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Radicalism in the Margins: The Politics of Reading

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in 1920

Edmund G. C. King

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This article examines marginalia as a form of radical writing practice in the period immediately after the First World War. It focuses specifically on a densely annotated copy of the second part of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's *My Diaries*, which covers 1900–1914 and was published in 1920. The annotator, John Arthur Fallows (1864–1935), was a former Church of England clergyman and Independent Labour Party politician, and the article asks what motivated him to leave such an explicit record of his engagement with the book in its margins. Blunt recast his original diary entries to show how the outbreak of the First World War had arisen from the pre-war imperialist policies of the Entente. Fallows, meanwhile, used his copy of *My Diaries* to inscribe a permanent record of his responses to Blunt's writing, which were shaped by his own memories of pre-war radical-left political action. The dual record of textual engagement that can be recovered from this copy of *My Diaries* provides insight into how two British radicals "read" the causes of the First World War in the period between the Armistice and the conclusion of the Paris Peace Accords.

In March 1920, John Arthur Fallows, a fifty-five-year-old former Church of England clergyman, bought a copy of the second part of *My Diaries* by the poet and anti-

imperialist commentator Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840– 1922).¹ This book, which had appeared in print for the first time the previous month, formed the final part of Blunt’s chronological narrative of events leading up to the First World War, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914*. After inscribing his name, address, and the book’s date of purchase onto the front flyleaf (figure 1), Fallows began to read, pen in hand. On the first page of the book, he wrote a headnote: “Imperialism, pushed by Capitalists & Generals & blue gents, equally bad under V. R., Ed 7, & Geo 5.”² Turning to the next opening, he arrived at Blunt’s entry for 3 February 1901, introducing the newly crowned King, Edward VII. Beside Blunt’s discreet reference to what he called Edward’s “little failings,” Fallows scrawled a list of concrete examples: “sportsman,” he wrote, “adulterer, boozier, stodger, better.”³ On the opposite page, as a headnote to Blunt’s commentary on Kaiser Wilhelm’s position on the Boer War, he left the observation: “‘Daily Mail’ & Tory press cant wobbling pro and con the Kaiser.” A few pages later, amplifying the book’s commentary on the April 1901 Hicks Beach budget designed to raise revenue to cover Boer War expenses, Fallows wrote, “blue travelling snob jingo Tories who make wars.”⁴ These annotations are typical – both in their density and their exaggeratedly waspish tone – of the marks Fallows made elsewhere in the book.

¹ This copy is now housed in The Open University’s Betty Boothroyd Library in Milton Keynes, where it was accessioned on 2 February 1977. As the Library lacks detailed accession records for this period, it is unknown whether the book was donated or purchased on the second hand market. Its provenance during the four decades between 1977 and Fallows’s death in 1935 and the whereabouts and survival of other books from Fallows’s personal library are likewise unknown.

² Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914*, vol. 2 (London, 1920), Betty Boothroyd Library, The Open University, Milton Keynes, 941.0810924 BLU, 1. All references to *My Diaries*, vol. 2 in this essay are to this specific copy.

³ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 2. For Fallows’s use of “stodger,” see the *OED*’s definition: “A stodgy person: one who is lacking in spirit or liveliness” (first recorded in *Punch* in 1905), *OED Online* (Oxford, 2014), web, accessed 19 September 2014.

⁴ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 3, 7.

Altogether, he left 841 individual pieces of verbal marginalia in the main text of his copy of *My Diaries: Part 2*, totalling about 3,826 words. In addition to this, the book contains abundant underlinings, vertical lines in the margins, and, on the rear pastedown, a partial manuscript index, all inscribed in a combination of pencil and pale blue fountain-pen ink.

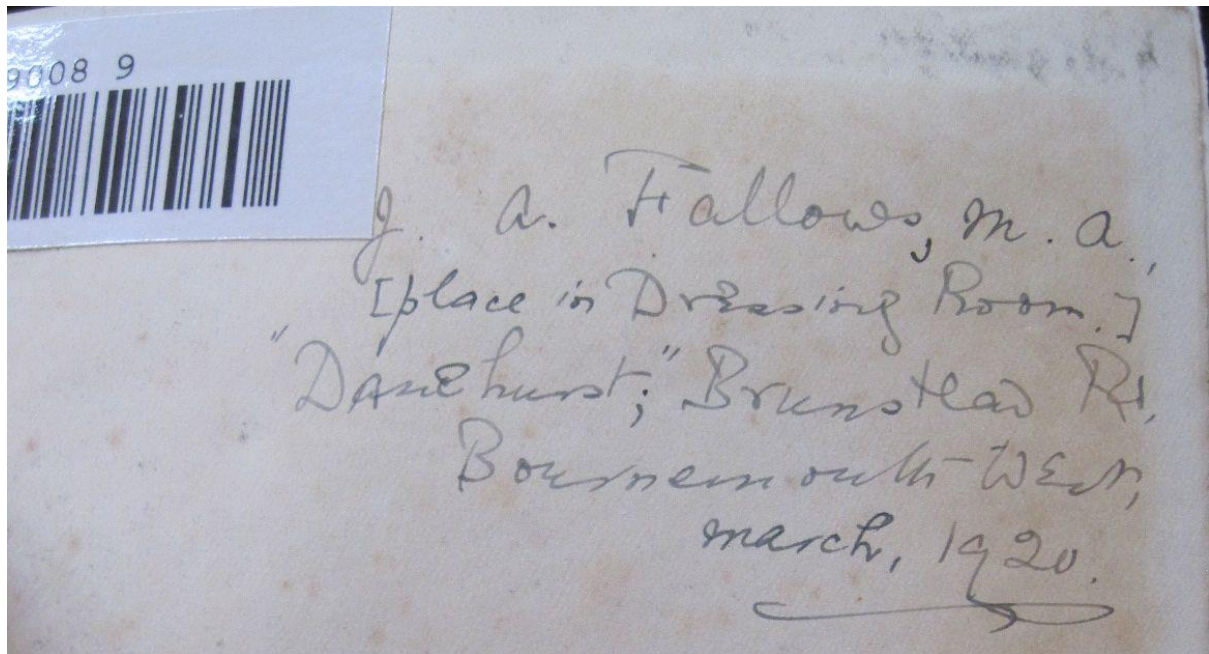


Figure 1: J. A. Fallows, ownership inscription in W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries: Part Two*, front flyleaf (detail).

The parallel texts contained within Fallows's copy of Blunt's *My Diaries* provide an insight at the level of individual experience into "the wars after the war." They show how two anti-war radicals responded to the emerging post-war settlement through programmes of reading and writing. Blunt sent *My Diaries* to the press believing that they could make a direct contribution to the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference. *Part One* he saw as a "blow" aimed against Britain's attempt to secure a protectorate in Egypt.⁵ The publication of *Part Two* was similarly freighted with political ambition. "The second proofs of *My Diaries Part 2* have come in," he

⁵ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Diary*, April–May 1919, 26 April 1919, 10–11, MS 446-1975, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge (hereafter FM).

recorded in his notebook on 24 October 1919. “They *must* have an effect on the results in Egypt & perhaps Syria when the peace proposals with Turkey are brought up at Paris, if only we can get the volume out in time.”⁶ Fallows did not much resemble the ideal reader that Blunt had in mind for *My Diaries*. He was a radical socialist, a class of thinkers whom Blunt both feared and distrusted.⁷ Blunt had hoped that the books would be bought by journalists and politicians who could mobilize public opposition to British territorial demands.⁸ Although Fallows had a background in politics – in 1902, he had been the first politician in Birmingham to be elected on an explicitly socialist platform, winning a seat for the Independent Labour Party (ILP) on the Birmingham Council – by 1920 he was living in quiet retirement in Bournemouth.⁹ While Blunt anticipated that his readers would mobilise the revelations in *My Diaries* for direct political action, Fallows used his copy to practice his own personal form of politics. Annotating Blunt provided him with a means of emotional and psychological self-justification.¹⁰ Writing in the margins enabled Fallows to convert his copy of Blunt’s book into a site for the preservation of personal as well as political memory. At their most coherent, the annotations resolve into fragments of autobiography in miniature. Laden with a mixture of pre-war gossip, scabrous social comment, and Marxian economic analysis, Fallows’s

⁶ Blunt, Diary, September–October 1919, 24 October 1919, 39, MS 449-1975, FM.

⁷ For details of Fallows’s life, see *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Volume 2*, s.v. “Fallows, John Arthur,” by David E Martin (London, 1974), 133–4; and “Late Mr J. A. Fallows: A Birmingham Clergyman Who Became Unitarian Minister,” *Birmingham Gazette and Evening Dispatch*, 10 August 1935, cutting in the Dictionary of Labour Biography Archives, U DLB/2/39, Hull History Centre.

⁸ Blunt, Diary, April–June 1919, 5 May 1919, 17–18, MS 446-1975, FM.

⁹ For Fallows’s political activities in Birmingham, see Asa Briggs, *History of Birmingham, Volume 2: Borough and City 1865–1938* (London, 1952), 198; Stephen Roberts, “Independent Labour Politics in Birmingham, 1886–1914,” *West Midlands Studies* 16 (Winter 1983): 9–15, at 10–11; and Mark Bevir, “The Labour Church Movement, 1891–1902,” *Journal of British Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 217–45, at 220.

¹⁰ On the particular attractions of memoir and biography for marginal annotators, see H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven, 2001), 94.

marginalia superimpose a specifically radical-socialist critique of Edwardian society and the First World War onto the already ideologically freighted pages of Blunt's *My Diaries*.

The programmes of memorialisation that Blunt and Fallows engaged in are reminders of what Samuel Hynes calls "the persistence of the past" in British society and culture during the early 1920s. While the war placed enormous pressure on many aspects of the Edwardian intellectual consensus, Edwardian ideas and values retained a certain degree of currency in the post-war world and helped shape the way in which witnesses to the conflict interpreted its outcomes.¹¹ These ideological survivals illustrate Andrew Frayn's point that "disenchantment" and "disillusionment" were neither straightforward products of the war itself nor simple responses to the economic and social challenges of the 1920s.¹² Instead, they had existed long before 1914, percolating into and informing the dissenting response to the conflict from a range of pre-existing radical, socialist, religious, philosophical, and artistic perspectives. Blunt's and Fallows's writing practices provide evidence in the very earliest years of the post-war period for the production and circulation of ideas and dissenting poses usually associated with the war-books boom of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Asking what impelled these civilian observers to perform these acts of historical remembrance, what continuities existed between their modes of enquiry and pre-war forms of political dissent, and what influence these early

¹¹ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1992), 354–5.

¹² Andrew Frayn, *Writing Disenchantment: British First World War Prose, 1914–1930* (Manchester, 2014), 7, 13–20. For influential accounts that interpret disenchantment as a largely post-war, literary response to the conflict, see Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History* (Cambridge, 2002), 23–6, 37; Janet S. K. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge, 2004), 185–7, 217; and Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London, 2005), 129–30, 134–5.

investigations ultimately had can shed additional light on the origins of disenchantment and the forces behind its eventual rise to prominence.¹³

My Diaries and Historical Remembrance

On 31 December 1918, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, seventy-eight and in chronic pain from the prostate disease that would eventually kill him, wrote a bleak assessment of the year's events in his diary.¹⁴ "Thus ends the year 1918, a bad one for all my hopes of the peace which was to come . . . All central Europe is in anarchy & the Ottoman Empire is certain to be partitioned between the three chief robber powers of Christendom[,] England, France & Italy."¹⁵ It was not only the shape of the emerging post-war political settlement that depressed him. The Entente powers' impending annexations in Egypt and the Middle East reminded him of his own personal and political failures.¹⁶ "I feel that my life has been a vain one," he wrote. "My poetry is not read, my philosophy has no disciples, the causes I have espoused have come to ruin. I have outlived my age."¹⁷ Within little over a year, however, Blunt's reputation and profile had undergone an unexpected renaissance. Both volumes of *My Diaries* attracted excellent press notices, details of which he recorded in his notebooks. This reception was more than he had hoped for. "The Reviews of my book continue with a chorus of praise such as I hardly remember for any book, certainly never for any of

¹³ For a definition of "historical remembrance," see Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory in History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, 2006), 8–11.

¹⁴ For detailed accounts of Blunt's life, reputation, and social networks, see Elizabeth Longford, *A Pilgrimage of Passion: The Life of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt* (London, 2007) and Lucy McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner: The Literary History of a Meal* (Oxford, 2014).

¹⁵ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Diary, December 1918–January 1919*, 31 December 1918, 18–19, MS 444-1975, FM.

¹⁶ For recent analyses of Blunt's anti-imperialism, see Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920* (Cambridge, 2010), 36–43, and Luisa Villa, "A 'Political Education': Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the Arabs and the Egyptian Revolution (1881–2)," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 17, no. 1 (2012): 46–63.

¹⁷ Blunt, *Diary, December 1918–January 1919*, 31 December 1918, 18–19, MS 444-1975, FM.

mine,” he observed in his diary with a mixture of pride and bemusement. “I have never before had even a tolerably good press till today when I have called all the political world knaves & all the journalists fools and at last they are delighted!”¹⁸

My Diaries was an example of a post-war literary “anti-monument,” raised specifically to counter mainstream and governmental accounts of the war’s origins.¹⁹ Official document collections, such as the British *Blue Books* of pre-war diplomatic correspondence, were the results of a careful process of editorial selection.²⁰ Governments sponsored these publishing ventures because, as Keith Wilson writes, they allowed ample scope for “historical engineering.”²¹ By selectively releasing parts of the archival record while withholding others, they could set the terms of reference for future academic debate about the war’s causes. At the heart of this official publishing programme was the question of “war guilt” – who should bear responsibility for commencing hostilities and what effect this should have on the post-war political landscape.²² Blunt clearly envisaged *My Diaries* as a kind of privately produced mirror image of these official accounts. In an earlier exposé based on published diary entries, *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (1907), he had argued that it “is not always in official documents that the truest facts of history are to be found.”²³ Instead, the letters and journal entries of “a close and interested spectator” in political affairs could form a more candid “document for the

¹⁸ Blunt, Diary, January–March 1920, 17 February 1920, 24–25, MS 453-1975, FM.

¹⁹ On “anti-monuments,” see Hynes, *War Imagined*, 283–310.

²⁰ See William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2010), 3–4.

²¹ Keith Wilson, “Governments, Historians, and ‘Historical Engineering,’” in *Forging the Collective Memory: Government and International Historians through Two World Wars*, ed. Keith Wilson (Providence, 1996), 1–27, at 2.

²² On the publishing histories of official post-war collections of archival material relating to the war’s origins, see Mulligan, *Origins of the First World War*, 8–9; Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London, 2012), xxi–xxiv; and *The Origins of the First World War: Diplomatic and Military Documents*, ed. and trans. Annika Mombauer (Manchester, 2013), 5–15.

²³ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (London, 1907), v.

history of our times,” no matter how embarrassing their contents might be for “persons in high places.”²⁴ Blunt introduced *My Diaries* with a similar apologia. Inside the books’ covers, he suggested, was a kind of storehouse of memory, one that juxtaposed the “Blue Books, in which essential facts are travestied” against “individual testimony . . . recording the words of statesmen in out of office hours, when they have spoken their naked thought . . . in very different language” from the official line.²⁵ The fact, as recorded in these private conversations, that Britain’s “Imperial ambitions” had helped precipitate the war, he wrote, “[needs] to be remembered,” no matter how consoling a belief in Germany’s sole war guilt was to British onlookers in the conflict’s immediate aftermath.²⁶ Like other examples of late-war and post-war “anti-monument,” such as Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* (1918) and John Maynard Keynes’s *Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), Blunt’s published diaries worked by bringing the personal and the political into a provocative dialogue.²⁷ The subversive potential of *Eminent Victorians* lies in Strachey’s willingness to relate innuendo about his subjects’ private lives. Recording the “peculiarities and repressions” of Victorian society becomes, as Dominic Janes writes, a way of exposing to ethical critique a British political leadership still largely mired in the nineteenth century.²⁸ *My Diaries* functions similarly. By outlining the failures of pre-war British foreign policy, Blunt aims to undermine the political

²⁴ Blunt, *Secret History*, v, x.

²⁵ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914*, vol. 1 (London, 1919), viii.

²⁶ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 1, viii–ix.

²⁷ On *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* as “anti-monument,” see Hynes, *War Imagined*, 291–3.

²⁸ Dominic Janes, “Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes’ *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*,” *Literature and History* 23, no. 1 (2014): 19–32, at 21.

legitimacy of the post-war settlement, a strategy augmented by his willingness to relate damaging gossip about the personal lives of politicians and the landed elite.

Despite the careful framing work Blunt performed in the diaries' prefatory materials, however, many of the books' reviewers failed to completely acknowledge their contemporary relevance. Reviewing Part 1 in the *Observer*, Philip Guedalla maintained a respectful tone and praised the volume for its "historical merit," but likened it to an "antique," albeit one possessing "charm," "beauty," and "unpublished points of view."²⁹ The *Athenaeum* acknowledged that the "political side of the diary" was "amazingly interesting," but ultimately dismissed Blunt's career as quixotic and misguided. "Mr. Blunt," it declared, "is a knight-errant of lost causes . . . tilting at the giants of imperialism."³⁰ Although *Part Two's* entire print run of 500 copies sold out (despite being prohibitively priced at 21 shillings), these reviews suggest that there was a substantial gap to bridge between Blunt's publishing intentions and the reception of *My Diaries* by actual readers.³¹ Would readers agree with Blunt's essential proposition that his pre-war observations about allied foreign policy undermined the moral authority of the Paris peace accords? How might a sympathetic reader digest the wealth of information Blunt provided and mobilize it for political action?

²⁹ Philip Guedalla, "Tales of Unrest," *Observer*, 8 June 1919, 5.

³⁰ L. W., "Lost and Other Causes," *Athenaeum*, 3 October 1919, 972.

³¹ For sales information, see Isabella Augusta, Lady Gregory, "Preface," in Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events 1888–1914*, vol. 1 (New York, 1922), vii.

Annotating *My Diaries*: “Anarchic Paraphrase”

The sheer profusion of marginalia that J. A. Fallows left in his copy of *My Diaries*, *Part 2* suggests an extraordinary degree of close engagement with Blunt’s text. He was not, however, a reader who could perform the kind of political work Blunt envisaged in the book’s “Forward” – mobilizing support for an “appeal” against the terms of the Paris accords on the “grounds of truth and honour.”³² Instead, Fallows performed a more personal mode of politics, using the book’s margins to inscribe a mixture of rumour, gossip, and sly commentary drawn from his own history of socialist political engagement. Frequent citations to other recently published radical or left-wing books show that the consumption of *My Diaries* formed part of a wider “dissenting” reading project during Fallows’s retirement. The following sections focus on two particular aspects of Fallows’s annotation practices, showing how each enabled him to respond to Blunt on his own terms. Through the first type of marginal notation, which I call “anarchic paraphrase,” Fallows reworded Blunt in more or less provocative and subversive ways. These paraphrases allowed Fallows to distance himself from Blunt when the subject matter irritated him and to claim some degree of readerly independence from the main text. Janes argues that the inclusion of personal and sexual innuendo in Bloomsbury social critique amounts to a form of “queering.”³³ Fallows’s use of anarchic paraphrase performs a similar role. Augmented by the addition of salacious gossip and abusive epithets, Fallows’s provocative rephrasings enabled him to develop Blunt’s relatively discreet sketches of upper-class misbehaviour into lurid verbal caricatures that perform their own acts

³² Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, vii.

³³ Janes, “Eminent Victorians,” 21.

of counter-cultural subversion. In the second type of annotation, “retrospective judgement,” Fallows used *My Diaries* to interrogate Blunt’s version of history, inscribing records of subsequent events into the margins to both update and assess the book’s predictions.

Fallows’s marginal rewordings frequently blur the boundary between the explicatory and the revisionist modes of annotation.³⁴ Sometimes they concur with Blunt’s judgements, but Fallows will assert his own authorial personality by expressing them in blunter, more frankly abusive terms.³⁵ A remark by Blunt that Gaughin’s paintings were “repulsively ugly,” for instance, is underlined, and Fallows has pencilled “Cubist asses” at the top of the page as a headnote.³⁶ Members of the aristocracy are frequent targets for Fallows’s paraphrastic invective. On 20 August 1908, Blunt records a visit from Constance (Shelah) Grosvenor, Duchess of Westminster, and being quietly appalled at the lifestyle multiple car ownership enabled her and her husband to enjoy. “The life of both of them is a perpetual gallop,” Blunt wrote. “This sort of society cannot last, it will end in Bedlam.” Fallows has vigorously underlined this passage in pencil (the word “gallop” receiving the heaviest pencil-marks) and written at the top of the page, “silly, blue, rich, snob, extravagant, fussy, racing, rushing, empty blue, landowner endowed Drones.”³⁷ In other places, Fallows juxtaposes a provocatively hostile paraphrase against a sympathetic description from Blunt. A passage marking the 1906 death of James Lane-Fox, in which Blunt includes some nostalgic memories of a boyhood climbing

³⁴ See David C. Greetham, review of H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 40, no. 1 (2002): 61–73, at 62.

³⁵ For a discussion of this mode of annotation, see H. J. Jackson, “Writing in Books and Other Marginal Activities,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (Winter 1992/3): 217–31, at 219.

³⁶ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 343.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

expedition, has received the baldly offensive headnote: “a foxhunting blue ass endowed.” In the left-hand margin, beside Blunt’s comment that Lane-Fox “passed his whole life fox-hunting, and died when he could no longer ride,” Fallows scrawled “what an ass!,” effectively subverting Blunt’s indulgent eulogy into an occasion for insult.³⁸

Elsewhere, Fallows delights in composing abusive paraphrastic marginalia about Tory politicians and members of the British royal family and relaying gossip. The second volume of *My Diaries* begins symbolically with the death of Queen Victoria. In the opening pages of the book, Blunt paints a quietly damning portrait of her as “a dignified but rather commonplace good soul . . . narrow-minded in her view of things, without taste in art or literature, fond of money . . . but easily flattered and expecting to be flattered.” In a headnote, Fallows more bluntly summarizes this critique as “narrow, stingy, commonplace, tasteless V. R., flattered by Tories, Revs, & canting press.”³⁹ To Blunt’s relatively circumspect indictment of Edward VII as “a lover of pleasure” who “allowed himself wide latitude in its indulgence,” Fallows has added an almost excessive catalogue of pursuits detailing the vices that Blunt only hints at: “Ed’s love of drinks, food, smoke, cards, betting, horse-racing, gambling, theatres, billiards, friends, sexual flirtations, sponging on rich friends.”⁴⁰ Some of the most gleefully abusive annotations in the book are directed at Winston Churchill. Blunt had a long, though eventually abortive, friendship with Randolph Churchill and would enjoy a similarly complex relationship with his son. The two were close in the early 1900s, even going so far as

³⁸ Ibid., 132.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 33.

to wear traditional Arab dress together during some of their meetings.⁴¹ By the time Blunt was preparing his diaries for publication, however, their friendship was far more equivocal. Blunt knew that some of the material in *My Diaries* would embarrass Churchill, but justified its printing with the thought that “it tells the truth and that can’t be helped.”⁴² Fallows’s annotations suggest that he was an eager audience for any negative or compromising comments Blunt had to offer about Churchill. A second-hand remark reported in March 1903 – seven months before Blunt first met him – that Churchill was “unscrupulous” has attracted the amplificatory headnote “unscrupulous, greedy, ambitious, conceited, gushy, canting Winston Churchill.”⁴³ A gloss in the right-hand margin adds the retrospective summation: “1920: now the worst jingo & capitalist blue snob Tory.”⁴⁴ Blunt’s later prediction that Churchill might end up leading the Liberal Party received the dismissive marginal comment: “he went back to the Tories when he found jingoism paid better.”⁴⁵ When Blunt noted sadly in April 1908 that Churchill had lost his seat in parliament, Fallows added the provocative rejoinder, “a pity that he didn’t lose his life.”⁴⁶

An early seventeenth-century term for marginal annotation, “adversaria,” provides an apt way of defining Fallows’s approach to Blunt’s text. As William Sherman notes, the name *adversaria* originally stemmed from the physical placement of marginal notes – they were written adjacent to the main text block.

⁴¹ Warren Dockter, “The Influence of a Poet: Wilfrid S. Blunt and the Churchills,” *Journal of Historical Biography* 10, no. 2 (Autumn 2011): 70–102, at 82.

⁴² Blunt, *Diary*, January–March 1920, 22 January 1920, 2, MS 453-1975, FM.

⁴³ On the meeting, see Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 77–8 and Dockter, “Influence of a Poet,” 82.

⁴⁴ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 45.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 209.

Over time, however, the meaning of the term has shifted. Readers of notes now assume that marginalia are not simply, as Sherman puts it, “opposite” the text “but oppositional” to it.⁴⁷ Many of Fallows’s notes occupy this ambiguous space between incidental adjacency and full-scale opposition. Some of Fallows’s paraphrases seem on the surface to endorse Blunt’s judgements, but they do so by concentrating them into abusive epithets. Others, like Fallows’s first note on Churchill, take a single adjective in the main text and amplify it by attaching a succession of blunter terms of Fallows’s own devising. Fallows’s oppositional stance extends to style as well as content. Many of the press reviews for *My Diaries* commented on its “qualities of style,” compliments that Blunt’s notebooks show him accepting gratefully.⁴⁸ Fallows’s anarchic paraphrases consciously disrupt this element of Blunt’s authorial personality. In places, they reduce Blunt’s fluent, conversational style to a staccato chain of abusive modifiers. The amplificatory nature of paraphrase provides Fallows with the space to inject ethical and sexual critique and indulge his misogynistic tendencies.⁴⁹ A night out with Lady Desborough, for instance, summarised in Blunt’s headnote as an “Amusing evening at Stafford House,” becomes in Fallows’s version, penned in above, “naughty, rowdy, gushy, excited blue snob ladies.”⁵⁰ At other points in the book, Fallows plays with the physical constraints the book’s white spaces imposed on him, positioning his marginal interventions to create maximum havoc with the text.⁵¹ On page 381, Fallows has taken advantage of the fortuitous placement of General French’s name at the edge of the right-hand side of the text

⁴⁷ William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia, 2007), 22.

⁴⁸ Blunt, *Diary*, April–June 1919, 12 June 1919, 37, MS 446-1975, FM.

⁴⁹ Cf. Janes, “Eminent Victorians,” 21–2.

⁵⁰ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 368.

⁵¹ Cf. Jackson, *Marginalia*, 32–3.

block to scrawl “an ass” in the margin next to his name. At the top of page 263, Fallows performs a similar act of typographical subversion, augmenting the printed headnote “General Gallifet” to read “General Gallifet a naughty jingo.”

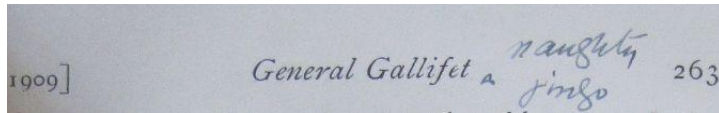


Figure 2: J. A. Fallows, marginalia in W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries: Part Two*, p. 263 (detail).

Blunt himself does not escape Fallows’s castigating pen.⁵² With more than a touch of envy, Fallows has added the following above Blunt’s 1909 account of a pleasant visit to Newstead Abbey: “lucky blue blood, finds friends all over England, altho’ a Radical & atheist.”⁵³ Other notes focus more specifically on the class privilege that enabled Blunt to publish radical books yet still maintain his position among the British ruling classes. To Blunt’s (inaccurate) prediction that the publication of the *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* would “about finish me in polite society,” Fallows wrote the cynical headnote: “Blunt allowed to write ‘Little England’ & exposing books, for which a poorer & less genteel man would have been fined & imprisoned.” Further down the page, he added in the margin: “blue blood covers all sins.”⁵⁴ A later headnote, appended to Blunt’s somewhat glib observation that “Court people . . . cannot understand how I, with my position of an English gentleman and landowner, can go in for revolution in Egypt and India,” puts the objection more forcefully (figure 3).

⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵³ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 258.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

an English Gentleman landowner
is allowed to be pacifist, Radical,
critic, atheist, when smaller men

1910] Will the King create 400 Peers? 299

"25th Jan.—I have recorded my vote at the election for Winter-
ton, the Tory candidate, his opponent being one Owthwaite, an
Australian land nationalizer, a carpet bagger sent down from
London.

"26th Jan.—There is a new assassination in India, this time of
a Mohammedan police officer in the High Court at Calcutta who
has been getting up prosecutions for the Government, and Minto
announces new measures of coercion. It is the Irish history over
again, with Morley playing the part of Buckshot Forster at the
India Office.

"1st Feb.—To London and called on Lady C. We talked about
the elections, and she declares that the King will very certainly
refuse to create the 400 peers needed to deal with the House of
Lords. 'You may take my word for that,' she said. I told her I
thought the King would do very wisely to refuse, as there was no
really strong feeling against the Lords, and she said: 'I will let
him know what you say; he would pay attention to your opinion.'
She tells me the King has no ill-will towards me, but my books
give offence with the Court people, who cannot understand how I,
with my position of an English gentleman and landowner, can go
in for revolution in Egypt and India.

"3rd Feb.—Spent the afternoon with Rivers Wilson, who told
me much that was interesting of his official days in Egypt, and his
recollections of General Gordon. [I have embodied most of what
he told me in my 'Gordon at Khartoum,' and need not transcribe
it here.]

"4th Feb.—Called on Clementine Churchill and arranged that
I am to lunch with her and Winston on the 10th, just before he
attends the Cabinet which will decide the momentous question of
the procedure against the House of Lords. So far neither Winston
nor any of them know what Asquith intends about the changes in
the Cabinet. We hope Winston may get the Home Office.

"5th Feb.—George Wyndham lunched with me. He assures me
the Conservative peers have not the least idea of throwing up the
sponge about their hereditary right of veto, nor does he at all fear
that the King will swamp their House with new creations. He
thinks there will be a kind of deadlock in politics, which will
prevent legislation of any kind for the next five years. The strength
of the Tory position is that they and the King together command
the whole material force of the country, besides half its voting
strength. They have the money, and the army and the navy and
the territorials, all down to the boy scouts. Why, then, should they
consent to a change in the constitution without fighting?

"6th Feb.—Lady Gregory (who is in London trying to raise
funds for her Dublin theatre), as well as George Wyndham and

are
boycotted
hated
starved
deported
for the same
things

landowner
✓ lucky
blue
Drone

cf. "Eminent Victorian"

King,
Lords,
blues,
society,
officers,
army,
admirals,
navy,
air-arms,
police,
£50

After 10 years it is Churchill & George
who support block of peers & blues
vs. Labour & Radicals

Figure 3: J. A. Fallows, marginalia in W. S. Blunt, My Diaries: Part Two, p. 299.

Underlining “gentleman” and “landowner” so heavily in fountain pen that the ink has smudged down the page, Fallows has written above, “An English gentleman landowner is allowed to be pacifist, Radical, critic, atheist when smaller men are boycotted hated ½ starved deported for the same things.” Later on the same page, adjacent to the word “landowner,” he wrote of Blunt: “endowed lucky blue drone.”⁵⁵ Despite their shared atheism and radical politics, Blunt’s continued self-identity as a Tory prevents Fallows from seeing him as a political ally. Instead, in notes like these, he implicates Blunt in the system of ruling-class hegemony that he believed had brought about the war. In structural terms, despite his authorship of “exposing books,” Fallows clearly regards Blunt as being as much a “blue drone” as Hugh “Bendor” Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster.

Fallows’s pose of outraged opposition to “blue blood” hegemony is, of course, a piece of self-fictionalization. As the son of a former Conservative Mayor of Birmingham and the beneficiary of an inheritance large enough to enable him to leave an estate of £66,285 at the time of his death in 1935, Fallows was closer in class terms to Blunt than he was to the hypothetical “poorer & less genteel man” of the annotation on page 181.⁵⁶ Indeed, Fallows’s psychological need to distinguish himself both from Blunt’s observations and from Britain’s pre-war political and aristocratic elite more generally can be read through Michael Roper’s account of “splitting” during the act of writing. Fallows’s acts of marginal denigration, coupled with the freedom to judge from hindsight, enable him to assume the pose of absolute

⁵⁵ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁶ Martin, “Fallows, John Arthur,” 134.

moral and historical arbiter. From this subject position, he could deny or obfuscate his own considerable economic and familial privilege. Political power and social capital in Fallows's marginalia always exist externally, projected onto other members of the British elite who prove too "silly," "muddling," or "schoolboy-ish" to exercise it effectively.⁵⁷ Each of these acts of projection seems to contain within it the repressed knowledge of Fallows's own thwarted political ambitions.

While the marginalia usually function as the means for disavowal or projection, Fallows does not always write himself out of the narrative. When the opportunity to inscribe insider knowledge into the margins arises, Fallows takes it. In the margins next to Blunt's description of the Indian colonial administrator Lepel Griffin's voice—"an English lisp and drawl"—Fallows adds the more precisely testimonial "an Oxonian throaty whisper."⁵⁸ His use of Austen Chamberlain's first name, in a reference to "Those tedious mediocrities, Long & Austen, still rulers of poor England, 1920," suggests a similar degree of personal familiarity.⁵⁹ Chamberlain was in the form immediately above Fallows at Rugby.⁶⁰ An anecdote about opium addiction moved Fallows to write "cf. Dowson" in the left-hand margin.⁶¹ Dowson was the poet Ernest Dowson, whom Fallows had befriended while at Queens' College, Oxford, and with whom he maintained a correspondence until Dowson's death in 1900. While the letters the two exchanged do not appear to have survived, Fallows makes occasional appearances in letters Dowson wrote to

⁵⁷ Michael Roper, "Splitting in Unsent Letters: Writing as a Social Practice and a Psychological Activity," *Social History* 26, no. 3 (October 2001): 318–39, at 327. "Silly" and "muddling" are some of the most frequent terms of abuse in Fallows's marginalia.

⁵⁸ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 194.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁶⁰ See Martin, "Fallows, John Arthur," 133.

⁶¹ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 190.

their mutual friend, the novelist Arthur Moore. On one occasion, he described listening to Fallows sing – “His voice is improved and he sang and played to me for about an hour and a half, most excellently” – and concluded, “I persist in liking him ‘in my fashion’, although he is indefensible.”⁶² In another letter, hearing that Moore was considering reading Edward Bellamy’s just-published bestseller *Looking Backwards*, Dowson urged him not to, relating how he had recently thrown his own copy of the book out a train window. The experience of reading it, he suggested, was rather like being lectured at by a lightweight version of John Arthur Fallows:

I perceive you mention “Looking Backwards.” I write to save your life. Don’t DON’T DON’T read that most ... of shockers. I bought it at Truro coming up on the [Great Western Railway] lately and before I got to Plymouth it had retired out the window. It isn’t a shocker – it’s a dreary fraud – it’s J. A. Fallows at 5 st. 7 lb. Verb sap.⁶³

Fallows’s marginalia become the instantiation of social networks, means for drawing connections between the page and personal memory, claims to a part in the narrative. Fallows’s use of *My Diaries* to record additional pieces of rumour and gossip also fulfils this role. When Blunt described the hurried 1851 marriage of Selina de Burgh to Lord Dudley, despite the fact that she was carrying another man’s child, for instance, Fallows expanded the anecdote by referring to a more recent

⁶² Ernest Dowson to Arthur Moore, 3 May 1891, in *Letters of Ernest Dowson*, ed. Desmond Flower and Henry Maas (London, 1967), 195.

⁶³ Dowson to Moore, 18 October 1889, in *Letters*, 109.

case – “cf. Blanco White & Wells’ Australian [sic] damsel, Amber Reeves.”⁶⁴ On another occasion, where Blunt covertly referred to the political influence of Edward VII’s mistress Mary Cornwallis-West with the oblique phrase “the feminine side of things,” Fallows filled in the gap by recording her name at the bottom of the page.⁶⁵

These moments of mirroring, where the authorial techniques and information networks of author and annotator coincide, illustrate the degree to which Fallows’s occasionally hostile outbursts against Blunt exaggerate the degree of his separation from the wider narrative. As Heather Jackson writes, “annotators like to declare themselves independent of the text, but they never really are so.” Readers find themselves “restricted in their range of reference” by the concerns of the author, their responses “governed by the original text.”⁶⁶ Throughout the notes, and despite his overt attempts to differentiate himself from Blunt, Fallows repeatedly accepts Blunt’s version of history. Frequent cross-references within the annotations to other texts, meanwhile, suggest that his consumption of *My Diaries* in 1920 was not an isolated event but was instead part of a wider and sustained programme of dissenting or anti-imperialist reading, both during the First World War and immediately afterwards. Fallows’s very first piece of marginalia in the main text is a reference to Keynes’s *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, used to gloss Blunt’s contention that “the terms imposed by the allied Governments at Paris” were “ungenerous.”⁶⁷ Crudely anti-clerical abuse aimed at Theodore Roosevelt in the marginalia may well have been influenced by Keynes’s theological critique of

⁶⁴ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 285.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶⁶ Jackson, *Marginalia*, 89, 76.

⁶⁷ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, vii.

Woodrow Wilson's thought processes.⁶⁸ "Conceited, swanky, bluffing Sunday-School sermonising by R.," Fallows wrote, adding further down the page the observation that "all Yankees must joke, or none would listen to them."⁶⁹ This pattern of bibliographical citation continues throughout the annotations. At various points, Fallows alludes to J. N. Brailsford's *War of Steel and Gold* (1915), E. D. Morel's *Red Rubber* (1905) and *Truth and the War* (1916), Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918), and Robert T. Reid's *How the War Came* (1919).⁷⁰ Taken together with *My Diaries*, these texts provided Fallows with an oppositional interpretive framework for explaining the war's origins and the shape of the post-war settlement.

Annotating *My Diaries*: "Retrospective Judgement"

Writing in his notebook on 7 April 1918, Blunt judged that the second part of *My Diaries* "forms a very complete picture of how the war was brought about."⁷¹ The forewords to both volumes provide further indications of how Blunt wanted his readers to interpret that picture. "Among the many contributory causes leading to the final catastrophe of the great World War of 1914," he wrote in the foreword to Part 1, "our obstinacy in retaining Egypt, notwithstanding all our promises, must be counted as one of the foremost." The war, in other words, had not been "thrust on

⁶⁸ On Keynes's critique of Wilson on religious grounds, see Janes, "Eminent Victorians," 24, and Larry Lepper, "What Literary Criticism Tells Us about Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace*," in *Keynes's Economic Consequences of the Peace: A Reappraisal*, ed. Jens Hölscher and Matthias Klaes (London, 2014), 35–62, at 54–55.

⁶⁹ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 312.

⁷⁰ For references to Brailsford in the marginalia, see Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 160, 211, and 481; for references to Morel, see 96, 106, 293, 296, 326, 434, and 448; for references to Strachey, see 77 and 299 (figure 3); for references to Reid, see 434 and 448.

⁷¹ Blunt, *Diary*, January–April 1918, 7 April 1918, 80, MS 438-1975, FM.

England through no fault of hers"; "it was not at Berlin that the first steps were taken in the direction of world-wide conquest."⁷² By framing his pre-war diaries in this way, Blunt was consciously resuscitating the terms of pre-war radical dissent against British foreign policy and injecting it into a new context where, he clearly hoped, it would gain a new relevance.⁷³ Reflecting the pervasive cynicism about Foreign Office motives common in pre-war radical circles, *My Diaries* represents the 1904 Anglo-French and 1907 Anglo-Russian ententes in starkly imperialist and self-interested terms. The "Anglo-French Convention," Blunt wrote, was simply an agreement "whereby the two Governments agreed to divide Egypt and Morocco between them."⁷⁴ The Anglo-Russian entente, meanwhile, "seems to amount to a partition of Persia."⁷⁵ Blunt's conviction that the Triple Entente was little more than a vehicle for imperial conquest was heightened in early 1918 by the publication in Britain of the so-called "secret treaties." Based on Russian Foreign Office documents released by the new Soviet government, these appeared initially in excerpt form in the *Manchester Guardian* in January and February 1918 and then in full in F. Seymour Cocks's *Secret Treaties and Understandings*.⁷⁶ Confiding privately in his notebook in April 1918, Blunt wrote,

⁷² Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 1, xv–xvi.

⁷³ On the terms of the radical opposition to British foreign policy, see Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914–1919* (Cardiff, 1976), 20–26; Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914–1918* (Hull, 1996), 1–24; Zara S. Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2003), 148–53; and Mulligan, *Origins of the First World War*, 5, 7.

⁷⁴ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 96.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷⁶ For the background to the documents' publication, see Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace, February–October 1917* (Stanford, 1967), 83–88, 103–5.

I remember reading the text of the Secret treaties which shows the scoundrel action of our Foreign Office in conjunction with those of France, Russia & Italy in dividing up the Ottoman Empire between them.... If there is any justice in the world, it will be the British Empire that will be partitioned at the war's end.⁷⁷

It was obviously impractical for Blunt to state his opposition to British imperialism this starkly in the pages of *My Diaries*. Nevertheless, Blunt effectively assimilates the “secret treaties” into the text, appending references to them in square brackets where they support his earlier suspicions about Entente motives.⁷⁸ In order to frame these developments in the most linear fashion possible, Blunt concludes *My Diaries: Part Two* with a “Chronology” of events. This, Blunt wrote in the foreword, was for “the benefit of those who would follow the logic of events leading to the Great War of 1914” and would be “of use to them in forming a correct historic judgment.”⁷⁹

Fallows accepted Blunt's “logic of events” with little question. He clearly relished the chance to participate in Blunt's revival of the pre-war radical critique of British imperialism. Although *My Diaries: Part Two* concludes with the outbreak of hostilities, Fallows has essentially written both the war itself and the emerging post-war settlement into the margins, using hindsight to show how subsequent history had borne out the substance of Blunt's predictions. In his entry for 5 May 1902, Blunt suggested that a division of Islamic states among European imperial states was “nearly certain to happen some day.” In such an event, he wrote, “I suppose France

⁷⁷ Blunt, Diary, April–May 1918, 4 May 1918, 25, MS 439-1975, FM.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vii.

will be given Morocco; Italy, Tripoli; England, Egypt; Germany, Syria and Asia Minor; Austria, Constantinople; and Russia, Persia.” Fallows, as Blunt clearly hoped his readers would do, accepted the implied invitation to test the diary’s predictive power. In the right-hand margin, he has written, “1917) England[:] Mesopotamia Palestine Persia; Syria to France &c.” At the top of the page, he summarised this entry as, “secret treaties of blue rulers grabbing Mahometan land.”⁸⁰ Mobilizing his library of cross-references, Fallows glossed a reference to the Moroccan Crisis of 1904 with the marginal note, “one of the causes of the war (cf. Morel).”⁸¹ A suggestion in September 1907 that “the partition of the whole of Asia is in the programme of our Foreign Office” has had the post hoc endorsement appended to it: “now / 1920) Curzon grabs Persia for English Oil-pluts . . . Arabia Mesopotamia Palestine 1920 / French to grab Syria.”⁸² News of Blériot’s Channel crossing in July 1909 has been shadowed with the retrospective observation, “few realised what a curse aëroplanes would be to this world in war.”⁸³ Blunt’s 1911 observation that “[i]t is impossible to run high Imperialism on the cheap” has had written beside it the post hoc confirmation “Our monstrous Budgets of 1920 & 1919.”⁸⁴ A reference to “our stupid English generals” in 1905 receives the approving headnote “our muddling generals” and the observation at the bottom of the page that “they failed at Gallipoli & Kut & vs. the Bolsheviks.”⁸⁵ An earlier prediction that “personal freedom and strict legality would . . . suffer” in Britain as a result of Boer War restrictions has been annotated “DORA [Defence of the Realm Act] 1918” with the accompanying head note

⁸⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁸¹ Ibid., 96.

⁸² Ibid., 191.

⁸³ Ibid., 271.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 357.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 117.

“Dictators & ‘Dora’ in war-time.”⁸⁶ Blunt’s report of a meeting with Herbert Spencer in 1903, during which Spencer had warned, “[t]here is coming a reign of *force* in the world, and there will be again a general war for mastery,” received from Fallows the simple note “1914” in the margin.⁸⁷

These moments of acquiescence, where Fallows literally underwrites Blunt’s authorial intentions, resemble what Jackson refers to as “mimicry.”⁸⁸ They reflect the centripetal force that a particularly persuasive text can impose on its annotators. But they do not, as Fallows’s tendency towards anarchic paraphrase shows, represent the entirety of his marginal engagement with *My Diaries*. Fallows embraced aspects of Blunt’s text because they reinforced his pre-existing opinions about armed conflict and its place in history. Reading it with pen in hand gave him the opportunity to indulge in a kind of rhetorical nostalgia for the terms of Edwardian and late Victorian radical-left critique. Blunt’s posthumous critique of Cecil Rhodes as a “lucky speculator,” who made money “at the expense of a war and ruin for everybody else” moved Fallows to write the scathing headnote: “rascally Rhodes, who faked war vs. Matabili in order to grab their lands, & helped to force England to war vs. Boers to get Capitalist profits & grab S. Africa.”⁸⁹ This piece of marginalia closely parallels an article Fallows wrote in the Christian Socialist journal *The Pioneer* in July 1899, while the South African wars were still unfolding:

⁸⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁸ Jackson, *Marginalia*, 88–9.

⁸⁹ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 22.

[W]e hold that we must not grab any more land . . . We oppose all forward movements, initiated by ambitious “prancing pro-consuls” for the sake of titles, honour, and money; . . . by capitalists and shareholders, who want big dividends to be earned at the expense of the nation . . . by Tories and plutocrats, who wish to persuade the gullible mob to shout for glory[,] . . . to revere the rich and titled, and to remain blind to the great economic injustices.⁹⁰

In other places, marginalia arise out of acute disagreement with the text. Blunt’s suggestion that British “working class” jingoism had “made the war” in South Africa, for instance, received a forthright piece of marginal dissent from Fallows: “workingmen make no wars; they’re all made by a few blue & plutoc[ratic] rulers who then instruct press to tell folks it’s nec[essar]y.”⁹¹

Both of these responses to Blunt – affirmation and disagreement – gave Fallows the chance to inscribe elements of his own history of political engagement into the book. In this way, the marginalia become a kind of mirror image of the main text. Blunt positioned his pre-war diary as an implicit commentary on both the war and the ongoing peace settlement. Fallows uses the margins of *My Diaries* to revive the radical critique of British foreign policy he himself had wielded in the pre-war years. The surprisingly sober observation that “we need a Parl[iamentar]y C[ommit]tee for Foreign Affairs, & no treaty or war sans Parl[iamentar]y consent” echoes a similar suggestion that Fallows had made in his ILP penny pamphlet, *The*

⁹⁰ *Pioneer*, no. 2 (July 1899): 12.

⁹¹ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 7.

Story of German and English Relations (1911), issued as part of the ILP's "sustained propaganda campaign" for armament reductions in 1910–11.⁹² Other marginalia, ostensibly prompted by Blunt, also have close parallels in Fallows's earlier writings in the socialist press. An annotation to Blunt's discussion of the deaths of several British officers at Gumburru in Somalia in April 1903 reads, "blue Tory snobs' sport of war."⁹³ The editorial to the first issue of *The Pioneer* derides "the follies of the upper-class game of war."⁹⁴ A dismissive account of Winston Churchill's escape from Pretoria in the second number of *The Pioneer* suggests that Fallows's antipathy to him was long-standing: "Another young Churchill is being trotted out by the local Tories," he wrote, in order "to catch the silly mob by fresh heroics of jingoism."⁹⁵ The headnote and index entry "stupid landlords," written in the context of Irish home-rule, recalls a long, vituperative column on the "landlord class" that Fallows contributed to another issue of *The Pioneer*, one which closely resembles the critiques of Tory aristocrats with which he peppered the white spaces of his copy of *My Diaries*: "the great mass [of landlords] are and always have been useless drones . . . wasting time in idiotic parties . . . in sports and slaughter, in jingoism, eating and boozing, betting and gambling."⁹⁶ The manuscript index that Fallows compiled for *My Diaries* show that these same terms continued to supply him with a personal lexicon for describing Britain's ruling classes long after he had ceased to be active in the labour movement. Written on the rear pastedown is a succession of entries

⁹² *Ibid.*, 104. For Fallows's earlier treatment of this idea, see J. A. Fallows, *The Story of German and English Relations* (Manchester, 1911), 13. On the ILP's arms reduction campaign, see Douglas J. Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace, 1889–1914* (Oxford, 1985), 240–6, quote at 240.

⁹³ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 53.

⁹⁴ *Pioneer*, no. 1 (June 1899): 3.

⁹⁵ *Pioneer*, no. 2 (July 1899): 9.

⁹⁶ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 62; *Pioneer*, no. 7 (December 1899): 54.

referring to “silly blues” (four entries), “rushing [car-driving] Drones” (two entries), a “rowdy dance,” “jingo pressure,” and “jingo Churchill.” Writing about Fallows’s campaign in the 1902 Birmingham Council elections, the *ILP News* commented on his “amazing candour of ... utterances” and “alarming” refusal to be “discreet.”⁹⁷ Marginal annotation enabled him to direct that same “candour” silently onto the page, each pen or pencil stroke offering him the opportunity to revisit the politics of the past.

Conclusion

Both Blunt and Fallows saw the immediate post-war period as a moment at which radical politics might become relevant again and each attempted to insert himself into current events through acts of writing. Yet ultimately each was a form of vanity publishing – literally in the case of Blunt, who covered the full cost of printing *My Diaries* himself, £470 for Volume One alone.⁹⁸ Blunt failed to recognise the extent to which his pre-Edwardian anti-imperialist critique of British politics had become obsolete by 1919–20. Given the strength of its bargaining position at the Paris Peace Conference, coupled with its desire to maintain imperial unity, Britain was not about to make territorial concessions on moral grounds. Fallows, too, despite the pugilistic tone of many of his annotations, was engaging in his own form of readerly vanity. There is no indication that he had any sort of contemporary readership at all. The marginalia are best read as acts of emotional and psychological self-justification. Anyone perusing the annotations now will look in vain for original interpretations

⁹⁷ Quoted in George J. Barnsby, *Birmingham Working People: A History of the Labour Movement in Birmingham 1650–1914* (Wolverhampton, 1989), 342.

⁹⁸ Blunt, Diary, August–September 1919, 8 August 1919, 8–9, MS 448-1975, FM.

of the conflict or indications that it brought about any shift in his intellectual framework. Their major impression is to confirm Fallows's marginality as a historical actor. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Fallows's annotations in his copy of *My Diaries* are of marginal interest as historical records. They provide evidence for readership practices within the politically dissenting communities that defined themselves in opposition to mainstream values in Britain, both during the war and into the first years of peace. Older radicals like Blunt and Fallows may have been, as Stephen Badsey puts it, "a small and un-influential minority."⁹⁹ The narrative of disillusionment that gained prominence in the late 1920s and early 1930s was, however, formed in part within the discursive crucible of pre-war and wartime dissent. Material traces left by civilian observers like Fallows provide evidence for the evolution, origins, and relative popularity of the "rejectionist" position in the immediate post-war period.

For Fallows, the war itself was not an immediate source of disenchantment. Instead, his opposition both to the conflict and the post-war settlement stemmed from a set of existing political commitments, reinforcing Andrew Frayn's observation that "challenge[s] to . . . officially sanctioned discourses" relating to the war tended to be "made from an already dissenting position."¹⁰⁰ Reading, pen in hand, within a canon of oppositional texts provided a form of "psychic relief," enabling Fallows to position the war within an ethical framework and assign blame for conflict to the "landlords" and conservative politicians he had been agitating

⁹⁹ Stephen Badsey, "Ninety Years on: Recent and Changing Views on the Military History of the First World War," in *1918 Year of Victory: The End of the Great War and the Shaping of History*, ed. Ashley Ekins (Auckland, 2010), 243–59, at 246.

¹⁰⁰ Frayn, *Writing Disenchantment*, 40. See also Jonathan Atkin, *A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury Attitudes to the Great War* (Manchester, 2002), 10–15.

against since his time at Oxford.¹⁰¹ Imitating the authorial strategies laid down by Blunt and Strachey, he was able to draw together the personal and the political into a form of ethical critique against the British establishment.¹⁰² His marginalia both endorse the rumour and personal gossip provided by Blunt and extend its reach with the addition of further slurs and damaging details.

Writing about the relationship between books and readers, Andrew Stauffer likens texts to “textiles, woven creations of material and semantic content.” During its lifetime, he writes, any book that encounters use becomes “an historical record,” its pages picking up “traces of its many social interactions and its long journey into our hands.”¹⁰³ J. A. Fallows’s copy of *My Diaries: Part Two* exemplifies this process in action. The “complete redemption” of the world along socialist lines that Fallows had predicted in *The Pioneer* in 1900 had not materialized.¹⁰⁴ Neither had war between Britain and Germany been averted by the ILP’s campaign for arbitration, in which Fallows participated through *The Story of German and English Relations*. In the wake of these thwarted histories, the subversive account of those events that *had* occurred documented in *My Diaries* provided an attractive alternative. Although he himself maintained a deep distrust for socialism, Blunt’s insistence that the war’s causes lay in conspiracies among Europe’s ruling classes to gain access to territory and resources had an obvious appeal for a socialist readership. The ways in which a socialist reader could interpret the book against the grain in this way is exemplified in Fallows’s headnote to Blunt’s “Chronology of Events.” Whereas Blunt wanted this

¹⁰¹ Cf. Roper, “Splitting in Unsent Letters,” 333.

¹⁰² Cf. Janes, “Eminent Victorians,” 21.

¹⁰³ Andrew Stauffer, “The Nineteenth-Century Archive in the Digital Age,” *European Romantic Review* 23, no. 3 (2012): 335–41, at 336.

¹⁰⁴ *Pioneer*, no. 9 (February 1900): 69.

appendix to reveal to readers the “logic of events” that led to the war, Fallows interprets this “logic” in explicitly Marxist fashion. The “Chronology,” in his words, “shews how the blues & pluts, ruling all the European states, have been grabbing land & make wars & secret alliances all the time / Capitalist Imperialism.”¹⁰⁵ Blunt’s denial, on the final page of the diary, that Britain had fought the war to defend liberty has been similarly rephrased to fit a left-wing intellectual framework. Whereas Blunt had written that Britain was “saved . . . from supreme disaster by the fighting tenacity of our ignorant boy soldiers, who believed what they were told, and throughout the war pretended, that it was one for liberty waged in the defence of weak nations, and to set the whole world free,” Fallows has written at the top of the page: “a deluded Nation of workers, soldiers, & taxpayers.”¹⁰⁶ For Fallows, the white space around the text block became the territory for his own form of radical political self-assertion, one that essentially converted the book into a piece of Marxist historical explanation. By doing so, he was able to transform his own copy of this already heterodox text into an enduring record of a lifetime of political dissent.

¹⁰⁵ Blunt, *My Diaries*, vol. 2, 479.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 451.