

REVIEW FORUM

***Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, by Peter Bailey.
Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.**

Social History's Half Holiday: Peter Bailey on Victorian Leisure

Patrick Brantlinger

Champagne Charlie, Ally Sloper, and other swells, toffs, shoppers, barmaids, snobs, prostitutes, chorus girls, and cads populate *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*. Peter Bailey even calls himself, in his professional guise as social historian, a "cad" (*OED* definition: "a low, vulgar fellow; a driver of an omnibus"). "Flâneur" would be more like it. Just as Walter Benjamin enjoyed imagining himself in the shoes of nineteenth-century urban types, so Bailey enjoys recreating the behaviours and significance of these characters. Reading his essays is therefore like taking a half-holiday into areas of leisure where earlier social historians rarely ventured.

Certainly the urban types—or, better, *roles* (cads etc.)—that Bailey privileges were of little importance to social history's first major incarnation, Marxist labour history. As told by E.P. Thompson and others, the forging of working-class solidarity and radicalism from the French Revolution through the Chartist decade of the hungry forties gets derailed, it seems, by the story of its unmaking in the second half of the century. As Bailey contends, this standard, decline-and-fall narrative is simplistic for several reasons. In what Bailey identifies as "the most influential account of this dilution of class consciousness" (130), Gareth Stedman Jones sees mass militancy transmogrifying into popular "escapism," or the commodified attractions of the music hall, the sports arena, and the seaside holiday. So did capitalism bribe or "distract" working-class radicalism into the twin cages of "respectability" and apolitical vulgarity? Or did it provide new forms of culture, entertainment, value, and even identity that put class conflict on the back burner, so to speak?

The Victorian city offered a rapidly expanding scene for leisure pursuits, for mass or popular culture, and many of these pursuits, as Bailey makes clear, emphasised role-playing: strolling and shopping, music hall, theatre, and Ally Sloper's con games and womanising among them. From the Great Exhibition of 1851 on, the symptoms of an emergent "consumer society" proliferated: mass daily journalism, the first department stores, the first advertising agencies, mass tourism, and the advent of marginalist economics. (This revision of orthodox, capitalist economics, exemplified in Britain by W.S. Jevons's 1871 *Theory of Political Economy*, scrapped the old labour theory of value, as in both Adam Smith and Marx, in favour of a consumption theory; utility defined as consumer desire became the sole measure of value.) And consumerism means that more and more individuals of all classes begin to be able to buy what they want, everything from food to clothes to entertainment.

As Bailey notes, the older social-labour history accounts of the Victorian era made a big deal out of working-class "respectability." After the hungry forties, as Victorians themselves often pointed out, trade unionism became respectable, inclined to work within the political and legal system rather than against it. Working-men

presumably also began imitating their betters (despite Arnold's characterisation of the "populace" as drinkers, brawlers, and smashers). However, in his "role-analysis" of "working-class respectability" Bailey contends that any self-respecting worker with enough cultural "knowingness" could slip into and out of a variety of roles, some respectable, some not so respectable. This is a perfectly commonsensical observation, yet one that social historians have not always observed. The earlier tendency, seconding Marx and Engels, was to identify a factory worker as just that and no more: a beaten, exploited, underpaid, alienated, but hopefully increasingly angry prole who would one day, butterfly-like, turn into a revolutionary of the right sort. Even the very first factory workers, however, were only factory workers part of the time. The "performance" aspect of social history that Bailey emphasises involves the fact that all of us play many roles every day of our lives. For better or worse, class is only one role or aspect of identity among many. And insofar as class identity is determined by work or occupation, it is qualified by or comes into conflict with the various roles that people adopt when they are not at work, when they are at play. From mid-century on consumerism in Britain's urban spaces meant in part new opportunities to play an ever-growing number of after-work roles.

Further, many city-dwellers at least express their identities as much or more through consumption and their leisure activities as through their work. Bailey has taken some clues in this regard from cultural studies (but even very recent versions of cultural studies persist in trying to find moments of supposedly political "resistance" in for example women's consumption of soap operas). For many Victorians what Marx called "the idiocy of rural life" had been abandoned for the "glamour," "knowingness," and flexible nomadism or transience of urban life. What urban role-playing involved was a sort of social liberation based on an at least transient social mobility (a shop clerk didn't have to inherit £10,000 a year to become a swell during his off-hours). "Glamour" and "knowingness" moreover are both important albeit kinky categories in Bailey's account of the advent of modern consumer society. Even more so is what Bailey calls "parasexuality," by which he means the increasing, tolerated or "licit," commercialised employment and display of attractive young women—barmaids and chorus girls for example. His studies of both of these perhaps minor but nevertheless characteristic occupations for women strike me as highly interesting additions to Martha Vicinus's account of both vocations and avocations open to "independent women" in mid- and late-Victorian Britain. And "parasexuality" is a very suggestive category in helping to understand how the erotic machinery of much mass culture works.

Bailey's social history of the emergence of commercialised leisure and consumer society shows that "knowing" actors and actresses of all classes on the urban stage were increasingly able to play and enjoy the roles they wanted to play—both during their leisure time and as occupations in the "leisure industries." A shop clerk or an omnibus driver could become a swell, a theatre-goer, or even a music-hall performer. A chorus girl could become a prostitute or a shopper or a watcher of other chorus girls or even the wife of an aristocrat. In modern urban history work routines, occupations, and social classes all begin to lose some of their rigidity. Leisure expands, popular culture expands, the mass media come on stage. Desire and pleasure become categories to reckon with for historians, sociologists, and economists.

Aware of Bakhtin's notion about writing a history of laughter, Bailey in his last chapter sketches a potential history of noise. He is certainly right that twentieth-century historians have privileged the visual while neglecting the auditory. And noise from music hall to the roar of traffic in the streets is a key aspect of urban experience. I get the impression, however, that Bailey wants mainly to suggest, as in various ways he does in all his chapters, how many aspects of experience social history has so far failed to encompass. And after noise . . . ? But there seems plenty still to do in relation to analysing the history of leisure and popular culture in Victorian Britain. One rather surprising omission from Bailey's account is advertising. He mentions it in passing and in his footnotes—he cites for instance Thomas Richards's *Commodity Culture of Victorian Britain*—but advertising was even then, between 1837 and 1901, becoming the leading, most pervasive, most characteristic form of capitalist modern and now postmodern culture. And it is advertising as a cultural category that was and remains the key site for any theory of ideology (or more generally for any version of cultural studies) “knowing” enough to want to understand how desire, distraction, “parasexuality,” and capitalist mystification all help to support enough versions of individual liberty and the pursuit of happiness to keep the entire ramshackle but effervescent system spinning on into the post-postmodern future.

From Coffee and from Supper Rooms,
From Poplar to Pall Mall,
The girls, on seeing me, exclaim,
“Oh, what a Champagne Swell!”

If the self-respecting social historian can't account for Champagne Charlie, he don't amount to much.

Veronica Kelly

Bailey's book is an excellent read. With its stylistic clarity and tactful deployment of a wide range of empirical and theoretical influences, the engagement value of this writing is—to quote sports commentators—awesome. The 1994 essay “Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture” is an inspiring piece of bold speculative investigation backed up by extensive knowledge, which identifies the really productive questions the evidence might yield: what did the popular reader or audience “know” and why did they seek to assemble this “knowingness” into a cultural code? This is how popular cultural studies should be written, one feels, with self-awareness about the author's historical speaking position, his class and gender experiences and especially his libidinal investments in the study. After all, if these debates and investigations didn't afford definite pleasures to the scholar, they wouldn't be occurring.

British social history, Bailey states, is preoccupied with class since it is the product of class at a culture-specific historical moment (5), or so it turned out for this author. But as the date spread of essays in this collection demonstrates this central hunger persistently fuels Bailey's writing long after the initial impulses of the class-driven post-war “lumpenpolytechnic” (6) male scholars had spent or diversified their energies in theoretically problematising discourses of ludic identity and competing

subject positions. Yet class doesn't just dissolve into another sort of "mere difference" (5). For example the essays on Ally Sloper, the strategic conviviality of music-hall "caterers" and "swell" singers demonstrate that precise social and critical ability to "spot" subtle class identifications and interests which is the hallmark of the best British-influenced social history. Although "material conditions" (4) no longer form the master discourse of the Williams-Hoggart school of popular culture studies, Bailey keeps these concerns alive without dissolving them into freely chosen commodities within postmodern identity play. His account of the working conditions of barmaids and musical comedy showgirls materially anchors his analysis of their symbolic function as bearers of the "parasexual" seductions of capitalist consumerism.

My own investments consist of assessing what Bailey's studies can offer an historian, not of social history of popular culture as such but of nineteenth-century popular theatre; a researcher with postcolonial theoretical inclinations situated in a settler society undergoing intense and diffusely motivated examination of its colonial past. The answer is: heaps, and this despite the music-hall obsession. Well, from here it can sometimes appear an obsession. For reasons of legislation concerning liquor and performance venue licensing, music hall as a site-specific performance formation never took hold in the Australian colonies, although the immense popularity of theatrical farce, minstrelsy and spectacular burlesque amply supplied colonial audiences with skilled comedic performances. Hence while its value as a test site for evolving theories of agency and "cultural cross-dressing" (8) is undoubted, the last thirty years' agonising by British social historians about the radical or complicit potential of just this one form can sometimes be a little eye-glazing. However, Bailey's sophisticated use of popular forms doesn't merely thrash over theoretical or political impasses. In the Ally Sloper study for example he sees the agency debate as having moved towards seeing mass culture interpellating specific competences rather than merely conferring consolation. In the context of exploring the "Champagne Charlie" singers he explicates the role of the reader/audience in the negotiations of the "polysemic properties" of popular cultural forms and states his desire for pro-active interpretations with "surprise value" (118). With a questing eye for performative signifiers, he locates just such a fertile interpretational nexus, between the licence and "hydraulic" male sexuality-cum-homosociality of the singer's swell performance and the "constrictive nature of the dress in which the authentic good time is being pursued," pointing towards tensions between "pleasure and consumption in a work-centred culture" (119). Gracenotes such as these show music-hall performance and popular urban culture generally being pressed into service for exciting and vivid cultural readings.

What else can Bailey offer the researcher placed as I am? His "Introduction" situates the incursion of feminist and postcolonial critiques into the social history and cultural studies fields, and the shuffling and readjustments these forms of materialist and epistemological revolution caused in disciplines already digesting (or rejecting) structuralism and the linguistic turn. Bailey is aware of the need to factor gender into his analyses, and throughout these essays one can see his increasing confidence in choosing to turn aside his gaze from the glaring gaslit spectacle of male public urban culture in order to see the women thus rendered invisible or shadowy by its blinding dazzle. The chapters on the barmaid and the musical comedy "girl" best perform this task with the latter being seen as a construction of "reactionary men defining their own New Woman"

(192). However, this angle of perception defines the limits of Bailey's own investigations into gender: how men define women. What pleasures or investments the actual chorus girls or female musical comedy performers derived is left hanging, and one might have wished a scholar with Bailey's flair in dealing with the "writerly" competencies of the popular audience to speculate more "surprisingly" about what specifically female audiences (or audiences strategically inhabiting the culturally feminine subject position) got out of musical comedy. How "knowing" were they in co-opting and subverting these masculinist and homosocial discourses and investing the spectacle with their own meanings and pleasures? Such questions can provide Bailey (and all of us) with fresh points of entry into the polysemic field of readings of popular performance.

As for the postcolonial aspect, in this particular collection of studies it is muted and implicit, which from a scholar long situated in Canada I find intriguing. From an Australian perspective I concur with Bailey that the modern city is the key to the subjectivity ranges of modernity and the channel to a cosmopolitan and "knowing" self-presentation, which I'd argue has interesting postcolonial implications for subject formation in colonial settler cultures. While poco as such doesn't explicitly name itself in this suite of essays, one feels it is ticking away beneath as one of those lived material experiences Bailey so entertainingly outlines in his confessional introductory passages (and we "know" just how performative and strategic a wielding of the confessional mode can be). When he writes of heterotopia and of the "wily and opportunist" working-class subject (6-7), and of the tricky negotiations between complicit and subversive investments in dominant cultures, one recognises tropes also working productively in postcolonial theorising. This book has plenty to offer investigators in the field of settler-society nineteenth-century subjectivities, who work through questions of how colonial theatrical performance both models and negotiates the cosmopolitan discourses of mass international popular culture.

The one part of the book which caused perplexity occurs in the very essay which is my favourite: "Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture." From Raymond Williams (1980) Bailey derives a simplistic contrast between the direct address of music hall and an increasingly "markedly naturalistic" theatre equipped with a box set (132). This model of the theatrical performer as divested of ability to manipulate role/performer dualities is untenable in the context of late nineteenth-century popular theatrical performance: and very likely since this essay was published in 1994 Bailey has had this brought to his attention. The implicit presence of Brecht looms in this historiographical account as the teleological destination of an eventually renovated theatre practice, with the sophisticated distancing genres of popular, or indeed most pre-modernist, theatre disallowed as valid before his specific incursions into—ironically—not popular theatre but bourgeois and even residually feudal theatrical production. In a pre-modernist performer-centred theatrical practice employing direct address conventions and dependent on audience complicity with, and sophistication in reading, metatheatrical framings and scenic illusion, what is now called Brechtian splitting of the performer/character functions remained the dominant communicative mode.

Current postcolonial and feminist theorising of the act of representation has instated—or restated—the ancient sense of the "persona" as mask and the

constructed and transactional nature of the performative act as ineluctably self-foregrounding. We'd now grant the popular theatre audience considerable access to those privileged music-hall (and modernist) realms of "knowingness" about foregrounded theatrical codes: first because these were frequently the same people, and second because they weren't waiting for modernism to show them what theatre had been scandalously demonstrating for millennia. The early mass culture inhabitants' appetite appeared indefatigable in demanding of their theatre deconstructive burlesques, pantomimes and farces of the evergreen "actor of all work" or "crushed tragedian" type—performances which delighted in exposing the constructed yet compelling nature of the acts of "passing" (145) and impersonation. This "masks and faces" trope was shared with bourgeois theatre audiences (who in Australia at least were substantially the same people). Moreover, from circumtextual evidence, the overwhelming fascination of the popular press with theatre and actors—interviews, exposés, critiques, and "behind the scenes" stories—likewise indicates a mass culture thoroughly obsessed with technologies of representation and what Bailey calls the "performative exchange of identities" (8).

It seems cavalier to whinge about this single wobble in a collection which so authoritatively and—even more impressively—congenially manages and transmutes a huge array of empirical research and specialist cultural theory. It is a compliment to say of a collection such as this that the text is even better than the endnotes: this is not intended to be facetious since synthesising and ground-breaking studies are seldom accomplished with such writerly poise and lack of visible straining. Bailey is a scholar in control of his project and, appropriate to the field he loves, a great communicator creating in his reader a very knowing sense of the shared insight. Best of all he displays an enviable instinct for identifying just when the implicit—or the complicit—precisely locates something requiring elucidation through rigorous scholarly examination.

Michael Pickering

It is rather sobering to be reminded that this collection of essays has been written over a period of twenty years. I read each of them with relish when they first appeared and have admired and learnt from all of them. Their congregation between two covers offers the opportunity of assessing them as a whole, rather than piece by piece, and of considering what Bailey has brought to Victorian studies. But the span of time involved in their writing raises at least two significant issues. First, although it is conservative in orientation and slower-moving than other fields of enquiry, social history has changed appreciably in recent years and is continuing to change. Second, although his general interests are distinctive and there is a great degree of consistency in his approach and style, Bailey's own practice and thinking as a historian has clearly developed since the late 1970s, when the first two chapters of this book were initially published.

The book's introduction sketches some of the major influences on the historical study of urban popular culture and leisure, though it does little more than this and is the most unsatisfactory aspect of the book. All we are offered is a reiteration of previous judgments stretching back to the eighties and hasty accounts of some of the various contributions to cultural theory which have helped to change and reconfigure social

history—with postcolonial studies receiving a single, short and misleading sentence. This is a missed opportunity. The introduction's subtitle flags cultural studies as well as social history, but Bailey offers nothing that is new on the relation between them, nor any advance from his already over-rehearsed orientation to this fraught relation. This is at once peculiar—for Bailey has learnt a lot, in his sceptical fashion, from the now sprawling field of cultural studies—and sadly predictable, for when faced with anything too much outside their own scholarly conventions, historians tend to draw in their horns and retreat to safe territory.

For Bailey it is because social history is now in crisis that it has become exciting again. I couldn't agree more. His reflections on a historian's own involvement in what he or she writes, and on the intersubjectivities of historical actors, are considered and at times illuminating, particularly when he touches upon the ways in which his own self-formation and growing up has influenced his preoccupations and forms of approach as a professional historian. One might note for example his sly and wry take on the issue of respectability in Victorian England and his emphasis on the unsettling cultural dislocations and liberating experiential opportunities simultaneously afforded by life in the new urban milieu of that period. But the crisis of social history is in part the result of its messy and far from resolved relations with theory, which Bailey places within scare quotes just as a gung-ho poststructuralist might place the word "history." While he is forthright about his own "fitful and oblique engagement" with "theory" (8), this serves only as evasion. I find this frustrating because of the dissonances that have developed between social history and cultural studies, precisely over the period in which these essays have been hatched and nurtured into their final form. I have addressed these dissonances elsewhere in my recent book *History, Experience and Cultural Studies*. Rather than reiterate previous arguments, I want to turn to certain changes in Bailey's approach to the study of cultural forms and to the considerable achievement which these essays represent.

First, bringing these essays together reveals the ways in which Bailey has become much more attentive to gender politics without giving up his earlier concentration on questions of social class and status. This is obvious enough in the subject matter of the later essays dealing with the Victorian barmaid as a distinctive and in some ways quite subtle form of the commodification of sociability, and with representations of gender and sexuality in musical comedy, but attention to gender differences has also informed his approach to performance, reception, identity and subjectivity in the music hall. Second, Bailey's more recent work shows a greater willingness to develop concepts as analytical tools appropriate to his objects of study, rather than sceptically or, as a way of lending authority to the historical presentation, self-defensively drawing on concepts from outside the discipline. This is particularly the case with his conceptual devices of "knowingness" and "para-sexuality" as ways of grappling with the distinctive character of the Victorian music hall and late-Victorian drink trade respectively. Third, there is from the essays on Ally Sloper and Champagne Charlie onwards a more interpretive turn, a welcome recognition of the need at times to risk one's hand in unravelling the polysemic twists and turns involved in the cultural forms to which he attends, and a greater propensity to do so as he develops a sharper nose for sniffing out the inflections and nuances of cultural performance and reception in the music hall and the broader urban environment from which music hall drew its

symbolic resonance. Arguably these developments in Bailey's own practice derive from an engagement with theory which he leaves untheorised. At the same time his work derives its sense of conviction and cogency from being grounded in close attention to the evidence of his sources and to their connections with the once-lived experiences of his urban subjects. His historian's eye is always directed to the specificities of these experiences. I want to single out just one aspect of this.

There is a tendency in the study of cultural forms to focus closely on the forms themselves and to ignore or play down the processes of their production and consumption. The result so often is a cultural reading that pays only superficial or scant regard to questions of social context. It is one of the hallmarks of Bailey's work that he avoids this tendency. This is particularly commendable in relation to his attention to the reception of cultural forms. Textualism has marred many recent variants of media and cultural studies, where the opportunities for studying processes of reception are obviously much greater. Its avoidance in cultural history where such opportunities are, equally obviously, much fewer should serve to emphasise the value of attempting to develop a historical understanding of how particular groups or subcultures negotiated the cultural products they consumed and oriented themselves within the cultural milieu they frequented. Bailey has successfully engaged in reconstructions of this kind of situated reception in a number of cases, though one which I have found particularly enticing occurs in his case study of the Victorian music-hall genre of the comic swell song.

Through his concern with the cultural and historical dynamics of its reception and use, Bailey connects up the different theatrical personae of the lions comiques—from the languid upper-class fop of the Lord Dundreary type to his lower-class debasement in the counterfeit swell or what we might anachronistically call the 'wannabe' gent—to different sections of the music-hall audience. Especially compelling is his linking of the sham swell to the likes of the upstart clerk, shop man, apprentice and medical student who expressed their social aspirations in imitation of their stage heroes. The specific form of masculinity exhibited by the music-hall swell—the cocksure but unconsummated sexuality, a "sexuality of display, perhaps of provocation, but not obviously of engagement" (118)—chimed in appropriately with the involuntary abstinence enforced on such young bachelors by impecunious circumstances, sexual inhibition and the strict parental control of possible female acquaintances. Though this summary hardly does justice to the scope and subtlety of his analysis, it is through this sort of contextually sensitive reading that Bailey shows the way in which swell songs gave symbolic expression to conflictual impulses of indulgence and constraint. In turn, by relating swell songs to the different constituencies in the music-hall audience at a particular time, Bailey shows how they "exploited the tensions generated by the ambiguities and oppositions of class, status, gender and generation," and thus need to be read for the ways in which, through "a range of cues that drew the audience into active recognition of its own various social selves," they "excited a variety of cross-cutting responses" (121, 123). From here he is able to point up the frictions and oppositions beneath the consensual liberalism of the halls, and then to "a deeper tension within capitalism itself on the admissability of pleasure and consumption in a work-centred culture" (119).

This is to indicate something of the real strengths and triumphs of these essays. If they are impaired by the thoroughly mixed bag of their new introduction, with its failure of nerve and tiresomely self-styled caddishness, their qualities far outweigh this disappointment and confirm Bailey not only as a leading historian of the British music hall, but more importantly as a major contributor to our historical understanding of modern popular culture and leisure in their crucially formative phase.

Martha Vicinus

These nine essays, originally published between 1977 and 1996, represent some of the very best work in leisure studies. Bailey was a pioneer in this field at a time when nineteenth-century social history was dominated by studies of class, labour (and Labour Party) disputes, and the standard-of-living question. His was a fresh voice, demanding attention, rather like the stentorian music-hall performers that he so eloquently recreates. Over the years he has maintained his focus on the working class, but he has ranged widely, arguing that we cannot understand class solely within the confines of its traditional economic and political venues. Through a series of influential essays, now reprinted, he opened new areas of research. All touch on themes that Bailey has made his own, including the importance of "knowingness" for young men of an uncertain social class, and the high degree of "parasexuality" within the world of urban leisure. He defines knowingness as a kind of cunning knowledge of the roles necessary for survival in a world in which family ties and traditional workplace loyalties were loosening. And more recently he has argued for the importance of what he calls parasexuality, or the packaging of sexuality in places of entertainment so that it is "contained and channeled rather than fully discharged" (151).

As Editor of *Victorian Studies*, I remember accepting the first essay in this volume; I was delighted to find someone who shared my enthusiasm for the 'halls. But his 1983 essay on Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday, with wonderful illustrations of its bacchanalian hero, captivated many readers and me. We saw, perhaps for the first time, how an urban knowingness could be a form of politics. This essay still impresses with its fine sense of how comic innuendo works. Bailey has a sharp eye for the telling phrase or quotation in this and other essays. He draws our attention to Ally's choice of drink, his seaside attire, and his daughter's suavity as signs of urban knowingness. The revealing phrase, often period slang, effectively demonstrates a point. We learn for example about how the idle oldest son of a successful businessman was said to be "stretching his legs under the governor's mahogany" (15), or about the doubled-edged comment of prostitutes calling out to young men, "Who's a naughty boy, then?" (184).

Bailey's special strength is his ability to force us to reconsider historical stereotypes in regard to nineteenth-century leisure during the long nineteenth century. One essay demonstrates convincingly that the long-familiar distinction between the "rough" and the "respectable" working class is quite false. The eminently respectable skilled artisan or clerk could "go on a spree," or he could practice the art of the adaptive and situational decorum to his so-called betters. Bailey documents how respectability could be turned into "a choice of role, rather than a universal normative mode" (39), thereby providing his fellow historians with a far richer and more complex sense of

inter-class relations. Perhaps he over-emphasises skilled role-playing in his work, but his argument offers an important revision of stale binaries.

The music hall essays move beyond the tired question of whether popular culture defuses working-class political energy or embodies it. Instead Bailey focuses on how the unruly, demotic elements of performance were turned into powerful commodities through a star system. His essay on George Leybourne shows both why he was the first major male star of the music halls, and the price he—and audiences—paid. “Champagne Charlie,” who was financed by the liquor interests, was seen by his audience as the pinnacle of worldly knowingness; his nightly demonstration of the “fizz” of the man-about-town’s life, including a cork flying into the audience, was immensely popular. Bailey, through dint of hard work, has also unravelled the often confusing economics of the ‘halls, showing how entrepreneurs willingly took great risk for great rewards, packaging themselves as master-hosts of parties for which the participants paid. Rather like the eighteenth-century masquerades discussed by Terry Castle, these masters of ceremonies made paying “guests” at the smaller halls feel part of a larger community of friends.

To my mind the two most interesting essays are those that deal with the “parasexuality” of the barmaid and the final essay, calling for a consideration of the aural as an important element in urban leisure. The latter essay, an informal opening of a new subject, gathers together disparate comments about noise and most especially the noise made by crowds, whether at a sporting event, or in the ‘halls, or on the streets. Bailey reminds those fascinated with the nineteenth-century flâneur that the leisure to look also includes the power to hear and to be heard. He notes that women, expected to be silent in public places, were invariably described as hysterical if they made a noise—witness the comments made about the suffragists. I was struck by how often his upper-class commentators compare the breaking out of excessive noise with the breaking out of other matter from human orifices, including smells, defecation, and perhaps characteristically, vomiting. Bailey could have teased out the differences between noises that we voluntarily make and those that are forced upon us, most notably by industry and transportation. We need to learn more as well about the implications of quiet, which has become a class privilege.

In an urban world without carnivals, festivals and other forms of ritualised foreplay, Bailey argues, we need to recognise the importance of parasexual locales for charting the changing dynamics of heterosexual relations. For Bailey the epitome of parasexuality was the barmaid. Safely cordoned off from patrons by the waist-high bar, she cheerfully pulled a phallic pump to draw foaming beer for waiting customers who ogled her breasts. Through wit and banter individual men tried to attract her attention, showing off to their peers, and perhaps promising themselves a bit more than they would ever get. Actresses and music-hall artistes, including the late-nineteenth-century chorus girls in the popular musicals, are also examples for Bailey of glamour and titillation without fulfilment. He acutely remarks that these women served and sang to men who may have had little sexual experience. To be “knowing” could mean to be hiding ignorance.

Bailey is too good a historian to forget the long hours, discipline and drudgery of these glamorous occupations, but he tends to minimise the sexual dangers faced by those who sang such lines as “It’s silly to be chilly” and “Naughty but nice.” Mary

Spongberg and other revisionist historians have called into question some of Bailey's assumptions. His focus on successful role-playing gives rather more autonomy to participants than they may have had. Moreover he seems to assume that most young men were unwilling or unable to find naughty girls, and therefore were forced to prefer parosexuality over the "real thing." But sufficient documentary evidence exists to show a much more mixed picture. Feminist historians have shown the very real dangers for example to women of supplementing one's meagre earnings behind the bar with a few sexual favours.

Bailey also remains impervious to, or perhaps bored by, one of the greatest sources of nineteenth-century working-class leisure, church attendance. Even if millions preferred the pub and music hall, thousands attended church services, following the star religious speakers with the same avidity that their peers attended their favourite music-hall performers. Many shopped around each Sunday, testing the speaking skills of different ministers; good entertainment value meant a sermon of at least an hour. Even if Bailey does not want to investigate these areas of leisure, they need to be mentioned in any consideration of popular urban performances. An unsophisticated Christian might feel quite "knowing" about city life after hearing a famous preacher or participating in the local YMCA. The full range of urban leisure is not discussed in this book.

Bailey at times seems to celebrate uncritically the rowdy drinking classes. For example he is disdainful of the second generation of music-hall stars in comparison with those of the 1860s and 70s. These swilling "swells" and the performers who parodied them are, for him, truer exponents of demotic leisure than the better-remembered later generation. Rather like business historians who love the driven and hard-driving pioneers more than those who lived within the rules and routines of capitalism, Bailey prefers the entrepreneurs who made and lost fortunes on gambling, speculation and entertainment to those who ran a good business. In the process he falls into the very problem that he criticises in other historians of popular culture: the originary moments are always best, to be followed by a decline into money-grubbing capitalism and straitlaced commodification. Bailey's celebration of urban popular culture is tinged with sentimentality. But I am happy to accept his nostalgia as a small price to pay for such inventive, compulsively readable history. This volume gives us a wonderful complement of fresh, creative, well-researched essays; students and colleagues will be borrowing and adapting his ideas and references for years to come.

Response

Peter Bailey

This has been like waiting for one's end of term report card or, a headier fantasy, sitting in Sardi's waiting for the early edition of the *New York Times* and the make or break notice of the show. Fantasy indeed, since the average academic has to be resigned to a much more delayed and fitful critical response, living or dying in the half light rather than the spotlight. But while not quite Sardi's, the review forum does telescope the usual process, delivering a concentrated jolt of attention while allowing the author the singular opportunity of a simultaneous public response. So here I find myself pondering a relative avalanche of critical judgment pronouncing my oeuvre variously awesome,

tiresome, no more than commonsensical, yet also inventive and even kinky—a rich range of cues for both basking and bitching. Not that I need resort to the latter, for overall these are generous critiques whose reservations are well measured and well taken.

There is a welcome recognition from all four contributors of the importance of leisure and popular culture on the scholarly agenda at large and for Victorian studies in particular. It is this sector in this era that generates the new sites and institutions that advance capitalism's strategic shift into consumerism and provide the prime settings for the construction of new forms of modern identity, consciousness and lifestyle, both personal and collective. Though from different specialties, the reviewers appreciate the general thrust of these essays which seek to combine newer theoretical modes with the historian's traditionally fine-grained attention to the sources. Like many of us I have been trying to accomplish the imaginative theoretical leap while keeping my empirical nose to the ground, an obviously fraught exercise. But for Michael Pickering I neither leap high enough nor far enough, succumbing to a "failure of nerve" in the brief formal excursus into theory offered in the introduction. I am genuinely sorry to disappoint him, for I respect his own venturesome work in reaching for a more fruitful liaison between theory-shy historians and the history-shy cultural studies crowd. In its treatment of theory the introduction was conceived as a succinct and accessible primer for students and non-specialists. The note on postcolonialism is ill-informed (I writhe in contrition) but otherwise, as I've learned from early consumer reports, it seems to work well enough. The mock pillorying of "theory" is a nervous tic left over from older intellectual skirmishes or perhaps a deeper sign of petty bourgeois insecurity that produces the defensive jokiness that Pickering finds irritating but others find, well, "entertaining." Though this is partly a matter of personal style it does raise more general questions of language and address in contemporary scholarship.

It is doubly ironic that while the various postwhateverisms have made language a deeply suspect medium and have urged more playful modalities the new scholarship remains immovably wedded to derivatives of the "plain prose style" of the scientific revolution (if perhaps not always plain enough). The need for other voices would seem to be particularly insistent in writing of popular culture and performance where the student can hardly be unaware of the painful incongruence between the sombre constraints of scholarly critspeak and the vulgar élan of its historical subjects. Thus Patrick Brantlinger feels impelled to bow out of his review with a cockney flourish. I'm not sure that this is the answer (in any case, Pat, don't give up your day job) but it does point to a far from frivolous question. "Did Foucault and Althusser Ever Play the London Palladium?" was how I tried to pose this question in the original title of one of the articles in the collection, going on to project what such an act might have been like had they done so; what was conceived as a suggestive heuristic device was disallowed as vulgar and offensive. Exactly! In similarly conservative terms, the preferred title for the book—*Champagne Charlie Meets the Barmaid*—was vetoed by the present publisher.

A recent reassessment of Harold Wilson, the postwar British prime minister, likens his style to a mix of Max Miller (a latterday music-hall star) and a Nonconformist preacher, which affords a connection with Martha Vicinus's strictures at my disregard of religion and the churches as a significant leisure site. I have written elsewhere in

acknowledgment of this important function but am prompted to add that, as Wilson demonstrated, church and music hall could be complementary as much as separate worlds whose distinctive rhetorics might be merged in a creative *mésalliance*. (Telling detail: "patter," the word given to the comedian's running line of comic chat between songs, derives from *paternoster*.) The amalgam was one of several such hybrid modes that enlivened popular culture and could be exploited not only to comic but to political effect.

Long reviled in the Victorian era as a monstrous corruption of popular taste (witness Cecil Sharp's folkloric recoil), music hall was by the interwar years being celebrated as a quintessentially English institution, its heyday forever receding. My treatment of Champagne Charlie may, as Vicinus suggests, be coloured with a similar retrospective sentimentality but I would not want to be thought disdainful of later performers. How could one dare disdain Marie Lloyd for example, even at a distance? But then "Our Marie" might be an unfortunate test case for, as Veronica Kelly keenly susses out, my take on gender stops short of a satisfactory reconstruction of the meanings of performance for women. I hope this won't sound like predictable blokeish apologetics to say that for subjects such as barmaids and chorus girls this was less a blindness of intention than a problem of evidence which might have been alleviated by more imaginative inferences. (Entry on report card: "Must try harder.") As it stands my representation of this group seems to Vicinus to award them too great a degree of autonomy and security in the social and sexual *melée* of the big city. I accept this. I think it follows not from a disregard of feminist historiography but from the tendency to overcorrect in favour of subaltern agency in general that is a persistent strand in post-Thompsonian British social history. This reading can seem overfull of men and women successfully "making" their own culture, a gutsy accolade that may often be too optimistic. On the other hand there is an emerging body of evidence and interpretation that greatly qualifies Janet Wolff's denial of the woman as *flâneur* or urban adventurer. And I'm reminded of Foucault's suggestion that modesty was a woman's form of (non)knowingness. Random thoughts on a challenging issue. . . .

Kelly deflates my own claims to a reflexive knowingness by identifying a suppressed postcolonial alter ego that I shall have to learn to acknowledge and exploit, not least because she suggests how instructive this perspective can be in providing further examples of the dynamic hybridity of popular cultural formation and its performative component. The Tichborne Claimant offers one obvious specimen, showing how a settler society offered wide open opportunities for the construction of a wholly new persona; that the Claimant went on to be a hugely popular turn on the British halls also demonstrates the popular relish for the always potentially subversive artifices of the performing self. As Kelly suggests, I have already been reproached for representing the collusive dialectic of the performer/audience relationship as evidence of a deeper level of engagement in the halls than in the contemporary theatre. I stand corrected: not only because there was a common audience for both, but because on similar grounds to those advanced by Kelly I would now argue for a more broadly deployed "popular modernism" articulated in the theatre, music hall and popular press of the *fin de siècle*. This was a dynamic complement to the aesthetic "high" modernism of the *avant garde*, more alert to the codes and protocols that translated into the effective negotiation of the dramas of everyday life. Popular modernism was the consumer's

selective appropriation of the often delusive product of the new culture industries and what Adorno called “the sly naiveté” of their entrepreneurs.

As Brantlinger points out, advertising was a significant element in the new commercial amalgam, one that together with much else in popular culture needs further critical explication. Certainly late-nineteenth-century advertising was crucial in producing a new rationale of pleasure which displaced the moralised prescriptions of “rational recreation” with a more overt and unconditional celebration of “fun” and the “good time.” This discourse revalidated leisure as the consumer’s entitlement rather than the worker’s reward. Well before 1914 the new ideology was borrowing extensively from American popular forms in song, dance and showbiz vernacular. This transatlantic traffic—in both directions—also needs attention in any new research agenda. In general, historical scholarship on popular culture has been too parochial and would benefit from further cross-cultural perspectives. And as Brantlinger and Vicinus recognise, changes in popular culture have profound if elusive implications for mass politics and the interpellation of the subject as citizen as well as consumer. Pickering is right that cracking open the multiple ramifications of popular culture requires more incisive theoretical applications, though the historical landscape needs animating with real people as well as concepts.
