‘American Invasions’
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On 29 April 1915, Herbert Farjeon alerted readers of *The Cartoon* to a dangerous development in the British theatre. ‘London’, he declared, ‘is being deluged with American farces, and the British drama is in a state of siege. We should have thought that there was trouble enough in Europe already. We should have thought that this bombardment even constituted a breach of neutrality’.[1] Farjeon was not alone in raising the alarm. As outlined below, references to the perceived ‘American invasion’ of the British theatre became a motif of public discourse about the stage during the First World War, especially during the 1915-16 season. For some, the presence of American actors and writers in London was something to be celebrated as a sign of a transatlantic theatrical fraternity. Yet, for a large number of critics, it pointed to a more sinister shift in power and they voiced their fears that the British theatre was facing a coup from which it had to be defended.

While it is true that the prominence of American plays and dramatists certainly increased during the war period, any suggestion that this was part of a concerted effort towards a more longstanding takeover is debatable. The validity of such paranoia is, however, not at issue here: rather, this chapter examines what these fears reveal about the wider social anxiety of the time. It argues that the perceived threat to the national drama must be understood in dialogue with the perceived threat to national identity that came with the war and the need to defend national honour on the battlefields. Further, the concerns raised speak to a growing unease at the changing power dynamic between the two nations and, more acutely, the suspicion levelled at the neutral stance that America adopted in the war.

The sense of an ‘American invasion’ manifested itself in various ways, including an increase in the number of American performers working in the country as well as a shift away from actor managers and towards theatre syndicates and trusts led by such impresarios as

Alfred Butt, Oswald Stoll and partners Edward Laurillard and George Grossmith Jr. The latter was often read as indicative of the pervading and problematic influence of Broadway, which was presented regularly as commercially oriented and mercenary in publications like *The Stage*. However, this chapter focuses on the plays that were produced at this time. Particular attention is placed on the growing popularity of the 'crook' play, which encouraged audiences to sympathise with the central criminal characters and introduced a new 'American slang' vocabulary that was deemed inappropriate for the British stage.

At the same time, the war period saw an increase in the number of British theatre exports to America, which is a secondary concern here. This included the transfer of successful, long-running productions like *Chu Chin Chow* as well as numerous writers and performers, leading some theatre commentators to warn of a British invasion. The promise of a more stable working environment and greater financial rewards was certainly a motive for such exportation but, as is argued below, the theatre was also used for propagandistic ends and to garner sympathy for the Allied cause. Particular attention is placed on Harley Granville Barker's ground breaking tour of Euripides's *The Trojan Women* to colleges on the east coast of America in 1915. The production set out to not only showcase British theatrical innovation – thus operating as a form of cultural propaganda – but also to bring the horrific reality of war to American audiences.

Invasion and the (Imagined) American Threat

Before turning to analyse the American presence in London in more detail, it is useful to pause and consider both the significance of the term 'invasion' in this context and the changing Anglo-American relations at the time. As has already been well documented, the decades that preceded the outbreak of the First World War saw a rise in the number of invasion scare stories appearing in a variety of forms, including reports, pamphlets, books,

plays, ballads, and the serialization of novels in national newspapers like *The Daily Mail*. The proliferation of such stories had a profound impact on the British popular imagination. For some, the outbreak of war appeared as the inevitable culmination to the countless fictional narratives of impending assault. It also continued the practice of forging British national identity around the imaginary threat of invasion by an alien 'other', which had been in place for over three hundred years and which continues today. John Gooch argues that by the late 1800s '[o]ne word could send a *frisson* of terror coursing down the middle class spine – invasion'.[2]

The enemies featured in the invasion literature tended to reflect British foreign relations, with work at the turn of the twentieth century typically focusing on the threat posed by Germany. Yet, the very presence of such narratives perpetuated a climate of anxiety and a 'derivative fear', that is, a 'free-floating anxiety… that gradually creates a paranoid world view' and which is not tied to a particular object or signifier.[3] The result was a more pervasive atmosphere of unease and suspicion that extended beyond named enemies.

A particular fear of the time concerned the preservation of the social, political and cultural status quo in the country. Samuel Hynes argues that the popularity of invasion literature in the early 1900s reflected a national mood of angst and a loss of self-confidence in the wake of the Boer War of 1899-1903.[4] Although Britain was ultimately victorious, the conflict exposed the serious deficiencies of the imperial defence – especially when faced with a combination of internal weaknesses and an external challenge – and cost the country dearly in terms of money, causalities and prestige. The feeling that disaster had been only narrowly avoided did little to resolve the existing anxiety about the country's ability to maintain its empire and, instead, painted the picture of a decadent nation unequipped to defend itself. In this context, invasion scare stories can be seen to operate as a call to arms and an attempt to wake Britain up to the very real threat of invasion. Such an attitude was only heightened by

the intense patriotism that accompanies war and, in particular, in the light of the British struggles on the Western Front.

The use of the word 'invasion' to denote American activities on the British stage, then, would have tapped into this defensive and suspicious mindset. Further, recent changes to Anglo-American relations gave the word a particular resonance. While America was not an enemy of Britain, the neutral stance that the former adopted in the war was a source of much frustration and anger. There were multiple factors that underpinned the American call for neutrality, including the existence of large German-American and Irish-American populations in the country, the belief in isolationism that had been part of the habitus of the United States since George Washington, and President Woodrow Wilson's own commitment to the principles of democracy and liberalism. The latter saw him initially pursue a mediated peace – or a 'peace without victory' – between the Allied and Central powers that would avoid one side being able to force a peace settlement on the other along with the consequent humiliation and resentment. He held this position doggedly for almost three years in the face of a growing polarisation of public opinion and fractures between members of his own cabinet on the question of intervention and preparedness, only relenting in April 1917 following the interception of the Zimmerman telegram.

The British Press followed these debates closely and placed America at the centre of public discourse on the war. Influential magazine *The Fortnightly Review*, for example, published a large number of articles that detailed all aspects of America's position in the war, ranging from the demographic make up of its cities to minutiae regarding the political wrangling taking place in Washington.[5] The aim was to increase the readers' knowledge of America, its politics and culture, and to show that it was Britain's natural ally and so had a duty to intervene. While the magazine's writers veiled their frustration, other publications such *The Bystander* were more vocal in their anger and encouraged anti-American sentiment,

especially in response to actions taken in Washington that were deemed to be against the British interest. Thus, soon after the American government publicly admonished Britain for its excessive treatment of neutral and belligerent ships on 28 December 1914, the magazine warned:

> But if you turn against England, what happens? We have to take stock of you as a possible enemy… Take up cudgels against us, Cousin, and you change us from being the advance guard of America in Europe to being the advance guard of Europe towards America. And remember that unless we win this war outright, we shall, to protect our hearths and homes, become armed to the teeth; we shall no longer be the sluggard who allowed his island to become the universal dump-heap; and as well as our hearths and homes we shall protect our markets.[6]

There was also the suspicion that America was maintaining the neutral stance in order to elevate its economic and geopolitical position in the world. The industrial surge that took place in America at the turn of the twentieth century meant that by 1913 its real per capita income exceeded Britain's by approximately 8 per cent and it had replaced Britain as the global centre of industry and commerce.[7] America was thus a commercial competitor of Britain and was often depicted as a mercenary force that sought to capitalise on the trauma of war. This attitude is discernible in the reference to markets in the above quotation, where the closure of the market is deemed to be the most potent threat to America and underlined many of the attacks on Wilson's policy.

The belief that Wilson pursued a policy of neutrality for personal gain was not unfounded. He believed that this neutral stance would strengthen America's position in the world and its future prospects: by casting himself in the role of the mediator between the warring nations, Wilson – and, in turn, America – could dictate the final terms of any peace treaty. Peter Hugill argues that this course of action was not only to give America the 'moral high ground' in the war but must also be understood as part of the ongoing economic conflict

between the two countries, which began in the early 1860s, and the American challenge to British global hegemony.[8] It is possible to identify the fears of this challenge and also the recognition of America as an economic and political rival in the protectionist discourse adopted by *The Bystander* and similar publications.

It is thus imperative to locate the accusations of an American theatre invasion in this context, where the same patriotic language was used to voice fears of an influx of writers, performers and productions from across the Atlantic. In 1916, for example, meetings were held in order to 'consider what steps should be taken "in connection with the forthcoming invasion of the British music halls by American artistes"' and to demand that theatre managers recognise their national duty and stand by British performers: 'Patriotism must come before percentage… Britain for the Briton!'[9] While performances in music halls are outside the remit of this chapter, this example demonstrates the extent to which the suspicion of an invasion permeated all parts of the British performance field as well as the recitation of protectionist tropes as a means of defending it.

Americans in Britain

Farjeon used a similarly militaristic language in his suggestion that the British drama was 'under siege', which painted a picture of an endless stream of new plays by American authors sweeping across the Atlantic and monopolising theatre seasons. This was a portrait echoed by B. W. Findon in April 1916, when he warned of the 'formidable invasion' that came with 'the landing on our shores of the American author'.[10] In reality, there was no sudden surge of new American-authored plays on the British stage: approximately fifteen such plays were staged in the 1913-14 season and this number actually decreased slightly over the next few years to thirteen plays in 1914-15; ten in 1915-16; five in 1916-17; and thirteen in 1917-18. [11] This led *The Stage* to conclude that the 'alleged invasion' had been 'much overestimated in number'.[12]

However, while it is true that the number of plays staged by American authors remained relatively stable, an important shift that contributed to the sense of there being an inundation was the success of these plays. Of the ten plays staged in the 1915-16 season, for example, four had runs of over one hundred performances, while *Daddy Long-Legs* and *Romance* both had runs of over five hundred performances. Likewise, in 1916-17, four of the five productions had runs of over one hundred performances, including *Inside the Lines*, which ran for four hundred and twenty performances. Such long runs and the fact that successful productions would often run for multiple consecutive seasons meant that there was a greater number of American plays being performed at any one time than would be suggested from looking solely at the number of new plays staged. In April 1915 – the month when Farjeon wrote his blistering criticism – there was at least nine American productions running in the West End concurrently.

Montague Glass and Charles Klein's three-act comedy play *Potash and Perlmutter* is a case in point. The play, which centred on two New York dressmakers Abe Potash and Mawruss Perlmutter – played by Augustus Yorke and Robert Leonard, respectively – transferred to London following a successful run on Broadway. Produced for the West End by Laurillard and Grossmith Jr., it opened at the Queen's Theatre on 14 April 1914 (thus shortly before the outbreak of war) to largely positive reviews, with critics celebrating performances that were 'as brilliant a display of what is called character-acting as the London stage has seen for many a long day'.[13]

The play proved a commercial success and remained at the Queen's for over eighteen months, eventually closing on 13 November 1915 after an impressive six hundred and fifty consecutive performances. Its popularity garnered a great deal of public attention and media interest with stories ranging from short notifications celebrating each milestone it reached to longer articles profiling the performers and focused issues of theatre journals.[14] In this sense,

it became a staple of the West End theatre scene during the first years of the war. Such was the success that a sequel production quickly followed, opening on 12 September 1916 – again at the Queen's Theatre – and running for one hundred and ninety-two performances.

The play also became a staple of the British theatre on a national scale as a result of the numerous regional tours that took place during the war period. Indeed, it was toured almost continuously up until December 1917, meaning that it was being seen on such stages as the New Theatre in Cardiff, the Theatre Royal in Margate and the Grand Theatre in Blackpool even after it had closed on the West End. Further, there were often multiple companies touring the play at the same time. For example, producers Charles Windermere and Seymour Hodge toured the play between July 1915 and May 1916 at the same time that Laurillard and Grossmith Jr. sent out two separate companies – a Blue Company and a Red Company – on a regional tour. This meant that the play was being performed in three different towns on any given night, or four if one includes London.

While this practice of staging multiple concurrent tours was certainly not unique to *Potash and Perlmutter*, it demonstrates the extent to which the play became part of the national theatre consciousness. Other successful American imports were given the same treatment and there were often periods when numerous plays were being staged by multiple companies at the same time. In the week commencing 11 October 1915, for example, there were nineteen productions of American plays taking place around Britain, including four different productions of both *Potash and Perlmutter* and *Peg O' My Heart*. Such practices may well justify the sense of an American omnipresence and a British theatre under siege from productions that were emphatically 'un-British'.

The Arrival of the Crook Play

From the beginning of its run in London, a key focus of the discourse surrounding *Potash and Perlmutter* was what critics saw to be its innately foreign nature. As *The Manchester Guardian* explained:

> So American is it that one was rather in the position of a Southerner at a Scottish dialect play. The language, the humour, the whole atmosphere were intensely foreign… Many Americans and many Jews were in the theatre to-night, and everyone seemed to find it all intensely amusing. The outsider was puzzled by most of it except by the expert acting in the quick American manner of Mr Robert Leonard as Perlmutter and Mr Augustus Yorke as Potash.[15]

The Derby Daily Telegraph likewise noted that the play 'covers a peculiar section of New York life, which finds its character in a certain alien population' while *The Daily Mirror* declared that it 'really wants a glossary. Not only its phraseology, but its pronunciation is strange to English ears'.[16] Other American plays of the time were met with a similar response, where their apparent strangeness and alien quality was emphasised and highlighted as a defining feature.

This was most noticeable in the case of 'crook' plays, a genre of play that became increasingly common on the British stage between 1915 and 1917 and which, for some, epitomized the American invasion. Indeed, as the *Birkenhead News* noted: 'The chief American exports for 1915 seem to have been chewing gum, "crook" plays, and indignation'.[17] The plays offered audiences a romanticised and often melodramatic portrayal of the New York underworld through largely formulaic plots, with popular examples being Elmer Rice's *On Trial* (April 1915), Harvey O'Higgin's *The Dummy* (September 1915), Carlyle Moore's *Stop Thief* (October 1915), and Roi Cooper Megrue's *Under Cover* (January 1917).

Willard Mack's *Kick In* was seen to be an exemplar crook play, containing many of its central tropes. The play follows reformed 'crook' Chick Hewes, who has to prove his

innocence after being mistakenly accused of stealing a diamond necklace by a disreputable detective. Various stock characters populate the play: Hewes as the sympathetic crook; his wife Molly as the saintly heroine; two bullying police officers; Hewes's unscrupulous former gang members; and a brother-in-law who is 'a victim of the drug-habit'.[18] In keeping with the usual narrative arc of crook plays, the plot also contains numerous unexpected shifts as well as comic and dramatic set pieces designed to entertain the audience.

Kick In opened at the Vaudeville Theatre on 28 August 1915 to largely positive reviews from the critics, who praised the exciting and rhythmic 'hustle' of the play that successfully created a vivid picture of criminal life in New York and the battle between 'dishonest policemen and honest "crooks"'.[19] They similarly commended its numerous references to the war and the inclusion of a 'pro-British speech' in which actor Ramsey Wallace expressed a desire 'to put on a khaki uniform and throw a rifle across his shoulder to help in beating "our mutual enemy the Kaiser"'.[20] Such references served to both demonstrate the play's responsiveness to the current climate and to ingratiate it with British audiences. The fact that it was performed by an all-American company added a level of novelty to the production and was also celebrated in the reviews, with many congratulating the actors on their lifelike performances and describing it as

> one of those rare cases to which we believe the native artist would have been unequal, or, at any rate, could not have secured quite the same effect… [the] pleasure-loving, gum-chewing, over-dressed daughter, a vicious youth half insane with "dope" – all these are the characteristic creatures of New York, fluently speaking its language. There is nothing quite like them elsewhere, and they are not to be reproduced by the elementary tricks of histrionic art.[21]

Such comments served the purpose of presenting the play and its characters as entirely alien and incomprehensible to British audiences without the aid of suitable translators, in this case American actors able to present 'typically American' characters.

The Issue with American Slang

This practice of exoticizing the play was particularly apparent in relation to the spoken text. Reference to the copious 'awful examples of the "great American language" with which the author's exceedingly racy dialogue is sprinkled' became the centre point of discourse on *Kick In*.[22] Gerald Bliss, for example, drew readers' attention to its use of 'the rich and rare Yankee slang, a language of choice expressiveness that even the flexibility of French cannot touch'.[23] Other critics did likewise, describing in detail the 'crude expressive New York' language in the play that presented audiences with 'a brain teaser'.[24] Many reviews were dedicated to trying to make sense of the various 'weird though picturesque slang phrases' – including the title itself – and, in response, the company produced a glossary 'for the convenience of playgoers, so that, for instance, when the audience hear that somebody is as "yellow as a duck's foot" they will know that he is treacherous'.[25]

While the tone of the commentary was certainly not scathing, it carried a general air of condescension that sought to differentiate the bawdy, 'hot and vivid', and incongruous lexicon of American plays like *Kick In* from what was deemed to be the more appropriate and necessarily superior penmanship of British dramatists. Thus, the repeated assertions of the oddity and incomprehensibility of such language worked to frame the plays as mere novelties or part of a temporary fad that would soon pass. At the same time, it is possible to identify a deeper concern regarding the future of the British theatre – and British culture more broadly – underpinning these assertions of foreignness. At a time when national identity was a stake, the presence of so many Americanisms on the British stage was deemed to be a threat and a sign of the growing cultural power of the United States. By gently mocking the language and highlighting its absurdity, the critics can be seen to proclaim the properness and superiority of the English language and defend it from potential contamination.

The question of the lasting influence of the American plays – and, in particular, the crook plays – on British theatre was not confined to the issue of language but also informed discussions about the tone and the quality of the work. The often melodramatic and farcical nature of the crook plays, their glamorous depiction of crime and the fact that they were almost exclusively set in New York offered audiences escapism from the traumas of war. However, some looked askance at the apparent frivolous and formulaic nature of the plays, fearing that their popularity was symptomatic of a wider degradation in the British theatre. B. W. Findon was among the most outspoken in his criticism of the work, warning readers of *Play Pictorial* that

> these American-made dramas are, intrinsically, such shoddy affairs. Unmitigated abortions of the English language, replete with colloquial conundrums, contemptible by-products of an art radiant with the lustre of such names as Shakespeare, Sheridan, Racine and Moliére.[26]

S. R. Littlewood was similarly sceptical of the emphasis placed on deception and pretence in these plays, suggesting that it both pointed to an absence of moral character and produced plays that were ultimately empty: 'We are getting finely competent, forceful work from the new Americans, but how often one feels that there is no real heart in it! It is just a "firm bluff"'.[27]

Further, questions were raised about the moral and social attitudes on display in crook plays. As noted above, the drama always centred on a clever and resourceful criminal and placed him in the role of the hero in direct reversal of the conventional crime play. While the crook at the centre of *Kick In* was innocent, this was not always the case. The inclusion of grotesque, brutal and/or inept police officers – who were often seen using excessive force and bullying tactics – as a counterpoint to the crook-as-hero further ensured that the audience's

sympathy lay with the latter. Littlewood, again, argued that this glorification of the criminal was symptomatic of the loss of moral standards in America:

> What we are really seeing in the "crook" play is the death of heroism – of the old flawless, blue-eyed heroism of melodrama. The villain is now the hero, though his black moustachios are clipped to a spot, and his "fierce 'ha-ha'" subdued to a Chicago whisper. We are, so it would appear, to have no further use for the old paragon of all the virtues. To be "inn-o-cent", even of the vulgarest offence is to be quite vieux-jeu these times.[28]

It was thus with a very real sense of unease that he and other critics observed the growing popularity of this genre, fearing the effect that it could have on the British public and, in particular, on the young men and women from across the country who flocked to see the plays.

This perception of lowering artistic and moral standards within the British theatre compounded fears for its future and its ability to survive the devastating effects of war. Included in these effects was, of course, the loss of life: in 1915, *The Stage* noted with concern a decrease in the number of plays by British writers due to the fact that were fighting in the war and may not return.[29] The perceived 'invasion' of American plays and writers was interpreted by some as part of a targeted effort to capitalize on this absence. In such readings, American theatre makers were presented as 'our beloved cousins who are "too proud to fight", but not too proud to snatch an extra cent or so on the dollar at somebody else's expense when opportunity offers'.[30] In this sense, American writers were caricatured as opportunistic parasites in much the same way as Woodrow Wilson, with both being accused of taking advantage of Britain's trauma in a bid to improve their own position.

At the same time, the increase in the speculative practices of the emerging theatre trusts and syndicates – seen by many to be another symptom of American influence – further threatened the cultivation of a healthy British drama. The need to secure commercially successful work led managers to prioritise importing existing American productions over

risking a previously untested British one. As Findon noted in 1918, this practice of letting the American '[take] possession of the London theatres' resulted in the atrophy of British drama:

> British dramatists don't exist. If they do, they are simply garden fountains, with a puncture in the hose pipe. Why is it? Are we dead-broke for the equivalent mental greenhouse fuel?... Or is it that Mr Alfred Butt and his kind are in league with a sort of Sinn Feiner's Society for the immobilisation of British Dramatists? Whatever may be the malevolent cause, there is one thing certain – Britain's authorship was never so low down.[31]

Of course, the practice of importing a production from another country was nothing new: there was a strong tradition of French, German and other European plays being staged in London to great acclaim. When the outbreak of war made the inclusion of such work more difficult – and, in the case of Germany, impolitic – the turn to America for new work was logical. Similarly, countless British plays and acting companies had profited from the American theatre market for decades, leading *The Stage* to question whether British dramatists 'have any right to complain'.[32] The difference, however, lay in what this shift suggested about both the changing Anglo-American power dynamic and the feared obsolescence of the British theatre.

In December 1915, at the height of the debate surrounding the American presence, British-American actor Augustus Yorke lectured to the Playgoers Club on the subject 'The New American Invasion of the Theatre'. The talk was designed to dispute the suggestion of a takeover and so reassure members that 'America wouldn't invade us if she could, and couldn't if she would'.[33] To justify this conclusion, Yorke drew attention to the fact that Britain had always exerted a stronger influence over America and that many of the plays that had given rise to talk of an invasion were connected to British or part-British theatre makers. Further, he described in detail the great respect and love that the 'average American' felt towards the

British society, where the 'awe and reverence for our history, our institutions, even our Parliamentary proceedings come in for a share of his approbation'.

In such statements, Yorke tapped into the national pride of his largely British audience and reassured them that America was aware of its innate inferiority and had no desire to overstep the mark. 'American writers,' he claimed, 'were… far too diffident in the face of the accumulated literary wealth of centuries to dream of an incursion into England's dramatic field.' The fact that he went to such lengths to guarantee the continued dominance of the British theatre, and the continued subservience of America, is a clear indication of how deep the fears of a power shift between the two nations ran. Just as the newspapers were filled with articles aimed at bolstering up national pride and a belief that the Allied forces would be victorious, Yorke used his speech to restore pride in the British theatre and its ability to repel any attack from another country, whether real or imagined: 'Only a decadent nation… could be successfully invaded, and while we can point to as brilliant a set of contemporary writers as any belonging to the ages behind us… we are not showing any signs of decadence'.

A British Invasion?

By way of a conclusion, it is illuminating to consider the attitudes on the other side of the Atlantic at this time and, in particular, to note that the British fears of an American invasion directly mirrored those felt in New York. Throughout the autumn of 1915, *The Stage* reported on the growing frustration in the United States at what was believed to be an imminent influx of British actors and writers. This included claims in its sister paper, the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, that '"preparations are rapidly being carried out for the most far-reaching invasion ever recorded in stage history"', where troupes of actors from across the country were '"massed in front of the various railway stations from where they will board trains for the steamers"'.[34] American actors were similarly outspoken in their anger at the number of British

actors in the country, who were seen to be both fleeing their civic duty by not enlisting and the recipients of preferential treatment by casting directors. Recent changes in the tax system gave a further advantage to British actors, who could 'come here and make a fortune and then go away without being taxed one cent by the Government on his earnings, while the American artist is forced to pay an income-tax'.[35] Furthermore, the transfer of numerous successful West End productions – including *The Man Who Stayed at Home* (February 1915), *A Little Bit of Fluff* (August 1916) and *Chu Chin Chow* (October 1917) – added to this sense of a British invasion.

Again, the validity of these claims of an invasion is not at stake here. Rather, their significance lies in what they reveal about the British fears analysed above. The fact that artists in America were expressing similar suspicions serves to invalidate the claims of a British theatre under siege and, instead, shows such claims to be imaginary. Further, while the American productions in London have been shown to be, at worst, attempts to capitalise on a growing theatre market, many of the British productions in America had distinctly political aims and served propagandistic ends.

With the continued neutrality of America and a very active German propaganda machine that discouraged intervention, public discourse surrounding the war was a contested space. Pro-Anglo groups had to not only convince the general public that Britain was its natural ally, but also that the German threat would soon reach its own shores, proving that intervention was necessary for reasons of public security. Jessica Bennett and Mark Hampton have examined closely the propaganda material published by Wellington House – Britain's War Propaganda Bureau – making any further exposition here unnecessary. The aim of such material was to project 'an image of Anglicized virtues under threat by German barbarism, aggression, and militarism'. [36] By arguing that Britain fought for the same values as the American people – including justice, honour, humanity and civilization – the material

emphasized the commonalities between Britain and the United States, creating an 'Anglo-American community'.

These same aspirations underpinned the exportation of British cultural products, including, of course, theatre productions. While by no means as direct as the Wellington House material, they also provided an opportunity of highlighting the deep and lasting bond between the two countries as well demonstrating the strength and artistic skill of the British theatre at a time when German theatrical experiments – and, in particular, the work of Max Reinhardt – were already making headlines in New York. Among the various British productions staged in the country, Harley Granville Barker's 1915 tour is the most notable. He was initially invited to stage a season of work at the Wallack's Theatre by the New York Stage Society, which was keen to engage a European director of repute so American audiences could experience the theatre experiments taking place across the Atlantic. This was seen as an opportunity to further the Allied cause by those at the very top of British politics. Prime Minister Harold Asquith, a close personal friend of Barker and his then wife Lillah McCarthy, applied gentle pressure for him to accept, seeing it as invaluable propaganda for the war effort and a chance to promote British interests in the United States.[37]

Barker's repertory season opened at the Wallack's Theatre on 27 January 1915, where it received largely positive reviews and played to good audiences. Indeed, in so far as its intention was to spread awareness of the British theatre and to build closer cultural relations between the two countries the season was successful. Yet Barker's rather impromptu decision to stage Euripides's *The Trojan Women*, along with *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in the stadia of various prestigious east coast universities was far more significant in terms of the war effort. Starting at Yale on 15 May, the productions travelled to Harvard, the College of the City of New York and the University of Pennsylvania before finishing at Princeton on 12 June.

Barker's *The Trojan Women* was distinct from the rest of the propaganda machine in that it did not herald unquestionably the virtues of the British, or simply replicate the nationalistic and jingoistic sentiments that were common parlance at the time. Still, it aimed to bring the reality of the Western Front to his audiences and to open their eyes to the atrocities taking place in Europe and the heinous actions of the invading German forces. The timing of the tour was significant in achieving this aim, coming, as it did, in the midst of new revelations about Germany's actions in the war. The sinking of the RMS Lusitania by a German submarine on 7 May 1915 and the publication of the Bryce Report five days later, which detailed the horrific treatment of the Belgian population by the German army, provided a context for Barker's production and primed the audience to experience the horrific sacking of Troy from a contemporary position. Watching such actions take place on the stage brought a new sense of reality and truth to the numerous detailed newspapers reports of the Rape of Belgium.

Gilbert Murray, the play's translator, made this link clear in a new preface he wrote ahead of the tour and which was reprinted in full in the *New York Times*: 'The burden of the Trojan women has now fallen upon others, upon Belgian women, French women, upon the women of Poland and Serbia'.[38] The same is true of specific artistic decisions made by Barker. While it is not possible to discuss the production in detail, it will suffice to focus on one key moment towards the end of the play when the dead body of Astyanax is delivered into Hecuba's arms. In the role, Lillah McCarthy looked, as Barker remarked, 'like the Queen of the Belgians', wearing heavy multi-layered robes, a tall, cone-shaped crown and carrying a long hooked sceptre that gave her an impressive stature.[39] However, on the arrival of the body, Barker instructed McCarthy to 'sit centre, crown and robes off', with a later instruction for the Leader of the chorus to 'take Hecuba's sceptre and crown'.[40] At once McCarthy transformed

from a ferocious and magisterial queen into an ordinary, frail civilian cradling the body of a dead child.

The audience was enthralled by this beautifully poignant moment and, as the *New York Times* observed, they watched silently as 'alone on the desolate shore, the white-haired mother of Hector is left to commune with the body of his little son'.[41] It was not difficult to make the connection between such images and the recently released accounts of the atrocities taking place in Belgium such as the witness who 'saw a Belgian boy of fifteen shot on the village green... and a day or two later, on the same green, a little girl and her two brothers… were killed before her eyes for no apparent reason'.[42] Murray made clear the effect that he and Barker wanted to create and the impression they wanted to leave audiences with: 'A solitary old woman with a dead child in her arms: that on the human side is the result of the deeds of glory'.[43]

At such moments, Barker clearly succeeded in his objective to use Euripides to comment on the war in Europe. Nearly every newspaper article made the connection, some more explicitly than others. *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* for example, observed:

> There is something timely in the great open-air performance of "The Trojan Women" before an American audience of many thousand persons at a moment when the eyes of the world are centred on Europe, when the sympathies of neutral nations are concentrated in alleviating the sufferings of war. "The Trojan Women" has been said to be the greatest war play ever written, since it contains a message for peace and plea for consideration for women and children in times of international strife.[44]

The New York *Sun* similarly noted that the action of the play could easily be moved to Belgium, Poland 'or any conquered land among those afflicted by the misery of the European war'.[45] It is also telling that a great number of the reviews appeared next to or near articles concerned with the war or specific peace efforts. It was, for example, no coincidence that a

notice in the *New York Times* informing readers of the upcoming performance at the Lewisohn Stadium appeared underneath a long article on the Lusitania.[46]

Barker's production brings a curious resonance to the term 'invasion' and the way it was used in relation to the theatre at this time. On the one hand, his presence in America during the war is indicative of a wider British presence – or an 'invasion' – that was not confined to the 1910s but had, rather, been a commonplace since the late 1800s. At the same time, his *Trojan Women* is a prime example of how the theatre can be used to warn audiences of a different and ultimately more catastrophic invasion that may be just around the corner. Likewise, the perceived 'American invasion' in Britain reveals an ingrained fear within the British public that the country's global power was on the wane and, in the case of the theatre, that it would lose its dominance and what was seen to be its exceptionalism. Such fears have proven to be well founded.

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[1] Herbert Farjeon, 'In the Limelight: "Three Spoonfuls"', *The Cartoon*, 29 April 1915. The use of the term 'America' in this chapter refers to the United States of America only and not to Central or South America. It does so in keeping with the discourse of the period while acknowledging the exclusionary nature of such usage.
[2] John Gooch, *The Prospect of War: Studies in British Defence Policy, 1847-1942*, London and New York: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1981, p. 36.
[3] Michael Hughes and Harry Wood, 'Crimson Nightmares: Tales of Invasion and Fears of Revolution in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2014), p. 309.
[4] Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind: First World War and English Culture*, London: Pimlico, 1992, pp. 33-4.
[5] See, for example, James Davenport Whelpey, 'America and her Impending Duty', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 579 (1 March 1915), pp. 423-30; Percy Martin, 'The Pan-American Phantom', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 585 (1 September 1915), pp. 519-28; Sidney Low, 'Sea Rights and Sea Power: Great Britain and the United States', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 595 (1 June 1916), pp. 929-42; and James Davenport Whelpey, 'The American Election: A Triumph for Radicalism', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 600 (December 1916), pp. 1052-61.
[6] 'The Bystander to Cousin Jonathan: A Warning Against Untimely Intrusion', *The Bystander*, 20 January 1915.
[7] Knick Harley, 'Growth Theory and Industrial Revolutions in Britain and America', Paper Presented at the Institute of Economics, University of Copenhagen, June 2003.
[8] Peter J. Hugill, 'The American Threat to British Hegemony, 1861-1947', *Geographical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (July 2009), pp. 403-25.
[9] 'Percentage or Patriotism?', *The Era*, 24 May 1916.
[10] B. W. Findon, 'Editorial', *Play Pictorial*, Vol. 28, No. 167 (April 1916).

[11] 'Runs of the Season', *The Stage*, 30 July 1914; *The Stage*, 22 July 1915; *The Stage*, 27 July 1916; *The Stage*, 26 July 1917. The numbers listed here include authors described as 'part-American' and are based on *The Stage* magazine's annual digest of the theatre season, with some amendments to account for errors.
[12] 'Season Statistics II', *The Stage*, 3 August 1916.
[13] H. M. W, ''Potash and Perlmutter': Notable Character-Acting at the Queen's Theatre', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 April 1914.
[14] See, for example, 'Chit Chat: *Potash and Perlmutter* Reaches 500th Performance', *The Stage*, 17 June 1915; 'Gaiety Actress as Jewish Heroine', *Evening Despatch*, 1 April 1914; 'Miss Hylton's Return', *Sunday Mirror*, 4 July 1915; *Play Pictorial*, Vol. 24, No. 147 (July 1914).
[15] 'Our London Correspondent', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 April 1914.
[16] 'Our London Letter', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 15 April 1914; 'This Morning's Gossip', *Daily Mirror*, 20 April 1914. For similar examples, see 'Potash and Perlmutter', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 April 1914; 'An American Farce', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 1914; 'Things Theatrical', *Sporting Times*, 18 April 1914; and 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News*, 18 April 1914.
[17] 'From "London Opinion"', *Birkenhead News*, 22 January 1916.
[18] 'London Theatres', *The Stage*, 2 September 1915.
[19] 'This Morning's Gossip: "Kick In"', *Daily Mirror*, 30 August 1915.
[20] 'London Theatres: "Kick In"', *The Stage*, 2 September 1915.
[21] 'The Theatre: "Kick In" at the Vaudeville', *Globe*, 30 August 1915.
[22] 'London Theatres', *The Stage*, 2 September 1915.
[23] Gerald Bliss, 'The Bee in the Bonnet', *The Tatler*, 8 September 1915.
[24] '"Kick In": Thrilling American Play at the Vaudeville', *The People*, 29 August 1915; '"Kick In" at the Vaudeville', *Leeds Mercury*, 30 August 1915.
[25] '"Kick In" at the Vaudeville', *Illustrated London News*, 4 September 1915;'Dramatic and Musical', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 21 April 1916.
[26] B. W. Findon, 'Editorial', *Play Pictorial*, Vol. 28, No. 167 (April 1916).
[27] S. R. Littlewood, 'The Conquering "Crook": What will he do with the English Stage?', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 September 1915.
[28] Ibid.
[29] 'Chit Chat: Fewer Plays Submitted', *The Stage*, 14 October 1915.
[30] '"Kick In" at the Vaudeville Theatre', *The Bystander*, 8 September 1915.
[31] B. W. Findon, 'Editorial', *Play Pictorial*, Vol. 32, No. 193 (June 1918).
[32] 'American Plays, by an Ex-Dramatist', *The Stage*, 2 March 1916.
[33] 'The Playgoers' Club', *The Era*, 22 December 1915.
[34] 'Chit Chat: "An American Invasion"', *The Stage*, 16 September 1915.
[35] Wilton Lackaye quoted in 'Foreign Actors in New York', *The Stage*, 21 October 1915. See also, 'English Actors in America', *The Stage*, 28 October 1915.
[36] Jessica Bennett and Mark Hampton, 'World War I and the Anglo-American Imagined Community: Civilization vs Barbarism in British Propaganda and American Newspapers' in Joel H. Wiener and Mark Hampton, eds., *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 157.
[37] Philippa Burt, 'From the Western Front to the East Coast: Barker's *The Trojan Women* in the USA', *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (November 2018), p. 328.
[38] Gilbert Murray, 'A Sword in Pity's Hand', New York Times, 13 May 1915.
[39] Barker quoted in Dennis Kennedy, *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 181.
[40] *The Trojan Women*, Lillah McCarthy Prompt Book Copy, May 1915, Victoria and Albert Archive at Blythe House, London, p. 66; *The Trojan Women* with Director's Handwritten Notes, Harley Granville-Barker Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, p. 67. This archival material is reproduced with the kind permission of the Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Estate of Harley Granville Barker.
[41] 'The Trojan Women Beautifully Given', *New York Times*, 30 May 1915.
[42] 'Bryce Committee's Report', *New York Times*, 13 May 1915.

[43] Gilbert Murray, 'Two New Forewords to "The Trojan Women"', *New York Times,* 16 May 1915.
[44] 'Gotham Theatre Gossip', *Philadelphia Inquirer,* 30 May 1915.
[45] 'Parts Well Played in "The Trojan Women"', *The Sun,* 30 May 1915.
[46] 'Lewisohn Stadium Ready', *New York Times,* 24 May 1915.