New Perspectives on Imagology

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on Imagology

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Enmity, Identity, Discourse: Imagology and the State

Joep Leerssen

Abstract

Imagological analysis can be fruitfully applied to political discourse, most importantly the discourse of international antagonism and national self-positioning used in government decision-making circles. Historians studying that discourse have tended to see its rhetoric of national characterization merely as a distracting accompaniment to actual, factually driven policies and developments. This, it is argued here, questionably presupposes that those policies were never driven by anything but cerebral reasons of state (such as these are seen by latter-day historians); it makes us unduly heedless of an important historical corpus throwing light on the force of emotive and national prejudice in policymaking.

Keywords

1 The Discourse of Enmity

The decades around 1900 saw one of the most momentous turnarounds in European international relations: Britain moved from a close, albeit nonformalized sympathetic relationship with Germany toward an *entente cordiale* with France. In 1815 at Waterloo, Wellington and Blücher had faced a French imperial enemy together. In 1914 at Ypres, Haig and D'Urbal faced a German imperial enemy together.

Such realignments are not performed swiftly or fluidly, but only under the massive force of tectonic power shifts and accompanied by the loud groans of a public opinion that reverses its long-accustomed sympathies and antipathies. The transmutation of Germany and England in each other's eyes from

family to foe remains a problem area of abiding interest, even decades after Paul Kennedy's 1980 benchmark *The Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (witness the more recent study by Richard Scully, *British Images of Germany* (2012)).

Diplomatic historians and historians of international relations continue to work in that field and produce a steady flow of publications on the run-up to 1914; this is partly due to the lasting bewilderment of how Europe, after decades of peace, could so suddenly and recklessly throw itself (or else "sleepwalk") into a world war. Fresh research is also periodically occasioned by commemorations, such as the centenary events in 2014, or the continuing aftershocks of Fritz Fischer's *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18* of 1961, which itself had its anniversary noted in 2011.

Fischer's book came as a massive challenge to the German post-1945 historiographical consensus that Germany had entered the war largely on a defensive agenda, aiding its ally Austria and trying to prevent a stifling encirclement by the Triple Entente. Fischer argued instead that expansionist imperialism had been formative in German political thinking for decades prior to 1914 and that it was no less formative in Germany's preconceived war aims. Having risen to the status of a major European power through the Bismarck-plotted wars of 1864–1871, Germany now wanted to take its place as a world power by crushing its Continental rivals and forcing Britain to accede to its colonial ambitions. German historians who were reluctant to adopt Fischer's unflattering account argued that such triumphalist, annexationist-hegemonic war aims as were bruited about were specious: only formulated *ad hoc* in the heady days when victory seemed assured, by the more volatile segments of Germany's government and public opinion, and thus unrepresentative of actual state policy.

The historiographical debate is thus dominated by the relentless vexed question as to the true nature of the German war aims, *wie sie eigentlich gewesen*. That question is probably unanswerable, since these war aims shifted with the rising and falling fortunes of the war itself, were subject to mixed feelings and semiconscious ulterior motives, and were contested by differing elements within Germany's army command, government, and public opinion; with at the apex of all this the notoriously vacillating and hysterically self-contradictory personality of the kaiser himself.

More problematically, though perhaps unavoidably, the debate around the German war aims perpetuates a very similar debate within the archival record and the primary documentation—and what is worse, historians rarely seem to acknowledge the extent to which their research questions recycle the propaganda debates of 1914–1915.

In the intense propaganda and crisscrossing accusations that accompanied the armed hostilities,[1] the German war aims were already one of the central bones of contention. The invasion of neutral Belgian territory in a pre-emptive strike at France was indignantly pointed out by Britain, France, and Belgium itself as a sign of Germany's aggressive perfidy; Germany's self-justification was that once the Sarajevo assassination had triggered the Austrian-Russian war, Germany had been reluctantly driven to this pre-emptive strike, a regrettable war-strategic necessity, by the hostile moves of its enemies.

German historians had, until Fischer's intervention, evinced little appetite to hold that self-justification up to critical scrutiny. But Germany's enemies had tried to punch holes in it from the beginning. Fischer's book was, in fact, foreshadowed by a documentation exercise compiled by none other than Emile Durkheim, together with his fellow-*normalien* Ernest Denis, entitled *Qui a voulu la guerre?*, published in 1915, which minutely traced diplomatic traffic in the weeks leading up to the ultimatums of 1914. The conclusion was that the war had been deliberately and aggressively provoked and engineered by Austria and, above all, Germany.

For a piece of war propaganda, that conclusion is unsurprising. What is more surprising is that the painstaking diplomatic documentation exercise by Durkheim and Denis remained so completely overlooked by historians (including the Germans) that the Fischer thesis seemed to appear out of thin air in 1961. Similarly overlooked was Durkheim's tract *L'Allemagne au-dessus de tout*, which as early as 1915 drew attention to the pre-1914 current of triumphalist unilateralism and social Darwinist nationalism in Wilhelminian Germany.[2]

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1   For a source collection, see http://show.ernie.uva.nl/greatwar. Throughout this article material from the *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (2018a), in its online version at ernie.uva.nl, will be made use of and referred to by way of URLs.

2   Although that tract (with its title sarcastically quoting Hoffmann von Fallersleben's *Lied der Deutschen*) can by no means be considered sound impartial scholarship, it exposes, and validly so, a number of pre-1914 German sources which aggressively advocate *Weltpolitik* ambitions and annexationism. Durkheim incisively analyses these as to their unilateralism, their social Darwinism (as we would call it nowadays), and their insistence that the sole arbiter as to the means by which Germany may pursue its national interests, including its rise to the status of a major world power, is Germany itself. Durkheim conveniently looks away from the fact that these were not purely "German" character flaws and that examples of such a mentality might be found much closer to home; but he does provide, beyond his propagandistic denunciation of a *mentalité allemande*, a very early analysis of the discourse of self-serving unilateralism as such, be it in Wilhelminian Germany, George W. Bush's USA, Netanyahu's Israel, or Erdoğan's Turkey. Durkheim's critique ties in with his general identification of *anomie* as a problem of modernity: the tendency to act solely on the basis of one's own will to self-realization, and not on the basis of any externally imposed moral or legal order. On Durkheim and *anomie*, see LaCapra (1972).

Tracts like General Friedrich von Bernhardi's *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (1912, six editions by 1913), though pointed out as incriminating evidence by French propagandists like Durkheim, and subsequently ignored by historians dismissive of war propaganda, would come back like acid reflux to haunt the Fischer Controversy after 1961.

Similarly, the Fischer thesis revolves around questions already raised in what for international historians is one of the key documents in the rise of British-German antagonism: the memorandum written in 1907 by Eyre Crowe (1928), a Whitehall official for Lord Grey. Crowe painstakingly outlines the shifting power balance in recent decades, noting a steady encroachment of German foreign policy on British forbearance in international affairs: he identifies a pattern of expansionist colonial claims being staked by German diplomats in the mode of grievances troubling the country's friendship with Britain, and only allowing these grievances to be assuaged once they have been met by British concessions. Crowe goes as far as to liken this to the returning demands of a blackmailer, and warns against something that in later decades would come to be termed "appeasement." A long-term continuity is outlined, from Friedrich II and Bismarck engineering Prussia's rise to the rank of European power to Wilhelminian Germany now trying to engineer a rise to colonial world power. There is a crux in reconciling the former phase as being a rational, deliberate process and the latter as driven by the notorious irrational volatility of Wilhelm II, but Crowe's conclusion is stark: the competitive and hectoring ("minatory") attitude that is shaping up now (in 1907) must either be stopped in its tracks by a firm British rebuff or will else lead, sooner or later, to war.

This was formulated seven years before 1914 by a diplomat who would later continue in a senior capacity in Whitehall (cf. Dunn 2013) and whose thinking would in 1940 inform Vansittart's denunciations of Hitler Germany as a logical continuation of Wilhelminian chauvinism (cf. Vansittart 1941). Crowe's document foreshadows the Fischer thesis very closely, and as a result, its reliability and representativity (and that of Crowe himself) have been debated by historians as a proxy for impugning or endorsing the Fischer thesis itself. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (1973), for example, pointing out the divisions within Germany's government and society, traces the different historical schools interpreting Germany's pre-1914 foreign policy very much along the lines of opposition that would have been at work among German foreign policymakers and commentators at the time, each trend generating its own historical exegetes as it were. He demurs from Fischer's *Griff nach der Weltmacht* thesis by stating that it foregrounds what was in fact only one among many attitudes and ignores the "forces of moderation" (Mommsen 1973, 14)—against which it may be pointed out that it was not the "forces of moderation" that carried the

day in August 1914. One of the best recent historians of the diplomatic run-up
to 1914, Andreas Rose ([2011] 2017), scrutinizes Crowe's personality and hints
that his German family links and character diminished his credit as a figure
of influence at Whitehall: rather than a dispassionate observer of what really
went on in Germany at the centres of governmental decision-making, people
like him took superficial opinions at face value; the memorandum itself was
prone to stereotyping and smacked of anti-German propaganda.[3]

Upon reading Crowe's document I found it much less pig-headed and
stereotypical than Rose made it out to be—given the sort of material that
was circulating at that period.[4] Was there perhaps a tendency at work to hold
"suspect" source material up to a purportedly higher truth?—that higher truth
being: government policy *wie sie eigentlich gewesen*, away from the sound and
fury of vulgar jingoism or impressionable sideliners, accessible only to the inner
circle of government decision-makers and cool-headed historians with access
to their archives. Historians, with their professional ethos of cool-headedness,
appear sometimes to be almost congenitally predisposed to discountenance
as ephemeral and superficial those opinions, even on the part of scholars and
diplomats as authoritative as Durkheim or Crowe, in which traces of political
emotion may be said to vitiate the reliability of sober calculation.

That impression on my part was reinforced when Christopher Clarke, in
his foreword to the English translated edition of Rose's book, second-guesses
the past in characteristic fashion by observing that "The German war-scares
that periodically crackled across the British press had less to do with objective
dangers than with inter-service rivalries and the battle for resources between
the Army and the Navy" (Clarke 2017, xiv). We salute Clarke's superior under-
standing, which chimes with some observations in Kennedy's chapter on "The

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3   Rose argues that British foreign policy was more concerned with Russia than with German
    Weltpolitik, and that public apprehensions of German belligerence were largely phobic in
    nature.

4   Crowe's ethnocentrism comes through at every turn, especially in describing the actions of
    foreign powers as the wayward undertakings of countries-as-such and those of British as the
    solid policy implementations by government officials; but there are only a few national eth-
    notypes at work, the most salient of these being directed against the French: "He [Théophile
    Delcassé, French foreign minister 1898–1905] had not counted on the capabilities for taking
    alarm and for working itself into a panic which reside in the nervous breast of an unprepared
    French public, nor on the want of loyalty characteristic of French statesmen in their attitude
    to each other" (Crowe 1928). In all other parts, Crowe reflects on the policies of the German
    Empire as a state, explaining these wholly as political strategies without any national-
    psychological explanations. That he discerns a long-term expansionist policy of establishing
    Prussia/Germany among the Great Powers may be commonplace, but it does not in itself, at
    least not in 1907, amount to a "stereotype."

Impulse and Orchestration of Patriotism" (1980, chap. 19); but it is odd, then, that Prime Minister Asquith, who presumably had access to the relevant information, bought into the invasion scaremongering of William Le Queux (more on him below). That earns Asquith the sarcasm of Rose, who feels that the opprobrium of the prime minister's gullibility is exacerbated by the fact that Le Queux was such a very inferior writer (Rose [2011] 2017, 55). Such literary value judgements do not, however, settle the matter. Granted that Le Queux was a hack and his adepts were hysterics, what gave their phobia such emotional traction with the highest government minister of the realm, and what does this tell us about the mobilizing force of jingoistic moral panics? There is much more to the jingoistic storm of 1907–1911 as surveyed by Kennedy than what Clarke culls from it—indeed Rose, to do him justice, provides an excellent chapter on Le Queux's influence (ibid., 51–58). Phobias, poor writing, poor taste, and poor judgement, while they may misapprehend the actual nature of developments, do not nullify the actions which they motivate; any pogrom victim, and a good few war casualties, can testify to that. It may be the historian's task to strive for a proper understanding of things, *rerum cognoscere causas*; but historians should curb their high-handedness when facing those moments when things were driven by an improper understanding of things, *rerum fallere naturam*. The operative agency of foolishness and misapprehensions should, on the contrary, be very carefully studied, for it is from the errors of the past more than from the hindsight of historians that we can learn.

The political mobilization and impact of national phobias, often by means of journalism or fictional literature, stereotypes, violent opinions, and prejudices, brings us to the core business of imagology.[5] Indeed, the rise of Anglo-German antagonism has led to at least one imagological classic, Peter E. Firchow's *The Death of the German Cousin* (1986).[6] Mommsen's anti-Fischer comment in this respect was quite suggestive, that he "draws the conclusions rather from what people said than from what they actually did" (Mommsen 1973, 14). It struck me that in quite a few cases, "what people said" was in fact exactly what they

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5   An extensive introduction to the theory and methods of imagology is unnecessary in this book. I refer to my articles "The Rhetoric of National Character" (2000), and "Imagology: On Invoking Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World" (2016). Various technical concepts (ethnotypes, auto-/hetero-images, centre/periphery dynamics) as well as the stereotypical character profiles of certain nationalities discussed here (German, English, Irish) are explained more fully on the website imagologica.eu and in the handbook *Imagology* (Beller and Leerssen 2007).

6   See also Scully (2012). The German side of that process is traced partly in Jeismann (1992). In addition, there is Bischoff's (2018) thoroughly documented and very insightful study on the representation of Belgium in German wartime publications.

actually did: declaring war, justifying their aims, making statements in parliament, raising moral panics in the press, war propaganda. Mommsen is critical of Fischer taking "the aggressive nationalist outbursts of the politicians [...] as the whole of the story" (ibid.); but the opposite mistake into which one may easily overbalance is to downplay them as mere inconsequential verbiage, obscuring or hiding the truth of the matter rather than giving us a clue toward it.

As an imagologist, I feel that the tendency among historians to reduce history to the facts behind the rhetoric may paint us into a corner in our attempt to understand what went on at the time.[7] The rhetoric formed part and parcel of the facts, and the German war aims, such as they were conceived to be, were subject to a war of interpretation, impugning and vindicating them, and triggering semiorchestrated, semispontaneous phobia-crazes in a tight interplay between scholars, literati, military public figures, politicians, and diplomats or government officials. This interplay, which after August 1914 would lead to intense war propaganda campaigns in all belligerent countries, was well under way well before 1914, a shaping influence on events rather than a mere reflection of them.

This is what makes Crowe's memorandum such a tell-tale indicator. Nor did Durkheim's 1915 tracts come out of nowhere, and they were by no means his freshly conceived spontaneous reaction to the events of August 1914. August 1914 was universally seen in France as a rerun of 1870, and the French anti-German discourse that swung into action was a direct continuation of the recriminations and contentions that had taken place in the 1870s and 1880s, pitting against each other Treitschke, Mommsen, and David Friedrich Strauss (on the German side) and Numa Fustel de Coulanges and Ernest Renan on the French side. Indeed, Fustel de Coulanges, who had been driven from his professorial chair at the University of Strasbourg when that city had been

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7   Take Mommsen's assertion that "[Fischer's] premise [...] that an aggressive nationalism lay at the bottom of all that happened, induces him to describe the actions of other powers as mere reactions prompted by German diplomacy itself. Yet neither French nationalism nor the growing militarist tendencies in Russia can be properly explained in such a way" (Mommsen 1973, 15). All that is quite, quite true: all of Europe was in the same chauvinistic boat by 1914, as Mommsen rightly observes, and Germany was certainly not the sole Godzilla in a continent of tender-hearted pacifists. But the two questions are begged, (1) whether the things that Mommsen calls French nationalism and Russian militarism were not, by his own line of reasoning, a merely superficial impression created by the occasional inconsequential outbursts of French and Russian politicians, as unimportant there as Mommsen claims they were in Germany, and masking the "forces of moderation" in those countries? Or (2) why France and Russia, and the German-born, German-married Eyre Crowe, should even have been bothered by mere verbal outbursts?

annexed by Germany in 1871, had conducted his antiannexationist critiques from his new chair at the Parisian Ecole normale supérieure, where, among his pupils were, precisely, Emile Durkheim and Ernest Denis, as well as Camille Jullian—anti-German propagandists of the 1914 generation, who later helped prepare Clémenceau's claims to the reannexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1918–1919 (cf. Leerssen 2018c).

Eyre Crowe, to return to him, worked in tandem with the popular author William Le Queux (1864–1927), who had been efficiently stoking public fears of a German invasion by a genre of potboilers imagining a German attack on English shores. The genre of "invasion novels" or "future war novels" had emerged in English literature immediately after the German victory over France in 1871: in that year, George Tomkyns Chesney published *The Battle of Dorking*, evoking a German landing in England. Notable examples of the genre were Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), Saki's *When William Came: A Study of London under the Hohenzollerns* (1913), and John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915). Le Queux's *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894) had still imagined the invaders to be the accustomed enemies: France and Russia. But a decade later, in Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906), the invading enemy had, as per the conventions of the genre,[8] become Germany. That book came out in a great media blitz, serialized in the *Daily Mail* with newspaper vendors dressed up as Prussian soldiers displaying maps of their armies' progress. The book edition sold a million copies.

That was one year before Crowe's memorandum; and the intricacy of the links between media, fiction, and diplomacy is indicated by the fact that Le Queux's book was a fictionalized platform for the war alarmism of Field Marshal Roberts, former commander in chief, whose anti-German speeches of the period appeared in 1907 as *A Nation in Arms* (cf. James 1954, 424; Sladen 1938). Indeed, the novels created a veritable invasion scare in England, similar to the Napoleonic one of 1803 and indeed similar to the one notoriously triggered by Orson Welles's radio play *The War of the Worlds*. Matters were stoked up further by the sequel *Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England* (1909). The resulting moral panic caused members of the public to write to Le Queux about suspected sightings; these communications were placed at the disposal of the nascent bureau of military intelligence. Indeed, one historian suggests that Le Queux himself believed the veracity of the alarmist tales he put before the public (cf. Andrew 1981). War propaganda preceded the outbreak of hostilities by a good few years: historical memories of 1870 (in France) and imaginative fiction (in England) prepared the nation for the trenches.

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8   Cf. Rose (2017, 51–58), and more generally Clarke (²1992) and Melby (2019).

Truth, fiction, misapprehensions, prejudices, projections, verbal outbursts, propaganda: all these are part of the historical record, and we need to study all that as such, and for what it is. One way of doing so is through an imagological analysis, combining the documentary record of literary, political, and military history, and situating the operative clichés of national character in an analytical triangle of textual rhetoric, historical context and cultural intertext.

2 Discourse of Identity

Few readers will disagree when I assert that the period 1880–1920 saw a steep rise, not only in the political role of public opinion, but also in the reliance, by state officials and statesmen, on stereotypes of national character. The First World War, which immediately saw writers and intellectuals enlisted in what became the first major propaganda war, boosted that dual process. As a result, we see in the twentieth century how people in senior government positions often vent a belief in the nation's essential character or identity as a guiding principle, something almost metaphysical, considered to be above mere party politics, uncontroversial, and reliable principles for statesmen to base their exertions and political vision on. No better source to study the deep ideology of the nation.

Statesmen are generally reluctant to come over as starry-eyed visionaries, and so the moments when they give vent to these affects are comparatively rare, and tend to be spotted in isolation—like De Gaulle's *Certaine idée de la France*,[9] or the atavistic Germanophobia of Margaret Thatcher's policy meeting at Chequers (cf. Ash 2001, 50–52; Moyle 1994, 107–109), or John Major's (1993) epiphany that:

> Fifty years from now Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and—as George Orwell said—"old maids bicycling to Holy Communion through the morning mist" and if we get our way— Shakespeare still read even in school.[10]

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9   The hallowed phrase comes from the opening words of De Gaulle's autobiography, laying down his lifelong vision (strongly influenced by Jules Michelet) of what France is as a nation and how it should stand amid other nations.

10   Major's reference to Orwell ("The Lion and the Unicorn," a piece of 1941 wartime propaganda classically formulating a twentieth-century English auto-image) is a telling instance of the back-and-forth interplay of literature and political rhetoric.

I would suggest that such statements are deeply meaningful for a politically applied imagology, and that they should be studied, not in anecdotal isolation as incidental, uncharacteristically spontaneous overflows of powerful feeling, but as instances of a specific type of discourse. Like war propaganda and the discourse of enmity, these statesmanlike pronouncements and the discourse of identity provide a rich field for imagological analysis.

In what follows I will present two statements, by a British and an Irish states-man, in which they testify to what their country means to them. The first of these comes from Stanley Baldwin (1867–1947), who was the British prime minister in 1923–1924, 1924–1929, and 1935–1937. In May 1924 he delivered a speech to the Royal Society of St. George, an English patriotic society "promoting and celebrating the English way of life," as its website has it. Founded in 1874 and well connected to the country's elite (it has been incorporated by royal charter and since its early days has enjoyed the official patronage of the reigning monarch), it is decidedly English (rather than British) in its outlook, sporting the English flag of St. George rather than the British Union Jack, and celebrating the name day of that saint, who is patron of England as St. Andrew is of Scotland, St. David of Wales, and St. Patrick of Ireland. Its definition of England, going by the website, and by its publicity material, is deeply traditionalist in that mode which has been studied as a cultural trope under the rubric of "Englishness" (cf. Spiering 1992; Middleton and Giles 1995; Easthope 1998). "Englishness" evokes a rustic landscape marked by a harmonious socioeconomic symbiosis between nobility and agricultural labour, traditional pastimes like cricket and foxhunting, villages and market towns with convivial inns and public houses and medieval cathedrals where intricate patterns of bell ringing are performed, and, at Christmastime, door-to-door carolling. As imagologists know, this idyllic image was formulated especially in the post-1830 decades of "one-nation Tory-ism" and found expression in the novels of Anthony Trollope and Thomas Hardy in his slightly lighter moods (*Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*). Englishness is also nostalgically evoked in BBC costume dramas such as *Lark Rise to Candleford* (2008–2011) and *Downton Abbey* (2010–2015), a television series which almost literally stages Major's above-quoted vision.

At the same time the Society of St. George revolves around patriotism of a less sentimental nature, marking for its fixed social days military commemorations such as "Cenotaph Wreath Laying in Whitehall on the Saturday closest to St. George's Day, followed by laying a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey; Battle of Waterloo luncheon or dinner in June; Battle of Britain luncheon in September; Trafalgar Day dinner in October."[11]

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11   For further information see The Royal Society of St George's website: https://rssg.org.uk/ [July 26, 2021].

It was before this society that Stanley Baldwin gave a dinner speech on May 6, 1924, which became famous under the title "What England means to me." The text is widely available,[12] and follows the obvious tropes of the "Englishness" register: opposing it to "the Latin races," refusing "to ape any foreign country, quietly dauntless," "with the result that in times of emergency the nervous system stands when the nervous system of other peoples breaks" (Baldwin 1924), et cetera.[13] These sentiments are offered jocularly and ironically, in a humorous and slightly self-deprecating bonhomie also implicitly presented as typically English, and are intended to raise an appreciative chuckle in the after-dinner setting. The speech then goes on to something more heartfelt and emotional: a praise of the English countryside experienced and recalled through physical senses like sound and sight. This Englishness is primal, sensory, visceral, and rooted in the recall of childhood; a shared intimacy:

> The sounds of England, the tinkle of hammer on anvil in the country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone, and the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill [...]. The wild anemones in the woods of April, the last load at night of hay being drawn down a lane as the twilight comes on, when you can scarcely distinguish the figures on the horses as they take it home to the farm, and above all, most subtle, most penetrating and most moving, the smell of wood smoke coming in an autumn evening, or the smell of the scutch fires: that wood smoke that our ancestors, tens of thousands of years ago, must have caught on the air [...]. These things strike down into the very depths of our nature, and touch chords that go back to the beginning of time and the human race [...]. These are things that make England.
> IBID.

"The love of these things," Baldwin goes on to say, "is innate and inherent in our people" (ibid.). Baldwin may well have evoked personal memories (he hailed from the idyllically situated town of Bedley), and the majority of the well-heeled members present at the dinner may also have had a country background; but the recognizability of these images derives most of all from their status as iconic cultural tropes, evoked in novels and in poetry, from Browning's "Home Thoughts, from Abroad" to A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, in the mellow musical harmonies of Vaughan Williams and "I Vow to

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Thee, my Country," and in scholarly work on the English village community, thriving at the time because the communities themselves were considered to be in danger of disappearance (cf. Williams 1973).[14] Baldwin's England as evoked here is wholly agricultural and pretechnological, with no artificial lighting or engines—something of the past, certainly in 1924, and indeed evoked as a dim memory from early childhood. It is, in other words, an exercise in cultural nostalgia, indebted to Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and akin to what J.R.R. Tolkien was doing around the same time when he conceived a bucolic Shire threatened by the dark satanic technology of Mordor. And in the mind of many of that generation (Tolkien, Robert Graves, Ford Madox Ford, the Georgian poets), the idyll of rustic England had been the cherished, idealized focus of the anguished homesickness that they had experienced in the trenches of the Western Front. The intertext is Victorian, the context postwar, the textual rhetoric combines sentimental rusticism with national patriotism and a conservative agenda. The English self-image opposes traits like tradition, ancestral continuity, class harmony, and closeness to nature to an implied hetero-image of non-English modernity, in a binary opposition which may be listed in tabular form (Table 1.1).[15]

TABLE 1.1   Non-English Other versus English Self

Non-English Other	English Self
bad example to follow	good to hold on to
lively imagination	stolidity
lack of staying power	staying power
(fractured)	continuity
(class strife)	class harmony
(metropolis)	countryside/empire
(mechanical)	organic, crafts

I now turn to a speech made by the Irish taoiseach (prime minister) Éamon De Valera (1882–1975) on March 17, 1943. The date was doubly meaningful: March, 17, St. Patrick's Day, celebrating Ireland's patron saint, was in that year

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14   The ethnographical glorification of English country life had started in the 1880s with the folklore studies of Cecil Sharp and Sabine Baring-Gould; cf. Roper (2018) and Leerssen (2018b).

15   The traits in parentheses are not explicitly flagged in the text but implied as a *repoussoir*.

also the fiftieth anniversary of the Gaelic League. That organization had been founded around the same time as the Society of St. George, but in a firmly anti-English mode: its rallying call had been a lecture by its founding president, Douglas Hyde, "On the Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland" (1892).[16] In the following decades, the Gaelic League had gained enormous popularity for a program of Gaelic-Irish cultural-nationalistic revivalism (language, music, dance), and had also radicalized into political separatism, if necessary by armed force. This culminated in an armed uprising and the declaration of independence of an aspirational "Irish Republic" in 1916. One of the commanding combatants was Éamon De Valera; the only one of the insurrection's leadership, in fact, to escape (owing to a part-American citizenship) the wholesale executions with which the insurrection was put down. In the following years De Valera remained a hard-line secessionist, refusing the compromise which in 1921 saw Ireland, partitioned and shorn of six Protestant-dominated Ulster counties, given dominion status within the empire. Eventually he rose to power in what first was the Irish Free State, transformed by him into a decidedly anti-British Irish Republic, whose constitution he devised in 1937. De Valera dominated that Republic for most of the century, either as prime minister (1932–1948, 1951–1954, 1957–1959) or as president (1959–1973).

This stalwart nationalist spoke on the Irish radio to celebrate the jubilee of the Gaelic League, reflecting on its history, its achievements, and its role as a champion of Ireland's native culture. The address, "On Language and the Irish Nation" (1943), spelled out what De Valera saw as the essential role of culture in ensuring the country's national identity and claim to sovereignty.[17] Coming six years after the new Republic's constitution and in the middle of a world war in which Ireland, at odds with Britain over the Ulster question, stayed neutral, it is a veritable manifesto of De Valera's ground plan for his country and is worth quoting at length:

> The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit—a land whose countryside would

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16 The text is online at https://ernie.uva.nl/viewer.p/21/54/object/351-187704 [October 26, 2021]. On the role of the Gaelic League in the decades around the Irish insurrection against British rule, including the role of Eamon De Valera, see my "Cúchulain in the General Post Office: Gaelic Revival, Irish Rising" (2016).

17 The text is online at https://ernie.uva.nl/viewer.p/21/54/object/351-227030 [October 26, 2021].

be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live. With the tidings that make such an Ireland possible, St. Patrick came to our ancestors fifteen hundred years ago promising happiness here no less than happiness hereafter. It was the pursuit of such an Ireland […] that made successive generations of patriotic men give their lives to win religious and political liberty; and that will urge men in our own and future generations to die, if need be, so that these liberties may be preserved. […] the founders of the Gaelic League similarly inspired and moved the people of their day. So, later, did the leaders of the Irish Volunteers [the 1916 insurrectionists]. We of this time, if we have the will and active enthusiasm, have the opportunity to inspire and move our generation in like manner. We can do so by keeping this thought of a noble future for our country constantly before our eyes, ever seeking in action to bring that future into being, and ever remembering that it is for our nation as a whole [i.e. including the Ulster counties of Northern Ireland] that that future must be sought.

The speech has gone down in folk memory; in the public mind it is now known, somewhat derisively and slightly incorrectly as to the wording, as the "comely maidens" speech. That misnomer is part and parcel of the speech's complex afterlife, which echoes through the second half of the twentieth century as a barometer of Irish cultural change. It invokes and denounces a formula evoking the twee, nostalgic image of a fondly imagined traditional Irish countryside, with "comely maidens dancing at the crossroads"—crossroads being a traditional open-air venue for communal dancing, or represented as such by sentimental Victorians. To project De Valera's speech into that tradition is a derisive rejection of its traditionalism and rusticism; that rejection developed after his death in 1973 among the country's baby boomers, in a long-delayed but then accelerated process of intergenerational change (cf. Waters [1991] 2011, 2009). In 1996 the phrase was reclaimed ironically as a chant evoking the revelling of sports fans celebrating their team's victory.

No less interesting than the speech's afterlife is its intertextual root system. De Valera's career is a textbook example of Miroslav Hroch's "phase model" of national movements, where "phase A" is an initial activity of cultural consciousness-raising (as in the original agenda of the Gaelic League) followed by a "phase B" of social demands based on a sense of cultural separateness and a "phase C" of mass activism asserting the right to national sovereignty (cf. Hroch 1968). De Valera, like all 1916 leaders, had gone through that progression, from

cultural enthusiast to armed forces separatist. His continuing commitment to reviving Ireland's Gaelic culture shows that "phase A" does not cease once subsequent phases of social/political intensification swing into action. And it means that the cultural auto-image that De Valera acquired from the cultural revivalists of the late nineteenth century stayed with him as a political program during his career as a politician and statesman.

That self-image was indeed of sentimental Victorian vintage, as his later critics pointed out. Gaelic Ireland was seen as a haven of unspoiled, healthy traditionalism in a world corrupted by the decadent forces of British/European modernity; as such, it complemented a European auto-image of the *fin de siècle* that saw Europe as caught up in a process of degeneration; that self-image, embraced by the fey and morbid poetics of Symbolism was summarized in Max Nordau's book *Entartung* of 1892. Hyde's project of "De-Anglicising" Ireland was a cultural regeneration agenda, cleansing the country of the degenerative forces of British vintage and allowing its unspoiled native freshness to reassert itself.

In 1902 an anonymous Gaelic revivalist described a pilgrimage into the western periphery of Galway; in a typically telescoping narrative, the waymarks are listed successively westward as the author describes how modernity and the English language decrease along the way, until s/he is in an ideally primitive world, free from any trace of English alienation. It is reminiscent of ancient Gaelic legends and sagas (Queen Maeve); here the cultural memory of ancient Gaelic literature (Ossianic tales) and Gaelic balladry (Raftery, Wallace) is maintained by noble savage rustics described with an equal measure of appreciative primitivism and almost colonial condescension. Their lack of modern comforts is praised as if it were an accomplishment, accompanied as it is by a strong physique and a native command of the Gaelic language:

> No greater treat can be in store for the Gaedhilgeoir [Irish language speaker/activist] than to travel from Galway west through Bearna, Spiddal, and Cashla to Connemara, to hear the Gaelic growing in volume and richness as he proceeds, till at last the English language is as unknown as it was in the days of Maev [...] it would be difficult to find a finer race of Irish-speaking men and women than these peasants of Iar-Connaught [the western part of the western province of Connacht] [...]. We have seen old men with fine characteristic features who could recite Ossianic tales and the poems of Raftery and Wallace by the hour, full at the same time, of ready wit and good, practical sense, living amid those stony wastes and confronting their daily difficulties with firm and determined eyes, and treading the ground that bore them with the self-confidence born of successful struggle. [...] Brown-faced, weather-beaten women who would carry a hundred-weight of oats home on their shoulders, and

give you a kindly smile in passing. Young women of queenly build and fine oval features, the most beautiful, they say, in Ireland, and indeed in the wide world. Young men and boys with laughing eyes, full of youthful vigour and enterprise [...]. Families of 12 or 15, all with beautiful teeth and exuberant health, joined in the closest bonds of affection—such is this Western Race, with its Gaelic speech and its boundless possibilities.

ANONYMOUS 1902, 129–130

The strong activation of a centre/periphery polarity correlates with a chrono-topical distribution of modernity (in the centre) and pastness (in the periphery). The commonplace nature of the imagery will be obvious to anyone familiar with Irish and Irish-related writing of the period, in a tradition from Dion Boucicault to John Synge and from Charles Kickham to Canon Sheehan; the piece follows the pattern established by the folkloristic literati of the Irish Literary Revival: Yeats, Lady Gregory, and indeed Hyde himself, a notable folklorist and collector of oral poetry (cf. Leerssen 1996). In turn, this *fin de siècle* text gives a strong intertextual sounding board to the imagery that De Valera was still activating and evoking in his 1943 speech, a half-century later, through the novel medium of a radio broadcast. De Valera's mid-twentieth-century Ireland is still predicated on a rejection of international modernity and a glorification of native tradition. One point of difference is that the social Darwinist glorification of energetic, unspoiled primitivism of 1902 is now, in 1943, transmuted into the timelier economic value of frugality: a newly independent state with few natural resources and a narrow economic basis should exercise thrift, in line with De Valera's policies and the wartime circumstances.

Schematically, the opposition between this Irish auto-image and its implied Other would look as presented in Table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2   Non-Irish Other versus Irish Self

Non-Irish Other	Irish Self
alienating oppressor	heroic resister
tyranny	spirituality
materialism	frugality
(decadence)	health
(alienating)	authenticity
(empire)	countryside
(forces of history)	force of tradition

The similarities and differences with Baldwin's English binaries are imme-
diately noticeable. They invite us to undertake a sustained comparison, which
would, however, exceed the scope of the present article. Although Ireland
and England at this time were strongly antagonistic, the two self-images work
along remarkably similar structural lines.

3 Imagology and the State

The cases outlined here have not been explored in depth; they are offered
merely as "proofs of concept." The reader will realize that the political dis-
course on state-defined enmity or identity can be fruitfully studied from an
imagological perspective—which means, not only as to its underlying govern-
mental policymaking analysed in terms of strategic power options, but also as
to its intrinsic rhetorical structures (text) and thematic filiations (intertext).
An imagological analysis works in the procedural triangle of "context, inter-
text, text," where *context* is the historical moment at which the discourse is
produced and/or operative, *intertext* the extent to which the discourse relies
on a reservoir of commonplaces and conventional tropes regarding national
characters, and *text* the way in which the discourse uses rhetorical or narra-
tive techniques to present its image of the nation's character convincingly and
powerfully.

Political historians of international affairs share with imagology an atten-
tion to context. For historians the context is the primary concern: understand-
ing the historical moment is what they study texts like these for. The emphasis
is different for imagologists, for whom the context is a dimension in which to
situate the text or discourse, helping us to make better sense of it. But despite
these different emphases, the concerns broadly overlap.

Historians will also, like imagologists, address intertextual matters, such as
literary fashions and conventions operative at the time (witness Rose's chapter
on the invasion novel genre); but here the concern is more of an ancillary nature:
forays into intertextual study are incidental and used as illustrative digressions
rather than as a central concern. For imagology, conversely, the intertextual
study (establishing the ethnotype's typology and its self-repeating or changing
character over time) is definitely a core concern. And the text-intrinsic analysis
is almost exclusively of interest to literary rather than political historians.

Imagology can be very fruitfully applied to the discourse of international
relations. Such discourse is open to the triangulation of textual, intertextual,
and contextual angles of analysis. For imagologists, this widening of the cor-
pus to genres "dont l'intérêt dépasse la seule littérature" (Guyard as quoted

in Dyserinck 2015, 44) can only be a refreshing impulse. For historians, the entanglement of historical decision-making with the dynamics of cultural production and representation may also present a valuable broadening of the analytical perspective. For both jointly, such an interdisciplinary initiative may break through the tunnel vision that each may have on their relevant source material, in the primary documentation as well as in the secondary-critical literature. The fact that the imagery of international relations has been studied so very piecemeal in different disciplines by scholars unaware of each other's insights is in itself a limitation that needs to be broken through. There is rich source material to be explored—the propagandistic use of travel accounts, the reliance of state bodies on ethnographical reports as to nations' characters, the use of ethnotypes in diplomatic reports, the use of ethnotypically charged fiction in national propaganda, from invasion novels and *Mrs Miniver* to *Rambo* and *Downton Abbey*—and it deserves to be explored on a thorough, well-established methodological basis, both as to its political function and as to its textual/intertextual/contextual workings.

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