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Mark Wollaeger: Modernism, Media, and Propaganda

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INTRODUCTION

MODERNISM AND THE INFORMATION-PROPAGANDA MATRIX

COMMON SENSE, that mysterious repository of unarticulated assumptions, may suggest that modernism and propaganda have little to do with each other. The case of Ford Madox Ford indicates otherwise. Ford is central to the larger argument of this book (and therefore receives extended treatment in chapter 3) because his passionate engagement with both literary aesthetics and the contemporary media environment reveals the sense in which modernism and propaganda are two sides of the same coin of modernity. Setting out to define literary impressionism (which is to say, modernism) early in 1914, Ford proclaimed that an impressionist “must not write propaganda.”¹ But within weeks of completing his modernist masterwork, *The Good Soldier* (1914), Ford began writing two books, *Between St. Dennis and St. George* (1915) and *When Blood Is Their Argument* (1915), for the propaganda operation run by C.F.G. Masterman out of Wellington House. With respect to style and narrative technique, the three books are indistinguishable. The conjunction of propaganda and modernist style is not in itself surprising. Just as Dziga Vertov’s film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) is at once a brilliant city symphony and a piece of Leninist propaganda, so Picasso attacked fascism through the cubist abstraction of *Guernica* (1937).² But by grounding his theory of impressionism in a refusal to propagandize even as he wrote propaganda grounded in impressionist technique, Ford betrays a deeper connection between modernism and propaganda. Understood in relation to his belief that modern writers had a civic duty to repair a dysfunctional culture of information, Ford’s modernism and propaganda begin to look less like strange bedfellows than like conjoined twins.

Ford, like George Orwell and Joseph Conrad, wrote both as a novelist and as a propagandist, but whereas Orwell felt compelled to theorize the relationship between art and propaganda, and Conrad, like Virginia Woolf, felt threatened by their cultural adjacency, Ford largely shrugged off perceived tensions. With information overwhelming the processing capacity of consciousness, Ford’s impression is designed to resist the onset of the posthuman by reinvesting facts with feeling. That

is, where T. S. Eliot posited a dissociation of sensibility that began in the seventeenth century with the English Revolution, Ford, more attuned to recent media history, described a split between factuality and the human caused by the surfeit of quantitative data spewed out by the mass press, reference books, and sociology. In Ford's theory, the impression mediates between the human sensorium and a body of facts that otherwise cannot be held together by the mind; propaganda steps in later to manipulate the reunified individual into the greater unity of a collective cause. Rehumanized to appeal to the modern citizen's overtaxed powers of synthesis, the impression is Ford's less direct method for controlling reader response. Propaganda, in this understanding, is acceptable so long as it does not advertise itself as such. The British Ministry of Information (MoI), as I shall describe in this chapter, held a similar view.

This is not to say that the shared subjectification of the fact in impressionism and British propaganda elides all distinctions between the two. Even in Ford, who wrote for the government, friction persists despite the close meshing of gears. Rather, the ease with which Ford moved between impressionism and propaganda indicates how important it is to grasp what modern writers thought propaganda was. To some it recalled the dead hand of Victorianism; to others it heralded a new age (now recognizable as our age) of informatic indeterminacy. By tracing the concept's significance through a range of modernists, and by looking closely at the distinctiveness of the British propaganda campaign, this chapter seeks to show how modernism and propaganda were constituted within an information-propaganda matrix.

MAKING SENSE OF PROPAGANDA: FROM ORWELL AND WOOLF TO BERNAYS AND ELLUL

Understanding what "propaganda" meant to modernists requires us to see the word's problematic status in light of its complicated history in the twentieth century. Specialists in propaganda studies today disagree so much about terminology that some have argued that "propaganda" is useless as an analytic tool and use "persuasion" instead; but "persuasion," others counter, covers too much ground. In mainstream discourse, "propaganda" is regularly used to dismiss purportedly documentary accounts for their deceptive inaccuracy or deliberate bias, as if "propaganda" were the accepted name for the capacious category of politically motivated falsehood. But slinging the term rarely settles the case: one person's propaganda is another person's information, and the distinction between the two is often difficult to draw.

"Propaganda" has not always been so difficult to define. The English

word derives from a Latin term that originally referred to a committee of Cardinals, or Congregation of Propaganda, established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 to propagate Roman Catholicism. The word was later extended to designate “any association, systematic scheme, or concerted movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine or practice” (*OED*). But with the professionalization of advertising in the late nineteenth century, and the emergence of public relations specialists and the rapid development of mass media in the twentieth century, “propaganda” became increasingly difficult to pin down. Although the word began to acquire some negative connotations over the nineteenth century owing to government distrust of secret organizations designed to sway public opinion, the *OED* does not record until 1908 the now-common definition of “propaganda” as tendentious persuasion by interested parties. At that time, with so much of modern society dependent on the rapid exchange of information, “propaganda” usually denoted persuasive information or mere boosterism. The information propagated might come from interested sources, but its integrity or reliability was not necessarily suspect. That would change over the first half of the twentieth century, when two world wars helped link “propaganda” to lies and deception without completely erasing the notion that “to persuade” might simply mean “to inform.”

By the forties, when the propaganda techniques pioneered by the British had been refined and deployed around the world for over two decades, propaganda seemed inescapable, and the sinister connotations it had begun to gather by the twenties were firmly established. For the Western world, Soviet domestic propaganda had begun to blur distinctions between propaganda and education, and the Nazi campaign added associations with obfuscation and systematic deception. With the surge in global propaganda in the interwar years, artists felt the pressure acutely. Themselves engaged in acts of communication within a media ecology that was changing rapidly, artists were forced to compete not only with increasingly pervasive new media but with organized efforts to use those media to manage the public. When in 1918 Ezra Pound referred to poets as “the antennae of the race,” he was already tuned in to the new medium of radio, which he himself exploited as a propagandist during World War II.³

But modernists responded to propaganda and the media that made it possible in diverse ways. D. H. Lawrence, for instance, was in one sense a born propagandist. He wrote entire books of doctrine urging readers to live their lives differently, and his fiction sometimes turns away from his characters to advocate alternative modes of being. Perhaps for that very reason, recruiting tactics during World War I enraged him. In December 1915 he spent some time in Battersea Town Hall at a recruiting station.

He was there because when British recruitment fell off drastically in the spring of 1915, Lord Derby, the newly appointed Director-General of Recruitment, devised a program under which men of military age would come forward “to attest” their willingness to serve if required. The so-called Derby Scheme was intended as a compromise between conscription and volunteerism. And so Lawrence, confident that his poor health would earn an exemption and needing to attest before he could apply for a passport to America, went to the town hall to proclaim himself ready and willing.⁴ But the next day Lawrence wrote to Ottoline Morrell that after waiting for several hours he left before securing an exemption because he “*hated* the situation almost to *madness*.” Lawrence was not put off by the recruiting officials or the potential recruits: “waiting there in the queue, I felt the *men* were very decent, and that the slumbering lion was going to wake up in them: not against the Germans either, but against the great lie of this life.” Taken out of context, Lawrence’s remarks simply repeat one of his familiar metaphysical points: men fail to live in truth because they do not live in harmony with their leonine passions. Yet the context of recruitment suggests that Lawrence’s visceral hatred—in the letter he underscores “hated” five times—was catalyzed in this instance not so much by the men’s capitulation to the bogey of mental consciousness as by their “spectral submission” to the untruth associated with war propaganda. The real enemy is not Germany but, as Stephen Dedalus puts it in *Ulysses*, the priest and king within. And like Stephen, Lawrence declares that he will not serve: “I had triumphed, like Satan flying over the world and knowing he had won at last.”⁵

Somewhat less satanic, George Orwell and Virginia Woolf both devoted relatively measured attention to propaganda. Woolf thought about the problem more than she wanted to, while Orwell devoted more attention to propaganda than any British writer of his generation. Although both were ambivalent, both sometimes wrote as propagandists, and their explorations of the blurred boundaries between art and propaganda shed light on problems of definition that were newly emerging as matters for public debate.

Orwell’s various writings reflect the polarized thinking of the thirties even as they suggest why it is difficult to generalize about relations between art and propaganda. In a 1941 BBC radio broadcast, “The Frontiers of Art and Propaganda,” Orwell tries to draw some conclusions from the propaganda wars of the previous decade. For Orwell, art since the 1890s took for granted the notion of art for art’s sake, even after the slogan itself was driven underground by the trial of Oscar Wilde. Writers still emphasized “technique” throughout the twenties, but in the thirties Nazism and the global economic depression made it impossible to preserve the “intellectual detachment” required by aestheticism: “any

thinking person had to take sides, and his feelings had to find their way not only into his writing but into his judgements on literature.”⁶ Orwell has mixed feelings about this development. Although he is happy to wave goodbye to the notion that literature ever could wholly detach itself from politics, the politicizing of literature, now “swamped by propaganda,” also caused “countless young writers . . . to tie their minds to a political discipline”—“official Marxism”—that “made mental honesty impossible” (*Collected Essays* 2:123, 126). Orwell draws the reasonable lesson that writers can neither remain wholly detached from their times nor sacrifice their “intellectual integrity” to political exigency (*ibid.*, 2:126). Unsure how to reconcile “aesthetic scrupulousness” and “political rectitude,” Orwell can only conclude that the decade’s events at least “helped us to define, better than was possible before, the frontiers of art and propaganda” (*ibid.*, 2:126–27).

Relatively inconclusive here, Orwell remains illuminating as a guide, in part because he refuses pat solutions to real problems, in part because he wrote both as an artist and as a propagandist. Orwell reflected at length on his dual identity in his diaries—and on whether his roles could even be separated. As a novelist, Orwell probed deeply into propaganda’s colonization of everyday life. *1984* is the most powerful novelistic indictment of propaganda ever written in English, perhaps in any language. But the most frightening and prescient element of the novel is not so much the state’s “rectification” of the news or the invention of Big Brother, for which the book remains famous. With Big Brother, Orwell simply anticipated Michel Foucault’s extension of Jeremy Bentham’s nineteenth-century fantasy of the panopticon from the prison to the whole of society, and “rectified” news, sad to say, was already a fact of life as Orwell was writing in 1948. More shocking is Orwell’s implicit claim that modern propaganda is able to restructure desire to such an extent that the very concept of internalizing authority breaks down. By the end of *1984*, the distinction between private and public no longer exists: Winston Smith truly loves Big Brother. Authority cannot be internalized when authority has always and already occupied the inner life of the mind. Or to borrow Stephen Dedalus’s formulation again, how can the priest and king within be killed if to do so means extinguishing consciousness itself?

Orwell nevertheless felt that propaganda had its uses: the object of his critique in *1984* is not propaganda per se but the totalitarian system it serves. In *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), Orwell expresses disgust over the fact that propaganda during the Spanish Civil War is being produced by noncombatants sheltered from actual bullets, but within five years Orwell (who *did* fight against fascism in Spain) was writing propaganda for BBC radio and confiding in his diary: “All propaganda is lies, even

when one is telling the truth. I don't think this matters so long as one knows what one is doing, and why" (ibid. 2:416, 411).⁷ Nietzsche never put it better. Nor did Orwell restrict himself to anti-Nazi propaganda. In August 2003 the Public Record Office in England released a list of "crypto-communists" that Orwell compiled in 1949 for the Information Research Department, a propaganda bureau that operated out of the Foreign Office. The important point for my purposes is not that a leftist would collaborate with the government to root out suspected communists. Although the notion of Orwell as a McCarthyite is alarming, there is no evidence that his handing over of the list did anyone any harm, and Orwell was not alone in believing that the Soviet Union had betrayed the left and that many British Marxists had in effect become Soviet nationalists.⁸ More significant is that Orwell, anticipating the analysis of Jacques Ellul, had correctly seen that modern governments cannot survive without propaganda. Rather than decry the decay of organic communities, he decided to help hold things together against the perceived threats of Marxism, fascism, and Nazism.

Orwell's ambivalence toward propaganda opens onto complex attitudes shared by many of his fellow writers and citizens in the early twentieth century. Orwell believed that literature should participate in politics, but he did not want to dispense with distinctions between the aesthetic and the ideological. His famous essay "Politics and the English Language" is based on the premise that the operations of language should not be subordinated to political exigencies and on the belief that language can shake off ideology.⁹ And yet, as Orwell knew, this was easier said than done.

Virginia Woolf found herself in a similar bind in the thirties. Feeling the unwelcome pressure of propaganda while writing "The Pargiters," Woolf decided that even though "this fiction is dangerously near propaganda," she could not "propagate at the same time as write fiction."¹⁰ But if she was dismayed with a new era in which "people must have things written in chalk and large and repeated over and over again,"¹¹ she was more than willing to enter the fray: with *Three Guineas* (1938) Woolf earned the title of "the most brilliant pamphleteer in England" from the *Times Literary Supplement* (*Diary* 5:148).¹² Not that Woolf would have appreciated being called the most brilliant *propagandist* in England. Keenly attentive to National Socialist propaganda, Woolf had come to see "propaganda" as a dirty word.

As I noted earlier, it was not always so. Before World War I propagandists began to professionalize the manipulation of public opinion, the Orwellian connotations of names such as Britain's MoI or the U.S. Committee on Public Information (CPI) did not yet exist: "propaganda" was typically used as "information" always had been, in a largely neutral

sense. During World War II, British officials still tended to use the words “information,” “propaganda,” and “publicity” interchangeably among themselves,¹³ but the popular view had long since changed, and the public was primed to accept Orwell’s now common assumption, canonized by 1984, that any official linkage between information and government is intrinsically sinister. As cultural pressures began to force a semantic shift, some intellectuals in the interwar years felt compelled to discount the common notion that there could be good and bad propaganda. Feeling the effects of what A. J. MacKenzie termed “the propaganda boom” of the thirties,¹⁴ Frederick E. Lumley undertook in *The Propaganda Menace* (1933) to disentangle propaganda from education and cultural boosterism by arguing that the word should be reserved only for “promotion which is veiled in one way or another” as to its origin, interests, methods, content, or results; “whatever promotional work has passed and now passes under that name had better be called something else in the interests of clear thinking.”¹⁵ Edward Bernays, it turns out, had already attempted to address the problem.

Nephew to Sigmund Freud and founder of public relations as a profession, Bernays realized the commercial potential of engineering public opinion while working as a propagandist for the CPI, better known as the Creel Commission.¹⁶ His first two books record his struggle to distinguish between the honorable work of public relations and its disreputable progenitor, propaganda. *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923) opens as if Bernays intends to distance himself from the word by undertaking to explain the significance of “a new phrase”: “counsel on public relations.”¹⁷ In fact, Bernays himself had coined the title in order to give his new enterprise an aura of professional standing. Detecting a connotative shift underway, Bernays admits that the average person probably thinks of the public relations counsel as someone who “produces that vaguely defined evil, ‘propaganda’” (*Crystallizing Public Opinion*, 11–12). But rather than clear away a misconception, he simply continues: “And yet . . . there is probably no single profession which within the last ten years has extended its field of usefulness more remarkably and touched upon intimate and important aspects of the everyday life of the world more significantly than the profession of public relations counsel” (*ibid.*, 12). Bernays’s odd sense that the extended reach of public relations ought to quell fears about the vague evils of propaganda may explain why he remained stubbornly immune for so long to the increasingly negative connotations of the word. When Bernays published his second book on public relations in 1928, he titled it *Propaganda* and proclaimed without qualms that “propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government.”¹⁸ Yet *Propaganda* also suggests that Bernays was beginning to acknowledge the need to disentangle his profession

from the title of his own book. He therefore devotes over two and a half pages to a tissue of quotations from Funk and Wagnalls that emphasizes the neutrality of the term by recalling its original meaning: “‘Propaganda’ in its proper meaning is a perfectly wholesome word, of honest parentage, and with an honorable history. The fact that it should to-day be carrying a sinister meaning merely shows how much of the child remains in the average adult” (Bernays, *Propaganda*, 22). Grow up, in other words, and stop calling your sibling a bastard. Bernays is only too happy to seize on the dictionary’s puritanical allegiance to etymology in order to bolster the position Lumley would soon attack, that whether “propaganda is good or bad depends upon the merit of the cause urged, and the correctness of the information published” (ibid., 20). He is therefore unconcerned that by his own count half the stories on the front page of the *New York Times* amount to propaganda. And yet within a few pages Bernays decides that “new activities call for a new nomenclature,” and, harking back to *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, reminds the reader that “the propagandist who specializes in interpreting enterprises and ideas to the public . . . has come to be known by the name of ‘public relations counsel’” (ibid., 37). Only a few pages later Bernays suggests that those who conflate public relations and propaganda are missing an important distinction: “the stage at which many suppose [the public relations counsel] starts his activities may actually be the stage at which he ends them” (ibid., 43). In other words, public relations enables propaganda without actually engaging in it.

Insofar as common parlance today tends to equate public relations with spin and propaganda with lies, Bernays can be said to have won the battle over nomenclature. But Bernays’s tortured distancing of himself from the term, Woolf’s insight into changing norms of persuasion, and Orwell’s sense of the modern state’s dependence on propaganda begin to get at the more complex understanding that emerges in the following decades, particularly in the work of Jacques Ellul.

Ellul’s importance in propaganda studies derives from his focus on propaganda as a sociological phenomenon made necessary by the nature of modern society rather than as the political weapon of a particular regime or organization. Ellul’s landmark book *Propaganda* (1962) draws on Bernays, and his definition of “sociological propaganda” as “the penetration of an ideology by means of its sociological context” echoes Bernays’s account of “the new propaganda,” which “sees the individual not only as a cell in the social organism but as a cell organized into the social unit.”¹⁹ The concept of sociological or “integration” propaganda permits Ellul to set aside extreme solutions to problems of definition, namely, the notion that everything is propaganda because ideology permeates all spheres of existence and the rejection of the term altogether in favor of a yet broader term, such as “persuasion.” Slower and more dif-

fuse than political propaganda, integration propaganda operates through political, economic, and cultural structures, and produces “a progressive adaptation to a certain order of things, a certain concept of human relations, which unconsciously molds individuals and makes them conform to society” (Ellul, *Propaganda*, 64). Integration propaganda thus includes not just the usual state-sponsored suspects—political broadcasting, censorship, atrocity stories, and the manipulation of news—but also more diffusely constellated organizations and institutions, such as advertising, public relations, and popular films, whose interactions effectively reinforce official political propaganda without necessarily setting out to do so. Ellul is clearly open to the charge that insofar as nearly everything counts as propaganda, he empties the category of meaning. But it is equally clear that it makes sense to use “propaganda” as a covering term to articulate the notion that in highly rationalized societies, diverse forms of modern communication function together to ensure the reproduction of the system.²⁰

In many ways Ellul’s theory overlaps with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s earlier account of “the culture industry” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). Both theories focus on mechanisms of integration and control grounded in principles of rationality that ultimately subvert themselves. For Horkheimer and Adorno, “the tireless self-destruction of enlightenment,” or its regression into myth, is rooted in rationality’s fear that its power of critique will unground the existing order.²¹ Ellul’s investigation of propaganda grows out of his critique of instrumental rationality in his more frequently cited *The Technological Society* (1954). For Ellul, technique is at the heart of modern society (not technology; the English title misleadingly translates the original French, *La technique*).²² By “technique” Ellul means any standardized ensemble of means used to attain a given end, and he understands propaganda as a necessary corollary of a society dominated by technique. Recalling Max Weber’s theory of rationalization, Ellul argues that while technique began with the machine, the progressive extension of technique into all domains of existence produces a civilization committed only to efficiency as an end in itself. Propaganda is necessary in such a world, for “propaganda is called upon to solve problems created by technology, to play on maladjustments, and to integrate the individual into a technological world” (Ellul, *Propaganda*, xvii). Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Ellul understands modern propaganda as a species of mythopoesis that papers over contradictions opened up by the homologous forces of rationalization, technique, and enlightenment.

But in comparison with Horkheimer and Adorno’s culture industry, Ellul’s model of relations among ideology, cultural production, and modernity offers a sharper analytic tool. First, Ellul’s theory is more dynamic and less monolithic. The culture industry articulates a top-down

model in which power is uniformly diffused throughout culture and inexorably subordinates the individual to the social totality through the agency of media controlled by capital. Thus all preexisting forms of entertainment and art are “taken over from above”; the resulting entertainment “prescribes each reaction”; content is transformed into style; and the stylistic transformation of “all branches of intellectual production” dictates “obedience to the social hierarchy.”²³ For Ellul, in contrast, individuals become consumers not because advertising and modern media (epitomized by cinema and radio) manufacture desire but because the desires and needs of the individual help generate the mechanisms that lead to their integration. Individuals collaborate in their subjection, in other words, because processes of rationalization, more broadly construed than in Horkheimer and Adorno, create needs that only propaganda can fulfill. Thus if both Ellul and the Frankfurt school critics offer grim visions of domination, the former’s approach preserves the possibility of agency by positing of a zone of interaction between individuals and apparatuses of integration. Modernism performs its cultural work, I argue in succeeding chapters, within this liminal space, a kind of psychosocial contact zone defined at one extreme by subjectivity construed as a sanctuary for being, and at the other by propaganda as an encompassing array of manipulative discourses. Second, whereas in Horkheimer and Adorno the difference between culture and propaganda disappears through the agency of media controlled by the culture industry—power, that is, alchemically transforms all cultural productions into propaganda—Ellul recognizes that cultural desires precede and motivate the invention of new technologies, such as new media, and that new technologies then reshape those cultural desires. In short, Ellul’s model is more genuinely dialectical than Horkheimer and Adorno’s “dialectic of enlightenment.” Thus where the concept of the culture industry asserts a media determinism in which specific media necessarily produce particular effects (e.g., “to posit the human word as absolute . . . is the immanent tendency of radio”),²⁴ Ellul sees the growing dominance of mass media as contributing to a more fundamental dynamic, in which the explosion of information requires the development of propaganda. This difference requires further explanation, for it goes to the heart of how Ellul’s theory brings into focus the ways in which modernism and propaganda, as incipient languages of the new information age, are related yet ultimately divergent mechanisms for processing information within modernity’s new regimes of rationalization.

In *Propaganda* Ellul repeats an argument he made more forcefully in an earlier essay, “Information and Propaganda” (1957): by the mid-twentieth century it has become virtually impossible to distinguish between information and propaganda. Ellul’s critics often misread him to

mean that the two are theoretically indistinguishable, but his point, in the words of Stanley Cunningham, is that modern propaganda is

characterized by a very close alliance with or incorporation of some central, highly prized epistemic values: information and knowledge; truth and facts; certainty and objectivity. It is further enhanced whenever these epistemic values are embedded within such culturally esteemed practices as debate, discussion, and scientific research; or when it is associated with such para-epistemic dispositions as thoughtfulness and reflection, and with the social values of openness, cooperation, courtesy, and civility—all of which add up to give a total impression of fair play and reasonableness in persuasive discourse.²⁵

Within this information-propaganda matrix, those most confident of their ability to tell the difference—intellectuals and professionals—are the most likely to be mistaken. Thus where Horkheimer and Adorno conjure the threat of elite capitalists gathered behind the curtain to orchestrate mass deception, Ellul describes the more alarming scenario in which the hidden persuaders (to cite Vance Packard’s popular version of the Frankfurt school’s conspiratorial vision)²⁶ are as blinded by information as those they would manipulate.²⁷

Much of the resistance to Ellul’s theory derives from his counterintuitive claim that “intellectuals are most easily reached by propaganda, particularly if it employs ambiguity” (*Propaganda*, 113). Horkheimer and Adorno implicitly exempt readers able to follow their complex dialectical critique (not to mention the writers capable of overcoming the reification of language that their analysis insists is universal) from the exhausted capitulation routinely suffered by their less nimble compatriots, for whom the culture industry is the only game in town. But for Ellul, information overrides intellect: “the more informed public or private opinion is, the more susceptible it is to propaganda,” because more informed is not the same as better informed: “information not only provides the basis for propaganda but gives propaganda the means to operate; for information actually generates the problems that propaganda exploits and for which it pretends to offer solutions” (*ibid.*, 113–14). If the intellectual reader resists this blow to academic self-regard, Ellul is no easier on everyone else: “The majority prefers expressing stupidities to not expressing any opinion: this gives them the feeling of participation” (*ibid.*, 140). So much for talk radio in the United States. Addressing the elite and the masses together, Ellul continues:

Developments [in the modern world] are not merely beyond man’s intellectual scope; they are also beyond him in volume and intensity; he simply cannot grasp the world’s economic and political problems. Faced with such matters, he feels his weakness, his inconsistency, his lack of effectiveness. He realizes

that he depends on decisions over which he has no control, and that realization drives him to despair. Man cannot stay in this situation too long. He needs an ideological veil to cover the harsh reality, some consolation, a *raison d'être*, a sense of values. And only propaganda offers him a remedy for a basically intolerable situation. (Ellul, *Propaganda*, 140)

Thus a claim I advanced in the preface can be refined here: propaganda finds a use value for negative affect by channeling what might be called informatic alienation into socially “productive” forms, such as myths, stereotypes, and xenophobia.

Admittedly, Ellul’s account exaggerates the effectiveness of propaganda—like Horkheimer and Adorno, he has no interest in empirical studies—as well as the degree to which propaganda usurps the role of all competing belief systems. The strong affect driving Ellul’s argument, particularly noticeable in “Propaganda and Information,” betrays an historical source when Ellul, discussing the role of memory in the conversion of information into knowledge, observes that “quite recently . . . we watched our intellectuals seriously assert the exact opposite of what they had said a few months before—not even alluding to their former stand and demonstrating that there is frequent loss of memory.”²⁸ The historical referent goes unnamed, but Ellul’s acid irony is motivated by the 1956 Soviet Party Congress in which Nikita Krushchev, finally acknowledging Stalin’s crimes and denouncing his despotism, in effect admitted that official Soviet history had been composed of propaganda unburdened by any fidelity to fact.²⁹ Writing as a quasi-Marxist just as the word “disinformation” was coined to name the blurry semantic space in which distinctions between information and propaganda were once discerned, Ellul no doubt felt betrayed into theorizing his own gullibility. But the depth of Ellul’s animus may also derive from the fact that he was a theologian as well as a cultural critic: sometimes he implies that humankind has fallen from a state of mythic premodernity—a state of psychic and social wholeness—into the modern hell of propaganda. Ellul himself thus writes as a modernist: his sustained analysis of the snares of modern existence amounts to a descent into the underworld, where he unearths, as Joyce does in *Nighttown*, the interlocking network of desires and social determinants that makes it hard for modern citizens to declare that they will not serve.

At this juncture, the interface between propaganda and information and between information and modernism becomes apparent. One might say that if the alienated, frustrated, and confused protagonists of modern British narrative are symptoms of modernity, propaganda is the solution. From the eddies and repetitions within “the prolonged present” of Gertrude Stein’s characteristic narrative voice to the present-tense

monologues of Woolf's characters in *The Waves* (1931), modernism's innocent eye or knowing ignorance, so intent on disavowing knowledge in favor of being, may be understood as a mechanism for coping with flows of information that exceed human comprehension. If Woolf's waves conjure the ruling power of Britannia, a covert power everywhere present but nowhere seen,³⁰ the italicized interchapters through which the waves roll insist equally on the natural fact of tides, seasons, and the rotation of the earth, offering a counterpoint to the turbulent ideological moment of the novel's composition and reception. According to this logic, lyric immediacy and modernist mythologies, like imagistic concentration and encyclopedic capaciousness, are the systole and diastole of an information ecology that demands either arbitrary exclusion ("We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing," says a missionary in *A Passage to India*) or impossible comprehension (the "Akasic records of all that ever anywhere wherever was" invoked by Stephen in *Ulysses*).³¹

If propaganda has always existed, reliable information has always been hard to come by in wartime; hence the proverbial fog. But the acuteness of the problems posed by the information-propaganda matrix is a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon. The saying "to lie like a bulletin" dates from the Napoleonic Wars, and the well-known tripartite typology of deception—lies, damned lies, and statistics—dates from the late nineteenth century.³² But with World War I, when newly invented propaganda techniques first harnessed the considerable power of the advertising industry to the political aims of the nation-state, the most telling saying emerged: the first casualty of war is truth.³³ Truth has died many deaths over the twentieth century, but the role played by the British propaganda campaign in World War I is fundamental to understanding the new media ecology faced by modernist writers and its effects on attitudes toward truth, factuality, and rhetoric. For when Woolf and Orwell struggle to articulate a space for the aesthetic in the culture wars of the thirties, they are attempting to find their bearings in a media environment whose rate of change, already an overwhelming fact of existence prior to 1914, had been accelerated by war.

PROPAGATING FICTIONS: WELLINGTON HOUSE, MODERNISM, AND THE INVENTION OF MODERN PROPAGANDA

Although historical accounts of modernism have devoted a lot of attention to World War I, the innovative British propaganda campaign rarely enters the calculus. The plan was unique among its European counterparts in that it emphasized facts over overt persuasion, disguised the

official origins of its propaganda, and placed literature at the heart of its efforts—at least at the beginning.

On September 2, 1914, just under a month after the outbreak of war, C.F.G. Masterman, the former Liberal MP charged by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith with initiating the British propaganda campaign, tapped into the tremendous cultural prestige of British letters by secretly inviting to his office in Wellington House twenty-five of England's most influential writers. The invitees included William Archer, J. M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, Robert Bridges, G. K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Anthony Hope Hawkins, Thomas Hardy, George Trevelyan, H. G. Wells, and Israel Zangwill. Rudyard Kipling and Arthur Quiller Couch could not attend but sent messages offering their services.³⁴ With the exception of Hardy, all those in attendance chose to help, and many others, including Ford Madox Ford and Joseph Conrad, joined the campaign later. It is not at all surprising that so many writers supported the war: though the Liberal Party traditionally had been far less inclined to wage war than the Conservatives, early support for the fight against Germany tended to cut across party affiliation. Positioning themselves as concerned citizens, the authors recruited into service published commissioned books under their own names through well-known commercial and university presses that were secretly subsidized by the government. The plan was so effectively secretive that most members of Parliament remained unaware of its operations for two years, and the public did not learn of the writers' participation until the early 1930s.³⁵ Although Masterman's publishing enterprise has been narrated in traditional literary histories, its full significance has not been fully understood or explored, particularly with respect to British modernism.

It is hard to overestimate the cultural influence wielded by Masterman's gathering of writers. "The novelists, poets, short story writers, critics, and dramatists at Masterman's meeting," as Gary Messinger observes, "were all part of an Edwardian literary establishment that had no competition from radio or television and whose representatives enjoyed tremendous prestige throughout the world among both elite and mass audiences": "Not only through their writings, but also through the earnings they amassed, the access they were given to the social networks of the politically and economically powerful, and the letter-writing correspondence they maintained with numerous loyal readers, these men were as influential a group of writers as the world has ever produced."³⁶ As influential as these men were, however, literature's role shrunk over the course of the war, for Masterman and his successors soon realized that film and other mass media were beginning to overshadow the cultural influence of literary intellectuals. The evolving British strategy thus charts the emergence of what in retrospect looks like a modern media

environment. More than a microcosm, however, the campaign also accelerated the pace of change. Propaganda's influence on the truth value of facts or, to put it another way, on the tension between the seeming immediacy of facts and the subtle ways in which facts are already and always mediated, registers across a wide range of modernist texts. The following historical narrative is therefore intended to lay the ground for subsequent discussions of the way modernists struggle to position themselves in relation to a media ecology whose transformation of factuality into rhetoric was contributing to the formation of what Walter Lippmann called a "pseudo-environment" of mediated images.³⁷

The most benign view of British propaganda is that it was designed primarily to disseminate factual accounts to counter rumors, gossip, incomplete stories, and fabrications already in circulation. To the extent that German propagandists, confident of a quick victory, sometimes resorted early in the war to lies or misrepresentations concerning enemy losses, landmarks destroyed, or territory captured, counterpropaganda could respond effectively simply by means of factual enumeration. As Lord Robert Cecil observed in a confidential memo, "in war-time it is the facts that count, not words. All we can do to help by propaganda is to let foreigners know what is actually happening."³⁸ Masterman too was committed to facts, and, judging from available documents, it seems that many British officials sincerely believed that factual enlightenment and persuasion amounted to much the same thing. Ivor Nicholson, who was in charge of pictorial propaganda, claimed after the war that the British never circulated "a deliberate untruth" and that "infinite pains were taken to sift information."³⁹ Facts would speak for themselves, and the world would recognize the truth of Allied accounts and the virtue of Allied aims.

The British factual emphasis developed in response to the pressures exerted by Germany's already well-established campaign. When war broke out on August 4, 1914, Germany had been using official propaganda bureaus, openly identified as such, to ply the world with its version of political tensions in Europe for decades. By the fall of 1914, many European neutrals resented the endless stream of German pamphlets. Masterman therefore decided to rule out direct appeals to neutral countries: "Strict secrecy has been observed as to any connection of the Government with the work," he reported: "every recipient of material distributed gratuitously should receive it from an unofficial source" and the material itself would not "bear any sign of having been produced under the auspices of the Government."⁴⁰ Officially named the Propaganda Bureau, Masterman's project soon came to be known by the building in which it was housed, Wellington House, a cover name Masterman made quasi-official in the title of subsequent parliamentary reports in order to

camouflage his operation's status as the state's central organ of propaganda. By the end of the war, it was generally agreed that British propaganda completely dominated the field, and most historians today believe that the British campaign played some role in persuading the United States to enter the war, contributed materially to shortening the war by undermining German morale, and was a significant influence on the punitive nature of the Treaty of Versailles.⁴¹

When Masterman assembled his writers, the first order of business was to organize an "Authors' Declaration" in support of the war in response to a letter recently published by German academics; the declaration appeared in *The Times* on September 18. But his long-term plans were more important. Knowing that the United States was particularly hostile to overt appeals from its former colonial overlord, Masterman had Gilbert Parker consult the American *Who's Who* and compile a list of prominent people who would receive the books with a note from Gilbert or the author, as if from one private individual to another. The same tactic was used with other neutral countries. Commercial publishing houses cooperating included Hodder and Stoughton and T. Fisher Unwin; Oxford University Press also helped out by publishing several volumes, most notably *Why We Are at War* (1914) by the Oxford Historians. Arnold Toynbee wrote several books for Wellington House, as did Lewis Namier, Hugh Walpole, and Arthur Conan Doyle; Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Hilaire Belloc, Gilbert Murray, and G. M. Trevelyan contributed at least one each. Extending its reach beyond English writers, Wellington House also solicited and translated works by foreign authors, including *Who Wanted War* (1915), co-authored by Émile Durkheim, and *The Trail of the Barbarians* (1917), written by Pierre Loti and translated by Ford Madox Ford.

Samuel Hynes has called the exclusiveness of Masterman's initial gathering a "crucial mistake" and suggests that the meeting was in part responsible for one of the dominant myths of World War I, "the concept of the Old Men, as the makers of the war and enemies of the young."⁴² Looking back, Hardy, who was seventy-four in 1914, also intuited a generational divide: "the yellow September sun shone in from the dusty street with a tragic cast upon them as they sat round the large blue table, full of misgivings, yet unforeseeing in all their completeness the tremendous events that were to follow."⁴³ It is certainly true that the gathering did not include the rising generation of writers who were beginning to shape British modernism. Bloomsbury writers such as Lytton Strachey and E. M. Forster were not invited, nor were loose cannons such as D. H. Lawrence or pacifists such as Bertrand Russell. (On the contrary, Russell was dismissed from Trinity College in 1916 and later imprisoned for six months for his antiwar activities.)⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf was not yet on the

map as a novelist, but no women were involved until the original twenty-five writers were joined later by twenty-five more, including Jane Ellen Harrison, May Sinclair, Flora Anne Steel, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Yet if Masterman's strategy was a mistake, it was so only to the extent that by rallying support for the war on idealistic grounds he ultimately contributed to the disillusionment of the postwar years. Beyond the fact that the British campaign worked exceptionally well, the meeting and subsequent campaign were clandestine (apart from the Authors' Declaration) and therefore could not have contributed directly to the generational agon that poets such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen helped to shape well before the existence of Masterman's campaign was revealed.

More important is the fact that the gathering marked the last moment in which literature would ever hold such cultural prestige in England. When Masterman wrote his influential critique of Edwardian culture and society, *The Condition of England*, in 1909, some of his primary "documentary" sources were literary: H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay* (1908) carried as much authority as William Booth's protosociological study *In Darkest England* (1890). In the long wake of World War I, however, the documentary role of fiction would be taken over by film and the rising disciplines of ethnography and sociology. By putting novelists to work as propagandists, Masterman not only helped to blur "the dividing-line between Journalism and Literature," a topic started in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) as "a conversational hare" at a Schlegel sisters' luncheon,⁴⁵ he contributed to the novel's absorption into the capacious and ill-defined category of journalistic fictionality. Woolf registers the pressure of journalism in her essay "Modern Fiction" when she criticizes Edwardian novelists such as Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy for writing too much like newspapermen. Compared to "the luminous halo" of existence caught in the web of modernist textuality, fiction attentive to the way Bond Street tailors sew buttons, she implies, reads like copy torn from the society pages.⁴⁶

Within days of his literary gathering, Masterman acknowledged the power of popular journalism by scheduling a meeting with influential editors and journalists. At Masterman's urging, representatives from, among others, the *Daily Chronicle*, *Daily News*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Standard*, *Daily Mail*, *British Weekly*, *Times*, *Westminster Gazette*, and *Spectator* agreed to work with the government to coordinate the release of official news in exchange for assurances that censorship would be minimal.⁴⁷ Later in the war, Lloyd George, having replaced Asquith, recognized that he could coopt the press even more effectively by appointing prominent publishers to key administrative positions. Thus Lord Northcliffe, founder and publisher of the *Daily Mail*

and the *Daily Mirror*, ran the Committee for Propaganda in Enemy Countries out of Crewe House, and Lord Beaverbrook, who held controlling interest of the *Daily Express*, ended up running the MoI; Northcliffe got some help from one of Woolf's targets, Wells, and Beaverbrook was aided by Woolf's favorite target, Bennett, whom he hired in 1918.⁴⁸

From the start, then, literature's prominent role in the campaign was shadowed by the mass appeal of journalism, and it was not long before competing information flows from other media began to crowd out literature. When the campaign began, England was uniquely positioned to control the global flow of information—by the turn of century, British firms owned three-quarters of the world's 200,000 miles of underwater cables⁴⁹—but Britain's material advantage would have counted for little if Masterman had not overcome his elitist inclination to appeal to the masses only indirectly through an older generation of opinion-shapers.⁵⁰ As Masterman laid aside his anxious mistrust of the crowd and began to distribute not just books and pamphlets but also films, picture postcards, illustrated magazines, and photographs, Wellington House eventually became only one branch—the literature division—of a dynamic, increasingly complex organization.

But the need to win over neutral opinion abroad and to recruit people into the new citizen army never produced a fully unified bureaucratic structure. Government propaganda was both supported and contested by private organizations on the home front, and as internal rivalries among various government propaganda agencies grew, several attempts were made to centralize control through increasingly comprehensive bureaucratic structures. In February 1917 Wellington House was absorbed into the new Department of Information (DoI), briefly run by the novelist John Buchan, and in March 1918 the DoI became the MoI.⁵¹ But even these reforms failed to produce a fully coordinated government monopoly. The DoI and later the MoI were supplemented by the Press Bureau of the Foreign Office, the Home Office Neutral Press Committee, the War Aims Committee, and a subdivision of Military Intelligence (M.I.7[b]). The Admiralty, which solicited an essay from Conrad, was also producing its own propaganda, as was the Intelligence Department of the War Office. Citizens' groups, moreover, were very active.⁵² The Central Council for National Patriotic Organizations aimed to whip up martial spirits, and the Union of Democratic Control, which opposed British war policy and included prominent figures such as Norman Angell, J. A. Hobson, Bertrand Russell, and Lowes Dickinson, held public meetings and published numerous propaganda pamphlets of their own. George Bernard Shaw's *Common Sense about the War*, which equated British and German war aims on economic grounds, made such a splash that Ford was specifically charged with responding to it. Wellington House

and its later incarnations thus had to fight to maintain a monopoly over British propaganda.

If intragovernmental infighting and home-front competition prevented the formation of a highly integrated culture industry, a shared commitment to plying the British perspective through as many media channels as possible nevertheless created the most effective propaganda machine the world had ever seen. The MoI developed a Photographic Section that controlled the taking, reproduction, and distribution of war photographs at home and abroad.⁵³ Picture postcards had been enjoying a boom since the late 1890s (a phenomenon to which I will return in connection with Virginia Woolf in chapter 2), and in his *Third Report on the Work Conducted for the Government at Wellington House*, Masterman reported that “100,000 postcards prepared by us, containing greetings from the British soldier to the Russian soldier, were sent to the Russian armies at the time of the Russian Easter. We also printed 20,000 cards for Italy, showing General Cadorna and Lord Kitchner in medallions surrounded by flags of the Allies.”⁵⁴ Maps and diagrams were also among Wellington House’s publications; in November 1917, W. M. Dixon, a Glasgow professor who took over American propaganda from Gilbert Parker, proudly reported that when President Wilson “referred to a map which threw a flood of light upon the Balkan situation,” the “map was one of our publications.”⁵⁵

Hindsight, however, reveals that the most important news in Masterman’s *Third Report* concerns film. In early 1916 Wellington House was still in charge of cinematic propaganda, and Masterman highlights the spectacular success of a full-length feature entitled *Britain Prepared*.⁵⁶ Masterman had good reason to be proud. At the start of the war, the British, like the French and the Germans, were using hot air balloons to drop propaganda leaflets in enemy territory, a practice first developed a century earlier in the Napoleonic Wars. By war’s end, not only had the British graduated to hydrogen balloons, but film propaganda was being shown in cinema houses and through Cinemotor, a mobile film unit whose large trucks gave “improvised open-air cinema shows” in rural areas and near the front.⁵⁷ Cinema trade groups approached the War Office early in 1915 to offer their services, and though Masterman was quick to grasp film’s potential, the War Office Cinematograph Committee was not formed until October 1915, when a trade group, echoing Masterman, finally convinced the War Office that the political value of war films outweighed any possible costs.⁵⁸

Strategic concerns, class prejudice, and multiform anxiety about the newness of the medium were the root causes of the military’s reluctance to embrace film. In the wake of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), military leaders felt that Japan’s strict censorship had helped their cause and

were determined to follow a similar policy. Originally raised in response to the press, these concerns carried over to the new medium: “the services were completely convinced that every sort of secret would escape,” and fears were not entirely misplaced: it later turned out that “one or two enemy agents were caught disguised as dealers in film.”⁵⁹ Cinema houses, moreover, were viewed with great suspicion by the government. Cinema was known as the poor man’s theater; most seats cost less than four pence, far less than competing forms of entertainment, and working-class attendance soared. During the war even more people attended, and by July 1916 “the public was . . . spending as much on cinema as on all other plays, shows, concerts, and organized sporting events put together.”⁶⁰ With a working-class public sphere emerging across England, local governments took steps to regulate cinemas by adding provisions to the 1909 Cinematograph Act, the first act of Parliament specifically concerned with the cinema, and Parliament stepped in again in 1916 with new entertainment taxes. Anxieties about what might be going on under the cover of darkness elicited further provisions to protect children from pedophiles. But in a contradiction characteristic of class myopia, anxieties about the cultural agency of film did not stop government elites from dismissing the medium as a trivial diversion for the working class. Some field officers even objected to their being filmed on the grounds that it was beneath them.

Despite these obstacles, *Britain Prepared* became Wellington House’s first film and established the dominant approach to the great majority of British propaganda films for the duration of the war.⁶¹ A three-hour silent film with few titles, *Britain Prepared* shows scenes of the British navy, munitions work, and the army in training. Extremely well received by audiences, the film adopted a purely factual approach by giving people starved for authentic war footage a sense of what the country was doing to win. With the dominance of sound films in the thirties and forties, propaganda films became increasingly ideological by using voice-over narration to frame the images spectators viewed. But *Britain Prepared* and other British World War I films are remarkably free of that style of persuasion, nor do they in any way anticipate the manipulative editing that Soviet film invented in the twenties. Instead, the stream of visual “facts” is presented from a British point of view—literally, of course, but also in the sense that the films evince “a respect, a sympathy even, for the men and women whose experience of war was recorded on film.”⁶²

Eventually, as the British campaign evolved beyond Wellington House, it was recognized that film had to become a major component of the war effort. A few fiction films were made, but, consonant with Masterman’s founding emphasis on facts, most films, such as *The Battle of the Somme*,

which gave the public its first taste of battle footage, adopted a documentary approach before the term even existed.⁶³ As film historians often note, John Grierson's documentary film movement in the twenties and thirties was made possible by government propaganda films, which eventually included official newsreels, films about life on the home front, the British Royal family, and neutral and allied countries. By January 1918 Edward Carson, undersecretary of state in the Home Office and newly entrusted with general supervision of propaganda activities under the MoI, could state what had become obvious: "no more potent medium of Propaganda than the Cinematograph existed."⁶⁴ By World War II film was deeply entrenched in government propaganda bureaus throughout Europe and America.

In addition to heightening the cultural prominence of new media, Wellington House and its successors contributed to the epistemological decline of the fact. Never the stable units of self-evident truth seized on by British empiricism, facts became even less trustworthy in the media ecology of the early twentieth century. Facts were of course under assault from multiple directions. The rise of positivism and modern science in the nineteenth century, always shadowed by its dialectical counterpart, idealism, inevitably elicited responses that challenged the notion that facts were the only possible objects of knowledge. If "the experimental method" of Zola's naturalism paradoxically attempted to reclaim truth from science in the name of science "by bringing together [in fiction] the greatest number of human data arranged in their logical order," the French symbolists, carrying romanticism forward into the twentieth century, tried to reverse the polarity of real and unreal by exalting ineffable mysteries over "the accidents of daily life."⁶⁵ And despite Freud's insistent claims for the empirical truth of psychoanalysis, in his case studies facts became little more than surface clues to the deeper realities of the psyche. Jim's anguished lament while on trial in *Lord Jim* indexes the historical moment: "Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything!"⁶⁶

With an influence felt in multiple cultural domains, British propaganda's commitment to empirically verifiable information contributed enormously to the increasingly equivocal status of facts. To a significant degree the British were true to their ideals, but their propaganda techniques indicate that they also knew that information flows best when channels are properly greased, that factual accounts must be tailored to suit different audiences around the world, and that the power of facts to make an impression varies according to the media through which they are disseminated. Indeed, the single most effective piece of propaganda disseminated during World War I, Lord Bryce's *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*, published in May 1915, gave Germany

ample grounds for its clever glossing of the Allies' information services as "All-lies." Though based on dubious research, the Bryce Report bore all the signs of detached objectivity: depositions, extensive appendices, and photographs of German soldiers' diary pages. Whereas Belgian committee reports refer to "the chivalrous and heroic resistance of the Belgian nation" against Germany's "devastating and murderous hordes," the language of the Bryce Report remains scrupulously legalistic and matter-of-fact.⁶⁷ In 1922 a Belgian commission could not substantiate any of the gruesome reports of children's hands having been lopped off or of citizens having been buried alive. But for the duration of the war, Wellington House made mutilated Belgian children as real as actual German brutalities by translating the Bryce Report into thirty languages and circulating it throughout the world.⁶⁸ In hindsight, the report shows how factuality was becoming detached from empirical grounding and transformed into a form of rhetoric. At the time, it firmly established one of the dominant myths of World War I: English civilization was fighting a war against German barbarism.

Initiating forms of deceit whose progeny remain with us today, the British manipulation of facts throws into relief the epistemological peculiarity of what Mary Poovey has termed the "modern fact." Poovey offers an historical account of how "facts" came to be conceived as both prior to systematic knowledge—as raw untheorized data—and inextricable from the theories they support. Tracing the emergence of this duality back to the seventeenth century, Poovey argues that the ambiguity of facts as both preinterpretive and wholly derived from theory is fundamental to modern epistemology.⁶⁹ In this context modernism and twentieth-century propaganda look like late chapters—or paired interchapters—in the history of the modern fact. Propaganda exploits the internal bifurcation of modern facts by amplifying their rhetorical appeal even while insisting on their value-free neutrality. The supposed independence of facts, their imperviousness to the assimilative power of systematic knowledge or suasion, made it easier for British officials to declare their fidelity to the veridical while subtly integrating facts into patterns designed to manipulate public opinion.⁷⁰ Although facts claim to speak for themselves—or rather, the purveyors of facts *claim* that facts speak for themselves—their framing and selection often amount to a species of ventriloquism in which the subjectivity of the editor qua propagandist speaks from behind a screen of enumerated facts. Modernism also troubles notions of objectivity, but not so much by spinning facts into spurious coherence as by pressuring one extreme into another. On one hand, some strands of modernism dwell so insistently on the image (Pound's "intellectual and emotional complex") or sensory data (Woolf's cascade of atoms falling on the brain) that the objective percept may seem to dissolve within the

