‘Where Daddy and Danger Were’: The Portrayal of Children in *War Illustrated* (1914-1916)

Jonathan Rayner

University of Sheffield

School of English

Jessop West

1 Upper Hanover Street

Sheffield S3 7RA

j.r.rayner@sheffield.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper examines the representation of children in the popular British First World War publication, *War Illustrated*. Images of children occur within several contexts, linked to dominant contemporary propaganda discourses. These include concepts of national mobilisation within total war, qualities of sacrifice, endurance and patriotism, and the demonization of German tactics of ‘frightfulness’ (i.e. atrocities inflicted upon civilians). The magazine’s visual representations of children, in photographs and illustrations by war artists, mobilise them as resources in propaganda, to support the prosecution of the war through the propagation of patriotic principles and the vilification of the enemy. Images of women and children in Europe reinforced contemporary propaganda discourses (such as the pervasive ‘rape of Belgium’ narrative). By comparison, children in Britain became symbols of the ideals of family and country which British soldiers had to defend. However, beyond their representation as victims of the war, children were also represented as participants in the conflict, in some cases assuming the status of combatants comparable to adults. This adaptation of children’s roles was matched and eventually overtaken in the magazine’s images by the reporting of the transformation of the status of women, and their burgeoning contribution to the war effort as the conflict continued.

Key words: Children, World War, Britain, France, Women, Propaganda

Introduction

This paper examines the appearance and representation of children in the popular British publication *War Illustrated*, a weekly magazine published throughout the First World War. The magazine was a lavishly illustrated record of the conflict, incorporating numerous maps, photographs and illustrations, and the work of war artists alongside weekly reporting, editorials and informed commentary on the events, conduct and consequences of the global conflict. In the analysis of the war, its articles included contributions and regular columns from notable contemporary figures, such as Sidney Low, H.G. Wells, Fred T. Jane and Carlyon Bellairs. *War Illustrated* was published in London by William Berry, the owner of the *Daily Telegraph*. It first appeared on 22 August 1914, little more than a fortnight after the declaration of hostilities. It remained in print until February 1919, and re-emerged in a similar form with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. By the end of the First World War, its weekly circulation had risen to 750,000 (Anon., 1939). Through most of the conflict the magazine was sold at a price of two pence (2d.), rising to three pence by 1918. This retail price for a weekly publication, in an era when daily newspapers typically sold for a penny (1d.) suggests, along with the length and vocabulary employed in its articles, that an adult, middle-class readership was its target audience. Yet its conception as an extensively illustrated, and therefore highly visual, record of the war may equally suggest its accessibility to both lower-class and younger readers.

The magazine’s portrayal of children is analysed in this paper via examination of visual content of both drawings and photographs, and through comparisons with analogous contemporary media forms. These include similar journalistic publications and, in relation to the particular deployment of pictures of children, contemporary British propaganda posters, which the images of *War Illustrated* can be seen to echo or imitate. Such comparisons are necessary to contextualise *War Illustrated*’s representativeness as a popular publication and propaganda organ in print throughout the conflict. Additionally, the images of children propagated in wartime publications are anticipated and even informed by pre-war popular cultural discourses of gender, nationality and empire, as described by Michael Paris (2000). Children appear frequently within the magazine’s images and stories, and are incorporated into the discourses of the conflict in three prevalent and persuasive guises: as witnesses to the upheaval of war, as victims of the burgeoning conflict, and as both willing and unwilling participants within it. Although *War Illustrated* was a British publication, children of other nationalities (those suffering the direct effects of the war in Europe) are often also described in its reporting or represented in its images for deliberate, emotive effect. As civilians and non-combatants caught up in the conflict, children frequently appear in extremely evocative and consciously propagandist images (both in photographic record and in artistic interpretation) as sufferers of the war’s misery and destruction. The depiction of their absorption into the conflict, through the foregrounded involvement of male and female parental figures, their recurring status as symbols and statistics of what would now be termed collateral damage, and their occasional direct involvement in frontline fighting, suggests their centrality to both the activity and conceptualisation of the war, and their deliberate mobilisation as physical as well as national propagandist assets. As such, the relative infrequency of their appearance belies the ideological and political importance with which their representation is endowed.

The magazine’s portrayal of children, particularised within the broader representation of mothers and families both in Britain and in Europe, centres from the conflict’s beginnings on their persecution as victims of the war, and specifically as targets and illustrations of German tactics of ‘frightfulness’: the infliction of atrocities on defenceless civilians. While they are always accompanied by inflammatory captions or commentary, the images of children included in the magazine are assumed to ‘speak for themselves’, in utilising a moral and ideological framework for the treatment of children and non-combatants generally in war. However, at the same time the supposedly unproblematic depiction of children implicitly denies them a voice, as they serve simply as ‘illustration’ of the conduct and consequences of the war. What the images of children are taken to articulate, albeit voicelessly, are the views and concerns of adults, with a parallel presumption that their message, transmitted through the magazine, is shared consensually and unarguably by its readers.

This obvious and immediate uses of the images of children within the publication’s propagandist agenda are subsequently expanded and complicated by the transformation of civilian, passive victimhood into active participation in the conflict. Instances of children joining soldiers at the front and engaging in combat are championed in heroic terms, rather than being simply condemned as examples of the mushrooming of the conflict and the inherent erosion of combatant/non-combatant distinctions. In this way, the portrayal of children parallels but is ultimately overshadowed by the alteration of the status and representation of women in the magazine, and in contemporary British society. As the war progresses the transformation of female roles and social responsibilities is reported and shown both more frequently and positively in the magazine. At the same time, the cumulative effects of the conflict on children alter or fade from the forefront of its commentary in relation to wider sociological concerns around female roles. The place of children within the conflict is thus transformed and politicised by and because of the developments overtaking the role and status of women precipitated by the global, total war. Through its selective inclusion or omission of images and discussion of children, *War Illustrated* charts and reflects these changes.

At the outset: images of children in 1914

At the beginning of the war, the images of children foregrounded in *War Illustrated* appear to straddle, perhaps unconsciously, several ideological, cultural and national stances towards the conflict. One of the earliest examples of photographs depicting British children (Fig.1) from the edition dated 26 September 1914 shows family members (children and spouses) walking alongside their fathers and husbands as the columns of soldiers of the Scots Guards and Grenadier Guards march to embark for France. The caption for this image reads: ‘Our departing troops, as they march to their entraining points, carry the domestic atmosphere right up to the railway platform.’ The jovial, holiday aspect of these pictures perhaps reflects the optimistic belief that the war will be ‘over by Christmas’, or the families’ stoical attitudes in the face of separation and potential bereavement. These images suggest the closeness of the children to the fathers in uniform, at once idealising the men as caring and heroic patriarchs and perhaps defusing the war’s danger by involving the soldiers’ offspring, or alternatively recognising the heroism of children sharing the conflict by giving up their fathers. The impact of this image lies in the degree to which the children can seem to be separate from the war, in watching their fathers depart, or equally appear to be mobilised even at this stage, being both as willing and perhaps naïve as the adults in their enthusiastic and public participation. Michael Paris has traced the extent to which wider cultural influences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had inculcated martial values and prepared British children of all classes for war, but the ambiguities which this image seems to encompass (marching with and like father, or carried on his shoulders as a child) perhaps belie the conception of an homogenous acculturated war generation (Paris, 2000: 87-97). The tension between innocent levity and unexpressed apprehension, innocence and denial, is palpable in the magazine image, and suggests a problematic positioning of both children and parents.

That, by comparison, the children of other countries are already involved in the war to an entirely different degree is borne out by imagistic replication in *War Illustrated* of the dominant propaganda narrative used to justify British involvement in the conflict, that of the ‘rape of neutral Belgium.’ Women and children, in other words specifically fatherless families, figure prominently in images which appear in the magazine only weeks after the positive depiction of British soldiers and their families. A homeless and widowed Belgium woman is shown reduced to begging in the street with her offspring in a photograph from 17October 1914 (Fig.2). This image clearly chimes with contemporary discourses which demonised German aggression and vindicated British intervention in the conflict, but appears almost understated in its visual authenticity. Horrific and ultimately unverifiable stories of atrocities committed by German troops in Belgium against women and children formed a significant part of lurid and sensational newspaper ‘reporting’ of the early war period. As Nicoletta Gullace argues, the metamorphosis of the political rhetoric of the violation of Belgian neutrality into the persuasive propaganda narrative of German atrocities was a direct but problematic consequence of the need to justify Britain’s involvement in the conflict:

The move from an emphasis on the violation of treaty law to a vision of the brutalization of women and children domesticated the meaning of British foreign policy and privileged a set of familial and sexual concerns within the stated military policy of the liberal state. Significantly, the articulation of Britain’s foreign-policy goals around the issues of domestic safety, the sanctity of the family, and the inviolability of a woman’s body considerably complicated the task of securing public acceptance of certain methods of waging war. (Gullace, 1997: 716)

Stories of German atrocities, largely validated by their source in the apparently reputable government-organised Bryce report on German Outrages (published in 1915) were reprinted throughout the British press at the time, and the imagery of imperilled women and children used to illustrate them was later repeated in American and Australian propaganda (Gullace, 2002: 17-20; Gullace, 1997: 728). Arguably, therefore, the excesses of the Bryce Report, and the uncritical propagation of its allegations through propaganda and press channels through the first half of the war, are epitomised the appearance of such examples in *War Illustrated* (Gullace, 1997: 717; Messinger, 1992: 73-76).

However, *War Illustrated*’s reliance on art work as much as photography also allowed for forceful visual representation (if not substantiation) of stories of German barbarity as the war progressed. For example, in the same edition from 10 October 1914, a photograph of the ruins of Rheims cathedral after a recent bombardment is juxtaposed on the adjacent page with a defamatory drawing of German soldiers smashing and stealing art objects as illustration of a ‘confirmed report’ of the ‘wanton pillage and destruction’ perpetrated by brutal ‘Prussians.’ The extension of brutal acts against civilians including women and children to the Eastern Front is asserted by a drawing included in the edition for 25 September 1914, which shows troops discovering a massacre. Its caption reads ‘Our illustration shows a detachment of Russian soldiers standing aghast on the scene of a German outrage.’ By February 1915, the rehearsal of such stories of atrocities as irrefutable fact had assumed the stridency seen in a full-page illustration entitled ‘Annihilation of a Family.’ The lengthy accompanying caption describes how a Serbian refugee mother, distracted with grief, threw herself onto German guns after her children had ‘perished’ by the road side. The exaggeration and rhetoric of these illustrations underlines the understated persuasiveness of the reportage exhibited in photographic records of suffering.

This thread of propaganda continues to the end of the year. A verbal summary of German atrocities included in the edition of 26 December 1914 supports its condemnation of the ‘War on Women and Children’ with artists’ illustrations of civilians being used as human shields, being executed in reprisals against resistance, and German soldiers abusing the protection of the Red Cross. The stories in this synopsis include one drawing (described as ‘official proof’) of French women and children being forced to march in front of advancing German soldiers, and another depicting the roadside shooting of a French boy scout accused of helping French soldiers ambush a German unit. The boy’s uniform appears to transform him into a combatant, paradoxically justifying his execution for one side and validating his courage for the other (he is described in the caption as ‘meeting death with a smile’). The lack of differentiation in this article between divergent examples of supposed ‘atrocities’ (for example, forced labour by POWs and indiscriminate sea-mining as well as diverse offences against non-combatants) parallels the unqualified slippage between photographs and drawings proposed as proof. This approach within the magazine’s pages suggests the pervasive power of the unchallenged discourse of German ‘frightfulness’ at this point in the conflict. While alleged atrocities against women assumed the highest profile in the propaganda discourses surrounding the so-called ‘rape of Belgium’, it is clear from the magazine’s published images that those against children, whether described in sensationalist terms or merely occurring and recorded mundanely within the deprivations of modern warfare, could carry equal or greater weight. They could also confer a particularly vexed status upon male children caught on the margins of the conflict, which could serve several propagandist aims set to persist and develop as the war continued. Children’s inhabiting of the war environment, their assumption of war roles, and in some cases even their adoption of military uniform, expanded and complicated their representation within *War Illustrated* as the conflict progressed.

Children of the conflict

The visual mobilisation of children within propaganda quickly assumes other forms, beyond their association with alleged atrocities and their currency in the description or depiction of outrages precipitated by the war. This can be seen particularly in relation to children in continental Europe affected directly by the conflict. Images of children in France through the first two years of the war chart the impression of the war on children’s experience, and a more insidious involvement of children in the manner and motives of combat itself. An early example is this image from 3 October 1914 (Fig. 3) illustrating a correspondent’s report of French farm boys joining their fathers at the front and serving alongside them in combat. The boys’ instinctive choice to be where ‘daddy and danger were’ is linked directly to national character (they are labelled ‘France’s warrior sons’). The tone of the caption indicates that while the individual children’s survival is clearly in doubt, the country’s is assured by such valorous examples. A similar image from 20 November 1915 illustrates a story of teenage Serbian boys heroically defending a village from German attack after the entire civilian (adult) population had fled. In marked contrast, an idealised image of the precious, protected innocence and enduring stability of family life for British children, even at a later point of the war, is exemplified by a highly sentimental illustration of the return of a (discretely wounded) father to his domestic setting at Christmas 1915 (Fig.4). The wife embraces her husband (who appears to be a cavalry officer, with riding boots, spurs and sabre) within a home environment apparently unsullied by war. In comparison with their parents’ dark garments, the conspicuous paleness of the children’s clothes heightens their innocent appearance. The caption for this iconic illustration reads: ‘Home Again! The Hero’s Return at Christmastide. After the turmoil of war, the tenderness of domestic peace.’ In this example, the small children surrounding the lofty (presumably upper-class) patriarch and looking upon him with worshipping gazes function simply as validation and reward for masculine, heroic duty. This image depicts both of the familial and martial duty demanded of the patriarch, and the mutual reward of his return to the family home. Notably, other images tying the father’s war duty to the fate and status of the family appearing in 1915 manipulate this awareness of duty, emphasizing obligation above reward. The most famous examples are the propaganda posters entitled ‘Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?’ (in which the shamed non-combatant father, questioned by his offspring, gazes out of the image to similarly upbraid the reader) and ‘Women of Britain say – GO!’ (in which innocent young child, selfless mother, and anxious daughter cling to each other as they watch soldiers march away from the window of the family home). These posters mobilise home, family, wife and children overtly, in order to galvanise and dishonour the masculine non-combatant, and steel the feminine for national sacrifice. By contrast, the Christmas image from *War Illustrated* appears redolent of the reciprocal rewards of such duty, for all family members.

The deepening involvement of French children in particular is represented through evolving images and narratives in subsequent editions. The notion of the future of France implicit in the 1914 illustration dominates subsequent images of the war on the Western Front. Fig.5 from 22 August 1915 shows French children playing with an off-duty soldier amongst the ruins of Arras. Its caption notes the ‘rare fantasy’ of this ‘scene of infantile frolic’ set against the background of the heavily shelled town. However, it strives to derive an uplifting moral from the children’s obliviousness to the destruction and even the audible sounds of artillery at the front: ‘Such is the spirit of France – the spirit that is not to be broken or subdued by Boche frightfulness.’ The front cover illustration of the magazine from 4 September 1915 (Fig.6) displays a different co-optation of children into wider war narratives. The image of the combatant posing with children is complicated here by issues of identity and territory which the caption has to acknowledge and navigate. It reads:

The French cuirassier has made friends with two pretty children of Alsace, citizens of the Greater France of tomorrow, the France that will extend to the Rhine and re-embrace the lost provinces. The little Alsatians, whose grandmothers have sung them to sleep with old lullabies of France as they remembered it before ’Seventy, have responded with spontaneous sympathy to the affection of this brave, fatherly man-of arms.

The complexities of this image’s significance (which the caption concedes in the admission of France’s territorial claims to match Germany’s, within the European landscape and history of wars beyond the current conflict and century) stand in contrast to the apparent simplicity its representation (of adult protection and affection offered towards innocent children). The contrast here, with other images of (French, British and even German) soldiers relaxing with children which have been included in *War Illustrated* to stress both the maintenance of pre-war patriarchal sentiments and the national duty of servicemen towards the civilian populace, is particularly marked. Where earlier images had championed the heroic virtues of French children for the assurance of the country’s future, here the children of a ‘Greater France’ (greater in the future in area, population and resources) appear acquired and occupied rather than protected by the figure of patriotism and patriarchy. The ambivalence of the children’s expressions, given that this is an illustration and not a photograph, ironically underlines the problematic political questions underpinning the image.

A more straightforward mobilisation of French children emerges in images from the following year. The impact of propagandist reportage using juxtaposition and incongruity in its portrayal of children is exemplified by Fig.7, from 11 March 1916. These pictures show schoolchildren close to the front line undertaking their daily tasks in gas masks. As in the case of Fig.5, the outlandishness of the children’s acceptance of war conditions alongside the maintenance of everyday activity is lauded and lamented in equal measure by the images’ caption. It reads: ‘Comedy and tragedy blend curiously in these two illustrations. These little children in France may actually consider themselves in the fighting-line. Daily they attend their school in Rheims, within range of German shells, wearing respirators. Such an antithesis of civilisation it would be hard to find.’ Tellingly also, this image’s caption purposefully distances the war experience of the French population from that of the British readership: ‘And to think that this might happen in some city in England were it not for the twenty-one miles of sea separating us from the Continent.’ The children’s likeness to actual combatants in this picture is bolstered in an image from 22 April 1916, which shows German prisoners walking past French children. Again the children are equated with and subsumed utterly within the national and political context, unified but anonymised in their description as ‘Young France.’ The self-conscious staging of the event (for the children and presumably for the camera as well) is matched by the assumption or dictation of the children’s response to it, which is contained in the caption: ‘Their expressions are curiously reserved, though no doubt a strong feeling of infantile contempt surges in their hearts.’

The integration of French children within the conflict which these images suggests, in their being shown to share the experience and danger of the front line, and being presumed to incarnate the sentiments of their parents, their political establishments, their countries at large and even (by implication, in this British magazine) the agenda of their Allies, previews the next stage of representation which occurs within the publication. This is the depiction of older children and youths entering or anticipating actual war service, seeking and eventually assuming adult occupations in uniform in a full realisation of the inculcation of war roles.

Children of the war society

The full assumption of adult roles by children parallels another development noted in the publication’s images: the transformation in profile and responsibility of women’s roles within the society assuming the aspect of total war. Images of children donning uniform accompany those of women entering diverse forms of war work and, in contrast to the curiosity or quaintness of children’s involvement, being seen to contribute en masse to the war effort. These illustrations of the alterations of status affecting children and women clearly exemplify the broad interpretation of ‘military participation’ which Arthur Marwick identifies as one of the four key modes of social change effected by modern, total war (Marwick, 1968: 60-63). While the emancipation of women and the recognition of the importance of the working classes may be attributed to such factors, the children depicted as entering adult roles in *War Illustrated*’s images can hardly be said to benefit economically or politically from their transformation. Rather, their resemblance to adults in participation in the war may act as a chastening reflection of the threat to pre-war societal standards and roles which the conflict represents. Alternatively, images of children’s increasing mobilisation, alongside those of the new roles for women, may be used to maintain adult male morale (and recruitment), and underline the necessity of complete commitment of the country’s population in total war.

A collage of photographs entitled ‘The Spartan Spirit of the Younger Generation’ from 2 January 1915 illustrates these changes, and distinguishes revealingly between the nationalities of different combatant children (Fig.8). The juxtaposed photographs include a ‘youthful Belgian prisoner’ with his German captors in Antwerp, another Belgian boy aged 13-and-a-half years who is reported to have fought with the infantry since the outbreak of war, a Parisian boy scout bearing arms and serving at the front, and two German youths in uniform (one identified as the youngest recipient of the Iron Cross and the other described as only 14 years old). The only British representative in uniform in this sample is a 14-and-a-half year old bugler from the Hertfordshire reserves, who has ‘twice volunteered for active service’ (and therefore presumably twice been turned down). Despite his martial air, the British youth remains protected from the conflict, unlike his continental peers and in spite of the pre-war inculcation of military ambition and imperial duty noted by Paris which his service in the reserve forces implies.

The concentrated scrutiny of adolescents in this example contrasts with the random topicality of another from 10 July 1915, providing ‘Snap-shots by the way in War-time’ (Fig.9). These include a comparatively conventional image (an off-duty British soldier fraternising with a French child) alongside pictures featuring more complex examples, described with more dubious captions: a young Austrian woman labelled ‘a modern Amazon’ who is serving ‘as a corporal in the Teutonic cause’, a ‘patriotic coloured family’ of mother, child and father from the King’s African Rifles, and a German male child in uniform, which carries the subtitle: ‘The militarism fostered in this child will be crushed ere he becomes a Hun!’ Plainly infants indoctrinated with militarism must be distinguished from young teenagers instilled with martial virtues. However, highly accurate children’s-sized uniforms were also sold during wartime by toy shops for British boys to wear (Paris, 2000: 136). Although the distaste which this image seems to inspire may be related to the small German boy’s alarmingly realistic attire (including a full field pack, webbing and rifle), it is difficult to see how his adoption of quasi-adult dress differs from the parallel patriotic commitment assumed by the British children marching with their fathers in Fig.1. Perhaps equally unclear is the tone of the caption describing the Austrian woman in uniform. It is uncertain whether such a development is to be admired and welcomed, or construed (like the German boy’s militarism) as a continental perversion of a well-regarded British phenomenon: the increasing involvement of women in the war effort. The appearance of both child and woman in uniform on the same page suggests both are incongruous, injudicious developments, and yet the growing role of British women in the war prompts, certainly in the case of *War Illustrated’*s coverage, much positive commentary, even as it leads to the diminution of the role of children in the imagery and popular imagination propagated by the magazine.

 The expanding role of women starts to form a key theme of the magazine’s treatment of the war less than a year after its outbreak. A relatively early example from 10 April 1915, composed of a photo-montage, maintains an air of condescension towards the new war-inspired activities (such as cultivating gardens, selling jewellery and other charitable acts) of Europe’s female aristocrats. This article nonetheless insists that the stereotypical task of nursing the wounded remains the ‘noblest and most beautiful sphere of womanly activity.’ A similar but contrasting page of photographs from 15 May 1915 portrays more varied and practical employment for women that ‘fills the gaps’ left by men in the trenches, including postal work, making uniforms, dentistry and working in shops. However, by 8 January 1916, it is the women’s roles which are seen to require compensatory arrangements. An illustrated report (Fig.10) describes and depicts a crèche newly established in Birmingham for the babies and children of female munitions workers, a necessary innovation in order for the women workers’ productivity to be maximised. While the report concedes that the children’s life and health are ‘perhaps more important to the State now than they seemed to be in times of peace’, it also asserts that the ‘prior claim’ on their time by children has ‘debarred’ many women from assisting the war effort who might otherwise be willing to do so. With this observation the magazine’s commentary seems to have come full circle, from showing women and children supporting and copying the mobilised male population, to showing children subordinated to and yet distanced from the undertaking of war roles by women. Children inhabit this story simply as children, returned to a state which requires maternalistic nurturing (notably delivered by other women in order for their mothers to undertake war work). They are at once unmodified in their dress and behaviour in comparison with their pre-war state, and yet changed utterly in the circumstances of their childhood.

 From this mid-point of the war onwards, the portrayal of children in *War Illustrated* reduces in quantity, but more importantly also becomes heavily circumscribed in detail. While the portrayal of the plight of European refugee children continues, and sentimentalised images (in the form of illustrations as well as photographs) of the rapport between British soldiers and French children behind the lines remain a staple, the portrayal of children in the context of combat (with the exception of Fig. 7) vanishes from the magazine’s pages. Where the propagandist purpose of children’s depictions persists is in the illustration as well as reporting of the war’s continuing impact on civilian and family life (peculiarly in Europe), and in the overstated representation of German atrocities. The sinking of the liner *Lusitania* in May 1915, the bombing of London and other civilian centres by German Zeppelins and multiple sinkings of merchant ships by U-boats in the second half of the war, all provide ample opportunities for the visual portrayal of women and children as victims of ‘frightfulness.’ However, images suggestive of the mobilisation of children, in their absorption into and participation in the conflict, no longer form a significant part of the magazine’s illustrations and stories after 1916. This alteration in the magazine’s imagery and reporting is clearly worth scrutiny and speculation. Perhaps this change reflects the comparatively greater newsworthiness of the growth of Britain’s adult volunteer and conscript armies, and the transformation of women’s roles in *War Illustrated*’s narrativisation of the conflict. Equally, the recognition of the horrors of combat at the frontline experienced by adult soldiers, particularly in the wake of the 1916 Somme offensive, perhaps negates the need for exaggerated depictions of infant involvement and female victimhood. The most tempting conclusion to reach is that the narrative of the changing role of women, replacing subjugation with enfranchisement and duty, displaces the narrative of children as witnesses, victims and participants of the conflict.

Conclusion: Illustrating the Children’s War

*War Illustrated*’s inclusion and manipulation of images of children represents a minor but highly vocal element in its totalising imagistic treatment of the First World War. Amidst the depicted destruction of countries, towns and families at the war’s outset, images of children are foregrounded for their naivety and ignorance of the true circumstances of the war, which are duly noted with adult irony and regret. However, by the war’s second full year, children’s apparent adaptability to and acceptance of the conflict, when fully acquainted with and absorbed within it (particularly in the case of children in Europe), are recognised both poignantly and with apparent pride in the pervasive, transformative effects of the conflict. Rather than being distanced from the war, and far from being shielded from it, children have become immersed and equated with adults in the business and experience of total war. They are no more or less victims, witnesses and participants in the conflict than adult members of society. It is worth noting that despite its predominant reliance on images, *War Illustrated* was not a publication intended for or targeted at children. The apparent simplicity of its patriotic and emotive war narrative from a twenty-first century perspective should not lead to a presumption of naivety in its address or its readership, or of a deliberate disingenuousness in its methods. In many ways its unbending insistence upon illustrating its stories appears familiar and inevitable in a conduit for reportage which strove to be convincing and comprehensive. *War Illustrated* is also entirely familiar to a more modern audience (characterised by its demands for and yet inurement to the constant, graphic visual representation of sensationalised imagery), in its similarity to late twentieth and early twenty-first century reporting and its comparable reliance upon images for coverage and commentary. In contrast to its often overtly manipulative images and clamorous captions, the articles and editorials filling the pages of *War Illustrated* are more even handed and occasionally openly censorious of Britain’s conduct of the war (for example in relation to reporting of the debacle of the Dardanelles campaign in 1915, the ambiguous interpretations of the outcome of the Battle of Jutland in 1916, or the failures in combating German U-boats as the war progresses). Alongside these instances of balanced, informed and critical commentary, the propagandist use of imagery of children may appear blatantly and unashamedly manipulative. As a popular publication *War Illustrated* reflects and reinforces current and dominant discourses of the war (the apparently unarguable moral case for war against German aggression, the additional motivation of outrage against the atrocities associated with the ‘rape of Belgium’), yet it also reports topically and investigatively on developments for which an end point, obvious to us now with hindsight, was still unknown (for example, the real threat to France’s future territorial and cultural integrity, and the systematic transformation of the roles of women in the twentieth century).

It appears inevitable rather than merely persuasive to see the currents discussed here (the depiction of children versus the depiction of women) in close association or even inverse ratio: the increasing imagery and narrativisation of women’s roles in the war distracts from or displaces the war’s absorption of or effects upon children. This is the more remarkable given the obvious connections between women and children in the war’s propaganda discourses. In relation to examples of post-war propaganda, Susan Grayzel has noted how all reported or invented atrocities against women inevitably bear on related assumptions of maternal emotions, pervasive notions of child-bearing and –rearing, and ideals of the importance of and threat to future generations (Grayzel, 1999: 50-85). Up to the present day, deliberately manipulative images of women and children as threatened or victimised groups within society continue to play a part in propaganda produced within hegemonic, patriarchal contexts (Chetty 2004).

Despite its relatively infrequent inclusion of images of children, *War Illustrated* uses such images for both cumulative and specific propaganda effect. The value of children to propaganda as victims, in relation to stories of German atrocity, is replaced by assertion of their symbolic incarnation or representativeness of national and military virtues. (Even here, however, the comparatively sheltered existence of British children remains an important distinguishing factor in representation). Yet this is superseded by the imagistic revaluing of another group previously utilised purely as victims – women – whose worth becomes focused instead in narratives of, if not equality, then at least unity and contribution. Being returned to the crèche does not necessarily end children’s involvement in the conflict, but it does reduce it and perhaps demote it in a conservative yet ironic fashion when seen alongside the recognition and celebration of modern female emancipation.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the University of Sheffield Library, Special Collections.

References

Anon., ‘The Press: war Weeklies’, *Time Magazine* 25 September, 1939. [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,761998,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C761998%2C00.html) (Accessed 09/03/2013)

Chetty, A. 2004. ‘Media Images of Women during War: Vehicles of Patriarchy's Agenda?’ *Agenda* 59, 32-41.

Grayzel, S. R. 1999. *Women’s Identities at War* London: North Carolina University Press.

Gullace, N. F. 2004. *‘The Blood of Our Sons’: Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gullace, N. F. 1997. ‘Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War’, *The American Historical Review* vol.102, n.3, 714-747.

Marwick, A. 1968. ‘The Impact of the First World War on British Society’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 3, n.1, 51-63.

Messinger, G.S. 1992. *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Paris, M. 2000. *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture 1850-2000* London: Reaktion Books.

Potter, J. 2005. *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women’s Literary Responses to the Great War* Oxford: Oxford University Press.