

Beyond the Island Story?: the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games as Public History

Catherine Baker

Department of History, University of Hull, UK

Abstract

This paper evaluates the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games as an exercise in public history. Public events have been widely identified within the study of nationalism as festivals that attempt to reinforce national identity and belonging.

Contemporary Olympic Games figure in this literature as a specific form of event where the nature and content of a host state's identity is displayed for the global gaze of other nations. While opening ceremonies perform a rich display of national identity in any case, London 2012 is particularly significant for taking place at a time of major political contestation in the United Kingdom and has frequently been interpreted as an expression of radical patriotism. Traces of such patriotic thought associated particularly with England can be found in the opening ceremony's historical pageant and overall concept, showing resonances with the work of Raphael Samuel, who argued for a radical patriotism grounded in a multiplicity of accounts of the national past from many social positions.

Depicting the nation through a multiplicity of biographical narratives produces a 'mosaic' mode of representation which can be seen in other documentary and public history projects and in the political context of British public multiculturalism in the 2000s. This responds to the need for any national narrative to be composed through compressing the lives of millions of people into one coherent story, but complicates

attempts to read a text such as the opening ceremony for what they ‘really’ mean. A model for understanding narratives of the past as being produced in interaction between their initial creator(s) and their reader(s) is necessary for understanding not only the London 2012 opening ceremony in particular but public history and narratives of the national past in general.

Keywords

Ceremony; narrative; national identity; Olympics; public history

Notes on Contributor

Catherine Baker is Lecturer in 20th Century History at the University of Hull. She is a historian of nationalism and narrative and has also researched popular music after the break-up of Yugoslavia; the Eurovision Song Contest; and the experiences of interpreters in post-socialist, post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Introduction

The opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games raises many questions for how we – whether ‘we’ are historians, artists, film-makers, audiences – represent and interpret the past. As a historical narrative, it was concerned with expressing a narrative of national identity anchored in the past, and did so by representing that nation as the sum of multiple biographical narratives – a ‘mosaic’ mode that has affinities with the radical patriotism of social historians such as Raphael Samuel or Christopher Hill. It was simultaneously a form of ‘public history’ itself, and suggested that opening ceremonies in general can be regarded as public history, at least in countries and languages where this is a meaningful term. On an

even deeper level, the multiplicity of its content and the diverse public responses to it highlight the problem of where the meaning of history is made: can the narrative be interpreted primarily with reference to what its producer(s) meant, or does meaning not appear until the viewers have started to make sense of what they see? And is the exercise of a 'historical imagination' (Munslow 2003, 17) only restricted to historians, or might the creative workers who scripted and designed this live and televised narrative also be able to interpret the past in the same way?

The representation of history in opening ceremonies is neither the fictionalisation of feature film nor the reconstruction of documentary (see, e.g. Rosenstone 2004; Hunt 2006); they are staged performances perhaps more akin to theatre, circus or pageant. Yet since at least 1980 (D'Agati 2011), they have deliberately and implicitly aimed to communicate narratives about the host nation's past and present through what they stage and how. In this sense, they are a form of public history. 'Public history' concerns the representation and creation of a history in the public domain, and may also encompass the communication of narratives based on historical research in a way accessible to the public, and/or the public's actual participation in a more active process of history-making (Kean 2013, xv). In light of this concept, research into national narratives must therefore incorporate 'public contexts where national pasts and sentiments are constructed in complex social milieus', such as heritage sites, pageants and museums, as objects of study alongside cultural and media texts (White 1997, 5).

The articulation of any national narrative involves compressing the experiences and lives of millions of people, over generations, into a story that emphasises certain characteristics and values (Bhabha 1990). This is a creative process, one of re-creation, not the extraction of one immediately obvious narrative from the past (Rosenstone 2004, 165). Among the sites where

national identity and belonging are reinforced, or among the technologies that deliberately build them, are public events. The influential approach of Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, combining 'the anthropology of ceremony' (1992, 1) with mass communications studies, argues that televised national events fulfil now the cohesion-building purpose that the sociologist Emile Durkheim originally attributed to in-person public ritual. An alternative, Gramscian viewpoint to this would see public events as a method for homogenising the nation's actual heterogeneity into an illusion of similarity and cohesion which thus becomes hegemonic (Williams 1989, 435). Benedict Anderson's notion of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) is frequently employed to describe what national public events are thought to create. Although this community of co-nationals who will never meet is idealised as 'horizontal' and 'fraternal', it could also be read as based on internalised hierarchies of class, gender, race and ethnicity within the nation, with 'coercive mechanisms of identification' exerting pressure on potential members of the nation to enact or perform their nation-ness in an appropriate way (Taylor 1997, 92).

The study of nationalism also has much to say about sport, its internationalisation through routinised competitions between states, and its relationship with the media. The twentieth and twenty-first century phenomenon of the 'global sports spectacle' (Tomlinson and Young 2006, 3), of which the Olympics are the foremost example (the football World Cup probably in second place), creates multiple opportunities for the staging and redefinition of national identity, as well as more tangible benefits for the hosting state (or rather the belief that these will accrue) through tourism and urban regeneration. The nature and content of national identity is communicated through symbol, including but not limited to the omnipresent flags which remind spectators that the territory of the world is divided up into nation-states and that this division is natural (Billig 1995). Athletes' competitive and ceremonial attire

represents a national uniform, signalling national belonging through colour, motifs, and the nation's name: the development and spread of Olympic national uniforming has been said to have marked the triumph of 'ideological theatre' over the early Olympic movement's utopian amateurism (Biddle-Perry 2012, 265). The very ways in which the sporting bodies perform as they compete may be intended – or expected – to embody a particular national subjectivity in its masculine or feminine varieties, especially – but not only – in the disciplines where judges reward artistry rather than quantitatively measure performance (Kestnbaum 2003; Adams 2011). Ideas about the gendered national bodies appropriate to one's own nation and other nations are also communicated through media commentary (Ličen and Billings 2013). Yet of all these Olympic/Paralympic practices, opening ceremonies are perhaps able to make the richest contribution to the invention of meaning based on representations of a national past.

Global sporting events have been compared to international expos in their capacity to project narratives about the participating nations framed within a narrative about the host state: Maurice Roche (2006, 260) thus describes both types of spectacle as 'mega-events'. The central site for articulating these narratives at an Olympic Games is the opening ceremony. Although the IOC mandates certain elements of the ceremony in order to perpetuate an Olympic tradition, most of the content is chosen by a creative team hired by the organising committee of a Games. The result, as Jackie Hogan (2003, 102) argues, is that opening ceremonies become 'elaborately staged and commercialized narratives of nation', emphasising the national identity of the host state. For Philip D'Agati (2011), the contemporary opening ceremony has consistently, since at least Moscow 1980, served as a vehicle for existing nationalist (and sometimes regionalist) ideas to be staged in this spectacular global setting. D'Agati views this as a positive development. Hogan is more critical, arguing that opening ceremonies' representations of the nation have tended to benefit

capital interests, dominant social groups and the state while continuing to marginalise women and people of colour, whom ceremonies rarely place at the centre of universal human experience (Hogan 2003, 118–20). Problems of marginalisation and silencing will recur when considering the London 2012 opening ceremony's attempt to narrate a multicultural, multivocal nation.

The ceremony therefore can and should be read in the context of longer-standing debates about the politics of history in Britain, and in particular Raphael Samuel's idea that a 'new version of the national past' (Samuel [1994] 2012, 158) based on 'a more molecular view of the nation, and a more pluralist politics' (Samuel 1989, xxxiv) could pose a successful radical challenge to the conservative, monolithic and exclusionary 'island story' (Samuel 1995, v) that had been the dominant narrative of British national history for most of the twentieth century. In stating this, Samuel believed that it could be possible to voice a radical patriotism grounded in a pluralist, bottom-up account (or rather, many pluralist, bottom-up accounts) of the national past, and to re-imagine the national past accordingly. The London 2012 opening ceremony appeared deeply informed by what one might call such a 'mosaic' mode of representing the nation, which presents the nation as the sum of multiple and divergent personal biographies..

Even in statistical terms alone, the London 2012 ceremony would have been a significant moment for opening ceremonies as public history. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which broadcast the Olympics in the United Kingdom, calculated that 27.3 million people in the UK watched at least part of the ceremony, with a formidable audience share of 84% of all viewers (BBC 2012). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) estimated that just under 900 million people around the world had seen it (AP 2012). Numbers aside, the

opening ceremony was also significant because of its content and the creative process of its planning and design (by a team including the film and theatre director Danny Boyle, the novelist and scriptwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce, and the costume designer Suttirat Larlarb). Within the genre of staged public events, the ceremony was particularly – and perhaps uniquely – multivocal and rich in cultural references and symbols, even if many could have been missed by a distracted viewer or would not have been familiar to members of the global audience with less knowledge of British history and popular culture. It could therefore be thought of as a display of symbols of national cultural identity, but also as a deliberate and distinctive historical narrative, developed and negotiated at a time of major political contestation in the UK regarding the nature of the citizenship ties between the people and the state. As such, it became open to interpretation as an expression of radical patriotism in opposition to the conservative and Conservative historical imaginary associated with the revival of H. E. Marshall's *Our Island Story*, but also as no more than the 'highly mediated commodity spectacle' that Michael Silk (2011, 736) had warned London 2012 was likely to become. The following discussion of some central symbols and ideas in the ceremony's representation of British national history shows that a search for authorial intention is insufficient for locating the 'meaning' of the narrative, but shows also that the theatrical and televisual nature of an opening ceremony can be powerfully informed by a historical imagination.

The London 2012 Opening Ceremony

The media guide to the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, which can be used as evidence of how its designers wanted to represent its content to the public (Miah 2012: 45), divided the four-hour spectacle into thirteen scenes: 'Countdown', 'Green and Pleasant Land', 'Pandemonium', 'Happy & Glorious', 'Second to the right, and straight on till

morning’, ‘Interlude’, ‘frankie & june say... Thanks Tim’, ‘Abide With Me’, ‘Welcome’, ‘Bike a.m.’, ‘Let the Games Begin’, ‘There is a Light That Never Goes Out’, and ‘And in the end...’ (LOCOG 2012, 1). With interruptions, these formed four main sequences: a historical pageant dramatising the power, wonder and terror of the Industrial Revolution in Britain; a celebration of children’s literature and the National Health Service (NHS); a celebration of popular music, television and the internet; and the Olympic ritual itself, including the athletes’ entrances, the raising of the Olympic flag and the lighting of the torch.

The scene initially presented in the stadium, a representation of green fields and hills with a (multi-racial) cast of villagers engaging in pastoral pursuits such as harvesting and cricket, was described in the media guide as ‘the countryside we all believe existed once [...] the Britain of *The Wind in the Willows* and Winnie-the-Pooh’ (LOCOG 2012: 20). Certain narratives of history in Britain, or more accurately perhaps in England, would have both started and ended with such a sequence. Stanley Baldwin’s nostalgic evocation of ‘the sounds of England’ (Baldwin n.d.) in his 1924 St George’s Day speech was situated on agricultural land, and the Baldwin narrative – itself, according to Peter Mandler (1997, 173), ‘more often quoted in the 1980s than in the 1920s’ – was echoed by John Major’s description of ‘long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs’ (Major n.d.) at the end of his 1993 speech on Britain’s relationship to Europe. Despite the misdirection of the creative team, who had released photographs of the green hill before the ceremony, this nostalgic scene was not what was represented in 2012. In part, this is because the description itself was self-consciously imaginary, referencing classic novels for children rather than any lived past (we all ‘believe’ – but only believe – that it existed once; the inclusion of several fictional characters whose creators were British, to acknowledge their authors’ cultural achievements, in other parts of the ceremony reiterated this point). More directly, the divergence from the

pastoral idyll was marked by the literal ripping-up of the green turf in order to dramatise the great rupture of the Industrial Revolution.

The remainder of the historical pageant consisted of the building of industrial chimneys and a factory production line on which five glowing rings are forged, surrounded by a parade of groups (played by thousands of volunteers) representing many important developments in the social and cultural history of 19th- and 20th-century Britain. These included not only industrialists in the image of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and soldiers from the First World War, but women's suffrage campaigners, the Beatles/Sergeant Pepper, black immigrants arriving on the *Empire Windrush* from the Caribbean, and the factory workers who are seen working the molten metal. These are groups who would not have been brought into publicly represented narratives of British history without the efforts of E P Thompson (1963), Sheila Rowbotham (1973), the History Workshop collective (among them Raphael Samuel) and other radical historians. The format, and even some of the content, bears some striking resemblances to the historical pageants organised by several British political organisations between the World Wars, particularly those of the Popular Front.¹ Samuel's work itself could not have been unknown to Frank Cottrell Boyce, who as a research student in English Literature at Oxford had contributed to Samuel's *Patriotism* collection with a critical essay on the *I-Spy* books (Boyce 1989).

The opening ceremony could therefore be viewed within a tradition of 'radical patriotism' in English political culture that can be traced from the late 19th- and early 20th-century invocations of the English national past by the labour movement (Ward 1999), entered George Orwell's writing on Englishness during the Second World War (Lowe 2009), achieved political realisation in the post-war thought and policy of Clement Attlee after

Labour's election victory in 1945, and has recently been articulated in texts such as the writing and music of Billy Bragg (Reichl 2004). (Any connections with Scottish, Welsh or Irish radical and patriotic thought were far less visible.) Christopher Hill's 1989 essay on 'history and patriotism' identifies several themes also depicted at London 2012:

Most to be valued, I think, though perhaps least acclaimed, are the creative achievements of the British people. Our industries were built by the labour of millions of men, women and children over centuries. So were our railways and shipyards. Our National Health Service was in its time the best in the world; whatever its defects now, we cannot afford to dismantle it. Above all we should take pride in the British people's gift for forming voluntary associations in order to do things about which top people are unenthusiastic[.] (Hill 1989, 4–5)

Interpreted this way, the historical narrative of the opening ceremony could be considered a counter-narrative to that narrative based on the countryside, the military and the monarchy which has been espoused on the conservative side of what Richard Evans (2013) has referred to as Britain's 'history wars' – a contestation over the politics of heritage that has been ongoing since the Thatcher ministries (see Samuel 2012 [1994]) – and which had been much more visible in the public rituals around the Queen's Diamond Jubilee earlier in 2012.

Although the rural, military and monarchical elements of British national identity were certainly contained within the ceremony, they did not dominate the narrative or the British public reception of it (apart from the scene in which the real-life Queen had been speaking with James Bond, followed by parachutists dressed as Bond and the Queen descending into the stadium) .

Attlee's ministry, and above all the foundation of the NHS in 1948, the same year as the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, is frequently represented as a turning point in British social history and one of the landmarks in contemporary British popular memory. Usually, it appears as the rewarding culmination of the (simplistic) narrative of national sacrifice and austerity during the so-called 'People's War'. The use of Attlee's reforms as a symbol of British national values and identity was a particularly strong symbol in the political context of London 2012, at a time when trades unions, health care organisations and members of the public had been opposing plans by the coalition Conservative–Liberal Democrat government to open the health service to much greater private competition). The opening ceremony heavily mythologised the foundation of the NHS in the sequence in which nurses pushing hospital trolleys (played by actual staff members from Great Ormond Street Hospital for children) and multiple incarnations of Mary Poppins defeated villains from children's literature including the Child-Catcher (*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*), Cruella de Vil (*101 Dalmatians*) and Voldemort (*Harry Potter*, whose author J. K. Rowling introduced the section and who is also known for her defence of the welfare state): this included a moment in which the aerial view of the nurses' trolleys spelled out the letters 'GOSH' and 'NHS'.

Were the team thus implying that the cherished welfare state was under attack by the latter-day Cruellas, Child-Catchers and Voldemorts of the coalition government? Much reception of the opening ceremony did read it as politically driven, whether opposing it – such as the Conservative MP Aidan Burley, who described it on Twitter as 'leftie multicultural crap' (Watt 2012) – or celebrating it – such as the journalist Jonathan Freeland, who praised its 'ethos of public service and ethnic diversity' and its identification of 1948 as 'the pivot year in the history of modern Britain' (Freeland 2012). However, Boyle has rejected a narrowly party-political interpretation of the ceremony and has preferred to position it as an expression

of more timeless and universal national values that he believes have made Britain unique in the world. In a book-length interview with Boyle, Raphael presses him several times on the political intentions behind the opening ceremony and its NHS sequence, while Boyle argues for a more expansive reading:

Raphael: [I]t felt like you were flicking a V-sign at the Coalition, who appear determined to introduce two-tier healthcare into this country [...] You say the opening ceremony was ‘beyond politics’. Others thought differently. It has been described as having a Marxist view of history.

Boyle: I know. But it didn’t. Not at all. Isambard Kingdom Brunel wasn’t a Marxist. Nor is [the inventor of the World Wide Web] Tim Berners-Lee. It was about the things that are important to you, the things you hold true as part of a stable, progressive, courageous country. [...] I was very conscious that the responsibility of this job effectively meant I was doing it on behalf of a huge number of people, some of whom would share my own political views, some of whom obviously wouldn’t. [...] The values espoused by the opening ceremony are not left-wing values. They’re more to do with the fact that we can be a modern, progressive country, and as such we can be an inspiring beacon for people everywhere. (Raphael ed. 2013, 411–12)

Any attempt to define national values – which Boyle sets out as ‘tolerance, dissent, inclusivity, engineering, culture, humour, ambition, [and] modesty’ (Raphael ed. 2013, 411) – is, of course, intensely political, and moreover imposes an unwarranted universalism on the process of generating collective narratives from sources. Nonetheless, if one at least accepts

Boyle's argument that he *intended to* contribute to a national historical narrative rather than make a temporary intervention against a particular government policy, something distinctive about the mode of historical representation in the opening ceremony can be identified: what might be called 'mosaic history', that is, the conceiving of the nation as a multiplicity of stories rather than as one single collective experience. The nation in mosaic history is constituted by the millions of people who have come on to the national land and by each of their life histories. In this sense, the opening ceremony – if its intentions succeeded – would not have simply offered one alternative leftist narrative to the 'island story' narrative of the Right, but forced the viewer to see the nation as the sum of all of these.²

The composition of the ceremony, with diverse pieces of action frequently taking place simultaneously in different parts of the stadium, supported this mosaic mode: the eye or the camera must focus on only one spot in order to take in any action at all, while other stories pass by in the corner of vision, only seen at a glimpse. The idea of the nation as multiplicity was complemented by the Olympic cauldron, designed by Thomas Heatherwick. Rather than the single cauldrons that have been traditional at other Games, the Heatherwick cauldron was composed of 204 copper petals (carried in by each national delegation during the contestants' parade) and was lit by eight young British athletes of different genders and ethnic heritages rather than by any one symbolic figure.

The success of this attempt at narrating the nation can be questioned on several grounds. One is technical: the argument that the representations it contained were so polysemic and jumbled that any viewer could find in it whatever they wanted to. Two other counter-arguments, about the ceremony as a depoliticised spectacle and about the silences within the ceremony's historical narrative(s) will be discussed here in more depth. Some of the most

critical readings of the London 2012 opening ceremony were those that drew attention to the disjuncture between the re-enactment of historical dissent during the ceremony and the restrictions on protest that had been enacted as part of the project to 'secure' the Olympic space (see Graham 2012). Most strikingly, the inclusion of militant suffragette protests in the historical pageant and the release of 75 'dove bikes' (LOCOG 2012, 34) to symbolise world peace and British achievements in cycling came as 182 participants in the Critical Mass cycle ride were being arrested after following a route in breach of an order that the Metropolitan Police had issued 'to prevent serious disruption to the community and the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games' (Richards 2012).³ Writing in 2010, Mark Falcous and Michael Silk (2010) had warned that the diverse and multicultural nation depicted by the narratives in and around London's Olympic bid should not be allowed to mask everyday experiences of poverty, Islamophobia, urban segregation and immigration restrictions in Stratford, London and Britain, nor the histories of the power relations that had produced them. Symbols of the national past, in Silk's view (2011, 739–40), threatened to conceal these realities behind a media spectacle of sport.

Further reservations emerge around what has been silenced in the effort to represent the British nation as a modern and progressive beacon to the world. The ceremony's emphasis on the Industrial Revolution as the crucible (or, indeed, the cauldron) for these values made it impossible to include instances of rural radicalism or early modern rebellion such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1371, the Western Rising of 1549 or the utopian movements during the English Civil War.⁴ Meanwhile, the ceremony's historical narrative did not acknowledge that much of the wealth that made the Industrial Revolution's feats of engineering possible had been taken from other people's lands, including the taking and enslavement of millions of people from those lands between the sixteenth century and the abolition of the slave trade in

the British Empire in 1833. It is debatable whether Boyce and Boyle's project could ultimately overcome this silence as erasure.⁵

Yet at the same time, and depending on what is being silenced, silence may also be radical. This observation relates particularly to the curious absence of the Second World War and the Blitz, which had been central to the narratives of national identity espoused by Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron in the years preceding London 2012. This narrative, already widespread in British public culture, had been strengthened by the constant references to the Blitz made by national and local politicians and the media after the 7/7 bombings took place the day after London had been awarded the 2012 Games (Falcous and Silk 2010, 175–76). Clearly, war memory was not absent from the ceremony: the historical pageant contained a minute's near-silence for the First World War soldiers and the dead of all wars, in keeping with the 'mnemonic turn' (Heathorn 2005) in contemporary representations of the Great War; a group of Chelsea Pensioners took part in the pageant parade; 12 members of the armed forces raised the British flag when the Queen and the president of the IOC entered the stadium; the Olympic flag, borne by British and international peacemakers, was also handed to Forces personnel to raise. What did not appear, however, was what Angus Calder (1991) has called the unifying 'myth of the Blitz', nor the depiction of 1939–45 as a magical time of national unity under Churchill's guiding hand – even though in contemporary Britain one has come to expect this to be one of the fixed points around which a historical narrative of the nation will be built.⁶ Similarly, the dead of 7/7 were commemorated obliquely, in a dance sequence choreographed by Akram Khan and a memorial wall containing images of 'everyday people who had passed away recently' (Miah 2012, 54), rather than leading into a direct narrative of the triumph of democracy over extremism in the way that a similar narrative of 9/11 had structured the opening ceremony of the Salt Lake

City Games in 2002 (Hogan 2003, 117–18). Although in the commentary on the London 2012 opening ceremony the silencing of heroic war memory has been little discussed, it may have been the creative team's most radical act of all.

Narrating the Multicultural and Multivocal Nation

Beyond the readings of history that can be derived from the London 2012 opening ceremony itself, its intellectual and creative origins also show direct links with other public history projects in Britain. The best-known of these is the extent to which the Industrial Revolution sequence was inspired by the work of Humphrey Jennings, the film-maker who became a major presence in British public history through co-founding Mass Observation in 1937. In 1985, Jennings published his collection *Pandaemonium* (Jennings ed. [1985] 2012), a selection of 372 texts written between 1660 and 1886 that traced the emergence of an industrial imagination in Britain. *Pandaemonium* orders the past in much the same way that Jennings's films and Mass Observation archived the present: by building up a multivocal, sometimes contradictory, jigsaw of documents and narratives, which may then be explored under the reader's own direction.⁷ *Pandaemonium* became recognised as a historical source for the sequence of the opening ceremony to which it lent its name when Frank Cottrell Boyce (2012b) mentioned its impact in an article published two days later. In a preface to a reissue of *Pandaemonium* published in November 2012, Boyce described the approach to national identity that could be drawn from Jennings's work and that could also be said to have underpinned the London 2012 opening ceremony:

National identity is not a settled thing – it's not a typical dish or a national costume. A nation is what Philip Larkin would call 'a frail, travelling coincidence' – a ragtag of people on a journey together. (Boyce 2012a, xii)

Danny Boyle, who had read *Pandaemonium* (a gift from Boyce) while directing a theatrical production of *Frankenstein* in 2011, similarly describes it as ‘a pick’n’mix book’ (Raphael ed. 2013, 398). Whether described as pick’n’mix, ragtag or mosaic, this is a mode of representing the nation which is far removed from the Smithian idea of national identity as a stable list of symbols and characteristics:⁸ it is based, instead, on biography and multiplicity. Notably, Jennings also employed this mode of representation in his films. *Listen to Britain* (1941), a wartime documentary about music, ‘proceeds entirely through its succession of linked images, music and sounds’, without commentary (Corner 2002, 359); *Family Portrait* (1951) was produced for the Festival of Britain and ‘reflects the ambiguous meld of characteristics which make up the nation’, including a ‘refusal to specify answers’ about what the nation is (Beattie 2009, 148).

Similar approaches have been taken by a number of well-known British public history projects, including the BBC’s *People’s Century* (Hunt 2006) and *People’s War* (Noakes 2009). The second work I wish to discuss in connection with London 2012, however, is David Kynaston’s multi-volume sequence *Tales of a New Jerusalem*, which tells a social and cultural history of Britain between 1945 and 1979 through amalgamating experiences from hundreds of diaries, memoirs and Mass Observation reports and showing how the social and political currents of the period changed day-to-day experience. Although Kynaston integrates his excerpts into an authorial narrative whereas Jennings’s stood alone, both present national history as the sum of multiple life histories. There are good grounds for considering Kynaston’s work alongside *Pandaemonium* as intellectual predecessors to the opening ceremony, since the image of a ‘new Jerusalem’, taken from Clement Attlee’s Scarborough speech in 1951,⁹ was revived by Kynaston in 2007 before being picked up more widely both

in defence against cuts to the welfare state and as one of the opening ceremony's central musical and intellectual themes. With its origins in the radical patriotism of William Blake, the author of the hymn 'Jerusalem', and through association with Attlee's ministry, the 'new Jerusalem' has become a utopian synonym for the welfare reforms that Attlee sought to bring about.

Blake's hymn itself is part of the English patriotic repertoire and has often been suggested as a specifically English national anthem; it became connected to the 1990s revival of English national identity when used as the theme tune of ITV's coverage of Euro 96 (Poulton 2004, 453). Alun Howkins (1989, 96) observes that it was 'sung outside Transport House as the results came in during the 1945 General Election'. In the opening ceremony, 'Jerusalem' was sung by a child soloist and choir to begin and end as the beginning and end of a cycle of patriotic songs from Britain's four nations (the others being 'Danny Boy' representing Northern Ireland, 'Flower of Scotland', and 'Bread of Heaven' representing Wales). Boyle's notes in the ceremony programme, however, gave the Jerusalem image a much more universal meaning, related to his vision of British industrial and cultural achievements as a global beacon:

But we hope, too, that through all the noise and excitement you'll glimpse a single golden thread of purpose – the idea of Jerusalem – of the better world, the world of real freedom and true equality, a world that can be built through the prosperity of industry, through the caring notion that built the welfare state, through the joyous energy of popular culture, through the dream of universal communication. A belief that we can build Jerusalem. And that it will be for everyone. (Boyle in Barnett 2012)

The utopia of 'Jerusalem', for Boyle, encompasses both the foundation of the NHS – 'we have clearly decided as a nation that we want universal healthcare' (Raphael ed. 2013, 410) – and the decision of Tim Berners-Lee (the 'Tim' being thanked by the smartphone-equipped young lovers 'frankie and June') not to patent the World Wide Web so that its communications technology could be, in the words of the opening ceremony, 'for everyone'. Whether the symbol of 'Jerusalem' can succeed in standing for utopian mutuality when there already exists a material, political and contested city of Jerusalem – or whether in a contemporary context this even risks becoming appropriative – is open to question. Nonetheless, the strand of radical patriotism that leads through Orwell, Attlee and Samuel to Boyce and Boyle certainly seems to take in *Tales of a New Jerusalem* as well as *Pandaemonium* on the way.

The mode of mosaic history employed by Jennings, Kynaston and the London 2012 opening ceremony team lends itself well to the task of representing a nation where official understandings of nationhood have been forced to become more inclusive and multicultural since the 1980s. Political multiculturalism, as defined by Tariq Modood, challenged the essentialist narrative of a homogenous white British identity that underlay state and non-state racism:

Multiculturalists have emphasised internal differentiation (relatively easy in the case of Britain which encompasses up to four national or semi-national components, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and fluidity, with definitions of national belonging being historical constructs and changing over time. In this way it has been possible to argue for the incorporation of immigrant

groups into an ongoing Britishness and against those who prophesied ‘rivers of blood’ as the natives lashed out against the aliens perceived as threatening national integrity. (Modood 1998, 378)

Key moments in incorporating this philosophy into public policy were the 1999 Macpherson Report into the killing of Stephen Lawrence, obliging public institutions to confront institutional racism, and the 2000 Parekh Report by the Commission for the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. (Lawrence’s mother Doreen, after many years of campaigning for the investigation into her son’s death to be reopened, was among the bearers of the Olympic flag in the London 2012 opening ceremony.) Many limits to this public multiculturalism must be acknowledged, including the conditionality of public acceptance of Islam, the continued evidence of racism by police and immigration authorities, the construction of divisions between less-entitled migrants and more-entitled natives through the rhetoric of ‘British jobs for British workers’ (Anderson 2013, 71–92), and a linguistic shift to talk of ‘integration’ and ‘diversity’ rather than actual ‘multiculturalism’ after the 7/7 bombings (Burdsey 2012, 74). Modood and Varun Uberoi (2013, 23) nonetheless argue that during the 2000s British politicians became increasingly committed to defining a more ‘inclusive’ British national identity, for whatever value of inclusivity they understood. It is fair to say that official public representations of the nation became more racially diverse between the 1990s and 2012, and that within this context sport was often looked to as a representation of how British national identity has changed and as a process through which the nation’s cohesion would actually be achieved (Carrington 2010, 141). Such a nation can arguably not be represented by any one person or body, only by assembled groups of people that symbolise diversity and multiplicity. In this respect, the joint photograph of Jessica Ennis, Mo Farah and Greg Rutherford, British

athletes of different racial backgrounds who each won gold medals in their Olympic events on 4 August 2012, was both fortuitous and telling.

Multivocal representations of the nation are thus particularly well suited to, and maybe enable, the representational needs of contemporary British public institutions. This mode of representation is not, however, as unique to Britain as some reception of the London 2012 opening ceremony suggested it might be. In Sweden, for instance, the national tourist board has organised a ‘rotation curation’ project on Twitter since 2011 where a different Swedish user tweets from the @sweden account each week: over time, its followers can build up an idea of the Swedish nation as constituted by layer upon layer of curators, and of the nation’s tolerance and open-mindedness as expressed through its institutions (the organisers have kept faith even when curators have made controversial statements).¹⁰ This is not an exercise in public history, but shares the same logic of promoting a nation composed of a mosaic of voices which are diverse, multicultural and sometimes contradictory. A multivocal, mosaic representation of nationhood is therefore not unique to Britain, yet had become solidly embedded in public depictions of the nation in the years preceding London 2012.

Conclusion

The ideas being contested at the time of London 2012 included not only the nature of the British state’s responsibility for its citizens’ wellbeing but also the state’s preferred narrative of the British past. In January 2011, the education secretary Michael Gove had announced a review of the National Curriculum for history, building on his October 2010 speech to the Conservative Party conference in which he stated that ‘[t]he current approach we have to history denies children the opportunity to hear our island story’ (Gove 2010). This allusion to H. E. Marshall’s *Our Island Story* immediately positioned the curriculum reform in

opposition to the effort to tell more diversified and democratised narratives of British history, which had itself been in reaction against the homogeneity and conservatism that Raphael Samuel – who called one of his books *Island Stories*, plural – and other critics identified in Marshall. In the strand of Conservative imagination exemplified by Gove, the ‘island story’ is the basis for a more rigorous history curriculum; other eyes, such as Richard Evans’s, have read it as a narrative of insularity, xenophobia and elitism, and as the erasure of more contingent histories in which the English Channel need not necessarily have denoted the eastern borders of Britain (Evans 2011). In these circumstances, entering the public domain with a radically multivocal depiction of national history could certainly be thought of as an intervention in politics – even though it is not quite true that ‘only’ Britain could have staged itself through such a mode of representation, and even though the individual life stories that make up multivocal histories cannot be separated from wider social relations of power.

The problem of whether an emancipatory agenda can accommodate the nation and the celebration of a specifically national past remains, and a viewer’s resolution of it is likely to affect how they interpret the narrative of the opening ceremony. In support of the idea of a radical patriotism stand the historical works of Samuel, Jennings and others as well as the spectacle of London 2012. Against it stands the difficulty of conceiving of the nation as an emancipatory or radical principle when the use of concepts of national belonging for coercive, intimidatory and repressive purposes is so well-established. If the idea of the nation is *inherently* based on the ‘casting out’ (Razack 2004) of an Other who does not belong, or who is not entitled to full citizenship because they do not comply with imagined characteristics or duties that members of the nation must exhibit, then the ideal of full inclusivity can by definition never be fully realised within the framework of nationalism and patriotism. Thus Paul Gilroy (2002, xxiii, xxxvii) considers that ‘Britain’s nationalism and

racism are still routinely and symptomatically articulated together', even though he is prepared to express a 'fragile belief' that lessons about 'how to live peacefully with difference' might emerge from a future 'restored and healthy Britain', and Sherene Razack (2004) argues even less optimistically that contemporary liberal democratic nationalisms since 9/11 have been based on the exclusion of Muslims from the polity as cultural aliens. This quandary is not new: the history of Marxist thought in the early 20th century likewise contained both arguments such as those of Rosa Luxemburg that revolutionary movements could not accommodate nationalism and attempts such as those of Otto Bauer to reconcile the nation and the proletariat (Munck 2010).

Viewpoints on either side of this divide have already been articulated in response to the London 2012 opening ceremony. A roundtable on the London Games in the left-wing journal *Soundings* (Graham ed. 2013), for instance, juxtaposed several approaches to this dilemma without reaching one unified conclusion:

[Claire Westall:] [M]uch of the politics was a message of union and cohesion, which seemed to override or simply bypass dissent or critique. Lots of historical moments were being aggrandised in ways that raised notable concern because the coming together they celebrated was based on historical amnesia. [...]

[Anna Minton:] But, for example, I was gobsmacked by seeing Doreen Lawrence and Shami Chakrabarti [the director of the civil liberties association Liberty] carrying the flag. I felt I had no criticisms there. That is how the coming together of the UK was symbolised for me. [...]

[Mark Perryman:] However, we cannot forget who the flag was then passed to – members of the armed forces. (Graham ed. 2013, 88–9)

A more positive reading of the ceremony's historical narrative, also based on social critique, has been offered by Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn (2013), who argue that it succeeded in offering a counter-narrative against the veneration of post-Second-World-War stoicism and 'austerity' that has been deployed in order to win public consent to substantial welfare cuts. The long-term effectiveness of the ceremony as an intervention in public historical narratives and in future public consent or dissent to government policies cannot yet be judged. Its grounding in already existing approaches to public history, on the other hand, is clearly demonstrable and visible.

If these, and other, divergent interpretations of the ceremony can be reconciled, a model for understanding narratives of the past as produced in interaction between their initial creator(s) and their reader(s) is required. Martin Nystrand's 'social–interactive model' of written communication suggests that a narrative is not complete until the reader fills it with meaning, though also that 'readers are constrained in their interpretations by their sense of the writer's purpose' (Nystrand 1989, 77); this can extend to audio-visual texts, although the process through which these are 'published' involves an even greater number of 'creators'. From this perspective, the ceremony's creative team, its volunteers and its viewers could all be considered 'authors' of the many more narratives that have emerged, through the reciprocity between text and reader, from a performance that at the moment of presentation was already multivocal. Their judgements about the creators' purpose might involve their contextual knowledge of (to name but a few factors) the Olympic movement, the creators' other works, political contestation in contemporary Britain, and how they position themselves in relation

to these. In the reading I present here, for instance, I use what I have understood about certain historical works and practices, and about the geopolitical significance of international competitions, in forming my reading of the text.

From a deconstructionist perspective, all historians are involved in authoring the past through selecting and interpreting evidence and through the very process of presenting it in a narrative form, even if they offer the results as objective (Munslow 1997, 70). The degree of reflexivity necessary to acknowledge this within historical writing is perhaps closer to the writing practices of anthropologists or feminist International Relations researchers than it is to those of many historians. Exploring how the 'mosaic' mode of representing social history appears to have been translated into performance within the opening-ceremony genre leads to a provocative question for historians: are the originators of self-consciously creative historical narratives actually better equipped to acknowledge the process of authoring the past than historians working in book-and-article-based forms, and do the writers of written histories have anything to learn from exercises in narrating history such as that discussed here?

Notes

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Unofficial Histories conference at Manchester Metropolitan University in June 2013 and at a research seminar at Leeds Metropolitan University in December 2013. Thanks to Cathy Elliott, Adam Gutteridge, Hilda Kean, Lucie Matthews-Jones, Matthew McDowell and Emily Robinson, to two anonymous reviewers, and to Alun Munslow, for comments which have informed this version of the paper. Thanks also to students from Hymer College, Hull for responses to an even earlier version presented at an activity in November 2012.

¹ Emily Robinson (2012) cites Mick Wallis's description of the 'Towards Tomorrow' pageant in 1938, dramatising the battle between 'Capital' and 'Co-operative Democracy', which opened on a pastoral scene before '[a] factory chimney thrusts forty feet into the air' and '[a] parade of banners circles the arena, charting the growth of co-operation from 1844 to 1914' (Wallis 1995: 26). My thanks to Emily for referring me to this.

² Compare the composition of Julien Temple's film *London: the Modern Babylon* (2012), produced for the Cultural Olympiad, which contains a similar multiplicity of archive film footage, popular music and social history (interview) to produce a narrative of London, incorporating some of the same turning points such as mass migration from the Commonwealth after the Second World War.

³ Similarly, writing on the Paralympics closing ceremony, Imogen Tyler (2013: 207–8) notes the disjuncture between what she considers the ceremony's simulacrum of a disability rights protest, with placards carrying generalised slogans, and the protests against the contractor ATOS (the operators of the controversial Work Capability Assessments for people claiming disability-related benefits) that had taken place earlier the same day.

⁴ See Hill 1972. Thanks to Adam Gutteridge for this point.

⁵ Compare the critique of the 'conservative understanding of reconciliation' that some authors have discerned in the representation of Australian Aboriginal history in the Sydney 2000 opening ceremony (Elder, Pratt and Ellis 2006: 181), or of the essentialisation of First Nations identities in recent Canadian opening ceremonies (Adese 2012). The Australian and Canadian critiques concur that the historical narratives of the respective ceremonies do not address the continued effects that colonialism still has on these countries' indigenous people(s) in the present.

⁶ Compare the London 2012 closing ceremony, directed by a different team, where the familiar caricature of Churchill literally towered over events at a key moment.

⁷ Frank Cottrell Boyce directly compares this approach to the films of Julien Temple, discussed above (2012a: vii).

⁸ See Smith 1991.

⁹ Attlee's reference to a 'new Jerusalem' used the last four lines of William Blake's hymn 'Jerusalem' at the end of his re-election speech, after the words 'Let us go forward in this fight in the spirit of William Blake' (Pearson 2012: 586).

¹⁰ The limitations on whose voices are heard on @sweden and how are greater than they may at first seem: the organisers issue guidelines to curators about what the audience would like to read and steer curators away from 'specific political agendas', while structural limitations (users must have internet access, be familiar with Twitter and able to tweet in English) mean that the potential curators pool is not representative of the 'average' Swede (Christensen 2013, 40–1). However, @sweden in practice is not a completely depoliticised space (different curators have, for instance, expressed opinions both for and against the most controversial topic in Sweden's international affairs, the extradition of Julian Assange), and the level of official trust placed in its voices has arguably led to a more advanced multivocality than anything comparable in Britain

References

Adams, M.L. 2011. *Artistic impressions. Figure skating, masculinity, and the limits of sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Adese, J. 2012. Colluding with the enemy? Nationalism and depictions of ‘Aboriginality’ in Canadian Olympic moments. *American Indian Quarterly* 36 (4): 479–502.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anderson, Bridget. 2013. *Us and them. The dangerous politics of immigration control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

AP (Associated Press). London 2012 opening ceremony audience hit 900 million predicts IOC. *The Independent*, 7 August. Accessed 27 August 2013.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/news/london-2012-opening-ceremony-audience-hit-900-million-predicts-ioc-8015361.html>

Baldwin, S. n.d. St George’s Day speech. In *What England means to me. A Domesday Book of the mind*, ed. Arthur Aughey, Christine Berberich and Gareth Young. Accessed 27 August 2013. <http://whatenglandmeanstome.co.uk/stanley-baldwin/>

Barnett, A. 2012. The fire and the Games. How London’s Olympic opening confronted corporate values. *openDemocracy*, 30 July. Accessed 28 August 2013.

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/anthony-barnett/fire-and-games-how-london%E2%80%99s-olympic-opening-confronted-corporate-values>

BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). London 2012 Olympics deliver record viewing figures for BBC. *BBC Media Centre*, 13 August. Accessed 27 August 2013.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2012/olympic-viewing-figs.html>

- Beattie, K. 2009. An ambiguous national iconography. Humphrey Jennings' *Family Portrait*. *Studies in Documentary Film* 3 (2): 147–58.
- Bhabha, H.K. 1990. Introduction. Nation and narration. In *Narrating the nation*, ed. H.K. Bhabha: 1–7. London and New York: Routledge.
- Biddle-Perry, G. 2012. Clothing the British Olympic ideal. The emergence of Olympic ceremonial attire, 1896–1924. *Journal of Design History* 25 (3): 252–67.
- Billig, M. 1995. *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.
- Biressi, A., and Nunn, H. 2013. The London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony. History answers back. *Journal of Popular Television* 1 (1): 113–20.
- Boyce, F.C. 1989. I-Spy. In *Patriotism. The making and unmaking of British national identity*, ed. R. Samuel, vol. 2, *Minorities and outsiders*, 9–17. London and New York: Routledge.
- Boyce, F.C. 2012a. Foreword. In *Pandaemonium 1660–1886. The coming of the machine as seen by contemporary observers*, ed. H. Jennings, vii–xii. London: Icon.
- Boyce, F.C. 2012b. London 2012. Opening ceremony saw all our mad dreams come true. *The Observer*, 29 July. Accessed 28 August 2013.
- <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jul/29/frank-cottrell-boyce-olympics-opening-ceremony>
- Burdsey, D. 2012. The Technicolor Olympics? Race, representation and the 2012 London Games. In *Watching the Olympics. Politics, power and representation*, ed. J. Sugden and A. Tomlinson, 69–81. London and New York: Routledge.
- Calder, A. 1991. *The myth of the Blitz*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Carrington, B. 2010. *Race, sport and politics. The sporting black diaspora*. London: Sage.
- Christensen, C. 2013. @Sweden. Curating a nation on Twitter. *Popular Communication* 11 (1): 30–46.

- Corner, J. 2002. Sounds real. Music and documentary. *Popular Music* 21 (3): 357–66.
- D'Agati, P.A. 2011. *Nationalism on the world stage. Cultural performance at the Olympic Games*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Dayan, D., and Katz, E. 1992. *Media events. The live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Elder, C., Pratt, A., and Ellis, C. 2006. Running race. Reconciliation, nationalism and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 41 (2): 181–200.
- Evans, R. 2011. The wonderfulness of us (the Tory interpretation of history). *London Review of Books* 33 (6): 9–12. Accessed 28 August 2013. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/richard-j-evans/the-wonderfulness-of-us>
- Evans, R. 2013. Michael Gove's history wars. *The Guardian*, 13 July. Accessed 28 August 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jul/13/michael-gove-teaching-history-wars>
- Falcous, M., and Silk, M.L. 2010. Olympic bidding, multicultural nationalism, terror, and the epistemological violence of 'making Britain proud'. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10 (2): 167–86.
- Freedland, J. 2012. London 2012. We've glimpsed another kind of Britain, so let's fight for it. *The Guardian*, 10 August. Accessed 27 August 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/10/london-2012-glimpsed-britain-fight>
- Gove, M. 2010. Michael Gove. All pupils will learn our island story. Speech to the Conservative Party conference, 5 October. Accessed 28 August 2013. http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2010/10/Michael_Gove_All_pupils_will_learn_our_island_story.aspx
- Graham, J., ed. 2013. Revisiting the Olympic legacy. *Soundings* 54: 82–91.

- Graham, S. 2012. Olympics 2012 security. Welcome to lockdown London. *City* 16 (4): 446–51.
- Heathorn, S. 2005. The mnemonic turn in the cultural historiography of Britain's Great War. *The Historical Journal* 48 (4): 1103–24.
- Hill, C. 1972. *The world turned upside down. Radical ideas during the English Revolution*. London: Temple Smith.
- Hill, C. 1989. History and patriotism. In *Patriotism. The making and unmaking of British national identity*, vol. 1, *History and politics*, ed. R. Samuel, 3–8. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hogan, J. 2003. Staging the nation. Gendered and ethnicized discourses of national identity in Olympic opening ceremonies. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 27 (2): 100–23.
- Howkins, A. 1989. Greensleeves and the idea of national music. In *Patriotism: the making and unmaking of British national identity*, vol. 3, *National fictions*, ed. R. Samuel, 89–98. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hunt, T. 2006. Reality, identity and empathy. The changing face of social history television. *Journal of Social History* 39 (3): 843–58.
- Jennings, H., ed. (1985) 2012. *Pandaemonium 1660–1886: the coming of the machine as seen by contemporary observers*. Reprint, London: Icon.
- Kean, H. 2013. Introduction. In *The public history reader*, ed. H. Kean and P. Martin, xiii–xxxii. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kestnbaum, E. 2003. *Culture on ice. Figure skating and cultural meaning*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Ličen, S., and Billings, A. 2013. Cheering for 'our' champs by watching sexy female throwers. Representation of nationality and gender in Slovenian 2008 summer Olympic television coverage. *European Journal of Communication* 28 (4): 379–96.

- LOCOG (London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games). 2012. London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony media guide. London: London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Accessed 27 August 2013.
- http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120730004223/http://www.london2012.com/mm/Document/Documents/Publications/01/30/43/40/OPENINGCEREMONYGUIDE_English.pdf
- Lowe, P. 2009. Englishness in a time of crisis. George Orwell, John Betjeman, and the Second World War. *Cambridge Quarterly* 38 (3): 243–63.
- Major, J. N.d. 1993 – Mr Major’s speech to Conservative Group for Europe. *The Rt Hon Sir John Major KG CH*. Accessed 27 August 2013. <http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1086.html>
- Mandler, P. 1997. Against ‘Englishness’. English culture and the limits to rural nostalgia, 1850–1940. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 7: 155–75.
- Miah, A. 2012. ‘This is for everyone’. The London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony as a cultural celebration. *Culture @ the Olympics* 14 (7): 44–57.
- Modood, T. 1998. Anti-essentialism, multiculturalism and the “recognition” of religious groups. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6 (4): 378–99.
- Modood, T., and Uberoi, V. 2013. Inclusive Britishness. A multiculturalist advance. *Political Studies* 61 (1): 23–41.
- Munck, R. 2010. Marxism and nationalism in the era of globalisation. *Capital and Class* 34 (1): 45–53.
- Munslow, A. 1997. *Deconstructing history*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Munslow, A. 2003. *The new history*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Noakes, L. 2009. The BBC's 'People's War' website. In *War memory and popular culture. Essays on modes of remembrance and commemoration*, ed. M. Keren and H.H. Herwig, 135–49. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Nystrand, M. 1989. A social–interactive model of writing. *Written Communication* 6 (1): 66–85.
- Pearson, C. 2012. New Labour – new renaissance. *City* 16 (5): 576–94.
- Poulton, E. 2004. Mediated patriot games. The construction and representation of national identities in the British television production of Euro '96. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 39 (4): 437–55.
- Raphael, A., ed. 2013. *Danny Boyle. Creating wonder. In conversation with Amy Raphael*. London: Faber.
- Razack, S.H. 2004. *Casting out. The eviction of Muslims from Western law and politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Reichl, S. 2004. Flying the flag. The intricate semiotics of national identity. *European Journal of English Studies* 8 (2): 205–17.
- Richards, T. 2012. Cycling arrests raise questions about legacy Olympics organisers want to leave. *The Guardian*, 30 July. Accessed 27 August 2013.
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2012/jul/30/critical-mass-arrest-olympic-games>
- Robinson, E. 2012. Pageants of progress. Party political performance in 1930s Britain. Paper presented at the Modern British History seminar, University of Cambridge, 5 November.
- Roche, M. 2006. Nations, mega-events and international culture. In *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, ed. G. Delanty and K. Kumar, 260–72. London: Sage.
- Rosenstone, R.A. 2004. Confessions of a postmodern (?) historian. *Rethinking History* 8 (1): 149–66.

- Rowbotham, S. 1973. *Hidden from history. 300 years of women's oppression and the fight against it*. London: Pluto.
- Samuel, R. 1989. Introduction: the 'little platoons'. In *Patriotism. The making and unmaking of British history*, ed. R. Samuel, vol. 2, *Minorities and outsiders*, ix–xxxix. London and New York: Routledge.
- Samuel, R. 1995. British dimensions. 'Four nations history'. *History Workshop Journal* 40: iii–xxii.
- Samuel, R. . (1994) 2012. *Theatres of memory. Past and present in contemporary culture*. Reprint, London: Verso.
- Silk, M. 2011. Towards a sociological analysis of London 2012. *The Sociological Review* 45 (5): 733–48.
- Smith, A.D. 1991. *National identity*. London: Penguin.
- Taylor, D. 1997. *Disappearing acts. Spectacles of gender and nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Thompson, E.P. 1963. *The making of the English working class*. London: Gollancz.
- Tomlinson, A., and C. Young. 2006. Culture, politics and spectacle in the global sports event – an introduction. In *National identity and global sports events*, ed. A. Tomlinson and C. Young, 1–14. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Tyler, I. 2013. *Revolting subjects. Social abjection and resistance in neoliberal Britain*. London: Zed.
- Wallis, M. 1995. The Popular Front pageant. Its emergence and decline. *New Theatre Quarterly* 11: 17–32.
- Ward, P. 1999. Socialists and 'true' patriotism in Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. *National Identities* 1 (2): 179–94.

Watt, N. 2012. Olympics opening ceremony was 'multicultural crap', Tory MP tweets. *The Guardian*, 28 July. Accessed 27 August 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jul/28/olympics-opening-ceremony-multicultural-crap-tory-mp>

White, G.M. 1997. Introduction: public history and national narrative. *Museum Anthropology* 21 (1): 3–7.

Williams, B.F. 1989. A class act. Anthropology and the race to nation across ethnic terrain. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18: 401–44.