

WRITERS IN ARMS AND THE "JUST WAR":  
LITERARY ACTIVISM, NATION, AND HEROISM IN LEFT REVIEW

by

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## Abstract

This thesis explores 1930s Leftist intellectuals in Britain and the fashioning of the Just War through involvement with the Republican cause in Spain. The primary consideration is how Leftists attempted to reconcile the anti-heroic legacy of the Great War with the need to re-create a heroic legend—both to oppose Fascism and to support revolutionary politics. In particular, the thesis focuses on the London-based *Left Review*, the literary journal of the Communist Writers' International published from 1934-38, which had several contributors join the Republican militias and International Brigades. The eulogies and tributes to intellectual warriors who had been a part of the *Left Review* community, and who died on the Front in Spain, illustrate the recreation of an acceptable Leftist warrior hero and the emergence of a heroic myth. The contradictions between ideological pacifism and the necessity of opposing Fascism were reflected in the debates conducted within this political and literary milieu. An analysis of these contradictions, and the heroic portrayal of the armed intellectual in *Left Review*, illuminates how Leftist intellectuals sought to discover and justify a form of military resistance that was consistent with their ideological beliefs. In addition to addressing the particular ideals of British masculinity that were reflected in intellectual discourse on Spain, attention within the thesis is also paid to how the portrayal of the Just War would contribute to Leftist engagement in the Second World War and the notion of the civilian participant in the "People's War."

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Ralph Fox was killed in action against the Spanish rebels and their Fascist allies on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. The death of so talented a writer at an age when his gifts were maturing would be overwhelmingly sad were it not for the fact that he ventured his life in full consciousness of the values at stake... We shall honour his memory best, and that of the other fallen comrades, by redoubling our efforts on behalf of the Spanish people.<sup>1</sup>

This *Left Review* obituary for Ralph Fox, killed at the age of 37 on the Cordova Front in Spain, reflected the close integration between radical politics, revolutionary writers and identification with the Republican Spanish cause in the 1930s. Support for the fledgling Leftist, and democratically elected, Popular Front government of Spain against the Franco Nationalist rebellion was an issue over which an otherwise divided British Left could unite. Contemporary Left-leaning literary organs, of which *Left Review* was a primary example, presented the conflict as the Writer's or Poet's War, a struggle in which culture was intimately involved. Stephen Spender, an observer and participant, labelled it as such and later commentators, in particular the works of British literary historian Margot Heinemann and Frederick R. Benson's still classic *Writers in Arms*, remain powerful carriers of this romanticized notion.<sup>2</sup> *The Last Great Cause: Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War*, a work written during the political upheavals of the late 1960s, is a similarly dramatic title for an event seen in apocalyptic terms by intellectual participants who took up arms to augment their writing.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Spain was hardly a "Poet's War," and that at least 80% of British volunteers were strictly working-class, not worker-poets,<sup>4</sup> does not diminish the fact that the Spanish Civil War was an event of primary importance to Leftist intellectuals seeking the legitimate their own political credibility. The builders of this entrenched

myth, many of whom, like Heinemann, were deeply committed to the cause of Spain, have constructed the narrative of the Just War. Spain itself became a microcosm of imminent destruction and potential redemption for the continent as a whole—its passions embodied the fears of a polarized Europe, and its psychological importance was disproportionate to its strategic significance.<sup>5</sup>

That the Spanish Republican cause served as a preparatory school for Second World War propagandists is no surprise. Issues of the Popular Front and the construction of the artist as revolutionary soldier played out vividly in the contemporary print culture of both the mainstream and radical Left. Within the literary community of the London-based *Left Review*, the official journal of the Communist Writers International, the deaths in action of writers and intellectuals such as Ralph Fox, Christopher Caudwell, and John Cornford on the Spanish Front recast the concept of the Just War and helped to recreate an acceptable Leftist warrior hero, a particularly *British* warrior hero, for the reality of imminent war. *Left Review* provides a dynamic narrative of how identification with, and participation in, anti-Fascist war brought to the pacifist Left what it would have least desired or anticipated—soldier heroes, and an uneasy acceptance of their own participation in armed conflict.

Seeking to redeem lost ideals of the Great War, the militia fighter would be fashioned as an anti-hierarchical and independent agent in the revolutionary cause. Uses of the heroic ideal affected self-identity, masculinity, political action, and the combination of travel and violence in a distant location also affected awareness of national identity. As such, the experience of Leftist writers and journalists who fought with the various Republican Militias formed a contrast between the broadly pacifist

sentiment wrought by the Great War, and the notion of the Second World War as the “People’s War,” a feeling expressed by popular author J.B. Priestley. By the 1940 emergency, many former pacifists, trade unionists and Communists who had experienced the Spanish anti-Fascist struggle had sufficiently negotiated a path away from strict pacifism, although the Communists would change their attitude towards the Just War in 1941. The intellectual acceptance of the Just War, conflicted as it was, facilitated a renewed sense of national identity, and a coherent sense of “Britishness” which included the heroism of the individual.

This study considers the closely-knit community of *Left Review* writers and journalists from 1934 to the journal’s demise in the spring of 1938, and how their participation in political and armed opposition to Spanish Fascism was portrayed in the pages of this short-lived publication. In particular, the construction of the Leftist heroic soldier was fraught with contradictions, uncertainty and compromise. A focus on mentalities towards war, and the heroic portrayal of the armed intellectual in *Left Review*, illuminates how Leftist intellectuals sought to discover and justify a form of fighting nationalism that was consistent with their ideological beliefs. Viewing the Great War simply as the “bad Imperialist war” and the anti-Fascist struggle as its reverse ignores the subtle complexities of how the links between ideology and war were mythologized. Leftist intellectuals of the 1930s constructed their own Just War, from which emerged their own heroic myth to sustain and commemorate the cause. The creation of heroes, and martyrs, out of pro-Loyalist volunteers, was a concept that the Left found useful as a step towards justifying support of their own nation at war.



As such, this inquiry into intellectual history of the 1930s addresses the larger question of the construction of the Just War in Western democracies. The ideological question of negotiating a principled opposition to war and the necessity of controlling aggression remains intractable for much of the New Left. The most persistent of rogue states, whose outrages fall outside the carefully constructed, polite nuances of international opinion and collective security, are no less a challenge to progressive politics today than were the Fascist dictators of the 1930s.

### **The Interwar Left: Division, Conflict, and Stagnation**

It is first necessary to consider the situation of the Left in the 1930s, facing both the world economic crisis and looming Fascist aggression. Defining the fractured 1930s "Left" is a complex undertaking since it was not even necessary to be a Socialist or Communist to consider oneself marginally "on the Left," this is, committed to a gradual softening of capitalist excess rather than an immediate revolutionary agenda. A consideration of *Left Review* should also question the meaning of Leftist envisioned by its own contributors. Our use of the term "Left," therefore, will be grounded quite firmly in a definition that emphasizes the *materialist* economic critique. In other words, the term "Leftist" in this study refers directly to those who saw the antagonism between capital and labour as the fundamental economic and political issue and who were committed to a structural change of capitalism. Margot Heinemann has described the mid 1930s as the genesis of Leftist intellectuals involving themselves with the working class movement "in large numbers and with practical effect."<sup>6</sup> Hence, Leftism and

pacifism found a level of common cause in opposition to the materialist and capitalist logic of nation-state warfare. This necessitated many of the debates over armed intervention that characterized 1930s intellectual dialogue.

It is also difficult to write about the Left in the 1930s at all without pointing out the tensions and divisions that were critically hampering progressives in achieving even modest political, social and economic goals. Despite the moniker of the “Red Decade,” the 1930s were actually a period of stagnation and acrimonious tension for British progressives.<sup>7</sup> While there was a sense of the imminent collapse of the capitalist system, the Left was too divided to iterate a completely united vision. The tension between revolution and assimilation into “safety first” ideology was expressed most profoundly through the rise, and slow slide into oblivion, of Ramsey MacDonald, Labour leader and Prime Minister from 1929-1935. An anti-war pacifist during the Great War, MacDonald became increasingly marginalized from Labour egalitarianism as he acquiesced to austerity measures that cut social spending, including welfare benefits for millions of unemployed Britons. Labour electoral fortunes plummeted, and the continuance of MacDonald as figurehead Prime Minister until 1935 was inadequate to thwart the agenda of the majority Conservative-Liberal coalition.<sup>8</sup> As a leader with competing constituencies, Ramsey MacDonald struggled to preserve his grassroots image as a socialist, even as he was viewed as having assimilated into the ranks of the elite.

The Communists and Independent Labour Party both attempted to add disaffected Labourites to their organizations, the former succeeding to an extent as membership rose threefold to 17,539 between 1935 and 1939—relatively tiny though

the total remained.<sup>9</sup> For Communists and independent socialists, then, the Spanish conflict served as a pole around which a conflicted and divided Left attempted to ally into a coalition respectably approaching the utopian Popular Front. The insurgence of the Spanish rebels led by General Franco against the democratically elected Republican government in the summer of 1936 was employed by the Left as an “all-purpose ‘catalyst of political feeling’ which politicised the apathetic, and transformed public opinion.”<sup>10</sup> The Spanish emergency, the “last great cause” remembered by 1960s authors, pulled the British Left into an increasingly European and international perspective, since positions on welfare policy or wealth redistribution were clearly non-starters in the present political climate.

The fact that Spain was always far more complicated than a simple struggle between “democracy” and “Fascism” did little to hamper the powerful civil war propaganda and Manichean narrative constructed by the Left. In short, the outcome of Spain would, for many, “determine whether the world would remain at peace.”<sup>11</sup> Despite, however, the almost uniform support for intervention advocated by Leftist intellectuals and the feeling the Spain held grave implications for the future of modern warfare,<sup>12</sup> the necessity for intervention was met with scepticism among British policymakers. The conflict, in official eyes, was merely an anachronistic and chaotic Latin preoccupation, a family quarrel in which it was best not to meddle. The National Government hid, conveniently, behind its non-intervention stance, allowing political activity in favour of Republican Spain to be displaced to extra-Parliamentary venues. Cultural production would, then, become one of the primary venues of contestation.

Participation in the International Brigades, or various ad-hoc militias for those who chose not to fight under the auspices of the Communist Party, became a political statement not only against Fascism, but the apathetic stance of Western governments. Approximately 2,700 volunteers from Britain defied the official “non-intervention” policy that rendered their participation in Spain illegal.<sup>13</sup> The opportunity for producing all-purpose class and revolutionary propaganda was, given the lack of immediate Leftist rallying points, seized upon by activists, both political and cultural. As such, a complex discussion of intellectual attitudes towards war and Leftist nationalism was necessary, particularly the role of the individual as an active, politicized, and risk-taking participant against Fascism.

### ***The Left Review in Cultural Context***

*Left Review*, launched as the official journal of the Communist Writers’ International with a starting capital of £27 in 1934, was first published from Collet’s Bookshop located on Charing Cross Road.<sup>14</sup> This location, a nexus of the radical literary and political set, served as an appropriate stage for the tightly woven community of mainly Communist writers, journalists and editors who saw their position as that of the radical *literati* and revolutionary underdog. *Left Review* began under the editorship of Montagu Slater, a post that later passed to Randall Swingler, Edgell Rickwood and Tom Wintringham. Offering readers a mixture of poetry, literature, *reportage*, and reviews of books, films, music, and theatre, the journal incorporated a realist style and an updated Marxist critique into its literary perspective.<sup>15</sup> Questions of international politics, style,

and “objectivity” versus political commitment were passionately explored and argued in its pages. *Reportage*, a form of journalism blended with literary and autobiographical styles, was well represented in *Left Review* and was particularly suited to covering Spain, with its emphasis on emotional impact and realism of presentation rather than factual accuracy.<sup>16</sup> Ralph Bates’ “Companero Sagasta Burns a Church” was an example of *reportage*, a provocative piece detailing an anti-clerical, anarchist church burning in which Bates participated, actually choosing which statues to destroy and which to preserve.

*Left Review* saw its core issues comprising economic struggle and Marxist criticism of politics and culture—according to Montagu Slater “the ordinary world of people and things, the world of work, the world of everyday economic struggle.”<sup>17</sup> The inaugural issue laid out a bold strategy for activist culture, no less than “the ending of the capitalist order of society.”<sup>18</sup> Well-known British writers including Naomi Mitchison, Auden, Spender, John Lehmann, Charles Madge, C. Day Lewis, Rex Warner and Edward Upward shared print with newer writers and brilliant continental European minds such as Malraux, Brecht and Lorca. The final impression of *Left Review* is of a highly self-conscious, lofty experiment, reflected in Montagu Slater’s pronouncement that the journal “comes at a time of intellectual avidity... it comes, like a Shakespeare play, in the midst of a crowd of inferiors.”<sup>19</sup>

*Left Review* has remained largely unexamined in an historical context, while literary histories, such as the work of David Margolies in particular, have illuminated the publication’s relationship to Marxist literary theory and broader issues of bringing letters into the revolutionary struggle.<sup>20</sup> Some historians have viewed *Left Review* as

uniformly propagandist, given its clear advocacy of Spanish Republicanism and uncritical endorsement of Stalinist Russia.<sup>21</sup> Yet no full reading of the journal can sustain the view of narrow dogmatism, nor did the majority of the literary pieces chosen for publication represent only the sanctioned ideology of the Writers' International. In addition, most of the contributors were never official Communist Party members, even if they vaguely identified themselves as fellow travellers.<sup>22</sup> Another factor that has led to discounting of the *Review*'s historical significance has been its short publication span, for which Margolies has implicated the Communist Party's refusal to continue support for the journal.<sup>23</sup> Whatever the reasons for its premature end, however, the sheer combined genius of *Left Review* contributors serves as a rich source for the opinion and work of the most important British intellectual minds of the era.

It is important to contextualize *Left Review* within radical journalism, as it was part of a burgeoning community of small publications that were often produced by an overlapping group of writers and editors. Such a fluid and supportive milieu allowed for exchanges of ideas and resources. Journals of literature and criticism such as *Fact*, *New Writing*, *Time and Tide*, and *Criterion* all shared the cultural stage with *Left Review*—and, symptomatically, lasted only as long as the 1930s. Although, as will be demonstrated with the *Left Review* and *Criterion* in particular, ideological perspectives often differed, these networks of production contributed to Leftist intellectual legitimacy in promoting alternate narratives of the national body politic. The Left Book Club, published by Victor Gollancz and with a total of 60,000 members at the height of its prominence, was also a major Leftist publisher whose influence surpassed the relatively modest number of subscribers.<sup>24</sup>

Considering the gravity of domestic and international crises, the 1930s were a crucial moment in the production of Leftist journalism and literary culture. Discussion of the “Mass” in industry, culture and politics challenged the Left to adapt to artistic modernity, not only in print culture, but drawing, art, film, photography and theatre. The influences of all these arts affected the evolution of socialist and dissident literature and criticism. Writers in the 1930s saw themselves as inheritors and adaptors of a lively nonconformist print tradition. The pro-union newspaper *Daily Herald*, the *New Statesman* founded by Fabians Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1913, and the inauguration of the Communist Party’s *Daily Worker* in 1930 represented a range of Leftist media prominent at the time. Journalism, propaganda, literature and politics combined as new relationships between the public, the intelligentsia and politics were forged to provoke public action on economic and social questions.

### **The Heroic, Anti-Heroic, and the Role of the Militiaman**

If we are to analyse the Leftist heroic figure in the Spanish Civil War, it is first necessary to delineate the simultaneous anti-heroic and heroic traditions that came into play both in traditional nationalist and Marxist discourse. Distinctly pacifist ideologies were clearly one legacy of the Great War, yet this should not to imply that pacifism was a necessary component of Leftist ideology, or that all Leftists would have agreed with any particular definition of pacifism. The scope of this study prevents a full contextualization of the complex shifts in 1930s pacifist factions, but the interpretation of historian Martin Ceadel is instructive, especially regarding the crises of 1936:

Abyssinia, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and the Civil War in Spain. These events, it must be remembered, provoked movement within the general public away from, but also a certain move towards, pacifism as a viable political position. Defectors from the position had generally come to doubt its ability to prevent aggression. New pacifists, however, were drawn to pacifism as the only untried, and hence not yet disproved, political ideology.<sup>25</sup> While only a minority of Leftist sympathizers had ever classified themselves as "pacifists," at the very least a general hegemonic reaction against militarism is apparent within progressive discourse. Among intellectuals in particular, interwar discourse had a strong pacifist basis. A common ritual of student Leftists became the peace demonstration, signing Peace Pledge Union postcards, or declaring opposition to Armistice Day rhetoric.<sup>26</sup> Starting from this position, our focus will be limited to the negotiation of pacifist sentiment by Leftist intellectuals who engaged with the Spanish conflict.

The issue of intellectual credibility was a powerful motivation for intellectuals who viewed Spain as an opportunity for redemption in which a post-war pacifist generation might exonerate its guilt at having missed the Great War.<sup>27</sup> The existence of this guilt was expressed by Stephen Spender, who found in Spain an absolution for Left-wing poets who had distantly written poetry during the economic misery of the 1930s.<sup>28</sup>

[Spain] tested the idea of adventurous, heroic travel. Spain held out the possibility of real action to writers who had long envisaged action, the prospect of journeying to a war whose cause looked good and brave and just enough at least to expunge those collective bad memories of the journey to fight in an inglorious, unheroic, soured First World War.<sup>29</sup>



The heroic or anti-heroic, then, was not so much defined by the participant's actions, as the specific nature of the conflict itself—most importantly, whether the cause was adequately “brave” or “just.” The Left, therefore, would first construct the cause itself as heroic. The advent of heroes, lauded for bravery, commitment, loyalty or courage, was a by-product of propagating and memorializing the cause.

The legacy and negative weight of the Great War contributed powerfully to war as reflected in the early years of *Left Review*. The introductory issue featured a discussion forum entitled “Writers and War,” in which literary figures from across the Leftist spectrum submitted pieces “to express their opposition to the warlike plans of the Imperialist governments.” George Bernard Shaw expressed a fear of rearmament, and Charles Madge charged bourgeois intellectuals with complicity in the First World War in the editorial “Pens Dipped in Poison”:

In 1914, when the shadow of war fell on the bourgeois intellectuals, they were taken completely unawares, and accepted quite uncritically the doctrines of a ‘righteous war’ offered them... those who had a vague, idealist, liberal ideology committed the greatest excuses and lost their head most completely when war broke out... It is therefore all the more necessary that writers and intellectuals of the present have the clearest ideas on the subject of war, its causes and the possible means of preventing it.<sup>30</sup>

Contemporary commentators who had, in 1914, portrayed the European conflict as a “holy war” that would cleanse and restore Imperial and national vigour were similarly lambasted, such as Poet Laureate Robert Bridges who had stated that “I hope that our people will see that it is primarily a holy war.”<sup>31</sup> In this description, irrational patriotism on the part of intellectuals was equated with the political and military decisions that sent millions of young British men to their deaths. Nor were Leftist leaders of 1914-1918 spared criticism. *Left Review*, in commending First World War

conscientious objectors such as Lowes Dickinson and Bertrand Russell, criticized the International Labour Party and the *Socialist Review* for their pro-war stance during the conflict and insistence that the war was a struggle of “ideals.”<sup>32</sup> A November 1934 article by “Ajax” concentrated on mobilizing writers for the “war against war,” and condemned the military tradition.<sup>33</sup> The later mobilization of intellectuals for the endorsement of anti-Fascist conflict was, then, particularly ironic.

In a review entitled “Heroism? Adventure? Glory?” three recently published war memoirs were scathingly portrayed as atavistic attempts to infuse bloodthirsty militarism with a noble, moral basis. The reviewer, condemning the creation of heroic figures from the Great War declared: “Heroism, adventure, glory—how tired these words look. They have made some progress during their long convalescence after breakdown through overwork in 1918, yet they still seem very thin.” Heroism and anti-heroism, however, could co-exist, as the wry “trench humour” of the Great War illustrated. Margot Heinemann interprets the British working-class tradition as a comic and anti-heroic one—participants coped with war, and clearly did not interpret it as the gallant activity that writers and historians sought to dramatize. Grim humour, then, characterized the authentic experience of the average infantryman on the front, evidenced by the solidier songs of the Great War.<sup>34</sup> Writers such as Orwell in Spain alluded to the “comic memory”: chasing a naked man down a trench, attempting to stab him with a useless bayonet, and throwing ineffectual grenades hopelessly wide of their targets.<sup>35</sup> It is necessary, then, to realise that both concepts were variable, and could exist in constructions of the same conflict—as much as Leftists wished to portray the

Great War as wholly anti-heroic, and the Spanish War conversely as a conflict fought for more noble, and hence more heroic, reasons.

The labelling of war itself as primarily “Fascist” or “capitalist” was used indiscriminately, and somewhat carelessly, throughout *Left Review*. *Dogs of War*, a work by Major Yeats-Brown and Peter Davies was deemed “material for the pathologist... it consists of a series of semi-connected outbursts in praise of warfare. It is Fascism in all its finery.”<sup>36</sup> A 1936 review of the pacifist book *The Citizen Faces War*<sup>37</sup> emphasized, “It is not Marxist to believe that war is inevitable.” Capitalism, Imperialism and elites were held responsible for war, and war under these auspices would never lead to revolution.<sup>38</sup> Heroism, as defined by the glorifying of war for its schoolboy fantasy aspects, was seen as a form of false consciousness, diverting working-class participants from the revolutionary cause into the service of capitalism. The use of such epithets was a part of negotiating, and more importantly justifying, a warrior identity that could be compatible with a Leftist outlook

The connection between Communism, war and the anti-Fascist struggle tied directly into Leftist resentment for official, aristocratic Britain. Playwright Douglas Goldring perhaps expressed this mindset best, making the sardonic statement that “when England goes Communist... no doubt the party in power will call itself the ‘Conservative Co-Operative Party’, and, as usual, half the Government will be Old Etonian.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, for many Leftists, Communism was the only alternative to Fascism, and the sense that Britain, with its “Old Etonian” aristocratic capitalism, was already well on the road to official Fascism made action in Spain essential to many.<sup>40</sup> This strong opposition to the establishment, the supposed Fascist appeasers and capitalist

oppressors of the Cliveden Set or worshippers of Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists, fuelled much of the defiant promotion of Spain. Such rhetoric would lead to Leftist re-integration into the national mainstream at the final discrediting of appeasement.

Guided by this inherent distrust of the British establishment, Leftist international leanings on the question of opposing Fascist aggression focused on the League of Nations. Support for military action, when advised against Mussolini or Franco, was considered tolerable through the League or other forms of international co-operation. For example, the back covers of *Left Review* often advocated for the United Front and Collective Security System,<sup>41</sup> and symposiums on internationalist organizations were advertised. Faith in the failing institution of the League and collective security existed because these mechanisms were perceived as representing both a distinctly Leftist paradigm, and they were the only alternative to national military culture. An insistence on collective security, however, entailed a willingness to wage war to enforce internationalist resolutions, and many Leftists were unwilling to fully authorize the use of military force. Such was the major contradiction of the Left's anti-Fascism, an ideological opposition that would only be partially resolved in Spain.

### **Culture and Politics Intertwined**

Intellectual debates must be considered essential not only to esoteric questions of culture, but also to those of intellectuals' relationship to the nation itself. Given that the modern state demanded the active participation of its citizenry, most particularly in

organized warfare, the Spanish War occasioned re-entry of large portions of the Left into the discourse of the state. The enlistment of intellectuals into Republican battalions was a manifestation of elite self-consciousness on the part of many Leftist intellectuals. The fetish of realism, as evidenced by the search for “authentic” working-class culture, was an attempt to lessen class divisions between Leftist intellectuals and the workers they purported to represent. George Orwell, for example, argued that Leftist intellectuals only fancied themselves to be free of class bias, but if they actually came into contact with the “real” working class their bourgeois prejudices would immediately surface.<sup>42</sup> The “people” were, at times, lauded as the heroic vanguard, but at others were disparaged as apathetic dupes of commercial interests. In *Left Review* this condescension was expressed, for example, by dismissals of popular films as “unreality and shams... stupid and impossible.”<sup>43</sup> Spain was an attempt to channel these often conflicting groups, the intellectuals and the working-class, into a common revolutionary activity.

It should be noted that *Left Review* was a Popular Front publication from its inception. That is, it saw itself as a part of the Leftist political-cultural alliance that was manifested most strongly on the continent in France and Republican Spain. Although, as has been noted, only some of its contributors were officially Communist, all of the journal’s writers were prepared to join the Communist Popular Front against Fascism. *Left Review*’s most powerful intellectual contribution to the Spanish cause, however, did not appear in the publication itself, but in a pamphlet entitled *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War*. A survey of prominent British writers, the project was clearly intended as a propaganda coup for pro-Republican intervention.

Literary historian Valentine Cunningham suggests that the *Review* manufactured the results, starting with its highly leading question: "Are you for or against the Legal Government and the people of Republican Spain? Are you for or against Franco and Fascism? For it is impossible any longer to take no side." Given such phrasing, it is highly unlikely that any author would want to publicly identify against "Legal Government" and for "Fascism." The published results, 127 writers "FOR the Government", 5 "AGAINST the Government", and 17 classified as neutral, were taken as almost unequivocal intellectual support for intervention. However, probing questions about both the classification of some responses and the number of right-leaning writers who were not polled leads, in Cunningham's estimation, to the doubtful legitimacy of the project as a whole.<sup>44</sup> Difficulties of this survey aside, the question of neutrality developed into an intellectual spat related to *Left Review*'s coverage of the Spanish question. The neutrality of T.S. Eliot, editor of *Criterion*, was a challenge to the absolutism of the *Authors Take Sides* creators, an annoyingly detached attitude (to proponents of action) that may have served to polarize intellectual discourse and valorize the Spanish volunteers. Eliot's response to the survey that "at least a few men of letters should remain isolated," and refusal to be drawn into the ideology of manifestos was anathema to the ascendant intellectual activism of *Left Review* contributors.

C. Day Lewis' *Left Review* pamphlet "We Are Not Going to Do Nothing,"<sup>45</sup> written in response to the pertinent question posed by Aldous Huxley "What are You Going to Do About It?"<sup>46</sup> illustrated the division and inertia of the Left. "It" referred to the primary issues of the Left: the rise to power of Hitler, foreign Fascist incursion,

economic disparity, and social injustice. The pamphlet was advertised prominently in *Left Review* and corresponded to the new conviction by intellectuals that culture and politics were inseparable. Eliot chastised Lewis in *Criterion* for “pamphleteering warfare” and similarly dismissed the creators of *Taking Sides on the Spanish Civil War* as “irresponsible zealots.”<sup>47</sup> The generation of writers active in the 1930s craved action and did not want to write, as Louis MacNeice perceived Eliot, as “pedant[s] who saw life from a corner.”<sup>48</sup>

Lewis’ choice of title, however, did further the charge that criticism of the *status quo* was all the Left had to offer, and that when pressed for specifics the most that could be pledged was the promise to “do something.” Lewis expressed both the hopefulness and inertia of the revolutionary cause—at once sure that action is necessary, but at the same time unsure of which actions to take. Such uncertainties would play into the overwhelming portrayal of Spain as a Just War, the configuring of the intellectual warrior hero, and the acceptance of violence as compatible with Leftist ideology. Shortly after the Franco rebellion, C. Day Lewis opined in *Left Review*, without mentioning Spain directly, that writers must act immediately, “throwing off [their] parochialism and political apathy in the interest of the civilization we have helped to build and can help to save,”<sup>49</sup> quickly followed by his editorial “Sword and Pen.”<sup>50</sup> “Here in Catalonia and in Spain the defence of culture is a reality and is achieved with arms in hand...but behind the lines we are also at the front.” Because the artist “lives his life more intensely and vitally,” he had the responsibility to defend both this confined space and the wider world of cultural freedom.<sup>51</sup>

### The “Irregular” Fighter

The absolution that Spender and fellow writers craved seemed attainable in Spain, but first a re-orienting of war along Leftist lines was necessary to break with the anti-heroic legacy of the Great War. The Just War, however, was not so simply disassociated from the past. The symbolism of the elder Cornford handing his First World War revolver to his son John Cornford to carry in Spain demonstrates the continuity of a traditional warrior ideal.<sup>52</sup> Drawing the dichotomies of the militia and irregular soldier, as opposed to the regular soldier of the nation-state, may help explain the symbolic importance of Spain to the notion of the citizen soldier, a notion that would powerfully affect the British experience in the Second World War. The March 1937 cover of *Left Review* featured the sketch of a highly masculine, muscle-bound and armed militiaman. His powerful upper body, clearly drawn out of proportion, signalled a strong military masculinity, but one constructed outside of the confines of the nation state.<sup>53</sup>

Opposition to the British military rested, and not without good reason, on its reputation as a bastion of strict class hierarchy, corruption, abuse, and disregard for the needs of enlisted men. *Left Review*'s contributors clearly viewed the traditional army as an institution that exploited the working class. John Pudney's poem "Generals" portrayed the lower classes as victims of upper-class officer megalomania, made possible by the duplicity of workers who were "mistaken asses" to accept the notion that the Boers or Huns were the enemy. Troops were seen as mere pawns in an irrational game played for inexplicable reasons. Pudney bitterly satirized his imagined



generals as sanctioned “paragons” whose ineptitude and amorality would end in “yellow gas and fire/ expressing the finality of their desire.”<sup>54</sup>

The role of uniforms was essential to the idealized partisan fighter in Spain and contrasted with the image of state military culture. One *Left Review* cartoon depicted a clearly working-class recruit into the British forces being marched off by a stereotypical sergeant. Satirically entitled, “The Path to Glory,” the piece neatly illustrated the resentment directed towards the military, resentment that still lingered from abuses and ineptitude during the Great War. The power of the uniform to inspire fear, obedience, authority and hierarchy were clear in the juxtaposition of the swaggering sergeant dwarfing, both literally and symbolically, the recruit in civilian clothes.<sup>55</sup> The absence of uniform, therefore, denoted an absence of hierarchy, authoritarianism and signalled equality among fighters. Described by Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*, the self-styled uniform, dubbed the “multiform,” lessened the impact of rank. The insistence on social equality, such as a Spanish officer who berated a recruit for calling him “Señor,” did lend itself to socialist ideology, if not military efficiency or discipline.<sup>56</sup> The image of the un-uniformed militia, then, became a means for the Left to accept roles as warriors in Spain without simultaneously accepting the baggage of an outdated military ideal discredited, in their minds, by the Great War.

Two examples of the iconoclast as military figure featured in *Left Review* were the French revolutionary Lissagaray and T.E. Lawrence. Both provided a means of modelling the binaries of regular versus militia versions of the fighter. The relative lack of hierarchy within the militia ideal would prove a more acceptable concept for intellectuals. Free of the negative connotations to the Great War provoked by the

authoritarian image of the regular army, the mythology of the "Poet's War" fit more readily into the militia environment. A 1934 *Left Review* article by Frank Jellinek, "Artists in the Commune," presented the possibility of the artist and intellectual as a guerrilla, revolutionary fighter. Jellinek venerated the artist of the Paris Commune, Lissagaray, who may have fired the last shot from behind the last barricade on Whit Sunday, 1871. "It was the work of a fighter through and through," Jellinek wrote, in what was essentially an ode to the prototype of the guerrilla and resistance fighter.<sup>57</sup> Lissagaray was thus remembered not for art or philosophy, but the act of armed defiance, last stand heroics more often associated in contemporary common memory with the Charge of the Light Brigade, or General Gordon at Khartoum.

In a 1935 tribute to Lawrence of Arabia by Ralph Fox, significantly entitled "Lawrence the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hero," the role of the war hero received guarded, contingent endorsement. Fox viewed Lawrence as an anti-capitalist and anti-elitist iconoclast who was at odds with his own class: "He is the only hero whom the English ruling classes have produced in our time, a hero who in his own lifetime gathered about him all the legendary atmosphere of the hero."<sup>58</sup> What Fox implied by liberal use of the term "hero," was that Lawrence's existence within sanctioned military culture was subsumed to higher and nobler ideals. As such, R.A.F. recruiters were subject to satiric criticism for using Lawrence's legend to establishment-endorsing ends ("for whom his [Lawrence's] death might have been specially arranged").<sup>59</sup> Fox's own death in Spain, ironically, would be similarly viewed as an object used for the veneration of a cause. The notion that one could be both a patriotic Englishman and not collaborate with the establishment, also emphasized by Fox, and would prove important to Leftist

relationships to nationalism. Charles Donnelly, a poet and eventually a member of *Left Review*'s "role of honour," also used Lawrence as a model of a writer hero who retained a sense of mystery and nonconformity.<sup>60</sup> Lissagaray and Lawrence, then, both provided examples of sufficiently "irregular," and hence suitable, figures of courage, martial skill and ideology for Leftist sensibilities in the Spain. The parallel of the militias, and the value placed on egalitarian and resourceful battlefield leadership, were notions that Republican Spain amplified.

### ***Left Review*'s Writers Enter the Fray**

The actual taste of violence, however, would further complicate theoretical notions of ideological purity and support for the Just Cause. The first British volunteer to be killed in Spain was a woman, Felicia Browne, an artist from a privileged background who had contributed sketches to *Left Review*. Killed in August 1936 while taking part in an attempt to blow up a railway station, Browne has remained a little known participant in the conflict, although invariably her gender did provoke some effusive eulogies at the time of her death. The exact manner of her death remains unclear, with most accounts placing her running through a firefight to aid a wounded comrade.<sup>61</sup> Her military training having been minimal at best, Browne's decision to head out on a sabotage party with the self-styled "Storm Troops" was typical of the heady feeling of rash action that many participants felt in Spain. What is intriguing about Browne is that she typified the civilian militia fighter that would become legendary in Spain—emotion, a commitment to politics, but little training in the actual skills of war. Much as the legend of East End

tailors Sam Masters and Nat Cohen, who, finding themselves on holiday in Spain at the time of the uprising, literally bicycled to the front,<sup>62</sup> Felicia Browne contributed to the notion of the atypical and fiercely independent militia soldier.

*Left Review*'s final editorial in 1938 would proudly claim six writers who had fought in Spain: Ralph Fox, John Cornford, Charles Donnelly, John Sommerfield, Tom Wintringham, and Ralph Bates, the first three of whom were to die on the front.<sup>63</sup> In addition, minor contributors such as Felicia Browne, W. Rowney (better known as the cartoonist "Maro"), and Julian Bell were also among the dead of the British Brigades.<sup>64</sup> Eulogizing the fallen in 1937, editor Edgell Rickword declared, "These men have re-established with their blood that unity between the creators of beauty and the masses of the people."<sup>65</sup> The fusion of intellect and martial bravery was portrayed in almost every eulogy that appeared in *Left Review*. An analysis these eulogies, along with the posthumously published work of Cornford, for example, draws most clearly the presentation of the Leftist intellectual hero. Memorializing the courage of the dead transformed political action, through the subjecting of the individual to physical danger, into an act of heroism.

Montagu Slater's eulogy for Charles Donnelly, a member of the Irish Company of the American (Lincoln) Brigade, brought together the warrior hero and the man of letters. A minor contributor to *Left Review*, Donnelly has been likened to "the Irish equivalent of England's John Cornford—the Byronic martyr at once unique and utterly characteristic of his type."<sup>66</sup> Montagu commended Donnelly for bravery in that "all the letters from Spain speak of his gallantry in the fighting." Active risk-taking on the front was depicted as fusing Donnelly's intellect and spirit, leading to writing intense verse

in extraordinary circumstances. "For Donnelly public and private living had come together and were to be fused in dying,"<sup>67</sup> captured much of the political and emotional investment that the Spanish conflict entailed. This was, in fact, a major intellectual shift for the core constituency of *Left Review*. Through the commemoration of individual heroism, the redemptive qualities of the martyr became a part of the Left's acceptance of the use of violence to achieve just ends, and hence the emergence of the definitive Just War.

The primary figures of the *Left Review* community who became objects of literary martyrdom were Fox, Caudwell, and Cornford. Significantly, all were members of the Communist Party. Ralph Fox, the most prolific writer of the three, was a journalist, literary critic and political activist who joined the Communist Party in 1925 and devoted his literary talent and active service to Communist organization and the United Front. A writer with wide-ranging interests, he published works ranging from biographies of Lenin and Genghis Khan to treatises on political economy and literary reviews, all while being one of the most active Party organizers. Having served as a teenager in the closing stages of the Great War, he had returned from the experience "with a lasting sense of kinship with toiling men and a hatred of the war-makers of world-capital,"<sup>68</sup> perhaps making the call of the Just War some two decades later all the more powerful.

Published as a posthumous tribute to his best writing, the volume *Ralph Fox: A Writer in Arms* included a range of his literary, historical and theoretical essays. The introductory pieces focused on Ralph Fox as a fighter, with each developing a separate aspect of Fox's heroism. Communist Party official Harry Pollitt praised Fox's "deep

sense of intellectual conviction,” Sidney Webb’s memories of Fox were of his understanding of Lenin, and Ralph Bates spoke of Fox’s personality and brilliance. Michael Gold elucidated the intellectual “mental conflict” between writing and the urge to “Take your place in the ranks! Organize! Educate! Fight! Freedom needs every soldier, and books are not enough!”<sup>69</sup> Taken together, these four accounts summarized much of the delicate construction of the intellectual warrior hero—a heroism secured in violent death.

The official account of Fox’s death was of him advancing to contact, similarly to Felicia Browne, across low ground covered by enemy machine-gun fire, “a supremely brave thing to do.” The military commander that Fox served under noted “I am not just paying a conventional tribute to a dead man when I say that he was a real hero.”<sup>70</sup> Emphasizing Fox’s British identity, and the heroism of the entire British Section, Communist Party official Harry Pollitt noted that General Kleiber of the International Brigade felt that the positions Fox and his British Section comrades helped defend “will be held to the very last.”<sup>71</sup> The association of the Left with martial courage and national pride emerged, bringing Leftists closer to the nationalist mainstream.

Christopher Caudwell (born Christopher St. John Sprigg),<sup>72</sup> who was killed in his first day of action on the Jarama four weeks after the death of Ralph Fox, was also an ardent Communist. Having previously written a range of fiction, poetry and books on aeronautics, his most important Marxist cultural and scientific studies, including the primary work *Illusion and Reality*, were compiled and published posthumously. *Left Review* eulogized Caudwell as a “young writer of great promise,”<sup>73</sup> and the heroic manner of his death heightened interest in his highly theoretical works, works which

otherwise might have remained obscure. Interestingly, Caudwell enlisted into the Brigades despite his doubts as to the viability of Republican military prospects, believing his involvement to be a question of duty, and the fact that if freedom were to fail in Spain “their struggle... will certainly be ours tomorrow.”<sup>74</sup>

John Cornford, a poet and Communist activist since the age of fifteen, was only twenty-one at the time of his death and served as a legendary figure of tragically destroyed embryonic genius. Significantly, fellow poet Louis MacNeice once noted that Cornford was the first inspiring Communist he had ever met. Indeed, Cornford thought of himself as a full-time revolutionary, and only incidentally as a poet.<sup>75</sup> His Spanish War poetry, the most famous of which was “Full Moon at Tirez,” provides insight into the reconfiguration of the Leftist warrior ideal. Poetic reflections on war had received wide play from *Left Review*’s inaugural October 1934 issue, featuring the famous anti-heroic poets of the Great War, including Siegfried Sassoon, and Wilfred Owen, the author of “Dulce et decorum.” The dark imagery of Owen’s depicted gas attack and war in “Dulce et decorum” as a destructive, futile and dehumanizing human activity contrasted with the revolutionary theme of John Cornford’s “Full Moon at Tirez: Before the Storming of Huesca.” Focused not only on individual heroism, but the grand-scale revival of working-class revolutionary activity,<sup>76</sup> this poem resonated with optimism and the glory of worthwhile sacrifice. Cornford’s interpretation that “freedom was never held without a fight,” affirmed the role of all Popular Front members participating in the Spanish War.

Stand by our guard on Huesca’s plain,  
Swear that our dead fought not in vain,  
Raise the red flag triumphantly  
For Communism and for liberty.

These final lines of "Full Moon at Tirez" contributed to the iconography of the hero by invoking the courageous, shown through the imagery of continuing to fight under demoralizing circumstances, the commemorative, in that the sacrifice of the dead would be recalled and used to further the cause, and the revolutionary, expressed through the hope that Spain would presage the overthrow of capitalism and Imperialism. Ironically, however, Cornford's only poem to be published in *Left Review* during his lifetime, "Letter from Aragon," was largely anti-heroic and reflected the mental scars that the ugliness of war inflicted on many participants. There was no revolution or confident future in this work, but rather coffins, the shelling of villages, and militiamen dying slow, agonizing deaths. The poem ended with a pessimistic warning of future Fascist rule of Barcelona, turning the city into a "heap of ruins with us workers beneath it."<sup>77</sup>

Interestingly, the inclusion of poetry memorializing Spain in *Left Review* occurred under the editorship of Edgell Rickwood, a soldier and anti-war poet of the Great War, a war in which he had lost an eye. Ironically, although Rickwood's own war poetry had been marginalized by the literary world in favour of Sassoon, Owen, and Rupert Brooke, he published some of the most memorable lines of Spanish Civil War verse, including both British and Spanish poets. Thus, while not a combatant himself, Rickwood may have viewed Spain as the Just War that his own experience of warfare had failed to be. The murder, and subsequent cult, of martyred Spanish poet Federico García Lorca by Nationalist forces proved to many that even the most severe anti-Franco propaganda had, in fact, been correct. *Left Review* gave Lorca equal stature to British poets, and his death served as a marker of the barbarianism of the Fascists.



Much of the poetry of the Spanish Civil War was clearly propagandist in intent. Auden's "Spain" was perhaps the most memorable mobilization poem to come out of the Spanish War, and was sold as a fundraising pamphlet. The heroic and violent imagery in Jack Lindsay's "On Guard for Spain" advocated violent resistance to Fascism: "Tear down the oppressors... Smash with our bare hands the iron door of greed." The workers of the world were urged to form their own "compact of steel," to save the "human future" itself.<sup>78</sup> Intended as a propagandist speech for "Mass Recitation," the poem, although it now seems stilted, must have had greater emotional impact while Spain was still a viable cause. The profusion of these pieces of agitprop, also known as "Mass Declamations," demonstrates the fact that what historians interpret as print culture also entered the public sphere through live presentation.

### **Backlash Against the Heroic**

Interwar intellectual culture was marked by controversy over the role of writers in direct political action. The dispute between Eliot and activist writers as played out in *Criterion* and *Writers Take Sides* was only one debate; intellectuals who supported action were in frequent disagreement over the form action should take. Much like T.S. Eliot's rejection of writer activism, Stephen Spender played a dissenting role on the question of Spanish heroism. At the height of British Leftist mobilization for the Spanish cause, in May 1937, Stephen Spender wrote his forceful declaration "Heroes in Spain." Rejecting propaganda that glorified the dead of the International Brigades, Spender acknowledged the Spanish conflict as a "terrible necessity," one that must be won yet at the same time

should be hated for its terrible and destructive nature. Spender wished for a war with “few heroics, no White Feathers, and genuine hatred for the necessity of war,”<sup>79</sup> and similarly complained about the “circus of intellectuals” who were greeted as saviours by the Spanish people.<sup>80</sup> Such an accusation also spoke to the core of intellectual self-doubt over their credibility as participants in Spain.

Continuing an intellectual debate started in *Left Review*, Spender’s article, significantly, appeared in the *New Statesman* and not in any of the Communist-controlled or influenced journals. Spender, however, remained on the editorial board of *Left Review*,<sup>81</sup> evidence that a tolerance for debate and diversity of opinion existed within the publication. Spender’s eulogy for John Cornford, one year after the appearance of “Heroes in Spain,” approved of Cornford’s courage (and, indeed, was close to a heroic portrayal), but was also wary of the roughness that Cornford manifested—his craving for violence, for watching movies full of shooting and for breaking up Fascist meetings was evident in the obituaries contributed to his *Memoir*.<sup>82</sup> Spender’s qualms regarding the celebration of violence were symptomatic of the problems inherent in abandoning the pacifist ethic, and of mixing high culture and violence.

Cornford is immensely significant not merely because he was young and brave, but because he lived and died with the courage of a purpose which reaches far beyond himself and which effectively challenges the barbarism and defeatism of the age we live in. One may feel, as I do, that the pattern of this young hero is over-simplified; his vision of life is impatient and violent... [but] the spirit of Cornford and some of his comrades rises like a phoenix from the ashes of Spain, which are the ashes of Europe.<sup>83</sup>

Spender’s own disillusioning experiences in Spain, similar in a sense to the experiences of both Orwell and Auden,<sup>84</sup> must have impacted his later reflections.

Spender travelled to Spain to write propaganda, yet found himself writing unflattering pieces about the Republican forces. He returned to Britain a man disabused of the notion that heroism was possible, but nevertheless convinced that the poets of the International Brigades had an important warning for all of Europe, and that “these poets and fighters are fighting not out of love for war, but because they are defending a life and culture which they see threatened.”<sup>85</sup> “Heroes in Spain,” however, issued an implicit challenge to many of his colleagues who, in their quest to put a tangible face on “revolution,” were producing quasi-hagiographic memoirs, fiction and journalism about fallen fighters. Spender used the strongest language in “Heroes in Spain” to condemn what he perceived to be the misuse of the memory of fallen fighters:

To say that those who happen to be killed are heroes is a wicked attempt to identify the dead with the abstract ideas which have brought them to the front, thus adding prestige to those ideas, which are used to lead the living on to similar ‘heroic’ deaths.<sup>86</sup>

Spender can be said to have missed entirely the ancient commemorative rituals that provided closure following conflict. To advocate intervention, and yet ignore the commemoration component of the war cycle was, ultimately, not a tenable position. A war with “few heroics,” was, indeed, an unsustainable war. Hence, the proliferation of commemorative poetry, such as Pablo Neruda’s “To the Mothers of the Dead Militia,”<sup>87</sup> demonstrated the necessity of justifying the sacrifice of the dead to the survivors. Spender’s point of view, however, did highlight the ambivalence with which the Left would continue to both hold war and the means by which the abandonment of pacifist or dovish tendencies was defended.

Authors such as Spender were still largely influenced by memory of the Great War and doubts as to the legitimacy of violence to bring about change.<sup>88</sup> The fact that

such equivocations became largely lost in the creation of a uniformly righteous cause is not surprising, given the construction of Spain as a struggle fundamental to the future of the world. *Left Review* contributor Julian Bell's comment that "I can't feel the slightest qualms about doing anything effective, however ungentlemanly and unchristian, nor about admitting to myself that certain actions would be very unfair,"<sup>89</sup> expressed worries that the anti-Fascists would, in fact, sink to the same moral level as their enemies. It was simply much less problematic, all round, to write of heroics, "roles of honour," and courageous sacrifice.

It is doubtful, however, whether intellectual or working-class volunteers viewed their participation in the terms the commemorative agents did. Margot Heinemann would later reject the charge that the majority of British volunteers, many of who she knew personally, were at all interested in glamorizing the war, considering them instead an army of anti-militarists. "If they strained to make themselves good and efficient soldiers, it was because the destruction of fascism seemed to require it, not because the soldierly character represented the finest type of human being."<sup>90</sup> The story of the "Jarama Song" illustrates the workings of the anti-heroic tradition on the front itself, and the subsequent assertion of heroism in commemorative literature. The tune, written by Scottish Brigadier Alec McDade, wryly grumbled about army staff, the wasting of manhood, and the interminable waiting that British Section soldiers endured. "Because of its humorous cynicism... it became popular in all battalions."<sup>91</sup> For the memorial edition of the British Battalion published in 1939, however, the words to the song were altered to suitably serious lines, reflecting the *gravitas* of the cause. "Wasted manhood," was transformed into a freely given manhood, and "brave comrades" who fell "in the

stand for the Freedom of Spain” were memorialized in a “stand to our glorious dead.”<sup>92</sup> The humour and anti-heroism of the front was, then, not the surviving image produced by those who safely eulogized fighters from journal offices in London. This is, however, not to suggest that there was only one “authentic” version of events. Feelings of the anti-heroic and heroic could, and did, co-exist. Battle survivors often expressed ambivalent attitudes, and it is important to remember that commemorative materials such as the British Battalion souvenir were largely fashioned by participants themselves.

Similar doubts about the creation of idealized heroes were certainly expressed on occasion by commentators, some of which found pro-Republican rallies eerily disturbing, with calls for an anti-Fascist “Holy War” reminiscent of scenes in 1914 when men had deployed to fight “for Liberty, for Democracy, and against Militarism.”<sup>93</sup> Others were sceptical of Leftist attempts to depict the Just War to save culture and civilization, since these were the same Leftists who had derided the Great War for purporting to support the same goals.<sup>94</sup> The construction of the “Holy War” against Fascism became an all-encompassing, secularized dogma that led to the famous disillusionment of participants such as Spender, and to a much greater extent, George Orwell.

Orwell returned from his Spanish experience a problematic figure to the Left. Something of a political naïf on arrival in Spain under the auspices of the Independent Labour Party,<sup>95</sup> he viewed the divided Leftist parties as common brothers in the anti-Fascist struggle. He found himself, however, fleeing not from the Fascists, but fellow Republicans who put down the breakaway P.O.U.M. (a quasi-Trotskyist anti-Stalinist

revolutionary faction) in May 1937. His account, *Homage to Catalonia*, denounced the Stalinist-backed crushing of proletariat revolution in Barcelona. Alternately criticized and ignored when published in 1938, the book sold barely 700 copies of its initial 1500 print run.<sup>96</sup> Orwell's focus on the atrocities of the Communist militias sat uneasily with the accepted narrative of Republican unity, of all being one in the struggle against Franco. Many otherwise sympathetic figures felt, at the very least, that a public insistence on publicizing divisions best left to simmer was both unnecessary and unseemly. The reaction of Communist Party stalwarts was best depicted by the *Daily Worker's* review, which painted *Homage to Catalonia* as "an honest picture of the sort of mentality that toys with revolutionary romanticism but shies at revolutionary discipline."<sup>97</sup> The "Holy War," then, could just as easily translate into a god-complex on the part of the self-appointed vanguard. *Homage to Catalonia* was, therefore, all the more conspicuous for recording events that were expunged from the mythology of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>98</sup>

### **Self-Identity and the British Volunteer**

Necessary to the depiction of the hero in Spain was a changing notion of masculinity, *British* masculinity in particular, and the sense of the "foreign" that Spain engendered. While members of the Left accustomed themselves to supporting the war, heroes emerged that both diverged from, and reflected, Imperial constructions of masculinity. The Leftist "picture of war was as falsely romantic, in its different way, as anything which had stirred the minds of Edwardian boys, brought up on Henty and the heroics of

minor Imperial campaigns,” according to participant Philip Toynbee.<sup>99</sup> The Spanish War provided a contrast between the “stoic and dependable” British volunteer, in contrast to the image of Latin military ineptitude. Exoticized depictions of Spain were evident, with many authors viewing the Spanish experience as a vibrant foil to the supposedly staid characterization of Anglo-Saxon culture. Benson maintains that intellectual fascination with Spain stemmed, not so much from “any exalted belief in the importance of the war for the future of mankind, but rather [from] the realization that something was lacking in their own culture.”<sup>100</sup> The narrative of “blood and soil” was essential to ideas of violence, nation, and defining self-identity in Spain. The September 1937 issue of *Left Review*, for example, included a feature on Spanish poets, who were portrayed as distinctly foreign: “Poetry is in the blood of the Spanish people, it acts directly and forcefully on their emotions.”<sup>101</sup> Identifying the exotic in Spain, then, related largely to contrasting supposed national and ethnic characteristics.

One such example is John Sommerfield’s “Spanish Diary,” a vividly written personal *reportage* on joining the International Column, with which Sommerfield saw action. At one point assumed dead on the front, Sommerfield returned to Britain in late 1936 to find his obituary being circulated. His writings exemplify what has been called the “rhetoric of violence” and “rhetoric of travel” of the 1930s, the Going-into-History that intellectuals imagined.<sup>102</sup> Geography and the crossing of the foreign frontier was a common theme in Spanish Front literature. Reminiscent of the Great War’s obsession with boundaries, frontiers, and the no-man’s-land of the front, accounts of Spain and military identity within the Brigades were intensely bound with the notion of the foreign.<sup>103</sup> Narratives of foreign intrigue and personal danger were rife in

Sommerfield's accounts; "Spanish Diary" constructed a literal blood and soil narrative. The Spanish, invariably rural villagers passed over by modernity, were essentialized as "those voices ringing with vitality, [they] communicated to us something more than enthusiasm, something really distilled from their blood and soil." A *tour de force* of Latin typology, Sommerfield's pertinent observations included singing and banner carrying peasants, a band playing "a cheerful tang lilt," and railway stations described as "sultry and vegetable." The breathless depiction of arrival in Spain as "something dreamlike, something utterly fantastic," spoke to the fantasy aspects of the travelling hero.<sup>104</sup>

The literature of the Spain was, in fact, full of blood and blood red imagery, relating to notions of violence and the nation—bloodier even than horrors depicted in the poetry of the First World War.<sup>105</sup> Sommerfield viewed the traditional redness of Spain in the "blazing red" Communist flag mirrored by the "great bunches of ripe grapes" and the wine served to the travellers in remote villages.<sup>106</sup> Cornford's injunction to "Raise the red flag triumphantly" was, however, in other more violent poetic depictions of Spain drowned by images of the "blood-caked plains where the Spaniards fight," red skies, and the "bleeding sea."<sup>107</sup> The shedding of British blood on foreign soil for the Just War was an important ideological shift for the Left. The notion, furthermore, of redemption through the shedding of blood was a facet of the quasi-religious construction of Spain. Hence, a necessary notion of the Just War, killing the enemy to arrest an implacable evil, necessarily replaced the strict pacifism of refusing to shed blood. Orwell's promise to kill at least one Fascist in Spain because "after all, if



each of us killed one they would soon be extinct,” was emblematic of the “New Barbarism,” as T.C. Worsley saw it.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the intertwining of blood, death and heroism, *Left Review* was careful to downplay the depiction of Spain as a site for Anglo-Saxon adventure: “The death of Ralph Fox as well as of the other young Englishmen with him can only be understood if it is made entirely clear that this was not an adventure, not the result of quixotic temper, nor spleen, nor rashness, but that these men valued what they gave freely.”<sup>109</sup> Spain, then, despite its interpretation through the lens of the exotic and the foreign, was not an event of soldier adventuring for rash revolutionaries but a serious political activity, invoking the militia hero. The personal writings of authors such as Sommerfield, on the other hand, support the view of British volunteers engaged in an intense, and intensely *foreign*, experience. Not unlike earlier colonial narratives, the experience was only heightened by war, the possibility of physical danger, and the presence of cataclysmic political upheaval.

Indeed, the intervention of the Left in Spain through the British Section of the International Brigades can be viewed as a subtle mirroring of the British Imperial narrative. This is not to suggest that colonialism and anti-Fascist conflict were similar, but to explore how each appropriated notions of a positive, and just, mission. Imperial heroes, Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, of the Indian Mutiny, or Gordon at the siege of Khartoum, are examples of the construction of courageous and adventuresome figures of traditional nationalist narrative. The notion of the stalwart British colonialist resisting the primitive “other” conveniently corresponded to imposing cultural ideals and traditions on colonized nations.<sup>110</sup> Arguably, volunteers in Spain claimed an

alternate link with the icons of their collective socialist past, while simultaneously employing the heroic imagery of the Imperial myth.

The 1939 British Battalion commemorative pamphlet illustrated the bridging of Spain, the socialist tradition, and British manhood. Death in isolated Jarama was linked with and noble traditions and values of Britain, and the introductory pages portrayed idealistic images of British cities and countryside, and the working proletariat and intellectuals united without class distinctions.

Out of the Proud traditions of Britain's past they came. Part of the long struggle for freedom...our modern bearers of Britain's great traditions came forward in answer to the call, ready to give their lives that freedom might live.<sup>111</sup>

The “traditions” that were memorialized referred to the radical—Byron, the Chartist struggle, and Keir Hardie—heroes and events emblematic of socialism. Contributors praised the “magnificent heroism of the British Battalion,” the members of which “typified the real Briton's hatred of the tyrant.” The epilogue predicted wider conflict and castigated the government for allowing and encouraging Fascist aggression, relating the experience of Spain once again to the future of British democracy. The failed Popular Front conflict was viewed as a training ground for fighters and revolutionaries, but more importantly, the pledge to defend Britain more resolutely than Spain had been defended was strongly expressed in the epilogue. The statement that “our fight for world-peace is carried on now under the flag not of Spanish but British democracy,”<sup>112</sup> brought the Spanish experience back to the more familiar territory of home. If the 1930s had represented Going-into-History, the end of the decade brought a returning of the travel narrative to Britain, and a reappraisal of where Leftist war ideology stood.

## Contradictions and Legacies

By *Left Review*'s demise in early 1938, after the horrors of the bombing of Guernica, and during Hitler's intimidation of Czechoslovakia, Leftist debate had shifted away from "war against war," towards questions of how best to counter Fascism. After Spain, the certainty of a wider conflict was considered a reluctant necessity, a crisis that could not be avoided through rhetoric or collective security alone. The League of Nations, the Common Front, and calls for anti-appeasement all being a dead letter within a year of Franco's decisive victory, complex identity negotiations were no longer a supportable luxury. Orwell's phrase "My country Right or Left" was a sentiment that clearly found resonance, despite the suspicion with which many Leftists held his other political views. It is important to remember, however, that of the three major Leftist parties in Britain in 1939, only Labour clearly supported the war, representing the vast majority of Leftist voters. The Independent Labour Party opposed it as an imperialist war, and the Communist Party shifted from support to opposition.

One prominent example of a "reconverted pacifist" was Fabian Margaret Cole, the sister of WWI conscientious objector Raymond Postgate. An editor of *Fact*, a small journal that appeared from 1937 to 1939, Cole prominently supported the Second World War effort. Perhaps the fate of George Lansbury, Leftist Labour MP and publisher, best illustrates the demise of the unrepentant pacifist political constituency. As a Christian pacifist, Lansbury was consistently opposed to using violence to bring Fascist power to heel. When Italy invaded Abyssinia he refused to support military force through the League of Nations, and spent the late 1930s attempting to prevent a European war.

After meeting Adolf Hitler, he believed it was still possible to reach a mutual compromise. Lansbury died, a disillusioned man, on 7th May, 1940, just days before Hitler's blitzkrieg through the Low Countries and France would shatter the "phoney war" and the hopes for peace which a few remaining pacifists had clung to, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

The question remains of how reconstituted Leftist ideology contributed to support of the Second World War, and to consider the legacy of war perspectives as played out in publications such as *Left Review*. Unfortunately, most of the journals of its type had disappeared by 1940, leaving no possibility of wartime comparison. Most of the major contributors to *Left Review* supported the war effort, but some, like Edgell Rickword, were too haunted by the false promises for which they had fought the Great War to shoulder the sacrifices again demanded by a failed and discredited government.<sup>113</sup> The Left Book Club, however, continued until the late 1940s, and diverged into a distinctly mainstream wartime path with its "Victory Books" series. The best known of these, *Guilty Men*, by "Cato,"<sup>114</sup> brutally indicted the appeasers of the 1930s, while asserting the heroism of British soldiers betrayed by their political leaders. In time of war, apparently, simple narrative would suffice: "This land of Britain is rich in heroes. She had brave, daring men in her Navy and Air Force as well as in her Army."<sup>115</sup>

Hand wringing over the lack of war preparation was, perhaps, indicative of the contradictory noises from the Left, attempting to capitalize on the mere fact that it had opposed appeasement and warned of Fascist intentions. The fact that most Leftists had simultaneously opposed martial preparation could be conveniently deflected with their

record on non-intervention. The Left Book Club clearly saw itself, from the late 1930s, as a voice “against war and Fascism.” The notion, however, that war might be essential to prevent Fascism was seriously resisted. An 1939 Left Book Club feature, *Why We are Losing the Peace* by “Vigilantes”<sup>116</sup> featured an introduction by future Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who proposed that “the £1,500,000,000 Arms Bill, which this country is being asked to meet, is precipitating a new and greater arms race in Europe.”<sup>117</sup> It was, therefore, ironic that the Left Book Club would publish *Guilty Men*, one of the most popular booklets of the war—“the story of an Army doomed *before* they took the field” due to a lack of vital military equipment.<sup>118</sup>

Popular author and Leftist J.B. Priestley’s concept of the “People’s War,” as a phrase describing the Second World War, represented the best articulation of national identity and purpose. Priestley had advocated at many rallies for aid to Republican Spain, although he was not a prominent figure of the cause.<sup>119</sup> The ideals of the “People’s War” stemmed directly from the Spanish Civil War insofar as popular figures such as Priestley gave the British a unifying and optimistic ideology, one that praised the heroism of the ordinary people. Priestley’s famous wartime *Postscripts* on the BBC were infused with a populist ideology, which was carefully critical of the ruling class and its pre-war failure without undermining the present National government. His Dunkirk address is best remembered for praise of “the ordinary British folk... whose courage, patience and humour stand like a rock above the dark morass of treachery, cowardice and panic.”<sup>120</sup>

This war also involved a feeling of civilian participation in the cause through home front sacrifice, the Home Guard, and the civilian flotilla that participated in the

rescue of Dunkirk. As such, many of the notions advanced by the Republican cause in Spain, such as civilian fighters, poets, artists and working-class Britons in arms, broadened the range of what was considered heroic. Hence, even non-combatants could lay claim to a role in the "People's War" and the heroism of the ordinary people. Priestley expressed the nationalism and the heroism of the individual more powerfully than could the intellectual version of the Warrior Poet. As a popular, rather than a highbrow, author Priestley reflected the discourse of the citizen soldier in the Just War. Reflecting a growing mainstream Labour electorate, the narrative of the "People's War" was also a useful construct that coalesced public longings for an altered postwar Britain, one which was more socially just.<sup>121</sup> The "reward" of post-war Labour social programs for the "sacrifice" of war did link warfare with the advance of socialism, though in a way that neither Ralph Fox nor John Cornford might have imagined. Hence, the Spanish Civil War and Leftist engagement in anti-Fascist conflict gave the Left legitimacy, purpose, and a mandate for replacing the "guilty men" as national leaders.

## Conclusions

Revolutions required leaders, and revolutionary leadership required heroes of the Ralph Fox variety—brave, politically committed, ideological, conscious of the gravity of events such as Spain and passionate about the fusion of all these characteristics. Fox's comrades who described his "shouting from sheer joy in battle"<sup>122</sup> were defining the essence of the Just War. Within the totality of twentieth century wars, the Spanish Civil War is a minor conflict in terms of scope and scale, men and machinery. Yet it has

filled a disproportionate amount of intellectual space as an event invested with extraordinary appeal to writers and intellectuals—an equivalent to the Greek War of Independence, Byron's cause, or the Italian Risorgimento. Stanley Weintraub has asserted "never since has a cause so captured the moral and physical influence of so many makers and molders of the language." For Leftists in particular, no other military cause has been construed as so firmly just and absolute.<sup>123</sup>

The tension between pacifism and heroism, as expressed by Stephen Spender, and the search for a coherent and compelling narrative is evident in *Left Review*. John Cornford's observation that "No wars are nice. *Even a revolutionary war is ugly enough*" [emphasis added],<sup>124</sup> reflected the conflicted attitudes many Leftists held towards violence, even after Spain. It was perhaps inevitable that the Spanish Civil War would be constructed as a simple battle between Fascism and democracy, since the event contained the propaganda specifications for which the Left had been searching within the political uncertainties of the 1930s. Therefore, the idealization of Spain allowed the pacifist Left redemption and readmission into the anti-Fascist and patriotic mainstream in anticipation of a Europe-wide conflict. *Left Review's* particular idea of the inseparability of the intellectual and writer from political activity was evident in every issue, most particularly in its advocacy for Spanish democracy. The intellectual at war became a means of enhancing the credibility of both the intellectual's politics and creative work. The issue of intellectual dilettantism was, however, certainly a sensitive issue for many participants. They did not want to be mere holiday visitors to the front, or to, as Louis MacNeice admitted, travel to Spain merely for "egotistical" motives or "sensation-hunting."<sup>125</sup>

Montagu Slater's eulogy to Charles Donnelly quoted Edward Upward in saying that "in revolutions and major wars do fundamental realities come to the surface of life."<sup>126</sup> The Spanish Civil War, a source for both political and intellectual stimulation, was also a search for unity and coherence. Spain, above all, was the Left's attempt to follow the dictum of Matthew Arnold, quoted in *Left Review* by C. Day Lewis: "Culture has one great passion—the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater, the passion for making them prevail."<sup>127</sup> To the Left, conflicted and contradictory as ideology and politics were, the determination was clear that, to use the infamous phrase of the reviled appeaser Neville Chamberlain, Spain would not merely be a "far off country of which we know nothing."

<sup>1</sup> *Left Review* (London), February 1937, 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Margot Heinemann, "The People's Front and the Intellectuals" in *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, ed. Jim Fyrth (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 157-186, and Margot Heinemann, "Louis MacNeice, John Cornford and Clive Branson: Three Left Wing Poets" in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties*, in Jon Clark, Margot Heinemann, David Margolies and Carole Snee, eds. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), 103-132. Margot Heinemann, "English Poetry and the War in Spain: Some Records of a Generation" in *"No Pasaran!" Art, Literature and the Spanish Civil War*, Stephen M Hart ed. (London: Tamesis Books Limited, 1988), 46-64, and Frederick R. Benson, *Writers in Arms: The Literary Impact of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1967). See also Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause: The Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> Margot Heinemann, "English Poetry and the War in Spain," 53.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick R. Benson, *Writers in Arms*, xix.

<sup>6</sup> Margot Heinemann "The People's Front and the Intellectuals," 157.

<sup>7</sup> John Baxendale and Christopher Pawling, *Narrating the Thirties: A Decade in the Making: 1930 to the Present* (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1996). Baxendale and Pawling argue that the 1930s have been constructed according to post-war politics and desires, and thus labels such as the "Red Decade" are more indicative of contemporary society than the decade itself.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63 and chapter 3. Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain: c. 1881-1951* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 125. Laybourn argues that "socialism in Britain during the interwar years went little further than the pragmatic policies that Ernest Bevin, the British trade union movement and the moderate Labour politicians would allow."



- <sup>9</sup> Keith Laybourn, *Britain on the Breadline: A Social and Political History of Britain Between the Wars* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1990), 124.
- <sup>10</sup> John Baxendale and Christopher Pawling, *Narrating the Thirties*, 145.
- <sup>11</sup> Frederick R. Benson, *Writers in Arms*, 7.
- <sup>12</sup> Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 29.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature and Society: Elite and Mass Culture in Interwar Britain* (Croom Helm: London, 1987), 206.
- <sup>14</sup> Charles Hobday, *Edgell Rickword: A Poet at War* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989), 159.
- <sup>15</sup> For analysis of *Left Review* and Marxist critical theory see David Margolies, ed., *Writing the Revolution: Cultural Criticism from 'Left Review'* (London: Pluto Press: London, 1998). Also see Margot Heinemann "The People's Front and the Intellectuals" and Hanna Behrend, "An Intellectual Irrelevance? Marxist Literary Criticism in the 1930s" in *A Weapon in the Struggle: The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain*, Andy Croft, ed., (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 106-122.
- <sup>16</sup> Stuart Laing, "Presenting 'Things as they are': John Sommerfield's May Day and Mass Observation" in *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*, Frank Gloversmith, ed., (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980), 142.
- <sup>17</sup> *Left Review*, May 1935, 364-5.
- <sup>18</sup> *Left Review*, October 1934, 38.
- <sup>19</sup> *Left Review*, June 1935, 364.
- <sup>20</sup> David Margolies, ed., *Writing the Revolution*, and David Margolies, "Left Review and Left Literary Theory," in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties*, Jon Clark et al., 67-82.
- <sup>21</sup> John Lucas, "Edgell Rickword: Man of letters," *Sewanee Review*, 102 (Winter 1994): 112-122. Julian Symons and Valentine Cunningham are examples of authors who viewed *Left Review* as narrowly propagandist. Lucas argues the journal's ideology was far more complex, and that of all the short-lived independent journals of the era, *Left Review* should rightly be regarded as containing the largest amount of first-class literary material.
- <sup>22</sup> Charles Hobday, *Edgell Rickword*, chapter ten.
- <sup>23</sup> David Margolies, ed., *Writing the Revolution*, 21-22.
- <sup>24</sup> Sheila Hodges, *Gollancz: The Story of a Publishing House 1928-1978* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1978).
- <sup>25</sup> Martin Ceadel *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 193. Ceadel's work remains among the most comprehensive works on pacifism and pacifist factions.
- <sup>26</sup> Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 88.
- <sup>27</sup> Philip Toynbee, *Friends Apart* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980 [1954]) quoted in Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 89.
- <sup>28</sup> Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 57.
- <sup>29</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 450.
- <sup>30</sup> Charles Madge in *Left Review*, October 1934, 12.
- <sup>31</sup> *Left Review*, October 1934, 12.
- <sup>32</sup> *Left Review*, October 1934, 16.
- <sup>33</sup> *Left Review*, November 1934, 13.
- <sup>34</sup> Margot Heinemann, "English Poetry and the War in Spain," 48.
- <sup>35</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 424.
- <sup>36</sup> *Left Review*, November 1934, 47.
- <sup>37</sup> Apparently a pacifist work by R. and B. Donnington.
- <sup>38</sup> *Left Review*, May 1936, 402.
- <sup>39</sup> Steve Nicolson, *British Theatre and the Red Peril: The Portrayal of Communism 1917-1945* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 81.
- <sup>40</sup> Katharine Bail Hoskins, *Today the Struggle: Literature and Politics in England During the Spanish Civil War* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969).
- <sup>41</sup> For one example, see the back cover of *Left Review*, October 1936.
- <sup>42</sup> Thomas William Heyck, "Myths and Meanings of Intellectuals in Twentieth Century British National Identity," *Journal of British Studies* 37 (April 1998): 192-221, 194.

- <sup>43</sup> *Left Review*, February 1935, 177. Montagu Slater also criticized a popular film on the life of Henry VIII in *Left Review*, January 1935, 144.
- <sup>44</sup> Valentine Cunningham "Neutral? 1930s Writers and Taking Sides" in *Class, Culture and Social Change*, Frank Gloversmith, ed., 45-69.
- <sup>45</sup> C. Day Lewis, *We're Not Going to Do Nothing: A Reply to Mr. Aldous Huxley's Pamphlet "What are you Going to do About it?"* (London: Left Review, 1936)
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> *Criterion* (London), January 1937, 289-90 and April 1937, 473.
- <sup>48</sup> Clifford Dymont, *C. Day Lewis* (London: British Council and National Book League, 1955), 13-14.
- <sup>49</sup> *Left Review*, October 1936, 671-4.
- <sup>50</sup> *Left Review*, December 1936, 794-796.
- <sup>51</sup> *Left Review*, January 1937, 857.
- <sup>52</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 89.
- <sup>53</sup> *Left Review*, March 1937.
- <sup>54</sup> *Left Review*, May 1937, 223.
- <sup>55</sup> *Left Review*, March 1937, 103.
- <sup>56</sup> George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1952 [1938]), 8-9.
- <sup>57</sup> *Left Review*, December 1934, 83.
- <sup>58</sup> *Left Review*, June 1935, 391. The article was re-published in the posthumous collection *Ralph Fox: Writer in Arms*, John Lehmann, T.A. Jackson, and C. Day Lewis, eds., (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), 88-95.
- <sup>59</sup> *Left Review*, June 1935, 391.
- <sup>60</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 440.
- <sup>61</sup> Tom Buchanan, "The Lost Art of Felicia Browne," *History Workshop Journal* 54 (Autumn 2002): 180-201, 195. Buchanan's article is one of the first in-depth accounts of Felicia Browne; her art, and actions in Spain.
- <sup>62</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 444.
- <sup>63</sup> *Left Review*, April 1938 (final issue editorial), 957-960.
- <sup>64</sup> Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature, and Society*, 206.
- <sup>65</sup> *Left Review*, March 1937, 65.
- <sup>66</sup> Ian MacDougall, ed., *Voices from the Spanish Civil War: Personal Recollections of Scottish Volunteers in Republican Spain 1936-9* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1986), 140.
- <sup>67</sup> *Left Review*, July 1937, 319.
- <sup>68</sup> *Left Review*, February 1937, 3.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ralph Fox: A Writer In Arms*, John Lehmann et al., eds., 3-12.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid, 13-4.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid, 5.
- <sup>72</sup> Many intellectuals of the 1930s were self-conscious of their own class. Some, like Christopher Caudwell, veiled their bourgeois roots by changing their names. George Orwell, similarly, once again passed as "Eric Blair" in Spain. Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 439-40.
- <sup>73</sup> *Left Review*, May 1937, 194. Also see Douglas Garman's eulogy for Christopher St. John Sprigg, *Left Review*, July 1937, 352-4.
- <sup>74</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause*, 39.
- <sup>75</sup> Margot Heinemann, "Louis MacNeice, John Cornford and Clive Branson," 116.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid, 120-22.
- <sup>77</sup> *Left Review*, November 1936. See also Margot Heinemann, "Louis MacNeice, John Cornford and Clive Branson," 125.
- <sup>78</sup> *Left Review*, March 1937, 79-86.
- <sup>79</sup> Stephen Spender, *New Statesman* (London), May 1, 1937.
- <sup>80</sup> Spender Spender, *War Within World*, 208-9, quoted in Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 48.
- <sup>81</sup> Charles Hobday, *Edgell Rickword*, 159.
- <sup>82</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 428-9.

- <sup>83</sup> Stephen Spender, "The Will to Live," a review of *John Cornford: A Memoir*, ed. Pat Sloan, (1938), *New Statesman* (12 November 1938): 772, quoted in Valentine Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 25.
- <sup>84</sup> Auden was reluctant to speak of his experiences in Spain, and was troubled by many things he saw and heard, such as the closing of churches and the treatment of priests. Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 72.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.
- <sup>86</sup> Stephen Spender, *New Statesman*, May 1, 1937.
- <sup>87</sup> *Left Review*, April 1937.
- <sup>88</sup> Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature and Society*, 212.
- <sup>89</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 428.
- <sup>90</sup> Margot Heinemann, "English Poetry and the War in Spain," 53.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>92</sup> *British Battalion XV International Brigade: Memorial Souvenir* (London: Marston Printing Company, 1939), 29.
- <sup>93</sup> Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 155.
- <sup>94</sup> Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 89.
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.
- <sup>96</sup> Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 293-4.
- <sup>97</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 427.
- <sup>98</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause*, delineates reaction to Orwell and his views of his Spanish experience in chapter three, "Homage to Utopia: Orwell in Catalonia."
- <sup>99</sup> Philip Toynbee, *Friends Apart*, quoted in Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 89.
- <sup>100</sup> Frederick R. Benson, *Writers in Arms*, xix.
- <sup>101</sup> *Left Review*, September 1937, 455-460.
- <sup>102</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 431-4.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>104</sup> *Left Review*, March 1937, 75-8.
- <sup>105</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 425.
- <sup>106</sup> *Left Review*, March 1937, 76-7.
- <sup>107</sup> Respectively, John Cornford, "Full Moon at Tirez," Ruthven Todd, "Christmas Present 1937," and George Barker, "Elegy of Spain." Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 425-6.
- <sup>108</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 421-4.
- <sup>109</sup> *Left Review*, February 1937, 4.
- <sup>110</sup> Mrinalini Sinha illustrates the political imperatives of constructing the British colonizer as more masculine than the colonized male in *Colonial Masculinity: 'The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). See also Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- <sup>111</sup> *British Battalion XV International Brigade: Memorial Souvenir*.
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>113</sup> Charles Hobday, *Edgell Rickword*, 216-8.
- <sup>114</sup> "Cato" consisted of Michael Foote, Frank Owen and Peter Howard—left-leaning Beaverbrook journalists.
- <sup>115</sup> "Cato," *Guilty Men* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1941), 11.
- <sup>116</sup> "Vigilantes," *Why We are Losing the Peace: The National Government's Foreign Policy: Its Causes, Consequences and Cure* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1939). Vigilantes was K. Zilliacus, a Leftist economist.
- <sup>117</sup> *The Road to War: Being an Analysis of the National Government's Foreign Policy* (London: Published for the New Fabian Research Bureau by Victor Gollancz Ltd.), 1937.
- <sup>118</sup> "Cato," *Guilty Men*, 16.
- <sup>119</sup> Margot Heinemann, "English Poetry and the War in Spain," 47.
- <sup>120</sup> J.B. Priestley, *Postscripts* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1941)

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<sup>121</sup> John Baxendale and Christopher Pawling, *Narrating the Thirties*, 129.

<sup>122</sup> *Ralph Fox: Writer in Arms*, John Lehmann et al., eds., 156.

<sup>123</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause*, 2.

<sup>124</sup> *John Cornford: A Memoir*, ed. Pat Sloan (1938), 242, quoted in Valentine Cunningham, ed., *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 91.

<sup>125</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, 444.

<sup>126</sup> *Left Review*, July 1937, 319.

<sup>127</sup> *Left Review*, November 1936, 742.

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