

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 admissibility 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