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## The Process Of Manufacture Rudyard Kipling's Private Propaganda

One of Rudyard Kipling's *Epitaphs* on the Great War, "Common Form," offers the theme of his involvement with Britain's propaganda effort during the Great War: "If any question why we died/Tell them because our fathers lied" (Hibberd and Onions 113). These lines have always suggested Kipling's disgust with England's complacent attitude towards preparedness for battle, noted in the losses incurred in the Boer War. Resting on the Empire's laurels, the older generations "lied" about the need for an army that would safeguard the Empire should it be threatened. And should an army be necessary, what awaited England's soldiers, according to the "fathers," was glorious victory on the battlefield. Read against Kipling's experiences in World War I, specifically the loss of his only son John, however, "Common Form" gains a poignantly ironic twist. During the Great War, Kipling helped to create a strong national propaganda that pushed young men (including John) into battle. Propaganda at its most devious and manipulative is a manufactured lie.<sup>1</sup> After John's death, Kipling came to realize that through his pamphlet writing, speechmaking, and recruiting he had manipulated the idea of war into a glorious crusade against the Germans. His public propaganda initially paralleled his own private doctrine of war, but with John's death, Kipling had to balance the public figure, who could not retract the "old lies"<sup>2</sup> with the intensely private man, who with all his might wanted his child alive again.

Deeply interested in any aspect of politics and the military, Kipling foresaw the war with Germany as early as 1897, and despaired of England's chances. In his poem "The Islanders," Kipling blasts the British, pointing with great irony and bitterness to the "[. . .] flannelled

fools at the wicket and the muddied oafs at the goals" (*Kipling's Verse* 301) as the type of men who would lead England's armed forces in war. He evokes the public school ethos (one which he helped to create in *Stalky & Co.*) and indeed predicts the type of soldier who was to conduct the war. "India's full of Stalkies," Kipling wrote,

Cheltenham, and Haileybury, and Marlborough chaps—that we don't know anything about; the surprise will begin when there's a really big row on. Just imagine Stalky let loose on the South side of Europe with a sufficiency of Sikhs and a reasonable prospect of loot—consider it quietly. (qtd. in Birkenhead 228-9)

With this astonishing image in mind, perhaps, Kipling set out to work for England during the war.

In September 1914, Kipling was invited, along with fifty-three other noted literary figures, to a secret meeting held at Wellington House.<sup>3</sup> Appointed by the Prime Minister as the head of a fledgling propaganda department, C.F.G. Masterman wanted to secure these authors' help to counter anti-British propaganda that was being distributed worldwide. Masterman chose Kipling because of his strong Imperialist views and because he had written propaganda during the Boer War. A cartoon of that time shows Kipling holding a dripping pen next to the famous Lord Kitchener who is holding a bloodied sword. The caption reads in part: "When the Empire needs a stitch in her/Call for Kipling and for Kitchener" (Buitenhuis 7). Masterman, completely unprepared to head the nation's Bureau of Propaganda, nevertheless created what was to become "an essential weapon in the nation's arsenal" (Sanders and Taylor 11). Indeed, it is to the rather dubious credit of Wellington House that "most of the principles and many of the techniques of modern propaganda were worked out in such detail that subsequent practitioners would do little more than elaborate on them" (Messinger 2).

Initially, the anti-German messages sent from Wellington House were directed toward neutral nations, but as the war progressed, Masterman and others came to understand the imperative to mobilize opinion at home. As the zeal with which the British initially supported the war waned, the need to gather recruits and support for the war became the driving force behind the manipulation of the home front sensibility. Gary Messinger, author of *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War*, notes that although "the church, the press, business, political

parties, and philanthropy were the [initial] major producers” of home front propaganda, the national government became increasingly involved in “a major psychological offensive against its own citizens” (2, 6). Messinger’s use of the term “offensive” links the government’s manipulation of public opinion directly to battle, suggesting the emotional war waged by noncombatants on the home front.

The principal method of distributing propaganda was the pamphlet. In *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction 1914-1933*, Peter Buitenhuis asserts that the pamphlet was a popular method of circulation because it was “cheap, and easy to produce, and simple to distribute” (21). The rhetoric of these pamphlets, Buitenhuis notes, comes from the “evangelical” tradition of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the “school story” (21-2). Both Bunyan’s and Kipling’s works were immensely popular during the war, and writers of pamphlets (including Kipling) drew from these works the ideas of sacrifice, spiritual progression and sportsmanship to appeal emotionally to the population of Britain (22). Kipling’s pamphlet *The New Army* is an example of the rhetoric used in this war to shift the imagination away from horror towards glory.

Sent by Wellington House to tour the camps of the New Army (made up of volunteers), Kipling wrote about the men in training with the intent to praise, to glorify, and ultimately to recruit more men. Of soldiers training on Salisbury Plain, Kipling wrote, “they were all supple, free, and intelligent, and they moved with a lift and drive that made one sing for joy [. . .]. [T]hey were all truly thankful that they lived in these high days.” The pamphlet concludes as Kipling asks,

What will be the position in years to come of the young man who has deliberately outcast himself from this all-embracing brotherhood? What of his family and, above all, what of his descendants, when the books have been closed and the last balance struck of sacrifice and sorrow throughout every hamlet, village, parish, suburb, city, shire, district, province and Dominion throughout the Empire? (qtd. in Buitenhuis 25-6)

Kipling’s emotionally charged rhetoric fired the imagination of the country at the same time as it muffled its sensibility through the manipulation of civilian emotion. In no sense were the British prepared for the realities of trench warfare, for their minds were enchanted by the

manufactured fantasy of the war and its fighting men. Not only did Kipling tour the camps, but he also offered his services as speechwriter, and as an immensely popular speaker at recruiting rallies. And near the end of the war, although shattered by his son's death, Kipling continued his propaganda work as a commissioner of the Imperial War Graves Commission where he assured England that her sacrifice of a generation of young men was not in vain. The inscription that Kipling wrote, "Their Names Liveth For Evermore," guarantees the dead a place in history as warriors of a glorious cause.

Aside from direct appeal for recruitment, the other major topic of these pamphlets was reports on German atrocities. The infamous Bryce Report was a 660-page pamphlet published in 1915 by the British (Sanders and Taylor 142-3). Also known as *The Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*, this piece of graphic reportage is a monument to opinion manipulation. Although it was proven, after the war, to be composed of unsubstantiated evidence, its highly emotional content (graphic examples of atrocities and case studies) mobilized the nation against the Germans when it was published. Indeed, Kipling wrote "Swept and Garnished" (October 1914) in reaction to earlier newspaper reports of atrocities, and the plight of the Belgians is mentioned in both "Swept and Garnished" and "Mary Postgate" (March 1915). Similarly, the attack on the *Lusitania* and the execution of Nurse Edith Cavell also provided Wellington House with highly emotional content for its campaign against the Germans.

Another successful method of spreading the message of war was the poster. Civilian sensibilities were saturated by 12.5 million of them by 1916. "Constant direct appeal" for recruitment was the main topic of these posters; however, they soon addressed the need for "war loans, labour recruitment, and food economy" (Sanders and Taylor 105). "Your country needs YOU," declares the caption underneath a portrait of an intense Lord Kitchener pointing a large and intimidating forefinger at whoever should view the poster. One of the major themes of recruiting posters was the "exploitation [. . .] of male pride in the face of family expectation" (138). A famous poster depicts a man with a forlorn and ashamed expression on his face as his children play with toy soldiers at his feet. The caption reveals the source of his shame, as one of the children asks, "Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?" This question recalls Kipling's query in his pamphlet and foreshadows Kipling's own desire to see his son go to war. Ironically, this question also sets up

the schism between fathers and sons represented by the nation's "fathers" and between Kipling and John.

So overwhelming was the propaganda that the government released that soldiers returning home felt a huge gap in communication with loved ones, because the truth of the horrors of war was propagandized before it was allowed to enter British sensibility. Good morale was a manufactured and closely guarded state in England. Civilians were fed war news filtered through government censors. Exhibition trenches set up in Kensington Gardens for the edification of the noncombatant were the "laughing stock of the Army" (qtd. in Fussell 43). Perhaps most detrimental to the common understanding of war, however, was that the bodies of the English dead could not be buried at home. In *Postcards From the Trenches: Negotiating the space between Modernism and the First World War*, Allyson Booth notes that "for soldiers, the erasure of corpses from the home front constitutes an erasure of home itself" (30). The erasure of the effects of war on the home front and the maintenance of the myth of the Great War were major causes of the enormous gulf that developed between combatant and noncombatant. On a national level, the government manipulated the public's sensibility in order to maintain support for the war. Linked with national censorship of war news was the manipulation of the private sphere of the combatant and non-combatant alike. The personal letters of soldiers were opened, read, and censored to ensure that no disturbing (or classified) information would reach the domestic front. Even so, the soldiers found it quite difficult to reveal what they experienced, for the language would not accommodate brutalities experienced on the front. Later, field postcards replaced letters, minimalizing language to checkmarks in appropriate boxes while at the same time doing away with the pressure on the combatant to find appropriate words to write home. The flow of (sensitive) information was controlled in this manner as well, for no room was left on the card for anything but a signature. Indeed, John Kipling's brief, chatty letters (and field postcards) to his mother and father mostly consist of requests for socks and other warm clothing, quick accounts of training sessions and dirty French accommodations. Ironically, a quick aside in one letter reveals the total innocence with which John, and most of the British forces, entered into the war. John writes from France: "It is hard to realize that the war is going on so near; if it wasn't for the occasional booming of guns it would be like England" (Gilbert 201). John's letter is indicative of the early response to the war, a response readily accepted by the home front.

Perhaps the easiest victims of war propaganda, at least on the home front, were women, for they were subjected to a net of misinformation that was woven long before the Edwardian era. The women of Britain were expected to conform to social, moral, and sexual codes that constricted thought, action and emotion. When the war began, more pressure was placed upon women, for even more than before they had to represent all that Britain was fighting for—home and hearth. Ironically, as symbols of these values and as “guardians” of the home front, women were also expected to do their part for the war effort. Many women went to work. Many women gave up their sons and husbands. Sacrifice was the ideal of patriotic duty, and few mothers (and fathers) under the ritualized dogma of propaganda could reject this call. To give up a son to service was the greatest contribution to the war effort of all. Propaganda posters of the time placed the pressure on women to send their loved ones off to war.

Conspicuous in recruiting posters was the image of the woman. In *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos*, Peter Parker argues that although “women’s role as far as the propagandists were concerned was to stand on the sidelines and encourage recruitment; [it] is also significant that women were used in the most cynical way by propagandists” (179). Britannia, the female embodiment of England, was most powerfully depicted with one breast bared as if to suggest that the men whom she had “suckled” must in turn fight and die for her. Women in posters also pointed the way to the battlefield and said, “GO!”; women asked other women to “Help and send a man to join the Army today” (179). The use of women in posters helped to widen the gulf between the combatant and the noncombatant as the fighting men came to perceive women as one of the causes of the continuation of the war. Unfortunately, these militant images of women were those that endured in the imagination of the civilian and veteran after the war. Kipling was to use the image of the militant woman in his propagandized characterization of Mary Postgate as an example of what the civilian must do in the advent of war.

In “Asylums of Antaeus: Women, War and Madness—Is there a Feminist Fetishism?”, Jane Marcus contends that the images of women in posters “cannot be seen as women’s images of themselves, but rather as such effective patriarchal projections that ordinary soldiers and university-educated poets could blame the women at home for the deaths of comrades” (141). Instead of being depicted as “virgin warriors” as the

suffragettes (as well as those other women who wanted to work for the war effort) presented themselves, the department of propaganda remodeled women's images into those "crucial and needed roles of mother and nurse" (134, 137). By recasting women's roles through the highly visible poster, the government effectively contained the suffrage movement and directed feminine power to the war's ends. Marcus also notes that the images of nurses and mothers in the posters offer a double message that links these supposedly nurturing roles with death, which caused a certain ambivalence in the soldiers upon their return from the front.

Rudyard and Carrie Kipling were also caught up in the net of misrepresentation as they sent their son John off to war even though he was wrenchingly young (only 17) and had poor eyesight. Kipling had to make a special request to his friend Lord Roberts to commission John into the Irish Guards. So conditioned were the Kiplings, along with the rest of Britain, that even though "Kipling's realistic mind [did not nourish] any genuine hope of his son's survival, [. . .] it never occurred to father, son or mother that there was any alternative to immediate service" (Birkenhead 267). An example of this strong resolve can be seen in one of Kipling's letters to his son. "Dear Old Man," he begins as he recounts a meeting between himself, Carrie, "Mademoiselle" (a former governess of John), and Rider Haggard.

She was immensely interested in your [military] career. "But *why*," said she, "is he in the Irish Guards?" [. . .]. Then she couldn't understand why you were in the Army at all. "*If* there is no compulsion," she said, "why should John enter the Army?" "Precisely *because* there is no compulsion," says Mother. (Gilbert 181)

Kipling helped to create this ritualized response to war through his pamphlet writing and recruiting, and it is from the perspective of the jingoistic propagandist that he wrote "Swept and Garnished" and "Mary Postgate." When we place "The Gardener" (1926) beside these stories, however, we can see not only the progression in Kipling's response to the war, but also his growing understanding of a civilian consciousness at war. He, too, suffered the transformation that took place in England because of the war, drawing him towards the noncombatant experience of the home front clearly depicted in "The Gardener." Although he was a war correspondent and visited the front in this capacity, his vision of the war was muted and his letters to his son from the field suggest that

he was not afforded a close up view of the fighting lines. Kipling wrote from Verdun:

I've had rather a good time. Been to several nice places including a bombarded town; had a squint at the Crown Prince's Army in the Argonne; seen Rheims (they weren't bombarding it for the moment) [. . .]. The men I saw in the trenches were mostly Saxons and didn't want trouble even when the French stirred 'em up. (Gilbert 196)

Even though Kipling's war stories are for the most part set on the front, or in the fray, one reviewer notes his "savagery is of [an] essentially cultivated kind. They are the kind of battle story which is usually written by sedentary poets who live in the country and are fond of children" (qtd. in Birkenhead 226). Certainly, Kipling was a poet, lived in the country and loved children, but his "intellectual brutality" (226) reflected in graphic depictions of war came from an active appreciation for war he had had since he lived in India, not from sedentary living. The fact that he was not fighting on the front during the war, however, gave him an uncommon perspective that he uses effectively in each of the stories.

Because he remained on the home front, Kipling came to understand the ambivalence primarily felt by women who sent sons or husbands or lovers off to war, and this is what sets these stories apart from his other war stories. Nowhere is this ambivalence more clearly seen than in the story "The Gardener." The intense, psychological portraits of women in "Swept and Garnished," "Mary Postgate," and "The Gardener" reveal not only the national propaganda that was working against women, but also a private propaganda within feminine experience that was equally as crippling to the woman who attempted to find a place in a male-dominated, war-torn world.

Kipling's female protagonists are women who rely upon their own private propaganda manifested in domestic ritual<sup>4</sup> to assure themselves security in the face of chaos. Similarly, Kipling relied on the arcane ritual of the Masons to help him cope with his son's death and with his own bitterness concerning the war, which is fully revealed in his character Helen Turrell in "The Gardener." However, once the "reality" of war intrudes upon his protagonists' domestic space, the strength of this feminine propaganda is tested. Ironically, Kipling uses government propaganda (misinformation) to destroy the feminine in his earlier



stories. Not until "The Gardener," written eight years after the war, do we see Kipling destroying private propaganda with a "merciless sea of black crosses"(188), the de-propagandized truth of the "war to end all wars" in an attempt to reconcile the losses he experienced through his involvement with the war.

Kipling's protagonists reveal his own conversion in the understanding of war. Each of the women is somehow detached from her "son," indicating a "masculine" facet of her personality. We can say that Kipling, as a father (in a father's traditional role), is detached from his child even though he was known for his deep love for children. Kipling's public aloofness is reflected in his stoic acceptance of John's death. He wrote to Lord Dunsterville:

I don't suppose there is much hope for my boy, [. . .] and the little that is left doesn't bear thinking of. However, I hear that he finished well [. . .] it was a short life. I'm sorry that all the years' work ended in that one afternoon, but—lots of people are in our position, and it's something to have bred a man. (qtd. in Birkenhead 269)

Yet beneath this ritualized acceptance of fate revealed in the letter, the words "my boy" betray the agony of the parent outside of gender. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar assert that Kipling "saw the ultimate tragedy of the war as a shattering of the father-son bond," and as "the absence of [. . .] a [. . .] son became a central presence in his life, he began to define himself as a debilitated inhabitant of a psychic no man's land comparable to the literal no man's land" where John was killed (288). Kipling's "The Gardener" clearly reflects this conversion from innocence to disillusionment both in his fiction and in his life.

Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate, in their introduction to *Women's Fiction of the Great War*, note that "In writing by both women and men, maternity is oddly displaced from gender and re-emerges as a fantasy of tenderness and power" (10). Reflecting these fluid gender boundaries, Kipling's protagonists are "non-mothers," but this non-mother characterization works against them in their ritualized propaganda, and the fantasy of power that emerges can be destructive. For instance, Frau Ebermann in "Swept and Garnished" believes that she has firm control not only over her own life and daily ritual, but she also controls what information she accepts. Her bout with influenza strips her of her

control and this allows her private propaganda to be destroyed. Although the proud mother of a German soldier, the Frau “had never been a child lover in any sense” (227). Her detachment from her motherly instincts makes the appearance of the ghost children in her flat all the more devastating to her because she tries, unsuccessfully, to fall back on the ritual associated with mothers to try to get rid of the children. Perhaps the most intricate characterizations of the non-mother, however, come in “Mary Postgate” and “The Gardener.”

Mary Postgate, companion to the elderly Miss Fowler, is important within Kipling’s progression. In her character we see the nation’s zealous patriotism and deep grief. Mary is hired as a companion, but she assumes the role of mother for Wynn Fowler, Miss Fowler’s orphaned nephew. She raises him up and sends him to war, and like too many young men in the war, he is killed. Mary avenges his death by watching (and allowing) a supposedly German soldier die a slow death in a wooded copse by Miss Fowler’s house. Although de-feminized by Kipling, Mary plays the part of Wynn’s mother, always “his butt and his slave” (236). The affection between them is overshadowed by Wynn’s verbal derision of her, but Mary, who has not performed the ritualized “woman’s business [. . .] to make a happy home for a husband and children” (249), becomes both father and mother to Wynn. Her deep love for Wynn is evident when she reaches her arms out to his plane as he flies overhead on a training mission. Her gesture is also one of sacrifice, evoking the nation’s sacrifice as well as Kipling’s sacrifice of his only son. Her reaction to Wynn’s death and the resulting fantasy of power in the German soldier’s death foreshadows Kipling’s stoicism and his strengthening hatred for the Germans because of John’s death.

Helen Turrell is perhaps the character closest to Kipling’s own personality. Helen’s sacrifice of her son and her grief after the news of his death mirrors Kipling’s own grief process. Indeed, he drew upon his own despair in his portrayal of Helen’s intense, but ritualized reaction to her son’s death. With characteristic complexity, Kipling develops Helen’s personality through her private relationship with her son (whom she publicly claims as a nephew), and also through her adherence to public propaganda. “The Gardener” grew out of a visit that Rudyard and Carrie made in 1920 to the battlefields on which the Irish Guards had fought. Kipling had promised to take a picture of a grave for a bereaved mother, like the character Mrs. Scarsworth, “And after this distressing pilgrimage which had deeply moved them both, Caroline entered

prosaically in her diary: ‘The gardener gives notice—no reason assigned’ ” (Birkenhead 291). Kipling, who often read and made comments in Caroline’s diary, must have gotten the title and the theme of his story from this entry, for it hints at private truth and the need for spiritual progression. In the context of the story, the gardener, a Christ figure, “gives notice” to Helen that she relinquish her private propaganda in order to be able to grieve as Michael’s mother. Helen Turrell is as intensely private as Kipling was, and she relies upon her personal ritual to detach herself emotionally from her son. Her relationship with Michael is based upon a lie (her own manipulation), and it is not until she is faced with his death that she can face her own truth. Kipling was a victim of the commands of sacrifice, duty, and endurance, the watchwords of propaganda, because his vision of war was manufactured by information that was fed to the British by their own government. Not until John’s death did Kipling fully comprehend the truth behind the “old lie.”

Setting is particularly important for Kipling’s propaganda stories “Swept and Garnished” and “Mary Postgate.” In these stories the setting helps to define the protagonists, and it also allows these women to experience an “intellectual” war of the kind that Kipling was waging at home. Both were written in the aftermath of the reports on German atrocities, and the domestic space of Frau Ebermann’s flat delineates her unsympathetic character. She is surrounded by her “mathematically square” pieces of imitation lace, “yellow cut glass handles of the chest of drawers, the stamped bronze hook to hold back the heavy puce curtains, [. . .] the mauve enamel, New Art finger plates on the door [. . .] [and] a green plush sofa” (227, 230). These trappings suggest a decadence that revolted Kipling and which he felt had taken over the youth of England, so it is ironic and revealing that he should imbue his enemy protagonist with the accoutrements of the “enemy” at home. In contrast to the Frau’s home is Mary Postgate’s conservative British domestic space. She, too, is the mother figure at home, yet she is as active as the Frau is complacent. The story is set in a small village peopled by village types. The rector, Nurse Eden (the village nurse), the doctor, and Mrs. Gerritt (the publican’s wife), among others, serve to represent the community of Britain. The home front represented by the village is a safe, normal, comfortable place, a manufactured vision of the home that was to be thrust upon soldiers and civilians alike. Mary Postgate’s domestic space is filled by Wynn and Miss Fowler, her charges who echo Kipling’s patriotic call to

Britain: "He must go" (104). As soon as Kipling sets up the domestic space of these two protagonists as places of safety however, the war intrudes, politicizing the private space of the home front, suggesting that the war is inescapable, and that the responsibility of winning belongs not only to the soldier on the front, but also to the "guardian" of the home.

In both of the early stories, the feminine space of the home is turned into a surreal war zone that allows these women to experience the "reality" of war. In order to allow the war to intrude, Kipling suspends consciousness. Frau Ebermann is in the throes of influenza and hallucinates the ghosts of the Belgian children who "set themselves to climb, boots and all, on to the green plush sofa" (230), destroying the aura of safety she has come to rely on. Allyson Booth notes that

civilian modernist writers reproduced the combatant tendency to understand life and death as experiences between which one fluctuates. While for modernist precursors [like Kipling], the past often insinuates itself in the form of ghosts [. . .] later modernists [like Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, and Elizabeth Bowen] often embodied the persistence of the past within corpses, which were experienced as threats to the ability of survivors to construct *stable* senses of their own identities. (57)

No longer will Frau Ebermann be able to look to her private space to gauge her own sense of order. It has become a political arena for the de-propagandizing of the truth. Similarly, Kipling shifts the atmosphere in "Mary Postgate" to allow Mary to fulfill her potential as a British woman on the home front; she has done her duty by sacrificing Wynn and continues to work for the war effort. The scene in which she destroys Wynn's effects is a ritualized ceremony of cremation. The "sacrificial" fire of the destructor illuminates the head of a German soldier who lies with his head "*tout cassée*" behind a laurel (114-5). She remains at the destructor, her mind on Wynn and the German, "the thing beneath the oak" (116). Mary constantly pokes the fires of the destructor, "wield[ing] the poker with lunges that jarred the grating" (116). The description suggests battle, the enemy is sufficiently repulsive, and Mary, permeated with the thoughts of Wynn and Edna Gerritt (a child killed in town, supposedly by a bomb dropped by the German),<sup>5</sup> glows and hums as she goes about her war work. Her space,

like Frau Ebermann's, is politicized. Kipling has shattered the safety of the home front by bringing the war in, allowing Mary to fulfill her domestic status as guardian of the home front.

Later, in "The Gardener," Kipling was to split the world of the home front and the war zone, perhaps because the war zone of France had reverted to a homeland again. Nevertheless, a shift does occur, as Helen Turrell is "waked up to some sort of second life" when she goes to look for Michael's grave. Alteration of place is necessary to Helen's recovery because Helen's village had "evolved a ritual to meet" any experience of war, much as Helen has evolved a ritual of lies to meet any experience within her life (182). At this point, Kipling is interested more in de-propagandizing the ritual in which he had become a player as well, and this private ritual is where the complexity of the story lies. Thus, when Helen is thrust into the horror of Haagenzeele, her safety is withdrawn, and she must look into the actuality of war represented by the cemetery itself. One can only speculate what Kipling must have felt when, as a commissioner of the War Graves Commission, he had to help decide the locations and the layouts of the national cemeteries that would not hold the body of his son. The awed response of the noncombatant is echoed in Kipling's description of Helen's first glimpse of the cemetery: "She *did not know* that Hagenzeele Third counted twenty-one thousand dead already" (188, emphasis mine). Kipling uses the safety of the home front in these stories to augment the horrors of war which come to include the manufactured images of war which he helped to create.

Because "Swept and Garnished" and "Mary Postgate" are blatant pieces of propaganda, Kipling creates protagonists as coded types who exist in a ritualized atmosphere and who respond to propaganda in ritualized fashion. Perhaps it is these characters that Mary Butts describes when she notes of Kipling, a favorite author, "He [. . .] wrote of women as though they were not quite human beings, creatures only of the flesh, the flesh touched by a kind of bad magic; creatures always in their essence, inferior to men" (Blondel 447). Frau Ebermann of "Swept and Garnished" is a German hausfrau complacent in her life of ease and assured of her son's success as a soldier. Her attitude is fed through reports from the daily papers: "Another victory [. . .]. Many more prisoners" (228). She also receives letters from her son at war which inform her that the only children killed at war are those who are careless enough to step out in front of horses and guns which pass through the towns. To the complacent Frau, this is "good information" (233).

Ironically, the Frau is also representative of the attitude towards the press in England at the beginning of the war, a complacent attitude challenged by Katherine Mansfield in her stories. Kipling wrote this story in reaction to the Bryce reports that detailed supposed German atrocities against the Belgians. Despite the manufactured quality of the reports, however, Kipling and the rest of Britain believed in them wholeheartedly (Wilson 130), and they only increased his fearful distrust and hatred of the Germans.

In "Swept and Garnished," Frau Ebermann is set up as an example to the British of the cold-hearted German soul, because she is not only satisfied with obviously false reports but is also not "a child lover in any sense" (227). The good Frau, experiencing a bout with influenza, lies in her sick bed "in misery of body and soul, [. . .] waiting for some tremendously important event to come to pass" (227, 229). She feels as if her life is in order because she has compartmentalized her emotions like she has the knick knacks in her apartment, and that "If it pleased our dear God to take her [. . .]—He should find all her belongings fit to meet His eye"<sup>6</sup> (228-9). This misunderstanding of the scripture augments Kipling's characterization, for the Frau manipulates the Bible to suit her needs.

Frau Ebermann relies upon the material objects of her private, feminized space for safety; "in all her distresses she had not allowed the minutest deviation from daily routine and ritual" (228). Her ritual is a constructed response that allows her to accept the reports from her son without second thought. However, when this domestic security is taken from her, as it is with the other women in these stories, she must face what it is that she has denied because of her reliance upon her own propaganda. However, even though "Frau Ebermann looked and saw" (223) the horrors of war represented by the ghostly visitation of the "utterly wearied" (229) young victims of war, she returns to her own feminine ritual to offset the terrible knowledge that she refuses to accept. Kipling's omission of the gory details of the violence wreaked on these children suggests the muted understanding of war general to the civilian population at the time. He reveals to us the violence of war through the lens of the home front, a domesticated lens. We see Frau Ebermann at the end of the story, a Lady Macbeth figure,

busily cleaning the floor with the lace cover from the radiator, because, she explained, it was all spotted with the blood of five children—she was perfectly certain there could not be more than five in the whole world—who had gone for the moment, [. . .] and Anna was to find them and give them cakes to stop the bleeding, while her mistress swept and garnished that Our dear Lord when He came might find everything as it should be. (234)

The lace cover, which was “mathematically square with the imitation marble top of the radiator” at the beginning of the story, and which binds Frau Ebermann with her own private space and domestic ritual, is now used by the woman in an attempt to regain her sense of order. She also resorts to the “motherly” ritual of providing a panacea for small hurts in children. Kipling does not allow redemption for the Frau. Indeed, Kipling’s propaganda is the unsympathetic characterization of the German woman. She is what has bred the German war machine. She is as culpable as her son is for the deaths of the children, and she fulfills the prophecy of the scripture alluded to in the title of the story, for her house is empty of the truth, and she must now live with the “unclean spirits” of her own perversion of the truth, making her “last state [. . .] worse than the first.”

“Mary Postgate,” written shortly after “Swept and Garnished,” is also a piece of propaganda; however, its aim is quite different from that of the previous story. If “Swept and Garnished” is anti-German, “Mary Postgate” is whole-heartedly pro-British and reflects the early zeal of the home front war. Indeed, Kipling’s characterization of Mary seems to suggest a “call to service” for the women on the home front. Mary Postgate becomes the epitome of British womanhood reflected in the recruiting posters, and Kipling holds her up as the “lioness” of England. This propagandized image of the female noncombatant at war seems standard, and in support of this vision, May Sinclair noted that “The British woman at her best is very like the British soldier” (qtd. in Raitt and Tate 6). Mary, like Frau Ebermann, is a stereotyped female, a spinster and a lady’s companion who expertly takes on the domestic and social duties prescribed by the pre-war community and inherited from her elderly charge, Miss Fowler: domestic accountant, the “odd” place at dinner, public aunt to the village children, community volunteer, and finally, a pseudo-mother to Wynn, Miss Fowler’s orphaned nephew. Even though Mary’s life is defined by her sex, as most women’s were at the time, Kipling seems to de-sex her in a number of ways, neutering her, in order that he may make her conversion into a soldier on the home front seem less manipulative. For example, when Miss Fowler asks her if she ever thinks about the “things that women think about,” Mary replies, “I’m not much of a conversationalist [. . .]. But I’ve no imagination, I’m afraid” (106-7). What Mary does have however, is “a trained mind, which did not dwell” on that which might shock her, and she is “colorless” in speech and

physical demeanor (103). She seems like a soldier in colorless khaki that is trained to obey orders and not to think about himself too much.

Kipling drains any sort of feminine attributes from her as if to suggest that the ritual of the feminine mind set has no place in a war. Instead, it is to be replaced by the “old lies” of the British gentleman soldier on the front. Therefore when Wynn, Mary’s beloved “son,” enlists in the war which “did not stay decently out of England and in the newspapers” (104), she sacrifices him for the good of the country. As Wynn goes off on a training flight, Mary “lifted her lean arms toward [the] little blur” of the plane as if in supplication to the higher call of duty, much as Mrs. Grant did (107). Part of the rhetoric of national propaganda transformed the finality of death into a quasi-religious offering. Women who have lost sons, husbands, lovers to the war need not feel any sense of grief, for their deaths aided the sacred cause of the war. At Wynn’s funeral, when Mrs. Grant “[flings] herself weeping on Mary’s flat chest [crying] ‘I know how it feels,’” Mary rejects her grief as comic and completely unnecessary: “‘And when he died, she cried all morning’” (107). This scene is mirrored later by Helen Turrell in “The Gardener,” but with a much different outcome. Mary’s ritualized response is then transferred into the act of disposing of Wynn’s effects in a haunting ceremonial reminiscent of Kipling’s own ritual for the dead.

Lord Birkenhead recounts that when one of Kipling’s loved ones died, “he ruthlessly eliminated from his life anything which could remind him” of that person’s physical existence (270). After the deaths of his parents, Kipling burned all their letters, and any “family papers that came his way” (253). Similarly, after John died Rudyard and Caroline declined trips to favorite vacation retreats and turned away gifts that might remind them of John. Much in the same way, Mary and Miss Fowler ruthlessly eliminate Wynn’s personal effects. The destruction of Wynn’s things reflects Booth’s assertion that these material objects, permeated by memory, can be discarded, taking memory with them. By extending this argument, we can see that only a part of the memory of Wynn is destroyed, the memory of the child, not the man/soldier. Into the fires of the destructor go the symbols of Wynn’s youth: “the books and pictures and the games and the toys and [. . .] the rest” (109). Kipling so minutely details the list that one imagines them John’s own possessions. The only personal items Miss Fowler and Mary keep from the destructor are Wynn’s RFC cap and belt, and a “huge revolver with flat nosed bullets [. . .] which were forbidden by the rules of war to be used against



civilized enemies”<sup>7</sup> (115). Just as the destruction of personal effects can erase memory, retaining certain items can augment memory. The burning of Wynn’s civilian effects suggests that Mary converts the memory of her civilian Wynn into the memory of the soldier in order to aid her foray into “experience of battle.”

Mary replaces Wynn as a “soldier” on the home front, an ideal that Kipling saw as a necessity for all who are patriotic. Indeed, Wynn trains Mary as he goes through his own flight training, teaching her about “Taubes, Farmans, and Zeppelins” (114). He also teaches her how to shoot the revolver loaded with the flat-nosed bullets. And so as a soldier, Mary must perform “her work—work which no man [. . .] would ever have done” (116). The war thus enters the domestic front as Mary engages in conflict. Taking on Wynn’s language, she refers to the Germans as “bloody pagans” (115) and sets out to wreak vengeance not only for Wynn’s death, but also the death of little Edna, a child killed in the village. In “Towards a Feminist Peace Politics,” Sara Ruddick notes that “despite the opposition between war making and caregiving, most caregivers have complied with, and often devoted their energies to, war” (114). Mary becomes a “powerful caregiver” in that she takes advantage of the vulnerable state of the German soldier, who, on the most superficial level, represents Wynn and her tie to motherhood. Her reaction to the soldier’s death reflects Ruddick’s assertion that “powerful caregivers may be more than usually tempted by sadism [and] self-indulgent aggression [. . .]” (119) rather than the “sexual glee” that some women experienced through the “invigorating sense of revolution [and] release which the war allowed” (Gilbert and Gubar 264). After denying the soldier any sort of assistance as a “sportsman” would at a time of crisis, and wielding Wynn’s pistol, she experiences an intensity of emotions as she listens to the German soldier die (116). Mary becomes a “militant mother” (Marcus 139) who has triumphed over the enemy and who has proved herself “more deadly than the male” (*Kipling’s Verse* 365). To show how completely Mary has rejected her former domestic ritual and status for the ecstasy of war, Kipling has her return home, “where she scandalized the whole routine by taking a luxurious hot bath before tea, and came down looking, [. . .] quite handsome!” (117). By breaking her former ritual in even this small way, Mary has completed her conversion and has become the romanticized image of the soldier of the Great War. However, this image is a false one because the experience she has is based upon private manipulation fueled by national misdirection. This

skewed attitude allows her to cast the blame for Wynn's death, during a training flight, on the Germans. This anger also allows her to imagine that a bomb has been dropped by a German plane, and it allows her to listen in sadistic ecstasy as a man dies. Mary's sense of completion at the death of the soldier then is based upon private propaganda, not the truth.

Yet even though this story might be a testament to hatred as some critics have noted, we are able to see ambivalence in Kipling's propaganda, slight though it may be, which looks toward his retraction in "The Gardener." Surely Kipling suggests ambivalence when he describes the airmen who bring Wynn's body home as "children" (107). He was perhaps thinking of his own son at war. Kipling also provides a sense of the youth wasted by the war in that Wynn was to have become a solicitor in London before the war ends his chances. However, Kipling carefully offsets this "slip" in a discussion between Miss Fowler and Mary: "I'm sorry it happened before he had done anything.' [. . .] 'Yes,' [Mary said]. 'It's a great pity he didn't die in action after he had killed somebody'" (107). Kipling changes the waste of a productive life into the waste of a destructive force. However, this destructive force that was to have been Wynn "was a gentleman who for no consideration on earth would have torn little Edna into those vividly coloured strips and strings" (115). Again we see violence and war through the filter of the home front, horrors couched in domestic language. One can also sense a certain irony in these words, for even though the chivalrous version of the soldier was etched into the British imagination, surely Kipling knew that war was not a gentlemanly exercise. However, mass indoctrination overrides any sort of personal ambivalence in this story, and we are to see Mary Postgate as "a policewoman of patriarchy, the woman who enforces in other women the continued complicity of motherhood and war" (Marcus 139).

From Mary's nationalist extreme, Kipling moves much later to a more complex and psychologically realistic characterization of the domestic experience in Helen Turrell in "The Gardener." Because Kipling remained on the home front and experienced the loss of a son, he produced an intricate understanding of the process of "being manufactured into a bereaved next of kin" (183). This story completes Kipling's progression within the stages of exposure to war. He has lost the innocence and the zeal evident in the early stories. The death of his son removed Kipling from his safe, ordered existence, placed him within the experience of war, and forced him to review his own motivation behind his propa-

ganda. Like other memoirists of the Great War, Kipling was not able to articulate his grief and despair until long after the war's end. "The Gardener" can be read as Kipling's personal experience of war on the home front. He projects himself into the mother, Helen Turrell. On a superficial level, Helen is like Kipling in that she too serves on various war committees and holds "strong views about the proposed village war memorial" (171). Kipling's intricate characterization at the beginning shows the complex private manipulation of truth within his character Helen Turrell, whose emotions are an extension of his own.

Helen Turrell is "thirty-five and independent," and a respected citizen of a small community with whom she is "as open as the day" (178). Helen is the mother of an illegitimate son, however, an anathema in polite Edwardian society, so she must create a private propaganda which is so flawless that no one will see the truth behind her "nephew's mouth which was somewhat better cut than the family type" (180). In this way, she rejects her motherhood (as Kipling rejected his emotional fatherhood through his propaganda), a loss that she will reconcile only when faced with the physical loss of her son. The narrator provides a litany of Helen's virtues, all of which fall in the general category of domestic responsibility. Kipling's language and the exactness and precision of Helen's story reveal the manufactured quality of the information. And the repetition of the phrase "the village knew" suggests the village does know all about Helen, but had "evolved a ritual" (183) out of respect for her family name (and wealth), in order to accept the knowledge of Helen's little secret. The village's ritual resembles England's ritual, in the erasure of the war on the home front through the distortion of the effects of war. Helen covers all details within her aura of misinformation. She allows no embarrassing questions to crop up because she has already taken care to cover her weak spots. For instance, Helen only allows Michael, her son, to call her "Mummy" at bedtime, and this is to be their secret, "but Helen, as usual, explained the fact to her friends" saying to Michael afterwards, "it's always better to tell the truth" (180). Ironically, Michael evokes England's complacency as he says tearfully to his mother, "but when the troof's ugly I don't think it's nice" (180). He feels betrayed (as most of England's fighting men did) when faced with the ugly truth behind the manufactured lie. This is the crux of the story, the difference in Helen's *mind* between the truth versus manufactured reality, and it seems that through this story, especially when read against the other two stories, Kipling questions the validity of the "old lies" constructed during the

war and reveals his own disillusionment.

Kipling stresses the “process of manufacture” in this story, alluding to the home front rituals of private and public propaganda and the “blessed passivity” (184) it affords to those on the home front whom the war has touched. Helen must take her place (as Kipling had to) “in the dreary procession that was impelled to go through a series of unprofitable emotions” (183). Like his character Helen, Kipling wrote numerous letters in order to find out what had happened to his son.<sup>8</sup> However, like Mary, who remained “quite steady” in the midst of her chaotic emotions, Helen’s private ritual allows her to “[stand] still” while the “world was going forward; [. . .] it did not concern her” (184). She exists in her prefabricated life and “slip[s] Michael’s name into talk and incline[s] her head to the *proper* angle at the *proper* murmur of sympathy” (184, emphasis mine). These are intricate movements in a complex dance for the dead which progresses in increasingly difficult stages as Helen is “manufactured into the bereaved next of kin” (183).

One can sense Kipling’s personal experience with tragedy as the narrator recounts how Helen, “moving at an immense distance [. . .] overcome[s] her physical loathing of the living and returned young” and sits on “various relief committees” (184). Despite his loss and the shift in his feelings about the war, Kipling was always involved in the war effort although he remained “silent” in his literary work. Like Helen, he could not allow his public persona to be overshadowed by his private truth. Appointed a Commissioner of the Imperial War Graves Commission, he was responsible for the creation of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and for choosing the inscription set up in every war cemetery: “Their Name Liveth For Evermore.” Helen, however, experiences what Kipling was not able to: “the agony of being waked up to some sort of second life,” as she goes to find Michael’s grave—“the altar upon earth where [she] might lay [her] love” (184). Kipling had no such altar, and yet Kipling’s experience allowed his Aunt Georgie to write of him: “Quite well, he seemed, and younger and stronger than before, as if he had died and been buried and risen again, and had the keys of hell and death” (qtd. in Birkenhead 269). Kipling made his journey through the stages of war resulting in a shift in vision, and his new understanding of war is reflected in the images of the cemetery where Michael Turrell is buried.

At Haagenzeele and its cemetery, Helen comes to see the “truth” of war, stripped of its propaganda. A “merciless sea of black crosses [. . .]

[in] a waist-high wilderness of weeds stricken dead” (188) presents the stark desolation of war. The fact that the cemetery is under construction when Helen arrives heightens the idea that the aftermath of war is a period of reconstruction (both physical and emotional). But the cemetery, a study in black and white, also indicates the glorification of war in the gleaming white headstones that top the hill at Haagenzeele. Before viewing the cemetery however, Helen encounters two women also touched by war who are physical manifestations of Helen’s despair stripped of private ritual. One woman has lost a son, and the other a lover. We can look to the brief but intense portraits of these women and see the psychological terror and despair working in Helen, as well as in the author. The dream-like quality of her experience and the “nightmare” of the “razed city full of whirling lime dust and blown papers” (185) marks Helen’s conversion and sets the stage for Helen’s encounters with her doppelgangers and the ensuing agony of the reality of her experience stripped of its muffling ritual.

The first, “a large Lancashire woman,” is unable to find her illegitimate son’s grave because “she did not know which of his two Christian names he might have used with his alias” which was Smith (185). Michael’s name is also an alias because of his illegitimacy. The woman is driven mad by this uncertainty, and she sobs on Helen’s breast, disconcerting her so much that she “hur[r]ies out before the woman could lament again” (185). The second, Mrs. Scarsworth, “a stolid, plainfaced Englishwoman” has constructed a lie to cover her own secret like Helen; however, sensing possible empathy from Helen, the woman bares her soul saying,

“I’ve got to tell someone [. . .]. Tired of lying—always lying—year in and year out. When I don’t tell lies I’ve got to act ‘em and I’ve got to think ‘em, always [. . .]. I can’t go to him again and nobody in the world knowing. I want to be honest with someone before I go.” (187)

Helen asks her how many years she has been lying as if to gauge her own “years and years” of subterfuge (187). She recognizes a link between them, but when Mrs. Scarsworth vents her grief, Helen reacts as she has willed herself to in the past: “Oh, my dear! My dear!” (188). It is the proper response with the correct distance and disassociation that Helen requires in all interaction. The Lancashire woman and Mrs. Scarsworth voice the

pain of the psychological wounds of those left behind, those same wounds within Helen which she controls and mutes through ritual because only private ritual allows her to survive the agony of her especially private loss. She is repulsed by these women because she is not ready to acknowledge what they already have—the truth. Here Helen represents another haunting image of Kipling's own ritual for the dead.

The extent of Helen's own need for private ritual is heightened at the end of the story, in a scene that has often been branded sentimental and ineffective. In the cemetery, Helen is faced with the overwhelming sea of crosses "rushing at her [. . .] wondering by what guidance" she would ever find her son's grave (188). The guidance comes from a gardener representative of the risen Christ and Christian ritual. He offers her "infinite compassion" and the freedom within the truth when he tells her, "'Come with me, [. . .] and I will show you where your son lies'" (189). It is the first time in the story that her relationship with Michael is voiced, by anyone, but Helen's reaction is not given to us, revealing Kipling's respect and need for intense privacy. However, the ending of the story suggests that even though she might have tacitly acknowledged the public truth of her private loss, she does so in a foreign land where her only naysayer is dead and buried. She rejects the "truth" of the Christian ritual for the blessed passivity of her own private ritual. As she leaves the cemetery and "turn[s] for one last look," she sees "in the distance [. . .] the man bending over his young plants; and she went away, supposing him to be the gardener" (189). It is much easier for her to remain in her own construction and continue to be "independent" than to live, fully awakened and vulnerable to intense pain in her "second life."

If we view this last passage in relation to Kipling's own experience, it seems to suggest a failure of public ritual (national propaganda and religion) which he discovered in part through his son's death. The story also reflects the narrowing of Kipling's gaze with respect to female characterization. Helen is much less of a type than Frau Ebermann and Mary Postgate, and her experience is much more psychologically complex and related in greater detail, suggesting that Kipling wrote with an understanding of those emotional agents which worked against the British home front during and after the war.

The stories reflect the innocence of the early war years, and they also reflect Kipling's own painful journey towards the truth and the need for personal peace in the aftermath of war. The unique qualities of the Great

War precluded his imperialist mode. Stories of conflict like his Anglo-Indian tales seem farcical when compared to the starkness of "The Gardener" which realizes the themes of modernist fiction. Often overlooked because of his extremist political writings, or trivialized because of his children's stories, Kipling survives as a chronicler of the Great War of the same scope as other memoirists who attempted to record the emotional and physical toll taken on England's men and women.

## Notes

1. My working definition of propaganda is taken from Gary Messinger who defines propaganda as "the presentation of information in an emotionally appealing manner for a purpose that is not candidly announced and in support of a view which we would probably debate" (9). This definition implies secrecy and the careful use of language to manipulate information directed to the specific audience of the home front. Also implied is the manufactured quality of the information.

2. Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" (1917) provides the catch phrase for all glorification of war: "My friend, you would not tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est/ Pro patria mori" (Hibberd and Onions 201). The speaker addresses those of Kipling's generation and the noncombatant who knew of war only through printed material.

3. On September 18, 1914, *The New York Times* printed an authors' manifesto, entitled "Famous British Authors Defend England's War." Those present at Wellington House signed it as well as others, including May Sinclair and Jane Harrison. It is one of the first examples of propaganda directed to neutral nations in order to gain support for England's effort in the war.

4. Private or domestic ritual is closely aligned with national propaganda. Private propaganda is a ritual borne out of emotional manipulation of information at the public level. Instead of relying solely on the mass publications for the sense that "all is quiet on the Western front," Kipling's characters as well as Mansfield's and Woolf's look to their physical, domestic space for a sense of safety within war. Hence, national propaganda is converted into private propaganda reflected in domestic ritual that euphemizes reality.

5. Yvonne Klein reports that on May 13, 1915 a German in a Zeppelin dropped a bomb that landed on Stoke Newington and killed Elsie Leggatt, aged three. She was one of the first of the air raid casualties of the war (1). Kipling used this incident as he used the Bryce Reports to add verisimilitude to his writing and an extra punch to the anti-German message in his early stories.

6. The scripture alluded to can be found in Matthew 12: 43-45.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there: and the last state shall be worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation.

This scripture enforces the idea of private domestic ritual that muffles perceptions of reality.

7. Flat-nosed bullets are meant to explode on impact rather than leaving entry and exit wounds. The wounds caused by these bullets are difficult to treat because of the internal damage caused by the explosion of the shell.

8. The circumstances of John's death were kept from his parents. H. Rider Haggard, a close friend, had ascertained that John, when last seen, was suffering terribly from a mouth wound. To spare the Kiplings this last image of their son, Haggard declined to tell them the circumstances of his death. This incident reflects national propaganda working on a private level. In a similar fashion, the home front population was not apprised of the realities surrounding the soldiers' deaths, nor were they allowed to bury their dead at home.

9. The scripture alluded to can be found in John 20: 15. "Jesus saith unto her [Mary Magdalene] Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away." The allusion to Mary Magdalene links the story to the brief poem "The Burden" that forms a conclusion of sorts to the story. Two stanzas from it preface the story:

One grave to me was given,  
To watch till Judgement Day;  
And God looked down from heaven  
And rolled the stone away.

One day in all the years,  
One hour in that one day,  
His angel saw my tears  
*And rolled the stone away!*  
("The Gardener" 179)

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