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**"MATRONS, MAIDENS AND MAGDALENES": WOMEN'S
PATRONAGE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY LONDON MUSIC HALLS**

by

by Laura J. King

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1989

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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of
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ABSTRACT

Current historical inquiry leaves the impression that music halls were essentially a male domain. It is the objective of this thesis to identify the presence of women within the halls and to discuss their experiences in them. It will be argued that female patronage of music halls was an integral factor in how the halls were operated and the kinds of entertainment that were performed on the stage. Married women, single women and prostitutes came to the halls under different economic circumstances, but their sexual status was always measured in relation to men. The appeal of the halls, however, was not homogeneous, and the entertainment both reflected and responded to the diversity in women's lives.

This inquiry endeavors to "turn up the house lights" and look at the variety of women who came to London's music halls in the Victorian and Edwardian period. To this end, a wide range of primary sources will be examined, including the sociological works of men such as Henry Mayhew, parliamentary proceedings, newspaper reports, pictorial evidence as well as the music hall lyrics themselves. Our focus will be on the theme of "universal friendship" and the carnivalesque or "world turned upside down " character of women's position within the halls. The halls will also be seen as a site or recreational "feasting" and "consumption."

This work will begin with a brief look at how, where, when and why women came to the music halls. It will then seek to debunk the "Morton Myth" that designates Charles Morton as the "Father of the Halls" and instigator of female patronage. Chapter Two looks

at the presence of married women in the halls, and the economic and social factors that determined their leisure activities. Chapter Three focuses on the "Girl of the Period" and the appeal of the music hall for her. She inspired sexual tension in her capacity as an "available" female, both as an audience member and in her representation in song. Chapter Four enlarges upon the sexual availability of women in music halls by looking at the prostitute. As a social setting, the music hall afforded opportunities for both "business and pleasure." The presence of prostitutes became a licensing liability as moral reformers attempted to "clean up the halls" as part of their battle to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts which regulated prostitution. In summary, women's patronage had a profound effect on the popularity, proliferation, and the prosperity of music halls.

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Dedicated to the memory of Jo King and Dagny Hansen.

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Music Hall in its inception was meant for women as much as for men, but it became a masculine preserve. Later of course, the women got back, for it is impossible to keep them out of anything, even if one wanted to. The Music Hall was perhaps the first masculine preserve to have its walls stormed and its defences were weak because there were so many women performers and so many women of the highest respectability too, who did not consider themselves "ladies," as the word was understood then, and who did not want to be considered "ladies" either. They wanted to go to Music Hall and they did.

- **W. MacQueen Pope, *The Melody Lingers On* (1950), p. 9.**

PREFACE

The music hall is silent. The flare of the gas jets no longer illuminate the tawdry backroom additions of pubs and taverns turned palaces of variety. The playbills have been long plastered over, and the penny song sheets have slipped along the gutters along with the moonlight mission invitations. The audience has gone home, and the doors to the halls have been boarded up.

And yet if those same doors were reopened, who would we find there? Current historical inquiries leave the distinct impression that the world of music hall was essentially a male dominion: a place of entertainment and recreation that grew out of existing male leisure patterns that were separate from those of women. It is the objective of this thesis to locate the presence of women within the halls, and to discuss their experiences. It will be argued that female patronage of music halls was an integral factor in how the music halls were operated and the kinds of entertainment that were performed on the stage. Married and single women came to the halls under different circumstances, as did the prostitute, contingent on their sexual status in relation to men. The appeal of the halls for women, moreover, was not homogeneous, and the entertainment both reflected and responded to the diversity of their lives. This inquiry endeavours to "turn up the house lights" and look at these women who came to London's music halls in the Victorian and Edwardian period; they can no longer be left in silence and historical obscurity.

CHAPTER 1

A MALE MUNDUS?: AN INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN IN MUSIC HALLS

Social historians of nineteenth-century British leisure activities have only recently accorded the music hall any cultural significance. Those exegeses of music hall that have been undertaken tend to perceive music hall as an inherently working class phenomenon that was gradually annexed by the middle class, or so social control theorists would have us believe. Class considerations have dominated the historiography, with little attention being paid to gender. Besides reducing music hall to a political or economic construction or a functionalist *deus ex machina*, these methodological approaches have denied women a role in the formation of popular culture.

Music hall came to symbolize the amusements of "the people" which incorporated all classes and both sexes. Patrick Joyce, in *Visions of the People, Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914*, has addressed the limitations that a class-based analysis creates. The economic basis of class provides a sense of social exclusion and connotes conflict, whereas "populism" points to a set of discourses and identities which are "extra-economic in character, and inclusive and universalizing in their social remit ... instead of conflict ... are notions of social justice and social reconciliation."¹ While the "working classes" were predominant in music hall audiences, Peter Bailey has noted in "Making Sense of Music Hall" that they "constituted a different and more volatile collectivity, dissolving and

¹ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People, Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 11.

recomposing as members of other groups by nationality, age, gender and stratum as invoked in performance."² In 1895, Charles Douglas Stuart and A.J. Park published a historical review of the music hall, and commented that within the "temple of Terpsichore" could often be found the ribald song and the obscene jest of vulgar comedy, but they concluded "the same might be said of the stage of the Restoration"³ J.S. Bratton has made a similar observation in her assessment of how different songs addressed different segments of the audience, which, "like the best Restoration prologues ... might speak line and line about to each part of the house, setting them laughing at each other, calling on the powerful emotional force of their rivalries and antagonisms to reinforce a climactic endorsement of the song and the singer himself."⁴ As far as women were concerned, there were working class patrons as well as petit-bourgeois, middle and upper class women who made their way to the halls for the entertainments that spoke to them. What is important to this discussion, as Joyce puts it, "was the right to enter into the kingdom of leisure in which everyone was equal ... predicated upon the idea of the good time, upon new versions of bonhomie and liberality that purported to speak directly to the people"⁵ The presence of women within

² Peter Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," Music Hall, The Business of Pleasure, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. xvii.

³ Charles Douglas Stuart and A.J. Park, The Variety Stage, A History of the Music Halls from the Earliest Period to the Present Time (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), p. 239.

⁴ J.S. Bratton, "Introduction," Music Hall, Performance and Style, ed. J.S. Bratton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. xii.

⁵ Joyce, pp. 308-09.

this "kingdom" was an integral factor in the collective construction of the "good time." Anthony Caputi, in *Buffo, The Genius of Vulgar Comedy*, has seen how this "agreeable sense of well-being" emanated from the traditions of the vulgus or folk origins of vulgar comedy⁶ which were a staple of music hall entertainments. The pre-industrial popular locus of the good time was Carnival, and Bailey has suggested that the feast and the carnivalesque manifested themselves in the music hall as a "site and occasion for liberality, profusion and plenitude, however bogus"⁷ In this context, the upside down world of music hall held special attraction for women by inverting gender and class restrictions imposed on them outside of the halls.

This thesis attempts to incorporate these kinds of approaches in the study of women's patronage of the halls. Peter Bailey, at the forefront of music hall historiography, has commented in *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* that one of the most prevalent "sins of omission" is the neglect of women in the study of popular culture. While lamenting the difficulties that surround the recovery of the "private, personal and informal," he suggests that social historians could "demarginalize" women by making more effective use of existing sources. This inquiry attempts to take up the gauntlet, however tenuously. Bailey contends that it was a special function of music halls to bridge the "public and private divide. Such sittings, of course, gave employment as much as leisure to women, as barmaids, waitresses,

⁶ Anthony Caputi, *Buffo, The Genius of Vulgar Comedy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), p. 16.

⁷ Bailey, p. xviii.

entertainers and prostitutes, but they were important sites for the construction of gender and sexuality and social laboratories for the rehearsal of gender roles and relationships still underworked in scholarship."⁸

A variety of primary sources must be re-examined if we are to locate women in the music hall. To this end, the sociological inquiries of such men as Henry Mayhew, William Acton and Charles Booth need to be investigated as well as the works of moral reformers such as J. Ewing Ritchie and Edward Thomas. Moreover, first hand accounts written by the middle class *literati* need to be reviewed in addition to contemporary newspaper and periodical accounts of music halls. Parliamentary papers, select committee reports and local government proceedings give us "official" data on music halls, although more heuristic methods must be employed when interpreting music hall lyrics and pictorial evidence.

In order to avoid broad generalizations, certain distinctions need to be made between the types of music halls that existed in nineteenth century London. In an 1891 article for *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, F. Anstey organized music halls into four classes: "first, the aristocratic variety theatre of the West End, chiefly found in the immediate neighbourhood of Leicester Square; then the smaller and less aristocratic West End halls; next the large bourgeois music halls of the less fashionable parts and in the suburbs; last the minor music

⁸ Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 17.F.

halls of the poor and squalid districts."⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, the first two categories will be referred to as "West End" music halls, while the latter two categories will be termed "East End" music halls, although this specification does include the working class halls of North and South London. Of the 347 halls that were licensed in 1878, only nine could claim first and second class status.¹⁰

⁹ Anstey, Harper's Monthly Magazine, Vol. 91, (1891), p. 190. As quoted in Dagmar Hoher, "The Composition of Music Hall Audience, 1850-1900", Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 75.

The components of these districts are as follows:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Kensington	Marylebone	St. Giles	Shoreditch	St. Saviour's
Chelsea	Hampstead	Strand	Bethnal Green	St. Olave's
St. George's	St. Pancras	Holborn	Whitechapel	Bermondsey
Hanover Sq.	Islington	Clerkenwell	St. George's	St. George's S.
Westminster	Hackney	St. Luke's	in-the-East	Newington
St. James's		East London	Stepney	Lambeth
		West London	Mile End	Wandsworth
		London City	Poplar	Camberwell
		St. Martin's		Rotherhithe
				Greenwich
				Lewisham

¹⁰ D.F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974), p. 32.

Middlesex Magistrates licensed 347 halls holding 136,700 in 1878.
 3 first class: 15,000 - 20,000
 6 second class: 2,000 - 3,000
 13 third class: 800 - 1,500
 53 fourth class: 300 - 700
 272 smaller public house concert rooms and harmonics.

Surrey Magistrates licensed 61 music halls holding 32,800 south of the Thames, and even the City of London licensed 6 halls holding 6,400.

This thesis opens with a discussion of how, where, when and why women came to the music halls. At the same time, the "Morton Myth" that designated Charles Morton as the "father of the halls" and the paternal benefactor of women's admission to the "first" music hall, the Canterbury, is called into question. Chapter Two will look at the presence of married women in the halls, as well as the economic and social factors that determined their leisure activities. Music hall lyric hermeneutics are employed to uncover how married women were represented on stage and how this reflected, responded to or rejected their putative experience. Chapter Three focuses on the "Girl of the Period" and the appeal of the music hall for her. The working girl had more economic and social independence than her married counterpart, but here too, the music hall provided a source of recreation and socialization that was unique. She inspired sexual tension in her capacity as an available female, both as an audience member and in her representation in song. Chapter Four enlarges upon the sexual availability of women in music hall by looking at the prostitute. As a social setting that abetted solicitation, the music hall afforded the professional prostitute both "business and pleasure." A distinction is made between the lifestyle that a prostitute could enjoy versus that of her "legitimate" sister, and the problems that her presence in the halls posed. Specifically, it will be asserted that the licensing pressures that music hall proprietors increasingly faced were due in large part to the surveillance placed on women's patronage of the halls, of which the prostitute was the most obvious target. These actions must be placed in context with Britain's experiment in regulated prostitution under the Contagious Diseases Acts and the consequent moral debate that erupted in Parliament and spilled over into the operation of the halls. In the final analysis, women's

patronage of the halls had a profound effect on their history as "shrines to popular culture" or (in the eyes of some contemporaries) as "temples of vice."

* * * * *

STORMING THE CANTERBURY

Soon after Charles Morton purchased the Canterbury Arms in 1849 he established a Club Room for Harmonic Meetings, held on Monday and Saturday evenings for "men only." This distinguished the Club Room from pubs, which ordinarily were open to both sexes. Morton was following in the tradition of the song-and-supper rooms that catered to the late night tastes of London's bohemian "man-about-town"; here was a working and lower middle-class version for his patrons. With Morton's "experimental" Ladies' Night, held on Thursdays, it would seem that he had single-handedly provided women with their first taste of equal leisure opportunities. And so the myth goes: hen-pecked husbands capitulated to their wives' harangues and petitioned Morton for their inclusion in the nightly entertainments, and Morton, in a purely magnanimous gesture to his male patrons, let down the barricades and admitted the "sans culotte." The success of this venture overturned the "men only" injunction and led to the building of a one-storied hall in 1851: the modern music hall was born and women had "stormed" the ramparts - a revolutionary moment, or so the historiography would lead us to believe.

What has been omitted from the story is just as informative as the mythology itself.* It begs the question of where working-class women had gone for leisure and social activity prior to 1851? It further implies that there was something truly revolutionary about admitting women into this "masculine preserve" of public entertainment. The pubs, singing

* Historians such as Colin MacInnes, W. MacQueen Pope, R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, D.F. Cheshire, Christopher Pulling and Maurice Willson Disher pay little attention to women in music halls. See Bibliography.

saloons, gin palaces and pleasure gardens did not exclude women, unlike the song-and-supper clubs such as the Cider Cellars and the Coal Hole, established in the 1820s, along with the infamous Evans'. These haunts attracted a much different clientele which was not predominantly working-class. E.L. Blanshard, Hook, Sheridan, Thackeray, Lord Exmouth and Monk Lewis counted themselves as members of Evans's. Martha Vicinus has outlined the distinct differences between these song-and-supper rooms and working-class establishments that preceded the new music hall. In *The Industrial Muse*, she has noted that: "Before the opening of the halls proper, the song-and-supper clubs had been for men only. Working women, however, had long attended the tavern free-and-easies...the most direct and important ancestors of the halls."¹ She further argues: "Working-class couples throughout England crowded into taverns on Saturday nights to hear the latest singers; it was only a matter of time before an entrepreneur built a separate hall and offered nightly entertainment."² Mander and Mitchenson in *British Music Hall* corroborate this observation: "The more gentlemanly Bohemian 'Man-about-Town' gradually deserted the Tavern for the exclusively male Song and Supper Rooms which began to appear in the 1830s, leaving the *mixed* working-class audience to frequent the taverns, which sank lower in reputation" (my emphasis).³ In another attempt to debunk the "Morton myth," Harold Scott has commented in *The Early Doors* that: "Women of perfect respectability had for years past found their way to the Rotunda, the Surrey, the Doctor Johnson, Wilton's and

¹ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse, A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), p. 240.

² Ibid.

³ R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, *British Music Hall* (London, 1965, second edition, 1974), p. 10.

elsewhere, to say nothing of the taverns with gardens attached to them from which they had never been absent."⁴ However, W. MacQueen-Pope has maintained that "the clientele of the early tavern halls like the Dr Johnson, and all of its rivals, was exclusively masculine."⁵ An illustration from 1825 does indeed confirm the presence of women as members of the audience and as performers at the Rotunda, Vauxhall (see Appendix 1.1). In *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens related that a Miss Ivins and her party attended the Rotunda around 1836.⁶ It is worth noting that even the anti-feminist holdouts such as the Cider Cellars, Coal Hole and Evans's did eventually admit women on a restricted basis when their popularity was in decline, although MacQueen-Pope states that the Song and Supper Saloon died as a result of the introduction of the "feminine element."⁷ In 1884, the actor Edmund Yates, in his *Recollections and Experiences*, stated that Evan's lost favour because of "the introduction of music-halls, where women formed the larger part of the audience"⁸

Not only did contemporary writers attest to the presence of women in music halls; pictorial and program evidence also supports the conclusions drawn by Vicinus and Scott, regarding the ongoing patronage of women in the early tavern music hall. The picture of The Old Drury Tavern, Bridges Street, Strand, from 1848 shows the presence of women as

⁴ Harold Scott, The Early Doors (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1946), p. 140.

⁵ MacQueen-Pope, p. 29.

⁶ Scott, p. 66.

⁷ MacQueen-Pope, . 29.

⁸ As quoted in D.F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974), p. 19.

well as Cooper's Concert Room, the Green Gate Tavern. The Mogul Saloon from 1847 (becoming the Middlesex Music Hall in 1851), Wilton's Music Hall from 1850 (formerly the Old Mahogany Bar), the Grapes Grand Harmonic Hall of 1846 (later known as the Surrey and Winchester Music Hall) are but a few examples (see Appendices 1.2 - 1.3). The Grapes Inn in Southwark, Scott tells us, drew its audiences primarily from the neighbourhood and was run along respectable lines. With its separation of the public bars from the auditorium, it shows itself as an early example of a rendezvous for a bourgeois audience of both sexes.⁹ Moreover, Richard Preece of the Grapes was the first to use the term "Music Hall" when his premises became the Surrey Music Hall in November 1848.¹⁰ The Royal Eagle and Grecian Saloon designated special prices for ladies and children, as the program indicates (see Appendix 1.4). These are but a few examples of the forerunners to the Canterbury that catered to both men and women of the working and lower middle-classes.

It would be misleading, however, to give the impression that the new music hall grew out of a process of "natural selection," namely the pothouse to palace progression. There were indeed other mitigating factors that figure into the process, as Penny Summerfield has indicated. She has noted that the authorities use of licensing laws factored into the success or failure of the establishments that pre-dated the music hall.¹¹ The Theatre Act of 1843 removed the monopoly of drama from the patent theatres, which afforded the saloons the

⁹ Scott, p. 55.

¹⁰ Mander and Mitchenson, p. 13.

¹¹ Penelope Summerfield, "The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of Music Hall in London," Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914, eds. Eileen and Stephen Yeo (Brighton: Harvester Press Ltd., 1987), p. 216.

opportunity of becoming legitimate theatres licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, but without the benefit of selling alcoholic refreshments in the auditorium, or becoming a Tavern Concert Room with a drinking license, but without the right of reproducing stage plays. While many venues openly disregarded licensing restrictions, many advertised their new status, as can be seen in the Surrey Music Hall program (see Appendix 1.5). Of the saloon theatre variety, one of the earliest examples was the Eagle Tavern with its Grecian Saloon.¹² An act of 1872 prohibited licensed public entertainment after 12:30; this signalled the demise of such late night haunts as Evans's, more so than their decision to admit women in the late 1860s.

The appearance of women in the music halls can be seen as the last triumph in their quest to break the "men only" restrictions of song and supper rooms, or as a gradual migration from taverns, singing saloons, free-and-easies and pleasure gardens. It might also seem at first glance that women's patronage of music halls owed something to the inimitable Charles Morton. Dubbed as "Father of the Halls" by Clement Scott (a title reiterated by Chance Newton and George R. Sims) Morton's motives are worthy of further inquiry, even though, as we have seen, the Canterbury was not the first "real" music hall. But perhaps Morton was the first "real" music hall entrepreneur, soon to be joined by the likes of William Holland and E.T. Smith. After all, Morton helped to perpetuate his own mythological contributions to music hall with his adept use of publicity. He issued a rather

¹² Scott, p. 66. Marie Lloyd's father worked as a waiter at the Grecian. She gave her first performance there on May 9, 1885 under the name Bella Delmere. See Daniel Farson, Marie Lloyd and Music Hall (London: Tom Stacy Ltd., 1972), p. 38.

self-aggrandizing pamphlet which outlined the reasons for his "innovative" decision to admit women:

And now a word to his patronesses. Perhaps they do not reflect on the service he has done them in establishing the Canterbury Hall; but this question he would be bold enough to ask them. When husbands, who now frequent the Canterbury Hall, used to tell their wives that 'they were going to hear a song,' or 'had been to hear a song'... [H]ad the poor wives the slightest inkling as to where their truant spouses were going or had been? Did not the announcement of an intention of 'hearing a song' too often ring the knell of many an evening's enjoyment to the poor woman sitting at home? Need husbands be mysterious, or wives suspicious any longer?...It is a disgrace to English civilization that toiling wives and sisters should be circumscribed in their enjoyments. There is the familiar canine prohibition, 'no dogs admitted.' 'No ladies admitted' has been the chivalrous phrase in which English men of the nineteenth century exclude the gentler sex from rational and refining recreations."¹³

Morton had championed the socially disenfranchised - "poor wives" - like none other, elevating them above their canine counterparts. He could no longer be named as a willing correspondent in any domestic disputes that arose out of the errant husband's presence at the Canterbury. Such nobility of purpose and genuine altruism becomes a little suspect with Chance Newton's comment that when the Canterbury threatened to be crowded with female visitors which hurt the sale of alcohol, Morton would temporarily put up the "House Full" boards in order to regain the "wet money."¹⁴ MacQueen-Pope has suggested that Morton had intended to admit women from the very beginning, but with the decrease in the "wet money" he was justified in charging an entry admission to all his patrons.¹⁵ The implication (seemingly shared by both Morton and MacQueen-Pope) was that the wives of the Canterbury patrons saw the "men only" rule "like most women, [and] regarded rules as

¹³ Charles Morton, as quoted in Scott, p. 139.

¹⁴ H. Chance Newton, as quoted in Scott, p. 139.

¹⁵ MacQueen-Pope, p. 55.

something to be broken as desired."¹⁶ Morton had indeed found his ticket to success in "breaking the rules" with the inclusion of women at the Canterbury music hall. Moreover, his employment of female artists also figured into his success. S. Theodore Felstead has stated in *The Stars Who Made the Halls* that the talents of Emily Soldene ("a handsome girl with a soprano voice") could be regarded as one of the people who made Charles Morton's fortune.¹⁷ When Morton ventured into the fashionable West End and built his "Versailles," the Oxford, in 1861, women "marched in"; gender and class "rules" were now an anachronism, and with the meeting of east and west, Morton was determined to remain on the "cutting edge" of music hall operation, refusing to fall behind the "innovations" inaugurated in the West End by his rivals at the Royal Holborn and the Alhambra. His mythological status was to continue in the *haut monde* quarters of London.

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¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ S. Theodore Felstead, *The Stars Who Made the Halls* (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1946), p. 24.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRESENCE OF MARRIED WOMEN IN MUSIC HALLS

"With wives there came the first lessons in courtesy."¹

(Contemporary journalist, Matthew Browne)

The presence of women in music halls was problematic for many contemporary commentators. The theatre style seating and ticket prices allowed for the different classes to "rub elbows," but it also meant that all women, married or single, working-class or bourgeois, young or old, could enter the halls so long as they had a ticket. As Peter Bailey has pointed out: "The rhetoric of music hall friendship was all-inclusive, promising universal membership...Of particular importance to the halls in this respect was that friendship included women."² J.S. Bratton has suggested that this element of friendship could denote a sexually disinterested protective function.³ The presence of the "wife", who was sexually accounted for, and her family, did help diffuse sexual tensions that women in public presented. However, her "respectability" was synonymous with her "unavailability." Although single women outnumbered wives and mothers in music halls, wives were officially

¹ Matthew Browne, as quoted in Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 165.

² Peter Bailey, "A Community of Friends: Business and Good Fellowship in London Music Hall Management, 1860-1885," Music Hall, The Business of Pleasure, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 48.

³ J.S. Bratton, as quoted in *ibid.*

more welcome than women on their own who were seen as "potential prostitutes."⁴ All women were subject to surveillance by proprietors, police, license inspectors, moral reformers, journalists and the middle-class *literati*, in addition to the single young men, the bourgeois *bon vivant* or the "masher," that sought out female companionship for a "good time" in the halls. Max Beerbohm, one of the most affectionate chroniclers of the wonderfully vulgar world of the music hall, has noted that this "good time...is of a wholly sexual order."⁵

Married women were seen as an antidote to libidinous behaviour; a control on their husband's social and drinking activity as well as chaperones for their unmarried daughters and sons. J. Ewing Ritchie, a staunch enemy of the halls, noted in *The Night Side of London*, that the majority of the audience was composed of "respectable mechanics, or small tradesmen with their wives and daughters and sweethearts...Now and then you see a midshipman, or a few fast clerks and warehousemen..."⁶ He further commented that "The presence of the ladies has also a beneficial effect; I see no indication of intoxication, and certainly none are outrageously shabby or ill-behaved."⁷ The increasing emphasis that was placed on attracting family audiences was an attempt to displace sexuality in the music hall in order to protect licenses and avoid moral censure from the critics of the halls. Dagmar

⁴ Penelope Summerfield, "Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall, 1870-1914," *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 23.

⁵ Max Beerbohm, "At the Gaiety," *Around Theatres* Vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1924), p. 455.

⁶ J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Night Side of London* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1869).

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 232.

Hoher, in "The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850 - 1900" has observed how the Parliamentary Reports on the halls and the London licensing sessions are preoccupied with the sexual status of women in the halls. Music hall owners and operators responded to these inquiries by diverting attention to the immensely beneficial presence of wives since the days of Charles Morton and the Canterbury.⁸ The LCC report of 1902 demonstrates the success that these licensing bodies felt they had of cleaning up the halls of sexually dangerous single women:

Who has brought that family public to the music hall? The County Council. What is it that attracted the father, mother, cousin, sister, and aunt? It is because we have said that music halls and theatres should be so decently-conducted, and that they should be so proper for the public, profitable for the employer; because we dare to be Daniels, we dare to repress vulgarity - and to check indecency, and will not allow the music hall to resemble the ante-chamber to a brothel, or the annex to a vulgar public-house.⁹

The Morton myth and the potential prostitute parable were firmly entrenched, as "The Times" of 24 Jan 1910 verifies:

⁸ Dagmar Hoher, "The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850-1900," Music Hall, The Business of Pleasure, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 74.

⁹ George Sims, Theatres and Music Hall Committee of the London County Council (THMC) Palace Theatre of Varieties, 1888-1903, attached to the report of licensing discussion 28 November 1902. As quoted in Susan Pennybacker, "It was not what she said but the way in which she said it': The London County Council and the Music Halls," Music Hall, The Business of Pleasure, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 118.

Today, in place of the obscure supper-room or the hall attached to the tavern, we have a large number of comfortable, handsome buildings...[and] in place of an audience of men only, or men accompanied by the least creditable of their female acquaintance, we see among the audience the family¹⁰

The sanctification of the family -- predicated on the desexualization of the wife and her economic dependence on her husband -- helped to further marginalize her unlike the single "working girl." At the Oxbridge, Greenwood observed the stalls full of champagne-swilling men-about-town and their painted ladies, but awarded greater significance to the more numerous complement of working men and their families in the 6d. seats in the body of the hall.¹¹ Summerfield states that the emphasis on the family audience served to reinforce the notion that "women accompanied by husbands were more officially welcome than women on their own, who were suspected of offering themselves for hire..."¹² Hoher has observed how a woman's sexual status has preoccupied both contemporary and modern commentators documenting the evolution of music halls. She writes: "It is noteworthy that respectable single unaccompanied women hardly ever figure in ... music hall historiography - despite the fact that they formed ... a considerable part of the music hall audience."¹³ A subsequent chapter of this thesis will attempt to take some initial steps in redressing this historical imbalance.

¹⁰ The Times, 24 January 1910, as quoted in Hoher, p. 73.

¹¹ Greenwood, as quoted in Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London : Methuen, 1987), p. 163.

¹² Summerfield, p. 24.

¹³ Hoher, pp. 75-76.

What remains to be seen is the role that music hall played in married women's everyday lives, ranging from its priority level in the family budget, to the realities of their "sanctified" union, and whether or not music hall entertainment reflected or mediated their experience. The same attention must be then directed to the lives of single women, respectable or otherwise, and how the music halls figured into their lives.

* * * * *

"A Night Out for a Shilling"

The gallery and the pit were the preserve of the working classes in the early suburban halls and the later metropolitan venues. Prices did not vary drastically from the days of the tavern music halls and pleasure gardens to the hey-day of the "grand" halls in the 1880s and 90s. A good example of the tavern music hall is the Royal Eagle, which listed its admission prices as 1s. for ladies and gentlemen, children 6d., lower stall and upper saloon seat, gentlemen 1s.(including refreshment ticket), ladies and children, 6d.¹⁴ The Grecian program noted that children in arms cannot be admitted unless they are paid for, and that parties that paid for the saloon could have pass checks to the upper stalls and seats on payment of 6d. Family stalls, holding eight to twelve persons could also be taken (see

¹⁴ Harold Scott, The Early Doors (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1946), p. 129.

Appendix 1.4).¹⁵ The Yorkshire Stingo, established in 1835, charged for the upper saloon 1s. for gents and 6d. for ladies and children.¹⁶

In his study of the Edwardian working class, Standish Meacham gives the example of how a workman who had won the football pool could "indulge his wife in an evening at the local music hall. 'A night out for a shilling' meant two seats at the hall, 6d.; a pint of beer, 3d.; 4 ounces of sweets, 1d.; and either two tram fares or a packet of cigarettes, 2d."¹⁷ The tram fares provision would seem to suggest that in the latter part of the century the working class was able to attend entertainments outside their immediate neighbourhood, although as early as 1855 the opportunity existed to travel to outlying halls with the introduction of the horsedrawn omnibus.

During the 1890s, the West End's Empire admission prices were: Private Boxes 1 to 3 guineas; Fauteuils (reserved) 6s.; Box stalls, unreserved, 5s.; Stalls, 3s.; Grand Circle, 3s.; Pit Stalls, 2s.; Pit, 1s.; Gallery, 6d.¹⁸ While venturing "uptown" or slumming in the East End did occur, Penny Summerfield has suggested that the smaller venues drew audiences from their immediate neighbourhood, and that their small size, low prices and familiarity beckoned the youthful and uniformly poor crowds described in many nineteenth-century

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 130. The Grecian was located in City Road, Shoreditch.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 53. The Yorkshire Stingo was located in New Road, St. Marleybone.

¹⁷ Standish Meacham, A Life Apart: The English Working Class, 1890-1914 (London: Thamer and Hudson Ltd., 1977), p. 127.

¹⁸ W. MacQueen-Pope, The Melodies Linger On (London: W.H. Allen, 1950), p. 226. The Empire was located in Leicester Square, Westminster.

reports.¹⁹ Felstead has noted that Gatti's did not cater to the elite: "The man in the street was their meat; for a nimble sixpence, which also entitled him to a bottle of beer or a large cigar, their patrons could see a show not to be despised."²⁰ Mander and Mitchenson have commented on the little family parties that could be found in the stalls of the suburban music halls. They observed that: "Most of them are probably regular visitors, and have the entry here in return for exhibiting bills in their shop-windows; and these family parties all know one another..."²¹ In 1867, Thomas Wright wrote about the relative costs of attending music halls in *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Class by a Journeyman Engineer*:

The refreshments supplied in these halls, however, are generally moderately good, but at the same time more than moderately dear, while the waiters ... haunt you in an oppressive and vampirish manner ... notwithstanding the comparatively low prices of admission ... music halls are about the dearest places of amusement that a working man can frequent.²²

As G.R. Sims observed, however, some of the local East End halls did not serve liquor and were still filled to the rafters twice nightly. The admission prices were 1d. for the gallery, 2d. for the pit, and 3d. and 6d. for the upper circle and boxes.²³

¹⁹ Summerfield, p. 22.

²⁰ S. Theodore Felstead, The Stars Who Made the Halls (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1946), p. 16. Gatti's Palace of Varieties was located in Westminster Bridge Road, Lambeth.

²¹ R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, British Music Hall (London, 1965, second edition, 1974), p. 24.

²² Thomas Wright, "Some Habits and Customs of the Working Class by a Journeyman Engineer," as quoted in D.F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974), p. 83.

²³ George R. Sims, as quoted in Arthur Calder-Marshall, "Introduction," Prepare to Shed them Now, the Ballads of George R. Sims (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 24.

Much has been written about the attraction that music halls provided for working-class patrons, irrespective of their cost: a social respite from their squalid lodgings in the comparatively opulent music hall. However, it still remains to be seen how entertainment figured into the family budget, even for a night out on a shilling. For this discussion we must turn to the wife who commandeered the Saturday pay-packet, and who, it should not be forgotten, also worked for wages outside the home in many cases in order to augment the family income.

* * * * *

The Economy of Marriage

'Last night,' he said (during what was made plain had been the 'very lists of love'), 'she goes an' ask me not to forget to leave twopence for the gas!'²⁴

Domestic arrangements centred on decidedly different spheres of work and responsibility, but these "internal" divisions were not as hierarchical and value-laden as we have come to interpret them in modern society. It was work "outside" the home that depreciated women's labour contributions due to supply and demand. As Gareth Stedman Jones has argued in *Outcast London*, "... the weakness of the women's industrial position stemmed partly from the fact that the supply of her labour was not primarily dependent upon the demand for it, but rather upon the state of demand for her husband's labour."²⁵ A Royal Commission on Labour in 1893 noted of an employer that "nearly all his

²⁴ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 55.

²⁵ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 84.

laundresses were married or had children to support. The husbands were generally bricklayers' labourers. In the busy season in the summer, when women were most wanted ... there were the fewest of them."²⁶ This was because wives did not work unless forced by necessity.²⁷ As Ellen Ross points out, "husbands' primary obligations were to work, and to hand over a customary amount of their pay to their wives. A wife expected that a husband would 'work for' her, and being a husband was synonymous with providing support."²⁸ The connection between marriage and support was so widely acknowledged and accepted that women ran into trouble in bigamy cases, when they formed new attachments after their husbands failed to "work for" them.²⁹

As Stedman Jones observes in *The Language of Class*, marriage was an economic necessity for working-class women,³⁰ and was viewed in this light by Victorian and Edwardian men and women. This is not to suggest, however, that these marriages are subject only to a strict Marxist interpretation; love and companionship were not necessarily absent in these alliances, but marriage was indeed a career of sorts for women from which they could expect financial compensation. Ross has suggested that power relations within marriage and neighbourhood custom determined the size of the working-class wife's

²⁶ R.C. Labour, The Employment of Women: Clara Collett, 'Conditions in London'. PP. 1893-4, XXII, p. 22, as quoted in Jones, p. 84.

²⁷ Stedman Jones, p. 84.

²⁸ Ellen Ross, "Fierce Questions and Taunts': Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914," Feminist Studies, 8 no. 3 (Fall 1982), pp. 580-81.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, The Language of Class-Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 226.

payment.³¹ The connection between marriage and remuneration for the wife was so entrenched that it was customary in common law marriages as well as legally recognized unions. For example, a woman was considered a "sailor's wife" and thereby committed (generally without benefit of the clergy), when she received half his pay.³² Little fuss surrounded weddings, unlike the pomp and ceremonial significance accorded a funeral; a sombre, dramatic spectacle that attracted neighbourhood audiences.³³ Other less "romantic" avenues to marriage included pregnancy and concubinage, whereby the practical woman could expect "payment upon delivery."

Married women who were forced to work outside the home were generally engaged in street-selling, charring, laundering and needlework, according to Henry Mayhew.³⁴ Where there were high levels of male casual labour, a complementary market arose for females: unskilled factory work for unmarried daughters and unskilled home work for the casual labourer's wife.³⁵ Ross has calculated that "Only about one-sixth of London's adult labour force was employed in factories through the 1890s. About 25 percent of adult male

³¹ Ross, p. 584.

³² Ibid.

³³ Meacham, p. 63. Burial societies provided insurance that the working-class member could avoid the stigma attached to a "pauper's funeral." Roberts noted a penny a week premium was paid by over 60,000 in Salford. (See The Classic Slum, p. 85.)

³⁴ Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor (1861), vol. 1, p. 458; vol. 2, p. 237; vol. 3, p. 307. As quoted in Jones, Outcast London, pp. 84-85.

³⁵ Stedman Jones, Outcast London, pp. 84-85.

workers were unskilled."³⁶ Seasonal and casual labour situations necessitated wives' and childrens' wage contributions to the family income.³⁷ In the 1860s it was asserted that the average wage of the East End needlewoman was 2s.3d.per week.³⁸ Factory work during the 1890s commanded 8-12s. per week according to Booth, while female home workers, in competition with more efficient provincial factories, saw a decline in their wages during the 1880s.³⁹ The Poor Law Commission supported these findings of the Sweating Commission, which documented the case of a married shirt maker who saw her weekly wages decline from 2s.to 1s.3d.⁴⁰ In order to put women's wages into perspective, it should be noted that the average wage of unskilled male labour in St.George's-in-the-East in 1887 ranged from 15s.4d. for hawkers to 21s.2d. for labourers, with an average rent of approximately 5s.⁴¹ The artisan or tradesman averaged between 25 and 30s. per week with rents between 6 and 7s.⁴² If we take our scenario of "a night out for a shilling" we would see that for one evening at the music hall, the family would have to come up with one-fifth of what they had to pay out in weekly rents. If we take the example of the married shirt maker as an economic indicator, over half of her weekly wages would be required to occupy two 6d. seats. By 1906, the Board of Trade figures showed that half the women in industrial Britain

³⁶ Ross, p. 576.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Stedman Jones, p. 109.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 125.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 216.

⁴² Ibid.

earned under 10s. for a work week of seldom less than 54 hours.⁴³ Factory work, it should be recalled, relied primarily on single women, but again, a night out at the music hall would command a substantial outlay. However, married and single women did attend music halls, so the expenditure did figure into the domestic budget, and women did not deny themselves the pleasure of an evening out strictly because finances were tight. While the size of the family dictated the strains placed upon the budget, measures were taken by resourceful wives in order to afford "a night out for a shilling."

Further to complicate matters, employment was often unreliable and impermanent for London's working class. Casual and seasonal working conditions reinforced the immobility of the family, as well as the necessity of being within walking distance of the source of their employment in order to take advantage of obtaining home work or casual factory employment at a moment's notice.⁴⁴ Moreover, the precariousness of employment meant that it was important for women to establish good credit relations in the neighbourhood to tide the family over during hard times. As Stedman Jones has stated: "Being known' in a district was thus of considerable economic importance. From the viewpoint of the labourer, it provided a further incentive against mobility."⁴⁵ This type of environment reinforced women's reliance on neighbourhood networking systems for childcare, bartering and sharing.

⁴³ Roberts, p. 76.

⁴⁴ Stedman Jones, p. 171.

⁴⁵ Stedman Jones, p. 88.

Within this working-class social milieu, wives wielded considerable power and autonomy. Many historians euphemistically refer to this culture as a "matriarchy" of sorts. Wives' contributions to, and administration of, the family budget determined the very nature of the family's existence. As Ellen Ross has observed, "wives' dress, their sexual, drinking, and socializing habits, their housekeeping and supervision of children - all contributed to the establishment of their family's (and often their street's) reputation on the continuum between 'rough' and 'respectable'."⁴⁶ The daily lives of working-class wives centred around managing a meagre budget in a hand-to-mouth fashion. Ingenuity was required to circumvent "poor providers" for the mere staples of existence which required frequent trips to the pawnshop as well as the taking in of lodgers.

Wives saw it as their right and duty to harangue improvident husbands who did not meet their financial obligations to their wives and family. The "nagging wife" then, can be seen as but one strategy employed by women to avoid insolvency. Violence generally erupted on the domestic battleground when the weekly pay-packet was at issue; women were determined to live up to their side of the marital bargain while they saw their men as continually attempting to undermine it. The husband, on the other hand, saw his position as "head of the household" jeopardized by his exasperated and antagonistic "angel of the hearth." Ross has suggested that working-class women, unlike their economically better off middle-class sisters, had not internalized habits of deference to their men.⁴⁷ There is a

⁴⁶ Ellen Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London Before World War I," History Workshop Journal, 15 (1983), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8.

sense that for all the struggles that marriage entailed, most women remained faithful to what they saw as their marital contractual obligations: a free hand in running the house as they saw fit, raising children and acquiescing to their husbands' conjugal rights. While married women's "working conditions" were trying at best and life-endangering at worst, separations and divorces appear exceptional; economics rendered married life superior to the unempowered life of the old maid or widow.

Music hall songs express themes that directly reflect the lives of these working-class married women. Their "maestri" of the domestic sphere was turned out on the boards night after night in all its seriocomic incarnations. With the presence of married women firmly established in the audience and the cultural "realities" of working-class life briefly sketched out, it is time to lift the curtain and see how the married woman's experience was played out in the halls.

Domesticity in Demos's Mirror: Reflections of Marriage

There is no nonsense about the Halls, no pretence. The mirror is held up, and in it the face of Demos is reflected, whole and unblurred...It is nearer to life...it distorts life exactly as the public likes to see it distorted.⁴⁸

- Max Beerbohm

The "comic disasters" of married life figure prominently in Max Beerbohm's recollections of music hall themes. These included: "Mothers-in-law - Hen-pecked husbands

⁴⁸ Max Beerbohm, "Demos' Mirror" (21 July 1900), More Theatres, 1889-1903 (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1969), p. 274.

- Twins - Old Maids - Jews, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Negroes (not Russians, or other foreigners of any denomination) - Fatness - Thinness - Long Hair (worn by a man) - Baldness - Sea-sickness - Stuttering - Bad Cheese - Shooting the Moon'...."⁴⁹ Maurice Willson Disher in *Victorian Song* has noted how departures from "normal life" were mocked:

Under this heading came the Salvation Army as an easy first, teetotallers and vegetarians, the clergy, coppers, and Jews, and all foreigners...tramps and toffs, landlords and lawyers, and any female figure who was not a fine figure of a woman. The list is very nearly complete, but even so it becomes difficult to see how a hall could find enough normal people to supply audiences when as a final item 'the married' are added.⁵⁰

These distortions of "normal life" counterbalanced the sentimentalized courtship songs that idealized romantic love and marriage of the "Oh so happy we will be" variety; an illusion that was quickly dispelled in real life. Both husbands and wives could laugh with derision from the vantage point of personal experience.

While music hall has been described as a patriarchal institution that reinforced concepts of traditional marriage,⁵¹ the female perception of marriage was indeed reflected in Demos's mirror, and often "magnified" in terms of her own sovereignty in the domestic realm. Beerbohm noted that the mother-in-law was depicted as a formidable tyrant, and

⁴⁹ Max Beerbohm, as quoted in David Cecil, Max: A Biography (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1964), p. 181.

⁵⁰ Maurice Willson Disher, Victorian Song from Dive to Drawing Room (London, 1955), p. 226.

⁵¹ See Orwell and Beerbohm on music hall reinforcing marriage in R. Hoggart, Uses of Literacy (1958), p. 15 and Colin MacInnes, Sweet Saturday Night (1969), p. 25.

that the public was really laughing at the oppressed son-in-law, unequal to warfare with two women.⁵² One music hall song advised

When you wed, do not wed the fam'ly as well,
For that will not a Paradise make,
Above all close the door to your mother-in-law,
Or - that's where you'll make the mistake.⁵³

In the song "Poor John," sung by Vesta Victoria, it is the two women who are at odds with one another for "ownership" of John: the mother-in-law exclaims, "Oh, lor! I wonder what on earth he wants to marry for!" to which the angry fiancée retorts, "Perhaps it's so he can get away from you!"⁵⁴ Following Beerbohm's psychology, it would seem that "Poor John" is the perfect candidate for a future role as the hen-pecked husband. Along with the old maid, the hen-pecked husband was seen as an anomaly in a patriarchal culture. The conventional marriage with its *pater familias* was often subverted by the mater, and as we have seen, this "distortion" may have presented a clearer picture of working-class marital relations than conventional wisdom would have us believe.

While wives' may have revelled in their triumphant roles in music hall lyrics either through identification or vicarious pleasure, Beerbohm has also suggested that these "distortions of real life" allowed the audience to collectively bestow its "voluptuous emotion

⁵² Beerbohm in Cecil, p. 181.

⁵³ As quoted in Ronald Pearsall, The Worm in the Bud, The World of Victorian Sexuality (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1969), p. 56.

⁵⁴ "Poor John" in Music Hall Song Book, ed. Peter Gammond (Newton Abbot: David and Charles Ltd., 1975), p. 90. Written by Fred W. Leigh and Henry F. Pether, performed by Vesta Victoria.

of pity⁵⁵ on performances they sympathized with. The middle-class could see a life more sordid than their own; the husband could commiserate with his harassed brethren, and wives could feel sorry for the woman harnessed to an impecunious partner or a brutish abuser.

The comedic caricature of marriage in music halls allowed the subject to hit close enough to home, though safely diffused through its perception as a humorous "distortion." As Christopher Pulling has summarized in *They Were Singing*:

The nagging wife, the brandished flat-iron or the flung saucepan, the disputes over the pay-packet, the heaviness of the wife's pastry, and the arguments about the mother-in-law - they were the traditional subjects of the music-hall, together with the lodger ... domesticities were after all, ever-present problems in certain circles of the audience, especially in the gallery: in the Cockney rhyming slang the wife was the 'trouble and strife,' and the hen-pecked husbands got a little self-confidence back, temporarily at any rate, by seeing other people joking about it.⁵⁶

J.S. Bratton has observed in *The Victorian Popular Ballad*, that many of the comic ballads dealing with marriage are from the female point of view, and deal with problems that can reflect no pleasure or credit upon a male listener, but genuinely express and relieve problems of the woman.⁵⁷ She has further contended that: "The active, vital woman with a life of her own to live is always liable to be in competition with her spouse for mastery of one kind or another, whether simply diverting the whole of the marital budget to her concerns at the expense of his pleasures, wishing to reverse their roles and impose her tasks upon him, or to express herself at the expense of his self-respect and good name, by

⁵⁵ Max Beerbohm, *Around Theatres*, vol. 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1924), p. 209.

⁵⁶ Christopher Pulling, *They Were Singing, And What They Sang About* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1952), p. 68.

⁵⁷ J.S. Bratton, *The Victorian Popular Ballad* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1975), p. 161.

asserting the sexuality which it is assumed is at least as strong in her as it is in him."⁵⁸ This carnivalesque inversion of the natural order is seen by Bratton as "bolstering confidence of those whose position in society gives them little chance of a dominant role in any other relationship they have."⁵⁹ Did this role reversal provide a safety valve for social and gender tensions, or did it reinforce the prevailing status quo and contribute to further constructions of gender and role identification?

* * * * *

The notion of "women wearing the trousers" expressed itself in many forms within music hall from the obvious implications of male impersonators and principal boys to specific "ladies versions" of popular songs, as well as characterization of the dominant woman found within many of those favourites. Pulling has suggested that the comedic appeal of women "wearing the pants" was because it was within the personal experience of nearly every one, but few of a man wanting to wear a skirt.⁶⁰ The power associated with male roles of behaviour was coveted by both men and women, and music hall lyrics confirm this ongoing competition between the sexes. This would suggest that while lyrics were by and large composed by men of a higher class, the presence of women in the audience

⁵⁸ Bratton, p. 184.

⁵⁹ Bratton, p. 162.

⁶⁰ Pulling, p. 60.

necessitated a conscious effort to address their point of view and focus attention on their gender specific trials and tribulations.

The "trouble and strife" was elevated to a formidable matriarch, making her appearance in innumerable guises: In 1896, Gus Elen's song, "It's A Great Big Shame," portrayed her as only "four foot two" and he a "brewer's drayman wiv a leg o'mutton fist" who, at "six foot free," was "underneath her fumb." The chorus gives voice to the antipathy of "Jim's" mates who remonstrate: "It's a great big shame, an' if she belonged ter me, I'd let her know who's who...Oh, isn't it a pity as the likes of 'er/Should put upon the likes of 'im?"⁶¹ Roberts commented on this marital phenomenon in *The Classic Slum* relating how a wife could pull her husband (known as a fighting man), out of the tavern "with a cold eye and a beckoning finger" and that his pals might sing afterward, "It's A Great Big Shame."⁶² He noted that husbands known for helping their wives had their streets dubbed "Dolly Lane" or "Bloody-good-husband Street."⁶³

In "It's A Great Big Shame," the role inversion that emasculates "Jim" in his mates' eyes can be seen in the following verse:

On a Sunday morn, wiv a dozen pals or more,
 'E'd play at pitch and toss along the Lea;
 But now she bullies 'im a-scrubbin' o'the floor -
 Such a change, well, I never did see.
 Wiv a apron on 'im, I twigged 'im on 'is knees

⁶¹ "It's A Great Big Shame" in Gammond, pp. 53-54. Written by Edgar Bateman and George Le Brunn, performed by Gus Elen.

⁶² Roberts, p. 54.

⁶³ Ibid.

A-rubbin' up the old 'arf-stone;
 Wot wiv emptyin' the ashes and a-shellin' o' the peas,
 I'm blowed if 'e can call 'isself 'is own!⁶⁴

The seeming incongruity of a man who, "it took two coppers for ter make 'im move along", bullied into domestic duties by a diminutive wife, of course "appeared" ridiculous, but it also served to alleviate the tensions of males caught in this situation. The heightened feminization of Jim is made visually apparent in the contrast between his size and the apron he is wearing; indeed, the song cover sheet illustrates this scenario: a mate in cap, coat and trousers confronts Jim at the doorway where he is holding a bucket and a broom, his apron concealing his workman's garb. The caption reads: "Of course I could do a drink, but I daresnt come out. She's at 'ome." (see Appendix 2.1).⁶⁵ Such characterizations reinforced the perception of feminine power for the women in the audience, whether real or illusory. Moreover, strength and defiance as sources of women's power are focused on rather than physical superiority; for the "weaker sex" neither their size nor their gender predetermined conduct.

A similar scenario to "Jim's" can be found in Vesta Tilley's song, "That's Pa!" although "Pa", a dock clerk, does not have the "commanding" physical presence of Jim the drayman:

There's a ginger-whisker'd, five-foot-nothing little bit of man
 That comes running home to tea - that's Pa!
 Who sits mildly eating bread and scrape as gently as he can be
 With a baby on each knee - that's Pa!
 Later on he dons an apron, scrubs the floor and shakes the mat,

⁶⁴ "Its A Great Big Shame" in Gammond, pp. 53-54.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 52. Song cover sheet caption.

While the lodger toddles out with Ma,
 And that baby-minding, kitchen-scrubbing, trod-on-little rat -
 That's Pa! that's Pa! that's Pa!⁶⁶

Like "Jim", "Pa's apron serves as his "dress", making it glaringly apparent to the audience that neither man is "wearing the trousers" in the family. The narrator of "That's Pa!" expresses an even stronger note of contempt for Pa when Ma's activities with the lodger are alluded to. In addition to his "womanly" domestic behaviour, Pa is seen as even less of a man with the suggestion that he is a cuckold; another theme worthy of a separate discussion. It is interesting to note that the domestic adjectives ascribed to Pa in the penultimate line have the ring of expletives - descriptions of "women's work " could definitely have a dirty sound to them.

One of Ada Reeve's songs, "Men", which stated that they were basically good-for-nothing, proved to be too incendiary, and was subsequently banned from the stage. She promptly countered with another, "Women, I Ought to Know Them, for I'm One of Them," which was just as successful as her prohibited number.⁶⁷ Jenny Hill enjoyed considerable success with her song "Bother the Men" or "A Fig for the Men"; *Era* categorized her performance as presenting "a strong-minded female speaking her mind freely about the men" as well as demonstrating antipathy towards the lords of creation, sung by a screaming old maid.⁶⁸ However, Jenny Hill knew who her real audience was, and did not

⁶⁶ "That's Pa" in Bratton, p. 180. Written by E.W. Rogers and performed by Vesta Tilley.

⁶⁷ MacQueen-Pope, p. 200.

⁶⁸ Era, 03 June 1872, 25 January 1872 as quoted in *ibid*.

let them down. It was reported in *Era* that she said, "women always go to the music hall and seem to appreciate you more than the men do."⁶⁹ This would suggest that women identified with songs about strong women, and openly expressed their approval to the performer. The hen-pecked husband theme could only be successful in the presence of the strong wife, and in this sense, the "reign of misrule" so often found in music hall lyrics and performance, was dependent on her ability to renegotiate sexual role expectations. Whether she was labelled a tyrant or a matriarch, her power was seen as incontrovertible.

In "The Cabman's Story", sung in 1900 by George Lashwood, the undeniable power of women over men is acknowledged:

Woman! Woman! What can it be,
 This wonderful power you possess?
 Ever since the world began
 You have been ruling the fate of man.
 Yours is the power
 That governs his pleasures and pains;
 Whether a man goes right or wrong,
 It's a woman that holds the reins.⁷⁰

Although expressions of female power are implicitly denigrated as "abnormal" or are seen as an extension of her Eve-like duplicitous nature ("Ever since the world began"), she is still no match for her husband.

⁶⁹ *Era*, 05 May 1894, as quoted in J.S. Bratton, "Jenny Hill: Sex and Sexism in the Victorian Music Hall," *Music Hall, Performance and Style*, ed. J.S. Bratton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 104.

⁷⁰ "The Cabman's Story" in Pulling, p. 117. Performed by George Lashwood in 1900, published by B. Feldman and Co., Ltd.

In one respect, however, husbands and wives are equals in the music hall. As Colin MacInnes has stated, women "certainly match up to their husbands in their realism: their attitude to their better halves is entirely disillusioned...and yet entirely faithful. However dreadful the old man may be - and he often is - the old girl is loyal to the core."⁷¹ One need only look at the much-discussed standards "My Old Dutch," "My Old Man Said Follow The Van," and "I've Been A Good Woman To you," to see how both long-suffering men and women reach an "understanding" in their twilight years. Unwavering devotion in the face of adversity is seen as a reward in itself; the martyr-like fidelity, generally perceived as a female characteristic, mingles pity with respect, and endurance with a long-lasting marriage. This "stick it out" mentality is seen by MacInnes as a part of the mythology of how the public wanted to see reality distorted (as Beerbohm has also noted) because "it denotes a presupposition of what this reality should be."⁷² Although patriarchal perceptions of marriage are constantly challenged and subverted, the romantic notion of marriage is still upheld as the ideal.

Sexual love is associated more with courtship than it is with married life, where it takes on its procreative role, or as a duty imposed on wives due to their husbands' "conjugal rights." As Roberts has noted, this fiction was believed to entitle a husband to the liberty of copulation at almost any time, whatever his or his wife's state or condition.⁷³ MacInnes has commented on the lack of sexuality in music hall lyrics. He states: "In the comic

⁷¹ Colin MacInnes, Sweet Saturday Night (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967), p. 56.

⁷² Ibid, p. 57.

⁷³ Roberts, note 5, p. 56.

numbers, there is certainly much scarcely disguised innuendo: yet the notion that the animal element in love is not only ludicrous, but also vital to it, is quite absent."⁷⁴ Innuendo, though, was a means of suggesting sexuality without openly appearing indecent; an appellation that could spell disaster for a proprietor's licence, or offend the particularly "British" sensibilities of his paying customers. "Giving the bird" was but one means the audience employed that distinguished unabashed bawdiness from unacceptable obscenity. Smythe Piggott, examiner of plays, told a Select Commission of 1892 that:

I have always found this, that the equivocal, the risky, the immoral and the indecent plays are intended for West End audiences, certainly not for the East End. The further east you go the more moral your audience is; you may get a gallery full of roughs in which every other boy is a pickpocket and yet their collective sympathy is in favour of self-sacrifice; collectively they have a horror of vice and a ferocious love of virtue.⁷⁵

H. Chance Newton, in *Idols of the Halls*, related a similar observation in his warning to Marie Lloyd "that if you dare to sing at the Paragon any of the very 'shady' songs you are now singing in the West End, the East End audience will balloon you off the stage!"⁷⁶

⁷⁴ MacInnes, p. 39.

⁷⁵ Parliamentary Papers, Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment HC (1892) (240) XVIII, Col. 5197. As quoted in Pennybacker, p. 137.

⁷⁶ H. Chance Newton, Idols of the 'Halls' Being My Music Hall Memories (London: Heath Cranton Ltd., 1928), p. 98.

The assumption on the part of middle-class commentators that working-class audiences were more moral is in itself a re-enactment of a melodramatic script of plebian virtue vs. aristocratic vice.

Irrespective of class distinctions, sexuality was a marginally acceptable topic for music hall performances as long as it was laughable. The humour was dependent on the ignorance of the subject whereby the "unspoken knowingness" of the audience allowed them to be "in" on the joke. Virtue could be idealized in the form of the family and the de-sexualized wife because of her unavailability - at least in theory. The sexuality of the single girl was seen as "vice waiting to happen" until she was saved by marriage and its benign sexuality.

Marie Lloyd's 'shady' songs, "Come into the Garden, Maud," "I Asked Johnny Jones, so I Know Now" and "What's That For, eh?" had definite sexual implications, as did Vesta Victoria's, "I Want To Play With My Little Dick," but these types of songs depended on sexual innocence and naiveté to achieve their effect, therefore the "maid" rather than the "matron" served as a more efficacious focus of attention. While married women could laugh at the implicit naughtiness in the sexual innuendos of a Marie Lloyd song, like "Tommy Make Room For Your Uncle," married sex had none of the appeal that illicit sex generated. Children were the tangible expression of married sex rather than physical pleasure, and music hall songs looked upon the wife as the asexual means of production.

Even less appealing than married sex was the act of childbirth -- a universally discomfiting, if not potentially dangerous enterprise in the late nineteenth century. Music hall songs, generally reticent on matters so closely connected with the act of sex, referred

to the exclusively female experience of delivery; an experience which only mothers in the audience could truly appreciate and identify with:

O the pain about my belly
 O the pain about my back;
 How shall I ever get o'er it,
 Faith my aching head will crack.
 Her mother was stuck in a corner,
 With a big drop in her eye;
 Hush my dear and darling creature,
 You'll be better bye-and-bye.⁷⁷

Although the language of pregnancy was carefully veiled, responding to conventional taboos, some latitude could be given to such songs due to the pain women experienced. Suffering negated any threat that women's sexuality posed, and sympathy could only be truly felt by another woman; in this case, the mother assisting the daughter in her delivery.

Children were seen as part of the domain of wives, and many music hall songs demonstrate how the role of mother superseded that of wife. Sympathy now is extended to the plight of the "outnumbered" husband and titular father, due to the prodigious size of his brood; the acquisition of twins was seen as a humorous "double-whammy." The humour implicit in large families was not so much sexual as it was financial. The strains on the budget with every addition to the family inspired many secondary themes such as the need to take in lodgers, dodging creditors, "shooting the moon," and the never ending struggle to keep enough "grub" on the table. Moreover, there is the assumption that women are responsible for creating large families:

Misses Moore, who lives next door,
 She's such a dear old soul.

⁷⁷ As quoted in Pearsall, p. 198.

Of children she's a score or more,
 Her husband's on the dole.
 I don't know how she manages to keep that lot, I'm sure
 I said to her today as she was standing by the door;

'Don't have any more, Misses Moore,
 Misses Moore, please don't have any more.
 The more you have, the more you'll want, they say,
 But enough is as good as a feast any day.
 If you have any more, Misses Moore,
 You'll have to rent the house next door...
 Oh! they're all right when they're here,
 But take my advice, old dear -
 Don't have any more, Misses Moore.'⁷⁸

The next-door narrator gives us the impression that Misses Moore, while a sympathetic character, is responsible for the number of children she has. Her ignorance of the consequences of a large family are alluded to in the fact that the neighbour feels it is incumbent upon her to bring the size of her family to her attention, along with the ever so slight condescension of "She's such a dear, old soul" who continues to procreate, seemingly blind to the fact that she has an out-of-work husband and insufficient rooms. What is seen as laughable is the financial burden that children present to the husband or father in addition to chaining him to the domestic sphere. It is interesting to note the reference to the "feast," whereby Misses Moore's excessive progeny is seen as outside the norm of the neighbourhood. Being satisfied with one's lot, or "enough," and not stepping outside the traditional social boundaries, has been seen as a classic working-class attitude and permeates many music hall standards, such as the sentimental "Home Sweet Home," the irreverent "At My Time of Life" and Harry Clifton's admonition, "Work boys, work, and be contented."

⁷⁸ "Don't Have any More, Mrs. Moore" in MacInnes, pp. 58-59. Performed by Lily Morris. Written by James Welsh and Harry Castling.

If we look at the music hall as a feast, as Peter Bailey has in "Making Sense of Music Hall," we can look at the issue of large families from a different perspective. As the location of the feast, "music hall was a site and occasion for liberality, profusion and plenitude, however bogus..."⁷⁹ Anthony Caputi has observed in *Buffo, the Genius of Vulgar Comedy*, that "in vulgar comedy there is plenty ... [of] revelries in love, marriages, and marvellous births in abundance ... evocative of a sense of the fecundity of nature, of a world of life and vitality. Release from restraint might well be a part of this sense of fecundity."⁸⁰ Herein lies the humour: excess contrasted with privation, and reality slightly exaggerated to make both identification and mockery possible.

Humorous results could also be counted on when one entered foreign territory, especially the world of the opposite sex. This is why most of the comedic songs dealing with children are from the male point of view. The father waxes nostalgic over his bachelor days in songs like "Why Did I Leave My Little Back Room In Bloomsbury?" and bewails his married state in such songs as "At Trinity Church I Met My Doom," "Blessings of Marriage" and "The Lottery of Marriage." In a Tabrar song of 1887, entitled "Hundreds and Thousands," Mormons serve as a locus of large families, while an earlier chorus song of 1882, "I Shouldn't Advise You To Do It," gives men the following warning:

For when a man's married the trouble begins,
The kids come in couples and add to his sins

⁷⁹ Peter Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," *Music Hall, The Business of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. xviii.

⁸⁰ Anthony Caputi, *Buffo, The Genius of Vulgar Comedy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), p. 194.

If you can't have a wife now without having twins
I shouldn't advise you to do it.⁸¹

Given music hall lyrics, one would think that twins were the rule rather than the exception, but it is precisely because of the "abnormal" nature of excess that the husband has to contend with (characteristically, there is no mention of how the wife feels) that evokes a humorous note of sympathy.

In "I'm Very Unkind To My Wife," we learn the reasons behind the husband's behaviour:

Before I was married I'd a pocket full o'quids;
Now I've got a pocketful of holes, and seven kids.⁸²

In "Pretty Little Sarah" George Leybourne sang about managing "A wife and fourteen children on eighteen shillings a week."⁸³

Not only did the husband feel the economic crunch of a large family, he had trouble finding lodgings to accommodate them. J.A. Hardwick's song of 1866, "Children Objected To" says:

You may seek in the East, you may seek in the West,
Where 'Lodgings to let' your eye may arrest,
Each family man will find, how high he bids,

⁸¹ "I Shouldn't Advise You to Do It" in Bratton, p. 175. Written by Joseph Tabrar in 1882 as a chorus song.

⁸² "I'm Very Unkind to my Wife" in Pulling, p. 70. Performed by Gus Elen and published by B. Feldman and Co. Ltd.

⁸³ "Pretty Little Sara" in Jane Traies, "Jones and the Working Girl: Class Marginality in Music-Hall Song 1860-1900," Music Hall, Performance and Style, ed. J.S. Bratton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 35. Performed by George Leybourne.

Tho' with gloves on his hands they object to his kids.
 If rooms in this town you wish to obtain,
 Young fellows, directly a girl's heart to gain,
 Make this bargain tho' she may not like it when wed,
 Have no children - each sleep in a separate bed.⁸⁴

Once more, the implication is that the wife is responsible for having too many children. The crowded working-class neighbourhood that is comically depicted in "If it Wasn't For The 'ouses In Between", ("It's a wonder as the landlord doesn't want to raise the rent"), is a theme that the suburban music hall goer could readily identify with; separate beds would not only seem a ridiculous in terms of marital relations but also in terms of space.

In a Wincott and Leighton song, the husband "Jupp" is willing to sell his "great big fat strong wife" and eight kids:

If you buy the missis and my little tribe, to prove that I'm no dodger,
 I'll sell you the marriage lines for half a shag, and come and be your young man
 lodger.⁸⁵

A Harry Randall song does give the woman's point of view on such comic consequences of marriage, but it is worth noting that the singer is a man dressed like a woman, who relates a series of domestic disasters that befall their "happy little home," and that the wife continues to assert that "I'm just about as happy as they make 'em now-a-days."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ "Children Objected to" in M. Willson Disher, Victorian Song, p. 132. Written by J.A. Hardwick in 1866.

⁸⁵ As quoted in Bratton, p. 175.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 176.

How would the wives and mothers in the audience react to these male representations of family life? Would they see their complaining husbands as pathetic in comparison to their stalwart acceptance of their lot as wives and mothers? Would the songs that deal with excessive numbers of children make their own situations appear more tolerable by comparison? Many women did bring their children in tow with them to the music hall as numerous commentators noticed. If the wife wanted an "evening out" and had no older children or neighbours to look after her younger ones, they would, out of necessity, have to come along with her. Roberts has noted how working-class women resorted to administering "Mother's Friend" to fretful babies, especially on Saturday evenings. "This 'Soothing Mixture' (laced with tincture of opium) would guarantee to keep baby in a coma until late Sunday morning."⁸⁷

The sardonic pathos of the "poor married man" portrait would be wryly amusing to the women in the audience and her empathy could be solicited by the hardship ballads sung by women; in particular, the "suffering child" and the "abused but loyal wife." This trend tended to reinforce the concept of separate spheres in the daily lives of husbands and wives. The impression given by many songs is that, much to the husband's chagrin, "Home, Sweet Home" is literally a "no man's land" where battles to maintain the field were daily held; the husband was outmanoeuvred by the wife's economic martial law, and outnumbered by her legion of infants and offspring. His defensive position is expressed in "Poor Married Man" sung by Vance in the 1870s, where the father is labelled a "molly-coddle" by his two year old son – another variation on the hen-pecked husband theme.

⁸⁷ Roberts, pp. 125-26.

The husband's position as "figurehead" of the household is also undermined by the presence of the lodger, usually a young single male. This is one of the classic jokes of music hall. We have already seen that the lodger was a sexual threat to Pa in "That's Pa!" and was seen by "Jupp" as a preferable role to that of husband and father. Not only is the husband seen as henpecked within the private sphere, but he is also ridiculed in the public sphere by the presence of the male lodger as his sexual rival. Furthermore, the lodger was also proof of failure as a provider. MacInnes has characterized the lodger as "one of the music hall Don Juans" (the policeman is also often cast in this role) along with the milkman, which the Wilkie Bard's song, "Never 'ave a Lodger For a Pal" would seem to confirm. However, in Vesta Victoria's song, "Our Lodger's Such a Nice Young Man," the lodger serves as a stand in for the henpecked husband. We learn from the child narrator that he is "So good, so kind to all our family!" and that "He kissed mamma and all of us, 'cos Papa was away." While there is the implication that the husband is a cuckold, the wife has managed to assign domestic duties to the lodger rather than her husband: "Before he goes to work he lights the fires and scrubs the floor" as well as "At night he makes the beds and other little jobs."⁸⁸ Once more there is a hint of the lodger's sexual role as well as his domestic one. However, this song was specifically designed as a counter answer to Wilkie Bard's "Never 'ave a Lodger For a Pal," and as MacInnes has pointed out, "the supposition that the husband is a philanderer - or wants to be one - is an enduring convention."⁸⁹ This

⁸⁸ "Our Lodger's Such a Nice Young Man" in Mander and Mitchenson, p. 85. Written by Fred Murray and Lawrence Barclay, performed by Vesta Victoria.

⁸⁹ MacInnes, p. 57.

could indeed be the case if we view papa's absence as opportunities for his infidelity, while the lodger serves as mamma's means of getting revenge.

The theme of the lodger evolved out of the all too real overcrowding of the London housing market. We saw in "Children Objected To" the difficulties that a family faced trying to find accommodation, especially with numerous children. The housing crisis and times of depression did force many families to take in lodgers if they could spare any extra room, in order to make ends meet. The Medical Officer for Bethnal Green commented in his report for 1867 that "many families who could ordinarily afford to occupy a whole house, have been obliged to let lodgings; others who put up with two rooms have been obliged to put up with one."⁹⁰ Similarly, the Medical Officer for St. George's-in-the-East stated that "owing to the badness of the times, it has happened that many householders have taken in lodgers, or have let apartments...."⁹¹

The literature on the acute housing problems of the 1860s and 1870s, outlined the connection between moral and social degradation and the plight of the urban poor. As Stedman Jones says of the authorities' consensus of opinion:

Crammed together in filthy, airless, and noisy one-room tenements, it was inevitable that the poor would be brutalized and sexually immoral and that they should seek to escape the dreadful monotony of their conditions of existence by craving the 'cheap excitements' offered by the pubs, the low music-halls and the streets.⁹²

⁹⁰ Report of Minister of Health, Bethnal Green (1867), p. 4, as quoted in Stedman Jones, Outcast London, p. 178.

⁹¹ 12th Report of the Vestry, St. George's-in-the-East (1867), p. 19, as quoted in *ibid.*

⁹² Jones, p. 286.

The "cheap excitements" of the music hall did, however, reflect the harsher realities of working-class married life. Violence in music hall songs are characteristically warranted by the wife's behaviour, occasioned by her stealing from her husband, or her "nagging" or her questionable fidelity. Many songs comment on these "facts of life," and attest to crowded police courts filled with brawling spouses seeking legal separation or divorce. Wives "knocked about" by their husbands are seen as somewhat akin to the husband's "conjugal rights" whereby her physical body is his to do with as he likes; thus, his actions are not only seen as justifiable, but "natural." Ellen Ross has given a dramatic example of this wife-beating mentality. She relates the case of the murder of Elizabeth Glover in January 1879. William Hancock was assaulting her outside the Black Swan Tavern in the presence of a crowd of six or seven, including a policeman. Hancock kept them from interfering by stating, "It's my wife, and I want to take her home, she is drunk" (which Glover meanwhile was loudly denying). Both a waiter and the policeman testified in court that they had not intervened on Glover's behalf "because I thought [said the policeman] they were man and wife...."⁹³

Music hall lyrics usually symbolize violence against wives in the form of the "black eye." In Charles Godfrey's song, "The Blessings of Marriage," a drunken husband paints his "portrait of marital bliss":

⁹³ As quoted in Ross, "Fierce Questions and Taunts': Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914," *Feminist Studies*, 8, no. 3 (Fall 1982), p. 592.

No doubt you all think that I'm pretty near 'screwed';
 Well, I am, and I don't care who knows it.
 I've been on the spree, and my money I've blued;
 I have, and I don't care who knows it.
 My wife will start nagging, for no reason why.
 Blow me, if she does, I won't stand it - not I.
 If she lets me have too much, she'll get a black eye.
 She will, and I don't care who knows it.⁹⁴

The male protagonist makes it clear that it is his nagging wife that is the antagonist, and that the black eye she is threatened with is justified; his insistence that he doesn't care who knows it reinforces his belief that he has a right to both his "spree" and beating his wife. Ross has further commented on the reasons behind domestic violence: "Since men's desire for domination in marriage, and women's to undermine it were openly acknowledged in their culture, it was not unexpected that men might use violent means to obtain their wives' obedience...there was nothing secret or shameful about a Saturday night fight. Wives' black eyes were one material, and predictable, result of sexual antagonism."⁹⁵

In Gus Elen's song, "Me and 'er - 'er and me," the long-married couple of the type sentimentalized in "My Old Dutch" have come to an "understanding" which includes violence which is romanticized, at least from his point of view:

⁹⁴ "The Blessings of Marriage" in Pulling, p. 69. Performed by Charles Godfrey in the 1880s. Published by Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew, Ltd.

⁹⁵ Ross, p. 593

I must acknowledge that she 'as a black eye now and then, but she
 don't care a little bit, not she;
 It's a token of affection - yuss, in fact that is love
 Wiv me an 'er - 'er and me.⁹⁶

Indeed, the song cover sheet prominently illustrates "er" with a blackened eye, suggesting that such an image was neither shameful or extraordinary (see Appendix 2.2). This "token of affection" would not seem to be reciprocal, but there are songs, generally in the henpecked husband genre, that attest to wives beating husbands as in another Gus Elen song, "I'm Very Unkind to My Wife." He relates the "unconventionality" of his situation: "Just because she beats me now and then,/I've come to the conclusion I am not like uvver men."⁹⁷ The woman is also seen as at the root of a domestic dispute in Harry Randall's song, "Poor Pa Paid":

Ma and Papa had some very high words,
 And into a p'lice court they strayed,
 And the magistrate fined my Mamma forty shillings -
 And Poor Pa paid!⁹⁸

The song implies that Ma's actions were not validated by the authority figure, the magistrate, and that sympathy lies with the other authority figure, Pa, who has to pay her fine; testimony to her economic dependence on him. This is an ironic inversion of the "It's the woman who always pays" theme.

⁹⁶ "Me and-er-'er and me" in MacInnes, pp. 129-30. Written by Walter Hastings and George Le Brunn, performed by Gus Elen.

⁹⁷ "I'm Very Unkind to my Wife" in Pulling, p. 71.

⁹⁸ "Poor Pa Paid" in *ibid*, p. 76. Attributed to Harry Randall.

In "Poor Thing" we are introduced to Sal Smith, who remained loyal to a philandering husband. He knocked her down the stairs:

Her salt tears notwithstanding
He shoved her off the landing

and then left her to sob as if her heart were broke. As Willson Disher relates: "the climax of the tale, intended as a source of merriment, she makes a hole in the sea so as to be free from tussles down among the mussels, added to which there is a comic illustration to show her lying face downwards like a corpse at the foot of the stairs."⁹⁹ Willson Disher rationalized this pathetic scenario as characteristic of Victorian insensibility and the desire to shock.¹⁰⁰

A similar macabre tale is told in the song of Sal Grogan. In the George R. Sims' ballad we are introduced to a once beautiful woman who had married a thief who beat her regularly, and then deserted her for another woman after battering Sal so severely that she lost an eye. During a fire, the other woman deserts the husband, and Sal risks her life to rescue the drunken thief. Her face is horribly disfigured by molten lead falling from the roof. This grim scenario concludes with:

Oh, who would shudder or sicken, if he knew of the deed of grace
Enshrined in the ghastly features of poor Sal Grogan's face?¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "Poor Thing" in M. Willson Disher, p. 199.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "Sal Grogan" by George R. Sims, Prepare to Shed Them Now, p. 86.

In another of Sims' ballad, "Moll Jarvis O'Morley, A Constable's Tale," we learn of Moll's equally gruesome experience. The narrator constable related:

Twas in this way it happened: Her husband, a horrible brute of
a chap,
Was arrested for smashin' her skull in, and half killing the babe
in her lap.¹⁰²

When the husband Tom gets a fifteen year sentence, he threatens her once more: "Have a care for yourself and the brat, Moll; when I'm free I'll just finish you both." The ever loyal Moll tries to get Tom's sentence reduced by saying it was only a one time incident. The incredulous policeman tells us "Twas a lie, bless your soul, why he whacked her, and kicked her night, morning, and noon." When Tom escapes from jail, Moll helps him elude the police by giving him her clothes to get away. She stays in the forest which the police have surrounded, "and [almost] died of starvation to give him more time to get free," leaving her demented. The constable concludes that women "ain't got no reason nor brains," and that they're "a darned contrydictory lot."

The "female sacrifice" is a common theme that combines hardship with virtue, but there were limits to the abuse women tolerated outside the dramatic devices employed in music hall ballads. Ross has remarked that "Violence itself would not bring wives to the 'threshold' of tolerance for marriage or husbands. What did cause women to seek legal separations or to leave their husbands informally, were threats of murder, physical attacks

¹⁰² "Moll Jarvis O'Morley, A Constable's Tale" by George R. Sims, Dagonet Ballads (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1909), pp. 48-51.

on the children (very rare according to all observers) refusal to provide income, and sexual insults (but usually not sexual jealousy)."¹⁰³

In "I've Been a Good Woman To You," sung by Jenny Hill in the 1880s, we learn what kind of circumstances a "good woman" had to put up with:

I've been a good woman to you,
And the neighbours all know that it's true;
You go to the pub,
And you 'blue' the kids' grub;
But I've been a good woman to you.¹⁰⁴

The italicized "you" go to the pub, implies that she cannot, and that he squanders the food money for his own pleasure. Her stoical forbearance of a "lout" reinforces her perception of herself as a "good woman," corroborated by her neighbours. Jenny Hill further sang:

He's out on the fuddle, with a lot of his pals,
Out on the fuddle, along with other gals;
He's always out on the fuddle, while I'm in such a muddle,
But I mean to have a legal separ-a-aa-tion!¹⁰⁵

The "fuddle" here is equivalent to the "spree" in the "Blessings of Marriage," and although there is the suggestion that the husband is not being faithful to his "good woman" with the presence of "other gals," the cost of his spree seems more at issue - "blueing the kids grub."

¹⁰³ Ross, p. 593.

¹⁰⁴ "I've Been A Good Woman to You" in H. Chance Newton, p. 111. Performed by Jenny Hill.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

When the wife threatens the husband over infidelity in Ada Reeve's song, "She Glories in a Thing Like That," she sings in the first chorus:

A nice time you came home last night, there's something wrong,
 For I found a hair upon your coat, quite three yards long,
 "I'll get a Divorce you Brute!" - Then "hubby" comes out strong,
 "Oh! well! If I'm a brute, then you're a cat!" (see now)
 She knows full well her "row-ing" will not be in vain,
 For he'll pacify her feelings with a cheque, that's plain,
 To have a "row" - Then Kiss and make it up again,
 Oh! She glories in a thing like that!¹⁰⁶

The song makes it clear that her "row-ing" (a variation on "nagging") is but a strategy in an economic tug-of-war. She is not as concerned about his possible infidelity as she is in extorting "guilt" money. The threat of divorce, is seen as just that: a threat or strategy to gain the upper hand. In "It's a Great Big Shame," "Jim's" pals exhort: "Oh! I wish as I could get 'im a divorce" implying that unlike Jim, they have the upper hand at home. A more informal arrangement than divorce is suggested in the George Lashwood song, "The Lottery of Marriage":

When we get married, it ought to be understood
 That man has the right to change his wife if she's no good,
 If the law allowed it, oh, it would be fine;
 I'd marry somebody else's wife - anyone's welcome to mine.¹⁰⁷

The pitfalls of marriage include nagging for men, and imminent poverty for women. If we look at nagging as a means of attempting to subvert male dominance on both a social and economic level, we can see that nagging was a political weapon for women. Open defiance

¹⁰⁶ "She Glories in a Thing Like That" in Mander and Mitchenson, p. 99. Written by George Everard, (1899), performed by Ada Reeve.

¹⁰⁷ "The Lottery of Marriage" in Pulling, p. 70. Performed by Will Dalton and George Lashwood, published by B. Feldman and Co. Ltd.

of male authority is implicit in this strategy, which, as we have seen, often resulted in physical violence.

Financial concerns were the primary basis of women's nagging, and when this strategy failed to achieve results, wives often resorted to stealing from their husbands. In the James Fawn song, "Woman, Lovely Woman" we see how women "manipulate" their husbands, especially when drunk:

Who sits up when we're out at night?
 Woman, lovely Woman!
 Who meets us when we come home tight?
 Woman, lovely Woman!
 By whom up the stairs are we carefully led,
 And when we're asleep and our senses have fled,
 Runs through our pockets, when we are in bed?
 Woman, lovely Woman!¹⁰⁸

Nancy Tomes cites the example of the real life case of Mary Ann Ford who so infuriated her husband when she took his entire week's pay that he ending up killing her and stood trial for her murder. He testified: "I never meant to kill her, she should have kept her hand out of my pocket."¹⁰⁹

Stealing from husbands could indeed have dangerous consequences, so wives turned to other methods such as pawning to combat insufficient weekly budgets. However, pawning was generally done without the husband's knowledge, and this could also lead to serious

¹⁰⁸ "Woman, Lovely Woman" in Pulling, p. 71. Written by Felix McGlennon in the late 1880s and performed by James Fawn.

¹⁰⁹ Nancy Tomes, "A Torrent of Abuse': Crimes of Violence between Working-Class Men and Women in London, 1840-1875," *Journal of Social History* II (Spring 1978), p. 332. As quoted in Ross, pp. 583-84.

repercussions. At the trial of Robert Plampton, who stabbed his wife Emily Maria, it was found that after a series of confrontations one afternoon, Robert went to take a nap and found that the blankets had been pawned. A saucepan had probably been pawned as well, delaying his dinner, since Emily had stopped for several drinks with the neighbours as she set out to borrow another one.¹¹⁰ Wives had to be exceptionally judicious in how, when and what they pawned in order to keep their sphere operational, thereby eluding male interference.

Creating income from "within" the home required considerable skill and expertise. Women had to maintain the family's neighbourhood reputation in order to secure good credit, and she also had to be a resourceful bargainer to know which shops paid the most for the clothing and domestic items that could be pawned. This transaction usually occurred on Mondays in order for her to make ends meet throughout the week until the arrival of the Saturday pay-packet. Women pawned singly and collectively, sometimes making bundles for others to pawn, as a means of mutual assistance within their sharing network. Charles Booth observed the importance of credit and how the same set of garments were pawned every week, and that a family financial windfall would warrant the purchase of a luxury item that would have greater future pawn value.¹¹¹ Roberts noted in *The Classic Slum* that the wives of the Edwardian community were not only judged by what they possessed, but also by what they pawned. Clean clothes had a higher status than hearth rugs or pots.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Old Bailey Trials, as quoted in Ross, p. 580.

¹¹¹ Charles Booth, as quoted in Stedman Jones, p. 91.

¹¹² Roberts, p. 25.

Men's clothes, especially his "Sunday best" were the first to be pawned because of their higher return. A music hall parody of "After the Ball" entitled "After the Shawl" wryly comments on pawning practises:

After the shawl went over,
 After she got 9d,
 She pulled out another bundle,
 That bundle belonged to me!
 'Twas a pair of my best Sunday trousers:
 "Five bob" I Heard her call;
 I then saw my best Sunday trousers
 Go after the shawl.¹¹³

Reporter James Greenwood recorded the case of a woman who for eleven years had pawned her husband's razor for three pence after he had used it in order to get a glass of gin, redeeming it in the evening with her husband's wages.¹¹⁴

Monday pawning was not strictly a matter of domestic business; it was also a social occasion for women. A somewhat aghast George Sims noted in *The Cry of the Children* that, "From home to the pawnshop and from the pawnshop to the public house is the conventional Monday trip of a vast number of poor married women ... The women meet their neighbours at the pawnshop and adjourn to the public house for a glass and a gossip."¹¹⁵ Ross reiterates the personal case history of a woman who recalled her mother partaking in this Monday morning ritual known as "Mother's Day," and that after returning home, the women danced the can-can and other music hall favourites in the building

¹¹³ Arthur Hadley, Penny Plain: Autobiography of a Bethnal Green Boy (1947), as quoted in Ross, p. 590.

¹¹⁴ James Greenwood, "Pawnbrokery in London," p. 114, as quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ George Sims, The Cry of the Children, p. 19, as quoted in Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London Before World War I", p. 11.

courtyard, accompanied by another woman playing the mouth organ.¹¹⁶ Not only does this demonstrate that women did engage in social activities outside the home, but that it was an activity which warranted pawning household items for. Moreover, their familiarity with music hall repertoire would also suggest that their pawning economy also provided for trips to the music hall, and that the matrons found nothing morally amiss in such entertainments as the can-can. Significantly, even poor women did not deprive themselves of pleasure that usually involved drinking in a convivial atmosphere.

Music hall songs have a lot of fun with drinking women; they are not particularly censured for doing so, but again there are class considerations that informed attitudes. Middle class women were characterized as teetotallers, while working class women saw nothing wrong with imbibing, although the impression is given that they were more circumspect in their drinking than their husbands. In the T.W. Connor song, "At My Time of Life," the aging wife comments on both her longstanding drinking habits and her refusal to ape the more fashionable "highty flighty girls" that have so impressed her husband:

I likes my drop of stimulant as all good ladies do,
 a 'arf a quarter, 'two out' used to do between the two;
 But now he says it's only 'roughs' as patronizes 'pubs'
 For all 'New Women' wot is 'class' belongs to swagger clubs!¹¹⁷

Her class loyalties are made very clear in the chorus:

Now fancy me old 'Mother Scrubs' a-jineing these 'ere
 Totties' clubs,
 Fancy me deserting the 'pubs', At my time o' life!¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ross, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ "At My Time of Life" in Gammond, p. 59. Written by T.W. Connor.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 60.

Marie Lloyd expressed similar sentiments in "A Little of What You Fancy Does You Good":

Now, I like my drop of stout as well as anyone,
 But a drop of stout's supposed to make you fat,
 And there's many a lar-di-dar-di madam doesn't dare to
 touch it,
 'Cos she musn't spoil her figure, silly cat!¹¹⁹

Clearly, the audience would appreciate the "indulgences" that the rather robust Marie would signify. It also thematically parallels the "enough" versus the "feast" mentality found in "Don't Have Any More, Missus Moore." "A little of what you fancy" was more socially acceptable than excess, although "lapses" could be forgiven. This is made evident in another Lloyd song, "My Old Man Said Follow the Van" or "Don't Dilly Dally on the Way." Perturbed at having to "shoot the moon" as well as the loss of her "nicest bit of china," she tries to get over it "with a 'two out' and a chat, 'Cos it's the little things like that what does you good."¹²⁰ We can feel sympathy for the wife who can't find her way to her new address because she "stopp'd on the way to have the old half quartern."¹²¹

The class solidarity that is associated with working class drinking habits, both male and female, is demonstrated in an 1894 song, "I'm One of the Girls," sung by Marie Kendall:

And I'm one of the girls! A girl to spend the chink;
 I'm one of the girls to have what you like to drink,

¹¹⁹ "A Little of What You Fancy Does You Good" in Gammond, pp. 140-1. Written by Fred W. Leigh and George Arthurs, performed by Marie Lloyd.

¹²⁰ "My Old Man Said Follows the Van" or "Don't Dilly Dally on the Way" in Gammond, p. 153. Written by Charles Collins and Fred W. Leigh, performed by Marie Lloyd.

¹²¹ Ibid.

I don't mix with lords or dukes or earls
My old man is one of the boys, and I'm one of the girls.¹²²

As Vance sang of "Beer": "The beer that you get, when it's bitter and wet, is the same for a clerk and a peer."¹²³ The married woman in the audience could raise her own glass to such sentiments and enjoy her own sense of community and social representation both in the stalls and on the stage of the music hall.

¹²² "I'm One of the Girls" in Mander and Mitchenson, example, 113. Performed by Marie Kendal.

¹²³ "Beer" in Pulling, p. 27. Performed by Alfred Vance.

CHAPTER 3

"THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD" GOES TO MUSIC HALL.

This chapter turns its attention to another overlooked segment of music hall audiences: single girls and women. Like their married sisters, these women had long frequented the pubs, tavern concert rooms and pleasure gardens, accompanying their family or "sweetheart" for an evenings' entertainment. Since early industrialization, new labour markets arose that exploited the advantages of female labour, and these employment opportunities allowed the single girl to develop a new economic and social identity which gave her more visibility in the public sphere than did the more private and localized domestic realm of the wife and mother. This visibility was evident in the music hall, and women's presence aroused much consternation amongst moral reformers who saw the independence of the working girl as the *casus foedoris* of a fall from virtue and a license for excess. The conviction that single women would be "corrupted" in the heady atmosphere of the halls served as the justification behind surveillance and restraints imposed on single women. In this vein, there is considerable speculation in music hall related discourses on the sexual availability of the "girl of the period." What made matters worse for contemporary commentators were the difficulties surrounding the identification of a women's sexual status. *A priori* notions concerning class and sex became increasingly blurred as women's new economic power allowed them to "dress" outside their class, and their mobility undermined geographical class assumptions. Music hall moralists, newspapers, and governmental inquiries, along with music hall lyrics themselves constantly mention clothing

in their efforts to discover "who" a woman is - a "respectable" single girl, a factory worker or shop girl with class pretensions, or, invariably, a prostitute.

But what was the appeal of the music hall for these women? Besides providing a convivial environment for socializing, how did the music hall entertainment "speak to them" and what were their responses? While there are many songs dealing with the bliss expected from marriage, did the songs that deflated marriage from the wife's point of view (as we have seen in the previous chapter) mitigate their expectations? Did the "good time" offered by the music hall reflect a sense of celebration for the single woman who had some economic leverage to avoid male social domination? Did she have more in common with the young man out on a "spree" than she did with the more domestic themes that spoke to married women's daily lives? Did the lyrics that she sang along with reinforce her own self-image, and if they did, what kind of image was being constructed? Finally, how did her presence affect other male patrons of all classes? This chapter seeks to answer some of these questions.

* * * * *

Who was the "Girl of the Period"? J. Ewing Ritchie, in *The Night Side of London*, was less than complimentary in his characterization of her:

The girl of the period is to be feared, talks far too much slang; affects a manner not occasionally a little too fast; in her innocence assumes wicked ways, which she mistakenly fancies to be winning ones. A visit to the Alhambra would teach her this ... that in the race virtue and vice do

not start fair - that the fallen one, tricked out with meretricious art ... is a fitter make for fools than herself¹

Ritchie further suggested that music hall audiences generally consisted of "fast men and women, who are disposed to pay very handsomely for their pleasures."² Ronald Pearsall's analysis of her in *The Worm in the Bud* notes that the "ostensible opponents of her new 'fast' ways - fast was an adjective born of this period (1860s) - secretly sympathized with her"³ as what was considered *de rigueur* was constantly changing. In 1868 Mrs. Lynn Linton wrote in the *Saturday Review* that "the Girl of the Period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face ... [having] an inordinate love of gaiety, a bold determined manner, a total absence of respect towards her elders, and sometimes even toward her parents; a flippant style of conversation and a glaring and sometimes immodest dress."⁴ The prospect of the "Girl of the Period" bore ominous overtones for the future of womanhood - her worldliness would threaten her inferior status and reproductive responsibilities. However, these negative images were softened in the comic patter of the halls. Here, she was welcome, and affectionately satirized in song. Bessie Bonchill in "The Girls of Today" sang:

She's a real penny novelty girl, a sit in a hovelty girl
A ladder of ropeity, midnight elopeity girl, like one in the play;

¹ J. Ewing Ritchie, *The Night Side of London* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1869), pp. 83-84.

² *Ibid*, p.55

³ Ronald Pearsall, *The Worm in the Bud, The World of Victorian Sexuality* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1969), p. 98.

⁴ *Saturday Review* (1868) as quoted in Pearsall, p. 98.

A sweet "ladye faire"-ity, don't comb her ahirity, won't wash her
faceity fay;
A shirkity workity, worse than a Turkity, frivolous girl of the day!⁵

The new found opportunities for consumerism, for "immodest dress" and "frivolity" emerged from the working girl's position in industrial society. This consumerism also manifested itself in the music hall where she could enjoy the "fruits of her labour," as well as demonstrating her ability to elude traditional class and gender-based restrictions on her appearance and behaviour.

Peter Bailey has noted that there were considerable numbers of single working girls in the music hall, especially in the cheaper upper reaches, and that their number was probably increasing.⁶ He has further observed that figures from casualty lists, such as the Dundee crush of 1865, confirm the presence of both male and female factory hands between 12 and 18 years of age.⁷ Dagmar Hoher has confirmed that young single working girls predominated among women found on victims lists. She states that these women "worked in textile factories or as domestic servants, message girls or in shops and offices. The more employment facilities for women a town offered, the higher was the percentage of women

⁵ "The Girls of Today" in J.S. Bratton, The Victorian Popular Ballad (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1975) p. 193. Written by J.P. Harrington and George Le Brunn. Published by Francis Bros. & Day [n.d. 1888]. Performed by male impersonator, Bessie Bonehill.

⁶ Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 161.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 162.

attending the halls."⁸ The 1861 London occupational census lists 265,284 females over the age of ten engaged in personal service; 116,888 in the clothing, boot and shoe trade; and 18,935 in commercial, clerical and retail occupations.⁹ By 1891, the figures had increased to 361,398, 136,931 and 43,945 in each respective category, although the percentage of females employed in these particular occupations had decreased by 3.29% since 1861.¹⁰ If we take the maximum seating capacity of halls licensed by the Middlesex, Surrey and City of London Magistrates in a mean year, 1878 (this totals 175,900)¹¹ and take into account the median population of women engaged in the above-mentioned industries between 1861-1891 (a total of 471,691), the numbers would suggest that, following Hoher's thesis, the number of single working women in these occupations far exceeded the maximum seating accommodations of music halls. In applying her theory to London, we may infer that there was a greater demand for this kind of leisure activity.

Because of the perceived "looseness" of the girl of the period, many music halls restricted the conditions of her entry. Ritchie outlined how some single women circumvented policies geared towards prohibiting unescorted women. He questioned how

⁸ Dagmar Hoher, "The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850-1900," Music Hall, the Business of Pleasure, ed. Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 81.

⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London (London: Penguin Books, 1971, 1984), p. 358. Appendix II, table 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 359. Appendix II, table 2.

¹¹ D.F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974), p. 32.

so many soldiers could afford a trip to North London music hall: "The spectator," he observed, "would be puzzled to account for the ability of the private soldier thus to sport his lovely person did not one remember that he is usually accompanied by a female companion, generally a "maid-of-all-work" of the better class, who is too happy to pay for his aristocratic amusement ... on condition that she accompanies him in the humble capacity of a friend."¹² Through connivance or by her consent, the working girl gained admission to the halls, overcoming any economic, social or sexual barriers that impeded her entry.

The Good/Bad Girl in Song and Performances

Music hall productions kept pace with the girl of the period. Peter Bailey has noted that the musical comedy girl was "derived from the palpable social reality of a numerous group of new women who did not fit the exclusive categories of madonna or magdalene ... the class and status of the new working woman were harder to read."¹³ Young working women were idolized and yet sexually scrutinized in such hits as "The Bar Maid," "The Gaiety Girl," "The Shop Girl" and "The Earl and the Girl." The songs reflected the experiences of those involved in the "white blouse revolution" as well as domestics, factory workers and coster girls. The caricature of Bessie Bellwood's barmaid (see Appendix 3.1) alludes to her sexual "knowingness." It shows her with a coy smile and alludes in the caption reference to the Middlesex Magistrates, the licensing body entrusted with safe-guarding

¹² J. Ewing Ritchie, Days and Nights in London (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1880), p. 69.

¹³ Bailey, "Parasexuality and Glamour," p. 166.

morality in the halls. Nonetheless, she, too, was a working woman who found employment in the halls. In the music hall song, "Pretty Little Sarah," we are told that Sarah earns a pound a week "as a milliner in the city" and gives her mother a crown a week for her board and keep -- "the rest she spends on clothes to make her pretty."¹⁴ In "Pretty Polly Perkins" we meet a young servant maid who lived on board and wages in a nobleman's house in Paddington Green.¹⁵ The enterprising Milly, of "Milly's Cigar Divan," was reputed to make 1000 pounds per year.¹⁶ While Milly is, perhaps, more indicative of bourgeois aspirations, we see that even a coster girl made enough money to go to the music hall in "'What Cheer, Ria'":

I am a girl what's doing wery well in the wegetable line,
 And as I saved a bob or two, I thought I'd cut a shine.
 So I goes and buys some toggery, these 'ere wery clothes you see,
 And with the money I had left I though I'd have a spree.
 So I goes to the music hall where I'd often been afore,
 I don't go in the gallery but on the bottom floor.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Pretty Little Sarah" in Jane Traies, "Jones and the Working Girl: Class Marginality in Music-Hall song 1860-1900," Music Hall, Performance and Style, ed. J.S. Bratton (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 35.

¹⁵ "Pretty Polly Perkins" in H. Chance Newton, *Idols of the 'Halls' Being My Music Hall Memories* (London: Heath Cranton Ltd., 1928), p. 42. Performed by Harry Clifton.

¹⁶ Traies, p. 42.

¹⁷ "'What Cheer, Ria'" in J.S. Bratton, The Victorian Popular Ballad, p. 184. Written by Will Herbert (1887). Performed by Bessie Bellwood.

Jenny Hill, famous for her representations of servants and "coster girls," sang chiefly about the archetypal music hall subject of the drunken spree, under such titles as "Every pub we saw, we went inside of it," and "Four Ale Sal."¹⁸ However, as Lois Rutherford and Peter Bailey have observed, "the 'spree' was more normally associated with the socially unacceptable behaviour of working men, indulging in a release from the restraints of the workplace and home."¹⁹ Here we see "indulging" females who use their hard-earned wages to facilitate a "spree." In both their representation in song and in their actions within the halls themselves, there is an inversion of roles and behaviours normally connected with women. In carnivalesque terms, the "Reign of Misrule" is sanctioned.

In Natalie Davis' essay, "Women on Top," she discussed how such inversions could undermine as well as reinforce the traditional social and political order. She asserts that "the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place."²⁰ Such unruliness on the part of women, Davis suggests, served to "widen behavioural options for women within and even outside marriage, and, [sanctioned] riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest."²¹ Mikhail Bakhtin has argued that Carnival is always a primary source of liberation, destruction and renewal, and rather than merely reinforcing

¹⁸ J.S. Bratton, "Jenny Hill: Sex and Sexism in Victorian Music Hall," Music Hall, Performance and Style, p. 106.

¹⁹ Lois Rutherford, "'Harmless Nonsense': the Comic Sketch and the Development of Music-Hall Entertainment," Music Hall, Performance and Style, p. 137.

²⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 131.

²¹ *Ibid.*

the *status quo*, it helps to change it.²² While Bakhtin has focused on Rabelais' day, there are connections that can be made with women in music hall. If we see the halls as places open to all, like Carnival, the people were provided with an actual experience of life without the hierarchies of "official" culture.²³ The boisterous 'Ria, for example, pot of stout in hand, deserts the gallery for the floor, flaunting the artificial seating hierarchy, as she revels in her spree. As Davis has further noted in "The Reasons for Misrule" the function of festive life was more than a "mere 'safety valve', deflecting attention from social reality," for it provided a forum in which people could criticize the political order.²⁴

Patrick Joyce has argued in *Visions of the People* that "the halls emphasized the celebration of consumption in terms of their exaltation of style; the figure of "Champagne Charlie" was in these respects an evocative one."²⁵ The spree of the swell, did however, have its female counterpart, embodied in the male impersonator. How would the single working girl in the audience have viewed another female dressed as a man, enjoying traditionally male pursuits? Could she, too, vicariously enjoy the experience of rejecting the social limitations imposed on her? Would the obvious knowledge of a feminine body in a male persona allow her to mock the swaggering attitudes of the so-called superior sex? In Davis' terms, she literally is the "woman on top."

²² Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (written in 1940, published in Moscow, 1965. M.I.T. Press, 1968). See chapter 1, pp. 4-12 and chapter 2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons for Misrule," Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 97.

²⁵ Patrick Joyce, Visions of the People, Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 308.

Peter Ackroyd looks at the social, sexual and economic implications of cross-dressing in *Dressing Up, Transvestation and Drag: the History of an Obsession*. He notes that clothing was used to reinforce order in the community:

When men wore top hats and frock coats, a phallically slim and sombre uniform, at the same time as women wore uselessly elaborate lace and crinoline, a definite statement was being made about the nature of nineteenth-century society and the economic role of the sexes within it. Transvestites abrogate all these pervasive but unacknowledged codes, and by denying the symbolism invested in clothing of their sex they break some of the most deeply held beliefs²⁶

Ackroyd also makes clear the connection between cross-dressing and Carnival, and its historical role in English society, noting that both men and women participated. He states:

When the Feast of Fools was secularized in the sixteenth-century, in the festivities associated with the election of the Lord of Misrule, its transvestitic aspects became clearer and better documented At the Shoreditch festive, Naogeorgus writes in *The Popish Kingdom* (1570), Both men and women change their weede, the men in maydes array, And wanton wenches drest as men, doe trauell by the way²⁷

From its earliest inception, music halls had a long tradition of male impersonators which included such performers as Fanny Robina, Bessie Bonehill, Nellie Farren, Millie Hylton, Ella Shields, Nelly Power, Hetty King, and the celebrated Vesta Tilley (see Appendices 3.1-3.6). Many of these performers had started out as principal boys in musical plays, and as Jane W. Stedman writes, "their appeal was partly sexual" ... [offering] opportunities for the sort of physical display that Nelly Farren's silver tights provided when she played Mercury in Gilbert's *Thespis*.²⁸ Ackroyd states that "Madame Vestris had some claim to being the

²⁶ Peter Ackroyd, *Dressing Up, Transvestism and Drag: The History of an Obsession* (Norwich: Jarrold & Sons Ltd., 1979), p. 34.

²⁷ Ackroyd, pp. 52-54.

²⁸ Jane W. Stedman, "From Dame to Woman, W.S. Gilbert and Theatrical Transvestism," *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington, 1972), p. 22.

first principal boy ... but the male impersonator is never anything more than what she pretends to be: a feminine noble mind in a boy's body. It is a peculiarly sentimental and therefore harmless reversal."²⁹ Peter Bailey has suggested that the male impersonator may have served to "flatter the men in the audience" and that "casting a woman as 'one of the chaps' also served to reduce distance and the difficulties of formal address between the sexes ... she might be manageable on male terms rather than as an unpredictable female."³⁰ However, although there was never much doubt that a woman existed beneath the clothes, it put an interesting twist on the songs that she sang in male character. Vesta Tilley, immaculately garbed from head to toe, actually set men's fashions,³¹ in her guise as "swell" or the "masher" about town. In songs like "Monty from Monte Carlo" she cut the pretentious young man from the suburbs down to size. She mocks:

Monty from Monte Carlo
 Monty from over there-ah.
 He's hot! Great Scott!
 When he's having a stroll in Leicester Square-ah.
 Girls sigh with admiration,
 Dukes cry, "Well, I declare-ah!
 It's Monty! Monty!
 The Monty Carlo [bang] millionaire-ah!"³²

Moreover, as Christopher Pulling observed, "With new songs like this she began "debunking" Leicester Square as the symbol of the gay life of London."³³ Rather than seeing the

²⁹ Ackroyd, p. 102.

³⁰ Peter Bailey, "Champagne Charlie," p. 64.

³¹ Christopher Pulling, They Were Singing, and What They Sang About (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1952), p. 33.

³² "Monte from Monte Carlo" in Pulling, p. 34. Performed by Vesta Tilley in 1910.

³³ Pulling, p. 34.

characters as "harmless," as Ackroyd concludes, or as ego-serving constructions that deflated sexual tension for men, as Bailey believes, the potential of the male impersonator can be interpreted as a far more socially volatile phenomenon. Bailey admits that the male impersonator could suggest that the swell was "less than a man,"³⁴ but such allusions to impotency deny the power of the woman who has usurped his role. Ackroyd does acknowledge that the male impersonator was not strictly ineffectual, in that she served as a threatening "woman out of place," but such disorder, he also notes, is indicative of the festive role of female unruliness.³⁵ In keeping with Davis' observations we can see that, as with the songs dealing with working girls out on a spree, the male impersonator also functioned as a challenge to male culture, and served to "tell the truth about unjust rule."³⁶

If we look at the previously quoted Bessie Bonchill song "The Girl of Today," the satirical observations on her behaviour take on a new meaning when we see that it is a woman performing it in male dress. It now serves the function of satirizing the perceptions of the male swell and his assumptions about the girls in question. Moreover, his sexual bravado is mocked in another Vesta Tilley song, "Algy" (first sung in 1895):

He's vurry well known is Algy, to the ladies on the stage,
Such a jolly good chap is Algy, just now he's all the rage,
And a ripping big favourite, Algy, with the barmaids at the Cri;
He's very well known is Algy,
As the Piccadilly Johnny with the little glass eye.³⁷

³⁴ Bailey, "Champagne Charlie," p. 64.

³⁵ Ackroyd, p. 72.

³⁶ Davis, "Women on Top," p. 150.

³⁷ "Algy" in Pulling, p. 33. Performed by Vesta Tilley, (1895). Note the barmaid reference and the implied sexual relationship with the swell.

The sexual reputations of soldiers and sailors were implicitly ridiculed in another Tilley song, "Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who Loves a Soldier," and Hetty King's rendition of "All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor." But mockery could also be tinged with tenderness and sympathy for the decayed man-about-town, bent up keeping up the appearance of a swell as in Ella Shields' "Burlington Bertie from Bow." His indefatigable optimism contrasts his pathetic situation:

I'm Burlington Bertie, I rise at ten-thirty,
 And saunter along like a toff.
 I walk down the Strand with my gloves on my hand,
 And then walk down again with them off.
 I'm all airs and graces, correct easy paces,
 So long without food, I've forgot where my face is.
 I'm Bert, Bert, I haven't a shirt,
 But my people are well of, you know.
 Nearly ev'ry one knows me, from Smith to Lord Roseb'ry;
 I'm Burlington Bertie from Bow.³⁸

Songs like "The Rowdy Dowdy Boys," sung by Millie Hylton, and "The Nineteenth Century Boys" sung by Fannie Leslie, celebrated "wine, women and song" and the communal joys of the male spree. When performed by a woman it also suggested that women, too, understand such pleasures and a sense of gender solidarity, reinforced by class. In Bakhtin's sense, female performances on stage and the identification of single women in the audience, served as forces of liberation and destruction that culminated in a new kind of renewal.

Another inversion of the power relations between the sexes, indicative of the "world turned upside down" in music halls, can be seen in songs that show the single girl circumventing her would-be lover. Like the dominant wife who gets the best of her

³⁸ "Burlington Bertie from Bow" in Pulling, p. 36. By William Hargreaves, published by Lawrence Wright Music Co. Performed by male impersonator, Ella Shields.

husband, these are "women's jokes," in which, as J.B. Bratton has observed, "the quick-witted girl runs circles round her undesirable husband or lover, masquerades in male roles, and in some way, escapes from a fate which the world has sought to impose on her."³⁹ The "girl of the period" compliments the formidable matriarch in that they both are "active rather than passive participants in events of every kind, they have opinions and powers of their own, and are a force to be reckoned with or counted upon rather than a symbol to be admired and revered."⁴⁰ While there is implicit sexual antagonism in the figure of the male impersonator, there are many songs where men are outrightly rejected by single women. In "Milly's Cigar Divan," we learn that many men want to marry Milly, who has become a successful business woman,

But Milly's up to snuff and won't be tied to any man
She'd rather keep her freedom and her own cigar divan.⁴¹

Here is how another heroine who runs a fish shop, repels an unsuitable lover:

I called him Johnny Raw and cried 'Now keep your place',
And took a piece of hot fried fish and slapped it in his face.
He look'd just like a great Tom Fool but not a word he said,
I took up a bowl of batter and poured it on his head
And then as a good wind up to make the fun complete,
I got together a mob of boys to pelt him through the street.⁴²

Physical abuse was also heaped on another "innocent," courting a working girl:

When I first courted Nancy she was, oh, so very shy,
And when I kissed her first she broke my nose and black'd my eye;

³⁹ Bratton, p. 161.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴¹ "Milly's Cigar Divan" in Traies, p. 44. Written and composed by John Cooke, (1884). Performed by G.H. MacDermott.

⁴² As quoted in Maurice Willson Disher, Victorian Song from Dive to Drawing Room (London, 1955), p. 135.

She was a barmaid at a tripe shop, where I often used to call,
But now she's a professional at some big Concert Hall.⁴³

In "Pretty Polly Perkins," sung by Harry Clifton, we learn of a "broken-hearted "milkman" who is dumped by the young servant maid.⁴⁴ As Jane Traies points out in "Jones and the Working Girl," these kinds of songs, when sung by a man, demonstrate an ambiguous attitude towards her in relating the difficulties they have in meeting her, rather than any conflict in her own position.⁴⁵ She further comments that, "songs for women singers (such as Annie Adams', "English Girls" and Nellie L'estrage's "No You Don't") celebrate and defend the independence of the girl who could look after herself, knew her own mind and had her own latch key, and was too worldly wise to be taken advantage of or 'got round'."⁴⁶

There are many songs that present the single woman as the classic "female deceiver" in order to trick a man into marriage or con him out of money. James Henry Stead, in "The Perfect Cure" lamented how he "wasted on her lots of cash,"⁴⁷ while the gent in G.W. Hunt's "Bloomsbury Square" is fleeced out of 10 pounds.⁴⁸ In Vesta Tilley's, "The

⁴³ As quoted in Pearsall, p. 58.

⁴⁴ "Pretty Polly Perkins" in H. Chance Newton, Idols of the 'Halls' Being My Music Hall Memories (London: Heath Cranton Ltd., 1928), p. 42. Performed by Harry Clifton.

⁴⁵ Traies, p. 39.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 38.

⁴⁷ "The Perfect Cure" in Disher, p. 137. Written by F.C. Perry. Performed by James Henry Stead.

⁴⁸ "Bloomsbury Square" as quoted in Traies, p. 22. Written by G.W. Hunt. Performed by George Leybourne.

Hunt's "Bloomsbury Square" is fleeced out of 10 pounds.⁴⁸ In Vesta Tilley's, "The Afternoon Parade," the hero is duped out of 20 pounds by a barmaid who eventually marries a pot boy.⁴⁹

In defying male attentions, the single girl in song uses a number of devices, but all to the same end: she asserts her own ability to control her own economic, social or sexual fate. In defending her virtue, she has to be just as cunning and active as those who wish to destroy it. For the males in the audience, her elusiveness stems from both her ability to transcend social definition by her fashionable dress and her rejection of a demure demeanour. Traies also makes the point that "For the middle-class male there is another element of uncertainty about the working girl, and that is the question of her sexual availability. She is usually selling something, but is she prepared to sell herself?"⁵⁰ Bailey's delineation of the "parosexuality" of the barmaid, can, in some ways, be broadly applied to the single working girl who entered the halls and was represented on stage. He states that parosexuality is a "safely sensational pattern of stimulation and containment" and that it established new forms of male/female interaction.⁵¹ The possibility of conquest is of lesser importance than the single girl's ability to establish her own terms of barter. She may flirt unabashedly, but this does not mean that she is easy to seduce.

⁴⁸ "Bloomsbury Square" as quoted in Traies, p. 22. Written by G.W. Hunt. Performed by George Leybourne.

⁴⁹ "The Afternoon Parade" in Traies, p. 40. Performed by Vesta Tilley.

The theme of the female deceiver is treated also in the chapter on prostitution.

⁵⁰ Traies, p. 42.

⁵¹ Bailey, "Parosexuality and Glamour," p. 166.

The difficulties in distinguishing a "respectable" single girl from a prostitute are dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter, but there are ambiguous messages about feminine attitudes regarding sex in music hall songs. We have seen that wives were less threatening because they were sexually accounted for, and their sex had a procreative justification. The single working girl was much more difficult to define in terms of her attitude towards sex. Her wage earning allowed her greater personal autonomy, and the anonymous nature of urban existence provided cultural liberties that would have been impossible in rural or small town environments. In "Her Golden Hair was Hanging Down her Back," we are told of shy Flo, who left her village for the city, "but alas and alack, she came back with a naughty little twinkle in her eye."⁵² Flo had posed for a tableau while in the city, and the combination of appearing on the stage and being naked, "save for her hair hanging" down her back, served as sufficient innuendo to see her "fall" as inevitable. However, it should be recalled that if the girl came from the country, she would have been exposed to a strenuous form of courting known as "bundling" which made premarital intercourse the rule.⁵³

In "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay," a tune coming out of a St. Louis brothel and exported to England, the infamous Lottie Collins let it be known in her quasi-sexual gyrations that she was:

⁵² "Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back" in Music Hall Song Book, ed. Peter Gammond (Newton Abbot: David and Charles Ltd., 1975), p. 49. Written by Felix McGlennon. Performed by Alice Leamar.

⁵³ Pearsall, p. 264.

Fond of fun as fond could be
 When it's on the strict QT
 Not too young, and not too old,
 Not too timid, not too bold,
 But just the very thing, I'm told,
 That in your arms, you'd like to hold!
 Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay!⁵⁴

The "good bad girl" was perhaps best associated with Marie Lloyd and her popularity grew out of her perceived "naughtiness" rather than actual obscenity. The "Spectator" put forward an antipathetic view of her in the *Star* of 14 October 1893:

She typifies, I suppose, the "knowing" female, the sophisticated young person for whom life has no secrets, but imperturbable self-confidence and a trick of winking at every other word strike me as rather inadequate compensations for a shrill voice and a toe which is neither light nor fantastic. But in the music halls it is, almost impious to question the talent of Miss Marie Lloyd⁵⁵

T.S. Eliot wrote of Marie Lloyd that she had a "capacity for expressing the souls of the people"⁵⁶ and Dion Clayton Calthrop, in *Music Hall Nights* stated of her:

No one could be more British. She is the height of vulgarity with a great heart. Her naughtiness is that of a child who wishes to shock Women who have families and go to church roar with laughter and turn pink⁵⁷

The sexual titillation of the naughty girl, evident in music hall songs and drawn out in performance, demonstrated that the chaste courtship of legend was not reflected in "Demos's Mirror." Questions about the morality of the working girl are further seen in the Marie

⁵⁴ "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" in Gammond, p. 37. Written by Henry J. Sayers. Performed by Lottie Collins.

⁵⁵ "Spectator," The Star 14 October 1893, as quoted in Cheshire, p. 75.

⁵⁶ T.S. Eliot as quoted in Peter Bailey, "Introduction: Making Sense of Music Hall," Music Hall, Business of Pleasure, p. xiv.

⁵⁷ Dion Clayton Calthrop, Music Hall Nights (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Limited, 1925), p. 82.

Lloyd song about "The Barmaid" where she is categorized by both her male and female customers as everything from "awfully jolly" to a "brazen hussy."⁵⁸ There is, as Max Beerbohm wrote, "no compromise, no friction, between the form and the audience. The audience is the maker of the form, and the form is the symbol of the audience"⁵⁹. The Rabelaisian performance of Marie Lloyd offers a case in point. If the audience demanded sexual titillation from a distance, and they had paid the price of admission, who was she to refuse them. As she noted, they had not paid their money for a Salvation Army testimonial.⁶⁰

Marie Lloyd's appeal may be class based, but it also reflected the appeal of the "girl of the period." She, too, was a "knowing" female, and thus performances such as Lloyd's reinforced the sexual autonomy of the single working girl. These women were not reticent in making their own inclinations known:

Come to me closer, my love,
Come closer, dear
Place your arm 'round me,
I will make you feel queer.
Fondle and kiss me
When no one is near,
For you know I'm a
Modest Young maiden.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Traies, p. 42, "The Barmaid," written and composed by E. Rogers, (1894), performed by Marie Lloyd.

⁵⁹ Max Beerbohm, "In a Music Hall" (20 June 1901) More Theatres, 1898-1903 (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1964), p.l 397.

⁶⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, The Language of Class-Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1983 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 225.

⁶¹ As quoted in Pearsall, p. 46.

J.S. Bratton has seen a similar "lack" of modesty, a most "unladylike" anticipation of marriage consummation in Nellie Wallace's song "Half-past Nine on My Wedding Day."

The chorus goes:

For next Monday morning is my wedding day,
 When the supper's over if the company wants to stay,
 Me and me George we shall resign,
 We're going to blow the candles out at half-past nine!⁶²

Likewise, in "Waiting at the Church" the deserted bride tells us she "dreaded so about the honeymoon."⁶³ The implications of these songs is that women enjoy the physical side of courtship just as much as men do, but only when they have chosen their lover, rather than being seduced by him. The music hall attitudes towards courtship are succinctly summed up in the following verse:

Something rather dangerous, something rather nice,
 Something rather naughty, though it can't be called vice,
 Many say it's nonsense, others think it wrong,
 All agree it's jolly, though it don't last long.⁶⁴

The "naughtiness" of the single working girl serves as a social climax that leads to the denouement of marriage where her sexual energies are safely contained within her procreative role. On the other hand, her "parasexuality" placed her in close proximity to the prostitute. Her "fast" ways and showy dress eluded conventional sexual categorizations. The new found economic leverage of the "girl of the period" allowed her to break the traditional

⁶² "Half-Past Nine on My Wedding Day" in Bratton, p. 185. Written by Charles Collins. Performed by Nellie Wallace.

⁶³ "Waiting at the Church" in Gammond, p. 87. Written by Fred W. Leigh and Henry E. Pether.

⁶⁴ Ronald Pearsall, Victorian Sheet Music Covers (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), p. 70.

codes placed on her behaviour and her rejection of these restraints made her all the more conspicuous in the public realm. Her patronage of the halls is but one manifestation of her social independence; indeed, there is a celebratory air that marks her presence. Not only does she subvert class biases through her consumerism, but she also undermines gender expectations. This is most clearly seen in her depiction as the "unruly" female, and the consequent sexual threat that she poses prior to her safe repatriation in marriage. In music hall song, she is free to revel in ostensibly male pleasures: the "spree" and seduction. The male impersonator embodies the role inversions that are associated with the single working girl. In this guise, she can vicariously enjoy nominal male power, at the same time as challenging it. Her cleverness and vitality are championed in songs that portray the male as gullible and easily misled, and such power inversions would have made the "reign of misrule" in music hall an appealing feature for the girl in the audience.

CHAPTER 4**Added Attractions and Licensing Liabilities:****The Presence of Prostitutes in London Music Halls**

This chapter attempts to locate the prostitute, both amateur and professional, in the world of London's music halls from the Ratcliff Highway to Leicester Square. Contemporary social investigators and moral reformers such as William Acton, Henry Mayhew, Charles Booth, J. Ewing Ritchie and Edward Thomas established the link between prostitutes and music halls. National and local government inquiries, along with newspaper, lyrical and pictorial evidence, confirm the pivotal role that prostitution played in the evolution of London music halls.

With the uniform neglect of women's roles in music hall historiography, it is not surprising that the presence of the prostitute is glossed over: she is summarily dismissed as an axiomatic element of music hall audiences. If indeed prostitutes were a *sine qua non* of audience composition, their experience would seem to warrant the same careful investigation that heretofore has been given to class analyses of male patrons and music hall ownership, financing and architecture.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, many single women did attend music halls, especially when employment outside the home afforded them greater opportunities to exercise their economic independence. The attraction of music halls as a source of leisure

and entertainment was the same for the prostitute as the single "legitimate" working girl, but for the prostitute, the music hall also served as a convenient site for solicitation, wherein "business and pleasure" could be combined. The financial dividends of venal sex, did, however, separate the kinds of lifestyles that the single working girl, legitimate or otherwise, was able to afford. It is within this context that both popular attitudes towards prostitution and those of moral reformers must be addressed.

As well, the attitudes of music hall owners and proprietors towards prostitution requires due attention. Initially the prostitute represented "profit" in her capacity as a music hall "added attraction" of sexual spectacle and promoter of alcohol consumption. However, her presence became increasingly problematic as the enemies of the halls began to exert pressure on local government to police public morality. With the prospect of potential closure and monumental revenue loss, music hall entrepreneurs and operators began to view prostitutes as a "licensing liability," and took steps to protect their interests. This took the form of a new marketing strategy directed at attracting the "family" rather than covertly catering to "flash women" and "fancy men."

It should be noted that this trend towards vice surveillance and retrenchment was not a phenomenon peculiar to the music halls. During the 1870s, moral reformers, feminists and social activists were engaged in combatting prostitution on another more political front: the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, which regulated prostitution in specified military garrisons and port towns. With extension of these laws to the metropolis apparently imminent, repealers waged their battle with immorality in the press and Parliament in a

highly publicized war of words; music halls were but a single target in their campaign of moral outrage. Social purity directives now superseded the traditional temperance attacks levied on music halls, and led to new forms of proscription. Whereas the prostitute had once found a relatively "safe haven" in the "temples of vice" subject to her economic exploitation, she was fast becoming the focus of moral immolation at the hand of forces within and without the music hall. The Magdalene had irrevocably transformed both the body and spirit of London music halls.

* * * * *

The road to prostitution was indeed a well-travelled one in Victorian England. Most nineteenth-century observers agreed that the avenues that led to trafficking in vice were poverty, immorality due to overcrowding, seduction (usually as a result of drunkenness) or desertion. There was also the opinion that some women entered prostitution by choice. Given the employment opportunities available to single women and their meagre remuneration, it is easy to see the superficial attractions that a life of prostitution held. This prompted the female vanity theory, where a love of "finery" precipitated a fall from virtue. Amateur or part-time prostitution was engaged in to provide "extras" or augment legitimate incomes that were subject to seasonal or occupational bouts of unemployment. Moreover, the demand for prostitutes ensured that the market would flourish. With the prevailing attitude that middle-class women were basically asexual beings, prostitution was seen as a means of relieving sexual tensions within marriage. As well, young clerks who were forced to delay marriage due to social and economic restraints also swelled the demand for illicit

sex, along with licentious aristocrats - the "traditional" patrons of prostitutes. The military combatted its requirement for celibacy with a program of regulated prostitution introduced in 1864. The Metropolitan Police Report of 1868 listed 6,515 "known" prostitutes while Sir John Simon's Public Health Report of the same year believed the figure to be in the neighbourhood of eighteen thousand.¹ For the country as a whole, the *Westminster Review* placed the number at 68,000 in 1869.² If this figure were correct, it would have made prostitution the fourth largest female occupational group.³ Thus the "necessary evil" was sustained by the social and economic realities that many men and women faced, and nowhere was this more evident than in the music halls.

The apparent *dolce vita* of prostitution vexed moral reformers who feared that respectable working girls would envy the advantages that were accorded the prostitute, and would seek to emulate her. And there were comparative advantages, as Judith Walkowitz points out:

The standard of living of prostitution was perceptibly higher than other working women. A prostitute, even a sailor's woman, could earn the weekly wages of a respectable working woman in a day, at a shilling a "shot." Prostitutes had a room of their own; they dressed better; they had spending money and access to the pub,

¹ William Acton, *Prostitution* (1857) 2nd edition, ed Peter Fryer (London: MacGibbon and Kee Ltd., 1968), pp. 38 and 177 respectively.

² "Prostitution in Relation to the National Health," *Westminster Review*, 92 (1869), p. 185.

³ B.R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 60, Table C, 1871. As quoted in E.M. Sigsworth and T.J. Wyke, "A Study of Victorian Prostitution and Venereal Disease," *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington, 1972), p. 79.

the principal facility in the working class neighbourhood that provided heat, light, cooked food, and conviviality.⁴

Like the pub, the music hall served as an even more glamorous venue, where the visibility of the prostitute made her advantages glaringly apparent to the toiling domestic, factory worker or shop girl. Edward W. Thomas of the London Female Preventive and Reformatory Institution noted in his work, *Twenty Five Years' Labour Among the Friendless and Fallen*, that the relationship between working girls and the music hall was one that invariably would lead into depravity and vice, caused by "low wages for long hours of toil; liberty to spend their evenings as they choose; the allurements of the music hall, and the fact that moral probity is not essential to their calling."⁵ William Acton, in his influential work, *Prostitution*, was concerned over the effect that prostitutes would have on, not only single women, but married ones as well. He stated:

My chief interest lay in considering the effect produced on married women by becoming accustomed at these reunions to witness the vicious and profligate sisterhood flaunting it gaily, or 'first-rate', in their language -- accepting all the attentions of men, freely plied with liquor, sitting in the best places, dressed far above their station, with plenty of money to spend, and denying themselves no amusement or enjoyment, encumbered with no domestic ties, and burdened with no children.⁶

Contemporary commentators, however, saw prostitution as a moral descent rather than as an occupational choice. Frequently the music hall was cited as an avenue which precipitated that fall from virtue to vice; the corrupting influences of immoral entertainments on

⁴ Judith Walkowitz, "The Making of An Outcast Group, Prostitutes and Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Plymouth and Southampton," *A Widening Sphere, Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 76.

⁵ Edward W. Thomas, *Twenty Five Years' Labour Among the Friendless and Fallen*, (London: Shaw and Co., 1886), p. 116.

⁶ Acton, pp. 54-55.

working-class girls made them easy targets for prowling *roves*. J. Ewing Ritchie, in *Days and Nights in London*, related the incidence of a girl who went to the music hall with an omnibus conductor who proceeded to get her drunk and take advantage of her. Ritchie admonished: "I need not ask the reader to say what became of her. Let him question the unfortunate women who crowd the leading thoroughfares of a night how they became to be what they are."⁷ While this declamation on the moral evils of music hall may seem a little melodramatic, Peter Bailey observes that a similar fate awaited the unemployed bar maid: "When her novelty as the siren of the bar wore off, she was likely to be dismissed, and numerous personal testimonies to prison chaplains and police court missionaries were adduced to demonstrate how easy was the subsequent descent to prostitution."⁸ Thomas related how one prostitute was killed by her client (another omnibus driver), after a debauched evening which included a visit to the music hall.⁹ The enemies of the halls were generally convinced that in the words of one of their number, they were mostly "anterooms to the brothels."¹⁰ Indeed, at Wilton's in the East End, the gallery could be entered only through the brothel inside which the hall was built.¹¹ The music hall, designated as a "house of meeting" for "assignation and solicitation" was assailed not only for catering to

⁷ J. Ewing Ritchie, *Days and Nights in London*, (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1880), pp. 47-48.

⁸ Peter Bailey, "Parasexuality and Glamour: the Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype," *Gender and History*, 2 (1990), p. 163.

⁹ Thomas, p. 45.

¹⁰ As quoted in Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 167-68.

¹¹ D.F. Cheshire, *Music Hall in Britain*, (Newton Abbott: David Charles (Holdings) Ltd., 1974), p. 38.

prostitutes, but also for cultivating an environment that was conducive to creating prostitutes.

Social investigators often had difficulty in distinguishing the "morally lax" woman from the professional prostitute. Dress and manner was not a dependable indicator of the prostitute's calling, especially when her style was copied by envious "respectable girls." What is made clear in contemporary commentary are certain class-based assumptions in the behaviours that marked a prostitute. The geography of certain London music halls, especially the kind of clientele that could be found there, served as a cynosure in the detection of prostitutes. Henry Mayhew, in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-1862), devised six categories of prostitutes: 1) kept mistresses and prima donas; 2) convives, both independent and those subject to mistresses who provided board and dress; 3) low lodging house women; 4) sailors' and soldiers' women; 5) park women; 6) thieves' women. The sympathy or censure extended to prostitutes by writers of the day often depended on where the prostitute worked. The experience of the East End prostitute was often depicted in lurid detail, but it was more comprehensible when it was contained within the environs of the lower classes. The more fashionable West End prostitute posed an entirely different kind of threat to the upper ranks of society, yet she, too, was seen as an invariable element of *bon vivant* society. This attitude found increasing expression from the supporters of the CD Acts: some members of Parliament and local government, as well as the military, the medical profession and the police forces responsible for the enforcement. Thus, the discourses on prostitution are not as limited in scope as most anti-vice propaganda.

The East and West End Prostitute: A View from Within and Without

The prospect of the risqué, whether in the form of "earthy" entertainments and "female shamelessness" or the more accessible embodiment, the prostitute, all contributed to the popularity and prosperity of music hall from the lowest establishment to the grandest incarnation. Perhaps the meanest pretenders to the appellation of music hall could be found in the environs of the Ratcliff Highway and the London Docks. So, too, could the dregs of whoredom. Kellow Chesney asserts that "a few dockside music halls may have been almost as dedicated to prostitutes and their followers as a Ratcliff Highway dance room or Kate Hamilton's."¹² Edward W. Thomas made this connection clear in his travels amongst the "friendless and fallen." He observed that:

In the east end of London, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the docks, it is not too much to say these [music halls] are arranged to suit the peculiarities of their frequenters, namely sailors, harlots and crimps. Ratcliff Highway is thickly studded with these resorts." He continued: "Of the female portion of the audience it could be seen at a glance - nor was there any attempt at concealment - every one was a fallen woman Many were remarkably well-clothed as far as material went. The number of females greatly exceeded that of males, which was explained by the fact that the ships then in dock were comparatively few."¹³

This particular form of prostitute, the "sailor's wife," attached herself to a single sailor while he was in port, and lived exclusively off his wages until he returned to sea. She then returned to regular prostitution for her means of existence. Thomas further attested to her primary role within the dockside music hall: "In all things prominence seemed to rest with

¹² Kellow Chesney, The Anti-Society, An Account of the Victorian Underworld (Boston: Gambit Inc., 1970), p. 340.

¹³ Thomas, p. 95, 37.

the females"; the master of ceremonies was unable to establish order as the prostitute's presence determined the overall behaviour of the hall.¹⁴ As the dirge-like perils of the sea were sung by these music hall patrons, they were followed by a "reckless and riotous chorus," expressive of the "spree" on shore again.¹⁵ In many respects, the prostitute was the tangible expression of this "spree" while in port, with the music hall serving as the medium.

The 1876 lithograph by Alfred Concanen of the Gunboat, a Ratcliff music hall, shows the predominance of sailors, and suggests the presence of prostitutes. The number of women displaying "free and easy" behaviour, drinking and sitting in the laps of men, are proportionate to that of the number of males (see Appendix 4.1). In Fred Barnard's depiction of an East End gallery audience in the 1860s, we also see a number of sailors, and a young, rather coy-looking woman is in the foreground eyeing a soldier, although she is presumably accompanied by the bored gentleman with his arm around her. It should be noted that a policeman can be seen in the background keeping watch over the audience (see Appendix 4.2).

William Acton had also embarked on a tour of the Ratcliff Highway halls, accompanied by a police escort. He observed of the audience that "the majority were men, but these were in many instances accompanied by wives and sweethearts ... some were prostitutes, but many were married women, according to the belief of my informants."¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 38.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 40-41.

¹⁶ Acton, p. 54.

The distinction between a "sailor's wife" and a regular prostitute is clearly more evident in Thomas' account than that of Acton. Perhaps this can be explained in that Acton's informants were Captain Harris, Assistant Commissioner of Police, and two inspectors and a superintendent. These men would have had a greater familiarity with working class and seamen's particular "marriage" arrangements, and a personal knowledge of individual prostitutes and their relationships.

Solicitation commingled with flirtation; venal sex with promiscuity. Only the most obvious public indiscretions were censured by officials. This ambivalent attitude towards the existence of prostitution in music halls is seen in an 1891 Inspector's report to the London County Council in the audience of the Canterbury in South London: "I saw none that I should consider to be prostitutes The audience were principally tradespeople, and their wives, working men, lads and girls I did not observe any persons whose behaviour would mark them as prostitutes."¹⁷

While Inspectors may have had difficulty in identifying prostitutes, the audience would certainly have been aware of those among their community who were prostitutes. Ritchie observed that when a comic singer claimed to have spotted some prostitutes in the audience -- the "naughty ones" he called them -- the "allusion was received with laughter."¹⁸

¹⁷ As quoted in Susan Pennybacker, "It was not what she said but the way in which she said it: The London County Council and the Music Halls," ed. Peter Bailey, Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 129.

¹⁸ Ritchie, p. 51

Bracebridge Hemming and police authorities stated that Stepney prostitutes readily integrated themselves into the social life of the neighbourhood.¹⁹ Judith Walkowitz's studies of the subject has led her to conclude that the labouring poor were of different minds on the issue of prostitutes. She writes: "Some saw prostitution as a threatening and illegitimate form of social behaviour. Others came to understand and tolerate prostitution as one of a series of strategies adopted by women to survive, even though it was not an option officially sanctioned by the poor community."²⁰

Although the upper class rake was characterized as both a creator and client of prostitutes, men from the lower ranks of society also availed themselves of the services of prostitutes. The social demography of both East and West End halls became increasingly amorphous as the appeals of music hall were "popularized." William Acton perceived "the spread of immorality both in the East and West End of London with the tremendous increase in the numbers of music halls."²¹ He saw the same "mingling of vicious with presumably respectable women" at the Alhambra and other music halls of the West End just as he did in the Ratcliff Highway.²² The moral reformer F.N. CARRINGTON, in *The Battle of Music Halls*, noticed changes in the patronage of Lusby's Music Hall in the East End.

¹⁹ "Prostitution in London," in *London Labour and the London Poor*, ed. Henry Mayhew, 1861 (New York: Dover, 1968), IV, pp. 226-32. As quoted in Walkowitz, p. 77.

²⁰ Walkowitz, p. 78.

²¹ Acton, p. 55.

²² Ibid.

He observed groups of "young inexperienced clerks" and the "West End types of customer" among the crowds of local tradesmen, labourers and sailors coming and going from the hall.²³

"Stumming" had its working-class equivalent in the form of the "cheap seats" available in the West End halls. "East Enders" therefore had the opportunity to "rub elbows" with London's elite in the palatial surroundings of such halls as the Empire and the Alhambra. The London music hall had moved into the West End in 1861, with the opening of the Pavilion and the Oxford. The proliferation of young clerks in such audiences is of passing interest in the discussion of music hall "attractions."

Peter Bailey has discussed the sexual identification of the clerk with the "swell" in his essay "Champagne Charlie." Citing letters to the *Daily Telegraph* of the 1860s on the plight of the "Young Man of the Day," he noted that the young clerk would enjoy vicariously the potential sexual exploits of the narcissistic "swell" which were denied him due to the limited contacts with females of his own station due to parental control, economic reasons for deferring marriage and his being "too wary, too impecunious, or too inhibited to avail himself of a prostitute's services."²⁴ This explanation, however, fails to consider that the music hall facilitated encounters with prostitutes, and that "young inexperienced clerks" did

²³ As quoted in P. Summerfield, "Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall, 1870-1914," ed. John M. MacKenzie, Imperialism and Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 23.

²⁴ Peter Bailey, "Champagne Charlie: Performance and Ideology in the Music Hall Swell Song," ed. J.S. Bratton, Music Hall, Performance and Style (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 62.

indeed enjoy liaisons with prostitutes. Although Ritchie blamed the downfall of the clerk on his desire to "ape" the swell of the music hall,²⁵ he also noted further inducements into depravity:

By the light of the gas he sees not how painted are the wretched women dressed in silks and satins, with hollow cheeks and hands bedecked with imitation jewellery. Under the influence of liquor and music and bad company, the careful training of the home is undone ... led away by "the strange woman," goeth after her "straightaway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction stalks."²⁶

A popular song of the period outlines the "uptown" experience of "John the Masher" on his Saturday half-holiday, which attests not only to class pretensions but to the presence of prostitutes as well:

I'm a Street up the Standity, care in my handity,
 Doing the grandity Sweller,
 Very much Baronty, See Nelly Farrenly,
 Short dresses and boots rather tall
 Awfully rollicking, fearfully frolicking,
 Number one Masher

But now I'm a cute wide awakeity, others' views takeity,
 Up to each racketty sweller,
 Queer in my speechity, very knee breechity,
 Stammer and stutter and dwell,
 Flowers of rareity round Leicester Squareity,
 A pushity shoveity loveity doveity
 Hottest young Masher of all.

But now I'm a don't care a figity, awfully bigity,
 Wonderful collarly feller,
 Five o'clock teaity, weak at the kneesity, a
 Kersington Gardery sweller;
 Bertie and Gusty, from university, do, dear boy, give us a call,

²⁵ J. Ewing Ritchie, The Night Side of London (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1869), p. 81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

A slasherty, dasherty, casherty masherty
Mashiest Masher of all.²⁷

Mimicking the swell, ("the Crutch and Toothpick" brigade of which Nelly Farren sang), was a popular theme in music hall programs, but part of this mimicking behaviour included picking up prostitutes. It was common knowledge that prostitution was rampant in the areas of Piccadilly, Regent Street, the Strand and Leicester Square. The "flowers of rarity round Leicester Squareity" were not the buds of untouched maidenhood, but prostitutes. The fringe elements of middle class society, medical and law students, bohemians, "swell" and "masher," "plucked their petals" after an evening at London's most celebrated halls found in the vicinity. Dollymops, or amateurs, who exchanged their services for an evening at these more fashionable halls and an oyster supper,²⁸ could be found amongst the professionals who were notorious for displaying their charms and soliciting attention along the music hall promenades. Ritchie stated that the "nearer you approach the West End ... there is more than one music hall I could name which is little better than a place of assignation and rendezvous for immoral women, and where you may see them standing by the refreshment bars soliciting a drink from all who pass."²⁹ Thomas, however, was more reserved in his assessment of the presence of prostitutes in the large West End halls: "I would not say that all the females were immoral characters, but I can affirm that I have seen

²⁷ As quoted in Ronald Pearsall, The Women in the Bud, the World of Victorian Sexuality (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1969), pp. 43-44. Pearsall attributes this song to Charles Godfrey, circa 1882.

²⁸ Chesney, p. 324.

²⁹ Ritchie, Days and Nights in London, p. 76.

several hundreds there at one time, and all with one common object, namely that of pursuing their dreadfully demoralizing traffic."³⁰

Lyrical references to prostitutes in music hall songs suggests that intercourse with prostitutes was an acknowledged part of the social milieu of the halls. The audience would be "in" on the joke, when, for example, Harry Champion warned the unsuspecting husband of the pecuniary pursuits of some of the ladies of Leicester Square.

If you're going up as far as Leicester Square
You'll find a lot of tricky females there
It will all be U.P. when your face they gaze upon,
They're sure to wad a bit of your overtime,
So take your umbrella with you, John.³¹

The geographical identification is important to interpretation of the text, as music hall semiotics depended on common place knowledge; in this case, Leicester Square is the symbol of West End prostitution.

In many respects, the West End prostitute compliments the characterization of the swell in music hall song. Her visibility is exaggerated by her "sham" glamour and social conceit, as evidenced in the following lyric:

I say, lads, have you seen my Molly?
Have you seen her chignon made of artificial hair?
I say, lads, have you seen my Molly?
She is a little beauty, and the pet of Leicester Square.

³⁰ Thomas, p. 97.

³¹ As quoted in S. Theodore Felstead, The Stars Who Made the Halls. A Hundred Years of English Humour, Harmony and Hilarity (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd. 1946), pg. 43.

She wears a mantle, dress and shawl,
That cost a crown complete,
And sports the new Flexura Boot,
They sell in Oxford Street.³²

The connection between the swell and the prostitute is expressed in the Harrington and LeBrunn song of the late 1880s entitled "The Belles of London." In a similar vein to the theme of the dominant wife or working girl who subverts the attention of males, the prostitute gets the better of the swell:

Have you heard the London Belles
Singing 'Ding-Dong' to the swells?
Not the bells in the steeples high;
But the ones around the 'Cri'
You'll find the belles in hundreds there,
Wearing other people's hair;
Once, I went, dressed like a Prince -
I've been 'storey' ever since!

Chorus: Oh! The belles of London Town!
Ding-dong! I've been undone!
Clipped and stripped, and dipped, and whipped
By the belles of London!

Maudie was the first, and she
Wang the changes nice on me;
Kissed me twice - then, with a grin,
Said 'Goodnight', stole my gold pin!
Soon, another petting, Flo',
Said 'Cū! dear, I love you so!
And this belle, this charming thing,
From my finger wlang my ring!³³

³² As quoted in Pearsall, p. 347. Pearsall notes that the slipper, shoe or boot was symbolic of the vagina.

³³ As quoted in J.S. Bratton, The Victorian Popular Ballad (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1975), pp. 169-70. The "Belles of London", by Harrington and LeBrunn, performed by T.W. Barrett in the late 1880s.

The "belles" in this song, like "Molly of Leicester Square," are readily identified not only by location, but also by the reference to their false hair, which in turn is indicative of the art of deception practised on "poor unsuspecting males." Allusions to the West End prostitute in song are generally of this playful nature, wherein the male is "tricked," or more explicitly in "The Belles of London," "clipped and stripped, and dipped, and whipped," by the deceitful demi-mondes. However, it should be noted that songs that refer to prostitutes are, by and large, from the male point of view. An exception to this can be found in the lyrical representation of the East End prostitute. In "The Matron's Story" (although written by George Sims) the life of the prostitute is in no way glamorized; indeed its pathos and shock value would be all the more acute when performed by a woman. As with many of Sim's ballads, the suffering and abused woman, in this case a prostitute, is the means through which he can morally obviate the attractions of prostitution. The most expeditious way of accomplishing this imperative is to change the geography from the "fashionable part of town" to a "filthy slum" -- "the Devil's place." The Molly of "the Matron's Story" is not the pretty demi-monde we saw in Leicester Square. She is brought to a midnight refuge, drunk,

Her face was flushed and swollen, and a blow had cut her eye,
And the blood that had oozed unnoticed on her cheek was caked and dry.³⁴

When Molly attacks and injures the chaplain, throwing a hymnal at his face, he in turn symbolically offers his right cheek, and instructs that her wounds should be dressed. Both Molly and the chaplain now have visible scars. Molly "went back to the awful outcasts with whom such women herd"; and is not heard of for five years, until one night when the

³⁴ George R. Sims, "The Matron's Story," Dagonet Ballads (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd. 1909), p. 66.

"mission of love and mercy" goes down to "an awful place down East - To a den where the lowest women herd with the vilest thieves." When the chaplain is attacked by the jeering crowd, a woman saves him and calls the police. We learn this is Molly, who pays her debt to the chaplain and now works as a matron in the refuge. This sensationalized account gives voice to the "noble whore" or "soiled dove" theme: her depravity and demoralization have their roots in poverty and exploitation.

This theme is reiterated in another Sims ballad entitled "Two Women." Here the distinction between the life of an East End prostitute and her West End counterpart is made glaringly apparent. Interestingly there is little sympathy extended to the preacher of the midnight meeting, an Earl, who tries to "scare" the East End prostitute out of her trade with a "scolding sermon." His exhortations on her sinful life lead the prostitute to commit suicide by jumping into the river. The meeting that brought together "the wretched warriors who sin for a crust to eat," is contrasted with a different kind of midnight meeting - "a ball in a Western square." Here we learn of the "evil fame" of the beautiful Countess May, who engages in an adulterous liaison with a prince. Sims expresses the hypocritical class-based attitudes that are extended to these "Two Women." He states of the Countess May:

She is crowned with the world's fresh roses; no tongue has a word of blame;
But the woman who falls from hunger is a thing too foul to name.
She is blessed who barter her honour just for a prince's smile.
The vice of the Court is charming, and the vice of the alley vile.³⁵

Sims makes it clear with whom his sympathies lie: "I'd rather be that drowned harlot than the beautiful Countess May." Presumably, the less-aristocratic members of the audience

³⁵ George R. Sims, "Two Women," Lagonet Ballads (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1909), p. 31.

could enjoy a sense of moral superiority in identifying with the hardships faced by the "noble whore," as well as the "crafty harlot" who undermines would-be swells. One can only speculate how the prostitute in the audience would have reacted to her reflection in "Demos' Mirror." However, her inclusion in the repertoire of music hall song themes, does suggest an acceptance of her presence as a *de facto* part of urban life. Whether she is depicted as a comic exploiter of men or a pathetic victim of exploitation by men, was largely dependent on where she practiced prostitution, with its concomitant class biases.

Quite apart from these distinctions, it is clear prostitutes were an integral part of both East and West end audiences, along with married women and single working girls. Yet, her presence was not strictly that of a passive patron; she was also an active solicitor within the halls. In this context, the proprietors of the halls materially benefitted from the business she drew in. The interdependence of prostitutes and proprietors in the East End was identified by Thomas who concluded: "It is a fact which cannot be gainsayed that the publican of such districts are in a sense dependent for the success of their business on the touting of harlots, and harlotry would be at a heavy discount in Ratcliff Highway without its public-houses and music halls."³⁶ Comparable observations would also be made of the prevalence of prostitutes in the West End music halls. Just as Thomas had noted the reciprocal relationship between prostitutes and music halls in the East End, Ritchie expressed a similar view on how big West End halls capitalized on the presence of prostitutes: "Such music halls are amongst the most successful of them all, and the

³⁶ Thomas, p. 96.

proprietors reap the golden harvest.³⁷ Thomas observed that the public authorities were well aware that these music halls were an "open market for immorality [where] hundreds of assignations are nightly made."³⁸ He suggested that "if the magistrates entrusted with the responsible power of granting licenses to those establishments ... would only acquaint themselves by personal observation with the real character of these places ... no doubt that a very large number of those who now so easily obtain licenses would find their applications met by stern refusals."³⁹ As pressure groups that advocated such restrictions gained political momentum, music hall proprietors began to search for alternative methods of "reaping the golden harvest" of music hall profitability.

One of the public authorities charged with keeping prostitutes in check were the metropolitan police -- a monumental task when one considers the sheer numbers of women engaged in prostitution either on a part-time or full-time basis. Regulated prostitution introduced in 1864 in garrison and port towns was overseen by a special police task force. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the police did not view the suppression of prostitution as a high priority. After all, the "necessary evil" was recognized and overseen by the government, albeit on a limited basis; furthermore prostitution was not an actual crime in itself. Sir Richard Mayne, Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the 1850s and 1860s, was willing to tolerate prostitution in music halls on the grounds that prostitutes were to be found in all public places and that barring them from the halls would

³⁷ Ritchie, p. 17.

³⁸ Thomas, p. 97.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 98.

in no way contribute to solving the problem.⁴⁰ However, repealers of the Contagious Diseases Act had demonstrated their unwavering determination to put an end to the government's policy of "sanctioned vice," and had appealed to the greater moral sensibilities of both politicians and the general public in the debate over prostitution. Their moral fervour was also channelled into an attack on the music halls in the 1870s and 1880s, which, it was perceived, also tacitly "sanctioned vice." The complicity of the police in this matter was openly challenged by moral reformers, and their opprobrium found its practical expression in a campaign to place licensing restrictions on music hall proprietors who turned a blind eye to prostitution. Middlesex Magistrates had complained to the Home Secretary (the overseer of the CD Acts) about the moral atmosphere of the music hall, and particularly of the laxity of the police officers who did not prosecute the main offenders, that is, comic singers on the stage and prostitutes in the body of the halls.⁴¹ But as Peter Bailey has pointed out, "chief constables had few complaints about the conduct of the halls, and caterers could often be sure of police testimony to the good order of their establishments when their license was challenged."⁴²

⁴⁰ As quoted in Dagmar Hoher, "The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850 - 1900," ed. Peter Bailey, Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 74. Pearsall notes that "the police divided whores into three basic kinds - well-dressed prostitutes in brothels, prostitutes walking the streets and prostitutes in low neighbourhoods (the "morts"). Arrests were infrequent." p. 251.

⁴¹ As quoted in Lois Rutherford, "Managers in a Small Way: The Professionalization of Variety Artists, 1860-1914," ed. Peter Bailey, Music Hall: the Business of Pleasure (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 101.

⁴² Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 164.

Many halls did lose their licences either on moral grounds or through less overt strategies directed at their alcohol licenses. The Cosmotheca, Bell Street, Edward Road, lost its license in 1869 and was refused again in 1873 "on complaint of the police that young prostitutes and children of tender years were admitted."⁴³ In 1874, the police opposed the granting of a license to the Oxford because, as they put it, "women had been admitted without men."⁴⁴ Penelope Summerfield has noted that youthful prostitution was often cited as grounds of refusing licenses to many small local halls in the 1860s. She asserted that there is reason to believe that "for some young women it was one of the few ways in which they could obtain admission money."⁴⁵ The more infamous Argyll Rooms of Great Windmill Street were denied their music and dancing license in 1878, although the owner, Robert Bignall reopened the premises four years later as a music hall known as the Trocadero Palace. Thomas saw the Argyll Room closure as a real victory: "every friend of true morality will rejoice to know that at the autumnal meeting of the Middlesex Magistrates, when all applications for licenses for public-houses, music-halls, and casinos were presented, several applicants were firmly and distinctly refused"⁴⁶ Other dancing rooms to lose their licenses were the Highbury Barn in 1870 and the *Camerne* in 1871. Sara Wright's performance of the *Colonna Quzdrille* at the Alhambra towards the close of the 1860s is but one example how "immoral entertainments" could shut down a hall. Her dance, performed in a very short skirt, led Emily Soldene to observe that the verb "to kick,

⁴³ As quoted in Summerfield, p. 216.

⁴⁴ As quoted in Hoher, p. 74.

⁴⁵ Summerfield, p. 22.

⁴⁶ Thomas, p. 184.

had never been so actively conjugated before," and the Middlesex Magistrates were so horrified that they took away the Albambra's license.⁴⁷

In 1888 the London County Council was granted magisterial licensing powers by the Local Government Act, and in the early 1890s a Theatres and Music Hall Committee was created by the Council to investigate license applications. The same kind of licensing restrictions that the Middlesex Magistrates used against Sara Wright's (known as "Wiry Sal") performance, were employed by the London County Council. "Mr. Punch's Model Music Hall" could not resist satirizing this kind of censorship. In a piece entitled "Poetic Licences" (A Vision in the Near Future) the scene is set as follows: a committee room of the LCC, sub-committee of censors (appointed under new regulations to report on all songs intended to be sung on the music-hall stage). The song is a pastoral ballad, and the lines objected to are: "Lighthearted were all the young lambs, They kicked up their legs as they frolicked-":

3rd Censor. If that is intended to be done on the stage,

I protest most strongly - a highly indecorous exhibition!

Mr. Wheedler. But they're only lambs!

3rd Censor. Lambs indeed! We are determined to put down all kicking in Music-hall songs, no matter who does it! Strike that line out.⁴⁸

"Wiry Sal" was but one of the first lambs sacrificed on the licensing altar.

⁴⁷ M. Willson Disher, Winkles and Champagne, Comedies and Tragedies of the Music Hall (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1938), p. 94. See also Felstead, p. 28.

⁴⁸ F. Anstey, "Poetic Licences," The Young Reciter and Model Music-Hall. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1897), pp. 122-123.

The membership of the Theatres and Music Hall Committee included such imposing figures as the cousin of the moral reformer F.N. Charrington, Spencer Charrington -- a Conservative MP with a comparable zeal for arresting vice. The Committee set about employing a group of inspectors to survey music hall performances and audiences, "especially the female portion"⁴⁹ Performers were appalled at the thought of LCC censorship. One proposal called for the Council to license individual persons on the stage, rather than the halls, prompting singer Charles Coburn to condemn what he termed a "Literary Contagious Diseases Act."⁵⁰ In addition to the uproar that the Contagious Diseases Acts incited in Parliament, it should be recalled that two parliamentary select Committees (in 1866 and in 1892) were appointed to investigate the subject of music hall licenses and the presence of prostitutes. The London County Council did refuse licenses to music halls based on their inspectors' reports. For example, the Rose and Crown in the East End was refused on moral grounds in 1890. Inspectors also took it upon themselves to make useful suggestions within their reports. An 1890 inspector's account of The Collins

⁴⁹ As quoted in Pennybacker, p. 127.

⁵⁰ Parliamentary Papers, Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment, HC 1892, (240) XVIII, as quoted in Pennybacker, p. 124.

in Islington. Green suggested "that all London halls might require women to be seated at all times in order to improve the character of the halls."⁵¹

The mobility of women within the halls provided the opportunity for active solicitation, and contributed to perhaps the most famous licensing controversy -- that of the Empire in Leicester Square. The insouciant manner of high-profile prostitutes, perambulating along the Empire's promenade, so incensed Mrs. Ormiston Chant of The National Vigilance Committee, that she spearheaded the opposition to the renewal of the Empire's license at the October 1894 session of the London County Council. The Council recommended the closure of the promenade upon hearing testimony from interested parties who supported Mrs. Chant. A Mr. Collins, described as a tea merchant in London and Liverpool, deposed that he had gone to the Empire nearly twenty times during the last three months, and on one occasion counted well-nigh 180 women of objectionable character. The Empire was, he thought, notoriously a show place for that kind of thing.⁵² (Mr. Collins' regular attendance at the Empire would seem to suggest a more prurient than pritanical interest!) A Nonconformist Minister, the Reverend La Pia of Haringay also appeared on behalf of the protesting Vigilance Committee. He said he came forward in the "interests of the purity of Music Halls" after seeing notices inviting the public to give evidence. He claimed one night he was accosted at the "Oxford" and counted forty-eight "gay women." There was a "sensational in Court" (literally depicted in *Era*), when he admitted that he hadn't

⁵¹ Theatres and Music Hall Committee, Presented Papers, Collins Music Hall, Islington Green, 1889-1909, 25 August 1890, as quoted in Pennybacker, p. 129.

⁵² D. F. Cheshire, Music Hall in Britain (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1974), p. 39.

actually talked to any of the women but assumed they were 'gay' because of their bearing.⁵³

The Council's ruling to close the promenade was vehemently objected to by the proprietor, George Edwards, who stated this would force the ultimate closure of the music hall and put all his employees out of work. Mrs. Chant vitiated Edward's allegations in the *Daily Telegraph* of 27 October 1894. She argued that "he virtually stated that if the promenade were done away with and the sale of drink stopped in the auditorium, ruin would fall upon the Empire ... We are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that if you take away the market for vice and the sale of drink, the directors will no longer be able to pay the shareholders their enormous dividends."⁵⁴ One of the members of the Council, John Burns, did remind Mrs. Chant that "it was not by narrowing prostitutes that prostitution can be diminished," but only by removing the economic conditions by which it is aggravated.⁵⁵ A compromise of sorts was managed with the building of a screen to close off the promenade from view. Popular opinion was not sympathetic to Mrs. Chant's crusade, evidenced in a popular song and a *Punch* caricature of the day:

⁵³ Daniel Farson, *Marie Lloyd and Music Hall*, (London: Tom Stacy Ltd., 1972), p. 65.

⁵⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 27 October 1894. As quoted in Cheshire, p. 41.

⁵⁵ Harold Scott, *The Early Years* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1946), p. 161.

Prudes on the prow! Boys, down their cant!
 Let us march onwards with this for our chant -
 Let them be puritans! We will be free!⁵⁶

(see Appendix 4.3)

The *Pall Mall Gazette* of 5 November 1894 reported on the "boys march upon the screen." Winston Churchill counted himself among their number.⁵⁷ The paper chronicled the popular reaction:

there was an attack on the canvas which was torn away in strips, and passed throughout the crowd, everyone endeavouring to secure a scrap of it as a souvenir .. then the woodwork of the screen was derelished by vigorous kicks from both sides. The crowd had already cheered itself hoarse, and now began to go out into London, brandishing fragments of the screen ...⁵⁸

Such demonstrations suggest a *de facto* acceptance of the presence of the prostitute by music hall patrons, (notably male), and a rejection of moral meddling into popular amusements.

Anstey said as much in his description of an Empire audience in 1890:

Most of the men are in evening dress, and in the boxes are some ladies, also in evening costume, many of them belonging to what is called good society. The women in the other part of the house are generally pretty obvious members of a class which, so long as it behaves itself with propriety in the building, it would, whatever fanatics may say to the contrary, be neither desirable nor possible to exclude.⁵⁹

MacQueen-Pope, too, had similarly "worldly" reminiscences of those "Ladies of the Empire" where "many learnt a lot about Life."⁶⁰ He mused: "there were all types for all tastes Some of those women met sad ends but, believe it or not, some of them married men they

⁵⁶ As quoted in Pearsall, p. 273.

⁵⁷ See Winston Churchill, *My Early Life*, 1930.

⁵⁸ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 November 1894, as quoted in Cheshire, p. 42.

⁵⁹ Anstey as quoted in R Mander and J. Mitchenson, *British Music Hall*, (1965), pp. 25-26.

⁶⁰ W. MacQueen-Pope, *The Melodies Linger On* (London: W.H. Allen, 1950), p. 235.

had met at the Empire in the way of business and settled down into truly excellent wives and mothers, the author knows of several such cases.⁶¹ Despite MacQueen's rather sexist incredulity, his "first hand" observations would lend credence to Judith Walkowitz's assertion that prostitution was but a temporary stage in many women's lives, prior to getting married.

As we have seen in previous chapters, both married and single women had always attended music halls, and the same was true of prostitutes. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the prostitute was viewed as an unwelcome patron by the music hall proprietor. By the time that Charles Booth published his survey of working-class life in 1902, he could comment that "no encouragement to vice can be attributed to these local [East End] halls,"⁶² and of the West End halls he noted "a measure of improvement may be indicated."⁶³ Booth turned his attention to the excellence of the orchestras at the Alhambra, Empire and Palace which infers that moral questions had either been sufficiently addressed or that the issue was no longer a priority of social investigators.

In many respects, the absence of moral censure in Booth's account attests to the success of the social purity element of the London County Council in purging the music halls of their most infamous patrons. To this end, music hall management, which had previously capitalized on the presence of prostitutes, now began to view them as a "licensing liability." They began to focus their public relations campaign on respectable wives and mothers to

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 24.

⁶² Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People of London, Final Volume (London: MacMillan and Co., 1902), p. 53.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 54.

compliment the "new and improved" bourgeois image of the halls. Invariably, prostitutes continued to frequent their old haunts from the Rauceff Highway to Leicester Square, but the vagaries of their patronage over the years had irrevocably transformed the very nature of the music hall; where there was once fast females, fash and flesh, there was now formula and family fare.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has endeavoured to take some initial steps in uncovering the presence of women in music hall. While far from an exhaustive study, this work only begins to point out the glaring omissions in current historiography. To redress this imbalance, the role of women in the formation of popular culture requires a more detailed analysis beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, I have attempted to demonstrate that women did indeed play a pivotal role in the evolution of music hall culture. Rather than perceiving the presence of women in the halls as a revolutionary moment in the history of popular amusements, I have tried to show that women's patronage in the halls grew out of existing leisure patterns that included both men and women. As the appeal of the halls transcended class restrictions and drew in both working-class and bourgeois audiences, the appeal of the halls for women cannot be overlooked. They, too, entered the "kingdom of leisure" as citizens of the public realm. Their patronage presupposes that the music hall was not an exclusively male world constructed for the sole enjoyment of one sex over the other.

Music hall lyrics and performances attest to the particular attraction the halls held for women. In many respects, the world of music hall was carnivalesque with its gender and class inversions. In this festive atmosphere women wielded considerable power, often at the expense of men: the nagging wife, the unruly working girl and the cunning prostitute thwart

male attempts to control them at every turn. Their reign of misrule did not serve as a mere respite from their politically disenfranchised lives, but also worked to criticize dominant male culture, resulting in new social and sexual constructions of power.

The visibility of women in music hall culture is the source of both comedy and conflict. For married women the caricature of their domestic lives is given full play; their economic struggles necessitated ingenious methods to circumvent improvident husbands. This is the world of Saturday night battles, trips to the pawnshop and the taking in of lodgers. Still, the married woman was not above having a bit of fun, especially when it came to indulging in a pint or two. The single girl's visibility is most clearly seen in her new economic position that facilitated greater opportunities for leisure activities. Moreover, her ability to dress outside her class and exert her social independence serves as the basis for comedic crises as well as moral and sexual speculation over her availability. This is taken to greater extremes in the treatment of prostitutes, both amateur and professional, where her consumerism is seen as the product of venal sex.

The presence of women in music hall proved to be problematic insofar as they refused to conform to male restraints that were imposed on them. The wife increasingly became the focus of attention of music hall public relations campaigns precisely because of her sexual containment within patriarchal culture. The "good/bad" single girl was quite another matter. Perhaps the best example of female unruin can be found in the "girl of the period." She was not averse to challenging the social order and flouting stereotypical expectations placed on her behaviour. Her identification with the musical comedy girl out

on spree, who undermined potential seducers, or the male impersonator who implicitly ridiculed the masculine swagger, were more than harmless jokes poked at the expense of men. It served to renounce her complicity in her own subjugation, and her conviction to reconstruct herself on her own terms.

The prostitute posed another set of problems in the day to day operation of music halls. Her presence was indeed part of the enticement for male patronage but she became the scapegoat for moral reformers who sought to purge the halls of sexually suspect women. Surveillance of women's behaviour grew out of fears over women's sexuality in the public realm. The Contagious Diseases Acts brought this fear to new heights, and the music hall became a target for intervention with assaults made on operating licenses. Women's economic, social, political and sexual lives had a direct bearing on the kinds of entertainment that were offered in the halls. The female experience was indeed reflected in "Demos' Mirror," complementing as well as contradicting the hegemony of the male image. Women's lives contributed to the popularity of music hall as well as the concurrent social and moral questions that their patronage posed. The role of music hall in the history of popular culture can no longer be viewed as strictly a masculine preserve, for as MacQueen-Pope stated, women "wanted to go to Music Hall and they did"

APPENDICES



1.1) "The Rounda, Vauxhall" (circa 1825)
Taken from Maurice Willson Disher, Winkles and Champagne

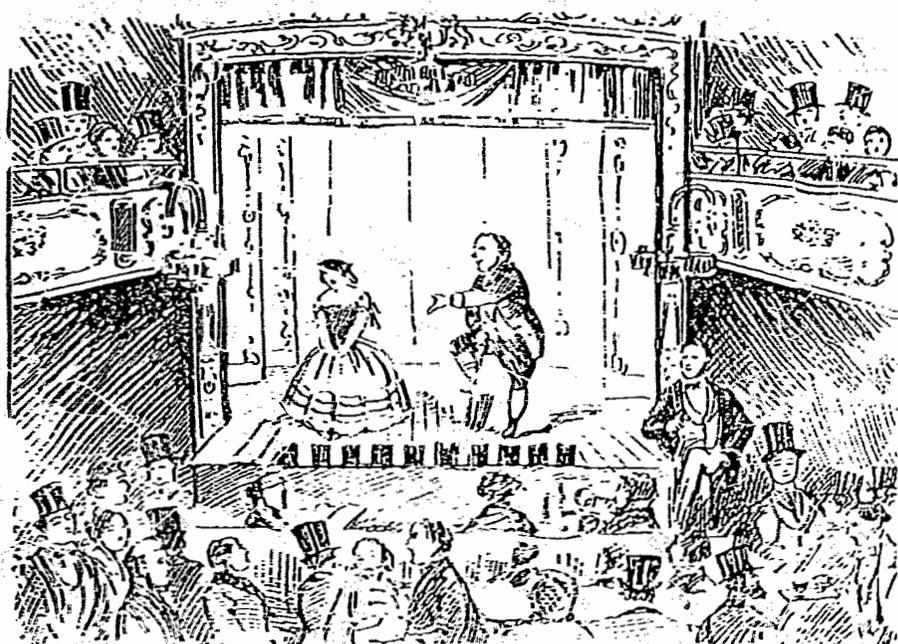


1.2)

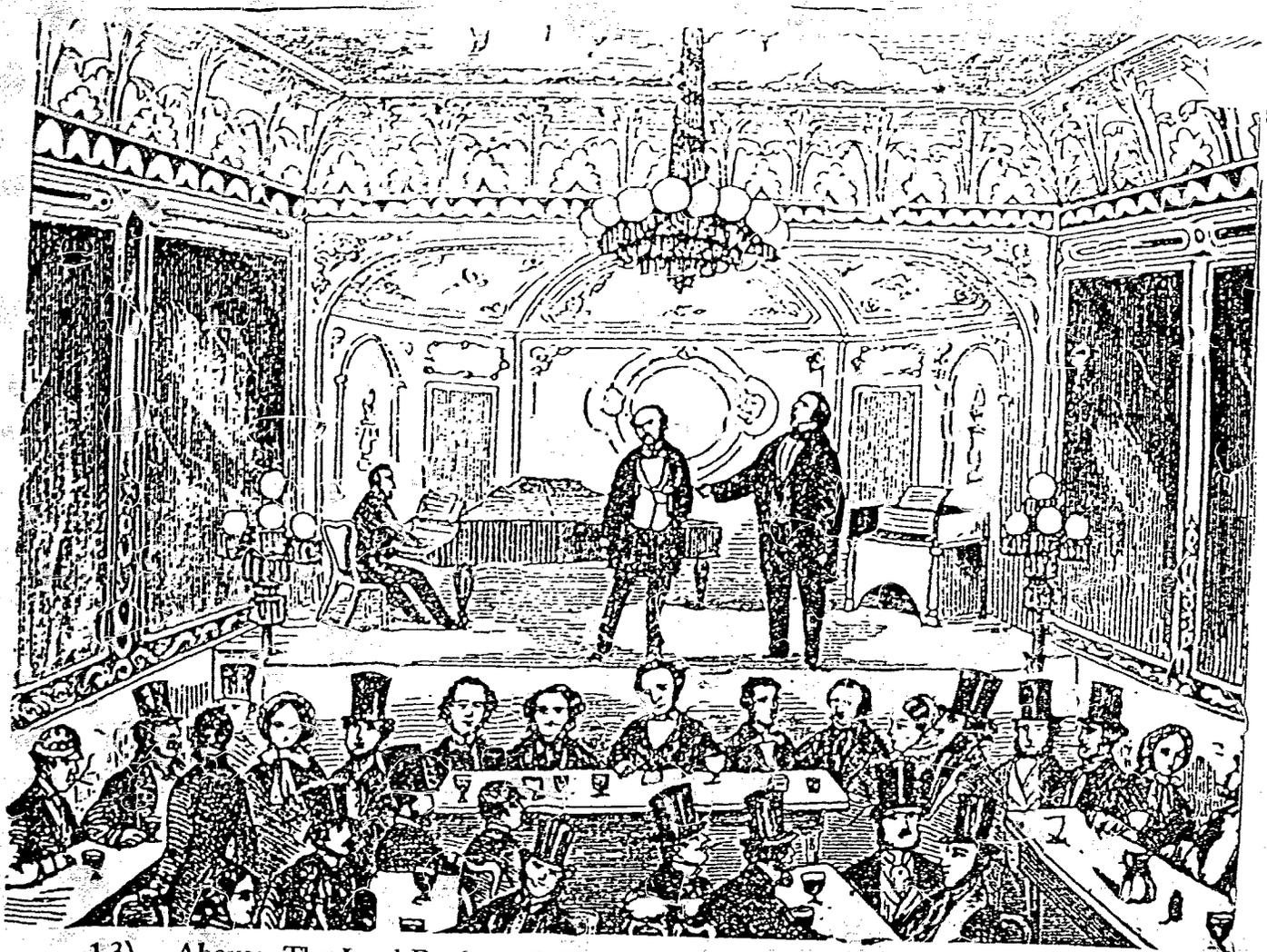
Coopers Concert
Room, Three Tuns,
Fetter Lane, 1835.
Taken from R.
Mander and J.
Mitchenson,
British Music
Hall.



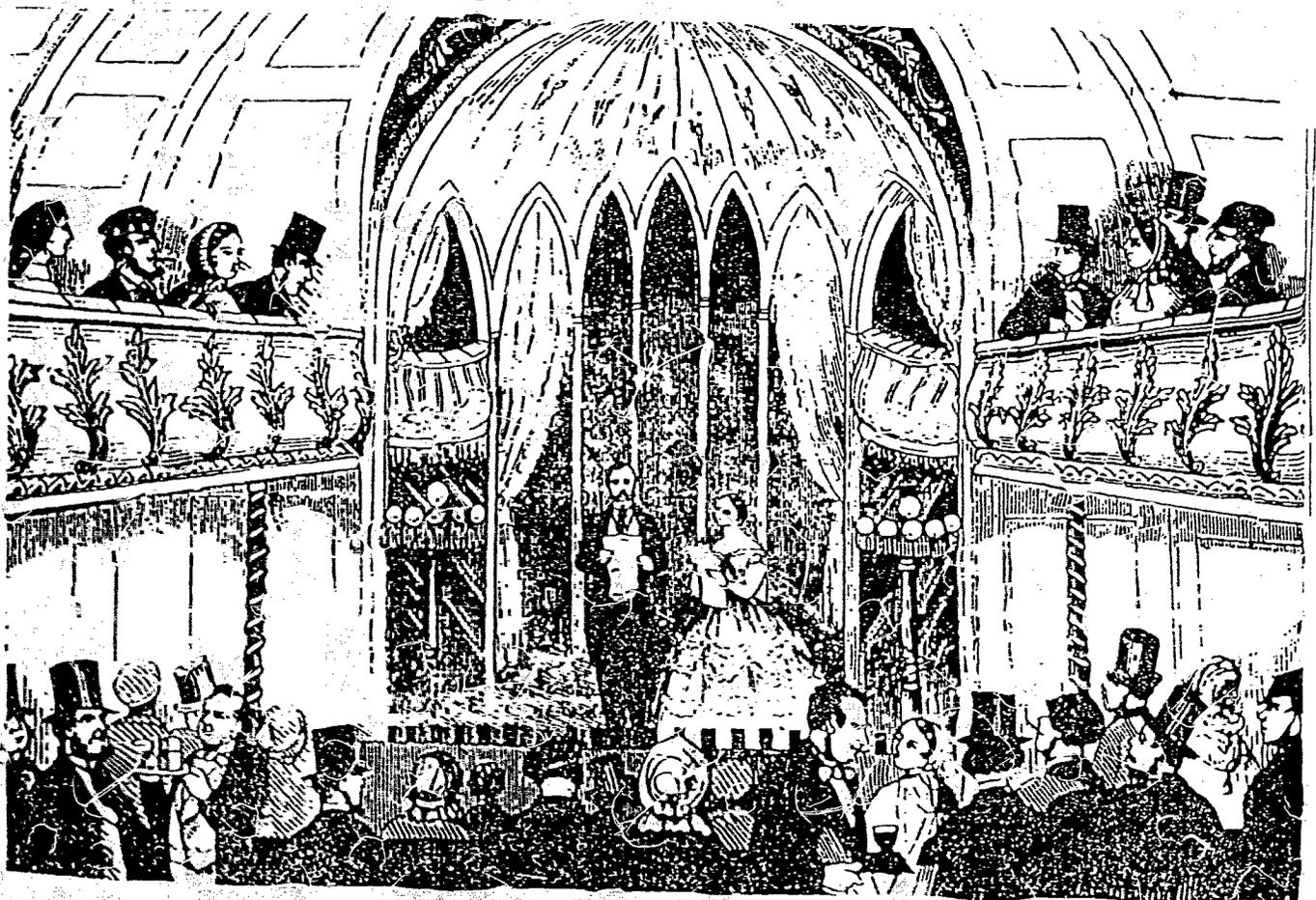
The Old Drury Tavern,
Brydes Street, Strand,
1848. Taken from R.
Mander and J.
Mitchenson, British
Music Hall.



The Mogul Saloon, Drury
Lane, 1853. Became the
Middlesex Music Hall in
1851. Taken from R.
Mander and J.
Mitchenson, British
Music Hall.



1.3) Above: The Lord Raglan, 1857. Below: Wilton's Music Hall, 1859. Taken from Mander and Mitchenson.

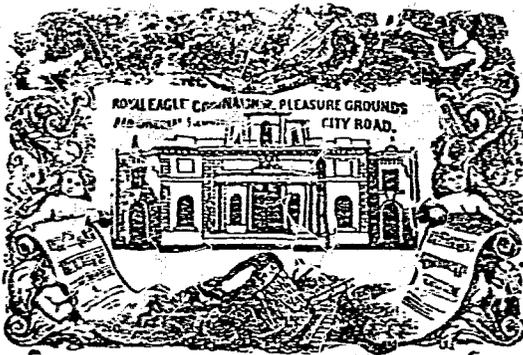




14) Eagle Tavern - Grecian Saloon, Taken from Harold Scott, The Early Doors.

Miss Field Pitt's collection

GROUNDS OF EAGLE TAVERN—GRECIAN SALOON IN BACKGROUND



At this Unequalled Establishment!

WILL BE GIVEN THE EVENING

A GRAND CONCERT

Admission 5s. 6d. - 1s. 6d. - 6d. - 3d. - 1d. - 1/2d. - 1/4d. - 1/8d. - 1/16d. - 1/32d. - 1/64d. - 1/128d. - 1/256d. - 1/512d. - 1/1024d. - 1/2048d. - 1/4096d. - 1/8192d. - 1/16384d. - 1/32768d. - 1/65536d. - 1/131072d. - 1/262144d. - 1/524288d. - 1/1048576d. - 1/2097152d. - 1/4194304d. - 1/8388608d. - 1/16777216d. - 1/33554432d. - 1/67108864d. - 1/134217728d. - 1/268435456d. - 1/536870912d. - 1/1073741824d. - 1/2147483648d. - 1/4294967296d. - 1/8589934592d. - 1/17179869184d. - 1/34359738368d. - 1/68719476736d. - 1/137438953472d. - 1/274877906944d. - 1/549755813888d. - 1/1099511627776d. - 1/2199023255552d. - 1/4398046511104d. - 1/8796093022208d. - 1/17592186044416d. - 1/35184372088832d. - 1/70368744177664d. - 1/140737488355328d. - 1/281474976710656d. - 1/562949953421312d. - 1/1125899906842624d. - 1/2251799813685248d. - 1/4503599627370496d. - 1/9007199254740992d. - 1/18014398509481984d. - 1/36028797018963968d. - 1/72057594037927936d. - 1/144115188075855872d. - 1/288230376151711744d. - 1/576460752303423488d. - 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The Song may be sung in Public without Fee or License Except at Music Halls.

IT'S A GREAT BIG SHAME!

OR
I'M BLOWED
IF 'E CAN CALL
'ISSELF 'IS OWN.

CHORUS
It's a great big shame, an' it's a great big shame,
It's a great big shame, an' it's a great big shame,
Noddin' an' a feller wot is his own,
An' he's not fair, but he's
Obligin' wot's an' a feller wot's an' a feller,
Wot's an' a feller wot's an' a feller,
But it's a pity as he's not an' a feller,
Sinc' he's not an' a feller wot's an' a feller.

Written by
EDGAR BATEMAN,

Composed by
GEA LE BRUNN,

*Sung with
Great Success
By*
EUSELEN.

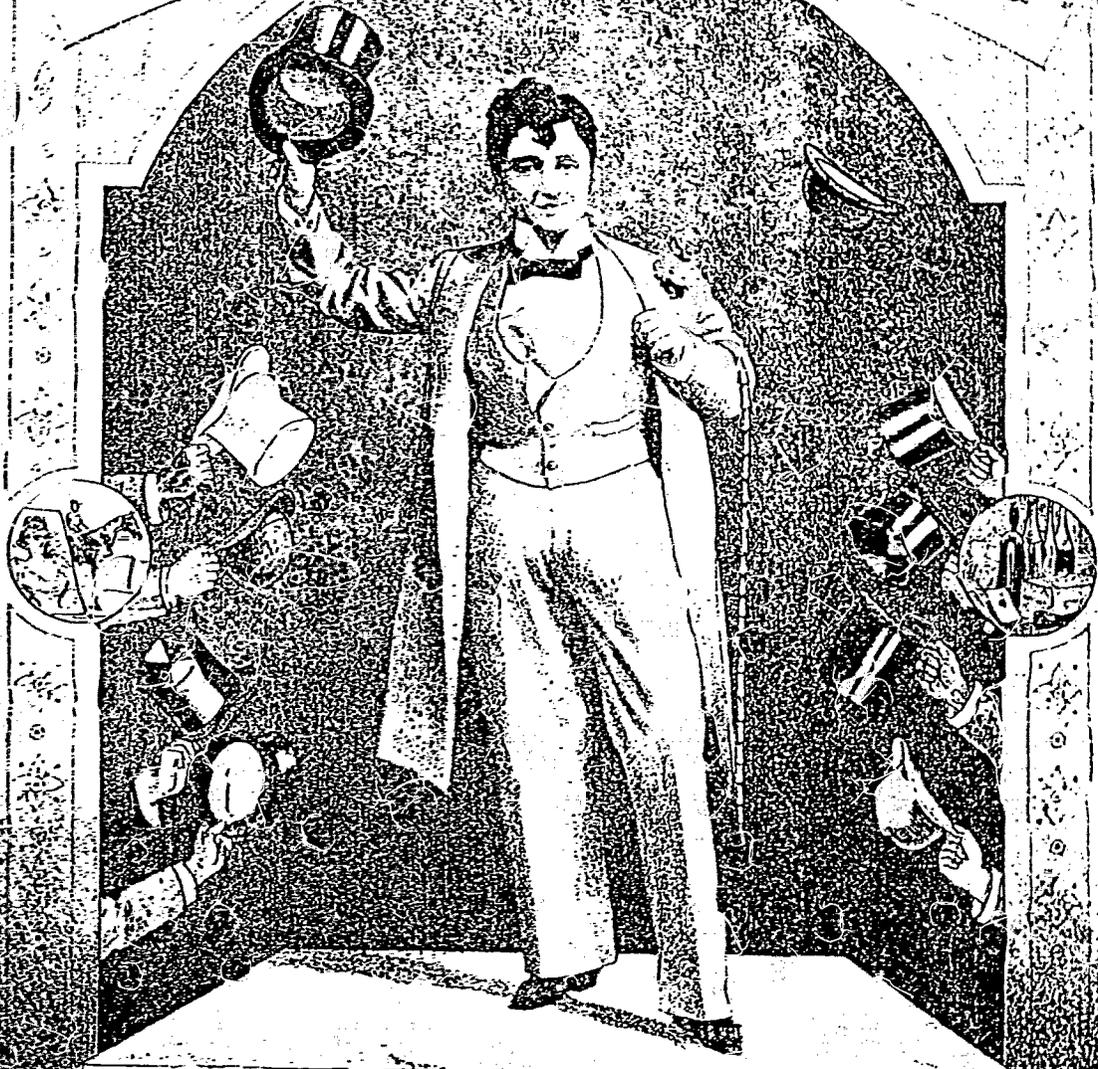
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NEW YORK: 207 NASSAU ST., N.Y.
NEW ORLEANS: 108 EAST 22ND STREET
BOSTON: 100 NASSAU ST., BOSTON, MASS.

2.1) Song cover sheet of "It's A Great Big Shame" taken from ed. Peter Gammond, Music Hall Song Book.



2.2) The song cover sheet for "Me and 'Er" showing the wife's black eye. Taken from Maurice Willson Disher, Winkles and Champagne.

KING OF THE BOYS



WRITTEN BY C. S. LEONARDS AND JAMES MANHILL.
 COMPOSED BY JOSEPH CLEVE.

SUNG BY

MISS FANNY ROBINA

The Original "FAUST UP TO DATE" AT THE GAIETY THEATRE.

LONDON: FRANCIS, DAY & JUNTER, 19, OXFORD ST. W.
 Publishers of: *Smallwood's Celebrated Pianoforte*, *10. 6. Smallwood's 55 Melodion*, *Francis & Co.*
 NEW YORK: B. H. HARRIS & CO. EAST 22ND ST.
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3.1) Fanny Robina, male impersonator. Taken from K. Maeder and J. Mitchenson, British Music Hall.

BEAT
CES
HE
DOWDY
RCH
BY
WILLIAMS



THE DOWDY BOYS



Written by
**TOM CONLEY and
FELIX Mc GLENNON,**
Composed by
FELIX Mc GLENNON,

SUNG
By

**MISS MILLIE
HYLTON**

DAY & HURTER, 108 & 110 ST. LONDON W. 27 EAST 21ST ST. NEW YORK

3.2) Left:
male
Impersonator,
Millie
Hylton.
Right:
Bessie
Bonehill
singing "The
Girls of To-
day", 1890.
Taken from R.
Mander and J.
Mitcherson,
British Music
Hall



ALSO SUNG BY WILL GODWIN.

**THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY
BOYS.**



Written by
**WILL
GODWIN**

Composed by
**ORLANDO
POWELL**

SUNG BY

**MISS FANNIE
LESLIE**

HOWARD & CO

THE HIT OF THE SE 60'S.

**THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY BOYS**

POPULAR
MARCH SONG
AND CHORUS.

Adapted by
**ARTHUR
LAMB**



Copyright
W. H. B. PETERS

Sung with
GREATEST SUCCESS
BY

THE SISTERS LEVEY

Below: Fannie
Leslie and the
Sisters Levy.
A typical
"masher" song
of the 1890s.
Taken from R.
Mander and J.
Mitcherson,
British Music
Hall.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GAIETY BURLESQUE "HALEPPA"
HAS MADE MISS BESSIE BELLWOOD'S SONG "WHAT CHEER 'RIA"
SUNG BY MISS HELI FARREN

WHAT CHEER 'RIA



WRITTEN BY
WILL HERBERT
COMPOSED & SUNG WITH ENORMOUS SUCCESS BY
BESSIE BELLWOOD

LONDON: HOPWOOD & CREW, 42, NEW SPAN ST. W. 17-J

OH JOHNNY!

DON'T YOU GO TO SEA



WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY
WILL JONES
SUNG WITH IMMENSE SUCCESS BY

MISS NELLY POWER

3.3) Above: Bessie Bellwood and Nellie Power. Taken from R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, British Music Hall.

Below: A caricature of Bessie Bellwood as a "knowing" barmaid. Nellie Power, male impersonator, in her own clothes. Taken from Maurice Willson Disher, Winkles and Champagne.



MISS BESSIE BELLWOOD

THE REASON WHY SHE IS SO POPULAR IS THAT SHE KNOWS HER BUSINESS AND SHE HAS THE KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE A GOOD BARMAID AND SHE IS A BETTER ONE THAN MOST



LAWRENCE WRIGHT'S **6^d** INSPIRATIONS. No. 1187

THE SONG MAY BE USED IN PUBLIC WITHOUT THE OP. OF THE
AUTHOR IF THE STAFF AND MUSIC FALLS.

BURLINGTON BERTIE FROM NOW.

Written
and Composed
BY

William Hargreaves

Sung
by

MISS ELLA SHIELDS



THE LAWRENCE WRIGHT MUSIC CO.
8, DENMARK ST. (Charing Cross Road)
LONDON, W.C.

3.4) Male impersonator, Ella Shields. Taken from R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, British Music Hall.



3.5) Male impersonator, Hetty King, famous for her song "All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor" Taken from R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, British Music Hall.



QUITE A TROP IN MY
NEWMARKET COAT,



3.6' Vesta Tilley as "Algy" (above from Mander & Mitchenson). In uniform (left) famous for "Jolly Good Luck to the Girl who Loves a Soldier" from Dische.



HARRY HALL F.W. LUMPHREY

VESTA TILLEY



4.3) Mrs. Chant portrayed as "Mrs. Prowlina Pry" by PUNCH, 27 October 1894. Taken from Edward J. Bristow, Vice and Vigilance: Privity Movements in Britain Since 1700



4.1) 1876 Lithograph by Alfred Concanen of the Gunboat. Taken from Peter Bailey, ed., Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure.



4.2) The Gallery by Fred Barnard - 1860; audience. Taken from Eileen and Stephen Yeo, eds., Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1911

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