

Racial depictions in visual culture during World War One

A transnational comparative study

Af:

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ABSTRACT: How can we understand British depictions of the German ‘race’, if they are understood as belonging to the same racial category? We argue that an analysis of racial depictions must be based on historical and cultural understandings. We present ‘race’ as an all-encompassing, flexible historical phenomenon, that includes cultural racism. We found that cultural and biological racism overlapped, working in tandem to create a single depiction within a spectrum of culturally or biologically based racial stereotypes. We argue that racialized stereotypes were deployed in both intra-white and non-white¹ depictions depending on the desired function of the propaganda resulting in both positive or/and negative portrayals that worked mainly in consolidating the Self and Othering the enemy – with the exception of white depictions of non-white soldiers often showcasing Othering exotic elements.

NØGLEORD: racism, stereotypes, propaganda, World War One, visual culture.



¹ For the purpose of this paper, we categorize European peoples and their descendants with light skin as ‘whites’. ‘Non-whites’ is therefore an umbrella term for all peoples excluded by this definition.

Introduction

In this article, we argue that notions of ‘race’ were used in flexible ways in creating the Self and Other in propagandistic messages during World War I (WWI). This strategy was deployed in both intra-white and non-white depictions depending on the desired function of the propaganda resulting in both positive or/and negative portrayals. Cultural and biological racism was merged seamlessly in creating the desired stereotypical depictions. ‘Race’ was thus a crucial tool in alienating an enemy or consolidating bonds between brothers in arms. Central for this paper is the notion, that examining the stereotypical racializing that took place between and within members of similar and different race categories (intra-whites and non-white) requires a broad definition of race which includes both biological and cultural racism.

Conceptions of ‘race’ played an essential role in contemporary Europe’s consciousness. However, the conceptual understanding and definition of ‘race’ as such was characterized by interchangeability and flexibility. ‘Race’ could imply numerous different meanings and was thus notoriously difficult to define. It was not exclusively associated with skin color but could also be found in terms of physical characteristics, environment, languages, behavior, and even ethnicity, nationality, and social classes.²

Racial depictions flourished in posters, magazine front pages, caricatures, and postcards during WWI and partook in the shaping and creation of a racialized world. In recent decades, WWI posters have moved from the periphery to the center of contemporary scholarly inquiry. They now constitute a field of cultural discursive research with a contextualizing and interpreting gaze (James 2009: 374-75). This coincided with an ‘interdisciplinary turn’ in the historiography of WWI making it a more challenging and rewarding field of study than it once was. Especially attention to traditionally overlooked source material such as mass cultural war posters has led to a renewed interest in WWI (James 2009: 14). Also, the increased emphasis in the humanities on the ‘visual turn’ has gained increasing prominence since the 1990s.

² For a wider discussion of ‘race’ see leading scholars: Santanu Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge, 2011); Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore, MD, 2008); Glenford Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism: A Social History of West Indians in the First World War* (Kingston, 2002); Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, NH, 1999); David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army 1860-1940* (London, 1994); David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers’ Letters, 1914-18* (New York, 1999); Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness* (Manchester, 2004); Timothy Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2012).

The publication of Maurice Rickard's now-classic *Posters of the First World War* (1968)³ marked the starting signal of the inquiry of the WWI posters. In the wake of Rickard's 1968 study, several works have been occupied with WWI posters (James 2009: 3). Today, the inquiry of the posters constitutes a large field of research.⁴ However, many studies rely solely on a national narrative, that is, an exclusive focus on a single nation's poster culture as a source basis. Also, quite a few studies are repetitive and selective in their sources of posters only analyzing the same handful thereby creating a somewhat distorted and repetitive consensus not making use of the seemingly endless supply of now available posters. Obviously, different studies have different thematic scholarly interests leaving 'race' as one of many. However, to our knowledge, there has not been a systematic, (multi) transnational, and comparative study of 'race' depicted in visual culture.

The early biological mode of thought, or naturalism, was developed in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although initially being almost purely somatic, later theorists added psychological characteristics to the categorizations. In the 19th century, with the rise of nationalism, 'race' as a concept was used to describe the groups of peoples belonging to nations, so-called national racism. This mode of thought focused on what was seen as the innate and fixed physical and intellectual make-up of peoples 'belonging' to a nation. Within this system of race-thought, and especially during WWI, the 'national races' within the 'Caucasian race' were ranked in terms of moral character and capability creating a race hierarchy which coexisted with the naturalist/biological race hierarchy (Blum 2020:5). Overall, this type of national racism worked well in tandem with biological/naturalist race-thinking, with regards to rationalizing subjugation, colonization and stereotyping - as will be shown in the analysis of the propaganda posters. Even though racial thinking did move toward a more biological understanding by the early 20th century emphasizing physical features, the 19th century conceptions of 'race' in terms of national and ethnic differences had not disappeared during WWI.⁵

³ Maurice Rickards (1968).

⁴ For major works in this field see also: Joseph Darracott, *The First World War in Posters from the Imperial War Museum*, London (New York: Dover, 1974); Peter Paret, Beth Irwin Lewis, and Paul Paret, eds., *Persuasive Images: Posters of the War and Revolution from the Hoover Institution Archives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Peter Stanley, ed., *What Did You Do in the War, Daddy? A Visual History of Propaganda Posters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Libby Chenault, *Battlelines: World War I Posters from the Bowman Gray Collection* (Chapel Hill nc: University of North Carolina, 1988); Rémy Paillard, *Affiches 14–18* (Paris: Rémy Paillard, 1986); Walton H. Rawls, *Wake Up, America! World War I and the American Poster* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988); James Aulich, *War Posters: Weapons of Mass Communication* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007); and James Aulich and John Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction? First World War Posters in Britain and Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Pearl James, ed., *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture, Studies in War, Society, and the Military* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Celia M. Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front*. (Lincoln: UNP - Nebraska, 2010). For specifically American visual sources see: David M. Lubin, *Grand Illusions: American Art and the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁵ Richard Standish Fogarty (2008).

In fact, intra-European racism increased. The Germans, for example, were often portrayed as racially non-European (Das 2011: 10-12).

We see the term and concept ‘race’ as a social construct, which entails that it is historically and culturally founded. Within culturalism (cultural racism), negative race-characteristics are understood as a result of the culture of those belonging to a traditional race group. The culture from which the alleged issues stem is seen as immutable and inherited by the next generation. In the 19th century, with the rise of nationalism, ‘race’ as a concept was used to describe the groups of peoples belonging to nations, so-called national racism. This mode of thought was more focused on what was seen as the innate and fixed physical and intellectual make-up of peoples ‘belonging’ to a nation. Within this system of race-thought, and especially during WWI, the ‘Caucasian races’ were internally ranked in terms of moral character and capability which can be viewed as cultural racism (Blum 2020: 5). The terms and concepts of biological and cultural racism will serve to qualify the different types of racial stereotypes found in the visual culture and explains the connection between race and cultural stereotypes where overlapping race-thoughts will be shown as prevalent.

How does one ‘read’ visual culture, what is culture, and what is propaganda? Firstly, we categorize propaganda as a specific type of communication:

“Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.” (Jowett & O’Donnell 2012: 7)

This definition contains a special emphasis on three key elements of propaganda, the first is the nature of the ‘attempt’ – since this means communication can qualify as propaganda even if it fails in achieving the desired effects. The second element is the deliberate element of propaganda, the message is carefully planned. This insight indicates that official propaganda depictions that promote a well-thought-out concept of race and culture contain certain intentions of the state. The third relates further to the deliberation of the message and is the systematic aspect, which entails an organized regularity of the message(s) (Jowett & O’Donnell 2012: 6-8). If similar themes and depictions are commonly spread in propaganda, this signals that greater propaganda campaigns are at play. Culture is essential to understanding the creation and communication of meaning. Meaning is created by the sender and created in the interpretation by the receiver (Hall 1997: 2). Semiotics as a theory examines the way we create meaning, and how we communicate it. Within the field of semiotics, signs are understood as “[...] *anything that can be used to stand for something else, whether that something else actually exists or not.*” (Berger 2016: 52). A semiotic theoretical framework is therefore concerned with looking at signs with regards to the relationship between denotations (what is

described) and connotations (what the described means) (Baines & O’Shaughnessy 2014: 170). In communication when a message gets produced, circulated, and interpreted, the message is encoded in the production, and reproduced in the interpretation via decoding (Hall et al. 1980: 118).

This paper is based on 79 visual sources (posters, postcards, cartoons and magazine covers) depicting race, that sadly cannot be reproduced in their full length. However, we employ a ‘tip-of-the-iceberg-principle’ showcasing a tiny albeit representative selection of posters that is part of a larger phenomenon. Our analysis is based on sources created by the major powers: Britain, France, Russia as well as Germany.⁶

Racial depictions

Firstly, we look at sources from the USA, Britain, Russia, and France, depicting negative stereotypes of the Germans or the Austro-Hungarians seeing how the depiction can be plotted into a spectrum ranging from primarily biological racism to cultural racism. This is especially the case with Allied depictions of the German ‘race’.

Our first example, a 1917 American recruitment poster titled “Destroy This Mad Brute - Enlist” (fig. 1),⁷ depicts a German invader. A denotative reading reveals a roaring mustached ape wearing a Pickelhaube stating “Militarism” who is walking straight towards the spectator, setting foot on American soil. In his right hand he is carrying a blooded club engraved “Kultur”, in his left arm

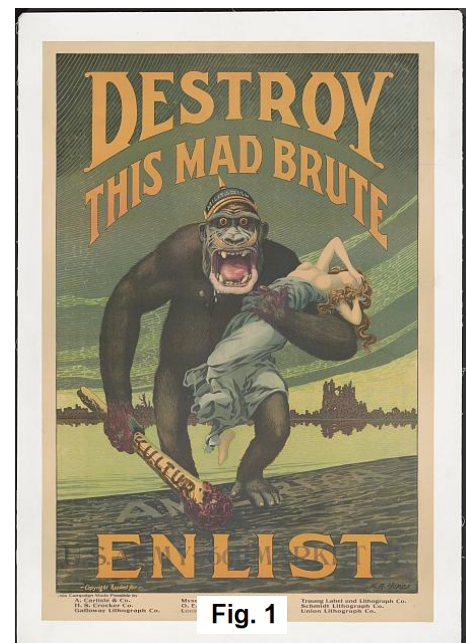


Fig. 1

⁶ The Ottoman posters are unfortunately notoriously hard to procure due to them mainly relying on oral recruiting. An evident place to continue the inquiry, would be to resume our hunt for Ottoman posters which left us at a dead end. The next step would be to get a hold of Haluk Oral’s *Arıburnu 1915: Çanakkale Savaşı’ndan Belgesel Öyküler* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007) (containing two posters), digging in NARA Istanbul, and two seemingly unpublished Phd.-theses involving Ottoman posters; Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), 413; Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden; Boston: BRILL, 2012), 72.

⁷ Fig. 1, H. R. Hopps, “Destroy This Mad Brute Enlist - U.S. Army”, 1917, poster. Printer: San Francisco Army Recruiting District, USA, San Francisco. From: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010652057/>

a young, bare-breasted woman. The background of the eerie greenish scenery reveals the ruin of a cathedral in a wasted landscape across the Atlantic Ocean. The more interesting connotative meanings shall now be explored. If we look at the movement of the main subject, the ‘German ape’ we see that he has just emerged from his trans-Atlantic journey from Europe which he has laid in ruins. The monkey-like creature itself symbolizes the biological backwardness indicating that the German ‘race’ as a whole is an unevolved human ancestor. The revealed fangs and bloodied fists show the ferocity and beast-like nature of the Germans. In this case, the iconic Pickelhaube figuratively (and literally) carries the connotations of the Prussian archaic militarism. The bloodied club of ‘Kultur’ further carries meanings of the uncivilized and decadent German culture; so primitive that it is best represented by a caveman-like club, which has been used to brutally kill American allies. The innocent young American woman firmly grasped in the monkey’s hands is an expression of German deviant sexuality. The defenselessness and purity of the virgin-like blonde is about to be defiled, breaking with Christian civilized sexual morals. The immoral sexuality of the German raping beast conveys the pathologizing nature of the German culture.

The themes of ogre-like apes wielding primitive clubs and swords are contrasted by, for example, a British cartoon (fig. 2).⁸ The cartoon shows two Pickelhaube-wearing chimpanzees, flying a bomber aircraft over a major European city, one of them about to drop several bombs on the defenseless civilian target. Showing the dangers of mere German apes wielding the destructive technology of the civilized world - from which they are excluded. Still naked, the monkeys are only wearing helmets, the cartoon plays into the animalistic and bestial Other of the German race. A French postcard (fig. 3)⁹ somewhat humanizes the German-ape by showing a laughing stereotypical ape-like German wearing a uniform and wielding a rifle - i.e., being dressed and armed like an ordinary soldier. This poster, therefore, shows the melding of cultural and biologically based stereotypes, by merging the civilized style of a military uniform with the ‘apelike nature of the German race’.

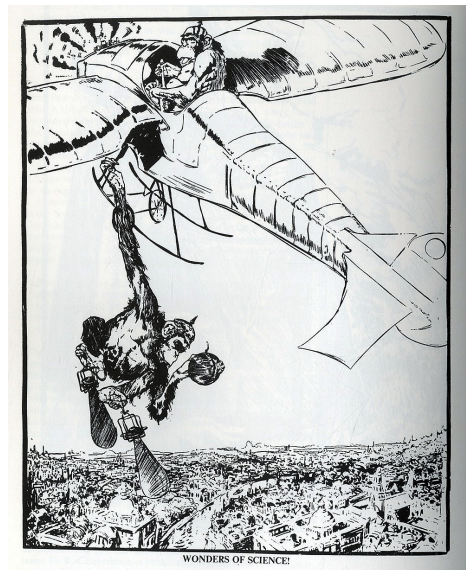


Fig. 2

⁸ Fig. 2, W. Dyson, “Wonders of science”, in the Daily Mail January 1, 1915. Place made: London, England. From: <http://fulltable.dyndns.org/VTS/aoi/d/dyson/5.jpeg>

⁹ Fig. 3, Wada, “La bête féroce sent venir la faim”, postcard, 1915, Place made: Paris, France From: <https://www.historyhit.com/app/uploads/2020/07/belgian-ant-german-poster-1.jpg>

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However, ape-like depictions of the Germans were not the only way of alienating the German race from a European biological belonging. Some posters claimed that the Germans were “Huns” indicating that the race was inferior, non-European, and of Asiatic origin. An American poster (fig. 4)¹⁰ reading “Beat Back the Hun” displays a giant German soldier staring like a predator at his next victim with sickly, luminous-looking green eyes across the Atlantic. His macabre bayonet and hand are covered in fresh blood wetting the remains of a smoldering cathedral which he has just laid in ruins.¹¹



Fig. 4

Although many Allied depictions of the German race took the form of primitive animals, some posters portrayed them as more human-looking, albeit still very raw and uncivilized. Correspondingly, the type of racism against the Germans increasingly turned away from biological racism into culturalism concurrently with their increasingly human appearance. Both the British poster fig. 5¹² and the French poster fig. 6¹³ show the transition of a German soldier into a German businessman. They underline the atrocities that he commits during service, such as destroying cultural landmarks, child-killing, molestation of women, and the torture of a POW. The clear message of not commencing business with the Germans in the future, here clearly relies on conveying that the German race as a whole is militaristic and evil. In the recruitment Australian poster fig. 7¹⁴ the racial stereotype of the Germans functions as a means to alienate and Other the German enemy, whilst at the same time underlining the immediate threat. The official recruitment poster depicts a German invasion of Australia. We see a German squadron that is in the midst of executing civilians and pillaging an Australian village.

¹⁰ Fig. 4, F. Strothmann, “Beat Back the Hun with Liberty Bonds”, 1918, Poster, Place made: USA. From: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/25800>

¹¹ The 1914 destruction of the cathedral in Rheims, France cemented the link between the Germans and the ‘Huns’. For more details on the German ‘Hun’ see: Nicoletta F. Gullace, “Barbaric Anti-Modernism: Representations of the ‘Hun’ in Britain, North America, Australia, and Beyond”, in Pearl James (2009).

¹² Fig. 5. D. Wilson, “Once a German - always a German!”, 1918, Poster, Place made: Sponsor: British Empire Union, Printer: The Globe Printing Co Ltd., London, England. From: <https://www.warmuseum.ca/collections/artifact/1026818/>

¹³ Fig. 6. F. L. Gottlob, “REMEMBER!”, unknown date, Poster, Place made, Author: La Ligue Souvenez-Vous, printer: Atelier F Gottlob, Paris, France. From: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/11163>

¹⁴ Fig. 7. N.A.W. Lindsay, “Will you fight now or wait for This”, 1918, Poster, place made, Author: Commonwealth Government of Australia, Printer: W E Smith Ltd., New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. From: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ARTV00079/>

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Further, two German soldiers are dragging away an Australian woman, employing molestation. The Germans in this depiction are not biologically different from the white Australians, but they are shown as barbaric and Other through their actions.

The Central Powers used racism as means of alienating the enemy, in a fundamentally different way than the Entente. Instead of primarily using biological racism by depicting white foes as biologically backward the Germans generally employed culturalism against the enemy states as such or its leaders. For this purpose, Central Powers drew mainly on allegories and myths. Fig. 8¹⁵ is a perfect example of this type of depiction. In this German war bond poster, US President Woodrow Wilson is about to be penetrated by a spear-wielding German soldier. The round-framed granny glasses, pointy nose, and water-combed hair indicate that the venom-spewing mouth belongs to the American president. Wilson's red skin and angel-wings imply that he is like Satan. At the same time, he guards sacks of dollars with his dragon-foot, playing to the mythological tale of the dragon guarding a treasure. The visual component of the poster is further supported by a rhyme, squarely focused on President Wilson's scoundrel-like acts. This poster, as opposed to the Allied posters of the German



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

him as a person or leader rather than referring to the American people. Another interesting set of cases are the German magazine front page fig. 9¹⁶ and the poster and postcard fig. 10¹⁷ where the British Empire is embodied by a giant spider spinning its web over much of Europe and the entire

¹⁵ Fig. 8. B. Clauss, "3. Armee", 1917, Poster, Printer: Mainzer Verlagsanstalt, Place made: Mainz, Germany. From: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5156>

¹⁶ Fig. 9. E. von Baumgarten, "L'Entente Cordiale", 1915, poster and postcard. Place made: Unknown. From: <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:19343435>

¹⁷ Fig. 10, J. Loewenstein, Trans: "The Great Cleansing Process", 1914, Magazine frontpage, publisher: Der Brummer, Berlin. From: <http://barronmaps.com/products/der-brummer-lustige-kriegs-blatter-nr-4-1914/>

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globe. In the former poster and postcard, the Germans reinforce the propaganda message of Imperial Britain's aggressive territorial ambitions highlighting that they were war-causing. Each of the spider's legs holds on to British possessions of Gibraltar, Malta, and Egypt while a fourth leg is being spiked by the Islamic half-moon on an Istanbul mosque. Next to the wounded leg in the Dardanelles Street is a British shipwreck symbolizing the failed Gallipoli campaign of 1915. A webbed Uncle Sam representing America is being forcibly dragged into the conflict by the spider's leg among other dominion and colonial troops connoting the racially inherent British warmongering.



Fig. 13

However, a few Central Power depictions of the enemy took the shape of human soldiers. A German postcard fig. 11¹⁸ shows two homeless-looking Russian border-soldiers in torn uniforms. They have just woken up, probably after a heavy night of drinking, on a grass field. Yet, their incompetence is more a result of the Russian alcohol culture rather than race. The last German-made poster, depicting ‘whites’ is fig. 12.¹⁹ In this poster we see the statistical representation of illiterates among the recruits of Germany, England, and France. The size of the cartoon representing the recruits of the nation corresponds to the amount of illiterates. The French recruits are depicted both as a white-Frenchmen and a dark colonial troop who are both having great issues reading. This type of racial depiction builds on a type of ‘scientific’ racism, where statistical information is used to form the portrayals of races. The said ‘races’ are both culturally based (the peoples of the white nations are seen as different races) and biologically based (deformities and skin color is emphasized).

Germany's national propaganda campaign was to some extent a defensive attempt to ward off Allied biological and cultural racist accusations of them being backward barbarians and bloodthirsty Huns and uncivilized in their culture.²⁰ This was reflected in the portrayal of themselves as attempting to underscore the diametrical opposite of their racial qualities. An excellent example countering these

¹⁸ Fig. 11, W. Trier, “Russische Grenzsoldaten”, 1914, postcard, Place made: Germany. From: <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/96003685>

¹⁹ Fig. 12, Unknown, “Analphabeten”, Unknown year, poster, Place made: Germany. From: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/29047>

²⁰ For a similar conclusion see: Jakub Kazecki og Jason Lieblang, “Regression versus Progression: Fundamental Differences in German and American Posters of the First World War”, in Pearl James (2009).

Allied accusations is seen in the German poster with the title “Wir Barbaren!” (fig. 13)²¹ in ironic quotation marks which was a part of a design-series of which fig. 12 also belongs. This pronouncedly schematic and informative poster reveals a diagram statistically comparing literacy rates, education spendings, book production, social care spendings, and scientific Nobel prizes between Germany, Britain, and France. At the bottom of the poster, famous German figures are shown. These selected parameters show that Germany is taking an enormous lead in every positive aspect. Another similar attempt building directly on the same narrative - parrying Allied ‘barbaric’ accusations - is seen in fig. 14²² once again quoting “Deutsche 'Barbaren'” - an obvious ironic quotation. Two lifeless French soldiers lying where they fell on the ground indicates that a battle has just taken place in the twilight. A fatherly German soldier is helping a wounded, limping French soldier by letting him rest his weakened body up against his shoulder while they are walking away from the scene. The connotations of these posters are clear: The Germans are proved not to be barbaric and uncivilized Huns - quite contrary they are the leading people of Europe spearheading progress, knowledge, and civilization drawing on a long and proud history of cultural achievements and leading historical personalities.



Fig. 14

²¹ Fig. 13, L. Oppenheim, “Wir Barbaren!”, 1915, poster, Place made: Germany. From: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20677>

²² Fig. 14, Unknown, “Deutsche “Barbaren”.” in Feinde Ringsum! 1915, poster, Place made: Germany. From: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/propaganda_at_home_germany

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Fig. 17[^]
< Fig. 15 Fig. 18 >

In his Chicago-studio E.G. Renesch has produced a fascinating design series telling an interesting connected story. In the poster titled “Duty Calls” (fig. 15²³), a white American soldier is farewelling his wife or fiancé in the front garden of their suburban house. In Renesch’s fig. 16²⁴ poster the same American soldiers have been dropped off in France and are fearlessly marching towards a distant frontline engulfed in a flaming hell. French regiments of soldiers stand by saluting the by-marching Americans accompanied by General Pershing and Uncle Sam. In fig. 17²⁵ the American regiment is storming the German lines under the title “Over the Top” with heads held high alongside their British and French allies. In fig. 18²⁶ the brave American soldier has made his way back to his wife and child sitting in a rocking chair in front of a fireplace in a middle-class home completing the narrative of the hero’s journey. The connotations of this interconnected story reflect the civilized values encoded in the depiction of the racially white American soldier. While being the caring paternalistic pillar of a nuclear family he also carries the same gentleman-values and he is a noble warrior - a national hero, too. The national hero narrative comes to life through strong connotative symbolism in Renesch’s posters. Besides the mentioned color symbolism in fig. 15 referring to the American flag embodying the scene as America itself, Uncle Sam is inspecting the troops in fig. 16 once again underscoring the national embodiment. The framed picture of George Washington, curtained with American flags hanging above the fireplace in fig. 18 is yet another example that showcases the almost religious symbolism regarding the founding fathers. Interestingly enough, the

²³ Fig. 15, E.G. Renesch, “Duty Calls” 1917, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/51012>

²⁴ Fig. 16, E.G. Renesch, “Pershing in France”, 1917, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pershing_in_France,_by_E.G._Renesch.jpg

²⁵ Fig. 17, E.G. Renesch, “Over the Top”, 1918, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Over_the_Top_\(1918\),_by_E.G._Renesch.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Over_the_Top_(1918),_by_E.G._Renesch.jpg)

²⁶ Fig. 18, E.G. Renesch, “Soldier's Return”, 1918, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: <https://postermuseum.com/products/soldiers-return-666>

marching American soldiers are portrayed with their fellow racially white British and French allies - not a single non-white is to be seen - playing well into the deeply segregated society of America. This highlights the racial brotherhood and equality between them in a perfectly white entity all as one.

Renesch created a pendant series to the aforementioned fig. 14, fig. 18, and fig. 17. While only minor variation in the mise en scène changed, Renesch carried out a racial replacement of the subjects portrayed indeed highlighting the flexible function of 'race'. The exact same narrative of the hero's journey now featured a black American soldier.



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21

In fig. 19²⁷ titled “Colored Man is No Slacker” (replacing the “Duty Calls” on fig. 15), a black American soldier is parting with his wife once again in a suburban front yard. His regiment made up entirely of black soldiers is marching by the parting scene. In the next chapter (fig. 20)^{28,29} of the hero’s journey, a regiment consisting entirely of black American soldiers are successfully overwhelming the German front line. Renesch baptized this poster “True Sons of Freedom” replacing the “Over the Top” title on fig. 17. However, Renesch also added further text in addition to the title: “Colored Men. The First Americans Who Planted Our Flag on the Firing Line” is written next to three black soldiers forcing two greying and retirement-ready looking Germans with unmistakable Pickelhauben to surrender. In the top right corner the quote “Liberty and Freedom

²⁷ Fig. 19, E.G. Renesch, “Colored Man is no Slacker”, 1918, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/50464>

²⁸ Fig. 20, C. Gustrine, “True Sons of Freedom”, 1918, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.18640/>

²⁹ Although fig. 20 is made by another artist the style and motif match with fig. 17. In addition, its Chicago-origin supports our strong suspicion that this was made in collaboration with Renesch.

Shall Not Perish” signed “A. Lincoln” is written on a giant God-like figure of Abraham Lincoln watching over the soldiers. In fig. 21,³⁰ very much resembling fig. 18, a black mother and her three children are gazing at a portrait of their uniformed husband and father hanging above the fireplace. The family’s awarded Service Flag is hanging in the window underscoring their military commitment. Next to the portrait, two minor portraits reveal the faces of George Washington and President Wilson. Above right, a large portrait of Lincoln is dwarfing the other pictures. The absence of the black soldier himself indicates that the scenery is not a “Soldier’s Return” as in fig. 18. Although his absence could be explained by him serving on the front, more likely he died in battle. The black soldier has made his ultimate sacrifice to the service of his country by dedicating his life, making him a “True Blue”. The strong connotations of these posters are unmistakable: The black American soldiers were indeed at least, if not even more, as good soldiers as a white soldier. The repeated use of the American flag alongside its colors symbolically represented in clothing and flowers make the black soldier the incarnation of the USA; the national hero. In this aspect, Renesch’s black soldier is astonishingly racially equal, and yet very segregated, to his peer white American soldier: They are both national heroes undergoing the exact same struggles and sufferings for their country.³¹

In some respects, the black soldier is even surpassing his white American peer in bravery making him racially even more suited for battle. This is especially spelled out in fig. 20 reading “Colored Men. The First Americans Who Planted Our Flag on the Firing Line”. In fig. 20, the black soldiers are also closer to disarming their German foes, while the white soldiers are still storming the Germans in the fig. 17 pendant, making the venture of the black soldiers look more successful. Also, the Pickelhaube hanging above the fireplace in fig. 21 is taken from an enemy he has slain in battle; a feature not present in the white fig. 18 counterpart. In addition, the fallen black soldier who has not returned in fig. 21, unlike his white counterpart in fig. 18, once more emphasizes the militant bravery of blacks. Renesch’s posters present the idea that black soldiers’ have exceptional combat skills and portrays them as a warrior race.³² They are some of the best warriors of the USA due to their racial qualities. However, despite being a pendant series, minor details in the scenography and the choice of titles keeps Renesch’s black soldiers very segregated from his white

³⁰ Fig. 21, E.G. Renesch, “True Blue”, 1919, poster, Place made: Chicago, USA. From: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:True_Blue_\(1919\),_by_E.G._Renesch.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:True_Blue_(1919),_by_E.G._Renesch.jpg)

³¹ Contrasting the heroic depictions of colored Americans is the fact that several race related lynchings of colored people took place in 1919, including several victims wearing military uniforms. See: David M. Lubin (2016) p. 254-263 for an analysis of the tragic contrast.

³² An ideology of recruiting based on the perceived combat qualifications of certain ‘races’ making some more suited for battle than others. The British designation for this policy and theory was ‘martial race’, whereas the French was ‘Les Races Guerrières’: Joe Lunn (1999), 517-36.

brother in arms despite going through the same hero's journey. The black soldiers are segregated at the front. Whereas his white American brother in arms fights along with British and French forces in fig. 17, the blacks are left to their own fate in the fig. 20 pendant. However, even though the black soldiers are physically separated from their white fellow countrymen, they are inseparably tied in spirit. The imagery of Lincoln in fig. 20 and fig. 21. alludes to the abolition of slavery and represents rights for minorities, freedom, and liberty. In fig. 20, the black soldiers are even embodying the spirit of Lincoln appearing as their guardian angel; they are indeed "True Sons of Freedom".³³ In fig. 21, the presidential row of pearls composed of Washington, Lincoln, and Wilson display the backbone of America whom the blacks champion: A fight for freedom and liberty and thus the soul of the USA.³⁴

The depiction of the black soldier as being a warrior race was also a common theme in French propaganda. In the fig. 22³⁵ postcard, a black French colonial soldier is retaining Kaiser Wilhelm and Franz Joseph securely under his arms while a confident and laughing expression on his face suggests the easiness of this imprisonment. The black soldier is portrayed in a civilized manner with his fancy colonial uniform. His impressive height and well-proportioned body underscore that he is an excellent soldier in great contrast to the weak and fragile trapped emperors. The French also portrayed their North African colonial subjects in a racially positive fashion although differently than their black subjects. fig. 23³⁶ displays two Moroccans decorating beautiful pottery. Their power of concentration and calm temper resulting in beautiful pottery reveals their civilized character traits.



Fig. 22

³³ See also C.4 where the tie between black soldiers and Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation plays a part in furthering the promotion of the civil rights of black people.

³⁴ For an excellent study of colored Americans and propaganda posters see: James D. Keene, "Images of Racial Pride: African American Propaganda Poster in the First World War", in Pearl James (2009). For colored American soldiers in a wider context see: Stephen L. Harris, *Harlem's Hellfighters: The African-American 369th Infantry in World War I* (Dulles va: Brassey's, 2003); Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Troops in World War I* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).

³⁵ Fig. 22, F. Régamey. "Le conflit européen en 1914 : les voilà, les deux qui voulaient dévorer l'Europe", Trans: The European conflict in 1914 / Here they are, the two who wanted to devour Europe Ca. 1914-1918, Postcard, Ernest Le Deley, Albin Michel, ELD brand, Paris, France. From: <https://archives.haute-garonne.fr/ark:/44805/vtad13b9572911551cb>

³⁶ Fig. 23, J. de la Nézière, "Exposition d'art Marocain", 1917, poster, Place made: Paris, France. From: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3f04077/>

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fig. 24³⁷ shows a French Algerian colonial troop departing his wife and child. He looks decent in his uniform and possesses loving character traits shown in the caring hug of his wife. The French non-white depictions of their colonial subjects' combat-suitability were thus evaluated after warrior race ideals. While the black soldier was characterized by his impressive combat-skills (fig. 22), the North African Algerians and Moroccans were more like their French countrymen seen in their cultural and civilized nature less wild and martial. Blacks were thus better suited for battle than their North African counterparts and tied closer biologically and culturally to Europe. The British also depicted their own Indian colonial soldiers (Gurkhas and Sikhs) in accordance with warrior race ideals.³⁸ In fig. 25,³⁹ an Indian soldier stealthily prepares his ambush on a German soldier with "cat-like noiselessness" emphasizing his innate animal-like skills. Simultaneously, the brutality of the Indian soldier is stressed by his weapon of choice: the Kukri knife. The Central Powers also depicted their non-white brothers in arms positively. The Germans displayed an Askari-soldier from German East Africa in postcard fig. 26.⁴⁰ The square-jawed and well-built black soldier bears a standard with the German imperial flag and his rifle. With head held high and a confident expression on his face together with his patriotic pose with the flag waving makes him look like a national hero fighting for Imperial Germany. However, the stick to which the flag is attached to is made out of bamboo elevating the exoticness of the soldier. Fig. 27⁴¹ is a German satirical magazine cover from



Fig. 25

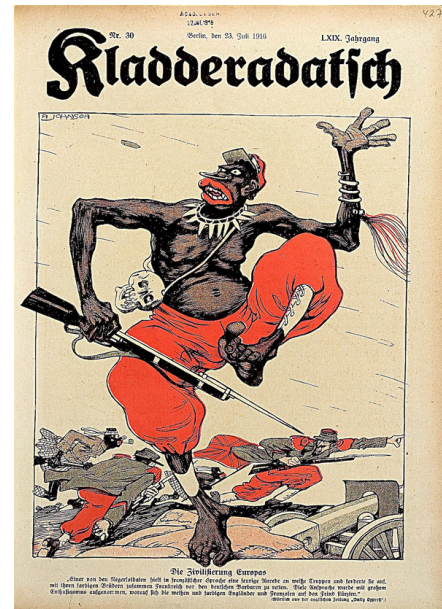


Fig. 27

³⁷ Fig. 24, L. Jonas, "Compagnie Algérienne" #1, 1917, poster, Place made: Paris, France. From: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/14408>

³⁸ Heather Streets (2017).

³⁹ Fig. 25, Unknown, "The Terror by Night: Our Gurkhas at Work", 7 November 1914, in *The War Illustrated*, place made: Britain. From: <https://archive.org/details/TWI1914/page/n327/mode/2up>

⁴⁰ Fig. 26, F. Bruckmann, "Askari aus Deutsch-Ostafrika", 1915, postcard, Sponsor: Verlag des Kolonialkriegerdank, Place made: Munich, Germany. From: https://www.europeana.eu/da/item/2048043/ProvidedCHO_Universit_t_Osnabr_ck___Historische_Bildpostkarten_9793

⁴¹ Fig. 27, A. Johnson, "Die Zivilisierung Europas", 1916, magazine cover in *Kladderadatsch*, Place made: Berlin, Germany. From: <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918->

Kladderadatsch. It depicts an Allied charge on the front. The foreground is dominated by a French colonial soldier, depicted in a racialized stereotypical way. The soldier is depicted as long-limbed and skinny while his bare-breasted upper-body reveals a chubby stomach. His body is awkwardly posed and his face is twisted making him look grotesque. His lips are unrealistically huge and red, and he's only wearing pants and a hat. He is wearing several tribal-looking accessories, such as a skull-purse, a tooth-necklace, a big nose ring, and several armbands. The skull-purse hints that the soldier has decapitated an enemy, as part of a barbarous behavior. A bullet is approaching his head coming from his own direction of attack, indicating friendly fire, underscoring the inappropriateness and 'stupidity' of exposing oneself in a friendly line of fire. This action portrays the black French soldier as stupid and as being incompatible with industrial warfare. "Die Zivilisierung Europas" ironically underscores the perceived double standards of the Allies calling the Germans uncivilized barbarians (as also shown in the analysis of the Allied campaign), whilst the Allies themselves deployed "underdeveloped" and uncivilized peoples on the European battlefield (as opposed to using these troops in the colonial theater of war). This depiction uses both culturally and biologically based forms of racist stereotyping - the biological forms seem to be the most prominent, over-emphasizing the physical features, and unintelligent behavior of the black soldier. The cultural stereotyping focuses more on the uncivilized acts of the soldier and the tribal accessories. Kladderadatsch also brought another strong biologically racialized stereotype after the war, in 1920. Fig. 28⁴² shows a gorilla-like figure who is dragging an unconscious woman away. The style of the soft cap and marching kit attached to the gorilla and the accompanying picture description, "Der schwarze Terror in deutschen Landen,"⁴³ confirms that the gorilla represents a black French colonial soldier. The connotations of this scenery refer to the purity of the German nation and 'race', incarnated by the vulnerable woman, being defiled by black occupation troops. Similarly, the biological racist element is most prominent here, expressing that black soldiers are biologically backward and closely related to apes, if not physically almost inseparable. However, while the ape-depictions of Germans, often referred to their militaristic savageness, this fig. 28 depiction refers almost solely to the biological and sexual danger stemming from the black races.

online.net/smw/images/thumb/4/46/Kladderadatsch_zivilisierung_IMG.png/200px-Kladderadatsch_zivilisierung_IMG.png

⁴² Fig. 28, Unknown, "Der schwarze Terror in deutschen Landen", 1920, magazine cover, Place made: Berlin, Germany. From: <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kla1920/0317>

⁴³Referring to the phenomenon called 'Black Horror on the Rhine'. Allied powers occupied Germany up to the left bank of the Rhine comprised of 30.000-40.000 African colonial soldiers igniting wide-spread protests in Germany: Andrew Jarboe (2014), p. 193-95.

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In some cases, French racial stereotyping also opposed blacks' involvement in the French army, which reflected a split in the public opinion on enlisting colonial soldiers. This is the case in the unofficial fig. 29,⁴⁴ where a black French colonial soldier is depicted on a postcard. He carries dum dum bullets and five saw-toothed bayonets which were frowned upon. The decapitated head confirms that "Boudou-Badabou" (the nickname of the black soldier) is harvesting heads of the German soldiers - as the title reads in French. The bayonet which he used for this procedure fixed between his teeth still bloody from his victim. In fig. 30⁴⁵ a black soldier is portrayed with a foolishly happy face enjoying a festive dinner on a bench in the field. Besides his blood-red lips, being the only prominent element of biological racism, this imagery connotes cultural racism: The simple and childlike bodily needs are easily fulfilled with a feast and entertaining "fireworks". This is also reflected in his childlike bodily proportions. In the background, two of his fellow black soldiers are chasing away a German soldier, one of them raising his rifle above his head like a spear, connoting that black colonial soldiers are not able to comprehend the correct use of weapons from a 'civilized' world. The message conveyed in these two postcards are clear: Black soldiers are too uncivilized for French service. While only his big exaggerated red lips and child-looking body indicates biological racism, his unfitnes for military service roots mainly in cultural racism because of his uncivilized and barbaric, mutilating behavior in battle.⁴⁶

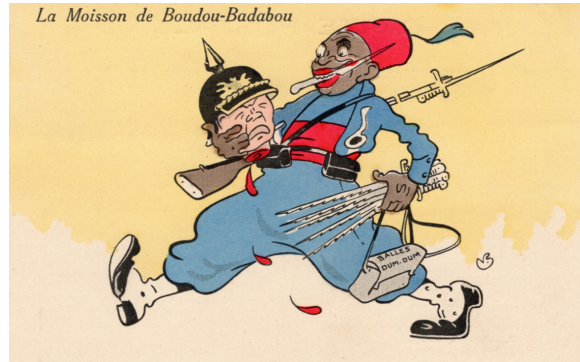


Fig. 29



Fig. 30

⁴⁴ Fig. 29, Unknown, "La Moisson de Boudou-Badabou", 1914-1915, postcard, Place made: France. From: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/propaganda_in_the_colonies_africa

⁴⁵ Fig. 30, P. Dufresne, "Le dos au feu, le ventre à table" ("Back to the fire, belly at the table"), 1914, poster or postcard, Place made: France. From: <https://histoire-image.org/fr/etudes/tirailleurs-senegalais-grande-guerre>

⁴⁶ For more French posters see: Richard Fogarty, "Race and Empire in French Posters of the Great War", in Pearl James (2009).

Russian posters depicting non-whites are hard to find, however, fig. 31⁴⁷ and fig. 32⁴⁸ are both examples of depictions of the Ottomans. The first, example fig. 31, shows the cowardice of the Turkish, fleeing from a Russian cavalry-rider. The Turk is wearing a fez, traditional clothes and has a fearful, twisted face with bushy eyebrows and a huge nose. Fig. 32 is ironically titled ‘Conversation near Constantinople’ and shows a Russian soldier, laughing at a gnome-like Ottoman Sultan, who is angrily stamping the ground. In this depiction, the tiny Sultan also has bushy eyebrows and a thick beard, and a large, curved nose. Both of these depictions show the Other, the Turks, as being insignificant cowards, while depicting the Self, the Russian soldier, as noble and well proportioned. These depictions use mainly somatic biological racism to stereotype the Ottomans, the cultural aspect is almost wholly left out.



Fig. 32

Conclusion

When creating propagandistic posters, ‘race’ was a flexible tool in alienating an enemy or consolidating bonds within the nation and between brothers in arms. Cultural and biological racism were shown as overlapping, working in tandem to create a single depiction within a spectrum of racial stereotypes, from the mainly biological to the mainly cultural racist stereotypes. The racialized stereotypes were deployed in both intra-white and non-white depictions depending on the desired function of the propaganda resulting in both positive or/and negative portrayals.

The positive stereotypes had the function of creating the white-Self, portraying their actions as justified, and the negative stereotypes had the function of Othering the white enemy, portraying their actions as unjust, and often their race as inferior. The Allied propaganda campaign focused heavily on Othering the Central Powers, by especially utilizing monster-type depictions linked to evolutionistic-biological racism. In comparison, the stereotypes that were culturally based often depicted the acts and primitiveness of the Germans as a result of them being a culturally backward race. In contrast, the Central Powers’ depictions focused on creating the Self as a response to Allied

⁴⁷ Fig. 31, Unknown, “Turkish Cowardice and Valiant Prowess”, 1914, Poster, Place made: Moscow, Russia. From: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_poster.JPG

⁴⁸ Fig. 32, Unknown artist, “Беседа под Царьградом” Translated ‘Conversation near Constantinople’ No. 5. 1914, poster, Printer: A.V. Krylov and Co., Moscow, Russia. From: <https://ru.bidspirit.com/ui/lotPage/source/catalog/auction/1102/lot/40993/%D0%9B%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%BA-%D0%91%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4?lang=en>

accusations. Contrasting Allied depictions, they often depicted the enemy based on either cultural stereotyping of the entire nation rather than a single 'race', or on the Othering of a single political leader; the Germans rarely depicted the white enemies as biological Others.

In contrast to the intra-white depictions, white depictions of non-whites often held both Othering and Self-creating functions at the same time. In some cases these functions combined in creating a racial duality in the image of the 'exotic' soldier, being both a part of the Self but also inherently Other. French depictions were the best example of this and played into the creation and enforcement of the racial duality of the black soldiers. Most prominently, was the idea of non-white soldiers being a biologically well-suited warrior race. This idea manifested itself in both positive and negative stereotypes depending on its function. When depicting the non-white enemy, they turned to biologically based negative stereotypes, emphasizing somatic differences and indicating intellectual³ inferiority. France was therefore notably the only nation that Othered their own troops to such an extent. On the other hand, the German depictions of enemy black soldiers and non-combatants were very biologically racist and created and sustained racial stereotypes of under-development both culturally and biologically.

Finally, examining the stereotypical racializing that took place between and within members of similar and different race categories (intra-whites and non-white) calls for using a broader definition of race which includes both biological and cultural racism.



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