Assembling Identities

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Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

REGENIA GAGNIER

Most of the authors contributing to *Assembling Identities* would have come of age in the time of multiculturalism and consciousness of globalization. They would be familiar with diverse identity politics, transnational trade federations and common markets, biosocial activisms on the internet. Yet from racial, ethnic, and sexual communities in multicultural Britain and America to clones in science fiction; from Portuguese fado to German and Italian opera to the Scottish pipes; the salient aspects of modern identities that they find are, as Sam Wiseman writes in his Introduction, ambiguity and instability. Ambiguity because, even in circumstances of domination, identities have complex performances, subtle expressions, and unpredictable effects. Instability because micro and local processes of identity formation are often crossed by macro and global processes outside their control. In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel said that humans were distinguished by their thinking consciousness, in that we draw out of ourselves and make explicit for ourselves that which we are. Unlike other species, we perceive ourselves, have ideas of ourselves. In relationship with external nature and technology, we actively, practically, self-realize.

Today, studies of dynamic, developmental systems have taken the dialectics of identity further and more precisely. Recent developments in molecular biology imply that classic distinctions between nature and nurture or biology and culture are not applicable to the human ecological niche. Research in epigenetics shows that the effects of culture on nature go all the way down to the gene and up to the stratosphere, and the effects of biology on culture are similarly inextricable. Living systems almost invariably involve the interaction of many kinds of organisms with a diversity of technologies. The anthropocene—the age of human cultures and technologies interacting with natural environments—changes rapidly, and to understand and manage its functioning requires perspectives from each domain. We call this confluence of perspectives from the natural or biological, cultural, and technological domains Symbiology, the post-organismic study of relation. The kinds of relations we study include

mutualism, parasitism, domination, recognition, separation, solubility, symmetric mutuality (relations among equals in power or status), asymmetric mutuality (relations among unequals such as parents/offspring, teacher/pupil, human/nonhuman animals), reciprocity, alienation, isolation, autonomy, and so forth, and these relations are discernible throughout nature and all cultures.

Assembling Identities addresses the relationships within which identity develops in diverse niches of culture and technology. There is no essence of humankind other than our exceptional ability to interact self-consciously with our environments. While many species transform their environments—beavers build dams, bees make hives, microbes change the colours of the seas—humans have an exceptional ability to transform nature through our use of technology, which in turn transforms us. The Frankfurt School called this the dialectic of enlightenment, the ways that human evolution and development are in a ceaseless loop in which we create technology that in turn returns to recreate us. The salient factor in human development is not what is in your genes, but what (niche or environment) your genes are in. And the ability of humans to reflect on this natural history of change and difference tells us that things can and will change; so that hope, so central to modern identities, is the natural consequence of human under-determination.

In the fifteenth century Giovanni Pico della Mirandola defended a conception of the human as the animal whose nature was not to have a nature, the Proteus who could sculpt itself into whatever shape it preferred. The philosophical anthropologists from Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx/Engels, and Nietzsche to Arnold Gehlen and Helmuth Plessner in the twentieth century also found that humans are exceptionally malleable. Schopenhauer had written that you know the species when you know one non-human animal, but humans have choice and in their choice consists their individuality and diversity, their unique identities. This exitless individuality or unfinishedness, our being presented at every moment with choices, being thrown into metaphysical unfoundedness, was the source of Sartre's notorious "nausea". More extreme and hubristic than the philosophical anthropologists, transhumanists today argue that precisely because humans have the freedom to alter themselves and their environments through their use of technologies, we must mobilize every enhancement and augmentation in our power to overcome what used to be considered the limits of human freedom: ageing, sickness, and death. Transhumanists consider it their task to confront ageing, sickness, and death with whatever enhancements (rational self-manipulations) and augmentations (mechanical enhancements) they can, from pharmaceuticals

or biotechnical neuroplasty to mechanical or digital extensions. (Their neoliberal leader is characteristically named Max More, indicating the transhumanists' maximal ambition.) Humans are developmentally plastic, with the capacity to be either creative or destructive, rational or irrational, active or passive in their diverse niches.

If we consider literature or other cultural products in their specific niches, we can see certain geopolitical commodities linking the production and reproduction of life. I have often focused on forms of biodiversity around which lives and literatures are built—cotton, coffee, tea, rice, bananas, tobacco, sugar—and imaginative literatures about total environments of banana wilt, rice blast, waste management, sustainable transport, etcetera: novels called *Rice, Yeast, Oil, Water, Men of Maize, Wolf Totem, Rickshaw Boy,* and so forth. In this volume the authors focus more on the technologies of theatre, music, television, digitization, aviation, tattooing and body image. They locate the salient actants and relations within particular niches in which humans assemble their diverse identities. Humans make their own identities, but they do not make them as they please... but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.

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INTRODUCTION

SAM WISEMAN

This collection of essays, drawn from across the arts, humanities and social sciences, represents a cross-disciplinary attempt to explore some of the ways in which identities—whether of individuals, communities, or nations—are constructed, maintained and contested. While the title emphasises the *formation* of identity, the collection also explores ways in which identities can be lost, adapted, appropriated, combined and disputed. Given the broad range of topics and disciplines present here, there are few characteristics which can be said to apply to every contribution; but one conclusion that is collectively implied is the invariable ambiguity and instability of identity. It is never a static concept: identities are in a state of ceaseless change, as they respond (on both individual and collective levels) to pressures and influences from institutions, ideologies and material conditions.

The sixteen chapters that comprise *Assembling Identities* are all versions or developments of papers given at the 2013 University of Glasgow postgraduate conference of the same name. The contributors are scholars working throughout the UK and beyond, in subjects including English Literature, Cultural Studies, Music, History, Theology, Media Studies, Social Anthropology, Digital Arts, Philosophy and Visual Culture. It is hoped that this disciplinary diversity will promote the discovery of new, unexpected perspectives and connections for readers in their thinking about identity; that unforeseen parallels will emerge between diverse places, periods and socio-cultural locations. Key loci of identity covered here include class, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion; some of the sites and behaviours of identity formation examined include performativity, technology and the body. These conceptual approaches provide different means of analyzing and understanding the ways in which sources of identity conflict, intersect, and/or problematize each other; the processes by which they are maintained, contested, and imposed upon individuals or communities.

The collection is subdivided into four sections: Performative Identities; British Identities; Ethnic, Bodily and Sexual Identities; and Visuality,

Technology and Identity. These subdivisions are not intended to imply clearly demarcated boundaries between the sections, particularly in terms of disciplinary approach; indeed, the editorial intention has specifically been to ignore any temptation to group chapters according to subject, focusing instead upon broad thematic links. In this way, seemingly unlikely parallels and connections may become apparent across disciplines. In Part Four, for example, some affinities can be perceived between Garfield Benjamin's examination of contemporary technological influences upon the reimagining of self (via digital avatars), and Rinni Haji Amran's analysis of the role played by aeronautical technologies in John Dos Passos' literary depictions of identity. Two profoundly different (but comparably significant) technologies are analyzed from markedly different disciplinary perspectives here, yet their impact upon our understanding of our identities in relation to the world bears comparison.

This gives an example of the kinds of question emphasized by the collection's subdivision of chapters. What role do new technologies play in shaping, maintaining and contesting our collective and individual identities? Similarly, we might ask what the functions and capacity of performativity are in this respect; what connections and shifts we can observe in the ways in which British identities have been produced and challenged, in different contexts and periods; and how the body can be employed, appropriated and/or reclaimed in the struggle to assert a specific identity. Different disciplines, methodologies and subject matter allow for different ways of exploring such questions, and it is hoped that the structure of this collection will encourage such enquiries. This is not to say, of course, that other thematic divisions could not be made, and readers will no doubt observe connections between essays in separate sections. Several chapters quite explicitly straddle the lines demarcated here: in tracing the role of the bagpipe in Romantic formations of Scottish identity, for example, Vivien Williams explores both Britishness and performativity; while Megan Ratliff's discussion of tattooing and asterisms in Japanese and Māori culture emphasizes both visuality (in terms of differing cultural perceptions of external phenomena) and the significance of bodily markings in the understanding and imagining of oneself and one's community.

Performative Identities begins with David Linton's essay "Degeneration/Regeneration: The Remaking of Nation in Wartime London West End Revue". During the First World War, Linton notes, revue shows evinced a "fragmented vocabulary of performance inscribed with a bewildering variety of national, racial and gender identity constructions." This, he argues, "was pivotal in negotiating patriarchal

power structures." From these beginnings, however—which emphasize the potential for performativity to assist in the wresting of power from hegemonic control, through the construction of subversive identities—Linton goes on to discuss the conservative, reactionary trends that predominated in West End revue specifically. Here, he identifies "a regenerative nationalism that sought a remasculinization of British culture", with the aim of "constructing a shared rhetoric of entertainment and patriotism." Performativity, then, emerges as both a potentially emancipating activity for marginalized groups, and a powerful source of ideology and propaganda for authorities. This point is reiterated in Defne Cizakca's chapter, "Identity and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Istanbulite Theatre", which stresses the crucial Armenian role in the growth of Istanbul's theatrical culture. This history, Cizacka argues, underpinned the Ottoman Porte's favourable attitude towards the Armenian director Agop Vartovyan, who sought to "unite Turkish and Armenian Enlightenment in the same location: his theatre." However, surveying twentieth-century responses to Vartovyan's work, Cizakca notes a proliferation of ideologically-motivated attacks from both Armenian and Turkish nationalists. Thus, where Linton's chapter reminds us that a theatrical movement can be a source of both reactionary and emancipatory impulses at a given moment, Cizakca's demonstrates that even a single playwright can be co-opted in both of these ways over time—depending upon the political context and the particular identities for which critics seek to appropriate the play.

Performative sites, institutions and histories, then, are always battlegrounds upon which differing conceptions of identity are contested. Performers are not simply free to assemble their own identity, but must constantly negotiate cultural and social pressures. Moreover, the particular cultural meanings of performances (and other artworks) are not fixed, but change over time according to competing ideologies. These points are also evident in James Félix's essay "Paupers, Poets and Prostitutes: the Evolving Identity of the Fadista", which discusses the Portuguese musical subculture, fado. Over time, Félix explains, the identity of the fadista has evolved from one associated with criminality and poverty, to a more romanticized and tourist-friendly archetype. What, if anything, now constitutes authenticity in a fadista? The problem here is twofold: firstly, there is the question of the cultural appropriation of a marginal subculture; and secondly, the question of *musical* authenticity. The complexity of the latter point is highlighted by Félix's discussion of Amália Rodrigues—a figure "seen as the embodiment of the fadista persona", and yet one associated with "international fame, and an innovative, radical approach to

the musical material." Performers, therefore, do not only draw upon the genres and traditions within which they operate; through their activities, they also modify the conventions and associations of those contexts. The influence of specific individuals can therefore alter what is perceived to be an "authentic" performative identity. This is also a central theme in Brianna E. Robertson-Kirkland's contribution, "Opera Identity: the Singer, the Character or the Immortal Performer?", which notes that contemporary opera singers "tend to think of vocal style as part of the composer canon." As Robertson-Kirkland argues, however, this is a relatively recent development: in Mozart's period, for example, performers and composers had a reciprocal creative relationship, and operatic roles were adapted by singers. Despite the obvious differences between fado and operatic culture, then, these essays collectively emphasize the complex processes through which performers negotiate an identity, in the context of a genre's history, conventions and contemporary assumptions.

Part Two, British Identities, begins with Vivien Williams' essay "'All the Bagpipes in the World are here, and they Fill Heaven and Earth': The Bagpipe in the Romantic Construction of Scottish Identity". Here the focus shifts from the role of musical performers in constructing identities to the ways in which external actors and institutions can utilize, shape and appropriate performative traditions to suit particular ideological ends. Williams notes "a radical change in perspectives" towards Highlanders and the bagpipe during the Romantic era, as violent connotations give way to characteristically Romantic notions of simplicity, solitude, sublimity and the picturesque. Despite this shift, Williams argues that both constructions serve the interests of British hegemony in differing ways. Today, the "spectacle of the pipers of the British Army marching in tartan uniform speaks of feelings of loyalty and reliability, which are nevertheless always matched with a sense of 'otherness'": the instrument has become a powerful ideological tool for those who seek to emphasize Scottish loyalty to Britain, while remaining a signifier of difference. Williams' chapter thus explores some of the historical tensions between Celtic self-identity and the identities imposed upon Celtic cultures by British and English institutions and ideologies. In Daryl Perrins' contribution, "Barry Islands in the Stream: Class, Regionalism and *Hiraeth* in Television Comedy Representations of Contemporary Wales", much of the focus is on the cultural battles fought for Welsh identity *within* Wales; and where Williams maps the construction of Scottish identities through paintings and folk songs, Perrins uses popular music and television comedy to investigate competing representations of contemporary Welsh identity. Producer-director Ed Thomas' optimistic

vision of a "bilingual, multicultural, pro-European" Wales is set against the fatalistic, self-effacing visions of nation presented in the situation comedies of the actor-director Boyd Clack; the evolution of a Celtic identity here emerges as an ongoing negotiation with English language and history.

Jed Fazakarley's chapter, "British Multiculturalism: An Emerging Field for Historians", draws upon sources from the 1950s to the late 1980s in its discussion of the emergence and development of British multicultural policy and values; Fazakarley examines the phenomenon as "an institution through which distinctive ethnic communities taken to possess special 'needs' requiring specific responses have been posited and thereby brought into social reality." His essay therefore stresses the extent to which institutional factors can influence the identities of minority communities—whether those identities are actually adopted by individuals, or merely imposed upon them by external groups and actors. The continuation of multiculturalism, Fazakarley argues, owes much to the sociological theory of "path dependency", which notes that the high costs of reversing a major policy approach can make it, to a certain degree, self-perpetuating. This arguably sets limits to the "multiculturalism backlash" often posited in contemporary Britain. Nonetheless, much of the state policy and rhetoric towards minority communities that Fazakarley examines stands in stark contrast to the racist and exclusionary language used by politicians and the media towards recent immigrant groups in the UK. This is the subject of Nikolay Mintchev's chapter, "Logics of Exclusion: Culture, Economy and Community in British Anti-Immigration Discourses". Focusing upon Bulgarians and Romanians, Mintchev notes that Eastern Europeans "are subject to different cultural representations" than the communities which form the basis of Fazakarley's survey. As a result, he argues, "the campaign against Bulgarians and Romanians is based upon new lines of racist argumentation"—namely stereotypes of criminality, differences in economic prosperity between Britain and Eastern Europe, and fears that immigrant groups will disrupt community cohesion.

The evolution and adaption of exclusionary discourses within British culture over time is thus evident in these two chapters; and Part Three, Ethnic, Bodily and Sexual Identities, opens with another survey of racist ideology. Anna-Leena Korpijärvi's focus in "From Fools to Villains: Changes in the Characterization of an Ethnic Stereotype" is on two successive Chinese stereotypes within American popular literature, John Chinaman and Fu-Manchu, and the social and political circumstances which underpin the "abrupt shift from a passive, almost childish and

effeminate deviant to a sophisticated and intelligent villain." By reading these texts in the context of contemporary historical events (such as the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901), Korpijärvi demonstrates the intricate interconnections between material conditions, popular culture and ideology that lie behind hegemonic attempts to impose ethnic identities. Conversely, Aretha Phiri and Maja Milatovic's "Dis(re)membering Bodies: Disability and Self-Constitution in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Octavia Butler's *Kindred*" examines the potential for African-American literary texts to challenge and resist such impositions. While "black national and cultural inclusivity has been consistently thwarted in a racialized and fundamentally racist America", Morrison and Butler's texts represent attempts at "re-envisioning and re-membering the placement of black (cultural) subjectivity within the (white) national narrative." Literary texts can thus alternately serve to impose, appropriate, or reclaim ethnic and cultural identities.

Part Three continues with another literary-critical essay examining the construction of marginal identities in US culture, "Gertrude Stein's Queer America", by Ery Shin. This explores the role played by literary difficulty in such constructions, with Shin noting that Stein's novel *The Making of Americans* "elevates monotony and the mundane into high art and is perhaps the most difficult modernist masterpiece to read as a result." Most significantly in the present context, Stein's "queer singular [...] floats in an existential no-man's land. It adopts a paradoxical stance towards middle-class America by being both of and against it." As with Phiri and Milatovic's intertwined exploration of ethnic and disabled identities, Shin's chapter emphasizes intersectionality: in Stein's work, the complex relations between class and queerness in early-twentieth century bourgeois America are investigated. Moreover, "*The Making of Americans* eerily anticipates class divisions within contemporary LGBT circles [...] by assuming that the ideal queer America is still a discerning white middle-class one." Another intersection with contemporary LGBT identities, that of religious faith, is considered in Andrew Grey's chapter "Christian and Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender: Reconciling Identities Through Comparison". Asking whether these identities are "inherently in competition with one another, and therefore mutually exclusive", Grey explores some parallels with the position of early Jewish Christians. For both groups, he argues, a dual identity can be adopted that is not inherently contradictory, depending upon the particular foundations that both religious and sexual identities are based upon. The essay thus illustrates the more general point that intersecting identities may or may not be seen

as being in tension with one another, depending upon the specific rationales and beliefs underpinning those identities.

The collection's final section, Visuality, Technology and Identity, begins with Garfield Benjamin's "Hyper-Bodies of the *Objet A*-vatar: the Assemblage of the Digital Self", an examination of the role of avatars as key tools in the mediation of digital environments. Benjamin explores some of the ways in which technology is changing our ability to claim and inhabit identities: as he argues, "a transfinite array of possible constructions" means that "the digital subject is constrained in their identity only by their access to technology and their own subjective presuppositions about the nature of their identity." The avatar can thus be seen as a tool for the reimagining of self, a means by which we can "perceive our identities outside of ourselves and thus creatively challenge our negotiation of selfhood." A similar role can arguably be played by clones in science fiction, and the following chapter—Liza Futerman's "Cloning and the Visual Formation of Identity in *Doctor Who* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*"—considers this in the context of the BBC series and Kenneth Branagh's 1994 film. As Futerman argues, the clone simultaneously "materializes the process of identity formation" and "dramatizes the incoherence of a unique and unambiguous identity." Like avatars, clones may "parody the notion of a coherent individual identity by both incorporating and challenging it." These different technologies and concepts, then, are both threatening—in their undermining of the idea of the coherent, unified and singular identity—and potentially emancipatory, in their implication that new and multiple identities may be adopted.

Megan B. Ratliff's contribution, "Bodily and Celestial Cosmologies: Tattooing and Asterisms Among the Japanese and Māori", considers how bodily identities are created not through the creation of new bodies (cloning) or the inhabiting of virtual ones (avatars), but rather through the making of marks upon one's existing body. Ratliff also looks at the relationship between visuality and identity, considering the inscribing of "central values, beliefs, and understandings" upon, on the one hand, the body, and on the other, the night sky. As Ratliff argues, tattooing "applies an invented order to the body", and thus "mirrors our relationship to [...] natural phenomena." Her essay therefore emphasizes that disparate cultures and practices can manifest the same impulse: to grasp and express a sense of identity through visual projection and inscription. The role of aerial perspectives in the constitution of identity is a central theme of the collection's final chapter, Haji Amran's "Aviation and Alienation in John Dos Passos' *Airways, Inc.* and *The Big Money*". This argues that flight revealed to Dos Passos "the vast changes to one's perception of everyday

life brought about by technological progress, which precipitated a necessary change in his literary technique in order to better portray the experience of twentieth-century America." This chapter thus continues the exploration of technological influences upon self-constitution, while further emphasizing how such influences can drive shifts in the artistic methods through which identity is represented and expressed.

Assembling Identities, and the conference which led to the collection, was only made possible by the practical and financial assistance of the University of Glasgow's Graduate School of Arts and Humanities; particular thanks are owed to Dee Heddon and Marina Moskowitz. The conference benefited immensely from a talented, hardworking and imaginative organizing committee, including Sarah Bissell, Julia Bohlmann, Madeleine Campbell, Elizabeth Ford, Agnes Marszalek, Calum Rodger, Elizabeth Oglesby-Wellings, Michael Shaw, Graeme Spurr and Hannah Tweed. I would like to thank the keynote speakers, Regenia Gagnier and Pierre Joris, as well as Gordon Barr, Katie Bruce, Alec Finlay, Nick Higgins, Karl Magee, Peter Manson, Nicole Peyrafitte, Annie Rose, Habib Tengour and Ruth Washbrook, for their contributions to various discussions, readings and events. I am immensely grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their faith in this project. Finally—and most importantly—I want to thank the contributing authors, who have created a stimulating, thoughtful and imaginative set of essays, collectively enriching our understanding of identity.

PART ONE:

PERFORMATIVE IDENTITIES

CHAPTER ONE

DEGENERATION/REGENERATION: THE REMAKING OF NATION IN WARTIME WEST END REVUE

DAVID LINTON

London West End revue performance constituted a particular response to mounting social, political and cultural insecurities over Britain's status and position at the beginning of the twentieth century. Uncertainties regarding Britain's colonial rule, as exemplified in Ireland and elsewhere, were compounded by growing demands for social reform across the country: the call for women's emancipation, the growth of the labour and trade union movements, all created a climate of mounting disillusion. Revue correlated the immediacy of this uncertain world, through a fragmented vocabulary of performance inscribed with a bewildering variety of national, racial and gender identity constructions on stage. Experimenting with narrative and expressions of speech, movement, design and sound, they displayed ambivalent representations that reflected social and cultural negotiations of previously essentialized identities in the modern world. During the First World War, a renegotiation of gender roles occurred as women took up the tools of industry in war-related production. This provided opportunities for women to break free from the domestic sphere, and was pivotal in negotiating patriarchal power structures and contributing to the women's suffrage movement. However in West End revue that negotiation took on a slightly different registration, as rather than a breaking-down of traditional gender roles and identities, as indeed there was in other spheres, wartime revue performance displayed a regenerative nationalism that sought a remasculinization of British culture. In often contradictory and complex representations, revues such as *Not Likely* (1914), *The Red Heads* (1914), *Bric à Brac* (1915), *Push and Go* (1915*), 5064 Gerrard* (1915), *Flying Colours* (1916), *Vanity Fair* (1916), *The Bing Boys are Here!* (1916), *Zig-Zag* (1917), *Airs and Graces* (1917),

Box o' Tricks (1918), and *Hullo America* (1918), among others, perpetuated images of British manliness and womanhood that reasserted patriarchal values and constructed a version of female virtue that sexually objectified women through the development of the chorus girl persona. This was pivotal in constructing a shared rhetoric of entertainment and patriotism. Focusing on the shows *Business as Usual* (1914), and *By Jingo If We Do!* (1914), I will highlight how revues of this period engaged in pertinent national identity and gender formations as the political establishment called for propaganda as well as distraction and escapism.

The onset of war saw a fervent, validating call to arms begin to grip the country with different voices detailing the numerous national benefits of impending battle.

> With the outbreak of war came chaos [...] there seemed to be no way out except by patriotism. It took everyone like an infection. Strange ideas took the public fancy. Said one patriot, "War is a virtue". Said another, "We are fighting a war for peace." Strange figures emerged from the grey mist to float into the golden columns of the press in order to tell the public of the marvellous good the war was going to do.[1]

Popular entertainments had long been known as the "fount of patriotism,"[2] but in the early days of the First World War, West End revue performance was at the forefront of promoting a justifying rhetoric for Britain's involvement in the conflict. At its core it was driven by a patriotism of blood and soil nationalism that engaged in a remasculinization of British culture. In a world in which "Germany was challenging British commercial and naval supremacy at every turn"[3], the war was presented in revue "as a necessity […] [which] might be the prerequisite of the establishment of a happier world order".[4] In Britain this line of reasoning was connected to pre-war cultural fears about national decline, and a growing sense of the erosion of British power, which emphasised a nation that had forgotten its true history and greatness; as Samuel Hynes recounts the narrative, "Englishmen had abandoned the high austere ideals of conduct that had made the Empire great, and had sunk into a too-comfortable, too-prosperous Edwardian decadence".[5] A key manifestation of this decaying world was argued to be the changing roles between men and women with the push for women's emancipation, seen by some as a sign of a culture of regression and degeneration. The fragmentation of traditional class identities and the erosion of the "sexual borderline"[6] between men and women were highlighted as manifestations of the crisis facing modern society. Friedrich Nietzsche attacked the idea that women would be emancipated once they had secured equal rights; rather, he

argued, women would become as sick as "European 'manliness' is sick" and saw it as the erosion of "womanly instincts".[7] War, it was felt, was the end product of "the softness into which England had fallen".[8] It was a "softness" attributed to the men of England, in a world "transformed by industrialisation and embourgeoisement,"[9] where nineteenth-century ideals of masculinity had been challenged by the "new woman" questioning the traditional institutions of marriage, work, and the family, and undermining patriarchy. A crisis of manliness was perceived to be happening as men, it was argued, "suffered from a weakened personality"[10], due to the rise of women.

Fears about the deterioration of the population and national blood stocks[11] were compounded by the high percentage of rejections during recruitment for the Boer War due to physical causes, and led to the creation of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904). The Royal Commission on Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded (1904-1908), along with the National Social Purity Crusade, was charged with raising the standard of social and personal cleanliness. A quest for national efficiency began informing the social reforms after 1906 which dealt with the working class, child health and welfare. These events fed into the belief of the demise of a British "race" of once-great physical prowess, now contaminated and vulnerable to attack, brought about through excess and decadence. It was now argued that Britain's degeneration and a growing effeminacy before the war could be countered, with the war becoming an impetus for cleansing and remaking the British nation, as expounded by Selwyn Image in his November 1914 lecture *Art, Morals, and the War*:

> Ah! There is little doubt we need a cleansing purge, a sharp awakening, a recalling to sanity, to a readjustment of our estimates of things. Well, perhaps it was only war, a war such as that upon us, a war, as I have put it to you, for the sake of fundamental ideals that could give us for art and conduct generally the salutary shock.[12]

"Far from being the end of civilization, the war would be the end of civilization's illnesses",[13] re-establishing patriarchal order, fortifying the old roles and positions of class and gender, and reclaiming British supremacy, as articulated by H.G. Wells:

> One talks and reads of the heroic age and how the world has degenerated. But indeed this is the heroic age, suddenly come again. No legendary feats of the past, no battle with dragons or monstrous beasts, no quest or feat that man has hitherto attempted can compare with this adventure, in terror, danger and splendour.[14]

It is therefore of central concern to illustrate how the resurgent ideas of regeneration and remasculinization were utilized and disseminated through the spectacular revue aesthetic at the beginning of the First World War.

Theatre is intrinsically connected to the nation. Not only does it enhance "'national' life by providing a space for shared civil discourse, entertainment, creativity", it is also "deeply implicated in constructing the nation through the imaginative realm".[15] As Steve Blandford explains, theatre provides the scope for meaningful proportions of the population to be involved with and affected by its role in the construction of national identity. Wartime theatre and other "communicative" technologies engaged in creating forms of national consciousness that propelled the idea of a national identity and belonging. As Benedict Anderson has highlighted, narratives of belonging put into circulation a means by which a community can be imagined.[16] This extends far beyond those that work in the theatre or actually attend performances. It includes the ways in which debates are conducted through forms of media, the ways in which culture is handled in political discourse and, of course, the ways in which theatre interacts with other cultural forms.[17] Popular theatre helped forge ideas of nation through means of commonality and differentiation, as cultural traditions take on meaning through a system of differences, where people come to know themselves as a community and as different to "others" outside of the community. In doing so revue became a potent symbol of the popular imagination, providing new formulations of national identity and the potentiality to move from representation into areas of performativity. This was evident in distinctive dancing and musical forms which would define a generation, offering new expressions of self.

West End revue productions like *By Jingo If We Do!* And *Business as Usual* were indicative of revues in the early years of the war engaging in a celebratory discourse of national identity that championed British manhood. Both shows took their titles from prominent war catchphrases (highlighting the commercial opportunism of the revue producers), which marked their association with the ensuing national war effort. *By Jingo If We Do!* was produced by Charles Cochran and opened at the Empire Theatre in October 1914, two months after the start of the First World War. The title was drawn from the chorus of G.W. Hunt's famous "Macdermott's War Song" (1877). *Business as Usual*, produced by Albert de Courville, derived its title from H.E. Morgan of W.H. Smith and Son, who in August of 1914 "in a letter to the *Daily Chronicle* suggested that the country would do well to follow a policy of 'Business as Usual'".[18] The phrase was taken up by the government, who believed that in order to

maintain a stable functioning country it was necessary to continue in the same manner as before the war. The implication was that any change in behaviour equated to a victory for the enemy, so 'Business as Usual' became shorthand for Britain's resolve not to give in. Both productions were rousing patriotic recruitment shows that mixed jingoistic bravado with musical razzmatazz, to disseminate wartime propaganda. Revue was perfectly placed to straddle a mix of the serious and comedic because of its non-linear narratives that mixed sketches, songs and dance, and enabled it to fulfil a crucial wartime role as an entertaining distraction that also provided a vehicle for enemy-bashing propaganda.

On the revue stage the representation of German soldiers moved between incompetent figures of comedy to devious evil aggressors. As Cate Haste argues, propaganda in its essence deals with "simplification […] [and] eternal repetition",[19] and in both of these shows this can be seen in simple sketches that "persuade men to fight […] keep up morale […] inspire patriotism and continually denigrate the enemy".[20] In *By Jingo If We Do!* this was achieved through a constant steady stream of "digs at the Kaiser," and depictions of the German soldiers that marked them as villainous and cowardly aggressors through "references to German atrocities" and a "brutal scene", depicting German officers performing acts of violence against defenceless women.[21] The German bombardment of the Belgian town of Louvain in August 1914 had been regarded in Britain as cowardly, and instigated stories of unprovoked German barbarity on civilians. German atrocity stories of rape, murder and mutilation were to be found in the press,[22] especially against women, and they were used as a catalyst to summon British men into action with accounts of "wanton, phallocentric, German barbarism".[23] Men like the writer Robert Graves were "outraged to read of the cynical violation of Belgian neutrality", and promised "vengeance for Louvain."[24] A widespread "campaign of hate was waged against Germany,"[25] which sought to justify the war by showing Germany's barbarism, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle later expressed:

> If our workers could actually see the vile things, which have been perpetuated upon our people […] they would work with redoubled heart and vigour. Since they cannot see them, they should be brought home to them in every way, verbal or pictorial, that is possible.[26]

The opening scenes of *Business as Usual* exemplify Conan Doyle's wish to reconstruct for the British public the savagery of German warfare, and illustrates the simple yet effective style of revue narrative story-telling. The harvest scene presents a small idyllic village in France or Belgium at harvest time, with people working in a "field of glorious golden corn." It is

a romanticized picture of country life, as the stage directions indicate: "the picture should be very tranquil, peaceful and animated by the youthful exuberance of the people at work." To add to this utopian sense, the people sing "Harvest Time", a celebratory song of "old Mother Earth […] gather[ing] the fruits that the world may be fed."[27] An English tourist enters and comments on the sense of patriotism among the villagers as they break into song again, this time singing "all the world is full of happy peacetime,"[28] as the church bell rings to celebrate the harvest. However, the peace is broken suddenly and theatrically by the sound of cannon fire. Panic ensues as barbaric German soldiers drag their guns over the harvest and shatter the peace, and villagers are flung aside, creating a final haunting tableau of the "advancing German hordes."[29]

A recruitment scene follows, depicting the crowded streets of Whitehall in London "immediately after the declaration of war," on August 4, 1914. On stage, "Bands of young men, hatless and otherwise […] [are] parading the streets waving flags and cheering […] etc.".[30] Here identities are performative, as the social bonds of nation are acted out. The scene portrays patriots who rush to enlist, reflecting the moment "many [men] joined up in groups, with their pals,"[31] as we see men move from an individual to a national identity. The scene is brought to a climax with the entrance of a female recruiting sergeant (played by Violet Lorraine); she organizes the newly-recruited men with the help of a group of chorus girls, who patriotically appeal for more men to sign up and fight:

> Come, take your heed of England's need of every gallant son
> That liberty and right ne'er be trampled by the Hun
> So join the colours, boys and help to lay him low at last
> Let William feel old London's heel upon him planted fast.
>
> Old London's hard to leave 'tis true, Old London's dear to all
> But what are London's pleasures when we hear our country's call?
> So give the games a rest until the greater fight we win
> Enlist to-day, my boys, and play your next match in Berlin.[32]

The Whitehall scene reflected the performative role women often played in the recruitment of men for the armed forces. Suffragettes like Christabel Pankhurst moved "from waging war against male obstinacy and weakness to waging war against German wickedness and inciting all British men to go out and take part in that fight."[33] In *The Times* suggestions flooded in for patriotic women "anxious to work for their country but who find that their talents do not lie in the direction of needlework or the domestic economy." Under the heading "How to be useful in war time, further work

for women"[34], suggestions varied from letter-writing, cooking and washing to cleaning boots; however, even at this early stage of the war there was a clear understanding of the role women could perform in "shaming" men into battle. As Mr Ernest H. Sollas from Shanklin wrote, "could not the women help by asking all the young men of their acquaintance, 'why have you not volunteered?'"[35] Some women took it as their duty to urge men to flock to the colours with a new-found zeal, as Ms A.M. Woodward's letter to *The Times* highlights:

> There is a wider duty than the making of garments. Young men must be persuaded to think what this war really means and what the terrible consequences may be if we fail to appreciate its magnitude and its meaning. So I am commencing a little missionary work. To-morrow I mean to give a leaflet to every man who is apparently a possible recruit. I shall watch for them on the train, in the street, at the cricket and tennis grounds, at the theatre, at the restaurant, and I hope that the little single appeal "from the women of England" will at least rouse their thought and will possibly help them act.[36]

The employment of women in coercing men to enlist became a widespread tool in the recruitment drive at the start of the war, and revues used this to their advantage, with beauty choruses and lead women at the forefront of recruiting sketches.

On the musical stage female representation had established a long tradition for mixing respectability and the erotic in "very careful ways"[37], with plots that centred on female figures in shows like *A Gaiety Girl* (1893), *The Shop Girl* (1894) and *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909). Musical comedy staged femininity constructing a "customized notion of female beauty and glamour."[38] Wartime revue followed in that tradition, with women serving as one of the major means by which the war was imagined and represented. Women functioned in a complex mixture of roles, tacitly implicated as a sexual reward for "serving your country", but also seen as symbols of the nation and home; the justifying factors for male action, as they needed protection. The promotion of women in West End revue mirrored Florenz Ziegfeld's New York revues, mixing patriotism and sexuality, "increasing [the] iconicity of the female body",[39] and constructing the myth of the chorus girl. This myth perpetuated the idea of an overtly sexualized woman in the male imagination through a sanctioned display of voyeurism, reflecting "a culture that packaged women and sold sexuality."[40]

The pervasiveness of women on the revue stage was not universally supported by theatre critics, who voiced concern at how "an unparalleled

wave of sexuality became the predominating theatrical feature towards the end of 1916."[41] The art critic Huntly Carter complained of a "pornographic theatre period", in which the West End was a space "full of erotic and aesthetic symbols capable of rousing sexual emotion",[42] through a "vision of chorus girls";[43] and where "gradually the individual is being quashed out, and the stage is loaded with crowds of child-aping women, called by courtesy, a beauty chorus […] they dazzle the eye and blast the ear."[44] For the theatre historian Frank Vernon, the war saw "the steady deterioration of public entertainments";[45] it was "the theatre of the 'night out' with a vengeance",[46] a theatre "butchered for the War-time flapper",[47] as soldiers sought distraction. It was the woman, Vernon argued, that created a "colonial holiday", as "the men on leave came and went, but she remained, helping one soldier after another spend his money on the entertainments she chose."[48] Popular entertainments such as revue, it was argued, encouraged sexual immorality, and the source of this problem lay with women. "Khaki fever" became a term used to describe the sexual frisson and sexual attraction of women to men in uniform. During the war, "sexual morality was often treated as pertaining to women alone",[49] as Edwardian double standards placed severe constraints on women and accused them of leading young men astray. In a letter to Huntly Carter, George Bernard Shaw was particularly disturbed by revue's growing sexualization and its effect on men:

> The dialogues and gestures are lewd and silly. The dress and decorations are sexual and suggestive. The whole thing is capable of driving men to the drinking bar at each interval, and to a brothel at the end of the play […]. Someone might say, what do we expect? Ought revues to drive men to prayer?[50]

The performance of distinct gender roles was now needed as a means of regulating the moral climate, and the "reassertion of separate spheres with its implied dichotomies of private and public, of different natures of women and men of home and the front,"[51] was constantly communicated.

In addition wartime revues sought to reaffirm the innate duty and honour of British soldiers, and highlighted the dangers of failing to "act and perform like men"; not only at the front but also within the home, as illustrated in the coffee stall scene in *By Jingo If We Do!*. This scene opens on a London night with Wally, the proprietor of the coffee stall, reading a paper and talking to a tramp about German atrocities:

> Tramp: Any noos?
> Wally: Kaiser's sent a telegram thanking 'is troops for them women and children wot they killed.

The emphasis shifts as Nellie enters, "shabby and ill-clad but showing a tawdry effort at smartness". Wally knows Nellie and asks why she is out so late, to which she snaps out a defiant "P'raps I am". Nellie asks for a cup of tea and places a sovereign on the stall counter. Suddenly suspicions about her night-time activity are raised; Wally lets out a long whistle and looks long at her before uttering, "So that's the game is it? Well it's no business o' mine". Nellie is one of a growing section of women during the First World War who became what were known as "amateur prostitutes", selling their bodies for sex.

As the scene progresses it is explained that Nellie's husband has "bin out o' work since the war began," and hasn't been seen for three days. As a mother with two children to feed, Nellie has been forced to look out for herself and her children. Presented here is a snapshot of a taboo social reality during the war, as women in hardship turned to prostitution. However, the scene is not concerned with trying to excuse or defend such behaviour, but is engaged in highlighting the reason behind such actions: namely, that the absence of male power has led to sexual degeneration. The scene presents a stark picture of the effects of men failing to fulfil their role as head of the family. In this scene women are presented as weak and gullible, unable to look after themselves, and prone to lapse if men are not in control. The consequences of such a fall are starkly shown when Nellie's husband Bill enters. Bill has not abandoned his family, but has been looking for work and has secured employment in Catford starting the next day. As he excitedly relates his good news, he too becomes suspicious of Nellie being out so late and notices her "rouged face". The scene quickly escalates as Bill realizes that Nellie has been selling herself for money, and concludes in Nellie's brutal murder: "Wot's that stuff on your face? Wot's this in your hand? (*Sees the money.*) Where d'jyer get it? (*Realization.*) You!" The stage directions then state that Bill seizes Nellie by the throat, pins her up against the coffee stall and stabs her, with the final blackout line of "You've done 'er in!" coming from Wally.[52]

This scene would seem startlingly out of place within the traditional genres of musical comedy and operetta, as Len Platt notes.[53] The revue form mixed comedy with realism, and Platt recognizes the experimental nature of *By Jingo If We Do!*. However, he misreads the scene by underestimating the precise historical conditions underlying the revue. In the context of a regenerating national rhetoric of remasculinization, the scene is not an oddity but a reaffirmation of British male power; a brutal

depiction of the male psyche under the conditions of wartime, where death rather than dishonour is the favoured option. Here the dishonour that the woman has brought results in a violent crime, which is framed as a crime of passion but is really about the social control and regulation of women and the reassertion of male authority, as male violence is condoned and tacitly justified. The implication is that only through the "righting of gender roles at home can men hope to be effective in remedying a travesty against the family abroad."[54]

The First World War saw revue performance establish itself at the heart of London's flourishing popular entertainment zone, the West End, through its engagement with specific strands of a wartime identity discourse of national regeneration and renewal. Doubts about the propriety of entertainment in wartime gave way to the recognition of the full possibilities of its use in the war effort, both for uplifting the nation's morale and for the dissemination of propaganda, as the West End became an "intersection between home and front".[55] In this respect the "tensions between 'home' and 'front' and between 'city' and 'war' were mediated by urban entertainments with their peculiar combination of modern, nostalgic and transgressive impulses".[56] In one sense wartime became "a passport to inclusion"[57] and revue stressed a social and collective national identity. Paradoxically, in another sense revue representations deepened misogyny, widened the gap between male and female equality, and regulated and sought to enforce a narrow moral economy and code of behaviour for both men and women. Yet these contradictions were crucial to revue performance's popularity and success at the beginning of the war, combining patriotic entertainment with the maintenance of national morale.

Notes

[1] Huntly Carter, *The New Spirit in the European Theatre 1914-1924* (London: Ernest Benn, 1925), 29.
[2] Penny Summerfield, "Patriotism and Empire, Music-Hall Entertainment 1870-1914", in John M. Mackenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 17.
[3] Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), 27.
[4] Ibid., 27.
[5] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), 19.
[6] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), 8.

[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (London: Penguin, 1973), 167-168.
[8] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 19.
[9] Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.
[10] Frederick Copleston, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosopher of Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1942), 35.
[11] See Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), Chapters 7 and 9.
[12] Selwyn Image, *Art, Morals, and the War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), 19.
[13] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 19.
[14] H.G. Wells, "The Most Splendid Fighting in the World", *Daily Chronicle*, September 9, 1914, 4.
[15] Nadine Holdsworth, *Theatre and Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.
[16] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[17] See Steve Blandford (ed.), *Theatre and Performances in Small Nations* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013).
[18] Marwick, *The Deluge*, 39.
[19] Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), 3.
[20]Ibid., 2.
[21] Arthur Wimperis, *By Jingo If We Do!*, MSS LCP 1914/33, np.
[22] See "Atrocities in Belgium. Accounts by Refugees. The Opening of the Great Battle", *The Times*, August 28, 1914, 7; "German Barbarity in Belgium. The Sack of Aerschot. Fourth Official Report", *The Times*, October 5, 1914, 6.
[23] Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 46.
[24] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 99-100.
[25] Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, 79.
[26] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Times*, January 16, 1918, 9.
[27] Albert de Courville and F.W. Mark, *Business as Usual*, MSS LCP 1914/33, np.
[28] Ibid., np.
[29] Ibid., np.
[30] Ibid., np.
[31] Winter, Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.
[32] De Courville and Mark, *Business as Usual*, np.
[33] Arthur Marwick, *Women at War 1914-1918* (London: Fontana, 1977), 30.
[34] Anon, "How to be useful in war time, further work for women, many forms of activity", *The Times*, August 28, 1914, 11.
[35] Ibid.,11.