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9 Staging the nation

Claire Waldoff and Berlin cabaret before and during the Great War

Melanie Schiller

With the formation of the German Reich in 1871, a formal nation-state was established, but the nation remained inherently and utterly divided. In particular, the consequences of industrialization and globalization in its early stages transformed formerly fixed hierarchies and identities, but also led to an increasingly uneven distribution of work and capital. And with its numerous regional centers, governed by formerly powerful elites, its religious identification, contrasts of rural and urban developments and the plurality of its political and social organizations, the Reich was anything but united for decades afterwards. Political and military authorities therefore understood the necessity of uniting the Reich ideologically and emotionally.¹

In this chapter, I want to discuss the pivotal role which popular entertainment and music, particularly cabaret in Berlin, played in ideologically and emotionally uniting the nation. In contrast with film, for example, musical life – and its newly developing industry – was not part of the official institutions' plans for propagating nationalistic ideals.² Music production was, aside from being subjected to censorship, not centrally organized,³ but it readily subscribed to nationalistic jingoism and informal propaganda between 1914 and 1918.

I will first focus on the position of cabaret, 'a product of changes in urban life and artistic taste at the beginning of the twentieth century',⁴ in Berlin as the Reich's capital. Subsequently I will demonstrate how, as one of the most popular music entertainments during the Wilhelmine years, it provided a particularly fertile medium for the propagation of the nation. Finally, in order to substantiate my analysis of cabaret as instrumental to the nation's ideological unification, I will focus on one exceptionally popular cabaret performer Claire Waldoff, who in her initial progressiveness and subsequent complicity with jingoism exemplifies cabaret's mutually constitutive relationship with the German nation before and during the Great War.

Cabaret in Berlin 1900–1914

In just three decades since the unification of the Reich in 1871, Berlin had developed into one of the most modern and fastest growing capitals of

Europe New forms of art and entertainment, and new mentalities and behaviors emerged, with cabaret being one of particular importance. Initially strongly oriented towards Vienna and Paris as sources of inspiration, Berlin's first cabaret, called the *Überbrettel*, opened in 1901, with several other cabaret clubs after the Parisian model following in its wake. Cabaret combined the serious aspirations of elite theater with the open and dynamic framework of the variety show and the 'political tribunal' represented by local anti-authoritarian sarcasm.⁵ However, while French cabaret carried a tone of artistic anarchism, politically oppositional demeanor, spontaneity and satiric pungency, cabaret in Germany was much more oriented towards the entertainment of the masses.⁶ Although censorship laws in Berlin prohibited the performance of any acts which were not pre-approved, and strict closing-hour regulations hampered cabaret owners in living up to international standards, Berlin cabaret in any case showed little interest in opposition, protest, social criticism or satire.⁷ Cabaret, then, soon became one of the most popular forms of entertainment in Berlin as it offered a public forum for negotiating contemporary conditions, rather than engaging in critical politics. In its ability to combine diverse and divergent viewpoints in one entertaining show, cabaret offered a perfect means of transcending the deep rifts between classes and cultures that the cities' rapid urbanization and modernization had created.

In its self-conception, Berlin cabaret was to be the nation's role model in style and sophistication. The owner of the *Überbrettel*, Ernst von Wolzogen, wanted to educate the 'dear barbaric Germans to gracefulness, emotional ease and the elated step of a dancer'.⁸ Hence, in addition to functioning as a common stage for Berlin's diverse inhabitants, cabaret consolidated the capital's role of culturally uniting the modern nation as an imagined community. In the catalogue of Berlin's industrial fair of 1896, the city is presented as representative of the modern nation: 'Berlin has to present itself not only as the largest city of Germany, but it also has to attest to its drive and its progressive spirit in all aspects of its indefatigable creativeness'.⁹

Furthermore, cabaret not only symbolically united Berlin and the modern nation in its popular entertainment, it also mirrored the complex social realities of modernization. Ernst von Wolzogen highlights how cabaret's very principle of alternating sketches, tunes, dances, literary recitations, shadow plays, etc., reflects the similarly 'pacy, fragmented, unmanageable, shocking, confusing and colorful' reality of urbanization and modernization.¹⁰ As such, cabaret understood itself as an entertainment medium for the masses that corresponded with a modern attitude to life. Cabaret's inherent need to constantly refer to and mock the latest cultural trends and fads – from love, fashion, high culture, popular entertainment, habits of speaking, styles of clothing, consumerism or sexuality to societal conventions and politics – makes it an incessantly up-to-date mirror of society. In that sense, cabaret can be seen as a keyhole to Wilhelminian culture, albeit always with a liability to exaggeration. Cabaret often functioned by simultaneously mocking what it itself represented. A typical evening at the cabaret for instance, would include

both cynical and sentimental love songs, comic sketches ironizing about the increasing sexualization of society (especially after 1918) as well as women wearing skimpily clothing performing the kicklines of 'Girls'¹¹ And even though it was also subject to censorship under Wilhelminian rule, its freedom in form and creative styles enabled cabaret to address themes that were considered beyond the scope of most types of popular music or theater, such as prostitution, homosexuality and lesbianism, and – to a certain extent – it allowed an update of traditional gender role performances Otto Reutter's song 'Hirschfeld Is Coming'¹² and Hans Bladel's 'New Stovepipe Verses'¹³ for instance refer to homosexuality, the 'Dirnenlied' as a sub-genre tells narratives from the perspective of the prostitute,¹⁴ and Claire Waldoff's performances challenged norms of gender and (hetero)sexuality, as I will discuss in more detail below

Cabaret was understood as an effective and timely means of entertainment, but also as a mild form of collective therapy It was to represent complex realities with a sense of humorous distance, offer comic relief and enable the audience to come to terms with modernity, as Wolzogen formulated the new medium's role in society¹⁵

Claire Waldoff and the progressive modernity of the city

The most successful performers of Berlin cabaret were those who not only reflected contemporary conditions of life in the city, but who also actively defined them Claire Waldoff (1884–1957) was undoubtedly most successful at performatively representing the Berliner archetype and simultaneously updating its image from one of pre-industrial stereotypes to one representing modern life in the metropolis From the beginning of her career at the cabaret, Waldoff came to define and embody Berlin as the center of Imperial Germany and as such she became popular far beyond its city limits Later, during the war years, Waldoff's nationwide popularity made her a predestined exponent of patriotic nationalism

Like most Berliners, Waldoff (born Clara Wortmann) was not born in the city but came from the industrial town of Gelsenkirchen Since she was an exceptionally bright girl, her lower-middle-class family – owners of a tavern – decided to finance her education and send her off to a better school for girls in Hanover However, the dream of continuing to medical school became financially untenable and the artistically inclined Waldoff instead joined the theater She moved to Berlin in 1906 and gave first performances at the Figaro-Theater on the Kurfurstendamm In the meantime, Waldoff acquainted herself with the Berliner dialect and character, and rehearsed the role she would later become famous for the working-class Berliner with a broad local accent One year later, in 1907, Waldoff debuted at the cabaret Roland von Berlin and celebrated her breakthrough with the 'Schmack-eduzchen' – a song about the love of a drake for his dearest little duck, sung in broad Berliner vernacular

Waldoff, well educated, independent and confident,¹⁶ was a rather unusual phenomenon on Berlin's cabaret stages where chanteuses and soubrettes usually performed in sweeping ball gowns with grand gesturing. Waldoff on the other hand, short and stockily built with red bushy hair, performing in a simple dress – and sometimes even in a so-called 'Eton boy' pant suit – represented an uncommon prosaicness and mundanity.¹⁷ Her appearance was 'in marked contrast to the corseted figures, stylish coiffures, and haute couture sported by the other cabaret divas'.¹⁸ Waldoff did without unnecessary gesturing.¹⁹ She stood absolutely still, at most she would move her head, but primarily she would use her rather harsh, guttural voice for expressive purposes.²⁰ Only between the stanzas of the marsh-reed song 'Schmackeduzchen' did Waldoff perform a little dance, in which she waddled in a circle like a duck.²¹ Waldoff's feistiness and upbeat temperament created a new character – the Berliner diseuse, perky, quick witted, humorous, funny and frivolous.²² Her affective quality and comic ability was rooted in the double articulation of mimetic restraint combined with lyrical explicitness 'only her eyes occasionally roll to their corners in horror, as she bawls ribald, sexually observant songs in a Berlin dialect. The whole expression, the fashioning of the Berliner's erotic character, lies completely in the intonation', Peter Jelavich explains.²³

In the following years, Waldoff performed short turns in several establishments each night – from the upper-class Chat Noir with an elegant audience on Friedrichstrasse, to the Linden-Cabaret, a popular entertainment locale for a more mixed audience. She rapidly became an icon of Berlin. With her stage personas, Waldoff embodied a rebellious and warm woman,²⁴ and her performances sought to evoke the nature of the common citizen of Berlin. By the 1920s Kurt Tucholsky was equating her with the statue of Berolina on the Alexanderplatz.²⁵

Waldoff built a wide repertoire of songs about recognizable everyday stories of love and life in the city. Some of her most popular hits include 'He's Called Hermann'²⁶ (1913), in which she describes her lovers' amorous abilities, 'All of Berlin Is Crazy for My Legs'²⁷ (1911) about her persona's sexual attractiveness and 'When the Groom and the Bride'²⁸ (1911) which speaks of a couple enjoying each other in nature outside the city. Sometimes her explicitness caused problems with the censor, but even then she succeeded in subverting the authorities, as Kurt Tucholsky observed 'in place of the excised lines, she would sing some nonsense sounds, and her intonation would give the audience a clear idea of what was omitted'.²⁹

Waldoff never made a secret of being a lesbian, and she would take on the role of either the 'boy' or the 'girl' in her songs.³⁰ Her performance of confident femininity deviated from that of contemporaries and anticipated the emancipation of the 1920s in Weimar Germany. Her trademarks were a shirtwaist, necktie and red-dyed 'pretty boy' haircut,³¹ and she smoked and swore on stage.³² Waldoff's androgynous appearance in pant suits as early as 1907 was then also disapproved of by Wilhelminian censors, as women were

not allowed to perform in men's attire after eleven o'clock at night³³ Waldoff later performed in her 'Eton boy' outfit anyway,³⁴ and she became a prominent figure in the queer life of the city

Waldoff's major achievement was not only to update the image of the Berliner from a pre-industrial era of fishwives, street hawkers, and apprentices³⁵ to figures firmly rooted in modernity She also managed to establish a sense of community among Berliners of all social levels, to foster pride in their city and its modernity³⁶ Additionally, Waldoff's exceptional popularity far beyond the city limits contributed to uniting a diverse public of all classes and backgrounds in identification with her persona as both Berliner and German Accordingly, the conflation of Berlin and Germany became traceable in reviews of Waldoff's performances – describing her as not only representing the Berliner, but also understanding her persona as representing a German archetype A reviewer for the avant-garde literary magazine *Der Sturm* wrote in 1911 'This little girl stands on stage with the correct manner of a pure *German* maiden, motionless, arms hanging down, hands modestly folded, with an incredibly harmless expression'³⁷

With Waldoff's popularity well established by 1913, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 marked a shift in her repertoire to firmly nationalistic propagandist performances With this shift, Waldoff, again, was a prominent marker of the zeitgeist, as the tune of cabaret overall moved towards ideologically justifying the war

Cabaret during the Great War

The Great War was a watershed for cabaret in Berlin, and two seemingly opposing trends emerged First, (popular) entertainment including cabaret turned virulently nationalistic, and second, cabaret became increasingly focused on 'pure' entertainment without political commentary Since censorship laws became increasingly strict under military control during the war, even the previously scarce satire or political parodies became less and less common

During the first weeks of the war, from August 1914, the cabarets were closed on order of the authorities³⁸ However, theaters soon re-opened as it became clear that diversions for the civilian population would be necessary during the prolonged hostilities³⁹ In line with the massive surge of nationalist patriotism, formerly fashionable expressions in French such as the 'conférencier', 'revue' and venue names like the Chat Noir or Piccadilly Café now became the German 'Ansager', 'Bunte Bilder' and 'Schwarzer Kater' or 'Haus Vaterland'⁴⁰

Light entertainment was now considered a basic necessity for society to relieve the strained nerves of the public 'Especially maximally strained nerves, rushed from one excitation to the next, are in need of temporary diversions' concluded an observer in 1914,⁴¹ and this revived Wolzogen's notion of cabaret as therapy for the masses The therapeutic function of comic relief and distraction from the serious realities of war was now used to

justify cabaret's production of overtly frivolous and simpering programming always peppered with a major dose of one-sided nationalism. Highlighting the trend of simple and amusing dissipation, in 1920 the director of the Metropol-Theater retrospectively explained that 'the war brought about an upheaval. We were forced to discontinue revues that were based effectively on politics and local events [] and turn to operetta'.⁴² Even if the dominant trend was apolitical themes, some shows tried to deal humorously with current circumstances to keep up public spirits, like the musicals *Berlin im Krieg* (*Berlin in the War*) (1914) in which the sung chorus goes 'laughter too is a civilian service obligation'.⁴³ Even food and fuel shortages became topics of jokes, but only until conditions worsened in subsequent years.⁴⁴ All the shows continuously reinforced the message that Germany would win the war and it was highlighted how the war effectively united Germans of all backgrounds and classes. *Berlin in the War* for instance showed conservative middle-class people and workers, Prussians and Bavarians fighting in unity, side by side in the trenches.⁴⁵

The war also marked a watershed for cabaret in terms of its artistic quality. Isolated from international influences and with stage bans for non-German artists and the perceived inappropriateness of performing non-German repertoire,⁴⁶ cabaret 'sank to the lowest capabilities of the genre', as Weimar cabaret critic Max Herrmann-Neisse later concluded.⁴⁷ 'Incompetence justified itself by means of inflammatory orgies of patriotism, and the confrencier garnered cheap applause with German nationalist editorials'. Most cabarets indeed staged nationalistic shows, and featured explicit songs like the 'Song of Hate against England',⁴⁸ which was sung at the Metropol-Theater on January 13, 1915, with 'vehement passion' and received much applause, as a police officer reported.⁴⁹

Like the rest of Germany, cabarets suffered from the economic conditions. The initial enthusiasm for the war soon gave way to a rather gloomy determination to survive. Caught between economic hardships, official encouragement for light entertainment, strict censorship supervision by the military and a general sentiment of extreme nationalistic patriotism, cabarets – either out of conviction or due to financial considerations – contributed their share to the war propaganda efforts.⁵⁰ Notably, any attempts of either circumventing censorship or introducing divergent programming resulted in severe repercussions. When the Metropol-Theater staged unauthorized and partly explicitly forbidden material in April 1915, the police warned its owner Rudolf Nelson that the theater would be subjected to 'further stringent controls, and should any more irregularities be detected, you can reckon with the strictest measures and possibly the closing of the locale by the High Command for the duration of the war'.⁵¹ And if it was not official authorities who took offense, other institutions might express their discontent. In 1916, for example, the show *When the Night Begins*⁵² was criticized by both the Church, the military and other nationalists for lacking patriotic sentiment.⁵³

***Let 'Em Have It!:* Waldoff and informal propaganda during the Great War**

In line with the general sentiment, Walter Kollo, Claire Waldoff's close collaborator and composer of many of her songs, wrote patriotic musicals as early as autumn 1914, in which the war is alarmingly trivialized⁵⁴ *Special Editions Cheerful Scenes of Serious Times*,⁵⁵ including the popular soldier song 'Right, the War Has Come (in Its Nice New Grey Battle Dress)'⁵⁶ and the first propaganda performance starring Claire Waldoff herself *Let 'Em Have It!*⁵⁷ *Let 'Em Have It!* became a major hit at the Theater am Nollendorfplatz and was performed more than 800 times at theaters all over the country⁵⁸ The show carried the significant subtitle 'A patriotic folk play'⁵⁹ and its scene titles indicate the storyline 'A thunderbolt out of the blue'⁶⁰ – 'Mobilization'⁶¹ – 'Out to get the enemy'⁶² – and 'Let 'em have it!'⁶³ Typical for the first phase of the war, like most theater and cabaret repertoires, *Let 'Em Have It!* represented explicitly nationalistic views⁶⁴

Waldoff played the wife of a porter called Minna and sang about parting and faithfulness to the soldier in war, with her husband on the battlefields in France⁶⁵ The exceptionally popular march-duet 'The Soldier'⁶⁶ with Karl Gessner (playing Waldoff's husband Schliephake), for example, is a song of praise for the military, full of jingoism 'The soldier, the soldier, is the finest man in all our land, and that is why the girls so are crazy about the lovely, lovely, lovely military man'⁶⁷ The song, affectively engaging its audience through its marching rhythm, fanfares and accentuated bass, exemplifies the heightened status of the soldier in German society, both as profession and as object of female desire⁶⁸ Although the original song is free of ironic intentions and as such rather 'typical' for German songs of the First World War,⁶⁹ this *Schlager* later sparked a range of ironic parodies about the dire food situation in the later stages of the war⁷⁰ 'The soldier, the soldier now eats the most herring in all our land'⁷¹ or 'The soldier, the soldier, he eats nothing but marmalade from morning to evening'⁷²

Other songs in *Let 'Em Have It!* similarly trivialize the war and represent combat as nothing but a funny game In the exceptionally popular song 'On the Bench by the River Panke'⁷³ Waldoff and Gessner sing in naive tone about the amusing turmoil of the war

Schliephake first the Frenchman gets his knuckles rapped
 Minna Then you tan the Russian's skin, yes, boy you are brave like that!
 Schliephake Finally, I will have the Englishman's hide
 Minna What will I do without you, I love you so much
 Schliephake Well, well, I will be back soon why are you so sad there on
 the bench?

The songs of *Let 'Em Have It!* became popular beyond their performances at the Nollendorf Theater, as printed songbooks with lyrics and sheet music⁷⁴

Eleven songs were printed as postcards the waltz 'The Eyes of a Beautiful Woman'⁷⁵ the march 'Our Kaiser'⁷⁶ and the duet 'When Kissing a Girl'⁷⁷ were promoted with sheet music for orchestra and even recordings were released and circulated widely⁷⁸ The most recordings were made of 'Forget-me-not',⁷⁹ a sentimental song about a farewell and a hero's death⁸⁰ The show's eponymous song 'Let 'Em Have It' also became a popular hit that outlived the war revue⁸¹

Although *Let 'Em Have It!* was a hit with the audience, it also received cautious reprovals from critics for being too 'flippantly joking'⁸² and for trivializing the horrors of the sacred war⁸³ On the other hand, the show was praised for offering soldiers who returned from the battlefields the opportunity 'to see the war also from the funny side'⁸⁴

On December 25, 1914 after a few months of closure, the Metropol-Theater reopened with Claire Waldoff starring in the theater's first war show and 'Perseverance-Revue',⁸⁵ *What We Are Thinking About – Colorful Imagery of Great Times*⁸⁶ Similar to *Let 'Em Have It!* in its nationalistic patriotism, *What We Are Thinking About* tells the story of a brave soldier who with the help of the 'Dicke Berta' (famous in England as 'Big Bertha') gun and with moral support by his wife, heroically defeats the enemy The revue glorified the war, and Waldoff's 'Waldemar-Mieze' duet with Guido Thielscher – a popular comedian at the time – about the love between a soldier and his woman at home was celebrated enthusiastically by the audience and was later released on record⁸⁷ One of the most popular operetta divas of the time, Fritzzy Massary, played a soldier's wife who celebrates Christmas in the trenches with her beloved, praising how well one can love also on the battlefield Particular praise from the critics was given to Claire Waldoff's own new text to the melody of an old soldier song 'The drum was beaten, all went, hand to hand, oh you Germany, now it's time to march [] hooray for the soldiers'⁸⁸ The war was once more represented as a harmless, amusing and entertaining game

As previously mentioned, censorship became a major obstacle for cabaret during the war and it was common for police officers to be present during performances Artistes and owners of many establishments, including Waldoff, expressed their discontent According to a police observer in January 1915, she complained to the audience that many of her songs had been prohibited, and she performed only one of her innocuous Berlin songs, as well as patriotic soldiers' songs like 'When the soldiers march through the streets,/ the girls open up the windows and doors'⁸⁹ or the march 'When recently I went from home,/ there I heard the sound of drums,/ there the brave landsturm goes/ with music and cheerful songs',⁹⁰ for which she received ample applause⁹¹ The song she was forbidden to perform was 'a soldier romance'⁹² a song about a young woman who 'worked her way up' through the military ranks, from corporal, sergeant to general, and (once she finally became 'Mrs General'), sometimes longed for a young, fit corporal⁹³

A few years later, on October 6, 1917, a new musical comedy called *Three Old Frumps*⁹⁴ premiered at the Nollendorf Theater It remained loyal to the

crown, but the battlefield glorification had been lost and nostalgic and sentimental references to the past had to serve as sources of nationalistic entertainment. Typical for this later phase of the war, a mild critical distance from the previously prevalent jingoism is noticeable.⁹⁵ *Three Old Frumps* tells the story of three 'old ladies' who desire to overcome their signs of aging and reanimate the love of their men. Marked by years of hardship and work during the war, the ladies have become less attractive, and the returning soldiers turn out to have been unfaithful. After initially being hurt, the ladies decide to take matters into their own hands and through a series of comic confusions they succeed, by dancing waltzes they get to rekindle the men's interest and their own confidence. Waldoff played one of the three ladies, the feisty cook Auguste, who in dialog with 'Sergeant Cornelius Hasenpfeffer' sings a title that would soon become a classic of Waldoff's repertoire 'Oh, God, Men Are So Stupid',⁹⁶ a song that presents women as emotionally and intellectually superior to men.⁹⁷ Keeping in mind Waldoff's stage persona throughout her cabaret performances as cheeky and confident rather than subordinate or coy, this progressive song can be seen as an inversion of the female role as object of masculine desire, to a self-assured parody of that very projection.

The droll burlesque of *Three Old Frumps* reinforces the clichés of a cook providing life's necessities for the soldier, but it also refers to its own representation of symbolic characters of the nation and – albeit tentatively – to the emerging crisis of food supply 'How is the soldier to put up a good fight, if he does not eat? From hunger protects the roast, from the enemy the army'⁹⁸ As such, the show can be understood as not only about the love between a cook and the soldier, but also symbolically representing *Heimat* and the nation, the war is presented as a necessity, albeit perhaps dragging on too long and taking its toll.⁹⁹

Soldiers at the front also enjoyed Waldoff's hits. Due to recordings of her cabaret and operetta hits, her music could not only travel nationwide, but also to the fronts in France, Belgium, Poland and elsewhere. During the months of June and July of 1916 alone, the record label Grammophon promoted twelve of her records, containing 24 titles, that were sold for 3.50 marks per record plus a 50-pfennig surcharge for rising raw material costs.¹⁰⁰ Gramophones in the military bases played Waldoff's records to distract the soldiers from their increasingly gruesome experiences,¹⁰¹ to provide a small piece of normality and stability, but also to remind the soldiers of the *Heimat*, and what they were fighting for 'Our deepest felt thankfulness from the trenches for reminding us of the oh so distant beautiful Berlin with your blithesome voice', went one letter from the front.¹⁰²

Cabaret, however, with its *Schlager* songs and focus on light entertainment, was not unconditionally popular, and the Berlin police received complaints 'almost daily from diverse sectors of the population (officers, Reichstag delegates, reservists, etc.)'¹⁰³ about frivolous performances during wartime. Letters from the front arrived, complaining

We come from the battlefield, where we experience nothing but sorrow, pain, and death, and in the big cities they party into the night. Our wives hardly know how to scrape by with their children, while the others dissipate their money with whores and champagne.¹⁰⁴

A soldier from Bavaria even concluded that 'the pack of sows deserves to be hanged, if they're that well off, those unpatriotic bastards'.¹⁰⁵

By 1917 the horrendous consequences of the war became increasingly visible. In addition, the shortage of food became palpable and reached dramatic dimensions during the so-called Turnip Winter of 1916/17, with thousands dying from hunger.¹⁰⁶ Towards the end of 1917, cabarets in Berlin had to cancel their evening and night performances, and restaurants closed as early as ten o'clock. For Waldoff, however, these restrictions had little effect. In May 1918, she embarked on a nationwide tour.¹⁰⁷ Together with a group of performers, this tour brought 'Berlin' and its symbolic representation of the nation to the people who knew Waldoff and her colleagues so well from their recordings. This way, audiences all over the country could confirm their belonging to the imagined modernity of the capital, and Waldoff could confirm her popularity throughout the nation.

The war years were crucial for consolidating Waldoff's nationwide fame. Many of her classic songs stem from the period of 1914–1918, and her contribution to propagating patriotic nationalism and glorifying the war right up to its final days greatly advanced her career and financial success. In her autobiography, Waldoff is reluctant to refer to these consolidating years, and only mentions the war almost in passing. But she admits to having been one of the 'believing artists, too believing it seems to me now'.¹⁰⁸ When describing her participation in propaganda shows like *Let 'Em Have It!*, *What We Are Thinking About*, and *Three Old Frumps*

Conclusion

In the early years of the twentieth century, until the outbreak of the war in 1914, cabaret in Berlin provided a performative representation of a rapidly modernizing society, and it consolidated Germany's identification as a nation. In its stylistic diversity, its fragmentary character, its ability to be contradictory in mocking and simultaneously cementing modern urban life, cabaret functioned not only as a mirror of Wilhelmine Germany, but also solidified a shared imagined community in the name of the nation. Clare Waldoff soon became the personification of not only Berlin's but also the nation's modernity.

With the outbreak of the war, cabaret continued to be a mirror of contemporary social moods, but its self-appointed function as ideological 'national educator' became increasingly prominent. Its critical reflection of the zeitgeist had taken a back seat. Cabaret consequently fulfilled several key functions in society before and during the Great War. First, in its affectionate reflection on and of the rapid processes of modernization, cabaret provided its

audiences with a source of common identification and symbolically united a fragmented society in national terms. Second, cabaret was a pivotal factor in consolidating nationalist patriotism in society during the First World War. Finally, personified by Claire Waldoff and her mundane recognizability in combination with nationalistic propaganda, its popular music and humor ideologically justified the war and emotionalized the German nation.

Notes

- 1 Dietrich Helms, "Das war der Herr von Hindenburg" Mythenbildung und informelle Propaganda in der deutschen Musikproduktion des Ersten Weltkriegs' in Stefan Hanheide, Claudia Glunz and Thomas F. Schneider (eds), *Musik bezieht Stellung: Funktionalisierungen der Musik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, V&R Unipress, 2013), p. 63. Cf. also Wilhelm Deist, 'Zensur und Propaganda in Deutschland während des Ersten Weltkrieges' in Wilhelm Deist (ed.), *Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft: Studien zur preussisch-deutschen Militärgeschichte* (Munich, Oldenbourg Verlag, 1991), pp. 153f.
- 2 Helms, 'Das war der Herr von Hindenburg', p. 64.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 4 Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 10.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 6 Jürgen Pelzer, 'Satire oder Unterhaltung? Wirkungskonzepte im deutschen Kabarett zwischen Bohemerevolte und antifaschistischer Opposition', *German Studies Review*, 9.1 (Feb. 1986), p. 46.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 'Die lieben deutschen Barbaren zur Anmut, zur seelischen Leichtigkeit und zu einem beschwingten Tanzerschritt' My translation. Cited in Maegie Koreen, *Claire Waldoff: Die Königin des Humors* (Gelsenkirchen, Chanson Cafe, 2014), p. 32.
- 9 'Berlin muss sich nicht nur als die größte Stadt Deutschlands präsentieren, sondern muss auch Zeugnis ablegen von seiner Tatkraft und seinem fortschrittlichen Geist in allen Facetten seiner rastlosen Schaffenskraft' My translation. Cited in David Clay Large, *Berlin: Biographie einer Stadt* (Munich, C. H. Beck, 2002), p. 62.
- 10 Pelzer, 'Satire oder Unterhaltung?', p. 49.
- 11 Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, p. 5.
- 12 Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld was a Berlin-based German Jewish sexologist and pioneering homosexual rights activist. In 1897, he founded the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (SHC), which combined innovative methodologies to study human sexuality with advocacy for legal reform. Through the publication of scientific research as well as popular literature on homosexuality, the SHC hoped to educate the German public. Cf. Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York, Vintage Books, 2014), pp. xi and xviii. 'Der Hirschfeld kommt' (Reutter, 1907). Cf. Ralf Jorg Raber, *Wir sind Wie Wu sind: Ein Jahrhundert homosexuelle Liebe auf Schallplatte und CD* (Hamburg, Männerschwarm Verlag, 2010). Can be heard online here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qSIImNW3PMw>.
- 13 'Neue Ofenrohrverse' *Ibid.*
- 14 Roger Stein, *Das deutsche Dirnenlied: Literarisches Kabarett von Briant bis Brecht* (Cologne, Bohlau, 2007), p. 8.
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- 91 Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, p 123
- 92 'Soldaten-Romanze', music unknown, text solely documented on postal cards, circa 1914 Cf Bemann, *Claire Waldoff*
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- 94 *Drei alte Schachteln* Music by Walter Kollo, lyrics by Hermann Haller and Rideamus, 1917
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- 96 'Ach Jott, was sind die Manner dumm', music by Walter Kollo, lyrics by Hermann Haller and Rideamus, 1917
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