiography, as above, is the tool with which to make such judgements, taking account of established and acknowledged historical data by proxy. If a textual passage or moment can be shown as 'true' in its aptness, can be corroborated, the illumination and decoding of this historical content, this trace remains, regardless of authorial intention. Questions of intention and presentation, however, offer further means by which to demarcate different kinds of records.

In the analysis of record, an additional concern is the binary of the explicit and the implicit, leading to continued sub-categorisation. Here, it is possible to distinguish between the deliberate, where the keeping or cultivation of record is a stated intention, such as in *True Comics*, and

the accidental or incidental. With the former, akin to reporting, historical content is arguably more likely to be an explicit element within the text, either through visual illustration, dialogue or narration. Where the record is incidental, though the explicit remains a possibility, there is a greater chance of encountering and needing to decode the implicit or inferential. These cases are likely to be comprised of traces in the Derridean sense, as discussed earlier. The trace of the patriarchal society of the United States in the 1940s discernible in the presentation of Paradise Island is an implicit, inferential or even allusive record.

More simply, finally, the temporal nature of the record should be considered. Because of the serialised nature of comic book publication, these sources should also be analysed in terms of their behaviour, how they function as record, with regard to the question of change over time. A single issue of a particular comic book series might provide just one notable instance of record, perhaps a precedential record where one specific textual element can be affirmed as historical content. This would be a momentary record. A static record might be confirmed in cases where a comic book repeats its historical content with regularity, without reflecting any degree of relevant real-world change. Alternatively, some comic book narratives will follow alongside and adjust to, or even attempt to replicate, the development of events. Taking a number of issues in a given series, the play of *différance* may reveal a sense of record operational across, or between, issues. These dynamic, sustained records, comprised of multiple identifiable contact points, would represent an especially prized resource. It should be noted, however, that despite their serialisation, unlike newspapers, comic books rarely had a stated intention of consistent reporting in line with the course of events. This results in different responses to the passage of time. An ambiguous and potentially unpredictable relationship with time could make comic books a particularly fascinating resource for historians.

It should be underscored that these preliminary categorisations are by no means absolute, nor mutually exclusive. The sources may challenge the limits defined here and will invariably call for a fluidity of analysis which accepts overlap, interweaving and perhaps even paradox. The theorisations presented here are intended as a principal framework for focused discussion and categorisation of comics as record.

Wonder Woman as case study

Turning now to demonstrate the proposed methodology in action, what follows could be compared to the 'control' in a scientific experiment. Whereas the succeeding case study investigations will be focused on

specific and defined historiographical subject areas, this presentation will endeavour to show the methodology at work, drawing out and categorising the record of historical content residing in the comic books in question. These consist of the first full year of published Wonder Woman adventures by William Moulton Marston and H. G. Peter, appearing across the titles *All Star Comics*, *Sensation Comics* and *Wonder Woman* in 1942.[10]

A fantastical series centred on the more-than-human Amazon princess who gives up her heritage, the isolated bliss of her native Paradise Island and her 'right to eternal life' to pursue US officer Steve Trevor and interact with the wider 'man-made' world,[11,12] Wonder Woman stories are nevertheless obviously set, in terms of their narrative, at the time in which they were being written, drawn and published. Whilst the verisimilitude of the Second World War in the books lends itself to a degree of categorisation, the book also retains a dynamic as its creators appear to keep abreast, and make select use, of contemporary developments. The Second World War serves as context and the impact of the war within the United States drives narrative, with the creative team clearly marking change over time (Figure 2.1).

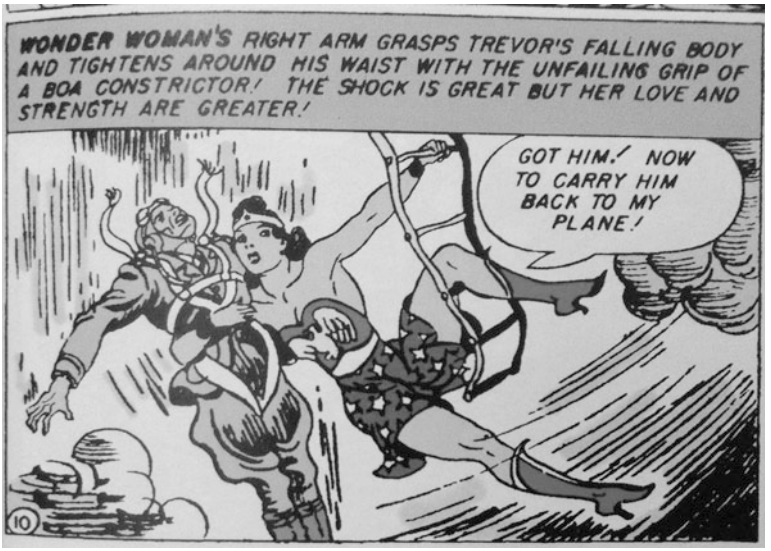

Figure 2.1 The world war serves as context for Wonder Woman as she saves a US Air Force pilot from 'certain doom!'
Source: *Sensation Comics* #1 1942 © DC Comics.

The wider, or world, war is used from the outset as backdrop, an immediate means of grounding the comic in the present-day real world, or a near version of it. The opening caption of the Wonder Woman feature in *All Star Comics #8* locates the action 'in a world torn by the hatreds and wars of men'.[13] By the time Marston, under the pen name of Charles Moulton, turned in his first comic book script, in February 1941, the war in Europe had been raging and rapidly proliferating for just over a year and a half (Daniels: 2000, 23). The coincidence of the book's release, December 1941, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in the same month, must have played a role in cementing the contextual framework of the strip. The opening captions in the Wonder Woman strips in the pages of *Sensation Comics*, in which the princess was lead feature, continued to reference the very real 'war', 'destruction', 'conquest', 'aggression' and 'hatreds' of the day.[14]

Within the individual stories presented in *Sensation Comics*, however, the world war is not an especially prominent feature. Where it does come to the fore, it generally aligns with the narrative of actual events. As an example, in the first issue of the quarterly solo series, Mint Candy, a soldier at a US Army camp in Texas laments that there is 'not enough excitement to keep a guy awake'.[15] At this time, the United States was still predominantly practising air and naval warfare. Later, a drugged Mint also gives up a 'dynamite' piece of intelligence to a Japanese agent, revealing that 'the Fifth Division is ordered to Alaska with fast transport and long-range bombers. Japan will be invaded from our Alaskan bases!'[16]

Marston was undoubtedly exercising a good degree of licence with this military design, but the mention of Alaska does tie the narrative to the events of the preceding months. Through April and May, Japanese forces had expanded their aggression in the Pacific, making landings at Tulagi and Corregidor, before finally vanquishing resistance in the Philippines on 5 May. Dutch Harbor in Alaska was soon drawn into the war, attacked alongside the invasion of the Aleutian Islands in the first few days of June.[17] *Wonder Woman #1* hit stands in July, so it is difficult to know whether Marston might, in fact, have heard news of the bombing of the Alaskan base before the book went to print. In any case, his allusion to the Pacific shows an awareness and engagement with the wider war and its infiltration of the narrative of the comic book.

Established historiographical knowledge shows a generalised record of the conflict with some specific, decodable geographical detail. Furthermore, the comment on the lack of excitement by a soldier of the US Army is an example of *mentalités*, as it certainly picks up on the mood

of anti-isolationist or interventionist currents within the United States at the time.[18] This kind and degree of verisimilitude, which begins the incorporation of the book within the range of useful sources and historical documentation, is altogether more common in relation to internal or domestic conflict within the United States.

The Home Front and intelligence war waged against spies, saboteurs and invaders generally serves to constitute the immediate plots of individual Wonder Woman episodes. Importantly, though, these stories put forth by the creative team cannot be dismissed as fanciful, extraordinary tales. The majority of the *Sensation Comics* features from 1942 are grounded, plausible and sustain a remarkable degree of verisimilitude which often forms the core of the narratives of the individual stories. This can be seen in a number of cases, cross-referencing the events of the comics with the chronologies and accounts assembled in the historiography.

In the fifth issue of *Sensation Comics*, released in May, naval warfare is at the fore as Diana and Steve Trevor attend the launch of the latest US Navy submarine, the *Octopus*. On the deployment of his masterwork, proud inventor Dr Sands passionately decrees that 'she'll strike back at the enemies of democracy!'[19] Unbeknownst to our heroes, however, the menace of a German U-boat, 'the strange undersea craft of the enemies of democracy', is on hand, preparing to derail proceedings.[20] The following month, in issue *#6*, in a story entitled 'Summons to Paradise', US intelligence officer Colonel Darnell finds his transatlantic crossing to England interrupted by a Nazi submarine.[21] The successive use of the U-boat here points towards some influence of contemporary developments. The words of Dr Sands, however, are the crux. That his craft is set to 'strike back' against German naval forces bears the mark of real-world events along the East Coast of the United States. German U-boat offensives against the United States began in mid-January 1942, following US entry to the war in December. In April, a policy of coastal 'dim-outs' went into effect over a 15-mile strip of the eastern seaboard as a consequence of the German raids.[22] That the US Navy, in the pages of *Sensation Comics*, is taking measures specifically to retaliate demonstrates that the comic was sustaining a narrative in line with the course of the war. These stories are responsive in their way and as such contain a discernible trace of real-world events of the war.

Perhaps the most prominent example of the sustaining of a dynamic verisimilitude and record in reference to the war in the United States is the choice of villain. Essentially, over the course of the year, the 'enemy agents' with whom Diana comes into contact are shifting and arguably

delineate contemporary events. The ubiquitous enemy featuring in the first seven months of comics is singularly the German 'Gestapo' or 'Nazi agent', conducting acts of espionage or sabotage. This foe generally matched the political climes of the United States at the time, where government-sponsored campaigns cautioned citizens and encouraged vigilance in regard to the 'Nazi menace'. There were also cases in which fears of the prospect of Nazi operatives acting within the borders of the country were validated. In March, for example, three Nazi operatives were captured in New York and sentenced to a sum total of 117 years in prison. In June, two teams of saboteurs landed at Long Island, New York, and Jacksonville, Florida by U-boat. They were captured and, after trial, executed.[23]

Wonder Woman #1, though, released in July, marked the first direct address of the collective enemy, with the second feature of the issue referring in its opening captions to the 'cool, calm villainy of Axis plans'. From here on, Diana and Steve's nemeses are expanded, encompassing Germans, the occasional Italian and the Japanese. The latter prove the most interesting, though, and certainly rival, if not overtake, their German counterparts as the central foil for our heroes. In *Sensation Comics #9*, readers are introduced to Colonel Togo Ku, 'Chief of Japanese spies in America'.[24] In the tenth issue, Wonder Woman pursues a band of German and Japanese agents scheming underground, beneath the streets of New York.[25]

With the new villains, old tools are transferred. The parodic accents and speech patterns bequeathed to German operatives are now mirrored in portrayals of the new enemy in the Pacific. With the introduction of the Japanese, however, what noticeably differs is the wholly unsubtle use of racial slurs that begin to flow through the book. Protagonists and periphery characters alike now utter terms like 'Japs', 'Nips' and 'slant-eyed mugs' in reference to the new antagonists.[26] The most intriguing example of the attention being paid to the Japanese comes in the retconning of a significant detail in the origin story of Wonder Woman, first told in *All Star Comics #8*. Where originally the crash-landing of Steve Trevor on Paradise Island was the result of his exhausting pursuit of a Nazi agent, *Wonder Woman #1* offers up a Japanese pilot as the cause of the aerial disaster.[27]

This general shifting of focus to the oriental enemy undoubtedly reflects, in some measure, the intensification of the war in the Pacific alluded to above. D-Day was still a distant prospect and the war with Japan was the focal point for US military efforts. What possibly accounts for the decidedly aggressive racial aspect which begins to permeate the

book, and the quite sudden change of principal villain, is the overdue enacting of a certain domestic federal policy. On 19 February 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order no. 9066, an act which, along with its companion, Order no. 9102 in March, has drawn considerable historiographical scrutiny and debate (Robinson: 2001; Malkin: 2004). Essentially instituting forced relocation, the former introduced the principle of 'military areas' from which Japanese and other 'subversive persons' could be excluded, or removed (DeWitt in United States Department of War: 1942, 34–35). It was not until April, however, that the first Japanese Americans were interned at inland camps. It seems likely that this watershed in domestic US politics, the serious formalisation of an internal enemy, served as clearance, or impetus even, for the new course taken by Marston and Peter. In this way, the comic book is again a record of *mentalités* in addition to recording the changing emphasis of US military engagement in the war.

Conclusion

The *Wonder Woman* stories of 1942 lend themselves to categorical analysis, and those elements discussed here are the most prominent, thematically, which emerge from an open reading of the books with a broad view to the assessment of possible historical content. The contextual record of the war, the shifting focus on enemies of the United States and the accompanying documentation of *mentalités* and domestic politics are not the only discernible historical aspects of the books, but they recur strongly and can be readily decoded. Where the case study investigations of the succeeding chapters will differ is in the use of framing questions, the localisation to specific historiographical areas of discussion. Undoubtedly, as Elton would lament, the imposition of questions by the historian in the course of research will colour their reading of the materials and their resulting analysis. Whilst this demonstration has in some ways mimicked the *ad fontes* approach, going directly to the sources without historiographical framing to assess whatever should emerge, this is untenable on a wider scale. Not only does the approach fail to circumvent the subjectivity of the historian, it is essentially incompatible with the tightly focused, often partitioned nature of historiographical discourse dominant today. Finally, it will also ultimately be necessary to focus on specific subject areas in order to integrate comic books more fully, to show how they can contribute to specific, individual discussions.

3
Haselden as Pioneer: Reflecting or Constructing Home Front Opinion?

Introduction – The popularity of Haselden

In January 1915 the highest-selling daily newspaper in Britain, the *Daily Mirror,* carried the headline 'Germany and the Big and Little Willies, who represent Germany, face [. . .] imminent disaster'.[1] The *Mirror* could be confident that its readership would recognise the epithets of the German Kaiser and his son bestowed upon them by the paper's popular staff cartoonist, William Kerridge Haselden. Haselden's comic episodes featuring the Kaiser and the Crown Prince eventually reached 159 in total. These were so popular with the *Mirror*'s audience that they were collected into book form as *The Sad Adventures of Big and Little Willie* in 1915; such compilations were published by the *Mirror* during and immediately after the war years. These cartoons found popularity both at home and abroad, and were, said the German Kaiser when interviewed by the *Mirror* post-war, 'damnably effective' when compared to the less subtle forms of German propaganda (Horn: 1976, 306). Indeed their names permeated even the British military. The first tank prototype was nicknamed 'Little Willie' in tribute to Haselden's character, and its successor 'Big Willie' saw active service on the front lines.[2]

The two Willies were not the only wartime characters to emanate from Haselden's prolific pen. He also portrayed humorous British characters, representatives of different ages, genders and classes, such as the young 'lady about town' Joy Flapperton, the 'old fogey' Colonel Dug-Out, and the personification of the soldier at the front, Tommy. In doing so, Haselden pioneered in British adult newspaper strips many developments which we now consider to be essential conventions of the comic strip medium, such as the use of the multi-panel sequential narrative and the creation of popular, recurring characters whose adventures and misadventures could be followed by his audience on

a daily basis. In this manner Haselden made a crucial contribution to British newspaper comic strips and also served the ends of the *Mirror*'s drive for greater newspaper sales. 'By stressing individual characters, the new comic art form lent itself to promotion and marketing because those images provided a means for embellishing commodities with personality' (Gordon: 1998, 7). The commodity was, of course, primarily the comic strips themselves and the newspaper in which they were published. But Haselden's multifarious characters also lent themselves to participation in the British propaganda narrative. The persuasive power of a story can be directly proportional to the degree of emotional connection between the audience and a character or characters (Dill: 2009, 13).

The *Daily Mirror* had hired Haselden immediately when he entered its office with a portfolio of cartoons in 1904. He was employed there for 36 years, between 1904 and 1940, and published over 5,700 cartoons (Horn: 1976, 306). At first, working with pen and Indian ink on board, he drew single-panel cartoons intended as political satire and imbued with a distinctive, light-hearted and intelligent humour. However, in October 1907 Haselden abandoned the traditional single-frame format of political cartoon that had been popular previously and committed himself entirely to the multi-panel format we now recognise as the comic strip. This became his trademark style for the next 33 years and earned Haselden the title of 'father' of the British strip cartoon (Roberts: 1951, 340). At this point in his career he also relinquished political subject matter and began to derive his themes from 'little passing topics of the day'. This was a highly relevant development for Haselden and for the *Mirror* itself. Many newspaper and magazine publishers at the time were seeking to increase the popularity and circulation of their publications by avoiding controversial and political subjects and editorials. The *Daily Mirror* itself spent over £150,000 in order to recast its image in this new popular direction (*Daily Mirror*: 1925, 4). The gamble paid dividends and, by the end of 1904, the circulation of the revamped *Mirror* reached 240,000 copies per day.[3]

Haselden's illustrations proved to be so popular that they led the *Daily Mirror* to publish the first-ever volume of non-political cartoons issued by a British newspaper. Published in 1907 under the title *Daily Mirror Reflections*, this collection sold so well that it encouraged the Pictorial Newspaper Company to publish annually a collection of '100 Cartoons (and a few more)' by Haselden over 29 successive years between 1906 and 1935. These collections deliberately omitted political cartoons to concentrate on the comic, aspiring to light entertainment.

A typical example of Haselden's pre-war work is 'Exercises in Observation – The Drawing Room', published 23 September 1909, in which the reader was invited to view the same middle-class room in four different panels at different periods in time. The reader was encouraged to guess which member of the family – father, mother, three-year-old Willie or Fido the dog – had inhabited it last. Hairpins scattered over the floor, but an otherwise neat and tidy drawing room, symbolised the mother, while dishevelled cushions and a tobacco pipe smoking on the tabletop, the father. Such comic strips, with clear-cut gender roles, provide a record of a normative pre-war aspiring middle-class mindset that Haselden lightly satirised in the context of the war. During the duration of the conflict his books were rechristened *Reflections in Wartime,* and the 1916 edition had an introduction purporting to be by Miss Joy Flapperton.

Once war was declared, the conflict became Haselden's focus. From 28 July until early October 1914 his publications were primarily concerned with directing satire against the changing attitudes of the upper and middle classes towards food prices and transport difficulties after the declaration of war. The only notable exception to this was when, on 22 August 1914, Haselden produced an anthropomorphic portrait of Kaiser Wilhelm as the German eagle which, over the course of the six-panel strip, morphed into a goose – an early example of his use of metaphor in relation to the Kaiser. This image was able to communicate a sense of ridicule and scorn for the Germans far more succinctly than an article could. On 2 October 1914, three months after the outbreak of international conflict, he made his greatest contribution to the domestic war effort and British popular culture in a *Daily Mirror* comic strip featuring Kaiser Wilhelm and his son the Crown Prince entitled 'Sad Experience of Big and Little Willie No. 1'.

Humour and Haselden as a cultural record

Humour does not exist in a vacuum; it is dependent upon the society in which it exists, adapting and evolving with it (Douglas: 1968; Zijderveld: 1968). An analysis of the humour of a society during a particular period provides a cultural record of the norms of behaviour and thought at that moment in time. Nicholas Hiley notes in relation to the 'Big and Little Willie' cartoons that, during the war, people 'firmly believed that the tradition of ridiculing the enemy, not hating him, was quintessentially British' (2007, 155). He quotes the journalist Helen Pearl Adam who claimed that the British cartoons were differentiated

from those of both allies and enemies by their perpetual good humour. The British presumed that they would prevail against the foolish Kaiser and his son, who was 'an awful silly blighter', and that it should all be done with a minimum of fuss (Hiley: 2007, 150).

Humour plays many roles in wartime, not least in alleviating the fear of death. It is a way of creating a distance between oneself and 'the most dangerous, most disruptive aspects of existence' (Davis: 1979, 107) and making them 'unreal' (Oring: 1987, 281). In addition, it releases tension (Freud: 1960) – points that could be said to apply to Haselden's work. He promised his book, *Daily Mirror Reflections* (1907), would 'conduce to the happiness of the homes in which it enters'. With the advent of war, his comic timing played a valuable role in contributing to morale both at home and abroad. 'Humour is also a very effective tool in getting people to listen sympathetically to arguments, and it is an excellent persuader' (Nilsen: 1993, 291). Britain's allies were also reportedly won over by the humorous simplicity of Haselden's cartoons. The *Mirror*, reporting on an exhibition of Haselden's cartoons held at the Dudley Gallery that was subsequently visited by Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria, claimed that there 'were several French and Belgian parties in the gallery' who asserted that 'Mr. Haselden's language is international'. The exhibition was very popular with wounded soldiers as well. Proving that the artist was able to communicate the mindset of the front as well as that of the population at home, one veteran, who attended on nearly every day that it ran, claimed that Haselden's cartoons were 'the brightest spots in the whole war'.[4]

Though there are no truly reliable accounts of the German reception of Haselden's comic strips, there were several articles within the *Mirror*'s gossip page in January 1915, claiming that they 'produced a deep impression' after the newspaper was distributed to the enemy during the Christmas truce of 1914.[5] There were also two reports that 'the Saxons have a sense of humour and a feeling for "the Willies" quite different from that of the Prussians'.[6] Indeed, according to 'This Morning's Gossip', 'the German trenches – not the Prussian trenches, please notice [...] would call out greetings across the short intervening space and ask for English papers, particularly the *Daily Mirror*. They wanted to see "Big and Little Willie," they said'[7] (Figure 3.1).

Ridicule

Central to the Big and Little Willie cartoons was the concept of ridicule. This is the mainstay of superiority or disparagement humour, which is used to both 'diminish' and 'reinterpret' its subject (Ferguson and Ford:

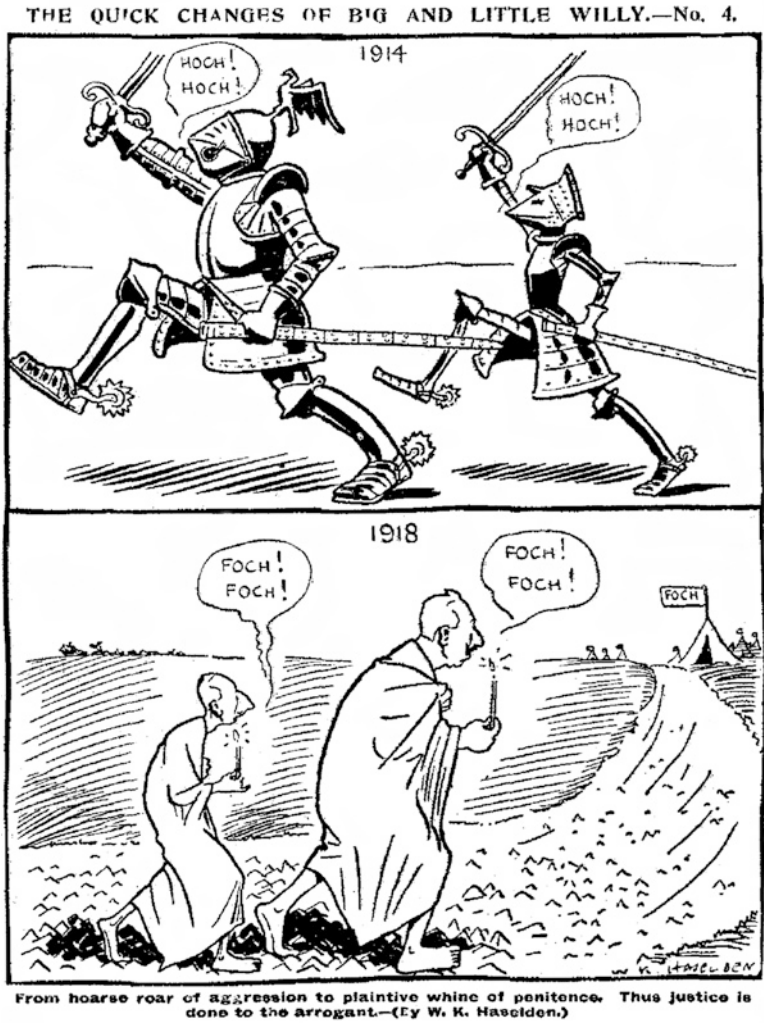

Figure 3.1 Big and Little Willie – a 1914 reference to nationalism, inspired by Germanic medieval chivalry, is contrasted with the Allied victory in 1918 led on the Western Front by Marshal Foch

Source: Haselden, W. K., 'The quick changes of Big and Little Willie No. 4', *Daily Mirror*, 8 November 1918.

2008). By laughing at someone, we gain symbolic power over them, as Freud pointed out: 'By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable, or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him' (1960, 103). When laughed at, even the ruler of Germany is put in a position of inferiority.[8] We also find inadequacies far more amusing when they belong to someone we hate rather than love (Zillmann and Cantor: 1976, 95), and the obstruction of their goals through their suffering of misfortune is in itself a cause for mirth (Zillmann and Cantor: 1976, 101).

In addition, the comic satire in 'The Sad Adventures of Big and Little Willie' derived from what Henri de Noussanne described as the Kaiser's 'refusal to recognize obstacles to his fantasies' (Noussanne in Nolan: 2006, 18). Haselden employed a stylistic device of primary importance to his wartime role as a popular propagandist. Reviewing First World War propaganda deployed to demoralise the enemy, Lasswell concludes 'that the principal theme is the impossibility of victory' (1971, 184). Haselden's work, deployed primarily on the British domestic front, serves the inversion of this purpose. Rather than directing at the enemy 'the unceasing refrain: Your cause is hopeless', Haselden repeats to the British public in every instance involving the Willies that their cause is hopeless and thus heartens the British public to the Allied cause (Lasswell: 1971, 164). For example, 'Sad Experiences of Big and Little Willie No. 3', published 6 October 1914, presents a comical depiction of the Kaiser and his son looking at a lion through 'Hohenzollern glasses', or telescopes held the wrong way round. Because of this telescopic inversion they believe the lion to be much smaller than it is in reality. Upon discovering their error the Willies promptly run away and the lion gives chase. Haselden employed a double reference, amalgamated in the term 'Hohenzollern glasses'. The first reference is to the House of Hohenzollern, of which the Kaiser and his son were members. The second reference combines the first with the common British phrase 'to see the world through rose-tinted glasses', meaning to be delusional. In the Hohenzollern glasses Haselden also incorporated the anthropomorphic depiction of Britain as the 'British lion'. This is a conventional icon widely employed both in popular culture and political cartooning throughout history.

National stereotypes

Haselden's use of cultural iconography in his comic strips clearly and concisely indicates nationality and various assumptions about national character, allowing his reader to succinctly interpret many levels of

meaning and representation within his work. For example, in the 'Sad Experiences of Big and Little Willie No. 2', published 5 October 1914, Haselden uses the metaphorical to chronicle actual events. He shows the traditional visual personification of Britain, 'John Bull', in his imperial role as keeper of the Indian elephant. Just as India defied expectations that it would rise against British imperialism during the conflict, the elephant defies the Kaiser's expectation that it will attack the keeper and instead turns on the Kaiser.

Such instances of articulately deployed cultural shorthand pervade Haselden's comics. In his recent work on the structure of comics, Scott McCloud explains that, as well as other options, comics 'require us to make a constant stream of choices regarding imagery, pacing, dialogue, composition, [and] gesture' (McCloud: 2011, 9). It is in this regard that Haselden employs national iconography such as the British lion, 'John Bull' and the German eagle. However, these devices also serve to enhance the mass appeal of Haselden's strips and to widen his readership beyond the literate, due to such symbols being easily and instantly recognisable both to children and the wider illiterate British public of the war era.

Maurice Horn has noted that 'the adventure strip confronts its readers with only a few basic situations. This is true, as it is true with all forms of narrative literature, but the variations exercised upon the primary themes were and are the measure of any artist. In this respect the cartoonists displayed an astonishing range and an unequalled evocative power' (Horn: 1976, 21–22). Though Haselden's comics are not adventure strips, this 'astonishing range' and 'unequalled evocative power' described by Horn is prevalent throughout his work despite his engagement with only 'a few basic situations'.

For example, on several occasions Haselden lampooned the Kaiser's remarkably recognisable moustache. Again, Haselden's art played upon cultural conventions regarding national symbols, in this instance the Kaiser's moustache, and international stereotypes regarding styles of facial hair. In 'Big Willie's War with His Moustache', published 17 April 1915, Haselden contrasted Kaiser Wilhelm's moustache with Uncle Sam's goatee; the 'nine o'clock shadow' popular in Spain; and Italian and Turkish fashion stereotypes. Haselden did so in order to ridicule the German leader as representative of the German nation and the enemy as a whole, but his strip also allows us an insight into his and his audience's view of other nationalities. The ridiculing of the Kaiser's moustache not only allows us to view what the population found funny, but also contemporary facial hair fashions. In addition, it provides a

record of contemporary mores. Of course, concepts of national character involving millions are difficult to defend, and broad statements about the 'character' are tenuous (Nolan: 2006, 4). However, it is exactly such 'broad statements' that constitute the most effective pictorial use of cultural symbolism. James Chapman explains that 'in a wartime context this was an ideologically legitimate mobilisation of national stereotypes for propaganda and morale' (Chapman: 2011, 37). Since stereotypes allow us to understand our day-to-day lives in the chaos of wartime, they can be particularly easy to call upon.[9]

Despite their predictability, Haselden's personifications in 'Sad Experiences of Big and Little Willie No. 4' (7 October 1914) become a metaphor for the discourse of the war. He depicted soldiers representing India, France and Britain standing resolute against obvious aggression by the Willies, who are trying to push the soldiers from their position at the top of the world. Ultimately, the Willies lose their footing and slide off the world crying, 'Himmel! They don't play the game properly!' This metaphor for the discourses of the war evokes the narrative that Britain was engaged in a legitimate act of defence and that it was aggression by the Kaiser that led to the outbreak of the conflict.

Gallows humour

Between 8 and 23 November 1916, the *Daily Mirror* published a series of 11 comic strips entitled 'Trials of the Wounded Tommy', in which Haselden humorously depicted the tribulations of injured British veterans upon their return from the front line. Incorporated into the comedy was the depiction of actual events, providing a record of verisimilitude. The Battle of the Somme, one of the largest battles of the war, was fought between 1 July and 18 November 1916. On the opening day of the battle, the British Army suffered nearly 60,000 casualties and many of the wounded returned to Britain to recover. It is therefore highly significant that Haselden chose this period to create the characters of Tommy and Private Bill and to make light fun of the situations in which soldiers found themselves upon returning to British society. The correlation between the comic strip and the editorial content of the newspaper comes across clearly, as the Somme was the subject of the *Mirror*'s front-page headline when Tommy and his colleague made their first appearance in the paper, and the characters were described as being 'safely back in "Blighty" '.[10] This connection between Tommy and Bill's wounds and the Battle of the Somme was stated explicitly in the explanatory text printed below 'Trials of the Wounded Tommy No. 3': 'Of course, it is very nice – delightful – to be taken out by an

ardent flapper. But when a man's nerves have been tried on the Somme, it would be even nicer if the flapper knew prudence and took a little reasonable care.'[11]

The premise from which the events of the series derive was established in the ironic explanatory text printed below; in 'Trials of the Wounded Tommy No. 1': 'daily programmes are arranged for [the troops], with the best intentions'. Haselden subsequently depicted a variety of scenarios concerned with the entertainment of British troops on the Home Front. In each instance, Haselden captured the humour of the British troops on leave from the front. 'Wounded soldiers convalescing in Britain who, owing perhaps to their distance from the front, were often in quite good humour reinforced the popular image of the cheery Tommy' (Madigan: 2013, 83). For example, in 'Trials of the Wounded Tommy No. 2', which is subtitled 'The ordeal of the idiotic question', Haselden illustrated Tommy and Bill being confronted with questions such as 'I suppose you were very glad of the opportunity of visiting the continent?' The first five panels of the six-panel sequence presented similarly ridiculous queries asked by different people. In the final panel, Tommy asks Bill: 'Bill, Which Do You Like Being Hit by Best, Shrapnel or Shell?'[12]

With his understated irony, Haselden connected with the mindset of the soldiers and employed a form of humour popular in the armed forces' own publications – a form of gallows humour – that 'originates and functions among people who literally face death at any moment' (Obrdlik: 1942, 712). Gallows humour constitutes an intrinsic part of British identity that predates the Elizabethan era, and it became a fundamental aspect of the culture and attitude of British 'Tommies' serving on the front line.[13] During the First World War a new form of courage became the norm, according to Madigan (2013), who notes that instead of the chivalric values with heroics that had hitherto been the aspiration, the main aim now was simply to 'stick it out'. This entailed a great deal of grumbling (as evidenced in trench publications), a form of 'mock-defeatism' and yet without any thought of actually giving in. Cartoons in this vein, by mainstream artists such as Bruce Bairnsfather with his 'Old Bill' character, as well as by soldiers themselves (see Chapter 4), were hugely appreciated both at the front and at home.

Explicit verisimilitude in the depiction of war

The war was present throughout Haselden's work during 1914–18 and beyond; it formed a generalised backdrop to the activities of Home Front characters, but also appeared more explicitly in the portrayal of very

specific actual events, such as the invasion of Belgium. In 'Sad Experience of Big and Little Willie', published 12 October 1914, Belgium is depicted metaphorically as a country gate, clearly bearing the legend 'No Thoroughfare' in reference to the German violation of Belgian neutrality, as ratified in the Treaty of London (1839).[14] Again looking through their 'Hohenzollern glasses', Big and Little Willie delude themselves that they can 'jump that absurd little gate without much trouble', although they ultimately come to realise the insurmountable reality of their situation in the most direct way possible – by falling on their heads. As on previous occasions, Haselden employed ridicule to present the conclusion that ultimately the fantasies of the deluded enemy would result in failure, while at the same time he employed slapstick humour to alleviate the tension for his audience. However, it is the use of metaphor that is most conspicuous; it allowed Haselden to illustrate so concisely (and with a considerable amount of optimism, since in reality the Allies had been forced to make several retreats) the unexpected resistance Germany encountered in a country it had hoped to simply pass through.

A further example of Haselden's direct verisimilitude corresponding with reported events, as well as his reinforcement of the narrative of German aggression, occurred in December 1914 when a German cruiser shelled the northeast coast of Britain and killed over 100 people. The events were extensively reported by the press and led to a rush on recruiting stations. The *Mirror* stated on its front page: '3 English Towns Shelled By German Navy'. The headline was followed by an explanatory article claiming, 'Britain has been bombarded. [...] The Germans have kept their word and carried the war to Britain's shores.'[15] Two days later, Haselden illustrated this event and its consequences in 'The Willie's Whitby Exploit and the Result'. Cause (German shelling of the British coast) and effect (increased British recruitment) were represented by Haselden in a two-panel, before-and-after strip. The German navy is represented by Big and Little Willie, who are very clearly the aggressors. Big Willie likens 'shelling abbeys' to 'sport' and thus forfeits any moral justification for his actions. In the next panel British recruits are shown propelling themselves through the air towards the cowering Germans. Though Haselden employed caricature and metaphorical aptness (British infantry recruits, for example, cannot fly), the subject matter of the strip was founded in reality and not a construct solely of the artist's imagination. In this instance, Haselden's work purported to be directly factual as well as being another entertaining reiteration of the British narrative of German aggression and foul play.

Subjectivity on the Home Front

Verisimilitude as a form of cultural record can also be tempered by specific forms of framing that present a point of view. The lens of subjectivity on the Home Front has its own value, especially when it becomes a reflexive dialogue through interaction between newspaper editorial and readers – allowing for cross-referencing of sources in the manner envisaged by Collingwood (1935). Colonel Dug-Out exposed the frustrations of the Home Front seen subjectively through the prism of the *Daily Mirror*. He was introduced on 9 July 1917 and was the first of Haselden's characters to appear on a regular daily basis and so create a dynamic record of change over time. Published on consecutive days between 9 July and 11 August 1917, 'The War Story of Colonel Dug-Out' consisted of 30 episodes.[16] The fourth episode of Colonel Dug-Out represents the first instance within British newspaper comic strips in which the plot is directly continued from one day to the next.

A retired, miserly and quintessentially English bully, the character of Colonel Dug-Out represents a group ineligible for active service on the front, namely men above the conscription age of 41. In this story is to be found the genesis of the story arc in British comic strips. Previously only the characters themselves and the basic plot premise (or characterisation) recurred in Haselden's serial strips. This marks a major development in the narrative devices employed by Haselden and encouraged the *Mirror*'s readership to follow the character's ongoing adventures on a daily basis. Establishing a record of change over time and of verisimilitude as he reacts to current real-life issues, he is also a clear example of Haselden's subjectivity.

As Colonel Dug-Out was directly developed from the paper's editorial standpoint of criticising the stagnant nature of British bureaucracy amid public concerns over German air raids on London, this allows cross-referencing with other content in the *Daily Mirror*. The main issues concerned the lack of British aeroplanes available for home defence and the public debate over the legitimacy of British air force retaliation directed at German cities. The terms 'air raid', 'raid', 'aeroplane', 'aircraft', 'bureaucrat' and 'bureaucracy' occur 79 times on either the front or fifth page of the *Mirror* during the first ten appearances of Colonel Dug-Out. Haselden's strips were published alongside the editorial column of the newspaper on page five, providing clear evidence of correlation between the comic and newspaper policy. It is no coincidence that the Colonel made his first appearance next to W. M.'s editorial column attacking 'the people who want nothing done'. W. M. repeats

the word 'cant' (or 'canting') five times in eight paragraphs.[17] Illustrating the point made by the Americans during the Second World War, that 'to know what the editorial writers are saying is to know what the cartoonists are drawing',[18] this position was reinforced in W. M.'s column over the following days.

Initially presented as 'excessively irritable before the war', the Colonel undergoes a rejuvenation as a result of the conflict.[19] Suddenly, 'he matters' again after his ironic appointment as 'Director General of Everything Else'.[20] In strip number 15, the Colonel employs 'a very intelligent young lady', Miss Teeny, as a typist. Miss Teeny, with her 'direct and simple mind', inevitably becomes extremely frustrated with the bureaucratic proceduralism of the Colonel (Markoe: 2010), and concludes the 16th episode of 'The War Story' with the exclamation: 'I shall go mad if I stay where there are such absurd doddering delays!'[21] She is the catalyst for a gradual positive change in the Colonel's behaviour, as well as his efficiency as a public servant and his general demeanour. The progressive cooperation of Miss Teeny and Colonel Dug-Out is highlighted in one strip when, during a meeting of the Do-Everything-and-Nothing Department to discuss a 'very knotty point', the 'Colonel's "Secretary" Is Called in, and Decides the Point in Two Seconds'[22] (Figure 3.2).

The idea of intergenerational, progressive cooperation is extended in the following episode (No. 24). During a brief absence from the department, Colonel Dug-Out empowers Miss Teeny to act 'in his place'.[23] However, the staff refuse to cooperate with Miss Teeny and are sternly

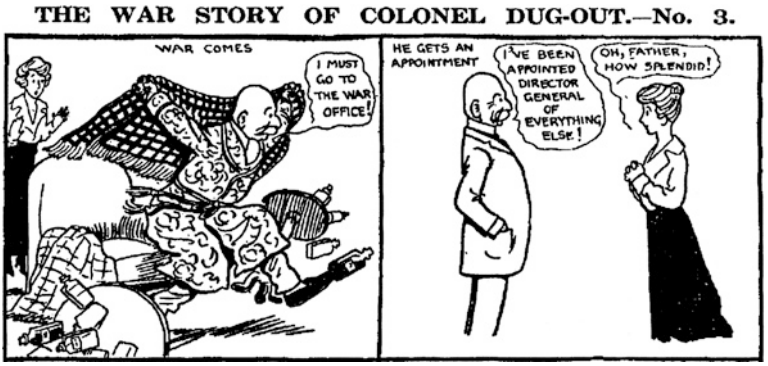

Figure 3.2 In the context of total war, Colonel Dug-Out's new job title is ironically pompous and meaningless, illustrating the *Mirror*'s editorial standpoint of criticising the stagnant nature of British bureaucracy
Source: Haselden, W. K., 'The War Story of Colonel Dug-Out No. 3', *Daily Mirror*, 11 July 1917.

told off by the Colonel on his return – evidently Miss Teeny can only maintain her authority in unity with the Colonel. Her authority derives from his. Yet the Colonel also only possesses effective authority in cooperation with Miss Teeny, demonstrated by his lack of coordination and his personal behaviour before her employment and during her absence due to illness. The message promoted by Haselden in this story arc concerned the advantages of cooperation in contrast with frustrated bureaucracy. In doing so the strip stands as a metaphor for the Home Front as a whole and forms part of the *Mirror*'s campaign for greater efficiency.

The correlation between the theme of the strip and the *Mirror*'s content extended to the final episode of Colonel Dug-Out. In 'The Colonel Bids Farewell to His Staff', Haselden again employed the two-panel format to highlight the change which has come about in the Colonel. In the first panel the Colonel rehearses a 'Farewell Speech to His Office Staff' that is visually depicted as garrulously extending over several pages. However, 'When it Comes to the Point' in the final panel, he simply 'Says a Few Kind Impromptu Words' and 'All Are Much Affected'.[24] Colonel Dug-Out's exit from the pages of the *Daily Mirror* reflected the paper's 'Thought for To-Day' which appeared on the same page: 'The things that really matter are not the big events of life, the occasional heroisms: but rather the little kindnesses – the constant consideration for others.'[25]

The *mentalité* of the Home Front – Class and gender

Haselden did not simply relay significant events, he also provided a more subtle record of the wartime mindset, or *mentalité*, on the changes engendered by the conflict. Aspects of observation on class also appeared in Haselden's portrayal of female characters, such as Miss Flapperton and Miss Teeny. In addition he provided us with a social discourse on women's changing roles and intergenerational conflict. In the *Daily Mirror*, running parallel to Colonel Dug-Out from the 12th to the 16th episodes, was a lengthy debate amongst readers concerning the ability of women to do office work. 'Is a Woman's Work More Difficult than a Man's?'[26] 'Housekeeping or Office? Which is really the more difficult task in life?'[27] This reflected a debate in society caused by the influx of women into the workplace, in particular in clerical work, one of the greatest and earliest areas of expansion following the enlistment of men (Thom: 2000, 30). Haselden exhibited his observance of topicality when he discursively took up the debate with the introduction of a

new character and a new story arc to 'The War Story' by introducing the aforementioned Miss Teeny as the Colonel's typist. The positive transformation that enveloped the Colonel following her appointment is not only to be interpreted as a call for greater cooperation and efficiency, but also a paean to the positive influence of women in the workplace, or at least in the office. This was one of the least controversial aspects of their employment, since office work was not seen as a threat to womanhood, unlike other occupations (Thom: 2000, 30).[28] However, in keeping with evidence of readership reactions in the *Daily Mirror*, as Holloway points out, if there was a change in the perception of working women it was in the class of the non-industrial sector employee (2005, 133).

Haselden illustrated 'the amazing change that comes over the Colonel's room with the assistance of the little typist' in a two-panel 'before and after' strip in the format of a spot-the-difference game in which Miss Teeny adds flowers to the desks, pictures to the walls, bows to the chair legs and so on. She also manipulates the Colonel into acquiescing to regular tea breaks (No. 17) and keeping an office cat (No. 18). In episode No. 20 the Colonel and his staff realise the importance of this change and the role of Miss Teeny when she 'stayed away for a part of a day' due to illness.[29] In her absence the Colonel returns to behaving as a tyrannical bully. Miss Teeny is forced to return to the office despite her cold, and is greeted with joy by the previously sullen Colonel. The way Miss Teeny exerts her influence – through tears and other emotional manipulation – and the type of change she engenders – good humour, interior design and a kitten, as well as efficiency – also provides a record of the restricted role expected of working women.

In contrast to Miss Teeny's proficient office work, 'The War Behaviour of Miss Flapperton' depicted an upper-middle-class young lady entirely concerned with fashion and luxury, yet who nevertheless managed to contribute to the war effort in her own way. Published in 12 instalments between 16 July and 21 August 1915, Haselden created a series of strips that depicted the wartime adventures of a British 'flapper' – 'a fashionable young woman intent on enjoying herself and flouting conventional standards of behaviour' (*Oxford Dictionary*: 2014) and thus a constant subject for debate in the papers, including the *Mirror.* Haselden personified a social trend, and the character came to life within Britain's cultural imagination. Miss Flapperton quickly became the figurehead of British flappers nationwide. Furthermore, the character herself proved to be extremely popular with British soldiers.

The second proposition characterising Miss Flapperton was her antipathy to her relatives, Uncle and Aunt Stodgy. As with her affinity

with young soldiers, this was a highly significant representation and record of the cultural atmosphere of the First World War and the rapid social developments that emerged as a result of the conflict. It is clear from the nomenclature of Uncle and Aunt Stodgy that they represented the hegemonic upper-middle-class attitude to the British social status quo, whereas Miss Flapperton threatened this. In the fifth instalment of the series, published 12 August 1915, Miss Flapperton remarks, 'Then my standard would never suit Aunt Stodgy –/– and I don't know that I'm very keen on her's!'[*sic*] In the sixth and eighth instalments, published 13 and 16 August 1915, both Uncle and Aunt Stodgy attempt to address Miss Flapperton's contribution to the war effort. Both episodes conclude with Miss Flapperton in the company of soldiers, either 'teaching subalterns French' or enjoying lunch with a young officer named Reggie Poppet. Haselden's characters invited comparison of the differing social attitudes and incongruent values of the adult British population. This was most apparent in the ninth episode of Miss Flapperton, in which the young protagonist defends her habit of smoking cigarettes by comparison with the habits of her peers in drinking 'cup after cup' of tea and 'bringing out smelling salts in church'.

Miss Flapperton personified the tensions inherent in the conflicting social attitudes of middle-class female youth in contradistinction with the prevailing attitudes of the older generation. As previously mentioned, she also shared an affinity with her generational counterparts, young British servicemen, whose attitudes towards behaviour and society were represented by Haselden as concentric with Miss Flapperton's. The series presented a humorous exemplification of the egocentric war contributions of a privileged young English lady while at the same time typifying the development of a new social attitude and *mentalité* that developed in Britain during the First World War.

Class differences were apparent elsewhere in Haselden's work, perceived in ways that are unique to the comic strip. During this early period in the history of British comics what we now consider to be the conventions of comic art and comic book heroes had yet to be established. However, his manner of illustrating his characters pioneered many of these conventions. Returning to the first episode in the 'Trials of the Wounded Tommy' series, it is interesting to observe Haselden's representation of the character of Tommy, whose uniform is that of an officer, in contrast with his colleague and comrade in arms Private Bill. Tommy, the hero, stands literally head and shoulders above his lower-rank and probably lower-class 'side-kick'. This additional height and upright posture communicates strength and confidence. Likewise,

a bent, lowered posture communicates the opposite traits in a character. This differentiation is further emphasised by the disparity in speech between the two characters. Tommy articulates his thoughts succinctly and with flawless grammar, while Private Bill echoes the single-panel cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather's working-class character Old Bill, speaking in slang profuse with grammatical inaccuracies. Interestingly, in the opening episode of this series, Haselden presents a portrait of himself in his role as cartoonist, where he also stands with significantly 'weak and dispossessed' posture compared to the mob of society ladies surrounding him. Furthermore, his lack of stature in comparison to both Tommy and Private Bill in the next panel indicates insecurity about the significance of his role as a cartoonist while other men fight on the front line.

From the standpoint of social and cultural record, one of the interesting facets of Haselden's work is that it posed the issue of whether the *Mirror* discourses, of which his comic strips form part, reflected or helped to construct opinion. Haselden explained that his method of working was: 'to look through the morning papers for a subject which is at the same time prominent and "cartoonable". Sometimes, of course, there are no suitable subjects – then one has to be made up. Almost everything but politics and religion is permissible' (British Cartoon Archive: 2014b).

The closeness with which Haselden followed national debate is illustrated by the character of Miss Flapperton, who was developed in tandem with the editorial comments published in the *Mirror* on the same day. 'Several of our cartoons have lately hinted that it would be interesting to know what "other work" most people consider themselves capable of doing – what work other than that they may be doing under protest at present.'[30] This topical debate was instigated by the investigations of the National Register, to which reference is made by both the editorial column and the explanatory comments added by Haselden below his comic strip.

The close connections and synergy between editorial aspects of the paper's campaigns and standpoints not only allows for a triangulation of sources, it also can be used to highlight the unprecedented level of reflexivity in the artist's way of working that accompanied the progress of the strip narratives. Haselden made changes in order to satisfy his readership, and was prepared to admit this in the newspaper. As he explained beneath Miss Flapperton's second appearance in the *Mirror*:

> We showed Miss Joy Flapperton, some time ago, offering her services as guide and companion to youthful officers, wounded or on leave.

> Since then, several such gallant officers have written to our cartoonist expressing their admiration for this young lady. It may please them, then, to see a continuation of her adventures, and to know, to-day, how she manages to be economical in wartime.[31]

Meanwhile, the newspaper's editorial by 'W. M.' heralded a relationship between male readers and Flapperton that aspired to reality:

> One is apt, however hard one may strive against it at home, occasionally to suffer from war-depression. [...] To this disposition – on the part of young officers do we attribute the at present very noticeable social and (if we may say so) military success of Miss Joy Flapperton and her friends – that young lady whose patriotic adventures our cartoonist is at present exhibiting. [...] And our young officer is always out with Miss Flapperton.[32]

The accuracy with which Miss Flapperton was portrayed, the popularity of Haselden's work, as well as the symbiosis between the comic strip and other parts of the paper, was emphasised by the debate it catalysed within the opinion columns of the *Mirror* concerning flappers as a social trend and the value and validity of their behaviour. By the fourth instalment of the series, the column of the *Mirror* concerned with readers' comments and letters had been given the title, 'War Girls: What Young Officers Think of the Part Played by Miss Flapperton'. A letter printed below and signed 'Subaltern' reads: 'Without her our leave would be so much more dreary than it is. And we often think of her out in France.'[33] The eighth and ninth instalments in the series were published next to opinion columns bearing the respective titles, 'War Flappers: Criticism and Approval of the Girl's Part in the National Effort' and 'Flapper Patriots: What Part the Young Girl at Home Plays in the Great War'.[34] As her adventures continued, the opinion column containing comments on Miss Flapperton by the *Daily Mirror*'s readership highlights an increasing public affinity among British youth for her and also her constant companion, Reggie. Alongside her tenth appearance in the *Mirror*, five opinion pieces mention Miss Flapperton by name. Two of these five are signed 'One of the Reggies' and 'A Reggie, in Camp, Gloucester', and the opinion column is entitled 'Flirting and War: Miss Flapperton and "Reggie" Present Their Excuses for Frivolity'.[35] The inundation of letters received by the *Mirror* on this subject was acknowledged in the editorial column of the following day in an article entitled 'Miss Flapperton's Future' that stated: 'Our letter column daily, for want of space, has to

reject dozens of appeals from mothers who are shocked by the lack of education received by our cartoonist's young friend Miss Flapperton.'[36] On the following day, another five of the eight opinion letters published were in direct response to this article, and on her final appearance on 21 August 1915, four of the eight opinion letters were concerned with the debate on 'flappers'.[37] The reaction of the readership raises the issue as to whether Haselden simply reflected opinion in my columns or actively constructed it (Figure 3.3).

This debate continued on the opinion page of the *Mirror* into August, outlasting the character herself by several days. There was, however, one notable exception. On 27 August 1915, the *Mirror* published a letter signed 'Joy Flapperton, Anywhere in England'. In this letter, a reader exhibited such affinity for the character as to adopt her name as a pseudonym. Joy Flapperton's letter defended the behaviour of flappers nationwide and referred directly to the power inherent in this character as a social meme. Joy wrote: 'with all this discussion I have become

Figure 3.3 Miss Joy Flapperton, symbolising the 'flapper' culture and the changing role for young women
Source: Haselden, W. K., 'Other work than your own', *Daily Mirror*, 16 July 1915.

quite a personage, and dull old people are beginning to take me seriously and want to talk to me, and so waste the time I really ought to spend in cheering up my Reggie.'[38] Miss Flapperton's position as an accepted wartime meme became so entrenched in British culture that the *Mirror*'s editorial column made direct reference to her without further explanation of her origin, two years after her last personal appearance in Haselden's comic strips: 'How outrageous, we say, is the conduct of our flappers to-day! How Joy "goes on" with young Reggie!'[39] This also shows that women related to her and provides further proof of the way that Haselden was able to both use and form opinion on the Home Front.

However, the reflexivity of Haselden's approach with Flapperton in taking reader response into account did not always result in successes when applied to other characters. On occasions the newspaper had to admit failure, and adjust accordingly. In the case of the final story arc of the 'War Story' series, Haselden introduced a new character in the form of Miss Teeny's younger brother Ted. In the strip Miss Teeny uses her powers of persuasion to convince the Colonel to employ Ted at a considerable salary, and heralds the final story arc that is primarily concerned with practical jokes played on the Colonel by Ted. Ted misbehaves due to boredom: 'It's a dull life when everyone's out.'[40] This revealing comment about British youth takes place in the penultimate episode of the 'War Story' series with its own individual title, 'The Usual Conduct of the Bad Boy'. Evidently this narrative did not prove popular with the *Daily Mirror*'s readership and the series concluded in the following episode. However, the very fact that Haselden had reacted to readers' opinions provides the historian with a cultural record of the period's mindset and an indication of public reactions.[41]

Conclusion

Haselden's artwork altered the focus of British cartooning from single-panel, political works to multi-panel narratives. Furthermore, Haselden's prolificacy and early adoption of sequential panels with narrative arcs encompassing not just days but months, provided the opportunity for in-depth storytelling to inform and entertain. The popularity of Haselden's characters demonstrated his adeptness in exploiting the *mentalité*, or intangible mindset, of both soldiers and those on the Home Front. Humour was a key factor in the equation, providing a cultural record of the way in which he considered that the British population chose to see itself during wartime. His work, as an artefact of mass

culture, contributed particularly to the British narrative of domestic British identity, and testified to the difficulties of a 'normal life' of work, leisure and consumerism in wartime. However, Haselden's work should not be narrowly defined in terms of the reflection of class: his varied characters crossed gender, age and class barriers. The popularity of his strips evinced by the publishing of collections of his cartoons, the correspondence engendered in the *Daily Mirror* by them and the spread of their fame to the Kaiser himself, allow the conclusion that he had touched upon the *mentalité* of a significant proportion of the population as well achieving recognition abroad. Gallows humour became a fundamental aspect of the culture and attitude of British 'Tommies' serving on the front line.

The work of Haselden has provided subsequent generations of scholars with varied forms of evidence: factual reporting of events, such as the shelling of Whitby Abbey in 1914, was explicit, but his work also contained implicit metaphorical aptness. At times he employed this simultaneously – after the shelling of Whitby, British recruits flew through the air towards the Germans. Haselden's prolificacy and innovative use of a narrative developed over several strips allows for a record over time. This is valuable as a means of charting debates connected with changing gender roles, efficiency within the civil service and the altered state of the country to which the demobbed soldiers returned. These themes often demonstrate a close adherence to the *Mirror*'s editorial policy, pointing to subjectivity and providing an alternative historical source for cross-referencing (Collingwood: 1935). Simultaneously the strips relay verisimilitude with topics debated and reported in the paper.

However, within the wider remit of this book, Haselden's most distinct contribution is to offer a subjective framing with reflexivity achieved through the interaction with readers and newspaper discourses that were generated by the relationship between textual content and comic strip. These provide evidence not only of the popularity of his work with readers but, emphasised by the debate it catalysed within the opinion columns of the *Mirror* concerning flappers as a social trend, and the value and validity of their behaviour, also the extent to which characters like Miss Joy Flapperton became cultural icons. Demonstrating the power inherent in this character as a social meme, a reader exhibited such affinity for the character as to adopt her name as a pseudonym, and defended the behaviour of flappers nationwide.

The cartoonist's genuine flexibility in reaction to reader responses provides added value to the cultural record. In recognition of this reader

commitment, Haselden and the newspaper's management reacted with editorial sensitivity. Today, the ensuing dialogue allows for cross-referencing and triangulation of sources: the reaction of the readership raises the issue as to whether Haselden simply reflected opinion in his columns or actively constructed it. In fact, a combination of the two sometimes seemed to be the result.

For example, the fact that women related to Flapperton provides evidence that the *Daily Mirror* was able to both use and form opinion on the Home Front in three ways: through the comic strip, readers' letters and the editorial. Haselden interacted with his audience; he referred to readers' correspondence and the debates surrounding the themes of his strips. The subjects of the strips caused lively debates in the *Mirror*'s letter pages, giving the impression of a symbiotic relationship between Haselden, his readership and the *Mirror*. His strips both demonstrated and reflected popular discourse, and allowed his audience to empathise with the characters, as well as producing a dynamic record of change for retrospective study. Examples of this include the rapidly evolving role of women, with their emergence into previously male-dominated workplaces such as the office due to wartime labour shortages, and the changes in gender mores – allowing young women greater freedom than before – as personified in the flapper. This high level of reflexivity in the artist's way of working that accompanied the progress of the strip narratives, in combination with humour, is unprecedented amongst contemporary strips. Haselden made changes in order to satisfy his readership, and was prepared to admit this in the newspaper.

4

Proto Comics as Trench Record: Anti-Heroism, Disparagement Humour and Citizens' Journalism

The First World War represented the peak of soldier newspaper production, and textual expressions by soldiers in their own trench and troopship newspapers are relatively well known (Fuller: 1990; Kent: 1999; Seal: 1990, 2013a, 2013b; Nelson: 2010, 2011), but the way the men created and used the cartoon multi-panel format is not. Humorous visual self-expression represents a record of satirical social observation from a 'bottom up' perspective, with potential to contribute to the trend towards use of a wider range of sources in First World War historiography.[1]

Visual narrative humour provides journalistic observations on everyday experiences that in many cases capture the spirit of the army in terms of stoicism, buoyed by a culture of internal complaints. Troop concerns expressed in this chapter's early comic strips of Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and British were similar. They shared a collective editorial purpose of morale boosting amongst the ranks through the use of everyday narratives that elevated the anti-heroism of the citizen soldier, portrayed as a transnational everyman in the service of Empire. The regenerative value of disparagement humour provided a redefinition of courage as the very act of endurance.

At a time when scholars are addressing the reasons why independent citizen journalism has faltered in the context of an extension of media conglomerates' hegemony under deregulated global capitalism (Curran: 2012), it may be timely to offer an expanded definition of the ways in which citizens' journalism can be historicised. Today's protagonists turn to their mobile telephones for visual communication, but it is all too easy to forget that during the golden age of the press during the early twentieth century, comic strip illustrations acted as a comparable tool

for journalistic observation and comment on a regular basis. Unlike, for instance, the fantasy comic genre with a backdrop of war, these multi-panels created by the armed forces are set in the war, and were often created by the men at the various fronts during the moments, and at the places, that historical events were actually being played out. Thus as sources of evidence, they are much more explicit, and the value for the historian is that, unlike memoirs, such illustrations have the advantage of being unaffected by the passing of time.

In light of the above, this chapter explores the contribution of sequential narratives as a form of democratic self-expression, all the more important because the stories demonstrate spontaneity and immediacy – not as news items, but as ways of interpreting stories about everyday experiences and feelings. This ephemeral medium can tell us the attitudes of ordinary soldiers and aspects of collective First World War experience, concerns about daily life, complaints about officers, medical services, discomforts, food and drink, leave, military routines and soldiers' expectations versus emerging reality.

By the time of the outbreak of war there were already some precedents in local publications for comic strips aimed at adults, as opposed to British comic magazines such as *Puck, Chuckles, Butterfly, Funny Wonder* and *Sparks* for the children's market. Although some troop publications were officially supported, many were produced, written and conceived entirely by the soldiers themselves. During the 1914–18 war the satirical ordinary man in cartoon form was continued, not just by celebrity cartoonists at the front, such as Bruce Bairnsfather, but largely by the lower ranks for their peers – that is, by, with and for citizen soldiers.

Trench publications gave the non-commissioned volunteer the opportunity to make his views felt; furthermore, ordinary soldiers were starting to appropriate a new genre of publishing – comic strip panels for adults. Yet academic study has only focused on texts, not early comics formats (Kent: 1985, 1999; Seal: 1990, 2005, 2013a; Fuller: 1990). This is probably due to the fact that not all trench newspapers contained multi-panel cartoons, or indeed any illustrations. Around a quarter of the 800 multinational editions held by Cambridge University Library contain satirical images; the sample of multi-panel drawings was taken from these.

As a cultural record, trench multi-panel cartoons expressed the concerns of the troops, and as a record of the past, such illustrations tackled situations that were familiar to armed forces readers, indicating not only the opinions of men at the fronts, but also the kind of discourses

they adopted. In cartoons and comic strips in troop publications, the central comic character was the citizen soldier – a volunteer recruit in the lower ranks. The British soldier was Tommy Atkins or Old Bill, the Australian was called 'Anzac' in Gallipoli, and 'Billjim' in Egypt and Palestine. These men were the ordinary soldier, the everyman as main actor, portrayed as a source of satire, entertainment and morale boosting. Consisting of two or more panels, these sequential narratives contributed to the advent of the newspaper comic strip. Focusing on British and Commonwealth examples from the Western Front, Palestine and the Dardanelles, this chapter explores how the interaction between pictorial and textual elements in this form of communication should be construed.

The two-panel cartoon format provided an ideal way of presenting quick, simple, contrasting narratives of shared experiences. Longer sequential storylines could add further sophistications to the format, such as a more complicated storyline with several events, episodes or milestones. The comic strip genre as it appears in trench publications was not usually formalised by the symmetric panel framing and regular characters that are commonplace today. Text captions and balloon dialogue appeared more frequently than box borders. In terms of content, complaints were central to the genre: these started right from the beginning, during initial training, and were not confined to any particular nationality or to life at the front. For example, 'Where Life Is Not Monotonous', a multi-panel narrative, very cleverly uses the same visual to illustrate a range of different training situations. The same image of two officers talking in front of a squad of very bored-looking soldiers is reproduced six times with different captions that include 'Bayonet Fighting', 'Squad Drill' and 'A Tale of Adventure'.[2]

Another comic strip, entitled 'Sling', tackles the subject of military routines by referring to the Salisbury Plain camp where reinforcements were trained and casualties rehabilitated (*Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F.*: 1917, 2, 5, 180–181, CUL). Here the four-panel illustration, with no dialogue, acts as a source with explicit 'verisimilitude' or likeness to real events. In this proto comic strip, the rucksack and boots gradually subsume the walker by becoming bigger and bigger, and therefore more burdensome, as the route march progresses. In reality, troops carried up to 60lbs of kit. Route marches during training were to accustom the men to marching at the front. Marches of between four to eight miles with full kit were common (Bet-El: 1990, 80–81). The concept was clearly exaggerated for the purposes of humour, but the authenticity of record concerning this form of training is clear. This chapter concentrates on the ways in which

trench publication proto comics like this one are significant as unique historical sources.

The 'voice' of the ordinary soldier has often been articulated in a 'top down' literary form by the better educated amongst them, as letters, diaries and memoirs. Whereas this cultural voice of the officer class and war poets has been hugely influential (Fussell: 1975), more recently scholars have adopted a more 'bottom up' approach (Morton: 1993). In addition, much of the scholarship on *mentalités* centres on psychological human resilience (Watson: 2008) and emotional survival (Roper: 2009), but by and large without resort to trench publications as a source, despite the fact that publications included parodies of news stories and of advertisements, snippets of gossip, jokes, poetry, anecdotes and cartoons as well as sequential illustrative narratives. The large body of material is significant because it represents an increase in the number of participant voices using an accessible form of publishing.[3] Trench publications crossed national boundaries. For 1914–18, Nelson argues that due to larger print runs and professional distribution, the Germans had by far the largest number, with 1.1 million editions distributed per month on the Western Front, and even more on the Eastern Front (2010, 175). He correctly notes that the most prolific of the Allies, the Australians and Canadians, were, like the Germans on the Eastern Front, far from home (2011, 53n127). Fuller (1990) selected 107 trench publications from Britain and the many Dominions for his study of text (not illustrations), concentrating on 61 that were uniquely produced by, and aimed at, the infantry. The French had 400 trench publications, but only 200 have survived (Audoin-Rouzeau: 1986, 7). From June 1915 onwards more than 250 Australian publications were circulated among troops, starting first at Gallipoli.

The main purpose for all newspapers was to amuse: satire and irony represented an ideal vehicle for recording the human side of the Great War. Men wanted to share stories about living conditions by addressing participants in similar recognisable circumstances on topics of daily life. In addition, feelings of geographic isolation prompted them to produce a record for friends and family back home. Comic strip panels appeared in newspapers manifesting a perceived editorial motive to unify the ranks – a collective purpose:

> They represent a collective rather than an individual commentary, validated to a large extent by their soldier audience. In addition, they deliberately set out, in many cases, to capture the spirit of the army. They address themselves directly and continuously to a task

> which letters and diaries tackle only peripherally and randomly. Even without this purpose, the journals were themselves an expression of the collective culture . . .
>
> (Fuller: 1990, 4)

Recruits, by definition, had positioned themselves for the first time in a new community that needed to express an identity, and they used collective communication to cement cohesion. Scholars have recognised that journalism has traditionally also provided a service to, by and for 'imagined communities' (Anderson: 1991; Allan and Thorsen: 2009; Chapman and Nuttall: 2011) but to date, citizens' journalism has not generally been historicised. It is usually defined as a non-professional exercise of the craft, with scholars who write on the present-day phenomenon stressing the range of platforms and manifestations of community journalism (Reader and Hatcher: 2012), but often overlooking previous precedents such as trench publications.

Some troop publications were supported officially and printed at the Western Front, either on abandoned French presses (as with *The Wipers Times*) or sent for printing to Paris or London. Official journals tended to have higher standards of production and more illustrative material, although this was not always the case, especially if the smaller, more makeshift publications, such as the Australian *Ca Ne Fait Rien* from the Western Front, could boast a talented caricaturist (Chapman and Ellin: 2012). However, there were usually more and better-produced sequential cartoons in newspapers with greater resources, such as the Canadian *Listening Post.*

Themes of proto comic strip content

The two-panel cartoon can be construed as a precursor to the comic strip format: binaries can indicate change over a period of time that involves an element of contrast in presentation. Themes embrace 'before' and 'after', or 'at first' then 'later', as a narrative. This style of presentation is ideal for depicting a quick snapshot of change, immediately recognisable because of the brief nature of the summary. Repetition of themes could become an ongoing joke, the appreciation of which acted as a bond between men. Common topics included the mismatch between the reality of wartime life and the image held by the folks back home, cultural differences of local populations in battlefield countries, perceptions of officer weaknesses, and discomforts and bad food. The historic record of armed forces' concerns is reinforced by the duration

Table 4.1 Broad themes of content

Topics	British	Canadian	New Zealand	Australian
Civilian Life and Leave	1	8	4	4
Food and Drink	0	5	2	5
Service Life	7	17	4	9
Contrasts	8	2	0	10
Officers and Discipline	1	2	0	2
Medics	4	2	2	2
Transport	3	3	3	0
Other	6	6	6	7
Totals	30	45	21	39
Total 135 multi-panel cartoons.				

of evidence as a dynamic record over a period of time – from 1914–18 and sometimes beyond. Various countries with different nationalities all expressed their attitudes and opinions, many of which occur regularly and sometimes simultaneously. Analysing this development in retrospect, this represents an unplanned synchronisation of soldier discourse – even more important because here we have multiple authors in numerous separate publications (Table 4.1).

Food and drink, so essential for physical and mental well-being, was a favourite. Both British and French armies provided rations with similar caloric value to their troops, but in practice most complaints emanated from supply problems that rendered ration scales meaningless, thus bully beef and hard biscuits became the target of much humour, also reflected in the fact that in 1917 the War Cabinet received reports that food was one of the main sources of troop discontent.[4] For example, the contrast between consuming food and drink whilst Australian men were in 'Blighty', as opposed to sustenance amongst the bleak destruction of the front, was highlighted in a two-panel cartoon in the *Aussie*.[5] The anonymous artist addressed 'how we do it in Blighty' with a picture of opulence for two soldiers who are served with food and drink on platters by a waiter in elegant, stately surroundings with pictures on the wall, marble columns and mansion décor. The second panel carries a simple title 'and in France'. The setting is depressingly desolate and details some of the discomforts of life on the Western Front. Standing outside a sandbagged shelter with an (ironic) Australian 'Comforts Fund' sign on the roof, men are enduring the mud and the cold in a waterlogged and shell-ravaged landscape.

Figure 4.1 'B.C. to Armageddon'
Source: Payne, G.M., 'B.C. to Armageddon', Supplement to *Machine Gun Corps Magazine*, October 1918.

Some multi-panel cartoons reflect on experiences by offering more serious social observation, as in Figure 4.1, in this case by addressing developments in battle technology – an important facet of the First World War's contribution to modern warfare. 'B.C. to Armageddon' by G. M. Payne was aimed at the readership amongst the Machine Gun Corps, one of the most modern units in the army, created in October 1915. The last panel shows two infantrymen wearing steel helmets and small box respirators, which were both introduced in 1916. One is wielding German 'potato masher' hand grenades and the other a rifle with fixed bayonet. As if to explain the strip that follows, the editor prefaced the work with an astute comment on new weaponry introduced during the First World War: 'Mr. Payne's talent was taxed to the utmost,

in featuring the British Tommy of to-day [*sic*], in his efforts to avoid the suggestion that the progress of war science throughout the ages has developed a new type of barbaric monster' (Supplement to *Machine Gun Corps Magazine* October 1918).

Cartoons as imagined communities of identity

By the end of the war, the British army had fielded 4 million men. Over 300,000 Australians had served overseas, and over 100,000 New Zealanders had seen active service. A total of 620,000 Canadians enlisted between 1914 and 1918, primarily civilian soldiers who signed up for king and country.[6] Amongst the first contingent of 33,000 Canadians, more than 70 per cent were British-born, and of those on the Western Front more generally, 50 per cent were born in the UK. Most saw themselves as both British and Canadian (Cook: 2008, 172; 2013, 327). Although linguistic differences can emerge from the colloquialism in dialogue that is also a characteristic of comic strips, especially in specifically Australian slang ('cobbers', 'dinkum', 'bonzer' for Australians), themes tended to be common to more than one nationality and front, with uniforms and backdrops changing, and differing geographical features acting as a variable. Wise notes that a single-panel cartoon produced by the British soldier–cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather was reproduced to depict an Australian soldier at Gallipoli by changing the uniform and the backdrop – everything else remained the same (2007, 237–238). Most of the complaints about officers, commonly expressed through humour, seem to be shared across the various nationalities of the Allied side.[7] Cook points out that although many Canadians believed they had their own national slang, in fact it was empire-wide shared language (2013, 344).

Attempts to differentiate between 'Tommy' and 'Digger' aspects tend to focus on class: although class differences clearly existed within the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), they were more pronounced in England (Fuller: 1991, 51), with the result that British soldiers were surprised by the relationship between Australian officers and lower ranks, considering 'their use of humour to protest against officers and their behaviour unconscionable' (Wise: 2007, 238). Whilst not disputing the pivotal nature of communications dating from this era as evidence of 'digger' identity, shared characteristics must be stressed: repetition of themes such as bad food, the mismatch between the reality of wartime life and the image held by the folks back home, cultural difference of local populations in battlefield countries, perceptions of officer weaknesses and

other aspects such as discomforts are common. On the Western Front British, Dominion and French troops faced the same enemies: lice, rats, mud, cold, rain, shells. These were much the same at Gallipoli in winter. In summer the inordinate heat caused flies to be added to the list. However, in comic strip panels Australian identity can be clearly discerned in colloquial language through dialogue and text captions, and in visuals through uniform and image. Close attention to detail is required to identify national differences such as the use of specific slang in dialogue and text, and uniform dress style.

Australian identity owes much to the oral tradition of Digger yarns and storytelling. Australian troop publications can be contextualised as part of a longer-running cultural development – the invention, reinvention and ongoing shaping of the Digger and Anzac legends as part of well-documented scholarship on Australasian identity (White: 1981; Seal: 1990, 2004, 2005). After the war, some newspapers such as the *Aussie* continued on as the voice of the returning serviceman, reproducing original cartoons and comic panels as a means of retaining memories. *The Anzac Book* was similarly tailored as a souvenir by projecting the record to a wider audience. The title *Dinkum Oil* meant reliable information in army slang (or 'slanguage') (Kent: 1999, 119; Laugesen: 2005), ironic given the fact that the section entitled 'War News' consisted of outrageous, totally unbelievable snippets of 'water cooler gossip'. In 'diggerese' slanguage these were 'furphies', after John Furphy who supplied water carts, around which men congregated to chat. In the Australian case, scholars have seen the men's publishing effort as evidence of a distinctive 'digger' subculture characterised, inter alia, 'by its language, its projection of an image of casual attitudes to authority, its matter-of-fact laconic humour' (Seal: 1990, 30).

Trench publications were influenced by oral culture, with slang, humour, songs and music hall performance all acting as badges of identity, but also as a means of uniting otherwise disparate Empire nationalities (Ashworth: 1980, 48; Cook: 2009, 238; 2013, 344). Using humorous content, soldiers' illustrative narratives drew on their own oral culture of songs, anecdotes and gossip to consolidate and communicate their own specific collective morality and outlook. Recruits, by definition, were positioned in a new community that needed to express an identity, and they used collective communication to cement cohesion.

In fact, the language and jokes may well have been incomprehensible to those on the Home Front who read them (Seal: 2013b, 14). For example, a special edition of the Australian *The Yandoo* was entitled 'Chatty

Number: Printed in a Fritz Dugout'.[8] As a running joke, the 'R and R' story of a night out in town that was featured as a front page in July 1918 with a heading 'Issued in No Man's Land' depicted a routine referred to as 'Tummy and Tub'.[9] 'Tub' shows the men's communal bathing in a big bath before they go out. One of the nine nude bathers in the middle of the huge water barrel asks 'Who says I'm chatty?' The reader can only understand the illustration with the shared knowledge that lice were known as 'chats'. 'Tummy' shows a French peasant woman who has rustled up the usual menu for soldiers, egg and chips. An Australian soldier sits at her table, happily brandishing a knife and fork. Her speech balloon asks 'Good Oh, Eh Monsieur?!!' He replies 'Oofs and chips. Tray bon madarm'. Again, 'franglais' language formed part of daily conversation at the Western Front, but this was a language shared by British and Commonwealth soldiers.

David Kent points out that, 'In a sense the field publications became the corporate diaries of tens of thousands of servicemen. These publications allowed them to recall and share experiences among themselves while also, in many cases, transmitting that experience to the people at home' (1999, 8). The *Listening Post,* for example, was sent home along with other publications that included UK journals – evidence that Canadians saw themselves as part of the British army. The last post-war editions of the newspaper were more like souvenir publications. The publication of the 7th Infantry Battalion, British Columbia Regiment was published twice monthly '(Huns permitting)' and was available from a military tailor in London's Strand, the canteens of most Canadian army units, and YMCA canteens in Canadian areas. The editorial team consisted of editors Captain W. F. Orr, Major D. Philpot and Major A. C. Nation. The news editor was private was J. W. Campbell (later sergeant). In terms of its production style, it fell midway between the more modest publications and the semi-professional journals (Seal: 2013a, 26–28). Many cartoons were drawn by the artist Hugh Farmer for *The Listening Post* and the paper reached a circulation of around 20,000 by 1917 (Cook: 2008, 174).

Records of collective *mentalités*

For the purposes of this chapter only multi-panel cartoons have been selected. The sample of over 130 provides a sense of personal agency, manifesting a desire for control over the armed forces' environment in order to encourage endurance and perseverance as a moral code. This can be interpreted as a new definition of courage and loyalty. Feelings

of geographic isolation prompted some Dominion troops to produce a record for friends and family back home, a motivation that was particularly relevant in the case of troopship publications on the return journey to Australia.[10] There are 70 surviving troopship newspapers (Kent: 1999, 11). Every boat had one, but the 'bright, breezy and colloquial' style (Seal: 1990, 30) became more commemorative for those editions produced on return journeys, because these were often republished as souvenir collections. For instance, Cecil Hartt's cartoons (some of which were multi-panel) were sold in England and specifically aimed at a market of servicemen who collected memorabilia; equally cartoons and illustrative sequential narratives were reproduced in the *Aussie* and passed around within battalions of the AIF (Wise: 2007, 236). By and large, there were more and better-produced sequential cartoons in newspapers with greater resources, such as the *Aussie* and the Canadian *The Listening Post,* that produced commemorative editions after the end of the war.

The most famous and successful publication that was produced for commemorative purposes was *The Anzac Book*. The volume was an instant bestseller, with 36,000 pre-sales from the First Anzac Division, 53,000 orders from the AIF by November 1915, and total sales of 104,432 as early as September 1916 (Kent: 1985, 388, 390). A trench publication with material generated by a competition, the book was originally intended as a distraction and as a morale booster over Christmas for troops in Gallipoli. Out of the 150 competition entries, 24 people offered sketches, paintings and cartoons, some of them multi-panel. When the decision to withdraw came, the intended audience for this body of work changed to the folks back home. Although it contained no news items, *The Anzac Book* consisted of journalistic observations in various forms.

Editor Charles Bean, who has been attributed with inventing the Anzac legend (much of which was initially promoted by English journalist Ellis Ashmead Bartlett),[11] was selective about the image he wanted to create.[12] While the 'digger' ideal, though not the word itself, had a longer history rooted in the bush and rural economy, Gallipoli provided attribution: 'the ready-made myth was given a name, a time, and a place' (White: 1981, 128). Cartoon and multi-panel images tended to project a self-mocking humour by their depictions of the unkempt larrikin, rather than the rural ideal. Both were part of the legend (White: 1981, 136): the self-image was one of both saint and sinner.

As editor, Bean selected illustrations which reinforced the positive qualities of patriotism and an acceptance of their sacrifice. The illustrative narratives ironically depict situations where endurance was

tolerated with good humour and danger was nonchalantly accepted. Graham Seal sums up the significance to the heritage of the Anzac 'legend' of these contributions, mainly by the lower ranks, submitted for *The Anzac Book*: 'These Works, scribbled and sketched by the guttering light of a candle, probably in a "possie" somewhere along the frozen line, display that spirit of irreverence, stoic humour and casual bravery that we associate with the digger' (2005: 61). He does not elaborate on the role of illustrative iconography, although this is central to early comic strip and two-panel cartoon humour.

Despite the fact that Canadians were generally the most prolific Empire producers, especially on the Western Front, this study found only two Canadian troopship examples. This is probably a reflection of their shorter sea voyage. There were differences in multi-panel cartoons between outgoing and returning journals, especially in how the Germans were depicted. Jeffery Keshen observes that the attitudes of trainees and combatants progressively grew more distant from those who remained in Canada, asserting a direct correlation between the levels of satirical content in Canadian trench journals and the proximity to the front (1996, 148).

Certainly at the Home Front illustrative satire focused more on heroism, jingoistic rhetoric and talk of glory,[13] although this remained prominent in papers printed for fresh recruits (Keshen: 1996, 135). In contrast, soldiers developed an ironic anti-heroism through their humour, epitomised by seasoned old soldiers, malingerers and characters such as Bairnsfather's 'Old Bill', who always seemed to know the tricks for survival. Anti-heroism found its iconic representation in multi-panel narratives about the range of uses for the bayonet (other than the obvious, for killing). This icon for illustrative humour could be used as a toasting fork, a hook or a cork screw, for instance.[14] Once again, this record of the past extends beyond the obvious entertainment value to also become, from a twenty-first-century perspective, a reflection of soldiers' attitudes and opinions, and hence an historic record of their concerns and evidence of their discourses.

Unlike cartoons in the civilian press and meant for a Home Front audience, in most trench publications the Germans were not demonised: troops felt that the Germans shared the horror of trench warfare. This resulted in what Tony Ashworth refers to as 'live and let live', a mentality that 'was accompanied both by an increase in sentiments of linking among antagonists and a decrease in sentiments of enmity' (1980, 135). This point is supported by Modris Eksteins, who argues that soldiers could feel more disdain for civilians at home than for the enemy,

because the 'spiritual bond' developed by men in the trenches led all nationalities to agree 'that the war experience, the experience of the "real war" in the trenches, marked men off from the rest of society' (1989, 232, 230, 229).

Examining the textual evidence in trench publications, Seal discovered:

> It was not uncommon to find references . . . to the feeling that Allied soldiers had more in common with their 'enemies' suffering the same thing in German trenches than they did with their own military, press, and Home Front. Regardless of nationality, soldiers on active duty came to identify with the insular community of the trenches.
>
> (2013a, 124, 178)

Once on the Western Front, troops joked about each other and those 'back home'. The contrasts in the two-panel cartoon 'Western Canadians' provides an example of infantry satire about the cavalry, although both are Canadian.[15] A civilian was satirised as 'Western Canadian', wearing a cowboy costume and firing two revolvers into the air, while in the second panel a 'Western Cavalryman' sits proudly on a tethered wooden hobby horse, his sword over his shoulder, watched by a squirrel. Both the cavalry and the Home Front are 'othered'.

Humour for survival

As a form of social observation, narrative humour relies on recognition of absurdity and incongruity in familiar situations. Humour in multi-panel trench cartoons offers an insight into the general culture, self-image and preoccupations by showing and not simply telling. Implied criticism combined with some visual exaggeration as satire, cynicism and shared experience demonstrates the explicit record provided by these sources. The comic strip format proved ideal for a snapshot story revealing the reality of absurdities through the interaction of dialogue and captions as narrative, and sequential drawings. These were typically based on the difference between civilian perceptions of warfare (influenced by propaganda and censorship) and the reality of experience.

A significant number of proto comic strips reinforced trench culture by presenting affectionate jokes about the naïve misconceptions of new recruits, who needed to learn the slang as well as the outlook. Trench journals regularly published dictionaries of slang for this

educative purpose; for example, *The Listening Post* 10 August 1917 contained a list for new Canadian recruits and their 'cousins' the Americans when they arrived in the trenches. In cartoons the recruit corrected by the seasoned 'old soldier' provided a reality break that often highlighted a grumbling or anti-authoritarian message. In one such example (*The Listening Post* Vol. 30, April 1918, p. 19), a new soldier was told by his corporal (an old hand) that the enemy line was only 200 yards away and to watch out for German mortars from the left. He is handed a mirror to be used as a periscope but, thinking it is to be used for shaving, he tells the corporal that it is no good to him because he has left his shaving gear in the billet. As an example of the verisimilitude of the cultural record, the illustrations include a depiction of a trench complete with firing step, duckboards and sandbags. As well as the angled mirror on its handle, other details include a metal triangle to be struck as a gas alert warning, a box of hand grenades and an empty rum jar. Furthermore, the cartoon contains two examples of rudimentary comic strip style that are not found in today's more developed formats: in the third panel, the first speech balloon is positioned lower than the second, defying present-day conventions of reading from left to right and from top to bottom; in the fourth panel, dots indicating eye line are used to emphasise the experienced soldier's exasperation and to ensure that readers appreciate that he is looking directly at the trainee.

The self-mocking humour of anti-hero stories was an aspect of soldiers' culture that can be misinterpreted as evidence of disloyalty. In *The Listening Post* Hugh Farmer often depicted Canadians as larger than other troops, whilst still manifesting the anti-hero audience appeal of Bairnsfather's more physically feeble characters. In cartoon humour the anti-hero was allowed to admit fear, fatigue, 'leadswinging' (malingering) and/or a search for 'Blighty wounds' (severe enough to be sent back to England); in fact such an admission is part of the culture. 'While cheating one's mates, brawling, or malingering were serious military charges, these deviant actions appeared to be condoned in the cultural products, and seemingly accepted by the led and the leaders as good for morale' (Cook: 2008, 190). In Figure 4.2, a booby-trapped German helmet sends a soldier back to the Home Front (Blighty) to convalesce from his wounds. In the third panel the foolish infantryman has literally been 'blown up' into the air. Shell shock was originally thought to have been caused by the concussion of a nearby explosion. Although a 'Blighty wound', one that removed a soldier from the front line, was often sought after, and the wounded soldier is being tended to by a nurse, he does not look happy to be there. The sequence is entitled, 'By Jove! The very thing

Figure 4.2 'By Jove! The very thing to take back to Blighty!'
Source: *The Gehenna Gazette* August 1917, p. 14.

to take back to Blighty!', a pun on words that would have resonated with the readership of this trench journal – *The Gehenna Gazette* (August 1917, p. 14) – as the German spiked 'Pickelhaube' helmets remained a sought-after souvenir for allied troops to send home to 'Blighty'. (They were no longer worn on the front line from around 1916.)

Satire acted as a vent for grievances, thus officers often turned a blind eye to criticism of them in publications (compulsory if complaints were

anonymous). They recognised that without this particular psychological escape valve, insubordination on the Western Front was likely and even mutiny would become a possibility (Keshen: 1996, 135). This pragmatic approach is compatible with the ideas of theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1984, ch. 1), who discusses the use of laughter in response to official seriousness. The regenerative value of humour that he signals is evidenced by illustrative narratives that frequently centred on complaints about everyday life: humour kept men going, against all the odds.[16]

The act of disparagement in soldiers' cartoons and early comic strips is likely to have had a cathartic effect as a substitute for more direct protest, thereby preventing internal conflict by providing a voice and a language that helped soldiers make sense of their new, and painful, environment. Humour theory identifies this process as 'disparagement humour':

> Disparagement humor [*sic*] refers to remarks that (are intended to) elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a given target (e.g., individuals, social groups, political ideologies, material possessions) . . . . Because humor communicates that its message is to be interpreted in a non-serious manner, disparagement humor can uniquely denigrate its target while stifling challenge or criticism.
>
> (Ferguson and Ford: 2008, 283–284)

Trench publications could offer a 'sounding-board in the uncertainties of front-line or near front line existence' (Seal: 1990, 30) and alert officers to potential discontents. As a communications vehicle, the comic strip format proved ideal for a snapshot story revealing absurdities through the interaction of dialogue, captions and drawings. Humour held the potential to undermine the power of officers and to 'reassert the masculine independence of the rank-and-file soldier' (Wise in Hart and Bos: 2007, 241), even if cartoons tended to avoid more fundamental questions such as the justice of participation in the conflict. According to Mike Mulkay (1988), the eventual serious content of humorous discourse can always be denied in the event of the speaker finding his/her assertions to be socially unacceptable, in other words, the retractability of humour allows for subaltern challenge, even facilitating embarrassing or aggressive interactions or the negotiation of dangerous topics such as death (that tended to be referred to via euphemisms such as 'becoming a landlord') (Seal: 2013b, 169). The 'paradigm of everyday courage that

soldiers both respected in others and attempted to cultivate in themselves' demonstrates a 'defiant rejection of victimhood' (Madigan: 2013, 97). This defiance was part of a reshaping of identity, in contrast to images of war at the Home Front, but it was a symbolic defiance of cultural expression, articulated in communications: soldiers rarely defied orders more directly.

Limitations in scope and self-censorship

Trench publications were a refraction, not a reflection, of culture in that they were primarily a source of entertainment aimed at encouraging the sense of community at unit level, or to use an officer term, an *esprit de corps*. The episodes and thoughts that were visualised inevitably portrayed everyday situations rather than battle, death or military observations on the progress and strategy of the war. Perhaps because of the relative isolation of trench-based soldiers on the Western and other fronts from the bigger picture of overall strategy, immediate social observation tended to provide instant narrative reactions through the interconnection of dialogue, captions and illustration, offering snapshots that reveal shared feelings and emotions as wartime experiences, but these have their limitations.

Officially backed trench journals were censored at both battalion and divisional levels, and all newspapers – including unofficial ones – were subject to self-censorship. The editorial process restricted content and language. In their publications (mainly officially endorsed and carefully edited, but aimed at reflecting back to the men unit loyalty and identity), New Zealand soldiers 'are identified closely with an Empire that represents strength, courage and liberation from an aggressor' (Condon: 2011). It is possible to argue that combat culture not only gave men a distinct short-term identity confined to the war years, but that this same culture also set boundaries and definitions of acceptability by readers themselves as well as the editor. Contributions were accepted not necessarily on aesthetic merits, but in order to create a voice for the shared mentality of the unit (Pegum in Hammond and Towheed: 2007, 134–135).

Within their chosen parameters, newspapers 'attempted to use, rather than deny, the depressing discrepancies of this Great War', and compared to Home Front mainstream press, there was certainly more freedom of expression (Keshen: 1996, 134). Illustrations were based on content themes common to all theatres of conflict. Editors had to be responsive to their readership, because they were amongst them and could not ignore 'their state of mind . . . Censorship and self-censorship

could not prevent the trench newspapers from responding little by little to the concerns, interest, grievances and hopes of their readers, and echoing them' (Audoin-Rouzeau: 1992, 33–34).

In a seven-panel sequential narrative drawn by Hugh Farmer for *The Listening Post* (Vol. 30, April 1918, p. 15), a soldier in his trench appears terrified in each panel as he is threatened in turn by 'that minnie', machine gun fire, a 'wizz bang', a mine, a '5 point 9' and a 'potato masher'.[17] The final panel depicts the soldier in the relative security of a billet behind the front line. He has escaped from all kinds of German weapons including shells, grenades and machine gun fire, but he is unable to express his experiences in a letter home. As the caption explains, the soldier cannot tell his family of his 'hairbreadth escapes' and he falls back on the innocuous language of the Field Service Post Card and its tick box statement 'I am quite well'. Once again, this demonstrates the break from the Home Front, the lack of civilian comprehension (as perceived by the troops) and self-censorship. Such articulations provide a verisimilitude that is an explicit historical record of attitudes. Furthermore, it is expressed instantly, at the time, and not later as a memory of the experience.

Newspaper reactions to medical issues exemplify the responsiveness alluded to by Audoin-Rouzeau. On the Western Front, soldiers stated that the medical corps were never seen within 500 yards of the firing line, and referred to the Royal Army Medical Corps as the 'rob all my comrades brigands' (Fuller: 1990, 61). This is countered by publications by the medical corps themselves, who clearly saw the need to correct their image, given the fact that the regimental medical officer had the unenviable task of deciding whether a man should be sent from the firing line to the rear. This required him to differentiate between faked as opposed to real illnesses. In cases of the former, a common remedy was the 'No. 9 Pill', a laxative that became the butt of many cartoon jokes. However, the cartoon or comic strip joke is an accurate one, demonstrating once again the explicit verisimilitude of the historical record. Nevertheless, any desire to 'shirk', despite the humour, was usually tempered by men's sense of duty and feelings of loyalty to their 'mates', as a collective identity that emerges in their publications. Yet the medics themselves saw things differently, and articulated this in a somewhat disturbing comic strip, with a byline 'drawn by Doc' about a character called 'Pills'. Each of the eight panels is given a time of the day, starting with 9.00 a.m., when the corporal is told (as he is taking a medicine bottle from the shelf) that he is wanted 'right away'. 'Righto', he answers cooperatively. After a 15-minute walk he meets his first patient, who has cut his finger on a bully beef tin. By 9.35 a.m., he

is pouring medicines, when he is told that 'a chap' wants him. He arrives to see a group of officers playing cards, and one tells him 'I want to see the dentist tomorrow'. A dialogue balloon of question and exclamation marks indicates that he is displeased and swearing to himself in frustration. By 10.00 a.m., he is administering a syringe to another patient when a man runs in to tell him: 'Shake it up, Doc! You're wanted at once'. The medical orderly sends the contents of the syringe everywhere while he swears again. By the final panel, at 10.15 a.m., he has become insane, and is seen running towards his next destination, brandishing an axe, foaming at the mouth, with a saw and two bottles under his arm.[18]

For the Canadian Field Ambulance, the contrast depicted by Sergeant T. W. Whitefoot in *Now and Then* was the 'Fiction' of fast, efficient stretcher bearers in a clear battlefield tending one or two wounded men on the field, whereas 'Fact' involved carrying a heavy soldier on a stretcher through knee-high mud to a derelict-looking medical post, sweating, with a speech caption that says 'censored'.[19] Humour allowed for the communication of truth. This reveals two contrasting discourses, showing one to be false.

Both editors and readers despised Home Front propaganda and the mainstream press as pedlars of unrealistic jingoism and heroism, yet by exercising their own editorial values – itself an attempt to gain control over their disastrous surroundings – they were simultaneously selective about content and tone, favouring contributions that encouraged entertainment and boosted morale. Trench journals presented issues and topics as 'disarmingly humourised and shorn of their more demotic dimension' (Seal: 2013b, 190).

Nevertheless, multi-panel cartoons still had a sharp edge; probably the most devastating comment on the subject of war followed by peace was entitled 'The Profiteer'.[20] The first panel is captioned 'France 1918' and shows a war-weary soldier walking through mud, burdened with kit and surrounded by desolation in a barren landscape. In the second panel, the landscape is also barren and desolate, but it is hot and sunny, and captioned 'Aussie, 1920'. The same man is now a hobo burdened with a backpack of bedding and a billy can in his hand, this time sweating, but otherwise in an identical pose.

Conclusion

Contributions towards the comic strip format varied in style and purpose. Sequential panels, with their unique interaction between

illustration and text, need to be recognised as a form of proto comic strip self-publishing and as an early form of citizens' visual journalism that can be evidenced transnationally. Themes tended to be common to more than one nationality and front, with uniforms and backdrops changing. The value of such early comic strips is as an historical record, with their explicit detail and verisimilitude, as a record of the cultural assumptions of soldiers, referencing themes that are relevant over a wide range of publications and theatres of war. Although linguistic differences between nationalities emerge from the colloquialism in dialogue that is also a characteristic of comic strips, this form of popular culture shows us collective, amateur self-expression, and the ephemeral spontaneity of the illustrative narratives is comparable to today's mobile phone and video-based citizens' journalism.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how British and Dominion use of humour aimed to encourage a collective identity and a specific culture of warfare, experienced by the 'everyman' anti-hero. Clearly newspapers at the time would not have survived if they did not articulate content that was more generally acceptable to their main readership amongst the lower ranks in a largely volunteer citizens' force. The regenerative value of 'disparagement humour' in the context of illustrative narratives by British and Commonwealth soldiers meant that a new kind of courage was reimagined. Trench publications provide not only an insight into morale, but also into the code of perseverance that helps account for Dominion long-term loyalty during what has been called the 'Great War of Endurance' (Hynes: 1998, 73). Sarcasm in drawings should not be confused with rebellion, for men were still prepared to obey orders: as scholars such as J. G. Fuller have noted, desertion and mutiny were rare – indeed, his enquiry seeks to establish how far the existence of soldier publications (but not specifically their cartoons) helped to avoid these eventualities.

As a form of social observation, narrative humour relies on recognition of absurdity and incongruity in familiar situations. Trench publications were primarily a source of entertainment, thus the episodes and thoughts that were visualised inevitably portray everyday situations rather than battle, death or military observations on the progress and strategy of the war. The contribution of works here to the history of citizens' visual journalism is one of immediate social observation through the articulation of sentiment. These provide ordinary peoples' instant narrative reactions through the interconnection of dialogue, captions and illustrations, offering snapshots that reveal shared feelings and emotions as wartime experiences.

However, multi-panel cartoons were no panacea – they have their limitations as a representational source, but one of their strengths is that they demonstrate an attempt to use humour as a form of control over the environment. This served to enhance morale, encourage endurance and facilitate survival. Historians are generally agreed that British morale, defined by Brian Bond in terms of attitudes, cohesion and combat effectiveness of groups, held up, 'although brittle at times' (2002, 2, 14). Given the British and Dominion troops' reputation for bravery, military expertise and concomitant prolific 'trench' publishing, these findings are probably the clearest example of Great War satire that encouraged, in the extremely dire circumstances of the fronts of the First World War, endurance and persistence – qualities that amounted to loyalty and patriotism. In this way the cartoon images in trench publications act as a unique, largely undiscovered and therefore underexploited form of cultural record.

For the historian, the efficacy of armed forces' proto comic strips can be attributed first and foremost to the potential they hold for the study of *mentalités*. Disparagement humour using illustrative narrative is unique in the way it provides concise, instant satire that encapsulates the spirit of soldiers' thinking on everyday matters at the fronts. The format manages to combine historical verisimilitude with the *esprit de corps* of the lower ranks.

5
The Rise and Fall of the First World War Gullible Worker as a Counterculture

Introduction – Comic strips of the politicised working class

This chapter explores the use of humour as a tool to expose the perceived 'incorrect' political thinking, or 'false consciousness', of the 'common worker' in English-speaking labour movement comic strips. Humour was used both to entertain and to educate. In order to achieve the latter, the comic strips repeated concepts discussed in trade union and socialist newspapers in an easily digestible form. This allows scholars today to triangulate and cross-reference editorial and comic strip newspaper content, as well as other sources (Collingwood: 1935), leading to a greater understanding of *mentalité* as a record of the Left in the First World War.

When the war broke out, authorities in the United States and Australia instigated intense repression against the Left, in particular the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or 'Wobblies'). This was ostensibly to counteract the threat caused by these organisations to the nation states in wartime, but was primarily motivated by economic and ideological factors (Peterson and Fite: 1957, 238; Fewster: 1985, 47). The publications of the Left reacted differently to their organisations' suppression: some submitted to censorship, while others chose or were forced to cease printing. One of the casualties was the 'gullible worker', a humorous character type that flourished in the comic strips of socialist and trade union papers in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the UK immediately prior to and during the first years of the Great War.

The gullible worker was a deluded and downtrodden representative of the working class, who believed that he lived in the best of all worlds where the newspapers, politicians and employers were always right. Such delusional fools included the figures of Henry Dubb, Mr Block, William Mug and Mr Simple. In supplying a record of communal

humour, these strips contribute a sense of *mentalité*, a perception of how socialists in Anglophone countries viewed the world, their fellow workers and themselves. Walker C. Smith, the editor of the IWW newspaper *Industrial Worker,* described his publication's character, Mr Block, as the 'average worker', the 'representative of that host of slaves who think in terms of their masters. Mr Block owns nothing, yet he speaks from the standpoint of a millionaire . . . he licks the hand that smites him and kisses the boot that kicks him; he is the personification of all that a worker should not be' (Smith: 1984).

Smith was not simply condemning 'the average worker', however; he was also urging 'him' to change. Educational outreach was seen as a key role of the activist. In the gullible worker comic strips the IWW and Socialist Party (SP) members (when not featured in Mr Block) were tall, upstanding men who spoke and dressed soberly and remained unswayed by the jingoistic and callous propaganda of the mainstream press. Through their superior political analysis, as they saw it, they endeavoured to educate the gullible workers who foolishly refused to listen but who then, inevitably and comically, got their just desserts. This was often at the hands of the police, who were ready to arrest anyone on the grounds of sedition, guilty or not. These strips are noteworthy in that they provide an opportunity to assess how the gullible worker reacted not only to his enemies, but also to those with the perceived 'correct' political consciousness, enabling investigation into the framing and subjectivity of the strips. The strips further add to the cultural record by providing explicit verisimilitude in reporting historical factual events, giving details of elections, newspapers and strikes.

By the beginning of the First World War, the labour movement in the English-speaking world was making regular use of cartoonists. This was the period in US history when radical papers such as the *Coming Nation, The Masses*, and the SP magazine *The Comrade* specialised in cartooning, while politicians, including Governor Samuel Pennypacker of Pennsylvania and 'Boss' Tweed in New York, railed against the images.[1] Cartoons were acknowledged by the establishment as having a dangerous, insidious influence and seemed to bear out George Orwell's subsequent claim that, 'the truth is that you cannot be memorably funny without at some point raising topics which the rich, the powerful and the complacent would prefer to see left alone'.[2] In Australia cartoonists such as Phil May and Will Dyson successfully drew on their Anglo-Australian backgrounds and helped build the image of heroic workers beset by villainous capitalists in both socialist and mainstream press (Dyrenfurth and Quartly: 2009).

As the radical American journalist B. O. Flower stated, the cartoonist could be a great educator, able to reach the 'poor and for the most part ignorant' (1905, 585). The comic strip could act as an entrance to the labour movement and to more theoretical arguments for newcomers while serving as a quick reminder for those already involved. All the publications that originated gullible worker characters prided themselves on their grass-roots journalism and lack of theoretical language. For them, the democratic and practical aspects of comic strips and cartoons were salient features. They also quickly realised that cartoons and comic strips sold well.

It was the subversiveness, as well as the accessible and educative aspects, of cartoons and comic strips that the Left in the United States and Australia sought to harness as they took the new medium of the comic strip and created the gullible worker, an alternative version of the 'everyman'. The latter, the representative of the ordinary individual, the 'man in the street', in existence in literature from the fifteenth century, had long been popular in comics and cartoons. The American cartoonist Frederick Opper's personification of the everyman as the character 'Common People', described by Flower as a 'foolish, cowed, insignificant . . . contemptible pigmy' (1905, 592), was a forerunner of the gullible worker. Perpetually bullied by the corrupt trust funds, 'Common People' was complicit in his own subjugation.[3]

Humour

As Michael Pickering (2001) has demonstrated, stereotypes are a crude method of categorisation, providing shortcuts in our efforts to understand the world's complexities. Studying stereotypes can therefore provide an insight into the *mentalité*, or mindset, of those utilising them. The way the Left chose to typecast itself at the end of the nineteenth century was as the 'heroic worker'. The socialist newspapers' cartoonists produced countless variations of 'the standard socialist iconography of the "worker" – the muscular, bare-chested labouring man' (Hobsbawm: 1980). Capitalists were depicted as looming, obese figures: the 'fat man' (or Mr Fat as the IWW called him) was, as Nick Dyrenfurth and Marion Quarterly (2009) discuss, a major character in labour movement images. His is a likeness that has survived into comics and cartoons today, remaining an instantly recognisable shorthand for capitalist, whether appearing as the villain in a Trotskyist cartoon or as the Fat Controller in Thomas the Tank Engine. The fat man made frequent appearances in the lives of Dubb et al., who were themselves a new form of worker

stereotype in the socialist press. A direct inversion of the 'heroic worker', the gullible worker was a derisive and very unheroic figure, yet one which in various, but very similar, guises was to prove of enduring popularity on both sides of the Pacific.

Why, one might ask, choose such a negative character? Surrounded by a hostile press and society, the very place one would expect to find a positive role model for the working class would be in the comic strips of the labour movement's newspapers, and yet it is they that provide the most damning depiction of all. If socialist publications had wanted to educate their readers, why did they not depict a sympathetic everyman worker in their strips? A number of reasons can be identified.

A sympathetic character who did his best for the class struggle would be worthy, but probably not particularly funny, and to be memorable it is often wise to be humorous, as studies have shown (Schmidt and Williams: 2001).[4] Humour studies acknowledges 'superiority theory', a concept that originates from some of the earliest ideas on the subject. Thomas Hobbes, with his typically dyspeptic view of humanity, described, in 1651, laughter as 'sudden glory' caused 'either by some act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves' (1975, 125). According to Hobbes, we find amusement in our own cleverness, in thinking up a joke, and when bolstering our self-esteem by believing ourselves superior to other people. This point was made directly in the introduction to a collection of Mr Block cartoons that noted, 'we wish to state that these cartoons that please you are portraits of the other fellow while the ones that arouse your ire are exactly as though you had looked in a mirror' (Smith: 1984).

Fortunately, subsequent studies have found that there are many aspects to that which we find humorous and, although one of them is indeed finding pleasure in others' misfortune, it is not as sweeping or callous as Hobbes would have us believe. To see a friend or someone to whom we are sympathetic brought low does not make us laugh; the pleasure comes from somebody we dislike getting their just desserts. Consequently, we enjoy a joke against a politician more if we disagree with their politics (Zillmann and Cantor: 1976). The enjoyment to be had from the gullible worker strips was that of seeing someone of an opposing political persuasion do something petty and be punished for it. Had the gullible worker been less bumptious, less wholly convinced of the righteousness of the world and his superiority in understanding it, he would have been too pitiful to be amusing.

His self-delusion also matches another aspect of superiority theory. Even before Hobbes, Plato identified that the true character of the comic is self-ignorance and specifically when that ignorance is from a position of weakness. A self-deluded powerful person is too dangerous to be laughable, but someone who is ignorant and powerless is extremely amusing (Lippitt: 1995, 54). This, of course, fits in perfectly with Block and his brothers. It is because we associate being laughed at with this position of inferiority that we dislike and fear it so much. Laughter can therefore, as Henri Bergson states, be used as a social corrective to make us conform (Pearson and Ó Maoilearca: 2014, 478). Undoubtedly the foolishness of Dubb, Block and others made clear that certain behaviour and attitudes would not be tolerated in the socialist movement.

This communal humour provides historians with an insight into the worldview of activists at the beginning of the twentieth century. The comic strips would have encouraged a sense of social belonging, since laughter enhances group feeling (Lorenz: 1996; Lefcourt: 2001, 133–139). For socialist activists on the periphery of society, being assured that the situations they found themselves in every day with fellow workers were not unusual must have been helpful and, as well as being humorous, must have inspired a feeling of comradeship. Laughing at the gullible worker and being part of the hounded minority who saw the joke cemented the bond between comrades. Had he, on the other hand, been an invention of the capitalist class used against the workers, socialists would have been far from amused.

There are other humorous aspects to the strips as well: the stereotypes, mentioned previously, and slapstick; Block was frequently kicked down stairs, and Dubb and Mug fruitlessly chased their sons to 'tan their hides' after being outwitted by them. There is the comedy of relief, engendered by being able to laugh at the forbidden (Freud: 1960), such as fellow workers, and there are 'running gags'; the characters have catchphrases that draw attention to the fact that every strip ends in disaster. Keeping activists amused while they were being educated was seen as essential. Joe Hill, the IWW labour activist and songwriter, pointed out: 'There is one thing that is necessary in order to hold the old members and to get the would-be members interested in the class struggle and that is entertainment' (Foner: 1965, 16).

The educative influence of Henry Dubb

Entertainment and readability were vital components of the attraction of the *Appeal to Reason*, a newspaper of the populist Socialist Party in the

United States. The SP stood at the forefront of the radical Left with its charismatic leader, Eugene Debs, and a plethora of publications. It was in the *Appeal to Reason* and its sister paper, the *Coming Nation,* that 'the first radical comic strip' (Cohen: 2007, 53), 'The Adventures of Henry Dubb', first appeared in the summer and autumn of 1912. The *Appeal to Reason* was the 'most successful and powerful' of the radical Left newspapers in the United States (Hume: 2003, 172). Founded by the visionary Julius Wayland in 1895, it was, in contrast to many socialist papers, an easy read. Wayland had, as Eugene Debs wrote, 'the faculty of reaching the average man' (cited in Quint: 1949, 595) and the paper championed a broad definition of socialism not bound by too much theoretical constriction. It prided itself on its army of volunteers who distributed the paper and agitated for socialism. Its fervent solicitation of reports from its readers inspired a form of citizens' journalism and resulted in them writing 'substantial parts' of the paper (Graham: 1990, xi). According to John Graham, it was 'much more than simply a newspaper, the *Appeal* was a participatory counterinstitution that actively represented the socialist movement' (1990, xi). As well as Debs, famous contributors included 'Mother' Jones (the union activist) and the writers Upton Sinclair, Jack London and Helen Keller.

By 1913, the *Appeal* had a paid circulation of over 760,000 (Graham: 1990, 1), in addition to a substantial non-paying readership, as copies were given as gifts and passed around at meetings and workplaces. Its unceasing propagandising for socialism and its investigations into political corruption did not pass unnoticed, however. As early as 1901, the government attempted to hamper the *Appeal*'s distribution by temporarily removing its posting privileges, and both big business and the federal authorities continued to harass both Wayland (until his suicide in 1912) and the paper through to the period of the First World War.

Equal in fame to the *Appeal*'s most illustrious writers was Ryan Walker, creator of the character Henry Dubb, who contributed both single-panel cartoons and comic strips to the paper. Walker had achieved success with mainstream comic strips, as well as creating satirical political cartoons, before he became famous as a 'professional socialist' cartoonist on the *Appeal*. In 1905 Flower eulogised Walker saying: 'Everything that smacks of injustice or despotism, or corruption or reaction, is his legitimate prey; and though his pictures (largely because he draws so much and is taxed to the limit of his powers) are valuable for their thought-compelling power rather than for their artistic execution . . . they possess that moral quality which made the poetry of Whittier so powerful during the anti-slavery crusade' (399). With 'The Adventures of

Henry Dubb', Walker provided a 'thought-compelling' lesson in every strip.

Dubb, a thin, balding labourer, represented the man in the street who was always 'being taken for a ride'. He unquestioningly accepted what the newspapers, employers and politicians told him, and defended his ignorance vigorously. In 1917, sent off to war, he claimed, 'I don't know why I'm fighting, but I'm a Patriot'.[5] Believing that anyone could be rich if they only tried, he was invariably surprised to find that no matter how hard he worked, he still remained poor. Dubb's nemesis, although the worker did not realise it, was Old Man Grab-It-All – the fat man personified. It was for him Dubb toiled when 'some one [*sic*] must be fed' (Walker: 1915). When his son, who shared similarities with Homer Simpson's children in questioning his intelligence, pointed out 'Pop, we are hungry because you've been workin' to feed the fat man – who ought to work to feed himself!', Dubb's only rejoinder, which he gave at the end of each strip as realisation dawned upon him that he had been tricked, was 'I'm a Henry Dubb' (Walker: 1915). Prior to and during the First World War, Walker used the strip to pedagogically examine the causes and effects of war.

The United States did not enter the First World War until April 1917, but once involved the country was swept by jingoism. The American Left had been hounded by the establishment and mainstream press before this event, but the conflict drastically heightened tensions. Socialists were accused of being in the pay of the Germans and, after the Russian Revolution, of being Bolsheviks. The Espionage and Sedition acts (1917 and 1918 respectively) were brought in to effectively curtail any anti-war activity and were used to harass the Left. One aspect of the Espionage Act was that it allowed the Postmaster General to ban the posting of any published material he felt violated the act. In the first year alone almost 80 publications lost their mailing privileges or kept them only by agreeing to self-censor (Kessler: 1984, 100).

The editorial board of *The Masses* refused to sacrifice what they saw as their integrity, and were twice put on trial for treason and conspiring against the war effort. The *Appeal to Reason*, however, ceased its vigorous opposition to the war, became social-democratic in its ideals, and called itself the *New Appeal*. Dubb appeared very little in the newspaper during the war years. Perhaps due to the *Appeal* compromising on its ideals, Walker chose instead to publish in other socialist papers such as the *American Socialist*, the *Northwest Worker* and the *New York Call*.[6] The *Call* gave a prominent position to cartoons within its pages, including typical Dubb strips as well as 'Henry Dubb's World', a mixture

of single-panel cartoons and comic strips involving everything from the standard socialist iconography of starving children to a strip 'peopled' by chimpanzees, with Dubb in a cameo role. The fact that it was 'Dubb's world' emphasised the liability, in the eyes of the socialists, of the working-class man, who in choosing to remain ignorant helped maintain the inequalities of society. Henry also regularly appeared in the *American Socialist*. On 29 April 1916 (dated May), this paper ran a 'Dubb Edition' to 'Wake up the Dubbs' featuring cartoons, letters and articles on the theme of the foolish worker. Dubb's transcendence here of the boundaries of the comic strip, and his involvement in several different features of the publication, was not unusual. This trend was repeated in other newspapers and provides a record, allowing the historian to show correlation between sources.

After the Sedition Act was passed, the *Call* swiftly had its mailing privileges withdrawn, but continued publishing by organising its own distribution, primarily door to door and through newsstands. This was despite the fact that it chose not to make the war its prime concern, focusing instead on issues at home. While the *Call* may not have been actively anti-war, the subjectivity, or framing, of the comic strip was explicit. Through the humour of Dubb, readers were both warned against, and educated in how to avoid, the false consciousness of 'war fever'. For historians the strips provide information on contemporary everyday arguments against the war, in addition to the *mentalité* of the socialist activists, as well as that of the workers they were trying to educate.

In strip after strip, Henry Dubb discovered that patriotism was of benefit solely to capitalists. While Dubb's employer, Grab-It-All, gave his workers the opportunity to be 'patriotic' by cutting their wages, Dubb, duped by politicians' stirring pro-war speeches, momentarily forgot that he was starving. In several strips Grab-It-All incited Dubb to go off and fight a 'great war' to 'defend civilisation', and Dubb belatedly discovered that the 'civilisation' he was risking his life for was that of the fat capitalist who stayed at home to sell war supplies. On the battlefield Dubb, being shot at from all directions, was sustained by the thought that he was fighting for his home, but as the cartoonist pointed out, it was 'the landlord's home' (Walker: 1915). Returning from the war, Dubb found that he was of no further use to capitalism and so had been discarded; his jobs had been given to cheap foreign labour, or to his wife and child who undercut him. Despite all this, however, he still believed that the capitalists had his best interests at heart (Figure 5.1).

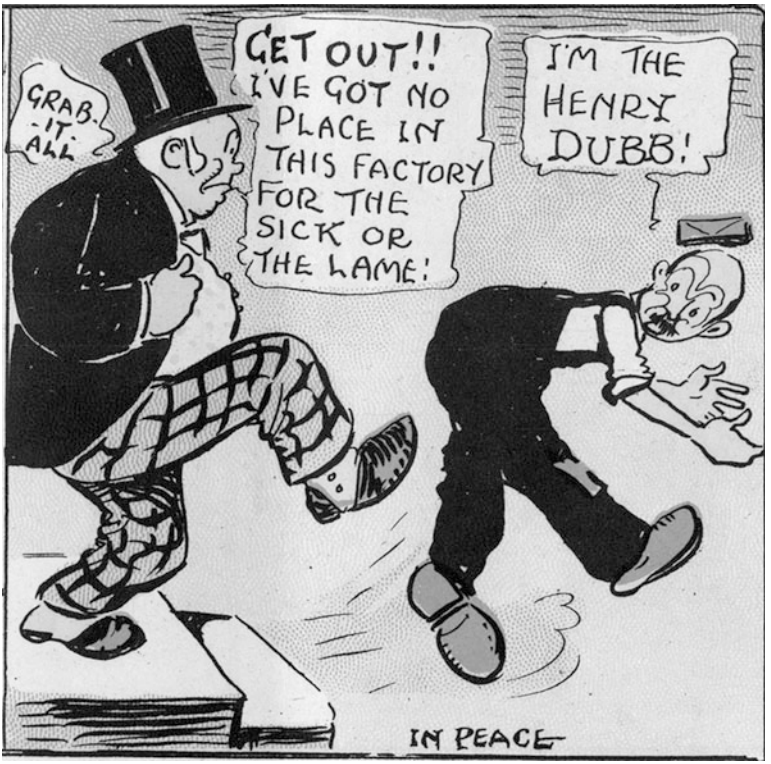

Figure 5.1 Henry Dubb provides a salutary lesson for readers on the subject of war and capitalism
Source: Walker, R. (1915) *New Adventures of Henry Dubb: Cartoons* (Chicago, IL: Socialist Party).

A favourite theme of Ryan Walker's which also appeared in the other gullible worker strips was that of the 'sane lunatic'. He would appear in a checked suit, having escaped from a mental hospital, and strike up a conversation with Dubb. Once Dubb had explained that it was perfectly normal that he should be building a house for Grab-It-All that he could never afford to live in himself, or that he would shortly be going off to war to get killed for Grab-It-All's profit, the 'lunatic' would conclude that the world of 'sanity' was not for him and hurriedly return to the asylum. Dubb would be left wondering why he felt like a fool. Walker drew the 'war and lunatic story' several times with minimal variation, while in Australia the creator of William Mug repeated the theme.[7]

The aim of the strips was as always to change the thinking of those workers with as yet unformed, or false, consciousnesses and to convert them to the socialist cause. The comics cannot be seen in isolation, however, as they were only one of several educative resources in the activist toolkit, and this variety provides an opportunity for a triangulation of sources by historians. The *Appeal to Reason,* for example, strove to bring about awareness with an educational outreach programme that incorporated extensive lecture tours. Speakers included luminaries such as Debs, but Walker was given equal billing for his 'chalk talks', described in the advertisement as 'an eye opener to Socialists and non-Socialists alike', where he would lecture on current political issues illustrated with on-the-spot drawings of Henry Dubb.[8] A review of one of his talks in the *Northwest Worker* was ecstatic and drew attention to the importance of shared humour within the labour movement. 'The most original contribution to the modern world given by Socialism is Ryan Walker, who, like the great Voltaire, is making people wise through laughing away their somber [*sic*] superstitions. A Dubb can look himself in the face at the mirror and take himself seriously. But no Dubb has ever been known to outlive a Ryan Walker cartoon-lecture.'[9]

Chalk talks were not the only additional tools available to activists. The lecture itself was published in pamphlet form in 1914 as *Adventures of Henry Dubb* and a year later a second book, *New Adventures of Henry Dubb: Cartoons*, appeared in colour. The latter was 'Dedicated to E. J. HOWARP [*sic*] (THE VAG)' Christ Church, 'New Zealand, The Comrade who has made Henry Dubb a household word in New Zealand and Australia' (Walker: 1915). Howard, an Englishman, had achieved this fame by writing a column in the *Maoriland Worker* (also reprinted in, amongst others, the *Call Magazine*, New York), entitled 'Letter to Henry Dubb', where he covered the same issues as the strip in text form. These letters were published as early as 1913 as a collection. By this time Dubb cartoon strips were being reprinted in *The Worker* in Australia and in the *Maoriland Worker* itself. The *Maoriland* was a union newspaper with a circulation of 10,000 in 1913 (National Library of New Zealand), a 'network of voluntary correspondents around the country' (National Library of New Zealand) and a particular attachment to Henry Dubb. As well as the comic strip and the column, it kept up a reflexive discourse based on the character through numerous letters from readers and from Walker himself – allowing ample opportunity for a triangulation and cross-referencing of sources by historians. Edited by the radical socialist Harry Holland, during the war it was a target for libel actions, censorship and police harassment.

Dubb became so ubiquitous that other single-panel cartoonists, when requiring a symbol for a foolish worker, used his name for their own creations (a fate that also befell Mr Block).[10] Nor does the *Maoriland Worker* provide the only instance for a cross-referencing of sources; outside cartoons and comic strips, Dubb was used as a warning example in speeches and articles for decades following the First World War, illustrating his transcendence of time and place. In 1921, for instance, Morris Hillquit, one of the leaders of the SP, stated in a speech in New York City that 'the worker who votes for the reelection of Hylan', the Democrat Party candidate, 'after 4 years of Hylan writes himself down as an incorrigible Henry Dubb. He deserves nothing better than Hylan and another mouthful of empty promises' (Hillquit: 1921).

Henry Dubb was discussed in articles in the United States, Australia and New Zealand, usually abusively. He was, as 'the Vag' bitterly pointed out during the Great War, 'the cause of all this trouble. For a pound a week and a few beers you would hang your grandmother. Your masters know this. They know you never reason a thing out… It's you, Henry, that keep the system going' (McAloon: 2012). In the UK, where Dubb was reprinted in several Labour newspapers, he was, however, perceived, especially in the 1930s, in a kindlier light. He was an example of the 'poor bloody infantry' or 'the little man', a 'courageous, good-hearted, patient, proletarian fool' (Tawney: 1981, 163). This was no doubt due to the efforts of George Wright, who used the concept of Dubb for a column, the 'Adventures of Henry Dubb – the life and times of an ordinary bloke', in the *Forward* newspaper. There he depicted the fictitious life of a British Dubb, who went down the pub and had an eye for the ladies (Oakley: 2011). The original Dubb comic strip had been an immediate success when it was republished in *Forward* in 1913, with the paper informing the *Appeal* in May of that year 'that men in common conversation now refer to a fool as Henry Dubb'.[11] The character also appeared in a song written by the Scottish socialist MP James Maxton that was sung on anti-war marches in Glasgow (Sounds: BL). An indigenous version of Dubb, John Willie, appeared in *Forward* after 1919 (Macintyre: 1977, 487), and echoes of Wright's Dubb can be seen in the comic strip character Andy Capp today.

After the war Walker also drew the 'Poor Fish' for the short-lived humour magazine *Good Morning*, using the same subjective framing as he had for Dubb. An outwardly piscine character, Poor Fish shared the mentality of the gullible worker. Dubb's strips continued to appear into the 1920s in the United States, but two years before his death Walker joined the Communist Party, where he instead depicted 'The Adventures

of Bill Worker' for the *Daily Worker*. Equally subject to the machinations of capitalism, Worker was sent off to war at the behest of 'bankers' and 'profiteers', who all looked remarkably like Grab-It-All. When Walker died in the USSR in 1932, Dubb was far from alone in his gullibility. The first to join him was Mr Block.

Aspects of verisimilitude in labour movement comic strips

As will be shown, Mr Block and the gullible workers that succeeded him, William Mug and Mr Simple, establish verisimilitude in a number of ways. Verisimilitude may be broadly equated with context. This can be both geographically and temporally general; Dubb's adventures, for example, could generally have taken place amongst the working class in any English-speaking country over a number of years, or may be very precise, such as the referencing of a particular strike or wartime event. Some characters rely more on geographical specificity than others. Mug is very firmly Australian, whereas, as we have seen, Dubb transferred easily to other countries. A record of change over time is provided by events, but also by the types of problems encountered by the gullible workers. These may be relatively static – for example, reactionary societal attitudes, such as racism; or dynamic – the advent of war brings constant change for Mug.

Mr Block in the USA

Mr Block, drawn by the artist Ernest Riebe, made his debut in the *Industrial Worker,* the flagship publication of the Industrial Workers of the World, on 7 November 1912. Since its formation in 1905 by labour organisers including Eugene Debs, 'Mother' Jones, Daniel De Leon, Emma Goldman and 'Big Bill' Haywood, the IWW had attracted 25,000 members (Foner and Schultz: 1985, 147). Its inception was a reaction to the behaviour of the largest union organisation in the country, the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Run by Samuel Gompers, the AFL organised 5 per cent of the workers in the country on a craft basis while ignoring much of the other 95 per cent (Preston: 1971, 440). It would later also support the war.

The IWW rejected the confines of craft organisation and aimed to organise everyone in a workplace regardless of job role, skill or lack thereof, thus minimising the chance of workers being played off against each other during a strike.[12] Their politics were a blend of anarchism, communism and syndicalism; they rejected centralised leadership, and

the organisation was genuinely grass-roots based. As Franklin Rosemont, who made a study of Wobbly cartoons, pointed out: 'Socialists, Communists and Trotskyists published papers *for* workers – some of them admittedly of high quality. The IWW, however, always published *workers' papers*: of and by as well as for' (2003, 24). The IWW papers not only shared many of the *Appeal's* high-profile contributors – Debs, Jack London, DeLeon and Haywood, to name but a few – they also similarly published reports from their readers out in the country, and had a strong creative streak. They were the 'revolution with a singing voice' (Rideout: 1956, 93), famous for their 'Little Red Song Book', providing the texts for many of the songs they sang on strikes, demonstrations and whilst working. The majority of the 1913 edition was written by Joe Hill.

Playing 'as large a role as songs in spreading the Wobbly message' (Rosemont: 1988, 426) were cartoons.[13] The Wobbly newspapers actively solicited cartoons from their members, who willingly obliged with a form of 'citizen cartooning', usually signing their artwork with pseudonyms. Early on, the IWW realised that songs and cartoons could do a more effective job at getting their message across than books of political analysis. Consequently they actively encouraged the perception of themselves as non-theoretical. As Michael Cohen says, an IWW member might well be 'the striking factory girl who learned her class-consciousness from cheap pamphlets, soap-box oratory, and comic strips' (2007, 39).

While in prison on a fabricated charge of murder in 1915, Hill encapsulated the IWW strategy, reiterating the importance of humour and education in a letter, stating: 'If a person can put a few cold, common sense facts into a song and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them, he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers who are too unintelligent or too indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial on economic science' (Foner: 1965, 16). That the IWW chose to focus jointly on songs and cartoons was not coincidental; both contained humour, were often bawdy and could convey complex ideas in a simple and entertaining manner. In doing so they also provided a record for historical study with multiple sources.

Hill himself created cartoons as well as songs, and was credited by Riebe with suggesting the idea for a Mr Block strip (Rosemont: 2003, 186).[14] It was fitting, however, that it was with his song 'Mr Block' that Hill made his greatest contribution to Wobbly cartooning. The song became a common refrain at meetings and on picket lines, such as in California in 1913, when 2,000 striking hop-pickers were fired upon by the sheriff and his deputies as they sang (Parker: 1972, 191).

Although drawn in a more 'cartoonish' way (his head was, literally, a lump of wood – 'blockhead' was a common insult), Block was an individual of striking similarity to Henry Dubb and likewise able to reach an audience beyond the limited readership of his specific publications. Mr Block also contributes a record of real events, of verisimilitude, both as context, providing a backdrop to his actions, and to specific incidents. The precarious existence of workers at the beginning of the twentieth century, forced to live hand to mouth without hope of secure, long-term employment, is constantly portrayed in the Block strips. Ever the optimist and imbued by the capitalist press with a 'false consciousness', he falls for every get-rich-quick scheme going. Reading that there are well-paid jobs available, he tells himself 'It's no use kicking about hard times. A man can get a job if he goes after it' and rushes off to apply, only to be told the position has just been filled. He joins a huge crowd of men who have been given the same news. A manly looking 'Wob' holding an enormous copy of the *Industrial Worker* tells them that the 'Capitalist papers are printing blind ads in order to get the last penny from the unemployed'. He encourages them to read the Wobbly paper that will put them 'wise to the game'. Before he is able to ingest this, Block is hit over the head by a police truncheon for 'Blockading the street'. His protest that he is a 'peaceable citizen' falls on deaf ears (Riebe: 1984). Poor Block never learns: after being tricked by one advertisement, he tries another and yet another, but refuses to 'condemn the whole so called capitalist press as the IWW does. My last boss told me that the newspapers are alright and that the IWW is all wrong, it must be so' (Riebe: 1984). In doing so he acts as a warning to readers, a prescriptive social corrective, of what to avoid as an activist.

Block storylines also endeavoured to show that xenophobia was part of the capitalist agenda. The Wobblies in particular were known for their stance against racism and the employers' habit, which Engels had noted in 1892 (Morais: 1948, 19), of playing different nationalities of workers off against each other. Joe Hill is recorded as having given a soapbox speech on the subject (Adler: 2011, 204) and Riebe illustrated the problem, providing both *mentalité* and verisimilitude, when he contributed a comic strip to the debate. This strip depicts Block's 'boss' sowing discord amongst his workers (all Blocks of different nationalities) on the basis of ethnicity and then lying back to relax as his employees exchange racist abuse, incapable of uniting against him. In another Block strip Riebe denounced the comic strip *Osgar und Adolf* due to its ridicule of foreigners (Rosemont: 1988, 430).

The year before the outbreak of the First World War, 24 Mr Block strips were reprinted in pamphlet form, 'The first radical comic book in the U.S.' (Rosemont: 2003, 185). Smith's introduction acknowledged the importance of cartoon strips in 'an age in which pictures play a leading part, an age where the moving picture show has stolen the audiences of the church and where the magazine without illustrations has fallen by the wayside, this little book of cartoons . . . is sent out to catch the eye and mould the mind of any Block into whose hands it might fall' (1984). Just like Dubb, it was hoped Block would be an educative influence.

The IWW felt that their main function was to educate the workers so they might see their true situation and thus emancipate themselves. They took their role as teachers very seriously, and in this they and the *Appeal* were not alone – most dissident publications tried to preach to the converted and reach out to and inform those who were not (Kessler: 1984, 158). The gullible worker cartoon strips were the perfect tool, educating the uninitiated and providing useful arguments to existing members, while simultaneously affording them a good laugh. Arguments made in editorial articles could be distilled into an entertaining yet instructive form. For example, referring to Hill's court case, the *International Socialist Review* wrote in 1915 that 'the prosecuting attorney sprang all the old chestnuts about the equality of rich and poor before the law and other orthodox rot'.[15] Mr Block, meanwhile, believed this 'rot' fully until he had a chance to try the courts himself. Originally railing against 'Some knocker', who has told him 'that a poor man hasn't a chance in the courts against the rich man', he believes 'there is justice before the law under the American flag'. He sets out to find it after being run over by a motor car, and spends two years pursuing damages, before finally winning his case, only to have his lawyer pocket 95 per cent of the money (Riebe: 1984). Mr Simple, the Australian gullible worker, has a comparable experience in which he ends up owing his lawyer money despite having won his case.[16]

A similar delusional belief shared by Block, Mug and Dubb, inspired in them by the capitalist press and their employers, was the justness and necessity of wars in which they were cannon fodder. In the cartoon 'Block meets Block', 1914, Mr Block meets his counterparts from other countries who have been similarly fooled into fighting for capitalism.[17] Another time, however, he is bright enough to take advantage of other men's thirst for war and decides to sell newspapers reporting conflict news skewed to the false consciousnesses of the different nationalities. To the French he sells news of a French win and thousands of German casualties; to the Germans he reverses the statements. Inevitably it ends

badly for him when men he takes for customers turn out to be IWW members who deem it 'an insult to take us for patriots'; claiming the union as their only nationality, they give him a good kicking.[18] In addition, for researchers today it provides evidence of the strip's subjectivity and potential for triangulation; reflective of the IWW's stance on the war, it can be cross-referenced with editorials from their press. The strip also provides insight into how the Wobblies viewed themselves.

On 31 October 1914, a special anti-war edition of *Solidarity* (the IWW's other main paper) was produced, and it was expected that 'the numerous cartoons will make the issue easy to dispose of'. These included a strip by Riebe entitled 'Poor Mother' depicting a female version of the gullible worker, a woman who is so 'enthusiastic about militarism and capitalism' that she sends her son off to war. If he survives she is overjoyed and doesn't care that other women's sons have been killed; if he dies, however, 'she's squealing for sympathy and – strange – she gets it'.

Although an explicitly anti-war organisation, after much internal debate the Wobblies took a stance toward the war similar to that of the *New York Call*. They believed that they had to win the conflict in the workplace before they could prevent an actual war and consequently drastically toned down their anti-war rhetoric, not even actively opposing the draft. This was, however, to no avail. The IWW were to suffer the worst persecution of all; accused of being traitors, their acronym was said to stand for 'Imperial Wilhelm's Warriors'. In August 1917 Frank Little, the IWW's most vocal anti-war organiser, was lynched, and over the course of the war IWW buildings were raided, meetings disrupted with violence, their publications banned and 184 Wobblies arrested, accused of being members of 'a vicious, treasonable, and criminal conspiracy [obstructing] . . . the prosecution of the war' (cited in Kornbluh: 1964, 318). *Solidarity* was forced to close in 1917 and the *Industrial Worker* in 1918. Despite the official rhetoric it was clear that the real cause of their persecution was not so much their opposition to war as their success in unionising. During the conflict, while the profits of business rose, average real wages generally fell, but where the Wobblies organised they succeeded in improving pay and conditions.

After the war the harassment of the Left continued and, despite a peak in support in the years immediately following the conflict, by the mid-1920s both the Wobblies and the Socialist Party were riven by internal strife and their influence much diminished.[19] The continuing persecution of the Left meant that people became afraid to subscribe to socialist journals, and sales of those newspapers that remained fell.

The papers themselves ceased to be outward looking and were instead consumed by infighting (Conlin: 1974, 12). Block did initially return after the war, primarily in single panels, appearing in the revived *Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity* and, in 1919, twice in book form. In one, the *Crimes of the Bolsheviki,* which expressed support for the Russian Revolution, Block appears as a credulous newspaper reader believing such reports as 'Bolsheviki declare women in Russia state property . . . Rape legalized' (1919, 30). However, after the early 1920s he ceased to appear.

Mr Simple and William Mug in Australia

The period leading up to the First World War saw a relatively uninhibited interchange of ideas and activists between socialist groups in different countries. The Wobblies were particularly adept at this, with members such as the organiser Tom Glynn moving between Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland and the United States. In the case of the gullible worker it is the interaction between the United States and Australasia that stands out. In Australia the Labor Party had, in the view of the radical labour activists, been successfully co-opted into the ruling elite (Fewster: 1985, 51). There were, therefore, a myriad of small progressive parties active on the Left, including the International Socialist Club, of which Harry Holland, subsequent editor of the *Maoriland Worker,* was a leading member, as well as two rival factions of the IWW. Eventually the more successful of the latter founded the Australian IWW's official newspaper, *Direct Action,* in January 1914. It was, it would later claim, a paper 'written by slaves for slaves' and in the Wobbly tradition encouraged citizens' journalism.[20]

Activists and organisations were not alone in crossing continents. Mr Block was also popular in Australia, where Hill's song was adapted by changing 'President' to 'Premier'. *Direct Action* not only used Riebe's worker as a form of admonishment towards their readers – 'Now, Mr Block, stand up like men' – but during 1914–15 published a gullible worker cartoon strip of their own, with strong echoes of the American character, entitled 'The Amazing Adventures of Mr Simple'.[21] The droopingly moustachioed Mr Simple was a more realistically drawn character than Block, and his actions were also more true to life. When he was arrested by police, it was because he had jumped a fence and stolen some food and not always, as with Mr Block, because he was the victim of a misunderstanding. He also got 'violently drunk' after being sacked from his job.[22] His strips, signed by 'Joe Ryan', were an ongoing narrative from one week to the next, establishing a record of change over time, as well

as verisimilitude. While there were political lessons to be learned, about not trusting the police or job sharks (issues he shared with Block), Simple was clearly aimed at not only providing education for non-Wobblies, but also entertainment for regular readers. Little asides for the members establish verisimilitude by referring to specific events, such as when Simple got sent to jail. 'He will therefore miss the IWW celebration on May Day at Concordia Hall. Where a quidful of fun can be got for a shilling.'[23] Graphically the look of the strip varied. Whereas Dubb and Block were showcased in strips, looking surprisingly modern with conversations taking place in speech bubbles, Simple harked back to proto comics. Occasionally, hard-to-read handwritten notes and speech bubbles appeared in the panels, which were aligned two by three in a block. At other times often witty explanatory text was listed beneath the panels instead.

Yet another, and graphically more accessible, cartoon brother in misfortune was William Mug. This character preceded Mr Simple and appeared as a strip in the *International Socialist,* founded by Harry Holland, in Australia from 1913–14 and in single panels until 1917. 'The Adventures of William Mug' also had the distinction of being 'one of the first actual comic strips in Australia' (Lambiek: 2009). As Ryan points out, while 'the establishment newspapers virtually ignored comic strips', the *International Socialist* saw them as a medium to promote their philosophy (1979, 13). Mug was drawn by the journalist and cartoonist George Dunstan, also known by the signature 'Zif'. From 1912 until it folded in 1922, by which time it was called the *International Communist,* Zif was the newspaper's most prolific cartoonist and like Walker became a Communist. William Mug was a crude version of Block and Dubb. Less slick than his American cousins, but more succinct and stylised than Simple, he also had a catchphrase; at the end of each strip, battered and confused, he would opine: 'There's something wrong somewhere'.

In September 1914 Harry Holland was released early from prison, where he had been serving a sentence for sedition. The *Maoriland Worker* explained the reason for this, referencing both real events and the comic strip character: 'Now that the war is on, and the pluto requires the assistance of William Mug, his heart softens toward that worthy's leaders – for the time being.'[24] It wasn't to stay softened for very long. Just as in the United States, the Australian government used the war as an excuse to repress the Left. Of all the gullible worker characters, Mug follows the course of the war most accurately, providing a record of duration and explicit verisimilitude. When Australia entered the First World War in September 1914, William Mug had been preparing since February when he enlisted, believing 'We're all equal in the Australia's

Navy' (Figure 5.2). However, once there he found himself scrubbing lavatories and, when he foolishly imparted his egalitarian beliefs to the admiral, ended up in a prison cell (an experience he also shared with Dubb).[25]

Figure 5.2 William Mug illustrates the socialist viewpoint that life in the navy consists of inequality and hardship
Source: Dunstan, 'Zif', 'He Joins the Navy', *International Socialist*, 28 February 1914, p. 1.

By 29 August, after war had been declared, Mug, undeterred by his experiences in the navy, had joined the army, smugly prophesying that he would 'Shake the Germans up'. It was then that he met the 'lunatic' who questioned the sense of going to war. Two weeks later Mug had abandoned the armed forces and was so happily immersed in the newspapers' tales of vast numbers of slaughtered Germans that he remained oblivious to his daughter's lack of shoes and the absence of food in the house. Eventually, forced by his wife, he petitioned the 'patriotic fund' for help. There the pompous fat gentleman, seated under the Union Jack flag, told Mug: 'Ah, we must all make sacrifices for the Empiah, you shall be granted a Union Jack and a portrait of Kitchener.' In the final panel Mug, looking somewhat deranged, was seen dancing on the flag, having torn up the portrait and uttering the words 'God Save the King. There MUST be something wrong somewhere.' This illustrated that even a Mug was aware of the limits of patriotism, albeit temporarily, since by the next strip he had forgotten his lesson.[26] In October Australia took possession of German New Guinea and neighbouring islands. Zif drew on metaphor as Mug celebrated this event in a single-panel cartoon by riding proudly off to war on a decrepit horse while John Bull, and other figures representing the warring countries, fought in the background. Mug reassured Bull: 'Don't be scared Dad. I'll soon be with you, I'll pinch all his fowls, and burn his farms like I did in South Africa.'[27]

The Australian socialists and the Wobblies actively opposed the war. When the Labor government attempted to introduce conscription for overseas duty in 1916 and 1917, the IWW, as part of a broad coalition, contested the amendments and won. However, the union became subject to brutal state repression. In September 1916 their offices were raided and membership lists seized and handed over to employers, who were at liberty to sack and blacklist members. Censorship was introduced, *Direct Action* and then the IWW itself were banned and the police, under orders of the Labor government (Burgmann: 1995, 203), began rounding up and incarcerating Wobblies. Some members would face prison sentences of 15 years.

Although they had won the anti-conscription debate and for a time avoided the consequences of a mailing ban by posting out individual issues of *Direct Action* at night, the Wobblies in Australia could not withstand the continuous harassment. With so many members in jail and no newspaper, by 1920 an IWW activist wrote to comrades in Chicago that, officially, the IWW no longer existed in Australia (Burgmann: 1995, 224). Mr Simple and Mug (temporarily) disappeared early in the war.

The internationalism of the gullible worker

Similarities between Mug, Dubb, Simple and Block and their storylines abounded, whether due to plagiarism or simply because, as their international success implies, the preoccupations of the movement were the same regardless of group or country.[28] It was not just the originating organisations that referenced their particular comic character. In the autumn of 1915 *Direct Action* referred to both the International Socialists' Mug and to the American Wobblies' Mr Block.[29] Aided by Hill's song, which allowed him to cross the boundary from a limited activist to a general audience, Mr Block also entered mainstream language as a symbol of the gullible, 'blockhead' worker. Dubb's fame too spread far beyond the confines of the radical Left, to the extent that he appeared in a speech in the British House of Commons in 1935 (New Statesman).

In the same manner as his predecessors, William Mug became a term for the deluded worker in the socialist press, helped by the connotations of his surname. In fact the blunt, concise names of Mug, Block and Dubb all added to their air of obtuseness. The exception was Mr Simple who, although he lived up to his name and was mentioned occasionally in *Direct Action* as a synonym for the gullible worker, never achieved widespread success in this area. 'Simple' was already in use as a stock everyman name, the butt of jokes syndicated in newspapers in both Australia and the UK.

Both Block and Mug strips highlighted police injustice; mistaken for socialists, they were beaten and imprisoned. All of the gullible workers refused to listen to the IWW or the socialists when they tried to explain to them the heinousness of the mainstream politicians. Mr Simple discovered the latter for himself when he campaigned to get a candidate elected, only to find, when he came to ask the new MP for food for his family, that the politician was too busy to see him, but advised that he 'enlist and fight for "your" country and your glorious freedom'.[30] Dubb, meanwhile, despite his son explaining to him that neither Democrats nor Republicans had his best interests at heart, surrendered his agency completely by allowing Grab-It-All to cast his ballot for him in the elections.[31]

It was clear that the gullible workers were suffering from alienation. Victims of economic and political forces beyond their control and unable to see behind the façade of capitalism, they surrendered to it. A major reason for this was, as the frequent strips targeting the capitalist and (in the case of Block) the reformist newspapers made clear, the false consciousness created by the propaganda of the press. Block,

Simple, Dubb and Mug epitomised those working-class men who were, to the chagrin of the IWW, not class conscious and therefore without the understanding of what trade unionism truly meant.[32] It was of course immensely frustrating that these Dubbs, ignoring Marx's theory of common interests becoming class interests (1847), simply saw the interaction with their employer as an individual transaction and not, as E. P. Thompson argued, a historical relationship (1968). And while the socialists and the IWW recognised the causes and symptoms of alienation and paid lip service to the fact that many workers were suffering in their ignorance, their sympathy was not always apparent. Obviously the gullible worker's huge popularity tapped into a deep well of feelings of recognition and resentment within the Left. The catharsis of laughter allowed relief (Freud: 1960), both from their own alienation from the capitalist system and from the forbidden feeling of anger towards fellow workers and would also have helped dissipate their potentially deep frustration with real-life gullible workers.[33] It was, in addition, educative – being forewarned of potential situations, labour activists could be forearmed with arguments.

The challenge for the labour movement was summed up by Walker Smith when he pointed out that although it was true that 'Mr. Block blocks the pathway of progress' and if it were 'not for the innumerable Mr. Blocks there would be no labor problem', it was also the case that it was 'from the Blocks that we must recruit our forces to overthrow wage slavery, and this can be done only by reaching Mr. Block with the message of industrial unionism' (1984). As indicated earlier, it was this educative message that the Left strove to deliver through the gullible worker comic strips.

Conclusion

Socialist party and IWW members clearly saw the comic strip as only one part, albeit a very popular one, of the educative resources or toolkit available to inform their – as they perceived them – unenlightened fellow workers and expose their 'false consciousness'. Their early use of the comic strip concept and the plethora of other formats in which the gullible worker appeared – chalk talks, speeches, readers' letters, songs, newspaper editorials and books – demonstrate the versatility and innovativeness of the labour movement and of the character. They also provide historians with extensive opportunity for cross-referencing and triangulation by which different facets of the cultural record emerge.

One of the strongest aspects of the record supplied by the gullible worker is the insight he provides into the everyday life and *mentalité* of the radical Left, as well as of the non-activists they were endeavouring to enlighten, during the First World War. This occurs primarily through humour, a vital component in the success of the character that allowed entry into the comic strip on several different levels. For the uninitiated, humour made accessible the political lessons being taught and provided the entertainment that was recognised as a vital part of the class struggle by Wobblies and Socialist Party members alike. Through humour the gullible worker was able to transcend the confines of individual parties, unions and countries and become a subject of mass appeal and an international phenomenon.

Inside the movement, the humour of the gullible worker strips provided a legitimate and cathartic outlet for activists' frustration with their non-class-conscious fellow workers. As Smith pointed out in his introduction to *Mr Block* (1984), the cartoons that caused laughter were the 'portraits of the other fellow'. Through communal humour, feelings of superiority and group solidarity were engendered in an often oppressive world in which activists could feel they were both in the right and not alone. However, the humour also acted as prescriptive social corrective, a salutary lesson in what sort of behaviour should be avoided in the labour movement. In the strips the ideal organiser appeared to be superior in both stature and bearing as he pointed out the gullible worker's foolishness. The strips therefore yield an insight into how First World War labour activists viewed both themselves and their non-unionised fellow workers.

Once the comic strips are compared with other sources, as recommended by Collingwood (1935), a strong sense of subjectivity emerges. The gullible worker was a tool used in the anti-capitalist struggle, and his strip espoused the opinions of the movements in whose publications he appeared. Their message, repeated in newspapers, speeches, letters and songs, that workers should not trust their employers, the courts, mainstream politicians or the press, came across clearly in the strips. The anti-war message that the Left in the United States was not able to expound blatantly was nevertheless able to emerge in the Dubb strips. More specific concerns of individual groups also appeared. For example, the Wobblies' particular stance against racism was apparent in Mr Block, while Mug reflected the Australian socialists' view of the British Empire.

A third type of record, verisimilitude, also appears in different forms in the various gullible worker strips. Mug often dealt with issues specific to time and place. His experiences developed in tandem with

real-life events, such as when Australia invaded New Guinea. The Dubb strips dealt more generally with the generic problems of capitalism and were therefore easily transferable to other countries. In addition, all strips provide historical detail as part of their incidental background. Working-class clothes and living conditions are depicted, employment is precarious and scarce, corporal punishment is accepted and activists sell newspapers on street corners.

The beauty of the gullible worker lay in the subversiveness of taking the mainstream, working-class everyman and, instead of, as one might expect, turning him into a radical anti-capitalist, making him an anti-heroic, law-abiding citizen who believes that capitalist society is just. His popularity, which transcended the radical Left, was, like socialism, international. These early comic strips were a deliberate strategy by the Left to educate their readership – they were part of the toolkit of conversion. For the historian, they represent a valuable alternative source to be cross-referenced with conventional documents such as newspaper articles and so establish the *mentalité* of the day to day from a non-establishment, grass-roots perspective.

6
Adjusting to Total War: US Propaganda, Commerce and Audience

Posters, advertising and cross-fertilisation

On 21 October 1939, *Radio Fun* began printing a Union Jack on its masthead and at the bottom of the front page, a second banner – previously featuring general jokey catchphrases of the two main characters of the comic strip 'Big Hearted Arthur' – now thanked 'the cheery lads of the army, navy and air force who are keeping Britain's flag flying'. Its sister paper, *Knockout*, abandoned its subtitle 'The Chummy Comic' for 'Victory Comic'. These are clear examples of how the Second World War patriotism in comics extended even to children's publications. Simultaneously adult titles were also taking the matter of comics and patriotism seriously. In particular, communications industry professionals were addressing how such feelings should be harnessed to the good of the war effort, drawing on earlier pre-war studies within the advertising industry on the efficacy of comic strips for promotion.

In 1935, Andrew Howe published an analysis of comic strip advertising techniques in *The Printers' Ink*, highlighting how the storytelling element of comic strips is extremely simple yet none the less very effective. 'The plot is simple. The problem is stated. A possible solution is presented. The problem is solved. Happy ending.' Howe concludes:

> It doesn't take a psychologist to explain what attracts readers to continuity strips. The funnies have educated them to expect action, a brief story, told tersely. [...] But above all – action [...] Aspiring continuity writers would do well to study the Lever Brothers advertising for Rinso, Lifebuoy and Lux. This experienced advertiser was among the first to adapt the comic strip technique to advertising on a large scale. Rinso has stuck to this type of copy for many years. It has played a

> big part in establishing this soap on top of the heap in a competitive field that spends millions on advertising.

Howe's reference to continuity strips is important as it highlights the affinity developed by the reader in regard to recurrent characters and situations that can be followed on a regular basis. Continuing his analysis of comic strip advertising by the corporation Rinso, Howe explains the essential element of their advertising narrative: 'Rinso sticks pretty closely to one pattern. The problem is presented, hope of a solution is discussed and then the product makes everyone happy for ever after. The problem is always housework. The solution is always Rinso.' Howe concludes that comic strip advertising 'is an effective technique if intelligently handled'.[1]

Studies of book publishing and reading have shown that the artistic endeavour of an individual writer is only one factor of a published work – the economic, political and cultural systems of the surrounding environment, along with interaction between reader, publisher, distributor and author, all play decisive roles (Darnton: 1990, 111). With comics this process is arguably at times even more pronounced, with writers and artists often acting as conduits for commercial and ideological forces, not least during wartime, when material and ideological changes occur in an accelerated and more perceptible manner than during peacetime. For Robert Chartier, each crisis that occurred within French publishing during the nineteenth century became 'the basis for innovation' (1988, 27), leading to changes in format, pricing and subject matter. The world wars can be said to have had the same effect on comics. In addition, Lee Erickson has pointed out that 'literary form is as much a product of the marketers and the readers as it is of the authors' (1996, 5). This chapter builds on the context of cross-fertilisation between posters, advertising and emerging wartime publicity needs to better understand how certain lesser-known US comics served the needs of propaganda in various ways. Close readings will establish how far depictions of the enemy changed over time, as dynamic records characterised by explicit realism and verisimilitude with real events.

On 22 June 1942, in Washington DC, the American advertising company Young and Rubicam presented their recommendations on 'How to Make Posters That Will Help Win the War' to the National Advisory Council on Government Posters. This Council formed part of the Graphics Division of the Office of War Information of the United States of America (OWI). Recommendations were made based upon

Young and Rubicam's analysis of a survey conducted in Toronto, Canada between 16 March and 1 April 1942, involving 33 different Canadian war posters.[2]

The two primary questions investigated by Young and Rubicam – whether the poster appeals to the emotions and how far it is a literal picture in photographic detail – can also be applied to US war comics. In fact, comics were far more effective vehicles for propaganda than posters because the sequential narrative inherent in the medium of comics is concerned with storytelling, allowing for additional elements such as empathy and identification with recurrent or familiar characters.

The method and focus of Young and Rubicam's analysis derived from previous commercial investigations into the viability of comics as a medium for product advertising and consumer-driven promotional campaigns in the years prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Importantly, this document recommends reproductions of 'comic strips' as potential source material for the visual element of the poster (Duncan and Smith: 2009, 3). Both posters and comics (panels) represent a nexus of linguistic and visual communication. Comics were clearly regarded as an essential element of the information arsenal by the OWI.

During the pre-war period, advertising companies and commercial journals conducted extensive research into the effectiveness of comic strips as a medium that could be deployed to further the ends of advertisers. At that time, comic strip advertising was a comparatively new phenomenon compared to entertainment or editorial comics.

In 1940, Ross Federal published a survey in *Sales Management*, indicating that 'nine out of ten adults are [comics] addicts whatever their income, three out of four succumbing seven days a week. Readers of advertising comics display a high loyalty to products advertised.' The enthusiasm for comics exhibited by those taking part in the survey 'surprised even the experienced interviewers'. In fact, *Sales Management* reports that only 20 people in 1,000 declined to answer the questions asked by Ross Federal. Furthermore, the 'loyalty factor' displayed by men and women who read advertising comics is remarkable and is represented in Table 6.1, below, showing the percentages of men and women reading the ten most-mentioned advertising comics 'who use the products in their homes'.[3]

Sales Management's analysis offers no strong conclusions as to why comic strip advertising was more effective when it came to males than females. However, the extremely high percentage of product use indicates that comic strip advertising, particularly when presented as a continuity strip, is extraordinarily effective. Not only were the strips and

Table 6.1 Percentages of men and women who use specific products they see advertised in newspaper comics[4]

Product	Men	Women
Camel	78.8%	73.7%
Lux	100.0%	85.5%
Rinso	100.0%	86.4%
Lifebuoy	83.3%	90.2%
Wheaties	94.7%	88.5%
Ivory Soap	100.0%	90.9%
Oxydol	100.0%	78.3%
Tea (no brand)	80.0%	85.0%
Spry	100.0%	93.8%
Ovaltine	85.7%	92.3%

Source: The Funnies? Everybody Reads 'Em and Not 'Just to the Children', A Ross Federal – Sales Management Survey in *Sales Management*, Bill Brothers Publications, 1 March 1940, p. 30.

characters ingrained in the memories of the consumers, but this form of advertising has been shown to be an extremely effective tool in manipulating consumer behaviour and influencing opinions in regard to these products.

OWI perceptions of propaganda and censorship

In a memorandum from R. Keith Kane, Assistant Director of the US Office of Facts and Figures, to his superior, Archibald MacLeish, dated 23 March 1942, Kane summarises the OWI's own research into comic readership across the United States: 'The comic page of the daily newspaper represents the most widely read non-advertising newspaper section among adult readers (except for society news or pictures among women). In a continuing study of the readership of 47 daily papers, the Advertising Research foundation found that approximately 83% read at least one comic strip daily.'

Kane continues, highlighting that even 'the most poorly read strip in each paper averages 15% of the adult readers; and the average comic attracts about 60%'. Kane's analysis progresses to account for the thematic content of each strip studied. He identifies that '33% of the daily comic strips appearing in 32 leading newspapers were war-related in topic'. This figure is surprisingly low at a time when the nation was embroiled in 'total war', for the second time within a quarter of a century. As with advertising comic strips, war-related comics 'are chiefly used in those strips which present a continued story rather

than those that present a single humorous episode'. Kane concludes his memorandum with the recommendation that: 'Comics therefore enjoy a very wide adult readership but only about one-third of them now refer in any way to the war. This suggests that this medium can be used as an effective means of conveying war information to the public.'[5]

Both the emotive appeal of comics, whether comic strips or comic books, and their development of realistic devices of representation are powerful aspects of visual–linguistic propaganda, essentially similar to those outlined by Young and Rubicam in their analysis of effective war posters. In a subsequent memorandum from Elmer Davis, the then Director of the United States Office of War Information, addressed to the Information Directors of the OWI dated December 1942, Davis outlines the importance of comic strips in generating awareness of OWI campaigns and generally informing the American public.

> Cartoons, advancing OWI campaigns, are distributed [...] to an average of 1,000 newspapers weekly. These include four panels in which humour is used to drive home informational themes, one inspirational cartoon, and a weekly panel, 'Kid Salvage'.[6]

Davis concludes by restating the dual importance of these war-related and OWI-commissioned comics and single panels, firstly because of their potential to reach 60 million Americans and, secondly, because comics artists 'reach seeing America'. Comics possess the visual capacity to communicate information not only to literate adults and children, but to illiterate Americans as well. Children formed an important target for the OWI's informational campaigns and drives. Indeed, the single-panel 'Kid Salvage' cartoon mentioned by Davis above depicted an American child doing his bit for the war effort by continually collecting scrap metal and recycling cans and bottles. Davis also identifies the importance of the device of humour 'to drive home informational themes'.[7]

Furthermore, it was not only officially commissioned comic strips that the OWI were concerned with. In an internal memorandum from Henry Pringle dated 6 November 1942, dealing with issues raised in the OWI's semi-monthly report of 15 October–1 November of the same year, Pringle wrote that 'it has been agreed that the Magazine Section shall send information regarding problems of the war to publishers of comic books'.[8] This information, forming part of the OWI's monthly 'Magazine War Guide', was designed to counterbalance the sheer impossibility of individually censoring the plethora of magazine and comic book

publications across the United States. Another memorandum, this time from Gardner Cowles, Jr, Director of US Domestic Operations and addressed to Major General A. D. Surles, dated 13 November 1942, further clarifies the magnitude of this task and the role filled by the Magazine Section's 'War Guide': 'Editors follow the Guide carefully, as a check-list of subject matter relating to the war and suitable for their magazines. Time will not permit them to read many of the releases and reports sent them, they say. They cannot usefully see representatives from each of the war agencies to discuss individual phases of each subject. The Guide summarises the possibilities, briefly, each month.'[9] Indeed, this Guide was so influential, and comic books were viewed by the OWI as of such particular importance, that 'Special Intelligence Report No. 13' of the US Office of Facts and Figures Bureau of Intelligence Division of Information Channels, Section I, dated 7 March 1942, concludes that there is a need to create a similar guide targeted specifically at 'the publishers of comic books'.[10]

Further to the information distributed by the Magazine Section of the OWI, the News Bureau also published the weekly 'Letter to Graphic Artists'. This publication was designed in a similar fashion to the CPI's Bulletin for Cartoonists, which had proved extremely effective in mobilising visual artists across America to submit cartoons and comics to help further war drives during the First World War. The service provided by the 'Letter' in circumventing the problems of media censorship on a mass scale is highlighted in a memorandum from George E. McMillan to Gardner Cowles, Jr on the subject of 'Cartoonists Working With The News Bureau', dated 27 February 1943:

> Through the Graphic Artists Letter, 660 additional artists are advised each week of suggestions for graphic treatment of war information and campaign objectives. Among these artists are editorial cartoonists, magazine illustrators, commercial artists, comic strip artists, and single panel cartoonists. Though the work that these artists do as prompted by the suggestions in the letter is not controlled, there has been abundant evidence that they are responding generously and are continually using the suggestions offered.

Though he groups visual and graphic artists together under the heading 'cartoonists', regardless of their artistic output, whether comic strips, comic books, traditional single-panel cartoons or posters, McMillan concludes that: 'The News Bureau for almost a year has made an effective use of cartoons to complement its other programs for the dissemination

of war information. [...] It is understood that the Bureau of Campaigns considers cartoons an invaluable contribution toward the activation of campaign programs.'[11]

The focus of these cartoonists and their commitment to both the various campaigns promoted by the OWI and to the editorial stance of newspaper publications in which their cartoons appear was reviewed by the Bureau of Intelligence Division of the OWI in March 1942. This report concluded that in no examined instance 'did the cartoon express a viewpoint which the newspaper did not also express in the editorial columns. [...] The cartoons studied during this period, or any period reflected, almost as a mirror the editorial trend of the day. To know what the editorial writers are saying is to know what the cartoonists are drawing.'

The same 'Special Intelligence Report' further advised the OWI on the reading habits of the general public, highlighting the visual accessibility of the information presented in graphic form. 'The reader habit is to look at the cartoon, and then shift to the editorial for greater development of the topic.'[12] Though the 'Report' presents no hypothesis as to why this trend might occur, the conclusion that cartoons and comic strips constitute the primary focus of the newspaper and magazine reading public suggests that these imbedded graphic elements serve as a summary introduction to the information communicated in the wider text and enhance the reader's assimilation of the information presented more generally. The question, then, is to what extent could the OWI rely on the editors of these publications and, by extension, the graphic artists who illustrated them, to follow the official guidelines, reinforcing the hegemonic narrative of the nation as a whole during the war?

Elmer Davis, who was himself a well-known journalist before accepting his role as Director of the OWI, writing to W. D. Chandler, editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, in August 1943, explains: 'The Office of War Information in its domestic operations is fundamentally an agency serving the newspapers and other media, and to be effective it must have the counsel and advice of outstanding editors representing a cross-section of the American press.'[13]

This was indeed the case. Walter C. Johnson, a prominent member of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, wrote to Davis: 'It will be a pleasure to continue to serve as a member of the Editors' and Publishers' Committee, advisory to the Office of War Information'.[14] Johnson was by no means alone in his patriotic loyalty to the concerns of the OWI. W. S. Gilmore, editor of the *Detroit News*, wrote to Davis: 'My appointment came when I was elected president of the American

Society of Newspaper Editors. You may count on that organization as well as on *The Detroit News* to do everything possible to help you in your difficult and important work.'[15]

Furthermore, William L. Daley of the National Editorial, an Association of American Newspapers, wrote a similar letter to the OWI's director, explaining his conviction that:

> I am sure that all associations of publishers and editors fully realize the grave responsibilities which have been placed in your lap during this emergency. I will be glad to serve on this committee and hope you will feel free to call on the National Editorial Association and its affiliated groups at any time.[16]

That same month, Davis was to receive a plethora of similar letters and statements from key figures in the American publishing industry pledging their patriotic intent to serve the requirements of the OWI, including John W. Potter, president of the Inland Daily Press Association,[17] as well as Dwight Marvin of the Record Newspapers who stated that, 'in any way that I can serve our cause I want to do so'.[18] This editorial support for the OWI campaigns was to filter through the American publishing industry as a whole, reducing the need for official press censorship by the OWI and extending to both comic strips appearing in the major newspapers and comic book publications throughout the nation.

The encroachments of war

On 11 March 1942, 'Special Intelligence Report No. 15' of the US Office of Facts and Figures Bureau of Intelligence Division reported that 'thirty-three per cent of 61 comic strips appearing in newspapers daily and Sunday have a war-related content'. The 'Report' identifies two distinct types of war-related comic strips. The first 'stems from the early illustrated joke' and primarily employs humour as a device for communicating the message of the strip. The second 'presents a continued story, one which is not usually comic. The characters are life-like, and the scenes are carefully drawn. There is no particular climax in the last frame of a day's strip.'[19]

These observations provide a contemporary record of how efficacious people in official circles perceived the comic strip to be. Their analysis is important for several reasons. Firstly, the distinction between strips employing humour and those that are 'not usually comic' highlights the early maturation of the content of comics, no longer simply dismissed

as the 'funnies'. Coinciding with the outbreak of the Second World War, this move away from humour allowed comics to deal on a mass scale with the social and political themes with which single-panel cartooning were traditionally concerned.

Secondly, the 'life-like' representations of characters and 'carefully drawn' background environment brought an element of realism to this imaginative medium that, in turn, increased reader empathy and identification with the characters and situations presented. As effective vehicles of communication, visual representations, whether comics or posters (as detailed above), prove to be much more effective when they present 'a true and literal representation [...] of people and objects as they are'.[20] This statement from an official contemporary source provides clear evidence of the value to the historian that comics offer of verisimilitude.

Further, the 'Report' identifies a stark contrast in the way in which each of these two types of strip deal with their war-related content. 'In the comic, episodic type, the war becomes a factor only as the characters have various adventures or mishaps in the course of their activities. The cartoonist uses the war to provide "gags", but he does not let the war guide his strip.' On the other hand, the more serious, realistic, serial type 'deals almost exclusively with violence, usually war, in the contemporary scene. None of the strips are comic, although some affect a light touch in dealing with war and sabotage.'[21] This acts as further evidence, through the nature of their text, of comics as explicit source material.

Comics publications had been focused on war since the advent of Superman in 1938. In the years before Pearl Harbor, 'the struggle against the Rome–Berlin Axis became the main topic of all action-oriented comics' (Gabilliet: 2010, 22). Indeed, Jean-Paul Gabilliet argues that it was this backdrop of the international war arena that catalysed the development of the superhero narrative and led to the increasing popularity of the genre as the war progressed. Highlighting the focus of the American media in general on Japan as the major enemy of the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor, 'Special Intelligence Report No. 15' continues: 'Of 19 strips of this type in which there is an enemy, seven identify him as Japanese; three as Nazi; one as Nazi and Italian; one ("Terry and the Pirates") implies broadly that the enemy is Japanese, and seven do not clarify' (Gabilliet: 2010, 22).

As with nearly all non-photographic representations of wartime conflict and villains, the enemies 'are quite stereotyped' (Gabilliet: 2010, 22). Such stereotyping involves 'a collective process of judgment which feeds upon and reinforces powerful social myths' (Pickering: 2001, 48).

The 'Report' summarily identifies these stereotypes as follows: 'Japanese are fierce, toothy, bespectacled and cruel. German officers are bald, tall, thin-faced, with a military stiffness. German soldiers are inclined to be fat, loutish, sloppy, decidedly different from the "typical American boys" ' (Pickering: 2001, 48).

In this sense, the Japanese are represented as a savage, alien and entirely 'other' race whose despicable methods display little regard for morality or the modern conventions of warfare. Of course, this was very much in line with the hegemonic narrative in the United States concerning Japan's 'sneak' attack on Pearl Harbor. As historically documented, this insecurity and mistrust of the Japanese–American community within America led to widespread persecution and their eventual internment in military-run camps across the United States, including 70,000 people in the Pacific coast area (Dower: 1986; Dower: 1996; Nornes and Yukio: 1994, 104–108; Chapman: 2005, 193–194).

On the other hand, the Germans are presented as pompous, selfish and arrogant, desiring power over the world and pursuing hatred as a primary motivating force. These representations naturally stand in contradistinction to the 'heroes' of the American narrative, the typical American soldier fighting to uphold the principles of truth, freedom and a hot slice of Mom's apple pie. This contrast in representation leaves no ambiguity, even at a cursory glance, as to exactly who the heroes and villains of the narrative are. 'In this moral frame there can be no doubt that the politics the Americans are defending are as good as the heroes themselves. The problem of good men fighting for a bad cause does not exist on this level' (Paymans: 1976, 228).

Unusually for comics, no serious attempt is made to ridicule or caricature the enemy in stories that contain conflict with US forces. Rather, they are represented as worthy opponents who, nonetheless, are doomed to failure against the superior forces of the United States Marine Corps and Air Forces. As with the 'every Marine a hero' narrative, this narrative of the alien but worthy adversary is repeatedly reinforced through each publication and, indeed, each story narrative and image.

There is an exception to this pattern in the first issue of *United States Marine Corps (USMC)* and, to a much lesser extent, in the third issue.[22] It is, however, completely absent from *The American Air Forces (AAF)*, the last of the titles analysed here. Caricature-based and essentially racist anti-Japanese narrative does appear and is shamelessly targeted at ridiculing the cultural customs and conventions of the enemy as they differ from those of Americans. The slapstick story 'The Slap-Happy Japs' lampoons cultural differences between the United States and Japan,

exaggerated beyond the point of absurdity. Evidently, however, this type of story decreased in popularity as the war progressed and the Japanese were increasingly recognised as adversaries worthy of a certain amount of respect. The feature itself was reduced from two pages in *USMC No. 1* to a single page by the third issue, and was retitled 'The Nips Are Nuts', which is more orientated towards culture-shock values (*USMC No. 3*). Any similar feature is entirely absent in *AAF* and the extant post-war issues of both publications. However, as well as ridiculing the Japanese abroad, these initial narratives reflect the racist insecurity felt by many Americans towards people of Japanese descent living in the United States.

Though the majority of narratives within these publications are fact-based and serious in tone, one narrative in the *USMC* series presents two characters who serve as comic heroes, humorously personifying two friends and 'everymen' in the US Armed Forces. These characters' names, Monte Zuma and Trip O'Lee, derive from the anthem of the US Marine Corps (*USMC No. 3*). The stories of Monte and Trip provide light comic relief from the more serious war narratives that surround them.

From cover images to final panel: The effectiveness of the message

When Superman appeared on the cover of *Action Comics No. 1* in June 1938, a new cultural phenomenon became manifest – the superhero. From his first appearance, readers were ardently asking news-stand vendors for the 'comic with Superman on the cover'. Born from the creative imaginations of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, Superman constitutes an internationally recognisable symbol. The connection between Siegel and Shuster's character and the US war effort, however, is often overlooked due to undeserved importance having been ascribed to one particular instance in which Siegel and Shuster illustrated their character failing the army medical examination in order to avoid criticisms of undermining the real-life armed forces and their role in the conflict (*Superman #25*). This allowed the character to remain on the Home Front and use his powers in the fight against spies and saboteurs as opposed to becoming involved on the front lines. Yet comic book covers often bore no relation to the content of the comics themselves, and this is especially true for Superman. War-related covers were often published despite the comic having no war-related content, in order to promote sales in a war-conscious market and to communicate a number of war-related messages which were supported by the publishers.

Superman was born of inspiration drawn from the conflict that had been brewing in Europe since the annexation of Austria by Germany in March 1938. In the first story to feature the character, amongst a plethora of other heroic deeds, Superman enlists in a European army and enters front-line combat against an artillery barrage in order to change the opinion of a corrupt official about the realities of warfare.[23] After Superman's alter ego, Clark Kent, sells a few 'Amazing War Pictures' to the newspaper he works for, 'The Evening News', the hero prevents the torture of a man in military custody and, 'due to the conciliatory efforts of Superman', catalyses a truce between the leaders of the belligerent nations by revealing that they have been 'fighting only to promote the sale of munitions' (Siegel and Shuster: 2006, 24–30).

In *Action Comics Nos 1–20,* published between June 1938 and January 1940, Superman appears on nine covers.[24] The war alone was the cover image on only one issue, and the belligerent nations involved are unidentified.[25] However, four of the nine covers depicting Superman involve the character in the war. Of these four covers, three represent an unidentified enemy. One represents Superman fighting German Junkers 87, 'Stuka' dive-bombers which are identifiable by their fixed landing gear but are otherwise not clearly represented as being Nazi. This trend was to change, however, as America clarified her support for the Allies.

As images of both Superman and the war continued to increase sales, Superman became a permanent fixture on the cover of *Action Comics*. Between February 1940 and September 1942, DC released 33 issues of *Action Comics*, with Superman appearing on every cover. As American involvement in the Second World War became more likely and her allies and enemies clearly identified, the war similarly became the most frequent context for the action of the cover illustrations. Likewise, clear identification of the enemy became the prominent trend. Superman's direct involvement in the war was illustrated ten times in the 33 covers analysed, appearing considerably more often than any other recurrent theme. Represented on two of these occasions as shaking hands with members of, and thus endorsing, the US Armed Forces, such images of Superman served to encourage support for the American military. Of the remaining eight war-related covers, Superman's primary foes are identified as the Nazis, who appear five times, while on two occasions the enemy represented is unidentifiable. This trend was seen throughout other publications containing Superman material as well and, as previously mentioned, the publishers and creators of comics were entirely supportive of the OWI propaganda narrative. On only one occasion are the Japanese represented as the enemy.[26] This particular issue depicting

the Japanese enemy has a cover date of May 1942. In light of the trend amongst comics publications to advance the cover date by several months, it is likely that this publication was available for purchase around March 1942 and would have been illustrated towards the beginning of that year. Thus, this issue was likely to have been compiled and the cover illustrated in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor.

Between July 1939 and August 1942, the title *Superman* was published by DC Comics 17 times. Six issues of the *World's Finest Comics* and a single issue entitled *New York World's Fair 1940* also contained Superman material, totalling 24 appearances in all.[27] Seven of these covers illustrate Superman involved in the war and identifying the Nazis as the enemy and the US Armed Forces as heroes. These motifs clearly reinforce the ideological war narrative of heroes. Again, on only one occasion are the enemy represented as being Japanese.[28] In this instance, they are identified through the image of Tojo being lifted from the world by the scruff of the neck by Superman, who is similarly lifting Adolf Hitler.

Without overemphasising the essential similarity between comics cover art and poster art, analysis of war-related comics covers, in terms of Young and Rubicam's criteria, reveals that *Action Comics/Superman* comics covers primarily served to dramatise the conflict of the Second World War. At the same time, many of these war-related images also served to promote enlistment in the armed forces and the purchase of war bonds. Furthermore, they served to identify and ridicule the enemies of the United States. During the Second World War, sales of Superman-related comics reached their peak and, with an additional estimated circulation of four readers per comic purchased, resulted in a surmised potential readership of 6 million Americans, not to mention the countless millions who encountered the cover image on the news stands and in the US military.[29]

US publishing and war messages

Deriving from the same premise of adolescent wish fulfilment as Siegel and Shuster's *Superman*, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's *The Boy Commandos* is at once both one of the most realistic war-related comic titles of the Second World War and also one of the most absurd. In each of the 20 initial episodes, published between June 1942 and spring 1943, four youths representing America and her Allies – France, Holland and Great Britain – are active in various missions against Axis forces alongside the US Commando force. Despite the odd premise, the comic proved

immensely popular with American youth, for whom the characters created an imaginary space into which they could project their own desire to be involved in the conflict. Indeed, Simon and Kirby created an almost identical publication entitled *The Young Allies* in order to further benefit from the popularity of *The Boy Commandos*.

Naturally, war was the predominant theme in each episode of the comic. Kirby's realistic representation of military equipment and uniforms derived from his own active service in the US Army in Europe. By extension, the characters were primarily involved in the European theatre of conflict. Based upon the premise of cooperation between the boys and, therefore, the Allied nations as a whole, the comic clearly served to 'create a better understanding between [the US] and our allies'.[30]

Further, by clearly endorsing other aspects of the US war effort, *The Boy Commandos*, as with so many other comics, directly served the purposes of national propaganda and reinforced the hegemonic rhetoric endorsed by the OWI. As with the Rinso advertisement mentioned previously, many comics publications deliberately place text or images in the concluding panel of a story that are not directly related to the content of the narrative itself. This final panel has been identified by both comics publishers and advertisers as being the most effective panel for the purposes of promotion. Analysis of the content of the final panel in each of the first 20 episodes of *The Boy Commandos* reveals that, although comics publishers mostly used this space to advertise future issues or other commercial publications in eight editions, this was closely followed by the deployment of the space in the promotion of war bonds and stamps in six issues. They also promoted other war drives, such as avoidance of the 'waste of vital war materials'. This highlights the direct involvement of popular comics publications in the promotion of the war effort. Regardless of the level of direct involvement in the conflict by the comic book characters of the era, the impact on cultural consciousness of continuous repetition of messages in support of the war, alienation of the brutal and corrupt enemy, and identification with the noble heroism of the United States and her allies cannot be overstated.

Although the United States adopted an official policy of isolationism at the outbreak of conflict in 1938, comics publishers, writers and artists, many of whom were Jewish, took a different stance.[31] Of course, it is arguable that conflict creates interesting stories and that those involved in the comics industry saw the Second World War as a prime opportunity to encourage and increase sales because it opened the door to new content. The primary villains of most comics during the period

immediately before the US entered the Second World War were spies, saboteurs and greedy, industrialist war profiteers who sought to embroil the United States in the conflict to serve their own selfish motives. The heroes were, post-Superman, a plethora of Caucasian American masked vigilante detectives who represented and defended the interests of the common American householder and who, more often than not, embodied New Deal principles and personified the rhetoric of the 'American Dream'.

However, subsequent to the United States' entry into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, it was the Armed Forces of the United States itself that quickly became the largest institutional customer of the comic book publishers (Gabilliet: 2010, 22). This dramatically altered the narrative focus and scope of many comics publications. No longer were publishers, writers and artists inventing stories based around the threat of the Fifth Column and the potential menace of the 'enemy within'. America had been directly attacked. The enemy had been clearly identified as primarily Japanese and, secondarily, as Nazi. And while many comics heroes and superheroes either enlisted in the army or served their country in their own particular way, it was the members of the US Armed Forces abroad, primarily in the Pacific theatre of conflict, who quickly became established as the true heroes of the US comics narrative of the Second World War.[32] This, indeed, demonstrated the dynamic cultural record of change over time.

The risk of invasion by belligerent foreign powers was a growing concern in the years immediately preceding entry into the war, despite the official policy of isolationism. The vast distances of both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans on either side were felt by many to have been 'shrunk by the roaring motors' of technological advancements. The Monroe Doctrine, the mainstay of US foreign policy since its introduction by President James Monroe in 1823, combined with the addenda of the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 and the Clark Memorandum of 1928, entrenched the argument that the United States possessed a self-evident right of self-defence. This encouraged congressional approval of Major Lewis Hershey's Selective Training and Service Act (1940), which instigated the first instance of peacetime conscription in the United States. The act required all American males between the ages of 21 and 36 to register for military service. Servicemen were then selected by a government lottery system and, if drafted, were required to serve for 12 months. The maximum age and length of service were subsequently extended to 45 years and two years respectively in August 1941 and, post-Pearl Harbor, were extended again to require the registration of all

men between the ages of 17 and 64 who, if drafted, were to serve their country for the duration of the conflict plus six months.

The changing situation in reality was mirrored by changes in comics publishing. It was during the summer of 1941 that Dell publishing company, having established themselves as one of the major publishers of comics, launched the singular title *U.S.A. Is Ready.* This publication boasted 68 colour pages of information concerning the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. Unusually, the publication contained no actual stories, whether purported to be factual or imaginative, but instead was concerned entirely with describing military insignia, equipment and manoeuvres. The artwork was rendered in eye-catching colour and the accuracy of the true-to-life illustration was remarkable. Though occasionally punctuated with the exaggerated narrative style commonplace within comics, the information presented was, for the most part, accurate and informative.[33] The explicit recorded facts and verisimilitude seem to have been intended as education and reassurance for the reader, as opposed to entertainment. The narrative was deliberately inclusive, with phrases such as 'our general staff', 'our staff officers' and 'our boys' recurrent throughout and, at times, the reader is skilfully placed within the imaginative action of the armed forces themselves, encouraging identification with the servicemen represented and with the branch of the armed forces with which the reader most associated.[34]

Within this publication the enemy is presented as exclusively German or Italian. Parallels were immediately drawn on the opening page of this comic between the might of the German army and the strength of the US Armed Forces. The introductory narrative story on the opening page of the publication was entitled 'Blitzkrieg: The American Way' and was immediately followed by an illustration of an American tank sergeant entitled 'U.S. Army's "Panzer" Man'. The publication was scattered with cautious phrases reinforcing the defensive narrative and the idea of Germany as the enemy such as: 'If we ever fight Germany' or 'America, of course, is not an England split from enemy-controlled territory by the narrow width of a Channel'. The intention of the publication was clearly to alleviate the fears of the American public with reassurance as to the strength of the US military. *U.S.A. Is Ready* was also clearly a publication aimed at encouraging military registration among the general populace and educating the population at large and, potentially, also members of the armed forces. Despite the comprehensive nature of the material presented, the introductory narrative concluded: 'This is a brief sketch of the mighty, draft-swollen force that the United States is

whipping feverishly into shape – to defend its shores, the American way of life against a new and ugly system of slavery. [...] This is America's army of 1941 [...] come what may, U.S.A. will be ready!'[35]

The publication itself concluded with a penultimate photograph of members of the United States Army, a fleet of warships and a formation of aircraft framing the American Pledge of Allegiance that is brightly printed in the colours of the flag of the United States. This was followed on the final page by a photograph of Admiral Husband Kimmel, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Fleet, and General George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army. The inclusion of these photographs, coupled with the style of illustration of the names of both the Admiral and the General, conveyed the dedication of this publication to these personalities, further advancing the patriotic sense of identification encouraged by the Pledge of Allegiance and the content of the publication as a whole.

From child to adult audiences: Body and music

The target demographic for war-themed Magazine Enterprises publications underwent an obvious shift from children and adults to exclusively adults and service personnel, as indicated by developments in the content of the publications as they progressed. Further evidence of this shift is inherent in the advertising displayed on the final pages of the comics. *USMC No. 1* contains an advertisement for the 'Krak-a-Jap' toy rifle. However, both *USMC No. 3* and *AAF* allocated this prime advertising space to promoting Charles Atlas's system of 'Dynamic Tension' exercise in a deliberate attempt to manipulate the readers' sense of their own masculinity. The final page of *AAF* depicted the smiling image of an almost naked Atlas who, within the comics narrative device of the speech bubble, decries, 'What's My Job? – I Manufacture Weaklings into MEN!' Charles Atlas, the pseudonym of Angelo Sicillano (1892–1972), was given the title of the 'world's most perfectly developed man' in 1921. The advertisements for his system of exercise occurred in many comics publications of the 1940s and they were, without exception, predicated upon the development of insecurities concerning body image and masculinity within their intended target audience.

One of the most interesting instances of Atlas's advertising actually contains a comics narrative account of the experience that, apparently true to the events of Atlas's early life, has since become established as a Western cultural meme of insulted masculinity in its own right. A scrawny young man was insulted by a muscle-bound bully while

walking with his girlfriend along the beach. Having been affronted by an adversary whom the weakling cannot possibly hope to overcome, and further insulted by his girlfriend joining in with the derisive bully and labelling him 'little boy', the young man began physical training and redeemed his masculinity by later socking the bully squarely on the jaw and reclaiming the affections and admiration of his girlfriend (*USMC No. 3*).

Although this narrative of affronted masculinity, subsequently redeemed by the mentorship of a 'real man' via the crucial element of physical development, is not directly associated with the war, the cultural reference in retrospect may well be one of implicit metaphorical truth, that is, of Atlas representing the United States as unprepared for war. The implication inherent in advertisements of this kind occurring within comics publications targeted at American adult males either eligible for, or actively serving within, the armed forces deserves to be mentioned. The army advertised a lifestyle in much the same way as Atlas did in his advertisements. The two worked in tandem to represent the image of the male body at the height of perfection as a body that is muscle bound (Atlas) and in uniform (military). As Jean Baudrillard (in Fraser and Greco: 2005, 277) writes, 'In the consumer package, there is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other [. . .] That object is the BODY [*sic*].'

As noted above, these comics publications repeatedly made deliberate (mis)representations of the cultural differences between combatants (the American 'heroes' and Japanese 'villains') of the Second World War. To further reinforce readers' identification with the heroes as represented in the comics narrative, the authors and editors emphasised cultural conventions and foregrounded cultural references that would have been widely familiar to their audience, deliberately connecting US servicemen with the majority (Caucasian, immigrant descended) personnel of the actual US Armed Forces. Though there are two promotional accounts within the pages of *USMC* and *AAF* for popular, war-orientated films, one of which was undoubtedly included to draw attention to the survival training for US airmen contained within the film series which was itself commissioned by the US military, it was the recurrence of popular music imbedded within the action of these comics that truly highlights the intentions behind such popular cultural references.[36] On occasion, these references to American popular culture were clearly misrepresentations within the context of the narratives in which they occur. For example, *AAF* makes reference to a song known as the 'Tiger Rag', a jazz song written and copyrighted by the Original Dixieland Jass Band [*sic*] in 1917.

The song has remained popular throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as a 'fight song' and theme for several US high school and college football teams. The inclusion of this reference within the narrative of *AAF* would undoubtedly have resonated with a cross-section of that publication's American readership, even though the narrative in which it occurs represents British troops in combat.

Among these musical references within the pages of Magazine Enterprises' publications are militaristic adaptations of popular nursery rhymes, such as 'Sing a song of six guns' (*USMC No. 1)*. There are also allusions to humorous songs such as when the comedy characters Monte and Trip sing the refrain 'We don't know where we're going but we're on our way', a reference to the First World War song of the American Expeditionary Forces known as the 'American Tipperary' (Williams: 1917). The humorous tone of this particular song is reminiscent of the British song of the First World War, 'We're here because we're here because we're here because we're here' and undoubtedly served the same purpose of employing gallows humour to raise troop morale. Furthermore, the epithet 'American Tipperary' locates the target audience of the song as the descendants of Irish immigrants, many of whom served in the US Armed Forces. The appeal of *USMC* to this demographic within the US and the American military is further reinforced by the inclusion of the refrain from a popular traditional Irish song about fighting titled '*Mush Mush Mush Tural-i-addy'*. In one panel an unidentified marine boldly sings the song's refrain, 'Don't tread on the tail of me coat!', while descending the side of a US vessel into a troop transport preparing for an assault on a Japanese beachfront. In keeping with the established conventions of comics illustration, the fact that this text was represented being sung, as opposed to simply spoken, was indicated by the inclusion of musical notes within the speech bubble in which the text occurs.

One further double reference to musical popular culture within the context of both of these war-themed comics publications, and also the American military establishment, occurs within a panel in *USMC No. 1*. Here a marine sings the refrain 'Tarawa Boom-de-ay' and emphasis is placed upon the word 'Boom' that is lettered in bold font (*USMC*). In this instance the reference is firstly a play upon the title of the popular piece of vaudeville music 'Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay', which was first performed by Henry J. Sayers in 1891, and secondly to the title of the USMC magazine *Tarawa Boom-de-ay,* with which the primary demographic of *USMC*'s readers, American service personnel, would have been familiar,[37] as a reference to the Battle of Tarawa in late November 1943.

This mention of an island chain in the Pacific, where US troops first met strong Japanese resistance when they landed, provides further evidence of explicit cultural source through content based on real events.

Dynamic cultural record or explicit violence?

Whereas in March 1942, 'Special Intelligence Report No. 15' (referred to earlier) concluded that in comics, for all their realistic characters, equipment and background scenery, 'Representations of actual warfare lack violence',[38] this was not the case in later years. During 1944, three comic books published in cooperation with the US Armed Forces provide accurate accounts of real events, battles, heroes and villains targeted at an adult audience. These comics are valuable and distinctive cultural artefacts that provide insight into a specific aspect of this historic conflict. *The United States Marines No. 1* and *No. 3* and *The American Air Forces* were edited by Vincent Sullivan, the former editor of National Allied Publications, who in 1943 had formed his own publishing company, Magazine Enterprises.[39] While Magazine Enterprises published a plethora of comics in a wide range of genres, *The United States Marines* and *The American Air Forces* were their only two war-related titles. Both titles outlasted the war itself and were published well into the 1950s. Unusually, both publications contain little fiction but instead purport to report the events of the war through the combined narrative devices of comic art illustration and photographic narrative sequences constructed from official US Marine Corps and Navy photographs. The content of these photographs had been reviewed and cleared for Magazine Enterprises' use by the US Marine Corps (*USMC No. 3*).

As previously mentioned, *USMC No. 1* was initially aimed at a non-military and non-adult audience. However, there are certain anomalies in the content of *USMC No. 1* that draw into question the suitability of this publication for children. The artwork is graphically violent, perhaps an indication that the title was not entirely aimed at children. By contemporary standards the photographs also provide graphic representations of violence and death. One photographic narrative depicted rows of bodies of Japanese soldiers 'half-buried in the tidal sands of the Tenaru River' after their 'vicious' attack on US Marine defences (*USMC No. 1*).

Of course, such graphic representations of violence, even captured through the lens of the photographer, are no solid indication that the intended audience consisted of adult males and specifically the US Armed Forces. However, the inclusion of the image of a naked marine

under an oil drum shower with his buttocks centred on the page beneath the palm trees of the South Pacific is a clear indication of exactly the intended demographic for this particular Magazine Enterprises publication (*USMC No. 1*). And, further identifying Sullivan's publication as specifically targeted at American males eligible for military service if not already actively serving, *USMC No. 1* also contained a recruiting advertisement and a full-page advertisement for a Red Cross blood collection drive (*USMC No. 1*). The space for this latter advertisement was notably provided by the publisher, who was also the editor, Vincent Sullivan. *The United States Marines* achieved its target market and the publication proved to be a success. Neither of Magazine Enterprises' later war-themed publications (*USMC No. 3* and *AAF*) contained any semblance of being targeted at children but instead built upon the popularity of the *USMC* series with service personnel and adults, particularly men. Again, this is evidenced by changes in the advertising on the final page of the publication, as discussed below.

The structure and format of these publications is informative, though dissimilar to *U.S.A. Is Ready*. The former recount historical events without resorting to the imaginative reconstructions or characterisations found in the majority of war-themed comics titles. Rarely were individual protagonists identified in accounts of battles, and the conflict was primarily located within the Pacific theatre of conflict. The heroes of each comic strip story were the marines and navy personnel of the US Armed Forces as an implied, coherent whole – the perennially reinforced narrative being that every member of the US Armed Forces and every American doing their part for the war effort were truly heroes.

Photo-narrative accounts of conflict in the Pacific amalgamated with photo-realistic illustration in the comics style of sequential narrative identifies these particular publications as a unique combination of cultural record for the period. Realism was achieved through the use of real events to convey explicit verisimilitude. The resulting combination of photo-realistic illustration and photographic narrative sequences opened a potential sphere of influence associated with these publications that was unrivalled by other war-related comics. This further dissolves the boundary between fantasy and reality presented within wartime comic strip and book publications more generally.

In addition, within the illustrated narrative there were also remarkable representations of American casualties that were similar stylistically to photographic images of the victims of conflict. In one instance in particular, the bodies of deceased American marines were shown in the foreground floating amid violent surf with other flotsam after a

beachhead landing, while their fellow soldiers continued the assault against a distant pillbox in the background. One wounded marine was receiving medical treatment from an army corpsman on the beach (demonstrating that casualties would be looked after), while another hung motionless and presumably dead against the beachhead fortifications. Counting the five deceased marines in the ocean foreground, added to the one dead and one injured on the beach, the image depicted seven American casualties and, including the corpsman, seven uninjured marines still fighting. In contrast to more usual depictions of warfare in comics, these publications represented war as remarkably violent. As well as illustrated representations of US casualties, they also included occasional photographs of actual American fatalities. In one instance, the reader's attention is drawn to the dead body of an American marine who was 'killed instantly' and photographed during an attack on a Japanese tank and machine gun nest on Bougainville Island (*USMC, No. 3*).

However, the violence represented as being suffered by the US forces pales in comparison to the repeated images of graphic and brutal violence suffered by the enemy as the marines 'cry havoc', meaning prisoners will not be taken. In particular, the repeated representations of death by fire, and especially by American flamethrowers, reveals this brutal weapon of war to be a popular favourite in the minds of the artists, editor and audience alike. As before, the violence of these illustrated images is reinforced by photographic narratives. These depict the aftermath of the illustrated actions and clearly show the charred bodies of Japanese casualties. In one instance, two burned Japanese bodies were shown on the island of Namur while an American marine stood casually beside them holding his flamethrower aloft (*USMC No. 3*). This image was immediately followed by one of a mass grave of Japanese casualties on the same island, while the narrative text draws the reader's attention to the Japanese convention of committing suicide or 'Hari Kari' as opposed to the dishonour of surrendering or being captured. Again, it can be argued that explicit verisimilitude is achieved through realism.

One particular page of *USMC* contained a narrative sequence of illustrated images depicting, in succession, a series of graphically violent images that, while brutally representative of the essential nature of warfare, were extraordinarily vicious. The first panel of this sequence (the second panel on the page in question) showed a Japanese infantryman being engulfed in double flame on the island of Tarawa by two marine flamethrowers. The soldier throws his arms up in agony beside the bodies of two other Japanese casualties. The posture of the Japanese casualty

is arguably indicative of either extreme suffering or surrender, further implying the ruthless nature of military combat even as undertaken by American 'heroes' whose actions are unquestionably benevolent within the dominant narrative of both the comics and the United States in general. The second panel depicted a US marine shooting a Japanese infantryman in the chest. The Japanese soldier is shown to be on his knees before the marine. Again, the image contains the corpses of two soldiers in the foreground implied, but not clearly represented, as further Japanese casualties of the battle of Tarawa. The third image of this ruthless sequence represented the 'bloody business of mopping up' as a Japanese soldier is bayoneted by a fresh-faced and youthful marine who performs this action without breaking stride (*USMC No. 3*). The final panel on this page again drew the reader's attention to the Japanese convention of committing Hari Kari. In this panel, a defeated Japanese soldier is shown sitting inside a fortification facing the barrel of his rifle, which he is using to end his life. The depiction of this soldier in his bare feet alludes to the nature of such a method of suicide: the physiology of most human beings necessitates trigger pressure being applied with the toes in order to ensure that the barrel of the rifle is aligned with the head of the suicide. The trajectory of the bullet was clearly represented passing through the Japanese soldier's skull and embedding itself in the wall of the fortifications directly behind him. A similar Japanese suicide is shown in the foreground, having already committed Hari Kari. Once more the Japanese are represented as the 'other', in contrast to the medical provision given to the marines in a previous example.

Such images reinforced the brutal violence of modern warfare in the minds of the publication's readership while primarily directing it against the enemy. They also located these particular publications, with their intended adult readership and distribution amongst US servicemen, outside the majority of American comics publications. The earlier observations of the OWI that '[r]epresentations of actual warfare lack violence' certainly do not apply to these particular publications.[40]

Conclusion

By opening an important space for American visual artists to appeal to the emotions of their audience and holding a mirror to the editorial stance of their publishers, comics provide a unique contribution to the historical record of this period. Through intelligent manipulations of the conventions of comics narrative in tandem with an engagement with advertising and propaganda, the storytelling aspect

of comics coupled with their mass circulation rendered the medium one of the most effective and efficient mass communications platforms of the Second World War. Strips were taken seriously by the OWI and by their audience. By developing, increasing and manipulating the reader's empathy and identification with the characters presented, either in the main narratives or the embedded advertising and propaganda messages, the comics examined in this chapter fed upon popular political and cultural attitudes, but also contributed to them in a unique way. This was achieved through a blend of propaganda message, interacting with commercial influence and changing representations of heroism and of enemy. In particular this change in the depiction of the enemy over time provides a dynamic record for historians. One main contribution of comic strip and book publications to the American Second World War effort was to dramatise the conflict for those members of the public who were not directly involved in the conflict. The idea that Superman usually fights Home Front spies and saboteurs, whereas marines fight the Japanese, although stereotypical, also served to boost morale, entertain and inform members of the armed forces who were either in training or engaged in active service on the front lines of the conflict.

The contribution of comic strips was clearly part of the propaganda equation, and as such these contemporary publications have a crucial role to play amongst the body of popular culture sources for those seeking to understand how American hegemonic narrative aimed to influence the hearts and minds of civilians and troops in action.

7

The Cultural Construction of Women: Pin-Ups, Proactive Women and Representation in Combat

This chapter provides an important record of gendered values at a turning point in history when attitudes towards women and their contribution to society were undergoing fundamental change. Respecting E. H. Carr's emphasis on rehabilitation of sources (1961), whilst also concurring with Collingwood's (1935) idea of interpolation, the aim is to compare and contrast cultural record transnationally in a selection of sources that contribute discursively to academic understanding of both women as wartime pin-ups and women at war. The range of potential representation of women varies according to the intended readership of the publication, the point of view adopted and the consequential subjectivity and framing. The types of record discerned are coloured by the discursive contexts within which the comics are evaluated. This chapter carries out examinations focused on the wartime needs of mass circulation daily strips, the roles fulfilled by female pin-up characters in servicemen newspapers and the accuracy or aptness of depictions of women in combat scenarios.

First, the male point of view: comics publications illustrated and distributed by the American military during the Second World War, such as Milton Caniff's 'Male Call' and George Baker's 'Sad Sack', both reveal and play upon the importance of pin-up entertainment for service personnel at home and abroad. In contrast, strips in the mainstream press, aimed at a more general Home Front audience, point to a more well-rounded and proactive role for women in the war effort. 'Male Call', deliberately intended as a pin-up strip for the troops, was created by Caniff in order to relieve many of the same tensions and anxieties

illustrated in 'Sad Sack' and serves to clarify the true nature of the pin-up in the hearts and minds of the combatants during the conflict. Published between 1942 and 1946, Milton Caniff's 'Male Call' quickly became one of the most popular features within the camp newspapers and other military publications in which it appeared. The artist, who was also the illustrator of the popular newspaper strip 'Terry and the Pirates', was listed ineligible for military service.

These comic strip publications will be analysed in light of contemporary theory concerning the wartime role of pin-up images and the psychological, social and cultural anxieties that they address in their representation of American women and servicemen. The military press incorporated many kinds of features: cartoons and comic strips were staples, and 'Sad Sack' and 'Male Call' were widely distributed to troops through training camp newspapers and the military publications *Yank* and *Stars and Stripes*. Though 'Sad Sack' is not, in the strictest sense, a pin-up publication, the anxieties to which it humorously alludes in many of its non-continuity episodes highlight the tensions inherent in the homo-social and sexually charged atmosphere of the US military.

Both these publications acknowledge the limitations imposed upon soldiers by the migratory nature of their service and the global conflict. Both publications highlight and encourage a preference for and necessary connection to domesticity over promiscuous (and potentially homosexual) sexuality and serve as an aid in bridging the gap between the domestic and military spheres. This creates a space for the projection and resolution of cultural anxieties and provides relief from the cultural alienation felt by American soldiers serving abroad. The comics often include an educative element within the narrative of individual episodes: this element may be either of a directly military nature or representative of normative moral or social behaviour, promoting a representational role model for soldiers and their behaviour both at home and abroad.

'Male Call'

Showing a link with 'Terry and the Pirates', in the initial episode of Caniff's series 'Male Call' the protagonist, Miss Lace, moves into the house that has been vacated by Burma, her predecessor. However, for the content of 'Male Call' itself, Caniff deliberately rejects continuity between episodes in favour of stand-alone instalments that require no foreknowledge from the reader. Thus, the format constitutes a deliberate

artistic manipulation of the medium to accord with the limitations imposed by its location as a military publication. The content was also sympathetic to the assumed needs of the soldiers, and it drew on what Caniff saw as the psychological and social needs of the audience, the strips akin to 'a two minute furlough back home' (Caniff: 1987, 12). In a letter published on the front page of *Stars and Stripes* in 1942 General George Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff, stated: 'A soldier's newspaper, in these grave times, is more than a morale venture. It is a symbol of the things we are fighting to preserve and spread in this threatened world. It represents the free expression of a free people' (Quoted in Cornebise: 1995, 214).

Despite her allure, Miss Lace is thoroughly unattainable, a chaste tease with wholesome intentions, a 'perpetual maybe' (Stromberg: 2010, 51). She spends time hanging around army bases as a woman who may be sexually available, unlike Wanda and Jane (discussed subsequently in this chapter), who are proactive adventuresses/spies for the war effort. Although she has no official job or career, Miss Lace presents a sexily allegorical and often comical token of the ideals that the troops are fighting for. Indeed, she also becomes an iconic symbol of and connection to the comforts and ideals of the United States.

'Sad Sack'

Deriving the basic premise for his character and the title for his strip by shortening the military term 'sad sack of shit', Sergeant George Baker created this popular wartime comic for publication in *Yank*. Baker's protagonist was deliberately represented as a victim of the institution in which he found himself enlisted. 'Sad Sack' ran for a period of approximately two years as *Yank*'s only regular comic feature. Similar to Caniff, Baker deliberately created a non-continuity strip of stand-alone individual instalments as part of a military publication with a migratory readership. Though not strictly a pin-up publication, 'Sad Sack' proved remarkably popular in American military circles and particularly with enlisted personnel at the very bottom of the chain of command. The strip is unusual in the way that it is rendered in silent pantomime. The 'Sad Sack' is not only an impotent underdog but also a mute victim of military life. Further, Baker's characterisation of women in the strip as fickle and potentially corrupting villains stands in stark contrast to Caniff's heroine and serves to effectively highlight the anxieties and tensions inherent in the reality of military service abroad for Americans during the Second World War.

Pin-ups as private obligation: Reading 'Male Call'

Westbrook argues that US propaganda appealed to 'putatively universal moral values' and to 'Americans as individuals and as families to join the war effort in order to protect the state that protected them [...] at bottom, is an appeal to go to war to defend *private* interests and discharge *private* obligations' (1990, 588). Westbrook further argues that the deployment of pin-ups during wartime effectively constitutes the 'cultural construction of women as objects' of this private obligation (1990, 589).

Lace personified and provided the comforts of home and the domestic sphere to both her enlisted companions within the strips themselves and to her enlisted readership alienated from such comforts by the war and the military establishment of which they were a part. Lace was, therefore, an icon of both tantalising sweetheart and comforting wife/mother. She was at once a symbol of both desirability and domesticity. From her third appearance in an episode titled 'Moral: Keep Your Brass Warm', the explicit identification of Lace as a pin-up was established.[1] The last panel reveals an alluring pin-up poster of Lace given by the character herself to General McGoolty with the handwritten message in one corner, 'Oh Mac – those cold buttons!' (Caniff: 1987, 28).

In Caniff's 'Male Call', Miss Lace at least implies that she is the as yet unclaimed sexual property of a soldier or even a division. In 'Quarantine', she accompanies a group of sailors as opposed to her usual company of enlisted GIs.[2] This rare behaviour is dismissed by Lace as, 'Foof! I like all you fighting guys' (Caniff: 1987, 52). In the second panel of the four-panel sequence a servant arrives and presents Lace with a package from the Signal Corps soldiers, whom Lace calls 'Generals' indiscriminately, and Lace informs her companions that she declined 'a date when you blue jumper Joes tied up' (Caniff: 1987, 52). The package contains 'A garter... made out of signal flags' that the last panel reveals to spell the warning 'Out of bounds, Admiral' (Caniff: 1987, 52). Here military protocol is employed to humorous effect within the context of male rivalry for female attention and also the rivalry inherent in the various branches of the armed forces. However, the humour relies upon the claim made upon Lace as sexual property by the Signal Corps, and the reaction of Caniff's heroine was rendered ambiguously in the final panel. Lace is neither identifiably embarrassed nor laughing but is drawn wide-eyed and with her hand at her mouth.

According to D'Emilio and Freedman the distribution of pin-ups to American troops, along with the official endorsement of pin-up 'nose art' on aeroplanes, tanks and other military vehicles, was a ploy by the government and military establishment to 'encourage heterosexual fantasy in the sex-segregated military' (1988, 274). This practice was encouraged despite the fact such images 'competed with and upstaged the insignias of the state' (Westbrook: 1990, 601). In large part, this was due to the fact that 'American military officials linked the aggressiveness of the effective soldier with healthy, heterosexual desire and worried about sustaining such desire and thwarting homosexuality' (Westbrook: 1990, 595). Madeline Hamilton agrees, concluding that the public consumption of such pin-up images allowed soldiers to 'display their heterosexuality in a potentially homoerotic environment' (Hamilton: 2006, 17).

This conclusion is reinforced within various episodes of 'Male Call'. 'Side Issues' involves a GI overhearing and misunderstanding a conversation between two aircraft mechanics concerning their aeroplane that has been named 'Miss Lace' and has a large nose-art painting of the character on its side.[3] The implied innuendo of the mechanics' conversation, through phrases such as 'She's been on her tail too many times' and 'She hasn't been the same since the captain scraped her belly that night', leads the GI to immediately defend the honour of Miss Lace, whom he claims to know personally, saying, 'I won't let you fellers talk about her that way! She's a nice girl' (Caniff: 1987, 91). The fact that the mechanics are discussing the aeroplane 'Miss Lace' and not the lady herself is not revealed until the following panel as, pointing towards the aeroplane, one mechanic asks, 'What's eating this joker?' (Caniff: 1987, 91).

In the main, Westbrook's argument is predicated upon the popularity of conservative images of Betty Grable, by far the most widely sought after pin-up girl of the Second World War, as compared with the more sexually suggestive images of her (slightly) less popular rivals such as Rita Hayworth. This pattern indicates, according to Westbrook, that 'Grable and many of the other most popular pin-up models were viewed not only as objects of sexual fantasy but also as representative of women, standing in for wives and sweethearts on the homefront' (Westbrook: 1990, 596). Grable's appeal, concludes Westbrook, 'was less as an erotic "sex goddess" than as a symbol of the kind of woman for whom American men – especially American working-class men – were fighting'. Again Hamilton agrees, writing that though the pin-up

constituted 'an object of shared public heterosexual desire, the pin-up also enabled individual servicemen to turn away from the relentlessly masculine sphere of the armed forces towards memories of home and the pleasures of domestic life' (Hamilton: 2006, 13).

How does this psychological interpretation of the pin-up emerge in Miss Lace strips? After three panels indicating that Lace is being sexually propositioned by a young soldier, to which she acquiesces, saying, 'Come to my place late tomorrow night – I gotta watch my reputation!', the episode 'This Took Crust' concludes with our heroine wearing an apron and serving the now contented-looking GI with a freshly baked pie, presumably containing apples and tasting 'just like mom used to make'.[4]

In 'Like a Fetter from Home', the heroine reveals her extensive understanding of male psychology as she manipulates and revitalises a depressed and homesick GI by chastising and berating him at every turn. Though this behaviour is remarkably out of character for the usually affable and amiable Miss Lace, her act is so similar to the domestic environment of the depressed GI that it immediately lifts him out of his stupor and he concludes in the final panel that, 'Miss Lace is wunnaful – reminds me so much of my Goitrude!' (Caniff: 1987, 46).

Further, Miss Lace often directly involves herself with her companions' domestic lives, though this is occasionally done under duress. In 'Fire Control Manual',[5] Lace is overheard helping a young GI write a letter to his sweetheart at home that will get her 'crying in her ink bottle' and 'burn out the censor's condenser!' (Caniff: 1987, 42). After the introductory panel in 'Snappy Story' in which she is being begged with the heavily sexualised plea of 'The trouble is, you lead a fella on – then, just when he thinks you're willing, you back out!',[6] Lace consents to look through the soldier's family photographs that he took on his 'last furlough' (Caniff: 1987, 84). These episodes highlight the importance of characters such as Miss Lace bridging the gap between the military and domestic spheres by directing her attention to such representations of domesticity as family photographs and letters to and from home. Indeed, in one of the first 'Male Call' episodes, 'Solid Sender', which in fact was a re-inked version of an earlier 'Terry and the Pirates' strip featuring Caniff's character Burma, Miss Lace positions herself as a direct, physical substitute for the comforts of home life as she symbolically offers contact with her as a proxy in lieu of correspondence with family.[7] Upon discovering a glum soldier on a street corner who has received no letter from home, Lace immediately raises his spirits with a kiss and tells the much happier-looking GI, whose face is now covered in lipstick

marks, 'Tell those A.P.O. Joes you played a little private post office . . . and there are the stamps to prove it!' (Caniff: 1987, 28).

Pin-ups as pin-ups

The theme and location of the pin-up within the American military pervades 'Male Call'. 'Something Hot at the PX' narrates a misunderstanding between the military police and a group of enterprising soldiers who have established a 'Pin-Up Exchange'.[8] The Exchange is advertising a variety of posters of beautiful women with slogans such as 'It's no sin to un-pin', 'Get a doll for your wall', 'Beauty is booty', 'Trade a babe' and 'Got a maid to sell or trade?' (Caniff: 1987, 32). There is no indication that the soldiers will be punished for this enterprise by the military police. The humour hinges upon the misunderstanding that the soldiers were 'Selling military information' as opposed to pin-ups. The anachronistic irony is, of course, that such pin-ups can arguably be construed as military information, of a kind.

The entrenched position of the pin-up within all levels of the military chain of command is revealed in 'Pets Beget Whet Threat'.[9] The sequence opens with a new lieutenant chastising a group of GIs about the pin-up posters on their wall. The lieutenant describes the posters as 'childish things' that should be of no interest to 'combat troops' (Caniff: 1987, 70). Upon reporting this practice to his superior officer, the lieutenant is startled to observe the walls of his superior's quarters similarly bedecked with pin-up posters of naked females.

However, arguably the most articulate instance of the military importance of the pin-up is referred to in 'Nice Lines of Communication'.[10] Caniff extends his usual four-panel sequence into six panels in order to illustrate the great lengths that soldiers will go to for their pin-up images and all they signify. An unidentified GI wades through rivers, crawls through a muddy battlefield, across great distances and through trenches, all the time carrying a package alongside his rifle. The final panel reveals that this package contains a poster of Lace on which is written 'Love to B Company Lace'. The expressions of the soldiers in the final panel are of joy and amusement and, arguably, also of pride. That the soldier who delivers the poster holds the package with the same reverence as his rifle could be an indicator of the importance of the energising role of Lace and, by extension, all pin-ups doing their part for the boys.

Despina Kakoudaki defines the pin-up according to two main features. Firstly, 'pinups usually depict one body in its entirety' and, secondly, the

'main stylistic feature of the pinup results from the genre's focus on the potential sexual energy of the single body' (2004, 339). Of course, to say that such pin-up images were entirely innocent and only communicated wholesome messages of domesticity would be absurd. The direct sexual allure of the pin-up is also addressed in 'Male Call'. There are many notable instances when both humour and the military angle are sidelined in favour of simply presenting a sequential depiction of an alluring woman in various stages of undress. 'Contour Map (Note Magnetic Azimuths and Topographic Features)' depicts four images of Lace as traditional pin-up.[11] There is no narrative within the strip and the only text connecting the images is the sentence, 'You mean you want a gag, too?' (Caniff: 1987, 68). 'There's a War on, Don't Be a No Show' plays upon common recruitment terminology and opens with a letter from 'Dogface Dan' to Lace requesting that she 'Show up in real pin-up outfits – you know – like the movie stills'[12] (Caniff: 1987, 45). Lace obliges her correspondent by modelling four such outfits in the subsequent panels. Lace concludes that the audience is 'stuck with me the way I am – not pinned up' and signs off her reply to Dogface Dan in her typically unattainable way as 'Approximately yours, Lace' (Caniff: 1987, 45).

Pin-ups as tool and talisman

Kakoudaki identifies the pin-up, particularly when portrayed as 'nose art' on vehicles, 'as a talisman' with 'power over things' and machinery in particular, citing the traditional ties between pin-up art and technology (2004, 340, 363). This talismanic superstition is incorporated into 'Male Call' in an episode entitled 'What the Newsreel Did Not Show'.[13] The first panel depicts four soldiers in a jeep driving past Lace, all craning their necks to look at her. The second panel of the three-panel sequence shows the jeep bouncing the soldiers from their seats over rough terrain. Devoid of any driver, its grill manipulated into a lusty leer, the jeep itself pursues Lace in the third panel. Clearly showing her garter as her skirt flares as she runs, the strip is indicative of the connection between, and the reliance of soldiers upon, pin-up images as iconic representative of the ideals for which they are fighting and the machinery with which they fight.

The identification of pin-up models with military machinery runs beyond talismanic superstition and firmly into the real necessity of education, as in 'Ranks for the Memory' in which two officers explain the protocol for saluting between the army and navy to Lace.[14] The

three-panel sequence concludes with an entire panel dedicated to a representation of equivalent ranks between the American navy and Marine Corps. In 'Male Call', 'Zest in OTS' soldiers during training are being inspected by an officer 'Worried about the failure of the men to identify aircraft silhouettes'[15] (Caniff: 1987, 29). The officer is then informed that the barracks has a 'new lecture system on that' in which 'the men combined their pin-up pictures with recognition charts'. The improvement in the men is dramatic. They are shown shouting out correct answers with gusto. The officer concludes the sequence remarking, 'Very interesting! I – ah – believe I'll stay and brush up on those sha – I mean outlines myself' (Caniff: 1987, 29). The connection made was between the outlines of the female form and the outlines of aeroplanes; the officers were impressed at the ingenuity of the soldiers and the results.

The value of 'Male Call' as a record of *mentalité* regarding male thinking is further demonstrated by the representation of soldiers' behaviour in the strips. The male point of view has to be compatible with the perceptions of normative behaviour in the US Armed Forces, and this is both implicit and explicit in the strips. Though there are occasional stand-offs and brawls necessitated by masculine rivalry, the interactions with Lace, though sexually charged (predominantly with innuendo), are entirely wholesome. On the few occasions when a soldier oversteps the conventions of civil interaction, Lace is perfectly capable of rendering him unconscious with a punch to the jaw. For example, in 'Combat Report', upon being asked by military police to explain her actions in knocking out a soldier, Lace reports, 'The general just extended his line of communication too far'.[16] The repetition of the association between the pin-up and lines of communication, as in 'Nice Lines of Communication' mentioned above, further indicates the inherent connection between pin-up images and the connection they represent to the familiar home environment from which soldiers were alienated.[17] The conduct of the soldier who receives the black eye is presented as reprehensible and is duly punished.

From fantasy to reality: Reading 'Sad Sack'

Cultural and racial (sexual) anxiety over the lack of white, American female company available to the troops was also illustrated by Baker in a 'Sad Sack' strip entitled 'Back to Earth'. The Sad Sack is initially illustrated sitting on his kit bag, dreamily looking out over the ocean towards a sign which reads 'Pacific'. In the next panel, the Sack is shown

fantasising about himself watching a sensual dance by a voluptuous, foreign female wearing a revealingly short skirt. As the fantasy continues in the third panel of eight, the Sack receives a kiss from this same female after the conclusion of her dance. In the fourth panel the Sack's ship is pulling into land and he is greeted by four women, smiling and waving. They are, however, wearing slightly more conservative skirts than the Sack's fantasy female. The sixth panel reveals these women to be American members of a USO troupe who subsequently board the boat and wave goodbye to Baker's hero. He is left dejectedly in the company of a large and equally dejected-looking black man. There is a stark contrast here between the fantasies of soldiers who believed the war presented them with an opportunity to travel the world and meet foreign women, and the reality of the situation in which they eventually found themselves.

Though neither Caniff nor Baker directly illustrated the inherent anxieties concerning American soldiers enjoying the companionship of promiscuous foreign females, Baker's general portrayal of the women in 'Sad Sack' was distinct from Caniff's and alluded to the social fears outlined above. While Caniff presented a popular heroine in the character of Miss Lace, the females encountered by Baker's hero inevitably turned out to be nothing more than villains intent on parting the Sack from his hard-earned money and ultimately leaving him for the companionship of an officer should one eventually appear. Arguably the best example illustrating the discrepancy between the imaginative fantasy of the everyday enlisted dogsbody and the fickle, usurious reality occurs in 'The Date'. In this strip sequence, Baker initially portrays the Sack escorting an attractive young lady from her house while happily daydreaming about kissing her. This fantasy element, clearly presented from the male perspective, is inverted during the course of Baker's trademark eight-panel silent pantomime as the Sack discovers the expensive reality of taking his date first to dinner at 'Spiffy Food' then to a show, followed by drinks at a 'Ritzy Nite Club' and a taxi ride home. By the time the Sack does indeed win himself a goodnight kiss for his efforts, all he can think about is the financial cost of the evening as exhibited by his thought bubble containing a dollar sign in the final panel. The discrepancy between fantasy and reality is exhibited as an illustration of the military anxieties concerning interaction with local females as well as an educative example promoting cautious behaviour in his readership should they find themselves in similar circumstances to Baker's popular hero.

Home Front readerships: The female point of view

So far this chapter has analysed representations of women by male comic strip creators, aimed at meeting the assumed psychological needs of the specific readership consisting of American servicemen. However, female characters in Allied Second World War comic strips published by the mainstream press were intended, by definition, to target a much broader and diverse Home Front readership. 'Wanda the War Girl', a local Australian comic reflecting a female point of view, combined with some vernacular characteristics, was created by Kath O'Brien, a woman whose intention was 'to give credit to Australian service girls for the marvelous job they are doing'. Such strips are historically significant as a precedential cultural record because the Second World War represents the first time that Australian servicewomen existed.[18]

'Wanda the War Girl', although a sexually provocative pin-up, presented a form of female representation necessitated by the Second World War that differed from earlier styles. The female character was powerful and productive: her bravery and attraction derived from her proactive presence in male spheres. 'Wanda the War Girl' was 'one of the first comics to reflect a female point of view [and was] reflective of its period' (Ryan: 1979, 53). Here was a fresh gender representation that was distinctive during this period in both form and in substance, extending the scope and range of female comic strip characters. As such, the well-dressed adventuress and spy exemplified a new attitude towards women (Figure 7.1).

During the Second World War, one of life's simple pleasures for the general public was to read the pull-out comics sections in the Sunday newspapers. Ruth Marchant James, a resident of Cottesloe in Perth, Australia, recalls that she could not wait to consume 'Wanda the War Girl', a strip first published in the (Sydney) *Sunday Telegraph* in 1943 (2007). 'Wanda the War Girl' appealed to adults and was said to be more popular with children than *Superman* (Ciddor: 1998, 23). A school history textbook about the period claims that Wanda was the first wartime Australian female icon: servicemen painted her picture on their tanks and planes and she was said to be Australia's favourite pin-up (Ciddor: 1998, 23). She escaped from espionage dangers involving German and Japanese armed forces, and her foolhardy exploits were often drawn from contemporary newspaper stories, evidence not only of an explicit and deliberate form of cultural record, but also a reminder in this case of the triangulation provided by the relationship that comic strips can

Figure 7.1 Wanda exemplifies the new role for women that emerged during the Second World War
Source: O'Brien, K. 'Wanda Smashes the black market', *The Wanda Comic* No.1, The Supercomic series.

have with other, more traditional sources that are frequently also used by historians.

Not only was Wanda beautiful and feminine, she was also a tough, independent woman. O'Brien recognised the changing social status and working lives of women. The overall effect of the strip was refreshingly different from the generally negative depiction of the sexualised woman in Australian war comics (Laurie: 1999, 121). O'Brien was influenced by 'Black Fury', an early wartime comic in the *Telegraph* (drawn by another woman, American Tarpé Mills), and by Norman Pett's extremely successful character 'Jane', who appeared in Britain's *Daily Mirror.* According to John Ryan, O'Brien's illustrative style is one of the most original and individual styles to appear in Australian comics, and is reminiscent of the work of artist William Dobell (1979, 53).[19]

As with the previous US examples, Wanda and Jane were sexually provocative pin-ups who furthered the war effort, undoubtedly aiding wartime propaganda. Joseph Witek acknowledges that there is a recent tendency to connect 'the textual specificities of the comic form

to the embeddedness of comics in social, cultural, and economic systems' (1999, 4). With this in mind, it can be argued that 'Wanda the War Girl' and Britain's 'Jane at War' differed from Miss Lace and the women in 'Sad Sack' in that both Wanda and Jane provided a newly progressive wartime depiction and a social trend for women to leave the home in order meaningfully to serve the war effort. Roger Sabin has noted that American superheroes became 'unashamed morale-boosters', patriotic figures fighting for their country, so why should a woman not also fulfil this function (1996, 146)? Just like Wonder Woman departed from matriarchal isolation to contend with the world of men and assist the Allies, these heroines are markers of emerging progressive *mentalités*.

Contemporary accounts testify to the enormous popularity of Jane. For instance, A. J. Brown, an intelligence officer at British Bomber Stations during the war, with the rank of squadron leader, wrote:

> Beyond a quick, cursory glance at the main items in the popular press, few of them [flying personnel] seem interested in the political columns of the more serious dailies or weeklies. On the other hand there is an almost fanatical interest in the strip cartoonists. I have seen Wing Commanders fight with Squadron Leaders for the *Daily M—,* merely to see the latest development in the career of 'Jane' and 'Popeye' etc., who are certainly far and away the most popular 'features' in the daily press. 'Jane' has an enormous following among flying crews, bigger than any one film star, and it is remarkable how she maintains her grip on these fans year after year. It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of 'Jane' is of more immediate interest to most R.A.F. personnel than the fate of the Allies on any one day.
>
> (1943, 105)

However, Jane was a different type of female to Wanda: just as patriotic and brave, but a somewhat absent-minded character whose good intentions were invariably accident-prone. When Jane, who worked as a spy, got into difficulty, her clothes were always central to the storyline because the scrape would entail her losing most of them. Unlike Wanda, who was created from O'Brien's imagination, Pett's drawings were constructed around regular poses by a real-life model, Christabel Leighton-Porter, who also gave stage shows for the troops during the war. She became a celebrity in her own right, but always posing as Jane, accompanied by a real dog, Fritzi, identical to the comic strip canine.

Context, social realism and problems of stereotyping

It is generally accepted that if there had not been a war there would never have been an Australian comic book industry (Gordon: 1998, 10).[20] This was due mainly to import licensing regulations and economic sanctions that restricted American imports during the Second World War. By 1948 the industry had grown to such an extent that there were 38 local and imported (mainly British) comics titles available each week (Stone: 1994, 72; Ryan: 1979, 197). However, when import restrictions were lifted, American products flooded the market again to such an extent that in the post-war period 80 per cent of comics circulating originated in the United States (Lent: 1999, 22). Despite the heavy competition, or maybe because of it, the popular characters produced in local comics have a social significance as part of the nation's cultural heritage.

The majority of characters depicted in comics were male, and when combined with a tendency to oversimplify for cartoon purposes, the result was that most female characters can be categorised as virgin, mother or crone (Stromberg: 2010, 50). In fact, the majority of women's roles can be further reduced to just two categories: either maiden/vamp or mother/old hag. The former are depicted as busty, physically exaggerated objects of desire, worthy only of rescue or 'merely a beautiful token to be at the side of the male main character'. The mother/hag is usually ugly and dominates her overly domesticated husband (Stromberg: 2010, 136). In wartime comics, women were usually depicted as civilian casualties, grieving relatives, and/or the victims of rape, pillage, looting or starvation (Stromberg: 2010, 50).

As Mathew McAllister, Edward Sewell and Ian Gordon point out, portrayals of life are not neutral or random (2001, 5); ideology is strongly connected to issues of social power. Ninety-five per cent of those who created comics were male and it was always assumed (during the wartime period at least; this changed in the post-war years) that 90 per cent of the readers were as well. Previously, the adventure genre was dominant and bravery centred on missions to create 'peace and order out of the chaos produced by the forces of evil' (Foster: 1999, 145); women's roles were as damsels in distress, assistants to the male protagonist or victims. Up until 1939, women were not usually shown as members of the armed services, and the Second World War was the first time that Australian women were depicted in such positions.

Thus 'Wanda the War Girl' reflected this change; as Witek suggests, 'Art has a psychological need to hear and render the truth' (1989, 114). This aspect of representation can also be seen in the US comics industry,

where female characters assumed service roles in addition to becoming costumed superheroes (Robbins: 1996). Much of Wanda's female competition in Australia was less socially realistic. In January 1945 the *Daily Mirror* introduced a cartoon strip by 16-year-old Moira Bertram, *Jo and Her Magic Cape*. Dark-haired Jo was beautiful and used her magic cape to help her boyfriend, an American pilot named Serge, to outwit gangsters, as well as the Japanese. The magic cape was a common trope, a comic strip fictional device to speed up the narrative and herald action, but it lacked realism and detracted from Jo's natural innate bravery and credibility. The strip ran for a few months before moving into comic books. In 1945 another local artist, Syd Miller (of 'Chesty Bond' fame), created a female character called Sandra for the *Melbourne Herald*. Although Sandra also appeared in England and elsewhere, according to John Ryan, Miller found that a female character limited the types of stories he could present. Sandra was axed the following year, to be replaced by the inimitable 'Rod Craig', an adventure strip that was adapted as a radio serial (Ryan: 1979, 54).

Comic creators believed that their male readership would not tolerate too many female characters because they slowed the action. The relative scarcity of female characters meant that those who did appear were not only more likely to occupy traditional roles, such as mother or wife, but would be open to stereotyping. Martin Barker argues a form of mitigation against allegations of stereotyping, however, by stating that the comic form has an equalising effect. This, he argues, should point theorists towards a slightly different line of enquiry: 'It makes no difference whether it is a stereotype of a plumber, a tax inspector, a policeman, a black person, a demented pig or a coward. For purposes of the strip, all are equalized. Therefore they are not just "stereotypes", they are much more; they are types for the purposes of the formula of the stories' (Barker: 1989, 116).

Nevertheless, there must be a relativist case to argue: 'types' of women impact upon cultural understanding of a far larger proportion of a country's population than do those of plumbers, for example. Clearly, the issue of representation within the comics form is a complex one: contemporary scholarship is particularly sensitive to ways in which visual discourse on the 'other' is historically determined. W. J. T. Mitchell, for instance, discusses how 'the relative position of visual and verbal representation is . . . never simply a formal issue or a question to be settled by scientific semiotics' (Worcester and Heer: 2009, 116). In comics and graphic art the danger of negative caricature is very real, and reductive iconography can have a dehumanising effect when

it is presented visually in the form of deformed features such as a big bust, fat body or heavy wrinkles, for example. Character types need to be easily recognised, while unique identity tends not to be celebrated.

One problem from the standpoint of historical female representation is the lack of a range of formulas involving women, exacerbated by a propensity to copy American formats and types when the originals were not available; such was the case with local comic artist Dan Russell's 1942 creation of reporter Wanda Dare, an imitation of Brenda Starr. In this admittedly limited context, 'Wanda the War Girl' appears relatively distinctive, especially in light of other problems associated with the comics form and the impact of such problems on the representation of gender. The complex way in which words and pictures are combined can allow for a range of meanings, but comic strip space is constrained (Walker: 1994, 9), and such limitations may encourage creators to resort to Barker's types for the formula of the story. The spatial limitations of the form need to be recognised for the effect they have on other aspects, such as the creation of a kind of visual shorthand, a reliance on standard character types and formulaic plots. As Scott McCloud argues, comics are uniquely placed to explore the space between reality and representation because the visuals operate mainly as iconic translations, and this is reinforced by the narrative structure (1994, 24–25). Narrative speed and concision is often helped by the fact that comics can change point of view easily (Carrier: 2000, 55), something that can be both a strength and a weakness of the form.

There were three main taboo subjects during the 1940s and the 1950s for Australian comics: sex, violence and bad language. Kissing and passionate embraces in romance comics were permitted but 'there was seldom any physical contact between the genders' (Foster: 1999, 145). Casual sex was considered risky, both to health and to Allied national security. Yet Wanda was a voyeur's delight, for her clothes were constantly torn, the better to display her long, shapely legs and impressive bosom. Clothes (before they came off, in Jane's case) had to be fashionable, feminine and carefully styled to display the character's shapely figure. In fact, Jane's underwear was the most essential part of her wardrobe. Creator Norman Pett was under much pressure to produce speedily and regularly for the British *Daily Mirror*. On one occasion he missed his deadline and had his contract suspended. After he had reached an agreement with the management, Jane returned and told her fans that she had been away because she had lost her pants. The newspaper office was then inundated with parcels from readers containing

replacement undies, including one with a touching note from a 13-year-old girl, 'Dear Jane, Perhaps these will help you out' (Saunders: 2004, 24).

Jane became known as the armed forces' secret weapon, credited with having sent the British troops six miles into German-occupied France in just one day, following D-Day, when she finally shed all, rather than just some, of her clothes (Saunders: 2004, 90–114). Both Wanda and Jane were the result of propaganda campaigns that encouraged men to idolise a particular sort of woman, the attractive servicewoman (Westbrook: 1990, 587). Wanda was also a 'truly national phenomenon and was seen as boosting the morale of the men in military service' (Stromberg: 2010, 50–51). Scholars have acknowledged that the pin-up can channel sexual energy by transforming it into military energy as a weapon (Kakoudaki: 2004, 231). In the face of a global conflict of unprecedented reach, governments needed to recruit women for the war effort, so the expansion of the roles for women was inevitable. What was new in representational terms was that these 'new' women were sexy, powerful, brave and productive.

Reading Jane and Wanda as liberated women

Jane as the comic strip wartime heroine with a big-heart captured the imagination of the time, providing an iconic symbolism that served to simultaneously inspire and amuse wartime populations worldwide. Jane's propensity to shed clothes right, left and centre prompted an ongoing storyline with plenty of scope for support ephemera, such as books, posters, calendars and the publication *Jane's Journal*. This formula kept Pett busy with Jane from 1932–48 and was continued by Pett's assistant Mike Hubbard through to 1959 (Saunders: 2004, 164). There were also two Jane cinema films and a 1982 BBC Television series, while Christabel Leighton-Porter, in the role of Jane, continued to make charity appeals and other public appearances until 1980.

A final-page cartoon in the 1946 edition by Rylee Publications epitomises the post-war image. Jane is leaving her house for work (with Fritzi, as ever), striding out through the front gate purposefully, with an umbrella in one hand and a purse in the other, sporting a smart hat and a stylish pencil-shaped jacket that displays her waist and is bordered by a business-like, crisp white collar. She also wears high heels and silk stockings. However, the frill of her underwear is visible below the bottom of her jacket, and leads on to frilly suspenders. The caption reads, 'I can't help feeling I've forgotten something'. In contrast, Wanda

supported Australian troops in their war effort with a bravery that was a deliberate exaggeration in pursuit of that aim. Almost bordering on recklessness, the strip's valorisation of female bravery served the needs of wartime propaganda; Wanda represented female liberation through conscription to the war machine, a tough adventuress who makes an active contribution to the war effort.

In the *Sunday Telegraph* on 2 January 1944, Wanda, suitably attired in sexy jungle gear, is taking the lead by suggesting that her associate Jim and their helper should seize a store of Japanese rifles. Although she keeps watch while the two men do the business, she still runs fast and is always at the centre of the action. She shoots a rifle and provides insightful narrative comments while all three are firing at the enemy. In February 1944 Wanda proves once more that she can always keep up with the men, and climb dangerous rock faces too, while simultaneously displaying her gorgeous legs. She insists on going ahead with Jim to do a 'recce'. Similarly, in the next episode she contributes to forward planning and strategic thinking. She makes useful suggestions on tactics as the team progresses by proposing that their captured Japanese prisoner could open the cave door: 'make him do his Buddha opening act'. This works, and they open a hidden cave full of wretched prisoners, for whom Wanda shows feminine compassion: 'better release these poor old fellows now, hadn't we?' Then she places a bomb in the Japanese radio device (she is technical as well) and makes a run for it, with pistol in hand, still looking shapely.

On 5 March 1944 we see the other Aussie troops respectfully accepting her as an equal: she shakes hands with them to say thanks, tells them to take care and says goodbye – the 'matey' thing to do. One of them replies, 'we'll be ok, Wanda. We've got to rejoin our cobbers'. Then, as Jim flies the captured plane away, Wanda operates the radio controls, sending a Morse code message: 'Jap radio station gone sky high. Reporting HQRS today. Flying Jap plane. Will signal approach. Wanda'. What amazing capability, control and technical expertise: good entertainment, but also positive encouragement for readers to appreciate that wartime women had their own independent role as proactive servicewomen and as part of the war effort.

The record of women in combat: Quality Comics Group publications

Having covered interpretative analysis and *mentalités* to this point, this chapter now turns to focus more tightly on questions of record,

representation and action with respect to the subject area of women in combat. The imposition of a different discursive historiographical framework yields different perspectives on wartime comics, principally in the determination of identifiable historical content. Rather than seeking to understand the cultural and societal meanings behind their depictions, this part of the analysis seeks to discover where the representation of women in combat scenarios is discernibly valid or accurate, in the sense of its metaphorical aptness. This different lens adds a further, perhaps evolutionary dimension to reflections on the possible roles of women at war as rendered in wartime comics. Returning to the United States, then, the sample of sources consulted are publications of the Quality Comics Group, a private enterprise, and their format is that of the fully fledged anthology comic book magazine, as opposed to the newspaper strip. The core titles examined in depth are *Military Comics*, *Police Comics*, *Smash Comics* and *True Comics* as published through the years 1939–45.

Examining comics for their depictions of women in combat is, quite like the subject area itself, especially important – precisely because women are greatly under-represented in accounts and depictions of war. This is owing to what Linda Grant De Pauw has termed the 'mythology of warfare', which only recognises the roles of 'warriors, victims and whores', where women are rarely the first (Skaine: 1999, 1). As she rightly contends, however, 'women have always and everywhere been inextricably involved in war', so the task is to find them (De Pauw: 1998, xiii). In this vein, this pursuit continues to follow the tenets of rehabilitation and democratisation central to New Cultural History. Unlike the examples above, then, analysis of the Quality Comics Group publications has not focused on assessing particular types, pin-ups or servicewomen, as they were represented. Rather, the point is to assess depictions of any women in combat scenarios, regardless of their prescribed role. It is important to note here that the notion of women in combat does not solely or exclusively denote female soldier. Instead, the subject area, unlike the oft-prevailing military terminology, concerns itself with women, more broadly and respectfully, whose lives are endangered in the course of their duties. Whether armed or designated non-combatant, women typically confront a reality where 'in the heat of combat, artificial distinctions tend to vanish' (Skaine: 1999, 51). In addition to being a significant historiographical area, discussions of women in combat and at war continue to be lively, as evidenced by the popular survey *Women Heroes of World War II* by Kathryn Atwood (2011), but furthermore, the historical is

frequently a central element in contemporary military discussions, especially in the United States. The works of Rosemarie Skaine and De Pauw are simultaneously historical and deliberately focused on then-present debates.

The presence of women in combat scenarios

'The Blue Tracer', a recurring feature in the pages of *Military Comics* by the pioneering Fred Guardineer, is a typical example of a fictional strip with some occasionally outlandish stories, which nevertheless sustains a reasonable degree of verisimilitude in regards to keeping a generalised narrative of the war. In its outlook, the strip might be deemed panoramic, in that it presents short stories, depicting varied campaigns involving different forces and across a number of locales in the global conflict. For example, the story in the first issue of the series, from August 1941, introduces readers to an Anzac company, while the strip in *Military Comics #13* even goes so far as to highlight the Red Army. Such a balanced presentation of Allied collaboration does not appear to have been particularly common in mainstream US comics.[21] The fifth issue of the book contains a precedentially valid 'Blue Tracer' story centred on an American journalist in the theatre of war. The narrative is geographically localised effectively by its reference to the sunken wreck of 'the first torpedo victim of the war', the *Athenia*. As is well known, the SS *Athenia*, a British passenger ship, was sunk on 3 September 1939 by a German U-Boat as it crossed the Atlantic from Glasgow to Montreal. To start, readers are introduced to Lola Thomas as the 'wet and bedraggled lady' who appears to have survived a shipwreck herself.[22] Recognised as a famed correspondent and rescued by the heroes who pilot the bizarre craft, the Blue Tracer, Thomas is a present part of an encounter with, and successful capture of, a Nazi warship. At the conclusion, Thomas vows to write a glowing review of the work of the Tracer as she sails to safer climes aboard the newly acquired vessel.

The rise of female war correspondents in coverage of the Second World War has been assessed, very much like the marked influx of women to industry, as a pivotal moment in the expansion of the roles of women within society. The historiography is comprised of case study work on the lives of specific journalists, often integrated into wider historical surveys. Martha Gellhorn, for example, is one of 18 women covered in depth by Wagner in *Women War Correspondents of World War II* (1989) and also features relatively prominently in the more general anthology, *Women and Journalism* (Chambers et al.: 2004). Highlighting

the continued interest in this area, 2011 saw the release of '*No Job for a Woman': The Women Who Fought to Report WWII*, a documentary film by Michèle Midori Fillion. That *Military Comics*, a contemporary publication, features a female war correspondent in 'The Blue Tracer' is significant, a refracted record of the reality that women did participate in the war in just such a capacity. Despite her fictionalisation, Lola Thomas is an important record of precedent, and the decision to depict a female American journalist as present in the theatre of the Battle of the Atlantic is undoubtedly metaphorically apt. Lola Thomas is a verifiable trace of the real in the pages of *Military Comics*.

Another example of a journalist, but a different kind of record, is found in the pages of *True Comics*. A series devoted to 'all that its name implies',[23] the book is comprised of short and singular stories intended and heralded as factual. Most are biographical, and interestingly a balance is struck between the presentation of historical tales and episodes from the then-present. In this sense, *True Comics*, in its contemporary features, is a solid example of the deliberate and explicit presentation of record. This is the case in its 37th issue, published in July 1944, which highlights the work of photographer Thérèse Bonney. The strip, 'Photo-Fighter', profiles a woman who 'fearlessly set off on what she called "truth raids" into warring Europe' and even chronicles her movements through the course of the war.[24] Bonney was present in Finland during the Russo-Finnish War, departing at its end in March 1940, before moving through Sweden and Holland until the invasion of the latter in May 1940. Thereafter she spent time in France until the occupation, whereupon she returned for a spell to the United States. At that time, she had in her possession some 7,000 negatives and deposited a copy of each photograph at the Library of Congress before returning to the European theatre once more.[25] In its Rare Book and Special Collections Division, the Library still holds a copy of an invitation to the opening of 'An Exhibition of Photographs by Miss Therese Bonney'.[26] The 'Photo-Fighter' strip is essentially an account of the career of a reporter who navigated a number of different theatres of war, often solitarily, in order to carry out her work. On escaping France, Bonney stresses that 'I must get my photos to America where they will tell my people the truth about this awful war'.[27] Indeed, she actively sought to use her photographs to solicit support and aid by highlighting the plight of Europeans, as in *Europe's Children* (1943) and numerous newspaper exposés. These contact points in the strip are found throughout and make this particular issue of *True Comics* a thorough and explicit record, whose truths are factual.

True Comics also demonstrates a real and consistent penchant for positive representation of women in its choices of historical stories, choosing carefully and deliberately to depict individuals whose achievements are both momentous and inspirational. Emily Geiger, a brave spy during the American War of Independence, features in *True Comics #7*, for example, while the life of Harriet Quimby is presented, quite timely perhaps given the contemporary importance of air warfare, in the 36th issue. Quimby was the first licensed female pilot in the United States.[28] Similarly, and on the subject of combat, *True Comics #3* focuses on recovery and rehabilitation, giving an account of 'a forgotten woman in history',[29] Deborah Sampson, who served in the Revolutionary War for two years disguised as a man. Unsurprisingly, these factual stories also had a declared didactic element to them. On a number of occasions, publisher George J. Hecht opened the issue with an editorial piece. Early in the series, in *True Comics #5*, with obvious reference to science fiction and superhero books, Hecht highlights the importance of presenting 'feats accomplished by real people',[30] and while there is no word on the sources used in the compilation of stories, there is a photograph and caption for 'the famous historian and artist',[31] Hendrik Willem Van Loon, a Senior Advisory Editor at Quality Comics. The educative aspect is also reflected by Hecht in his reference to the fan mail received following the launch of the book, as he cites thousands of letters from 'boys and girls, from mothers and fathers, from school teachers and school principals and ministers'.[32] Whether an exaggeration or not, this gives at least some insight into readership. The regularity of stories focusing on extraordinary women was likely a key component in securing and sustaining the interest of female readers.

Women as active combatants

As an example of the transition from being present in a combat scenario to becoming an active combatant, the 'Secret War News' feature in *Military Comics #5* recounts incidents related to possible German flotilla bases near Scapa Flow off the coast of the United Kingdom, and includes a scene in which an un-named British nurse fires a pistol. The recurring feature, which might be likened to *True Comics*, reports on 'True Stories of Daring War Adventures'.[33] The nurse, an ambulance driver, attempts to halt the work of a German spy, firing on him as he seeks to hijack her vehicle. She wounds the German, forcing him to leap from the moving wagon, but loses control in so doing and ultimately crashes into a building. Her fate is unknown and though the nurse in question is

not a protagonist, this may be a precedential record. Nurses were often deployed with combat troops and shared the same dangers. Additionally, the definition of non-combat zones was subject to the realities of warfare and field hospitals, hospital ships and cargo planes alike all saw attacks during the war. Importantly, there are also known cases of nurses caught behind enemy lines, in addition to cases of nurses captured as prisoners of war (Skaine: 1999). In Britain, at least, there is a precedent for women being responsible for weaponry. Some women in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force trained with rifles until at least 1941 (Imperial War Museum), and in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, women operated anti-aircraft guns (National Archives: website). Further, while it is not possible to confirm from the documentation whether the initiative came to pass or was officially recorded, a security officer at an Imphal hospital in 1944 suggested that each nurse of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service be issued with a handgun, if only that they might commit suicide before capture by Japanese forces (Taylor: 1988, 201). Although beyond the scope of this investigation, the examination of first-hand accounts by nurses would be a pertinent addition to this discussion. In short, the nurse discharging a pistol here is a record for which there is some indication of precedent within the historiography.

The arming of the nurse here also plays into the particularly interesting discussions of the ethics of targeting. By picking up a weapon and attempting to halt the feats of a Nazi saboteur, this nurse has arguably made herself, in technical terms, a legitimate target. A complex and polemical issue, the question of arming non-combatants still draws heated debate today. Sharon Wildwind, a US nurse who served in the Vietnam War, illustrates the quandary effectively: 'If nurses arm themselves, they have to give up the sanctity of being a nontarget. Sometimes the sanctity is eroded and all kinds of people are attacked' (Skaine: 1999, 55–56).

Another periphery actor whose depiction is significant and more clearly precedential appears in *Military Comics #13*. Again in 'The Blue Tracer', a female soldier belonging to a Red Army company is present in an episode that sees the heroes tackling a rival Nazi craft. Though she remains un-named, she takes a speaking role, strategising with her comrades.[34] This important example ties in with the well-known and well-established historiography specific to Soviet women at war. Numerous heroic and even mythical soldiers, and particularly snipers, have been profiled in the secondary accounts (Cottam: 1998) and the Soviet Union was notable for its active use of women in combat (Myles: 1981).

Interestingly, the strip also shows a hanged woman in the background of one panel. While it impossible to determine whether she is a soldier, she serves as a further example of the presence of women in combat scenarios.

Returning lastly to the explicitly and deliberately factual, *True Comics #38*, published for August 1944, features the story 'One-Woman Army',[35] centred on the military career of Annie Den Hooch, 'the first woman privileged to wear the uniform of the Netherlands Army'.[36] A determined nurse, Hooch resists Nazi influence and travels to England to join the Dutch army there. For her commitment and insistence on serving in a number of theatres, she becomes a legal exception and, in 1943, is commissioned as a lieutenant in the Netherlands East Indies Army. Summing up one of the central issues pertaining to women in active combat roles very effectively, Hooch remarks to an official, 'You mean I can help Holland officially?'[37] As Skaine, amongst others, keenly emphasises, lack of institutional recognition is a recurring obstacle in the subject area (1999). This again underscores the connection with New Cultural History, with its focus on recovery and rehabilitation. Regrettably, however, in this case it has not been possible to corroborate this narrative of a landmark woman in consultation of the historiography. Despite a wide reading of the historiography of women at war, no account has been taken of non-English sources. If there is a record of Den Hooch, it seems likely it might reside in Dutch works of history. Based on the approach of the book and its general level of accuracy, it would appear unlikely that the story has been fabricated. Nevertheless, without being able to carry out any interaction with other sources, without cross-referencing 'One-Woman Army' must remain an unconfirmed factual record.

Conclusion

Pin-ups in comic strips were referred to earlier as the 'cultural construction of women as objects', but characters who fulfilled proactive servicewomen jobs, such as Wanda and Jane, mitigate against this because they were 'pin-ups plus'. Their independent roles, with jobs in the armed forces, meant they appeared as powerful, brave and productive in their own right, whilst retaining their obvious femininity. The allure of servicewomen in comics emerged as a propaganda need, but nevertheless represents a new form of cultural record: here was a narrative of exaggerated adventure based on the reality of the war effort. The strips 'Male Call' and 'Sad Sack' did not present women as a fighting force and, viewed as a historical source for armed forces' attitudes,

their value lies in the articulation of normative behaviour for men rather than of women, a sense of *mentalité* with regard to the male gaze. Yet the phenomenon of women in combat during total war was new, and therefore carries a historical significance that merits more detailed examination. Changing the historiographical lens through which to evaluate comic books as sources, it is possible to discern altogether different records of women during the war in the publications of the Quality Comics Group. In the context of discussions of women in combat and the theatre of war, moving away from interpretation and further towards processes of cross-reference and determination, yields a more nuanced image of the representation of women at the time, as they are depicted as both present and even courageously active in combat scenarios. Whereas 'Male Call' is a record of *mentalité* and Wanda is a positive inspiration, the features of *Military Comics* and *True Comics*, viewed in context, contain historical content that is more documentary. 'Photo-Fighter', which reports on Thérèse Bonney, is a record detailing a photographer and activist whose work was at war. Importantly, lastly, investigations of this sort are necessary precisely because they can further balance perspectives on the representation of women, but also because they serve to rehabilitate overlooked documentation and still under-recognised subject matter.

8
Collective Culture as Dynamic Record: The *Daily Worker*, 1940–43

Introduction – British communists and total war

In a speech to the House of Commons on 20 August 1940 Winston Churchill emphasised the reality of Total War: 'The whole of the warring nations are engaged, not only soldiers, but the entire population, men, women and children.' As the First World War had shown, the Home Front was crucial to the modern war effort and in the 1939–45 conflict, 'the engineers' war' (Croucher: 1982, ix), manufacturing was essential. In this struggle, fought out on the factory floor, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) made an impact far beyond its small membership in encouraging production and efficiency and discouraging labour conflict. At a time of 'total war', the party whose creed was that of 'producer' (Morgan et al.: 2003, 144) came into its own, but how did this emerge in its main comic strip?

The Communist Party's industrial contribution did not occur until after the Soviet Union joined the Allies following Germany's invasion in June 1942. Prior to this the CPGB had taken the unpopular minority stance that the war was being prosecuted by an uncaring and rapacious government in the interests of capitalism. Their vocalisation of this stance led to the home secretary, Herbert Morrison, banning the party newspaper, the *Daily Worker,* from January 1941 to September 1942. When it re-emerged, the paper and its comic strip, 'The Front Line', had had a radical change of heart. Not only was the conflict now a righteous one, but the factory, previously portrayed as the seat of capitalist profiteering, had changed abruptly into the place where the war would be won.

'The Front Line', of which 163 strips have been found for this study, was drawn by the anonymous artist Hob-Nob and revolved primarily

around the life on the Home Front of a Communist family of three; the mother Clarice, Stan the father and a little girl, Fanackapan, between October 1940 and January 1941 and between September 1942 and June 1943. While the CPGB itself has received considerable attention from scholars, there are few studies of, or even allusions to, its cartoons and comic strips (Mellini: 1990; Worley: 2002, 248; Heathorn and Greenspoon: 2006, 110–111; Hyde: 2011) and 'The Front Line' has not been discussed at all. In contrast, the CPUSA's strips, such as 'Pinky Rankin' and 'Little Lefty', have received more detailed attention (Brunner: 2007; Cohen: 2007).

Wolfgang Hünig (2002, 30) has pointed out that 'the understanding of a cartoon is not an inherent property of the cartoon, but is dependent on the social, cultural and world knowledge of the readers'. In the case of 'The Front Line' such knowledge would, perforce, include the transformation of the CPGB's policy towards the war and the suppression of the *Daily Worker*. However, this chapter also argues, conversely, that with its explicit subjectivity (the close following of party policy) and specific and significant subject locations, 'The Front Line' adds to our knowledge of the CPGB and the intended audience. This chapter therefore uses examples of the comic strip to act as a prism for the analysis of the CPGB's priorities during the Second World War.

Some of the issues changed radically over the course of the conflict, providing a dynamic record, while others remained static. Traces of the party's take on societal attitudes, including women's rights, anti-Semitism and the treatment of black servicemen, also emerge through the strip. Hence, this chapter contends that 'The Front Line' provides a comprehensive view of the Home Front from a CPGB perspective, not only in historical verisimilitude (by relaying with factual accuracy contemporary political issues and events) but also, due to its particular form, in communicating far more fully than editorial articles could the *mentalité* – the mindset – of party members at the time. In doing so the strip forms an easily definable cultural record. This chapter acts as an example for the wider issues of the relationship between social movements, popular culture and humour with the argument that the communal aspects of humour (Lorenz: 1996; Lefcourt: 2001; Verkaaik: 2003) played a significant role in 'The Front Line'. Henri Bergson has said: 'Our laughter is always the laughter of a group' (2009). As will be discussed, the CPGB's internal discipline promoted a closed group mentality, yet it simultaneously aimed to be a mass party and therefore also encouraged a broad definition of class consciousness; both attitudes were reflected in the comic strip.

As the earlier chapter on the 'gullible worker' established, cartoons and comic strips were recognised early on by the Left as being ideally suited to the purposes of propaganda. Many members of the Wobblies in the US, Australasia and Britain joined the incipient Communist parties in the early 1920s, bringing with them their love of cartoons and comic strips. The CPUSA embraced the concept, at least to start with, although with a more restrictive view of art and artists than the IWW had had.[1] In New York, the party published a book of 'red cartoons' in 1928 in which the editor urged the reader to 'use these pictures to stir men and women and boys and girls to think, to hope, to feel and to fight' (Carmon: 1928).

In the UK the party took a more ambiguous stance towards cartoons and the comic strip concept.[2] It was not until 1933 that the *Daily Worker* gained its own cartoonist. Despite the lack of official acknowledgement of the importance of comic strips, Hob-Nob was not totally deprived of recognition. A reader wrote in to say that at his place of work, 'Hob-Nob's cartoons are appreciated by many [...] his cartoons with their realistic themes are easily more popular than the stupid, meaningless comic strips of the capitalist press'.[3] In addition, advertisements for the *Daily Worker* bazaar usually noted that there would be a stall where Hob-Nob's cartoons could be bought as postcards.

The *Daily Worker* had also been running children's strips since its beginning in 1930. These served the dual purpose of not only exposing children to radical politics, but also creating a closed world where every member of the family had a place within the party (Worley: 2002, 248), thereby facilitating an early accumulation of cultural capital (Bourdieu: 2010) within a very narrow field, but one that was considered 'young'. In 1938, 30 per cent of the party's members were in the Young Communist League, and at the party congress in 1937 almost half the delegates were under 30 (Morgan et al.: 2003, 149).

By the Second World War, the comic strip characters of the Left had moved on from the superiority humour of the gullible worker. Workers were no longer an example of the 'other', there to be mocked. Instead, they were to be emulated. The 'Front Liners' were a 'respectable', heteronormative, nuclear family. This was part of the policy of the CPGB; as the prominent party activist, Hymie Fagan, stated, 'we did not want our members to appear queer [unconventional] in the eyes of the working class' (Callaghan and Harker: 2011, 125). Not offending the sensibilities of the working class entailed keeping up an outward appearance, at least, of marital fidelity and hard-working sobriety. As mirrored in 'The Front Line', gender boundaries were also strictly observed.

The 'Front Line' family was very ordinary and the humour stemmed from everyday situations. Unlike contemporary newspaper strips that focused on the Wild West and dashing detectives, narratively nothing very dramatic happened to the British 'Front Line' family. Instead, Clarice, Stan and Fanackapan lived their life largely through day-to-day political activism. This was a narrative device employed to put across the points the *Daily Worker* needed to make, but as accounts of life within the party show, it was normative behaviour for members and their families. In fact, the comic strip acts as a similar form of cultural record to memoirs in providing a sense of the *mentalité* of Communist family existence – the thoughts, feelings and world view less easily captured in CPGB histories. Raphael Samuel, for example, described how his and his mother's life was wholly sublimated to the party: 'The weekend would pass in a whirl of politics. [...] there were stickers to put up on the lampposts ('Second Front Now'); there were the comrades to visit with my mother on her dues-collecting round; there were the books with strange titles [...] to peer at on the bookshelves' (2006: 61).[4] At leisure a CPGB member could join a communist sports, theatre or reading group and their children could become members of the Young Pioneers or, if teenagers, the Young Communist League. Even when 'The Front Line' comic strip characters were killed (temporarily and slightly humorously), dramatic tension took second place to the political message that Air Raid Precautions (ARP) safety measures were inadequate.

The history of the CPGB is not simply that of a minority social movement. It is also part of the narrative of the working class, a people's history that is not always acknowledged. While it would be inaccurate in terms of the operation of the paper to suggest that the *Daily Worker* was a purely grass-roots publication (despite its claims, it was tightly editorially controlled), the party had nonetheless an exceptionally committed membership, numbering 17,756 at the beginning of the war (Thorpe: 2000, 781), which was overwhelmingly working-class.[5] 'The Front Line' reflected this and put ordinary working-class people at the fore.

As has frequently been attested (Eaden and Renton: 2002; Hobsbawm: 2007; Callaghan and Harker: 2011; Hyde: 2011) the party has had a political and a historical significance belied by its relative paucity of members and votes garnered in elections. The party's links with the USSR, the residue from its activities during the Popular Front era of the 1930s (including the Left Book Club with its 57,000 participants), its high membership turnover rate (which meant that many more people came into contact with its ideas than paid subs at any one time) and,

above all, the party's prominence in the trade unions meant that it was a notable player in Britain during the Second World War. Much of the significance of 'The Front Line' as a cultural record stems from the fact that it documents such a unique and brief period in the history of the CPGB and the country as a whole.

Subjectivity: The CPGB and the *Daily Worker*

The primary medium for the exposition of CPGB policy was the *Daily Worker* and the paper's contents, such as 'The Front Line', were therefore strongly subjective, mirroring the 'party line'. The party had founded the *Daily Worker* in 1930 claiming that it would be a *new* paper, bearing nothing in common with Fleet Street journalism.[6] 'There will be no room for professional truth stranglers. The network of worker correspondents will penetrate into the factories, mines and mills and bind the *Daily Worker* so close to the masses that it will reflect all their movements and feelings.'[7] This proved to be somewhat optimistic. From its first day the paper had problems with distribution – the wholesalers refused to stock it and party members were forced to distribute and sell the publication themselves. The paper also required regular contributions of Soviet money to stay afloat; there was difficulty in finding worker correspondents and it was found that, after all, professional journalists produced better copy.

Tedious though its articles might be, by 1939 the *Daily Worker* had an estimable record of early opposition to fascism and appeasement.[8] As the war began, the party should have found itself in an enviable political position. If the CPGB had supported the war consistently, according to later claims of the then editor of the *Daily Worker*, J. R. Campbell, it would 'have made our Party and we would have had at least 50 Communist MPs' (Kettle: 1991). However, this was not to be, for on 23 August 1939, four days before Britain declared war on Germany, the Soviet and German foreign ministers signed a non-aggression pact. The consequence of this was that the CPGB was torn between its desire to oppose the fascist threat of Germany it had warned of for so long, and its obedience to, and wish to support, the USSR.[9] The party now launched a campaign against the war, claiming that: 'The struggle of the British people against the Chamberlains and Churchills is the best help to the struggle of the German people against Hitler' (cited in Pelling: 1975, 112). It attacked the Coalition Government and big business in addition to agitating amongst service personnel and in munitions factories.[10] The *Daily Worker* regularly reported the positive outcome

of strikes and supported soldiers who claimed 'We are not treated like human beings'.[11]

In the summer of 1940, the CPGB started a broad movement that became known as the People's Convention. This organisation campaigned for friendship with the USSR, the downfall of the government and the election of one that was truly representative of the people, an end to profiteering, increased wages, nationalisation of banks and industries and the building of bombproof shelters (Pritt: 1941). Many of these aims were reflected in the *Daily Worker* and, after October 1940, in its comic strip as well. The paper also attempted to expand its readership by appointing a public editorial board, which included the famous scientist J. B. S. Haldane. Headlines such as: 'Government Could House Homeless – If It Cared' and 'Debate Shows Cabinet Failure' gave an indication of the paper's stance.[12]

It was into this atmosphere that the 'Front Line' family emerged on 19 October 1940. Stan, the father, appears to be employed alternatively in a munitions factory and on a construction site. Following the ban, he works at whatever job suits the purposes of the strip that week, a not unusual narrative device in 'pantomime' (wordless) comic strips (Gifford: 1971, 12). He appears to be too old to be called up, but it may also be concluded that his employment exempts him from conscription. In the early strips Clarice appears to be 'solely' a housewife, while Fanackapan is a small preschooler with a pet kitten.

Stylistically the strip varied drastically: in its first incarnation it was crudely drawn but was later replaced by a simpler, neater design, with excursions into modernism (when depicting bombing raids) and surrealism. The latter included illustrations of anthropomorphic microorganisms, named GERM, and stylised ARP wardens. In content it emulated the *Daily Worker* both as a whole and based on individual issues. A report on a particular subject, such as onion prices increasing by '600 per cent', could lead to a comic strip on the subject a week or two later.[13] In doing so it provides scholars with an opportunity to cross-reference sources and test the verisimilitude of the strip as well as its adherence to party policy.

The final 'Front Line' strip before the ban neatly encapsulates several of the *Daily Worker*'s campaign issues. It depicts a grotesque, simian-like capitalist amassing money from food queues, gorging himself in restaurants and eventually fleeing in disgust from a workers' demonstration demanding higher standards.[14] Two days later the paper was closed down by the home secretary. The party was prepared for the ban and initially published an underground version of the paper. However,

according to the journalist Claud Cockburn, this was 'a mere gesture, the publication reaching hardly anyone' (1959, 61), and it quickly palled. Instead the CPGB set up a successful news agency supplying a daily bulletin of labour news gleaned from 'the *Daily Worker*'s extensive network of "worker correspondents" ' (Beckett: 1998, 97).

In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia and the CPGB immediately altered its stance on the war. The party was now, the general secretary Harry Pollitt claimed, supporting Churchill 'wholeheartedly without any reservations' (Beckett: 1998, 100). Henceforth it criticised the government for not pursuing the war effort actively enough – it demanded a second front and that pressure be put on employers to improve both outputs and workers' conditions. Forthwith CPGB activists turned their formidable organising talents towards winning the war. The ban on the paper was not rescinded until September 1942 when Morrison was forced to accede to pressure from many quarters, including his own party. The *Daily Worker* then also threw itself into the service of the war effort, calling the coalition government 'a cornerstone of all human progress' (Callaghan and Harker: 2011, 147) and enlisting every facet of the paper, including the cartoons and the comic strip.

Subject location and subjectivity: Production and the Second Front

In his campaign to have the *Daily Worker* reinstated, Pollitt had claimed that if the paper was allowed to appear there would, among other benefits, be a greater drive for production and a stronger demand for a second front (1942, 26). These aims emerged clearly in 'The Front Line' where the most constant and recognisable milieu, other than the family home, to appear in the strip, post-ban, was the workplace and in particular the factory. For the party the workplace 'had a centrality in their thinking comparable to that of Parliament in Labour Party theory' (Croucher: 1982, 35) and more often than not this was epitomised in the factory.[15] The importance the comic strip placed on the Home Front and industrial employment was substantial and directly reflects CPGB policy. In doing so it not only demonstrates the significance of subjectivity in establishing a cultural record, but also that of location – the factory floor.

Despite not achieving their aim of a mass party, by the Second World War the CPGB were almost in control of the trade union movement (Pelling: 1975, 137), with their members leading several of the major unions. At party congresses during the latter part of the war, one-third

of the delegates came from the Amalgamated Engineers Union, and the CPGB newspaper *New Propellor* [*sic*] was an influential voice in the aircraft industry. Just after the war, in January 1946, a 'Press Readership' survey found that 69 per cent of the *Daily Worker*'s readers were trade unionists, the highest percentage of any paper (Rust: 1949, 116).[16] This industrial sector strength put the party in an unparalleled position. Not only was the factory setting the natural milieu for the militant communist, it now coincided with being the front line of the Home Front. At a time of 'total war' the outcome would be 'decided at least as much in the metalworking factories of the industrialised world as in open combat' (Croucher: 1982, ix).[17]

'The Front Line' made this clear by several times equating factory workers (often women) with soldiers. On 21 September 1942, a female riveter is shown to be 'on the job', an equal with the male soldier and fireman in adjoining panels, while an MP, in the last panel, is depicted as 'off the job' playing golf. In a similarly themed strip a rich elderly man, presumably a general or an MP, takes a leisurely bath, as Stan and a soldier friend cheerfully go off to fight the war in their respective work roles.[18] Again on 2 January 1943 German soldiers are in retreat from British, Soviet and Australian troops, while at home a female factory worker chases a suited 'complacency' with a wrench. On 22 March 1943 soldiers and factory workers (men and women) act in unison as they attack a group of upper-class demonstrators protesting against the ban on turn-ups for trousers.

In the winter of 1942 the *Daily Worker* informed readers that large factories would be paying 'tribute to this great and invincible spirit of the Soviet People by organising a special production week'. The factories would be competing on the grounds of production, absenteeism and accuracy. One 'Home Counties airplane factory' was aiming for a 100 per cent all round increase in production in six months 'with the determination to go in and win'. In 'The Front Line' Stan makes clear his dedication to the party line. He has only time to read the *Worker*'s headline 'More production' before springing up and increasing the production quota by 200 per cent. When his workmate, slouching idly by his machine, asks 'How long is this war going to take', Stan sternly tells him: 'That depends on the weapons we make, so start up your motor and double your quota'. When observing another colleague visiting the lavatory too often, Stan quips: 'is your journey really necessary?' By quoting the slogan relating to cutting unnecessary travel on railways, this is obviously an attempt at wartime humour. The fate of a man who, during army training, refuses to do 'his bit', saying 'don't wanna know!', is

harsher. He is finally abandoned in a gully by his unit, including Stan, who didn't 'wanna know!' about him.[19]

The workplace represented not only production; its role at the heart of the CPGB member's life was illustrated by the strips set there on other issues. To emphasise the need for affiliation with the Labour Party, Stan is shown working together with a Labour comrade, the message being that cooperation achieves quicker results. This had been a major issue for the CPGB since its inception (Lenin had personally demanded affiliation) and it became even more urgent during the war, with Labour in government as well as persisting in being the mass party of the working class. The CPGB had previously accused Labour of being 'social fascists', however, when the *Daily Worker* and 'The Front Line' dealt with the concept they chose to forget their own factionalism and portrayed Labour as the petty sectarians. In the strip the workers are seen working and fighting alongside each other in fraternal harmony while the Labour leaders preach disunity.[20]

'The Front Line' showed that the factory workplace was also the ideal place to share the *Daily Worker*. Due to paper shortages the *Worker* was unable to fulfil demand and concluded that there was 'only one way to meet this acute limitation of circulation! The paper must be passed on'. It promoted the slogan 'Ten Readers for Every Copy', encouraging subscribers to share their newspapers. The slogan appeared in 'The Front Line' and Stan hands round his copy of the *Daily Worker* during a break at the factory as well as sending it to comrades serving overseas. The factory is also the setting for political discussions with colleagues, but above all it is the scene for the propaganda for the Second Front.[21]

The 'issue of issues' (Rust: 1949, 100) for the CPGB and 'The Front Line' was the formation of a second front on mainland Europe to relieve the pressure on the Soviet Union. With this aim party leaders travelled the country on speaking tours, the *Daily Worker* kept up a barrage of articles and exhortations, such as 'Lobby your MP on the Second Front', factory meetings were organised, and the unions, and eventually even Beaverbrook, were persuaded of the Second Front's urgency.[22] The resistance shown by Russia, in particular during the Siege of Stalingrad (August 1942–February 1943), of which the *Worker* provided daily updates, met with admiration amongst the general population; even the BBC celebrated Red Army Day, and the CPGB, as the USSR's representative in Britain, reaped the benefits. The party's counter-hegemonic rhetoric had become accepted opinion and for the first time it found itself popular on a mass scale, with membership figures rising to an all-time high of 56,000 in December 1942 (Thorpe: 2000, 781).

'The Front Line' took its part in lobbying for the Second Front seriously and carried a score of strips on the subject, utilising a wide range of storylines. The second strip to be published, post-ban, illustrated 'The Front Line's' allegiance to party policy by linking the two major themes of production and the Second Front with Stan telling his colleague that the latter will start 'Here on the bench, lad. Let's get going'. The connection is made again when Stan and Clarice work together in munitions as Fanackapan gives flowers to the Red Army in an adjacent panel.[23]

In 'The Front Line', factory workers and ordinary soldiers are shown to be desperate for the Second Front. For example, in September 1942, a soldier is raring to go but is jerked back by an umbrella round his neck, symbolising the establishment. The ruling class are likened to tortoises in a zoo as they discuss the eventuality of the Front, or portrayed as scelestic newspaper proprietors prepared to skew the headlines simply to avoid it. Generals are depicted as too obsessed with their maps and toy soldiers to see the realities of war and the urgency of the Second Front. Quislings speak against it and fat, elderly decision makers ignore the ticking clock, focusing instead on eating second helpings of pie and taking leisurely baths. The CPGB family, in contrast, set their alarms, work tirelessly for a second front and refuse to forget about it, even when under the mistletoe.[24]

Dynamic record: Everyday politicisation pre- and post-ban

'The Front Line' shows a radical difference in mood and often topic pre- and post-ban and is therefore a dynamic record of change over time. The difference is so striking it serves to draw attention to the subjectivity of the strip, the closeness with which it followed CPGB policy, and thus its usefulness as a cultural record. Pre-ban the horror of war is always present, albeit in a sanitised pantomime form. Post-ban the horror of war and other inconvenient themes are ignored. This includes depictions of strikes, which the party no longer supported even though it cost them grass-roots support. The strip's promotion of hard work and self-sacrifice for the war effort in 1942 and 1943 is also in stark contrast to the pre-ban 'Front Line', where the conflict is shown to be of benefit only to capitalism and far from the 'people's war' depicted by the BBC.

Pre-ban the strip shows sacrifice to be in vain. Expected to heed the proclamations of official posters: that 'Your Country Needs You', the 'Front Line' family find their country offers very little in return. Attempting to picnic in the countryside, they are chased away by a landowner claiming the privilege of 'private property'. After an air raid

spent hiding under a table for shelter, they are forced to queue for water and public transport is in disarray. When the *Daily Worker* published an article on the distribution of evacuees, 'Cottages are crammed while palaces are empty', 'The Front Line' reinforces the point as Fanackapan is sent to the country and finds that workers' houses are full of refugees while the manor house contains only servants.[25]

The *Daily Worker* article 'Where Profiteering and Corruption Flourish' aimed to prove that factory workers were being tricked into working extra for the war effort in order to increase the profits of industrialists. 'The Front Line' displays rotund capitalists amassing money and in one outraged strip, based on an article in the *Sunday Express*, engineering orders being completed for the Japanese, who were fighting Communist China. The message is clear, that this is a war for capitalism and therefore fine speeches claiming that the aim of the war was to 'Crush Hitler and build a better Britain' are lies. They are literally the same old tune, for when Stan finds a gramophone record from the previous war the only change is the word Kaiser for Hitler. Capitalists and generals, while assuring workers that they will defend the empire and independence, are revealed to be selling everything to Uncle Sam. While the worker family endures the war in the Anderson shelter, the wealthy are shown to be abandoning Britain and boarding ships to America, taking their gold with them.[26]

Access to food was a critical issue for working-class readers for the duration of the conflict. Rationing had begun in January 1940 and increased in severity throughout the war, by August 1942 encompassing nearly all food except bread and vegetables. Post-ban Hob-Nob would often use rationing as a subject for wartime jokes, but pre-1942 the focus was on injustice. With headlines such as 'Food Policy shows contrast for poor and rich', the *Daily Worker* highlighted the fact that war shortages were disproportionately affecting the working class, while the rich could bypass scarcity by eating in restaurants. In 'The Front Line' onions are shown to be the preserve of the upper classes, displayed in glass cases in exclusive shops (Figure 8.1). In the eyes of the *Daily Worker*, the fact that the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, was a Conservative department store owner was deeply suspicious. 'The Front Line' conveyed the opinion that the authorities were in league with the capitalists and shopkeepers who were free to inflate prices, despite CPGB members' protestations.[27]

Even post-ban, although the wartime privations were borne much more cheerfully by then in 'The Front Line', it was plain that the party did not believe there was an 'equality of sacrifice', a concept mooted

Figure 8.1 'The Front Line' (final panel missing), illustrating the scarcity of onions and, in the opinion of the *Daily Worker*, the inequalities of food distribution

Source: Hobnob, 'The Front Line', *Daily Worker*, 25 October 1940, p. 5.

by the government to encourage the population to accept wartime cutbacks. In a strip entitled 'Equality of Sacrifice', the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kingsley Wood, is seen snatching 'beer, baccy and Beveridge' from the poor.[28] The year before, the same point was illustrated by a strip where Clarice wonders why there is never any good quality fruit available to buy, only to realise that an upper-class woman is being given priority. The poor are also shown to be suffering more from the consequences of the Blitz, with the prices of housing and food rising but wages remaining static.[29]

The most clearly defined issue that arguably demonstrates verisimilitude, pre-ban, is that of air raid shelters. It takes up almost 20 per cent of the 1940–41 sample of 62 strips and is the subject of the very first 'Front Line' strip – 'Teaching the People – Not to despise the small shelter'. This was based on a remark by Churchill, quoted on the front page of the *Daily Worker*, where the prime minister claimed that education, rather than the production of bigger and better shelters, was necessary to prevent deaths. The paper disputed this: Due to their proximity to industrial targets, working-class homes were particularly vulnerable, and the air raid shelters (such as tin Andersons) available were inadequate in both capacity and strength. The Blitz had begun the month before and thousands of people had been killed. The *Daily Worker* pointed out the inadequacies of existing air raid protection daily on the front page for weeks (as well as the CPGB's solution – open up private shelters to the public, requisition mansions for the evacuees and simultaneously build bombproof shelters) as the party ran a campaign for deep shelters in working-class areas.[30]

The lack of space in public shelters and the injustice of private ones was illustrated by 'The Front Line' on its very first day, with subsequent strips showing the family frequently buried by bomb blasts, soaked to the skin while sitting in the shelter and, at one point, killed. The Anderson shelters are proven to be not only useless as protection, but also liable to flooding and unsanitary. The family are shown regularly demonstrating for safer and more numerous shelters and being arrested for their pains. The CPGB campaign was successful in pressuring the government, but by the time construction of deep shelters began the population was utilising underground stations instead. Subsequent 'Front Line' strips focus on the lack of sanitary conditions there and the inefficacy of the ARP wardens in charge of organising the facilities. A *Daily Worker* article likened the situation in some shelters to the plague.[31] The pre-ban strips give the impression that the war and the privations were pointless and therefore there is little point in bearing them

cheerfully. Positive news in the papers is shown to be deeply dangerous and morally corrupt and instead the *Daily Worker*'s realistic headlines, such as 'Less Meat, Less Bread Is Prospect for 1941', are to be preferred.[32]

The commentary on air raid shelters, food prices and profiteering could be expected to have universal appeal amongst the working class. Indeed, according to a Mass Observation survey it was these 'personal inconveniences' that kept 'interest in the war alive' amongst women working in the factories (1943, 45). However, there was one type of strip that required the more specialist knowledge expected from CPGB members. The wartime loss of civil liberties, heralded by the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act of May 1940, was contested by the party and highlighted in a comic strip where Stan is shown trussed up in chains by capitalists, each shackle labelled with a different issue – 'arrest without warrant', 'labour conscription' and 'prison without trial'. Rescued by a trade union delegation on their way to the People's Convention, the tables are turned on the capitalists, thus voicing the CPGB's hopes for the organisation and a clear example of the comic strip reflecting *mentalité* as the embodiment of collective feeling.[33]

When the Communist shop steward John Mason was accused of 'actively obstructing measures to increase production' and detained without trial on the orders of Herbert Morrison, the CPGB ran a campaign to free him and Hob-Nob depicts the home secretary ignoring the pleas of various delegations (Stan with the trade unionists, Clarice with the Co-operative movement) for Mason's release, choosing instead to liberate a fascist, because Mason 'is not . . . feebleminded'. The inference is that the fascists are, and therefore are less of a threat to the government than the Communists. Morrison is not identified by name in the strip, but is easily recognisable – evidence of a clear correlation between the strip and reality. Post-ban 'The Front-Line' featured many more such caricatures and at times appears to be an extended editorial cartoon as opposed to an ongoing family narrative.

Mentalités in representations of anti-Semitism and racism

Taking a stance against anti-Semitism was an intrinsic part of being a CPGB member. Prior to the war the party was known for this position and had proved itself in the Battle for Cable Street in 1936. Its Jewish membership was therefore numerous and deeply committed.[34] During the Soviet–German pact 'The Front Line' conspicuously omitted references to anti-Semitism and fascism, preferring instead to criticise its own government. However, once free to again wholeheartedly condemn

Germany, these issues re-emerged and post-ban the strip kept up a persistent commentary. Reminding the public of the 'Men of Munich', with the caption 'See no evil, speak no evil', 'The Front Line' shows a member of the upper class ignoring the threat of fascism and the outrages performed against Jews and Communists only to be finally throttled himself by the same scourge. A week later it is pointed out that 'The Leopard does not change his spots' as the British Union of Fascists (BUF) are equated with Hitler and PJ (Perish Judah) is seen scrawled on the wall of a room desecrated by the fascists.[35] 'Chalking', sloganeering on walls and pavements, was a common pursuit of CPGB members and the 'Front Line' family took an active part, in particular when it came to combating fascist and anti-Semitic graffiti.[36] In doing so, 'The Front Line' expressed the collective attitudes and normative behaviour of CPGB members.

In its battle 'to make itself the pre-eminent and most consistent anti-Fascist paper' (Rust: 1949, 107), 'The Front Line' portrayed the BUF's leader, Oswald Mosley, as a stink plant and Admiral Darlan, the French collaborator, as a dead rat. Darlan was a bête noir of the *Daily Worker*; it referred to him in print as 'that rat Darlan' and was furious that he, despite being a Vichyite, had been recognised as the French leader in North Africa by the Allies. William Rust was incensed enough to mention him in his book years later (1949, 108) and 'The Front Line' remarked upon his treachery thrice, even after he was assassinated on Christmas Eve 1942. Other, British, collaborators such as the secretary of state for India and Burma's son, John Amery (subsequently hanged for treason), were also subjected to the scorn of the comic strip.[37]

The Communist Party had early on taken a radical stance against racism and colonialism and 'was alone in formulating a clear and consistent anti-imperialist policy' (Callaghan: 1987, 38). A rare pre-ban storyline depicts a soldier joining up to defend his country against invasion – 'For freedom – Britain for the British'. Instead, in an echo of Henry Dubb, he realises he has been duped when he is sent to India and is expected to oppress people with the same aspirations as himself.[38] Members of the CPGB were active in India in setting up militant trade unions, some at great personal cost. The party's policy against racism and colonialism was one of the main reasons the novelist Doris Lessing joined the party during the war.

Post-ban the party combated the racism that came to the fore when black GIs were stationed in Britain, especially the prejudice shown by pub landlords in refusing to serve black troops. In an example of the comic strip's politicisation of everyday events and its verisimilitude, this issue was highlighted by 'The Front Line' with parallels drawn with class

discrimination. When a couple of black GI's are denied access to a pub, Stan cheerily takes them to another, only to find that this is for 'officers only'.[39] This is also an obvious instance of *mentalité*, where non-tangible attitudes are expressed, and evidence of which a historian would be unlikely to find outside memoirs or anecdotes.

Representation of women

Together with the positive attitude and emphasis on production, one of the greatest changes in 'The Front Line' post-ban was the role of Clarice – personification as evidence of a dynamic record. She now became more active outside the home, both in paid employment and as an ARP. This, and the appearance of unidentified women as factory workers in the strip, reflected the change in women's roles that had occurred since the beginning of the war. From its inception the party had endeavoured (under firm instructions from the Comintern) to attract female members and diligently promoted itself as the party, and the USSR as the state, of equality, but depictions of 'the worker' were after all primarily male, with women as passive helpmeets, 'figures of suffering and endurance' (Hobsbawm: 1978, 127). While Clarice is strong and active in the strip and her spheres of activity increase as the war progresses, she never achieves the fully rounded life of Stan, which incorporates work, trade unionism, illegal activism, family life and the pub. Although the family principally appear together or in pairs, when a character actsd alone it is Stan who predominates. Pre-ban he appears separately in 17 strips, with Clarice in five, while post-ban the discrepancy is even more marked: 25 strips for Stan, four for Clarice.[40]

While the CPGB paid lip service to the idea of recruiting housewives, it was plain they saw them as 'second best' (Hunt and Worley: 2004, 13) and a different breed from the women factory workers they aspired to enrol. Housewives, as was shown by Clarice's role, were expected to be interested in 'women's issues' such as cooking and child development and were given the function of organising the *Daily Worker* bazaar. However, the party's attitude did begin to change during the Second World War as it began to place a higher value on housewives as comrades (Croucher: 1982, 785) and in addition received an influx of members from the large numbers of women recruited into heavy industry to replace men. By March 1945, women made up 26 per cent of the membership (Thorpe: 2000, 785).

The party now strove to address the issues that came to the fore in relation to low pay, domestic work and childcare as did 'The Front Line'.

It was noted that it was impossible for a woman to work a long shift in a factory as well as feed, clothe and look after her children, herself and her house. Clarice is shown searching for a full-time nursery place for Fanackapan or a part-time job for herself, while her daughter demonstrates for more nursery staff.[41]

Equal pay was another issue strongly supported by the CPGB. The women that had been drafted in to do vital jobs in engineering and armaments production were paid far less than the men they replaced. They also received less compensation should they come to harm as a result of enemy action, or during the performance of civil defence duties. 'The Front Line' drew attention to the absurdity of this, with Clarice observing 'and they might make up the women's 2/3 compensation by arranging for every third bomb to be a dud!' The issue was revisited in January 1943, when statesmen are portrayed smoking cigars with profits showing a steep upward turn on the wall behind them and concluding: 'Equal compensation? Dammit, they will be thinking next of equal pay'. Yet, 'The Front Line' itself avoided any mention of strikes, nor did the strip, post-ban, feature demonstrations (except for Fanackapan's innocuous protest).[42] Nevertheless, it has still been argued that the strength with which the unions emerged from the Second World War owed much to the CPGB (Branson: 1985, 334).

Humour in 'The Front Line'

Jimmy Friell, who drew editorial cartoons for the *Worker* under the pen name Gabriel, claimed that his own contribution 'lay in supplying the humour that the paper so desperately needed' (British Cartoon Archive: 2014). Hob-Nob must have felt a similar obligation, for 'The Front Line' is suffused with a gentle, if occasionally laboured, humour. Just as the location and subjectivity of the strip leave traces that may be interpreted as cultural record, so too does humour. In the case of the Communists, Bergson's contention cited earlier that 'our laughter is always the laughter of a group' (2009) is apt, not least because the party relied upon intense organisational loyalty. As Bergson points out, 'however spontaneous it seems, laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers, real or imaginary'. The group was defined widely post-ban as anyone who sympathised with CPGB policies or who was disaffected by the government's response to the conflict and who could identify with and find humorous the wartime issues involved.

As with other aspects of the strip, there is a marked difference between the humour before and after the ban. Consistent with the pessimistic tone of the *Daily Worker* in 1940, violent slapstick predominates 1940–41. Illustrating Freud's theory that humour is a form of release from tension (1960), 'The Front Line' makes light of the threat of injury and death, from inadequate shelters and unexploded bombs, in depicting the family and especially Stan being frequently buried or blown up in an entertaining manner. As Hünig points out, 'an aggressive act can only be regarded as humorous if the object of the aggression is not seriously injured' (2002, 26). The same can be said for the violence in 'The Front Line', where being hit by a bomb tends to result only in a rueful look and some bandages, with full recovery by the next instalment. A hard-hitting comic strip where the protagonists became horribly maimed when hit by a bomb might have been accurate but would have rapidly lost readers, especially as it seems likely that the strip, in common with the cartoons, was intended to provide relief from the seriousness of the rest of the paper.

Other, slightly less critical, flaws in the shelters were also pointed out in a comical manner with the use of incongruity, or disparity humour (that is, the mirth caused by the difference between expectations and reality). The contrast between the expected robustness and safety of the shelter and the reality was pointed out many times. For example, to free the family from a collapsed Anderson shelter Stan uses a tin opener. On another occasion, dodging rain and bombs, Stan finally dives into the shelter, only to find it flooded and himself up to his neck in water. The theme is repeated when the family spends the night in a boat floating inside the shelter. These are humorous observations, yet the criticism of the protection provided to the population is clear (and obviously part of the CPGB's campaign on the issue) and serves to illustrate the point that no matter how exaggeratedly or facetiously a criticism is presented, 'some of the negative social judgment that is directed towards a critiqued target prevails' (Hünig: 2002, 29–30).

Incongruity and criticism also played a role in some of Hob-Nob's most surreal strips. Pre-ban these focus on the unsanitary conditions of air raid shelters personified in the character of 'GERM', an anthropomorphic yet bug-like monster who grows to enormous proportions as hygiene conditions worsen. His appearance inspires no surprise in the 'Front Line' world, but rather annoyance from the Communists and bureaucratic complacency from the ARP wardens. The sense of being overwhelmed by the lack of sanitation comes across clearly. Together

with the jokes on food shortages, GERM gives a sense of metaphorical aptness that could not be provided by a news article.

Post-ban rationing provided much of the humour found in 'The Front Line'. In an extremely surreal example, a man takes the place of a performing seal in a circus in order to get a constant supply of fish. On a separate occasion, Clarice buys a fish for supper which, as there is no paper, she wraps in her bus ticket, but the fish is so small it falls through the punch hole. This strip could have been made blatantly partisan by showing the rich buying up the supply of large fish, but Hob-Nob was satisfied with the rationing joke. Other non-political wartime jokes are made when Stan requests a fry up and is told 'Sorry this is a restaurant, not a museum!' and when he orders a pair of utility trousers only to discover they lack turn-ups. These, the sales clerk informs him, are being saved for the time 'when we haven't any trousers'. When Fanackapan plays at fishing in a sterile water tank she calls it 'utility fishing'. These general interest wartime jokes featured primarily after the ban.[43] With the increase and broadening of the readership of the *Daily Worker* following the USSR's entry into the war on the Allied side, this would have been a way to draw in these new, less actively political readers. Thus, 'The Front Line' was able to appeal to a potentially wider group of working-class readers, who felt included in the 'us' of 'them and us' and could recognise their own situation in the jokey references to rationing.

In creating the dichotomy of 'them and us' Hob-Nob made use of labour movement stereotypes. Social stereotyping is adopted as a form of systemisation to organise our social world (Tajfel and Turner: 1979; Pickering: 2001). 'The Front Line' includes several instances of this, especially of the 'fat man' who remains oblivious to the urgent necessity of the Second Front. The difference between workers and the 'fat man' is made starkly clear in a strip focusing on the overcrowding on the railways, where a rotund capitalist sits in luxurious solitude in First Class while Stan is thrown back onto the platform to ruefully scratch his head, unable to board the train. The 'them and us' feeling is invoked again when Clarice, typing in an office, comments on her portly manager: 'It's marvellous how he keeps his pre-war figure'. Her colleague informs her that he has gained the weight during the war.[44]

Fun is also made of upper-class women, who are depicted as silly and pampered. An elderly wealthy woman's response to her maid's announcement that she is departing to do war work is shocked despair; who will now walk 'Precious', her Pekinese? The humour results from the contrast between the realities and importance of war work and the shallowness of the rich. The latter is emphasised again when Mrs

Flitterwit, a younger version of the above, claims she would do '*anything*' for the war effort, but does very little. There were, it seemed, sensible working-class women and the silly, rich, idle ones.[45] Thus humour is used to instil class consciousness.

There are various clues that the 'Front Line' family are working class. Their home furnishings and their dress are simple and limited. Stan wears rolled up shirtsleeves – highlighting muscular arms, echoing the ubiquitous depictions of 'the worker' (Hobsbawm: 1978) – braces and, when outside, a cloth cap – the virtual 'badge of class membership of the British proletarian when not at work' (Hobsbawm: 1999, 287). Clarice wears plain clothes as opposed to the elaborate dress of the rich female characters. In the strips Hob-Nob could draw both upon the traditional labour cartoonists such as Will Dyson and upon USSR iconography. Yet, the 'abiding image of a Soviet man as muscular, athletic and indomitable' (Callaghan and Harker: 2011, 9) would have been out of place in this context. In eschewing heroic depictions of the workers and instead focusing on a more realistic portrayal – Stan is balding and spends several strips in the pub wryly grumbling – Hob-Nob placed the 'Front Line' family in a specifically British context. As Jeffrey Richards points out, 'War always brings the concept of national identity into sharp focus' (1997, 85) and the CPGB, even while exalting the Soviet Union, always understated Moscow's involvement in its own affairs. Prior to the ban (and the Soviet Union's change of allegiance) the USSR was only mentioned once (if admiringly, with disparagement humour used against Britain) in the strip – the necessity of distancing the party from them and focusing on the Home Front being far greater than supporting the Comintern.

In 1941 the *Daily Worker* found there were limits to what the British government would accept in text form. Following the lifting of the ban the party was naturally wary of appearing too controversial, yet the comic strip could continue to criticise government figures harshly under a light veneer of humour.[46]

Conclusion

As 'total war' became the norm after the First World War, and manufacturing of vital importance, a focus on the heroics of the ordinary person became paramount, such as civilians being bombed or mechanics in the factory winning the war through their collective contribution. 'The Front Line' perfectly encapsulated this new attitude. The centrality of the factory workplace to the war effort and to the party as a whole

is reflected in the strip – quotas are doubled, 'slackers' admonished and the *Daily Worker* shared – and provides an example of the importance of the concept of location in establishing a cultural record.

The subjectivity of the strip also emerges as a distinctly dynamic record of change over time, through the factory setting and in the drastic change in topics and mood following the ban. The strip's consistent adherence to CPGB policy is clear as it switches from opposing to supporting the war, and agitating for a second front. The transformation of women's roles within the strip, from housewives to factory workers, meanwhile, not only records the party's change in stance over the years, but also, due to wartime conditions, that of society.

Both verisimilitude and *mentalité* are also apparent in 'The Front Line'. The former is demonstrated by the clear correspondence between *Daily Worker* articles, other CPGB publications, contemporary events and the comic strip. The mindset of party members, meanwhile, is often exemplified by the strip's very progressive position on everyday issues such as racism, thus providing a record of Communist politics as a way of life.

'The Front Line' is imbued with humour, a form of relief from the often serious pages of the *Daily Worker* and from the war as a whole. The violent slapstick of the first embattled years of the war was a way to find relief from the horror of omnipresent and, as the party saw it, pointless death – and also to criticise the government in the seemingly innocuous guise of humour. In addition, the political internal jokes served the latter purpose while cementing group cohesion at a time when the CPGB's world view was deeply unpopular with the general public. The shaping of a group mentality was an important way to raise class consciousness by targeting those in power. By the Second World War, left-wing humour and the comic strip had become more inclusive, children and women played larger roles and there was little sectarian disparagement humour.

'The Front Line' could be educative, informing less political readers of the inequities of the system and drawing them into the paper to read the more complex text articles. However, the CPGB strip also extended its role to include goals such as increasing production or the readership of the *Daily Worker*. In addition, 'The Front Line' could simply supply entertainment, especially as the readership of the paper widened post-ban. Jokes about rationing often relied on recognition from the average working-class reader of the day-to-day inconveniences of war rather than on political appeal, and thus provide a broader social and cultural record.

It is the 'lost world of British Communism' (Samuel: 2006) that emerges most clearly through 'The Front Line'. At a crucial time in both the CPGB's and Britain's history, when the party achieved a level of influence on the government and an enormous swing in its popularity in public opinion that was unprecedented and unreplicated, the strip provides a rare window into the organisation's changing *mentalité* – non-tangible thinking – that uses humour as a dynamic record of this collective culture.

9
Conclusion

According to Carr and Collingwood, all sources must be interrogated and ultimately recognised as works of narrative. In the case of comics, a factual record could be asserted in cases where contemporary data, now decipherable historical facts, have been accurately logged within the narrative of the comic book. In such works of narrative, character is all-important. In comics, character types need to be easily recognised and although unique identity tends not to be celebrated, characters can become metaphors, in the way that Haselden's Colonel Dug-Out stood for the Home Front as a whole and formed part of the *Mirror's* campaign for greater efficiency. Similarly Haselden's personifications in 'Sad Experiences Of Big and Little Willie' became a metaphor for the discourse of the war, as the artist captured the humour of the British troops on leave from the front. His work, as an artefact of mass culture, contributed particularly to the British narrative of domestic British identity, and testified to the difficulties of a 'normal life' of work, leisure and consumerism in wartime. Allowing his reader to succinctly interpret many levels of meaning and representation within his work, Haselden's use of cultural iconography in his comic strips clearly and concisely indicates nationality and various assumptions about national character.

Dynamic record, reflexivity and humour on the Home Front

Comics not only bear the influence of the real, shown in the wider context or backdrop of the story, they record it dynamically in individual episodes. Because of the serialised nature of comic book publication, these sources should also be analysed in terms of their behaviour, how they function as record, with regard to the question of change over

time. For example, Haselden's strips both demonstrated and reflected popular discourse and allowed his audience to empathise with the characters, as well as producing a dynamic record of change for retrospective study. With Miss Flapperton and Miss Teeny, he provided a social discourse on women's changing roles and intergenerational conflict. Miss Flapperton's position as an accepted wartime meme became so entrenched in British culture that the *Mirror*'s editorial column made direct reference to her without further explanation of her origin two years after her final appearance in Haselden's comic strips.

The examples in this book demonstrate that the act of framing in specific ways can bring benefits: arguably the lens of subjectivity on the Home Front has its own value, especially when it becomes a reflexive dialogue through interaction between newspaper editorial and readers. The subjects of the Haselden strips caused lively debates in the *Mirror*'s letter pages, giving the impression of a symbiotic relationship between Haselden, his readership and the *Mirror*. Here cross-referencing of sources, itself a means of opening up comics to contextual influence, provides added value, for it is accompanied by reflexivity; the comic strip creator acknowledged feedback, changed his creations to take this into account, and then informed his readership that he had done so.

In the analysis of the *Daily Worker* in Chapter 8, the difference in political content before and after the newspaper's ban acts as a dynamic cultural record. The subjectivity of the strip also emerges distinctly as a dynamic record of change over time, through the factory setting and in the drastic change in topics and mood following the ban. The factory, previously portrayed as the seat of capitalist profiteering, changed abruptly into the place where the war would be won. A radical difference in mood and often topic in 'The Front Line' can therefore be described as a primary source that provides a dynamic record of change over time.

As with other aspects of the strip, there is a marked difference in the humour before and after the ban. Political points were made in a comical manner with the use of incongruity, or disparity humour (that is, the mirth caused by the difference between expectations and reality). Incongruity and criticism also played a role in some of Hob-Nob's most surreal strips. In 1941 the *Daily Worker* found there were limits to what the British government would accept in text form. Following the lifting of the ban, the party was naturally wary of appearing too controversial, yet the comic strip could continue to criticise government figures harshly under a light veneer of humour. 'The Front Line' was able to appeal to a potentially wider group of working-class readers, who felt included in the 'us' of 'them and us' and could recognise their own

situation in the jokey references to rationing. Some comic book narratives followed alongside and adjusted to, or even sought to replicate, the development of events; for example, the vicissitudes of the Communist Party of Great Britain are featured in 'The Front Line'.

War women – Conforming to and challenging gender norms

Time and character type can provide specificities for cultural analysis, as demonstrated in Chapter 7 by the example of war women. Both the chronological moment and the personalities are clear: at once a symbol of desirability and domesticity, presenting a sexily allegorical and often comical token of the ideals that the troops were fighting for, Miss Lace became an icon as both tantalising sweetheart and comforting wife/mother. The value of the strips 'Male Call' and 'Sad Sack' as a cultural record lies in the articulation of normative wartime behaviour for armed forces men rather than of women, whereas Wanda represented female liberation through conscription to the war machine. As a tough adventuress she made an active contribution to the war effort, and as a character she provided positive encouragement for readers to appreciate that wartime women had their own independent role as proactive servicewomen. Pin-ups in comic strips were referred to earlier as a 'cultural construction of women as objects', but characters who fulfilled proactive servicewomen jobs, such as Wanda and Jane, mitigate against this because they were 'pin-ups plus'. Their independent role and association with the armed forces meant they appeared as powerful, brave and productive in their own right, whilst retaining their obvious femininity. The uniqueness of a specific moment in time for comics as a cultural record is demonstrated perfectly in Chapter 7 by the integration of examples from the Quality Comics Group, into an established subject area. These comics provide narratives about the presence of women in dangerous combat scenarios, which are confirmed as metaphorically apt or correct according to precedent, through consultation of the canon of historiographical knowledge and discussion. This methodology adds more and further meaning for scholars interested in this area.

Comics as a democratic format and as grass-roots humour

When examining the intra-textual context of a comic book, the setting of its story, the historian can evaluate its verisimilitude in order to assess its potential status as record. For example, trench publication

proto comics are significant as unique historical sources. Two-panel 'before and after' cartoons were ideal for depicting a quick snapshot of change, immediately recognisable because of the brief nature of the summary. Chapter 4 demonstrated that denoting the precise spatial and temporal confines within which an author writes, or within which a creator produces, is an indispensable element in the recovery of the real within a document. The recuperation of little-known examples such as multi-panel cartoons from the trenches is significant for the history of comics. The importance of this factor is reinforced by an ongoing theme that permeates this whole study, namely how comics represented a democratic format that was accessible, low-brow and aimed at ordinary people. This book further engages with the democratic process by arguing for the use of comics as a source. The reader is offered the potential to appreciate a level of democratisation within democratisation.

Humour in multi-panel trench cartoons offers an insight into the general culture, self-image and preoccupations of their creators by showing and not simply telling. Using humorous content, soldiers' illustrative narratives drew on their own oral culture of songs, anecdotes and gossip to consolidate and communicate their own specific collective morality and outlook. Wartime themes tended to be common to more than one nationality and front. Shared themes across nationalities, geography and time represented an unplanned synchronisation of soldier discourse.

Interestingly, it was not only trench publications that shared content preoccupations internationally. The analysis of the gullible worker in Chapter 5 demonstrated that similarities between Mug, Dubb, Simple and Block and their storylines abounded, whether due to plagiarism or simply because, as their international success implies, the preoccupations of the movement were the same regardless of group or country. Obviously the gullible workers' huge popularity tapped into a deep feeling of recognition and resentment within the Left. The catharsis of laughter allowed relief (Freud: 1960), both from their own alienation from the capitalist system and from the forbidden feeling of anger towards fellow workers, and would also have helped dissipate such a feeling.

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) realised early on that songs and cartoons could do a more effective job at getting their message across than books of political analysis. Like songs, cartoons contained humour, were often bawdy and could convey complex ideas in a simple and entertaining manner. Laughing at the gullible worker and being part of the hounded minority who saw the joke cemented the bond

between comrades. Of all the gullible worker characters, Mug follows the course of the war most accurately, providing a record of duration and explicit verisimilitude broadly correlating with the historical context. These strips are noteworthy in that they provide the opportunity to view how the gullible worker reacted not only to his enemies, but also to those with the perceived 'correct' political consciousness, enabling investigation into the framing and subjectivity of the strips (Figure 9.1).

The strips further add to the cultural record by providing explicit verisimilitude in reporting historical events; they give details of elections, newspapers and strikes. The beauty of the 'gullible worker' lay in the subversiveness of the artists taking the mainstream, working-class 'everyman' and, instead of, as one might expect, turning him into a radical anti-capitalist, making him a law-abiding citizen who believes that capitalist society is just.

Whether mediated consciously or subconsciously, subject location, to use the language of post-structuralism, leaves a trace. A trace in a work might equally reflect a minor detail of the real or at best, for the historian, it may record a real event. For example, Mr Block contributes a record of real events, both as context, providing a backdrop to his actions, and as specific incidents. A work might well contain some degree of truth in the unquantifiable sense of metaphorical aptness.

Comics and the armed forces – Metaphorical aptness

The scale of appeal of comics to the armed forces cannot be understated, to the extent that this study may only scratch the surface of the richness of war examples. Their value is evident in a number of different modes of expression: pin-ups, Wanda, Jane, the active response by amateur cartoonists in trench publications, and propaganda examples. Chapter 6 demonstrated how official investigations into comics provide a contemporary record of how efficacious people in official circles perceived the comic strip to be. In terms of Second World War content, the reader cannot help but notice the impact on cultural consciousness of continuous repetition of messages in support of the war, alienation of the brutal and corrupt enemy, and identification with the noble heroism of the US and her allies. This emerges regardless of the level of direct involvement in the conflict by the comic book characters of the era. After Pearl Harbor, it was the Armed Forces of the United States itself that quickly became the largest institutional customer of the comic book publishers. Equally it was the members of the US Armed Forces abroad, primarily in the Pacific theatre of conflict, who quickly became established as the true

Figure 9.1 Henry Dubb exhibits his 'incorrect' political consciousness by opposing women's suffrage
Source: Walker, R. (1915) *New Adventures of Henry Dubb: Cartoons* (Chicago: Socialist Party).

heroes of the US comics narrative of the Second World War. Conversely, perhaps the most prominent example of the sustaining of a dynamic verisimilitude in reference to the war in the US is the choice of villain. In Chapter 6, change in the depiction of the enemy over time provides a dynamic record for historians.

The contemporary publications in this chapter have a crucial role to play amongst the body of popular culture sources for those seeking to understand how American hegemonic narrative aimed to influence the hearts and minds of civilians and troops in action. To further reinforce the readers' identification with the heroes as represented in the comics narrative, authors and editors emphasised cultural conventions and foregrounded cultural references that would have been widely familiar to their audience, deliberately connecting US servicemen with the majority (Caucasian, immigrant descended) personnel of the actual US Armed Forces. Songs and popular cultural references are clearly evident in American Armed Forces publications from the Second World War. Chapter 6 demonstrated that the power of comics was recognised by contemporaries for adult audiences, often with metaphorical representations of the war. In some examples the cultural reference may well be one of implicit metaphorical truth, that is, of Atlas representing the United States as unprepared for war.

For the events of fictionalised narratives to be metaphorically apt as a record, there must be some known historical precedent. Precedent is attached to narrative or action. A contemporary representation of domestic attitudes towards US involvement in the war through the dialogue of characters in *Superman* or *Action Comics,* for example, is useful historical content for the historian concerned with holistic questions of discourse or *zeitgeist*. Thus, as with the notion of the trace, fictionalisation, or even fantasy, can begin to be evaluated as record for the purposes of the historian. Events might not have transpired in exactly the manner depicted, but the aptness of their presentation is nevertheless discernible historical content.

Mentalité in comics as a cultural record

The concept of comics as a cultural record is both relational, in that the process of selection requires an element of cross-referencing, and – as with any historical source – relativist, because of differing assessments of usefulness. The range of examples from contemporary comics analysed in this study underlines the multifarious uses and features of comics, for the construction of any sort of text invariably entails engaging with a

wealth of contemporary structural and strategic choices. This book, in recognition of this, has extended the range of *mentalité*, the depiction of the non-tangible, the scope of which is extensive due to a number of factors. Creative judgements, for example, are inevitably mediated by the present, for content is created through reference to the established paradigms of the author's surroundings and influences, with creative choices that can be conscious or unconscious. Publishers may have an active input, assessing what they believe the readers need, for economic gain, but also to encourage prescriptive normative behaviour. How these influences are viewed by historians also depends on the latters' spatial and temporal location.

Despite this apparent eclecticism, shared features emerge, epitomised by the collective purpose and articulation of world war comics that has sometimes been overlooked. Mutual characteristics such as the 'every-man' concept, use of humour and anonymity in authorship can all be highlighted. However, the main emphasis in originality for this study has been the elaboration of ways to define cultural record in comics. Categories for analysis have emerged and been tried and tested in case studies. These can be viewed as generically portable concepts, hence they could be used elsewhere as a model for historians, cultural theorists and analysers of comics, and it is hoped they will survive indefinitely as working tools for scholars. They deserve to be built upon, adapted, reappraised, redefined and customised by other researchers.

Notes

1 Introduction

1. It is common within scholarship to use the term 'comics' in reference to both the industry and the medium (encompassing comic books, comic strips, sequential narratives, visual narratives and graphic narratives). Synonymous terms have been used mainly to avoid frequent repetition of the word 'comics'. However, it is acknowledged that 'comic strips' generally refer to comics that occur within newspapers while 'comic books' tend to be published in pamphlet form, either as anthologies or as one longer narrative.
2. A stance echoed by Carr, who also suggests that history itself is the 'continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts' (1961, 24).
3. For more on children's comics in relation to the general market pre-Haselden, see Chapman (2011) and Perry and Aldridge (1975).
4. Churchill, W. *The Few*, House of Commons, 20 August 1940 http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/1940-finest-hour/113-the-few, accessed 13 January 2014.
5. There were clearly practical problems for wartime industries everywhere. Hammond and Towheed have pointed out that the price of paper almost doubled in the first two weeks of the First World War; rationing was quick to follow, and yet somehow the trade was expected to cope with an immediate 25 per cent increase in the demand for news. The steady personnel drain made it increasingly difficult to continue 'business as usual' (Hammond and Towheed: 2007, 4).

2 A Proposed Theory and Method for the Incorporation of Comic Books as Primary Sources

1. This book focuses on the widening of sources within history. Although acknowledgment is due to the discipline of the History of Art, where the academic study of comics has been long accommodated, this often focuses on the visual and technical aspects of the form. In doing so it can overlook the content and the unique synergy between text and image in comics. Comics are a prime example of Ernst Gombrich's 'iconic art', achieving impact by appealing to cognitive skills that cross cultural divides, returning to the usefulness of popular culture's interpretative mode (1960). The art historian W. T. J. Mitchell (2005) has since noted that the cartoon and comics form leaves a large cognitive space for audiences to interpret meaning, acting as a 'living organism', even demanding a user interaction (see also Maggio: 2007). Comics Studies too has emerged consistently to affirm and expand upon the artistic and literary value of the medium. The focus here, however, is on

the social and politically historical content of the comics, not the technical issues of them as visual art and literature.

2. Indeed, even the most apparently objective forms of record, such as the photograph, have been critically evaluated as products of individual subjectivity. As an entry point to such discussions, see Sontag: 1977.
3. The quandaries posed by the work of David Irving on the Holocaust, in conjunction with the response by Richard Evans, provide an insight into the extremist possibilities of the abuse of historical practice in the post-structuralist, narrativist landscape, while the challenging and pioneering work of Richard Price is outstanding for its attention to the formal construction of narrative. See Price in Munslow: 2013; also Price: 1990; and Evans: 2002.
4. Naturally, narrative theory has its objectors. David Carr, for example, has written quite extensively in 'an effort to reaffirm the epistemic or truth-telling character of history' (Carr in Roberts: 2001, 197). In practice, he does not reject theories of narrativity in absolute terms, but seeks to re-establish apparently more fundamental aspects of the writing of history by outlining the continued importance of 'getting the story straight' (Carr in Roberts: 2001, 197), which is perhaps better described as accurate chronicling. For more, see Carr: 1986.
5. *All Star Comics #8*, December 1941–January 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
6. Although it is essential here to draw on established principles within the theory and practice of history to support the positioning of this proposal, that it might resonate more strongly with historians, subjectivity and subject location is a concern across disciplines. For examples, see the works of Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis and philosophy, Roland Barthes in literary theory and philosophy and Clifford Geertz in anthropology.
7. Derrida's 'writings abound in responses to a wide range of literary texts'. See Attridge in Derrida: 1992, *ix*.
8. *All Star Comics #8*.
9. Carr (1961, 16) described Collingwood as 'the only British thinker in the present century who has made a serious contribution to the philosophy of history'.
10. Specifically, the issues consulted are the first twelve of *Sensation Comics* along with the fabled 'first appearance' in *All Star Comics #8* and the summer special *Wonder Woman #1*.
11. *All Star Comics #8*.
12. *Sensation Comics #1*, January 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
13. *All Star Comics #8*.
14. *Sensation Comics #2*, February 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
15. *Wonder Woman #1*, Summer 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
16. *Wonder Woman #1*, Summer 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
17. For an overview of the conflict in the Pacific, see Van der Vat: 1991; for more in-depth coverage, see Costello: 1982.
18. For recent discussions, see Olson: 2013 and Dunn: 2013.
19. *Sensation Comics #5*, May 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
20. *Sensation Comics #5*, May 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
21. *Sensation Comics #6*, June 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.

22. For discussion of the US home front, good surveys are found in Winkler: 1986 and Jeffries: 1996.
23. An accessible narrative account of these events appears in Ardman in Historynet.com: 2006. See also: FBI website: 2014.
24. *Sensation Comics #9*, September 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
25. *Sensation Comics #10*, October 1942, in DC Comics: 1998.
26. For examples, see *Wonder Woman #1*, *Sensation Comics #10* and *Sensation Comics #11*, November 1942, in DC Comics, 1998.
27. *Wonder Woman #1*, November 1942, in DC Comics, 1998.

3 Haselden as Pioneer: Reflecting or Constructing Home Front Opinion?

1. *Daily Mirror,* 1 January 1915. Circulation of the *Mirror* rose to 650,000 per day by July 1910 and continued to rise, to well over 1 million copies daily by the outbreak of war in July 1914.
2. The tank was credited with being a major contributing factor in the breaking of the deadlock on the Western Front after the German Spring Offensive of 1918. 'Big Willie' was the nickname for the British MK1 tank which was also nicknamed 'His Majesty's Land Ship Centipede' and 'Mother'. For further information, see Encyclopædia Britannica (2014).
3. Simonis, Henry, 'The Street of Ink: The Daily Mirror', *Newspaper World,* 20 January 1917.
4. *Daily Mirror,* 23 November 1914.
5. *Daily Mirror,* 5 January 1915.
6. *Daily Mirror,* 5 January 1915.
7. *Daily Mirror,* 28 January 1915.
8. For more, see Lippitt (1995, 54).
9. For more on stereotyping, see Pickering (2001).
10. *Daily Mirror,* 8 November 1916.
11. Haselden, *Daily Mirror,* 10 November 1916.
12. Haselden, *Daily Mirror,* 9 November 1916.
13. 'I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows' (Shakespeare: 2014b).
14. In doing so Haselden was reinterpreting the cartoon 'Bravo, Belgium' by F. H. Townsend, which had been published in *Punch* two months previously.
15. *Daily Mirror,* 17 December 1914.
16. The *Mirror* was not published on Sundays and its sister paper, the *Sunday Pictorial,* was not renamed the *Sunday Mirror* until 1963.
17. W. M., *Daily Mirror*, 9 July 1917.
18. 'Special Intelligence Report No. 13' of the US Office of Facts and Figures Bureau of Intelligence Division of Information Channels, Section I, 7 March 1942, Library of Congress microfilm.
19. Haselden, *Daily Mirror*, 9 July 1917.
20. Haselden, *Daily Mirror*, 11 July 1917.
21. Haselden, *Daily Mirror*, 26 July 1917.
22. Haselden, *Daily Mirror*, 3 August 1917.
23. Haselden, *Daily Mirror*, 4 August 1917.

24. Haselden, *Daily Mirror,* 11 August 1917.
25. Robinson, quoted in *Daily Mirror,* 11 August 1917.
26. *Daily Mirror,* 23 July 1917.
27. *Daily Mirror,* 24 July 1917.
28. For more on women workers, see also Braybon (1989).
29. Haselden, *Daily Mirror,* 2 August 1917.
30. From the editorial column signed W. M., *Daily Mirror,* 16 July 1915.
31. Haselden, *Daily Mirror*, 7 August 1915.
32. W. M., *Daily Mirror,* 7 August 1915.
33. *Daily Mirror,* 11 August 1915.
34. *Daily Mirror,* 16 and 17 August 1915.
35. *Daily Mirror,* 18 August 1915.
36. W. M., *Daily Mirror,* 19 August 1915.
37. *Daily Mirror,* 20 and 21 August 1915.
38. From a letter signed, 'Joy Flapperton, Anywhere in England', *Daily Mirror,* 27 August 1915.
39. W. M., *Daily Mirror*, 18 July 1915.
40. Haselden, *Daily Mirror,* 10 August 1917.
41. After the war Haselden continued to draw on factual events, criticise government policy and promote the *Mirror's* viewpoint that the country was not adequately recompensing its war heroes. In 'The Future of Tommy' (21–29 November 1918) he targeted the problems faced by soldiers returning home. He subsequently also focused on the general dissatisfaction and atmosphere of 'unfulfilled promises' (Lebas, Magri, Topalov: 1991, 263) surrounding the 1919 Housing Bill. In a series of five comic strips (May to December 1919) he attacked housing agents and the government on the subject, having previously identified the issues faced by a young couple affected by the housing shortage (20–30 January 1919).

4 Proto Comics as Trench Record: Anti-Heroism, Disparagement Humour and Citizens' Journalism

1. For more on First World War historiography, see Bond (2002).
2. *Chevrons to Stars,* October 1917: 52, CWM.
3. The only other event in modern history that prompted a similar self-publishing explosion – for print text, not cartoons – was the French Revolution, when the number of publications mushroomed to 2,000 from only one official journal during the ancien régime (Chapman: 2005, 15–22; 2008, 131–132).
4. NAUK: War Cabinet Minute 231, 12 September 1917, CAB 23/4.
5. 'Blighty and France' *Aussie* no. 5, June 1918.
6. Approximately 60,000 died and a further 170,000 were wounded (Cook: 2000, 19).
7. For German trench publications, the most numerous, but frequently officially backed, see Nelson (2010, 2011).
8. AWM: folder 5, vol. 3, part 4, 1 September 1917.
9. AWM: folder 10, part 11, vol. 111.

10. Overall, a total of c. 200 Australian journal editions have survived. Condon (2011) takes a sample of 41 New Zealander trench publications.
11. According to Broadbent (2009, 160–161), 'The hyperbole about courage and dash that surrounds the Anzac Legend is Ashmead-Bartlett's. The more human features of the image – the mateship, the robust vigour, and the ability to endure and put a cheerful face on adversity – can be traced to Bean.' See also Fewster (1982).
12. Bean later published some of his rejections for *The Anzac Book* in *The Rising Sun* (ed. Seal: 2005, 51–61). Rejected contributions were published subsequently in a recent edition of *The Anzac Book* (2010).
13. In terms of mainstream cartoons, there was a difference between those artists who had been to the front and those who had not. Hiley (2007) also maintains that the majority of early British Home Front cartoons poked fun at the Germans while European artists demonised them.
14. *Chronicles of the NZEF*, 30 January 1918, vol. 3, no. 36.
15. *The Listening Post*, Vol. 27, August 1917.
16. See also Obrdlik (1942); Freud (1960), Le Naour (2001).
17. For a discussion of the different names given to ordnance, see Ellin (2014).
18. NLA: *Aussie*, 1918.
19. CUL: WRA540, 1918.
20. NAL: *Aussie*, no. 16, 15 June 1920.

5 The Rise and Fall of the First World War Gullible Worker as a Counterculture

1. See Hess and Kaplan (1975, 13) and Cohen (2007) for more information.
2. Orwell, G., 'Funny, but not vulgar', *Leader*, 28 July 1945.
3. See Piott (1987) for more on Flower and Opper.
4. The educative aspect of cartoon characters being foolish and making mistakes was recognised in RAF training manuals during the Second World War with the persona of Private Officer Prune. See Hamilton (1991).
5. Walker, *Northwest Worker*, 15 March 1917.
6. Both the *American Socialist* and the *Northwest Worker* ceased publication in 1917.
7. Walker, *Maoriland Worker*, 16 May 1913. War and lunatic story: Walker, *Northwest Worker*, 1 June 1916 and 7 September 1916, and *Maoriland Worker*, 12 August 1914. Zif, *International Socialist*, 29 August 1914.
8. *Northwest Worker*, 1 February 1916.
9. *Northwest Worker*, 6 April 1916.
10. See, for example, *Maoriland Worker*, 5 May 1915; *Worker* (Brisbane), 15 September 1915, 24 July 1919, 24 October 1923.
11. *Appeal to Reason,* 3 May 1913.
12. The AFL were known for strike-breaking, as Mr Block strips highlighted.
13. The IWW are still active. For the centenary of their foundation a comic strip version of their history was published (Schulman and Buhle, 2005), with the artist Nick Thorkelson focusing on Mr Block (see http://www.nickthorkelson.com/mrblock.htm). Buhle has also published other works on the Wobblies (1967; 2005).

14. A successor to Hill was Woody Guthrie, both in his music and his habit of cartooning. His 'Woody Sez' cartoons were published in the Communist People's World in 1939–40; see Blake (2008).
15. *International Socialist Review,* 16 (July 1915–June 1916), p. 126.
16. Ryan, *Direct Action,* 1 April 1915.
17. *Solidarity,* 5 September 1914.
18. Riebe, *Industrial Worker*, 1914 (n.d.). Accessible at http://nickthorkelson.com/block13_insult.gif. Accessed 10 November 2013.
19. See Streitmatter (2001:112) and Thompson (1967:2) for figures.
20. *Direct Action,* 28 February 1914.
21. The insult appeared in: Burke, J. M. 'Patriotic ... Boneheads', *Direct Action*, 1 January 1915.
22. Ryan, *Direct Action*, 15 February 1915.
23. Ryan, *Direct Action*, 15 April 1915.
24. *Maoriland Worker*, 2 September 1914.
25. Zif, *International Socialist*, 28 February 1914; Walker, *Northwest Worker*, 8 June 1916.
26. Zif, *International Socialist,* 12 September 1914.
27. Zif, *International Socialist,* 24 October 1914 in a reference to the Boer War where Australian troops destroyed Boer farms and confiscated their animals to aid the British.
28. This is a point of similarity with trench publications. Chapman and Ellin (2014) and Wise (2007) point out there are cartoons that are essentially the same, despite originating in different countries and by different artists in different languages. The only adjustments are changes in uniform and backdrop.
29. Massage, 'One Road to Industrial Freedom'. *Direct Action*, 15 September 1915; *Direct Action*, 1 October 1915.
30. Ryan, *Direct Action*, 15 December 1914.
31. Walker, New York Call, 3 October 1916.
32. See, for example, 'TWENY FOUR', Selfishness and the Worker, *Direct Action*, 13 May 1916.
33. On alienation, see Ollman (1977).

6 Adjusting to Total War: US Propaganda, Commerce and Audience

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22. Unfortunately, issue 2 of *USMC* is no longer existent in the archives of the Library of Congress.
23. Published in two parts in *Action Comics No. 1–2*, June–July 1938. The first was originally untitled. However, it was subsequently retitled, 'Superman, Champion of the Oppressed'. This title occurs in *The Superman Chronicles, Vol. 1*, New York: DC Comics, 2006. The second was titled, 'Revolution in San Monte Pt. 2'.
24. This number does not include the small promotional symbol on the corner of the comics. This Superman motif was introduced in later editions of *Action Comics* in order to advertise that these comics contained Superman content.
25. *Action Comics No. 11*, April 1939, in *Superman Chronicles Vol. 1*, New York: DC Comics, 2006.
26. *Action Comics No. 48*, May 1942, in *Superman Chronicles Vol. 9*, New York: DC Comics, 2011.
27. *World's Best Comics No. 1* (Spring 1941) continuing as *World's Finest Comics Nos. 2–6* (Summer 1941–Summer 1942) in *Superman Chronicles Vols 5–9*, New York: DC Comics, 2008–11.
28. *Superman No. 17*, July/August 1942, in *Superman Chronicles Vol. 2*, New York: DC Comics, 2007.
29. See also *Time*, 13 April 1942.
30. 'How to Make Posters That Will Help Win the War – Recommendations based on a study of Canadian War Posters' by YOUNG & RUBICAM, Inc. for the National Advisory Council on Government Posters of the Graphics Division, Office of Facts and Figures, Washington DC, 22 June 1942, p. 4.
31. See Jones (2004).
32. For more on this, see Riches (2009).
33. Examples of such 'comics' language include: 'Though invasion is less likely than an attack from Mars' or 'Like sharks on the blood trail, our armored cars lunge at the enemy' ('USA Is Ready', Dell, 1941) Newspaper Division, Library of Congress.
34. For example, 'You feel your ship swing sharply' ('USA Is Ready', Dell, 1941) or 'In your cockpit-world, the Earth is a toy you can spin with a flip of your stick' ('USA Is Ready', Dell, 1941), Newspaper Division, Library of Congress.
35. A. P. Delacorte (1941) (ed.), *U.S.A. Is Ready* (USA Is Ready: Dell Publishing Company, Inc), 37. Newspaper Division, Library of Congress.
36. The films advertised are *Guadalcanal Diary* (Twentieth Century Fox: Lewis Seiler, 1943) and *Land and Live in the Jungle* (18th AAF Base Unit (Motion Picture Unit), California, 1944).
37. Sharp (2002) (ed.) 'Jap Answers Marine Pilot' *Follow Me* xxxvix, 5.
38. 'Special Intelligence Report No. 15' of the US Office of Facts and Figures Bureau of Intelligence Division of Information Channels,

Appendix B, Section II, p. 3, 11 March 1942, Microfilm Division, Library of Congress.

39. *The United States Marines Vol. 1 No. 1* and *The United States Marines Vol. 1 No. 3*, Vincent Sullivan (ed.), USA: Magazine Enterprises, 1944; *The American Air Forces Vol. 1 No. 3*, Vincent Sullivan (ed.), New York: Life's Romances Publishing Company, Inc., January–February 1945, Newspaper Division, Library of Congress.
40. 'Special Intelligence Report No. 15', Appendix B, Section II, p. 3.

7 The Cultural Construction of Women: Pin-Ups, Proactive Women and Representation in Combat

1. 'Male Call' 7 February 1943.
2. 'Male Call' 1 January 1944.
3. 'Male Call' 17 June 1945.
4. 'Male Call' 16 May 1943.
5. 'Male Call' 22 August 1943.
6. 'Male Call' 8 April 1945.
7. 'Male Call' 14 February 1943.
8. 'Male Call' 4 April 1943.
9. 'Male Call' 17 September 1944.
10. 'Male Call' 19 March 1944.
11. 'Male Call' 20 August 1944.
12. 'Male Call' 10 October 1943.
13. 'Male Call' 30 May 1943.
14. 'Male Call' 11 July 1943.
15. 'Male Call' 21 February 1943.
16. 'Male Call' 26 December 1943.
17. 'Male Call' 19 March 1944.
18. For more on gender and war in Australia see Damousi and Lake (1995).
19. Eventually, the strips were collected into comic books published by Consolidated Press, first as *The War Comic* and then as the first and the fourth in the Supercomic Series (1947–1950s) – the only original local products out of 66 US reprints (NLA MS 6514). After the war, O'Brien increasingly based her stories (written in conjunction with journalist C. W. Brien) on the novels of Ashton Woolfe, a self-promoting former employee of the French security services; she combined his (embellished) real-life accounts with items from newspapers. Wanda's dangerous exploits continued until the strip was abruptly terminated mid-adventure in 1951 (NLA 1984). Unfortunately, the locally produced comic could not compete with American imports.
20. Throughout Europe and Latin America, and in Canada and Japan, comic books and comic strips are regarded as serious artistic and cultural productions. In the United States, however, comics have traditionally been considered a low-brow medium (Varnum and Gibbons 2001).
21. *Military Comics #1*, Quality Comics Group, August 1941 and *Military Comics #13*, Quality Comics Group, November 1942.
22. *Military Comics #5*, Quality Comics Group, December 1941.

23. *True Comics #5*, Quality Comics Group, October 1941.
24. *True Comics #37*, Quality Comics Group, July 1944.
25. *True Comics #37*, Quality Comics Group, July 1944.
26. Invitation to Exhibition Opening, 15 November 1940, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.
27. *True Comics #37*, Quality Comics Group, July 1944.
28. *True Comics #7*, Quality Comics Group, December 1941 and *True Comics #36*, Quality Comics Group, June 1944.
29. *True Comics #3*, Quality Comics Group, August 1941.
30. *True Comics #5*, Quality Comics Group, October 1941.
31. *True Comics #5*, Quality Comics Group, October 1941.
32. *True Comics #2*, Quality Comics Group, June 1941.
33. *Military Comics #5*, Quality Comics Group, December 1941.
34. *Military Comics #13*, Quality Comics Group, November 1942.
35. *True Comics #38*, Quality Comics Group, August 1944.
36. *True Comics #38*, Quality Comics Group, August 1944.
37. *True Comics #38*, Quality Comics Group, August 1944.

8 Collective Culture as Dynamic Record: The *Daily Worker*, 1940–43

1. See Brunner (2007) for the backlash against comics at the end of the Popular Front period.
2. For a short period in the early 1920s Francis Meynell, the editor of the forerunner to the *Daily Worker (*henceforth *DW), The Communist*, had a deliberate policy of using cartoons as an 'integral part of the paper's rhetorical armoury' (Hyde: 2011, 529).
3. *DW*, 15 January 1941.
4. See also Howkins (1980, 244); Cohen (1997); and Rosen (2012).
5. See Thorpe (2000, 799–800) for a discussion of this.
6. See Worley (2002) for the early years of the CPGB.
7. *DW,* 1 January 1930.
8. For more on this, see Morgan (1989).
9. See King and Matthews (1990) for the verbatim record of the party's internal debate.
10. The coalition began in May 1940. For more on the CPGB at this point, see chapter 3 in Eaden and Renton (2002).
11. *DW,* 2 November 1940.
12. *DW,* 27 September 1940 and 29 November 1940.
13. *DW,* 7 October 1940 and 25 October 1940.
14. *DW,* 21 January 1941.
15. In 1925, the organisation had established that in order to build a 'mass party' 'the eyes of all Communists should be directed to the factory, and to the factory gate . . .' (The Communist Party of Great Britain, 1925).
16. It was for this expertise in trade union and industrial news that Lord Beaverbrook, newspaper proprietor, Lord of the Privy Seal and variously Minister of Supply, Aircraft Production and Information, read the *Daily Worker*

(together with *The Times* and the *Financial Times*) first of all newspapers each morning (Mellini: 1990, 48).

17. The party now aimed to increase production, minimise inefficiency, eliminate industrial conflict and combat apathy. This included taking an active role in the new Joint Production Committees where workers and employers cooperated and which the *DW* had previously denounced. For more, see Branson (1985, 334) and Rust (1949, 91).
18. *DW,* 8 October 1942.
19. *DW,* 2 November 1942, 2 November 1942, 16 December 1942, 14 January 1943, 15 September 1942, 15 October 1942.
20. *DW,* 15 January 1943, 8 February 1943, 15 February 1943, 19 September 1942, 27 November 1942.
21. *DW*, 7 September 1942, 22 September 1942, 22 December 1942, 1 December 1942.
22. *DW*, 3 October 1942.
23. *DW,* 23 February 1943.
24. *DW,* 30 September 1942, 6 October 1942, 13 October 1942, 17 October 1942, 9 October 1942, 8 October 1942, 23 December 1942.
25. *DW*, 2 November 1940, 6 November 1940, 11 October 1940, 27 November 1940.
26. *DW,* 9 October 1940, 3 January 1941, 12 December 1940, 20 December 1940, 6 December 1940.
27. *DW*, 7 January 1941, 25 October 1940, 30 October 1940, 12 November 1940.
28. *DW*, 7 May 1943. William Beveridge's report, which was the basis for the modern welfare state, was published in December 1942.
29. *DW,* 23 October 1942, 25 May 1943.
30. *DW*, 19 October 1940, 9 October 1940, 19 October 1940.
31. *DW,* 30 December 1940, 30 October 1940.
32. *DW,* 28 November 1940 and 31 December 1940, 1 January 1941.
33. *DW*, 6 January 1941. See Stammers (1983) for more on civil liberties during the war.
34. See Rosen (2012).
35. *DW* 18 February 1943, 26 February 1943, 30 December 1942.
36. As early as 1932 the *DW* had attempted to banish anti-Semitism in its younger readers, when its comic strip's two 'Young Pioneers' overcame their irrational dislike of a Jewish boy and united with him in the class struggle (*DW*, 19 January 1932).
37. *DW*, 29 December 1942, 19 December 1942, 8 December 1942, 14 December 1942, 25 February 1943, 1 December 1942.
38. *DW*, 2 December 1940.
39. *DW*, 29 September 1942. See Smith (1987) for more on black GIs in Britain.
40. For a comprehensive discussion of women's roles in the CPGB see 'True Sons and Daughters of the British Working Class' in Morgan et al. (2003); for the pre-war situation see also Hunt and Worley (2004) and Bruley (1986).
41. *DW,* 18 November 1942, 31 October 1942.
42. *DW*, 24 September 1942, 8 January 1943. Despite being in favour of equal pay the CPGB opposed the strike for higher wages by the women at the Rolls Royce Hillington factory in 1943.

43. *DW*, 28 January 1943, 16 September 1942, 16 September 1942, 7 January 1943, 1 October 1942.
44. *DW*, 10 October 1942, 3 November 1942.
45. *DW*, 20 November 1942, 27 October 1942.
46. See Collins (1996) for left-wing humour being viewed by the government as a safety valve in times of war.

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Index

Note: The locators followed by 'n' refer to note numbers.