

Connectivity:  
Cockney-styled Artistes of Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early  
20<sup>th</sup> Century Music Hall and Britain's Inner  
Urban Audiences

David Charles Barrett

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Manchester Metropolitan  
University for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

Department of History, Politics and  
Philosophy

2023

## Acknowledgments

This study has been some five years in its preparation and production but with a gestation period that spans several earlier decades. For at least six generations, both sides of my family have been born, lived and in several cases, died in the area defined within this study as Cockney London. They were ordinary people whose lived experiences were governed by their demographic environment. During various festive occasions such as Christmas gatherings and family weddings, I can remember as a child listening (not altogether willingly) to my grandparents and great aunts and uncles sing those songs that were popular in Edwardian Britain's music halls. Such songs meant very little to me at the time, but somehow snippets of the melodies must have taken root in my mind.

I never knew whether my grandparents and their siblings ever went to see the likes of Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, and the other leading cockney entertainers at their local music halls in Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Southwark, or Lambeth. I suspect they did. Similarly, I never recognised the poignancy, until I began this study many years later, of the fact that I was born within applause range of Charles Morton's Canterbury Music Hall in Lambeth and grew up within a ten-minute walk of the New Cross Empire and passed by on many occasions Marie Lloyd's former house in Lewisham.

Yet, whilst there may be a sense of inevitability in the writing of this study, the fact that it has been completed is, in no small way, due to the important input of several individuals to whom I duly acknowledge my grateful thanks. First of these would be my supervisor Dr Marcus Morris whose advice and guidance has seen this study through to its conclusion. His counsel in encouraging me to

explore seemingly academic blind alleys but at the same time steering me back to the core of this study has been invaluable and I know I would call upon him again for any future post-doctoral research.

I would also like to record my thanks to the archivists and librarians at the Universities of Manchester and Glasgow and especially Nicola Ward at the Sir Kenneth Green library at Manchester Metropolitan University. The direct access restrictions imposed during the national Covid-19 lockdown were made less cumbersome by the help of such people to digitise and make available to me relevant archival and secondary source material. Special thanks must also go to Clare Waller of the Special Collections and Archives department of the Templeman Library at the University of Kent for her help in obtaining copies of song sheets from the late Max Tyler collection.

I am also indebted to Peter Charlton, the specialist music hall historian at the British Music Hall Society; no question was ever too obscure or too difficult for him to answer or to point me in the direction of where I could find more information. Similarly with Peter Norris, the author of the most authoritative book on Gus Elen, for his help in researching the Elen archive for me to document his extensive 20-year plus touring itinerary, as well as various detailed information about Gus and his career.

However, my greatest thanks must go to my wife Dr Joanne Barrett for her unfailing support, encouragement, and belief in my ability to complete this study. Without her love and inspiration, this thesis would never have been written.

## *Abstract*

By the last decade of the nineteenth century and continuing into the first of the twentieth, music hall in Britain had become a commodified, national entertainment medium. Whilst still an eclectic mix of entertainment offering, one genre of stage performance, which included the leading national artistes of the day, were those defined in this study as cockney-styled entertainers. Although unique performers in their own way, each had an on-stage act that was focussed upon their particular presentation through song, common individual characters, and depictions of the everyday experiences of the population that lived and worked in Cockney London. Their performance style and the lyrics contained in their most successful songs were strongly London-centric, referenced and delivered in a cockney vernacular. Superficially, this would seem to be counter-intuitive and paradoxical. How could inner urban audiences beyond the metropolis positively relate to the cockney-styled entertainers' London-referenced stage presentation and cockney vernacular delivery when they would likely have little or no direct experience or familiarity with the capital?

This study directly addresses this apparent paradox, by positing a new theory in respect of the performer/audience relationship that these entertainers shared with inner urban audiences nationally, but especially those within the inner urban communities of Britain's largest cities. This relationship, defined as 'connectivity', meant that the leading cockney-styled artistes were able to embark on successful regular regional tours of music halls utilising their existing style of London-centric performance content delivered in a cockney vernacular without the need for any local modification. However, this special performer/audience connectivity was only made possible by the contingent synergy of four key enabling factors that were present around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century which are identified and analysed in this thesis. Through the promotion of this theory of connectivity and the analysis of its enabling factors, this study presents a unique addition to the historiography of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall.

# Contents

	Pages
<i>List of Tables, Graphs and Illustrations</i>	vii-viii
<i>Introduction</i>	1-44
Music Hall within late Victorian and early Edwardian Popular Culture	
Cockney London and the cockney-styled entertainers	
Cockney-style entertainers – Knowingness and Interpellation	
Towards Connectivity – Enabling Factors	
Sources – Primary and Secondary	
British Music Hall Data, 1890-1914	
<i>Chapter One</i> <i>The Performer and Audience Relationship</i>	45-75
Introduction	
Something in the Air – the Aura of Performance	
Knowingness – the Metalanguage of Music Hall	
The Meaning of Words and Audience Understanding – Philosophical Perspective	
Bridging the Gap – Connectivity	
<i>Chapter Two</i> <i>Towards a Demographically Homogenised Inner Urban Population</i>	76-149
The Urbanisation of Britain	
Employment/Unemployment	
Housing	
Health	
Social Deprivation and Poverty	
Conclusion	

		Pages
Chapter Three	<i>From Disreputable Notoriety to Respectable Mass Entertainment: the Development of British Music Hall 1850-1914</i>	150-220
	The Early Years	
	1850-1914	
	Syndicates and Circuits	
	Conclusion	
Chapter Four	<i>From Unrefined Transgressive to 'Salt of the Earth': the Emergence of the Music Hall Cockney</i>	221-273
	The Opinion Forming Power of Victorian Print Culture	
	Developing the Stereotype	
	Low Life or Life Laid Low?	
	The Cockney in Early Music Hall	
	From 'Sam Weller' to 'Arry'	
	The Music Hall Cockney – Move Over Imagined Real- 'Tommy Atkins' arrives!	
	Of the Streets of London: The Real 'Real'	
	The Stereotype Transformation Completed	
	Conclusion	
Chapter Five	<i>Just Like Us</i>	274-324
	Collective Identity	
	Emotional Empathy	
	Cockney-style Entertainers as Conduits	
	Conclusion	

		Pages
<i>Chapter Six</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>	325-332
<i>Appendices</i>	1-4	333-347
<i>Bibliography</i>		348-377

## List of Tables and Graphs

<u>Chapter Two</u>		Page
2.1	The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales 1801-1911	82
2.2	Urban Population of England and Wales by Differing Lower Limits 1801-1911	83
2.3	Scotland Population 1801-1911	84
2.4	Populations of Britain's Largest Towns 1891-1911	85
2.5	Cockney London Population by Metropolitan Borough	91
2.6	Population Densities of Cockney London 1901-1911	115
2.7	Birth Rate/Death Rate/Infant Mortality Rate 1901	139
<u>Chapter Three</u>		
3.1	Music Halls/Theatres of Varieties 1890-1910	211
3.2	Weighted Estimate. Annual Music Hall Audiences	212
3.3	Music Hall Companies Dividends 1890-1920	213



## List of Illustrations

<u>Introduction</u>		Page
I.1	Promotional Photographs: Kate Carney, Marie Lloyd, Harry Champion.	34
I.2	Sheet Music Song Covers: Vesta Victoria, <i>'Our Lodger's Such a Nice Young Man'</i> Gus Elen, <i>'There Ain't No Gittin Rid of 'Im at All'</i> Marie Lloyd, <i>'G'arn Away. What D'Yer Take Me For?'</i> Alec Hurley, <i>'The Coster's Sister'</i>	34
 <u>Chapter Three</u>		
3.1	Poster. Moss, Thornton and Stoll Theatres, (circa 1905)	194
3.2	Poster. Livermore Brothers Tour (1896)	196
3.3	Poster. Manchester Hippodrome (circa 1904)	198
3.4	Poster. Battersea Palace (circa 1908)	205
3.5	Poster. McNaughten Vaudeville Circuit (1910)	207
3.6	Song Sheet Music Cover. Gus Elen, <i>'E Dunno Where 'E Are'</i>	320

## Introduction

As Victorian Britain moved towards the twentieth century, virtually every sizeable town and city in the country could boast having at least one music hall or palace of varieties. In the case of the most populous cities beyond the metropolis in 1900, Manchester (including Salford), Liverpool (including Birkenhead), Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow had 36 halls located within their inner wards and registration districts with a gross single performance audience capacity of approximately 72,000.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later this had risen to 55 halls with a single gross performance audience capacity of approximately 102,000. In addition, by 1910, the ten London metropolitan boroughs to the immediate west and south of the old City of London, defined here as 'Cockney London', had some 37 halls with a single performance gross audience capacity of approximately 76,000.<sup>2</sup> Music hall, therefore, at the turn of the century and for the following fifteen years at least, was a major player in the increasing competition for the nation's pastime and leisure activity. It was an entertainment medium that was patronised by the broadest strata of late Victorian and early Edwardian society; from the highest (in the case of London's West End halls this would include, the Prince of Wales, latterly King Edward V11) to the humblest artisan or factory worker.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendices 1.0 to 1.5

<sup>2</sup> The growth of music halls outside London from 1890 was mainly focussed in the inner central areas of towns and cities, except for coastal towns where new halls would be concentrated on sea front promenades. In London, having a distinct music hall entertainment area in its West End (The Oxford, Drury Lane and Empire Leicester Square for example) the development of new halls after 1890, was mainly in the suburbs, with those in the area determined Cockney London, being the most prolific. For a detailed examination of the growth of London's West End as the capital's principal area of performance entertainment, encompassing traditional theatre and music hall, see, R. McWilliam, *London's West End. Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Prince Edward (latterly King Edward V11) was known to be a keen follower of music hall. As part of the 'Command Performance' that was requested by him and held at Sandringham House in

The historiography of British Music Hall encompasses a wide range of disciplines and has been examined through many lenses and from varying perspectives with most of the scholarly work focussed on Victorian music hall. It ranges from those focussed on music hall as part of nineteenth century popular culture to its place within wider gender and humour studies. It encompasses music hall and its impact on the development of popular song to its place in the historic built environment of Britain's cities. It has been examined through the lens of the public house trade and that of the Victorian and Edwardian temperance movements. More recent studies have focussed on music hall's eclectic entertainment offering as well reviewing music hall's songs in relation to Boer War propaganda and its place as a military recruitment platform following the outbreak of the First World War.

However, although there have been some very notable biographies of its leading artistes, a particular genre of music hall performer, and their place in making British music hall a truly national institution, has had less exposure. Classified by the industry trade press from the last decade of the nineteenth century as serio-comedians or comediennes, these artistes, most often born and raised within what became the inner Metropolitan boroughs of the London County Council, had, as the mainstay of their performance material, the everyday lived experiences of inner urban life in the Metropolis. How this genre of music hall performer and their performance material achieved a positive resonance with music hall audiences in Britain's largest cities beyond London, is the focus of this study. Underpinning it, however, is the need to address and explain what would

---

1901, Dan Leno, a leading music hall performer of the day, were part of the entertainment cast. Music Hall celebrities, Vesta Tilley, George Robey and Harry Lauder would feature in the cast of the 1912 Royal Command Performance held in the presence of King George VII and Queen Mary.

appear to be an intractable conundrum. How could inner urban music hall audiences in the country's major cities outside the capital relate to both the cockney-styled entertainers as artistes, and more particularly, their performance material, especially their songs? Moreover, how could this have been achieved with regional inner urban audiences who would likely have had little or no direct experience of London generally but especially that which referenced landmarks or specific aspects of its East End area? Furthermore, this apparent barrier to comprehension would also seem to be exacerbated by most of the performers' material being delivered in a cockney vernacular. The resolution of this paradoxical conundrum and the answers to these attendant questions, and how this genre of music hall entertainer overcame them, is the central theme of this research study.

These artistes were immensely popular and enjoyed long careers with the most successful invariably topping the bill at halls throughout the country and were among the industry's highest paid performers. That they became national entertainers with national acts, with songs and performance characterisations based upon the everyday lived experiences of Cockney London, is testimony of their ability to transcend such perceived barriers to regional audience engagement. Such artistes as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, and others like them were the music hall superstars of the day. This study will show that such artistes achieved their popularity with inner urban audiences nationally by developing a uniquely special relationship with them to the extent that they were regarded as more than just entertainers; they became a manifestation to audiences of everyday urban life in all its various colours. This relationship was the result of the degree of audience and performer traction that was generated

through the synergy of the everyday shared experiences of inner urban life with those highlighted in the artistes' stage performances and especially those depicted in the lyrics of their songs.

This relationship theory is defined and analysed in Chapter One as a special 'connectivity'. It was a particular attribute that all these performers possessed. It gave them the means to develop national performance repertoires but with London-centric references, especially in their song lyrics, that were delivered in a London cockney vernacular. In so doing, such entertainers were able to emotionally conjoin with their audiences to the degree that any lack of direct knowledge or experience of inner London by regional audiences was not detrimental to an understanding or acceptance of the artistes' performance. Neither was it detrimental to any regionally nuanced variations of the sociological conditions experienced by many inner urban dwellers across the country. Consequently, it was not necessary for these artistes to modify their performances to reflect any local or regional characteristics or variances.

This study demonstrates that this connectivity was fostered through the emotional empathy and collective identity music hall audiences had with these artistes. This was based upon the collective and individual appreciation and rapport of the shared everyday experiences of inner-urban dwellers highlighted in the entertainers' performance material and on-stage characterisations. In addition, it proves that such connectivity could only have been achieved and sustained by the convergent synergy of four key enabling factors that were present within late Victorian and early Edwardian wider society.

These factors, although individually distinct, were inextricably linked and critical to the cockney-styled entertainers and their ability to develop their special audience/performer connectivity. Whilst there was no specific hierarchy of importance or weight attached to these enabling factors, the first, the emergence of a quasi-homogeneous inner urban population in Britain's most populous cities, does have primacy. Although the other three enabling factors: the commodified development of a national music hall industry, the repositioning of the cockney stereotype and the presence of an inner-urban collective identity, could have developed independently of the first, they likely would have been less significant. These special enabling factors are analysed in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, and demonstrate that the presence of a special connectivity between the cockney-styled entertainers and regional inner urban music hall audiences especially, was critical to the performers' national appeal.

Furthermore, this connectivity would ensure that any apparent barriers in audience comprehension resulting from the London-centric focus and delivery in a cockney vernacular in their performance repertoires were rendered ineffective. This meant that this genre of music hall performer could develop national acts that negated the need for regional modification. This original study, therefore, builds upon the extant historiography of music hall to create a uniquely nuanced understanding of this special relationship between a specific genre of music hall artiste and their audiences in Britain's most populous cities from the last decade of nineteenth century.

## Music Hall within late Victorian and Early Edwardian Popular Culture

The historiography of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall and its place within social and popular culture is extensive.<sup>4</sup> Its evolving position as part of the increasingly contested space within Victorian popular culture is largely defined in the paradigm constructed through the concepts of music hall audiences' involvement first suggested by Stedman Jones and expanded upon by the subsequent works of Bailey.<sup>5</sup> Stedman Jones, focussing on London, argues that from the 1870s until the end of the nineteenth century, a new working-class leisure culture developed that was inherently politically conservative and with a character that was inwardly focussed. He argues that this reflected a disenchantment with mainstream politics that was the result of a failure by the trade unions to achieve their political ambitions. He further suggests that this emergent working-class leisure culture, with music hall as a key constituent, created a 'culture of consolation' within the working class that was 'impervious of middle class attempts to guide it'.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the

---

<sup>4</sup> Selected reading would include: B. Beaven, *Leisure, citizenship, and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); J. S. Bratton (ed), *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); P. Joyce, *Visions of the People*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); S. Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working-Class*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977); D. Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914: A Social History* (Kingston: McGill-Queens, 1987); L. Senelick, 'A Brief life and times of the Victorian Music Hall' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 19:4 (1971), pp.375-398; L. Senelick, 'Politics as entertainment, Victorian Music Hall Songs,' *Victorian Studies*, 19 (1975), pp.149-180; A. Horrall, *Popular Culture in London, c.1890-1918: The Transformation of Entertainment*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2001); I. Peddie, 'Playing at Poverty: The Music Hall and the Staging of the Working-Class' in P. Krishnamuthy (ed), *The Working Class Intellectual in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); M. Vinicus, 'The Music Hall: From a Class to a Mass Entertainment' in M. Vinicus, *The Industrial Muse. A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp.238-280.

<sup>5</sup> G. Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working-Class,' *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1973) pp.460-508; P. Bailey, 'Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall', in *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1982); P. Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning and the Knowingness of Popular Culture', *Past and Present*, 44 (1974) pp. 138-170.

<sup>6</sup> Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture', p.462.

dominant cultural institutions were not those of the middle class, like school, evening classes or friendly societies, which were in essence *respectable*, but the public house, the sporting paper or the race course and, most important of all, music hall.<sup>7</sup>

Bailey, however, sees the emergence of a working-class leisure culture through a slightly different lens. He contends that the urban working class of the last quarter of the nineteenth century selectively adopted certain middle-class mores and that notions of *respectability* were practised tactically in a situational sense for dealing with the external world beyond the immediate class or community reference group.<sup>8</sup> So whilst urban working-class music hall audiences may well have been consoled, distracted and reassured through their attendance, they also went there 'to learn how to live'.<sup>9</sup> However, as the social mix of music hall audiences widened with the increase in middle-class patronage, and notions of societal conformity widened, Bailey suggests that large numbers of the audience may have been willing converts to such conformity. To this end, he argues that rather than there being a culture of consolation in respect of music hall within Victorian popular culture, the focus should be on a culture of competence or empowerment with music hall audiences where this empowerment was manifest in a shared knowingness about the world.

Summerfield, whilst broadly agreeing with Stedman Jones's general assertion of music hall developing a culture that was indicative of the resistance of the

---

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed examination of the Victorian notion of respectability see Chapter Three.

<sup>8</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.39.

<sup>9</sup> Bailey, 'Custom, Capital and Culture', p.201.



working class to the outside cultural influences of the middle class, takes issue with the notion that such a consolation of culture was created solely by the working class. She argues that music hall's development was influenced by contextual social relations which itself helped to constitute.<sup>10</sup> Her argument that 'institutions which developed entertainment provided opportunities for two sorts of intervention into working-class life: capitalists, driven by profit and authorities trying to regulate which meanings of life and behaviour types should dominate', is very convincing.<sup>11</sup> She offers a number of such examples ranging from the influence of the magistrates in granting or renewing music and dancing licences in premises in London's working-class areas to the formation and influence of the Music Hall Proprietors Protection Society as 'improvers of popular entertainment for the people'.<sup>12</sup> For her, the evolutionary process of music hall and its place within Victorian popular culture was a process of deliberate selection made to look natural. Yet for Beaven, despite late nineteenth century social reformers adopting more aggressive forms of rational recreation aimed directly at working-class communities, 'the working-man showed a remarkable propensity to manipulate the entertainment offered to coincide with their own cultural preferences'.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding the magisterial weight of Stedman Jones's and Bailey's works in situating music hall's place in Victorian popular culture, as well as Summerfield's

---

<sup>10</sup> P. Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of the Music Hall in London', in E. Yeo & S. Yeo (eds), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981), pp.209-240.

<sup>11</sup> Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms', p.209.

<sup>12</sup> Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms', p.216 & p.219 citing Charles Morton's Canterbury Music Hall promotion pamphlet.

<sup>13</sup> B. Beaven, *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.39.

more nuanced interpretation of music hall's development within this context, they do share broadly, the same two limiting factors in relation to national music hall audiences from the dawn of the twentieth century. The first is that both of their studies focus on music hall in London, and, second that they examine music hall from a purely Victorian perspective. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, music hall, whilst still having a very strong London influence, was becoming a national commodified mass entertainment medium, released in part from its earlier Victorian restraining shackles of respectability. There are varying interpretations of what respectability actually was, and how it may have been applied to social groups or within popular culture generally and indeed within music hall. Most of these have been informed to some degree by that of F.M.L. Thompson on the emergence of a respectable society and that of Stedman Jones in his essay on class expression and social control.<sup>14</sup>

Kift goes some way to addressing the general paucity of Victorian music hall historiography beyond London where she asserts that its development was not a simple replication of that seen in the metropolis.<sup>15</sup> She contends that differing local social conflicts, especially in the rapidly expanding towns of the north of England, played a significant role in its development within Victorian popular culture. As evidence of this she offers the disputes of Thomas Sharples's Bolton Star and Thomas Youdan's Surrey Music Hall in Sheffield as examples. She further contends that, whilst following a general pattern in the shift of the anti-music hall position of reformers from being focussed on alcohol abuse to

---

<sup>14</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society. A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*, (London: Fontana Press, 1988); G. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>15</sup> D. Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

questions of moral corruption, regional music hall's existing ties with other forms of popular culture remained strong.

Falk explores a yet more nuanced position of music hall's place in Victorian popular culture. He suggests that through a process of a sanitisation of its content and its capitalised commodification, during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, music hall, as seen by its middle-class critics, had moved up the social scale.<sup>16</sup> In doing so, he argues, there emerged a rise in the professional music hall critic that gave music hall the element of 'modernity'; a term he applies to the designation of a 'crucial transformation in the development and middle-class reception of London music hall in the late Victorian era and nothing less than a structural change in discourse on the halls'.<sup>17</sup>

A more recent addition to the historiography of music hall's place in popular culture is found in Gerrard's analysis of how, by growing into a mass entertainment medium, it came to represent an especially *British* culture.<sup>18</sup> Utilising Williams's 'Structures of Feelings' concept and his 'social' definition as the tool to 'dissect the importance of British Music Hall to British culture', he argues for its dual role as both an entertainment medium and as a reflection of the nation 'at times of turbulence and peace'.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> B. Falk, *Music Hall and Modernity. The Late-Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Falk, *Music Hall and Modernity*, p.5.

<sup>18</sup> S. Gerrard, 'The Great British Music Hall: Its Importance to the British Culture and 'The Trivial'', *Culture Unbound*, 5 (2013) pp.487-513.

<sup>19</sup> Gerrard, 'The Great British Music Hall', p.489, p.510, citing R. Williams, *Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism (Critics of the Twentieth Century)*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

Nevertheless, the inner urban music hall of the last decade of the nineteenth century and particularly that from 1900, although its roots in working-class popular culture may have been nurtured by way of Stedman-Jones's 'consolation of culture' or Bailey's 'culture of competence' and, indeed, Summerfield's 'process of deliberate selection', was essentially, a different product from that of thirty years previously. It was now, especially from an audience perspective, a cheap (in terms of participation), readily available, regular entertainment activity that did not require any aspect of self-imposed middle-class notions of respectability. Neither did it require any special intellectual input from the user (the audience) as a condition for its participation. Rather, it was a simple palliative or antidote to the everyday lived experiences that for many was dominated by material and social deprivation relating to employment, housing, and health.

Unquestionably, music hall played an important role in late Victorian and early Edwardian society's growing entertainment and leisure industries, and its place within the development of an evolving national popular culture is well documented. What has been lacking however, is a focus on a particular genre of music hall performance, the cockney-styled entertainers, and their interaction with inner urban audiences in Britain's largest cities from the last decade of the nineteenth century. This study, whilst acknowledging the theories of Stedman Jones, Bailey, Summerfield *et al*, in relation to Victorian working-class popular culture, enhances, with a focus through the lens of the cockney-styled entertainers, this existing body of knowledge by presenting a more nuanced and divergent perspective. It explores and analyses how the leading cockney-styled entertainers, who would include such famous artistes as Marie Lloyd and Gus

Elen in their number, developed a special connectivity with their inner urban audiences. In so doing, the study demonstrates how the everyday lived experiences of many in Cockney London were mirrored in the stage performances of such artistes and projected back to inner urban audiences in Britain's most populous cities without the need for any regional modification or interpretation.

### *Cockney London and the Cockney-styled Entertainers.*

There is a plethora of quasi definitions and characteristics that have been applied to the term 'cockney' and by implication, its geographical locus.<sup>20</sup> Etymologically, the word 'cockney' is generally believed to have been used from the fourteenth century as a description of a small or defective egg (a 'cocks' egg) and subsequently gained usage as a pejorative description of a pampered or spoiled child.<sup>21</sup> Later, from the fifteenth century it became applied to a town resident who was regarded (by supposedly more robust rural folk) as being effeminate or puny. The term began to gain a more specific urban locus, principally that of the East End of London, during the nineteenth century in references to the metropolis's low life as described in literary works such as Egan's *Life of London* or Dicken's *Oliver Twist*. Cockney, as a spoken dialect, would become a vernacular particularly associated with the densely populated

---

<sup>20</sup> Notable works would include: W. Matthews, *Cockneys, Past and Present* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1938); P. Wright, *Cockney Dialect and Slang* (London: B.T. Basford Ltd., 1981); J. Franklyn, *The Cockney: a Survey of London Life and Language* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1953); G Steadman Jones, 'The 'cockney' and the nation, 1780-1988' in D. Feldman & Gareth Steadman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations Since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> A. Jacot de Boinod, 'Cockney', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (London: Encyclopaedia Britannic Inc., 2020) at <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Cockney>> [accessed 6 April 2022].

area of London's East End.<sup>22</sup> It was noticeable as being an argot of London's inner urban working class using a rhyming slang that was most in evidence within London's coster communities.

Whilst the use of the word 'cockney' can be traced back over several centuries, the term as applied to a specific social group has a more recent history beginning from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Moreover, as Stedman Jones correctly asserts, the notion of the 'cockney' as a representation of a social group within the population of London, primarily its causal poor, has been successively constructed and reconstructed over a period of at least one hundred years.<sup>23</sup> As a result, 'cockney' 'cannot be understood as a straightforward expression of London life since 'the real and the imaginary, are and always have been, closely intertwined in the description of the 'cockney'.<sup>24</sup> Stedman Jones's analysis of the cockney, is constructed through the lens of class consciousness and the varying representations that were embodied in being 'cockney'. He suggests that the late-Victorian cockney stereotype had moulded the various elements of a populist, city-based conception of a nation that 'projected the fantasy of a metropolitan community grounded in the good-humoured, if sometimes ironic, acceptance of social difference and subordination'.<sup>25</sup> He further suggests that it was part of a chronological sequence that was punctuated by 'alternating phases of exclusion and assimilation, of fear

---

<sup>22</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'vernacular' as: 'using the form of language that a particular group of speakers use naturally, especially in informal situations.' *The Cambridge Dictionary* at <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vernacular>> [accessed 6 April 2022].

<sup>23</sup> G. Stedman Jones, 'The 'cockney' and the nation, 1780-1988', in D. Feldman & G. Stedman Jones (eds) *Metropolis London: Histories and representations since 1800*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.272-317.

<sup>24</sup> Stedman Jones, 'The cockney', p.273.

<sup>25</sup> Stedman Jones, 'The cockney', p.314.

followed by reassurance.<sup>26</sup> Stedman Jones, situates his study of the cockney, particularly those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, primarily among the coster communities of London's casual poor, especially those within the Metropolitan inner area. In this study however, Cockney London is examined and defined within a specific spatial framework that is informed by certain common social demographics in respect of population densities, employment, housing, health and social deprivation.

The traditional thinking, certainly that focused on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is that a cockney would be anyone born within the sound of the bells of St. Mary le Bow, Cheapside in the old City of London. Whilst it would be impossible to accurately determine who would be able to hear these bells (which were destroyed by enemy action in 1942) in the nineteenth century, a survey conducted in 2000 estimated that, given the existing nineteenth century topography, they would have been audible six miles to the east, five to the north, three to the south and four to the west.<sup>27</sup> On this basis, and with the additional factors of demographic similarities such as general housing type, population densities and employment characteristics, cockney London is defined in this study as the ten Metropolitan boroughs within the twenty-eight formed by the establishment of the London County Council in 1899. Specifically, these ten metropolitan boroughs, bounded by or adjacent to the River Thames, were Hackney, Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, Stepney, Poplar, Southwark, Bermondsey, Lambeth, Deptford, and Woolwich.

---

<sup>26</sup> Stedman Jones 'The cockney', p.316.

<sup>27</sup> 'Cockney', *Oxford English Dictionary*, at <<https://public.oed.com/blog/cockney>> [accessed 6 April 2022].

Contained within this definition of cockney London, the cockney-styled entertainers of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall, as referred to in this study, are deemed to be those whose stage performances and material were of the style and social demographic characteristics that were in evidence in most of the lived experiences of the population of these London metropolitan boroughs. Such artistes did not necessarily need to have been born or raised in Cockney London, albeit most were, to fall into the category of cockney-styled entertainers. Rather, that their stage performances were primarily focussed on their presentation of the cockney persona with their performance material delivered in a cockney vernacular. As this study demonstrates, the cockney-styled artistes of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall, both through their performance material and their characterisations, based on the everyday lived experiences of those living in Cockney London, became an embodiment of inner urban living in Britain's most populous cities.

### *Cockney-styled Entertainers – Knowingness and Interpellation*

In Chapter One the special relationship enjoyed by the cockney-styled entertainers and their audiences is examined. It looks at the unique appeal these performers had with audiences both within Cockney London and those audiences outside of the metropolis. It examines the reasons for their phenomenal national popularity with regional inner urban audiences, despite their acts being predominantly London-centric in content and presented in a cockney vernacular, who likely would have had little or no direct knowledge or experience of this part of London.



Building upon the earlier seminal works of Bailey in particular and his concept of 'knowingness', but also later expanded upon by Medhurst and Russell, it posits a special relationship that the cockney-styled entertainers had with audiences, defined as 'connectivity'.<sup>28</sup> With Bailey, 'knowingness' is defined as 'what everybody knows but some know better than others' and was applied especially to certain unspecified elements within Victorian London music hall audiences; implicitly those of the working class.<sup>29</sup> Those *in the know*, who could understand and relate to a meaning or suggestion presented by the performer or performance, could become imbued with a 'projected sense of identity and membership as the earned return on experience which engaged more than a simple generic literacy or the recognition in common of a particular way of life'.<sup>30</sup> Knowingness and its language of meaning acted as a counterpoint to that embedded in the notion of middle-class respectability and its attendant social disciplines. Its effect therefore was to 'pull the crowd' (or at least a sizeable proportion of it) 'inside a closed yet allusive frame of reference, and by implicating them in a selective conspiracy of meaning'.<sup>31</sup>

Bailey's notion of knowingness can be routed in the application of Bourdieu's philosophical work outlined in his 'Theory of Practice' concept and more directly in Althusser's discourses on ideology and his theories of interpellation.<sup>32</sup> Applied to Victorian music hall audiences, especially those loosely referred to as working

---

<sup>28</sup> P. Bailey, 'Music Hall and the knowingness of popular culture', *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); P. Bailey, (ed), *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); D. Russell, 'Varieties of Life: the making of Edwardian music hall' in M.R. Booth & J.H. G. Kaplan (eds), *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); A. Medhurst, *A National Joke* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Bailey, 'Music hall and the knowingness', p.128.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p.149.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p.137.

<sup>32</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

class but within the sphere of this study more aptly termed inner urban audiences, Bourdieu's notion is that 'life trajectory is constructed by those choices made under the constraints of an individual's inherent disposition'.<sup>33</sup> Since a large part of Victorian inner urban music hall audience's lives were virtually pre-determined by their existing social situation was unlikely to change over their lifetime, the songs, characters and comedic situations as projected by stage performances which reinforced this, would naturally find traction.

Althusser's discourse on ideology and how this can be underpinned through the concept of "appellation" is further nuanced in Bailey's notion of knowingness. Ideology for Althusser 'represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'.<sup>34</sup> An ideology can be determined within a group where it is reinforced and re-stated through the notion of interpellation; a way in which the ideology is hailed or called so that it offers a particular identity to a group which it is encouraged to accept. Appellation is affected, according to Althusser, by two mechanisms of power: Repressive State Apparatuses, those that force a group into its place (judiciary, armed forces, political oppression) and Ideological State Apparatuses, those that manufacture consent within groups or individuals. These would include institutions such as schools, families, or churches. In Victorian Britain, music hall would be a particular institution

---

<sup>33</sup> Y. Yang, Bourdieu, 'Practice and Change: Beyond the criticism of determinism', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46: 14 (2014), p.1523. For further reading on Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* and its applications see: T.R. Schatzk, 'Overdue analysis of Bourdieu's theory of practice', *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 20: 1/2 (1987), pp.113-135; G.L. Acciaoli, 'Knowing what you're doing'. A review of Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, *Canberra Anthropology*, 4: 1 (1981), pp.23-51; M. Grenfell & M. Kelly, *Pierre Bourdieu: Language, Culture and Education*, (London: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999); M. Grenfell, *Bourdieu: Language and Linguistics*, (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2008); D. Swartz, *Culture and Power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); A. King, 'Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A 'Practical' Critique of Habitus', *Sociological Theory*, 18 (2000), pp.417-433.

<sup>34</sup> N. Stevenson, 'Marxism and Mass Communication Research', *Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and Mass Communication*, (London: Sage, 1995), p.37.

where, through the ideas and representations being made to inner urban audiences through the stage performances of the cockney-styled entertainers, they would be conditioned to recognise and accept certain attitudes and behaviours to which they would identify.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, as Bailey himself acknowledges, the broader functional value of knowingness is questionable beyond being effective in the collective appellation of an audience.<sup>36</sup> This would seem to be especially so since the knowingness of a London-based audience, and outwardly projected by a London-centric performer, required little more than a passive understanding by an audience of the implied suggestion or lived experience. For the cockney-styled entertainers of the late Victorian and early Edwardian period, they could not rely on knowingness alone to successfully interact with regional audiences if they wanted to use their existing London-centric performance material. They had to develop a new and advanced sense of interaction that was only made possible by way of the synchronisation of certain key societal factors and their own believability with regional inner urban music hall audiences. They had to go beyond knowingness and achieve a special sense of connectivity with their regional audiences to the extent that they were perceived, not just as cockney-styled entertainers, but as members of their own communities sharing their everyday lived experiences though the presentation, characterisation, and lyric content in their songs in their stage performance.

---

<sup>35</sup> For further reading on Althusser's notions of ideology and interpellation see: D. Felluga, 'Models on Althusser on Ideology' *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts*, (London: Routledge, 2015); P. Hirst, 'Althusser and the theory of ideology', *Economy and Society*, 5:4 (1976), pp.385-412; D. Strinati, 'Marxism, Economy and Ideology', in *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Bailey, 'Music Hall and the knowingness', p.139.

This concept of the performer and audience special relationship is examined through three lenses. The first is the emotion engendered within an audience as part of the anticipation of the artistes' performance. As the curtain is raised or the introductory overture is played, this expectation and sense of occasion is naturally heightened; even more so if the artiste or act is already well known or has appeared successfully before. It was an aura that all the most successful national music hall performers generated; unseen and largely intangible it was what today could be termed 'stardom'. It was something that was earned by the performer from the audience; the result of the unwritten contractual agreement between the two that is the nature of paid for, live performance entertainment.

The second is the meaning of words and their potential linguistic characteristics in respect of audience understanding as proposed in Speech Act Theories. Based on the original concepts of Austin and later expanded upon by Searle, this theory proposes that language is more than simply words to express ideas or emotions or intentions.<sup>37</sup> They suggest that words can also be linguistic actions implied or explicit within communication utterances with their meanings being characterised as either 'locutionary', 'illocutionary' or 'perlocutionary'. However, speech act theory does have limitations and is not without criticism.<sup>38</sup> The

---

<sup>37</sup> J.L. Austin, 'How to Do Things with Words', in J.O. Urmston, (ed) *The William Jones Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1995* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); J.R. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> L.A. Bjorgvinsson, *Speech Act Theory – A Critical Overview*, unpublished thesis, (Iceland: university of Iceland, 2011); J.M. Saddock, *Towards Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts*, (New York: Academic Press, 1974). For further reading on speech act and linguistic theory see: J. Habermass, 'Social action, Positive Activity and Communications' in M. Cooke (ed), *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998); M. Yoshitake, 'Critique of Austin's Speech Act Theory: Decentralising of the Speaker-Centered Meaning in Communication' *Kyushi Communications Studies*, 2 (2004), pp.27-43; J. Streeck, 'Speech Acts in Interaction: A Critique of Searle', *Discourse Processes*, 3:2 (1980), pp.133-135; J. Streeck & J. Scott Jordan, 'Projection and Anticipation. The Forward Looking Nature of Embodied Communication', *Discourse Processes*, 46:2/3 (2009), pp. 93-102.

theory's primary weakness is that it is predominantly speaker-orientated and takes little or no account of how utterances could be received by listeners in different ways or with different interpretations. Nonetheless, from a general perspective, it can be loosely applied to certain styles of music hall performance. Although recognising these limitations, Grice, through his notion of a 'Cooperation Principle' contained within his theory of conversational implications, accepts there being an element of cooperation within speech act utterances. Moreover, there exists within language a social agreement.<sup>39</sup> Some of Nellie Wallace's and Lilly Morris's songs are good examples highlighting how sections of their lyrics can be interpreted as being perlocutionary in nature. Words as actions is also viewed from another philosophical standpoint in Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Language.<sup>40</sup> However, critics argue that Wittgenstein's notions of mind pictures 'depicting' and 'representing' are just questions of semantics. Nevertheless, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that for most of the cockney-styled entertainers of music hall, a central element of the success of their performance material relied heavily on painting pictures in the minds of their audiences.<sup>41</sup>

The third lens through which the audience and performer relationship is examined, and the one which offers the sharpest clarity of focus is that relating

---

<sup>39</sup> P. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, in B. McGuinness & J. Schulte (eds), *Critical Edition* (London: Suhrkamp, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> See: H.J. Glock, 'Truth in the Tractatus' *Synthese*, 148 (2006), pp.345-368; P. M. S. Hacker, 'The Rise and Fall of Picture Theory', in L. Block (ed) *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp.85-109; J. Plourde, 'Wittgenstein's Picture Theory and the Distinction between Representing and Depicting', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 25:1 (2017), pp.16-39; N. Pleasants, *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2002); I. Proops, 'The New Wittgenstein. A Critique', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 9:3 (2001), pp.375-404; W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); E. Nujers, 'Wittgenstein versus Mauthner: Two Critiques of Language, Two Mysticism', in A. Pichier & J. Wang, (eds) *Papers of the 30<sup>th</sup> International Wittgenstein Symposium*, (Kirchberg am Wechsel, 2007).

specifically to the cockney-styled entertainers of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall and their ability to conjoin with audiences individually and collectively. Using some of the songs and performances of Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, and Vesta Victoria as good, but not exclusive, examples, it demonstrates that this special connectivity was an essential conduit between the social message or story in their performance and the everyday lived experiences of their inner urban audiences. This connectivity, however, was contingent on the synchronisation of four key enabling factors present from the last decade of the nineteenth century which are analysed in depth in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five.

### *Towards Connectivity – Enabling Factors*

The emergence of a quasi-homogeneous inner urban population within Britain's most populous cities by the end of the nineteenth century, sharing key demographic denominators in respect of employment, housing, health, and social deprivation, is examined in Chapter Two. Although urban population data in relation to England and Wales prior to that obtained from official regular government censuses after 1841, is, of necessity, estimated, that extrapolated by Law for this period is generally accepted by population historians as having a high level of statistical integrity. Although some of the data in absolute numerical terms has been questioned (in particular by Robson) it does, however, provide a sound basis for the general trend towards urbanisation during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> This cautionary note can also be applied to the

---

<sup>42</sup> C.M. Law, 'The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales, 1801-1911', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41 (1967), p.132; B.T. Robson, *Urban Growth: An Approach* (London: Methuen, 1973).

early nineteenth-century population data for Scotland compiled by Lynch; a point which he himself concedes and is re-enforced by the Registrar General for Scotland in highlighting the problems of comparative terminology of 'burghal' and 'extraburghal' to 'urban' and 'rural'.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, by synthesising this data, with that from government censuses returns after 1841, the growth of urbanisation in Britain can be determined which in turn helps to build a wider picture that would reflect certain elements of an urbanised populations' lived experience. This data shows that the proportion of England and Wales's population classified as urban more than doubled from 1800 to 1911 and for Scotland increased fourfold.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, not only was Britain's population becoming urbanised, it became concentrated into its largest cities: in particular in Manchester (including Salford), Liverpool (including Birkenhead), Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow and the ten London Metropolitan boroughs termed in this study as Cockney London. According to the 1901 census, those cities and Cockney London accounted for fourteen per cent of the total population of Britain, with Cockney London being the single most populated area with just over 1.8m inhabitants.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> M. Lynch, *Scotland. A New History*, (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.411. For selected reading on urbanisation in Britain from 1800 see: B.I. Coleman, *The Idea of the City in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2006); R. Davenport, 'Urbanisation and Mortality in Britain 1800-1880', *Economic History Review*, 73:2 (2020), pp.445-485; G. Kearns & C. Withers, *Urbanising Britain. Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); R.J. Dennis, 'Distance and Social Interaction in a Victorian City', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 3 (1977) pp.237-250; S. Szreter & G. Mooney, 'Urbanisation, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate. New Estimates of Life at Birth in Nineteenth Century British Cities', *Economic History Review*, 51:1 (1998), pp.84-112; J. Langton, 'Urban Growth and Economic Change: From the late seventeenth century to 1841' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol.11, 1540-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); P.J. Waller, *Town, City, and Nation. England 1850-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>44</sup> See Table 1, p.82; Table 2, p.83.

<sup>45</sup> See Table 4, p.85.

With Liverpool, Glasgow and to a slightly lesser extent Cockney London, it was their importance as maritime ports, augmented by shipbuilding, shipyard repairs as well as their attendant docks, cargo and warehousing facilities that was a major factor in their population growth. With Manchester and Leeds, it was their dominant positions in the textiles and woollen industries, and for Birmingham it was its growth from a workshop-based to factory economy. All these cities and Cockney London evidenced dramatic population growth during the nineteenth century due to the part they played in the overall growth of the British economy. Such growth fuelled the demand for labour, which was met, not only by inward migration from the surrounding areas, but importantly by external migration, especially from Ireland and Eastern Europe.

Population trends and statistics, from 1899 to 1921, presented in *A Vision of Britain Through Time* along with relevant Medical Officer of Health Reports for the years 1899 to 1903, augmented with secondary source material are used to create a detailed comparative analysis of Britain's major centres of population using four major demographic common denominators: employment, housing, health and levels of social deprivation.<sup>46</sup> This comparative analysis shows that

---

<sup>46</sup> 'A Vision of Britain Through Time', at <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>>; [accessed 2 August 2020]; Medical Officer of Health Reports at <<https://wellcombelibrary.org>> [Accessed 2 August 2020]. Further key reading for London would include: R. Porter, *A Social History of London*, (London: Penguin Books, 1994); R. Dennis, 'Modern London' in M. Daunton (ed), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. 111, 1840-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); W. Besant, *East London*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1901); P.L. Garside, 'West End, East End: London, 1890-1914', in A. Sutcliffe (ed), *Metropolis 1890-1940* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1984); G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study of Relationships Between Classes in Victorian Society*, (London: Verso, 2013). On Manchester and Salford see: R. Greenhall, *The Making of Victorian Salford*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2000); A.J. Kidd & K.W. Roberts (eds), *City, Class and Culture. Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty. Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992); T. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford*, (Manchester: Sharrat and Hughes, 1904); A. Kidd, *Manchester. A History*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2011); F. Scott, 'The Conditions and Occupations of the People of Manchester and Salford', *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, 1888-89* (London: 1989). For Liverpool and Birkenhead see: R.A. Lawton, 'The Population of Liverpool in the Mid Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Historic*



within the inner urban areas of Britain's most populous cities beyond the metropolis and including Cockney London, the lived experiences of the majority of its citizens shared common characteristics. Their working life, or for many, their sporadic working life, was with industries that were dominated by low wage and low skilled requirements. They were generally housed in areas of very high population densities, in conditions that were often inadequate for family needs (few rooms) and with poor or only rudimentary sanitary facilities. An ever-

---

*Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 107 (1955); G.J. Milne, 'Maritime Liverpool' in J. Belchem (ed), *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); E. Davey, *Birkenhead. A History* (Stroud: Phillimore & Co., 2013); 'Cosmopolitan Liverpool', in J. Belchem (ed), *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); W. H. Saunders, 'The Making of Liverpool' *Proceedings of the Liverpool Philomatic Society*, 63 (1917-18); 'Liverpool: trade, population and geographical growth' in W. Farrer & J. Brownbill (eds) *A History of the County of Lancaster* (London: 1911); J. Belchem, 'Introduction: The Peculiarities of Liverpool' in J. Belchem, (ed), *popular Politics, Riot and Labour. Essays in Liverpool History, 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992); R. Lawton & C. Pooley, 'Liverpool and Merseyside', in G. Gordon (ed), *Regional Cities in the UK, 1890-1980* (London: Sage, 1998). For Birmingham see: C. Chinn & M. Dick (eds), 'Introduction', *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); C. Chinn, 'The Peoples of Birmingham', in C. Chinn & M. Dick (eds), *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); C. Upton, *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 1997); W.B. Stephens (ed), 'Economic and Social History: Social History Since 1815', *A History of the County of Warwick, Vol. 7, The City of Birmingham* at <<http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/vhc/warks/vol7/p223-245>> [accessed 29 July 2020]; A Briggs, 'Birmingham: The Making of a Civic Gospel', *Victorian Studies*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990). For Leeds see: C.J. Morgan, 'Demographic Change, 1771-1911' in D. Fraser (ed), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980); A.J. Taylor, 'Victorian Leeds: an overview', in D. Fraser (ed) *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980); D. Thornton, *The Story of Leeds*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2013); J.D. Buckman, 'Later Phases of Industrialisation' in M.W. Beresford & G.R. Jones (eds) *Leeds and its Regions*, (Leeds: British Advancement of Science, 1967); J. Harrison, 'The Origin, Development and Decline of Back-to-Back Houses in Leeds, 1878-1937', *Industrial Archaeological Review*, 39:2 (2017); J.B. Hannam, 'The Social Context of Working-Class Life in Leeds, 1880-1914' in *The Employment of Working-Class Women in Leeds*, PhD Thesis (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1984). For Scotland see: C. Withers, 'The Demographic History of the City, 1831-1911', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds), *Glasgow Volume 11: 1930-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); G. Best, 'The Scottish Victorian City', *Victorian Studies*, 3:1 (1968); J. Butt, 'Working-class housing in Glasgow, 1851-1914', in S.D. Chapman (ed) *The History of Working-class Housing. A Symposium*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971); R. Rodger, 'Employment, Wages and Poverty in the Scottish Cities, 1841-1914', in G. Gordon (ed) *Perspectives of the Scottish City*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985). For general reading on working-class housing and poverty in Victorian and Edwardian Britain see: J.H. Treble, *Urban Poverty in Britain, 1830-1914*, (London: Methuen, 1979); A.S. Wohl, 'The Housing of the Working Classes' in S.D. Chapman (ed) *The History of Working Class Housing*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971); R. Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); 'Common Lodging House', *The Workhouse. The Story of an Institution* at <<http://www.workhouse.org.uk/lodging>> [accessed 10 June 2020]; M. Freeman, 'Seeböhm Rowntree and Secondary Poverty, 1899-1954', *The Economic History Review*, Vol.64, No.4, (2011); B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, (London: Andesite Press, 2017); I. Gazeley, 'Poverty in Edwardian Britain', *Economic History Review*, 64:1 (2011); M.J. Daunt, *House and Home in the Victorian City. Working Class Housing 1850-1914*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1983).

present consequence of overcrowded and insanitary conditions was the exposure to and experience of respiratory and other contagious diseases, referred to at the time as 'Zymotic'; all of which would contribute to lower life expectancy and high levels of infant mortality.<sup>47</sup> The prevalence of such adverse living conditions, along with periods of unemployment or underemployment would mean that for many, if not most, inner urban dwellers, they could expect some periods of poverty in their lifetime.

In Chapter Three there is an examination and review of the development and growth of music hall from its early years as a loosely regulated adjunct to the public house trade, through to the establishment of purpose-built auditoriums to a carefully regulated national and commodified entertainment medium managed by capitalised syndicates. Such syndicates, which dominated the urban music hall landscape from the last years of the nineteenth century, would provide a platform for the leading cockney-styled entertainers to reach regional audiences on a regular basis through annual tours.

This development of music hall would gradually encompass wider Victorian society's notions of respectability as an unseen, but recognised driving force which governed behaviours and attitudes individually and collectively within and between social classes. Notions of Victorian respectability offered by historians such as Bailey and F.M.L. Thompson and Best are proffered.<sup>48</sup> For Bailey, respectability would be a powerful value system that gave Victorian society

---

<sup>47</sup> Generally accepted during the nineteenth century as those such as typhus and typhoid fevers, scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough and diphtheria.

<sup>48</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of a Respectable Society*. G. Best, *Mid Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1971), pp. 256-233.

cohesion and stability; Thompson sees it as framework for conducting personal and family life through a coded creed, whilst Best suggests that it was a means of assimilating widely separated social groups with a common bond. However, respectability could mean different things to different classes. For the working classes, who by the end of the nineteenth century formed the majority among inner urban music hall audiences, it would invariably manifest itself within the many vicissitudes of their everyday lived experiences; from keeping up with paying the rent, to having a Sunday-best dress or suit, albeit that it could spend much of its existence during the week in the hands of the pawnbroker.

The ill-defined, but nonetheless widely acknowledged presence of respectability, and its potential attainment, was paramount to the development of Victorian music hall, especially from the middle of the nineteenth century. It was a catalyst for change that propelled its embourgeoisement towards a commodified national entertainment medium from its earlier symbiotic relationship with the licenced premises trade and alcohol sales. The chapter explores music hall's development from its early beginning as another form of amusement delivered by itinerant amateurs that was offered to patrons of the local public house, whose sole purpose from a landlord perspective was to increase the sale of liquor. It examines the emergence of the 'free and easies' and 'song and supper' rooms which would in turn lead to the establishment of the purpose-built halls that began to appear more widely across Britain's towns and cities.

As music hall became increasingly a capitalised industry, so it would be the returns on investment that would play a major part in its forward direction. Bigger and brighter halls began to be built through the emergence of

professional syndicates where profitability was driven by economies of scale (more performances, more audience capacity) and at the same time, reducing the dependence on alcohol sales. The chapter goes on to plot the development of the integrated circuits of the increasingly termed 'theatres of varieties', and how they would facilitate the growth of national music hall performers by offering a nationwide platform to reach audiences through regular regional tours. It demonstrates that from the last decade of the nineteenth century and through to the first decade of the twentieth, the number of music halls in the inner areas of Britain's five most populous cities and those in Cockney London would double, with its annual weighted audience capacity increasing by more than sixfold over the same period.

The chapter concludes that music hall's growth and development into a national, commodified mass entertainment industry, structured within syndicated circuits of halls and theatres of varieties, was one of the key fundamental, enabling factors in providing the leading cockney-styled entertainers with the vehicle to perform nationally. It was this structural organisation that provided a critical element in the development of their special connectivity with regional inner urban audiences.

The nationwide popularity of music hall's cockney-styled entertainers which was manifest in the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras was more than just about their performing skills. Whilst talent, stagecraft and performance material would always be the basic requirements necessary for a successful performing career, the personification of the characters they created and the nature and content of their acts would have to be accepted and embraced by the audiences, to make

them so popular. The characterisations and everyday lived experiences of inner urban life was portrayed in the lyrics of songs and in sketches performed by the cockney-styled entertainers. These artistes would unlikely have been so well received, not just by the inner urban working population but by other social groups that comprised late Victorian and Edwardian society at large, had not the stereotypical image of the London cockney and inner urban dwellers generally, undergone a major transformation over the previous fifty years. It is this transformation and how it was manifest that is the subject of chapter four and its importance as one of the enabling factors in the cockney-styled entertainers' ability to connect with audiences nationally.

The ways in which industrialised societies absorb, assimilate, and re-assimilate various social groups can be examined and quantified in a multiplicity of ways. It can be part of strategic central government initiatives or legislation; municipal or regional actions; pressure from lobby or opinion forming groups; the attitudes and direction of religious authorities, all the way down to local and individual tolerances or prejudices. This was no less the case in Victorian society. However, it is the lens of its print culture that affords a particularly sharp focus to view the transformation of the image and stereotype of inner-city urban dwellers generally and those especially of Cockney London. This print culture would include the world of Victorian popular novelists, the periodical press, national print media and satirical cartoons and, by widening the lens to include the relevant trade press, how its perception of the inner-city dweller stereotype was presented.

London's inner urban population, and those in Britain's largest cities, when it was considered at all by wider Victorian society, was generally seen as potentially transgressive with the propensity for it to be subversive. Indeed, to middle-class respectable society its existence was barely acknowledged and certainly not likely to be subject of polite conversation or discussion. Yet perversely, as Childers would point out, it would be those on the margins of society, the poor, the destitute and the criminal, that would often become central characters both in fiction and non-fiction Victorian literature.<sup>49</sup>

Through referencing Keating's major study of how the working-classes in Britain, were depicted in Victorian fiction, and Scott's analysis outlining the path of the music hall cockney performer over the same period, the chapter demonstrates the dramatic change in the stereotypical perception of the London cockney.<sup>50</sup> Evidence of this transformation is supported by primary source data such as that from *Punch* magazine, *The Era*, *The Penny Magazine* as well as the published works of, *inter alia*, Dickens, Besant and Egan. How this transformation of the cockney stereotype became manifest in music hall is detailed in the second part of the chapter. It shows how the criminally transgressive characters portrayed in the early 'free and easies' and 'song and super' rooms give way to the initially stylised, but later authentic, street-based characters of Cockney London. It further demonstrates how these newly portrayed characters, borne out of the everyday lived experiences of the inner urban community of Cockney London, but replicated throughout the inner urban areas of Britain's largest cities, found

---

<sup>49</sup> J.W. Childers, 'Social Class and the Victorian Novel', in D. David (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney: Flesh and Blood, or Replicant', *Music and Letters*, 83:2 (2002), pp.237-258.

their way into some of the most popular songs of the period. In this way they provided the essential nucleus of the leading cockney-styled entertainers for their nationwide audience appeal.

The final chapter of this study examines the fourth enabling factor contingent to the special relationship of the late Victorian and early Edwardian cockney-styled entertainers, that enabled them to enjoy a special connectivity with their music hall audiences beyond London. It will demonstrate that this connectivity was only possible because the quasi homogeneous and demographically bounded inner urban communities that emerged by the late nineteenth century, within Britain's largest cities, adopted the London cockney as their *de facto* representation. Furthermore, the leading cockney-styled entertainers became a performance embodiment of this representation by being part of the collective identity that existed as one of the plurality of identities of the inner urban dweller.

The chapter explores the relatively modern concepts of identity in general and that of collective and social identity and especially emotional empathy, and reverse engineers these to a late Victorian and early Edwardian world of identity beyond that driven by regional or national affinities, that was heavily centred in social class and hierarchy. It suggests that for most inner urban music hall audiences, there existed a strong sense of 'we-ness' that was highlighted and lauded in the lyrics of some of the most popular music hall songs, especially those performed by the cockney-styled entertainers. It looks at identity from different philosophical, sociological, and psychological perspectives, taking in

among others, the notions espoused by Castells, Cerulo, Ellemers, Snow, Volosinov and Tajfel.<sup>51</sup>

It examines the inner urban populations of Britain's major cities as a collective and how an identity was shaped and moulded by a multiplicity of sociological factors including class, ethnicity, and religion but most importantly by their shared everyday lived experiences. This collective identity re-enforced the sense of 'we-ness' among the inner urban populations of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cockney London which in turn generated the sociological counterpoint of the 'other'. The notion of 'we-ness' was manifest in inner urban communities' self-perception being the 'in-group' which was reinforced by them as major sections of inner urban music hall audiences. It was this sense of a shared collective identity that would facilitate the existence of Bailey's notion of knowingness and this study's nuanced expansion of this into a theory of special connectivity, that would coalesce audiences 'inside a closed yet allusive frame of reference'.<sup>52</sup>

The 'them and us' aspect of the everyday lived experiences for most inner urban dwellers was a major feature in many of the lyrics of music hall songs, especially those performed by the cockney-styled entertainers. Moreover, by the last

---

<sup>51</sup> M. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977); K.A. Cerulo, 'Identity Construction: New Issues', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 23 (1997), pp.385-409; N. Ellemers, 'Social Identity Theory', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-identity-theory> [accessed 25 September 2022]; D.A. Snow, 'Collective Identity', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, at <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8/10403-9> [accessed 25 September 2022]; V. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Seminar Press, 1973); H. Tajfel, 'Social categorisation, social identity and social comparison' in H. Tajfel (ed), *Differentiation between social groups: studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*, (London: Academic Press, 1978).

<sup>52</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.137.



decade of the nineteenth century, this genre of music hall performer, being received by inner urban music hall audiences throughout Britain as 'one of us', became a conduit between the emotional empathy generated by the song lyrics in their performances and the shared experiences of many in those audiences. These entertainers and the style and content of their performances therefore became an easily recognisable and accepted, albeit unstated, representation of inner urban dwelling for most inner-city music hall audiences. That these performances would invariably be London-centric in content and presented through a cockney vernacular was little more than stylistic interpretation; it was the connection to and empathy with their audiences' everyday lived experiences that was the core to the cockney-styled entertainers' nationwide touring success. This connectivity and how this was only made possible by the synchronous convergence during the late Victorian and early Edwardian period of four key enabling factors is the central tenet of this study which adds a new dimension to the existing historiography of British music hall.

## *Sources*

Primary sources concerning late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall audiences generally are very limited; even more so in respect of how they themselves related to the leading cockney-styled entertainers of the day. Whereas today's entertainment celebrities often produce an autobiography within in a relatively short time after achieving fame, those of music hall tended to eschew public recognition following their withdrawal from the limelight and lived quiet, albeit financially comfortable, lives. Harry Champion, for example, first retired around 1920, and concentrated his interests on his existing business of hiring horse drawn broughams to his fellow performers. Trading as North

London Coaches but registered as W. H. Crump and Sons (his real name being William Henry Crump), the business was in existence up to the time of his death in 1942.<sup>53</sup> Some of the leading stars sadly never made retirement and died young.<sup>54</sup> Those autobiographies that have been published, however, like those of Albert Chevalier or Dan Leno, do need to be read with a certain degree of caution since their accuracy can sometimes be questioned, and their style and tone is not lacking in modesty.<sup>55</sup> Others, like those of George Robey or Ada Reeve, are more enlightening and offer interesting insights as to their views on music hall audiences.<sup>56</sup> Few of the leading music hall stars kept regular diaries and there is dearth of comprehensive individual archives beyond general family papers.

Beyond individual promotional photographs, such as the examples overleaf, which all the leading stars of music hall would have had, there is a general paucity of visual material relating to music hall performance. There are a small number of film recordings of some of the cockney-styled artists; in most cases they were 'staged' and made at the end of their career and of questionable quality. There is no known film record of any Marie Lloyd performance.

---

<sup>53</sup> A. Ruston, 'Champion, Harry (real name William Henry Crump)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/41077>> [accessed 7 April 2022]; Harry Champion came out of retirement in the early 1930s and was part of a music hall revival tour promoted by Lew Lake, (b.1875 -d.1939) that included Vesta Victoria, called 'Stars Who Have Never Failed To Shine' and continued to work until ill health forced his permanent retirement in 1941, in R. A Baker, *British Music Hall. An Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2014), p.250.

<sup>54</sup> Marie Lloyd died at the age of 52; Dan Leno at 44, in R.A Baker, *British Music Hall*, p.29, p.32

<sup>55</sup> A. Chevalier, *Before I Forget: The Autobiography of a Chevalier D'Industrie* (London: Wentworth Press, 2019); D. Leno, *Dan Leno: Hys Booke Written by Himself. A Volume of Frivolities: Autobiographical, Historical, Philosophical Anecdotal, and Nonsensical* (London: Greening & Co., 1899).

<sup>56</sup> G. Robey, *Looking Back on Life*, (London: Constable, 1933); A. Reeve, *Take it For a Fact* (London: Heinemann, 1954).



Kate Carney

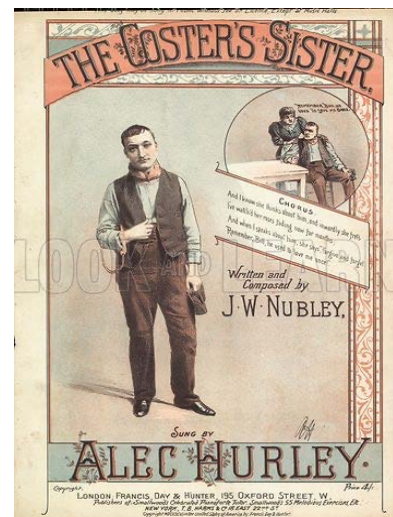
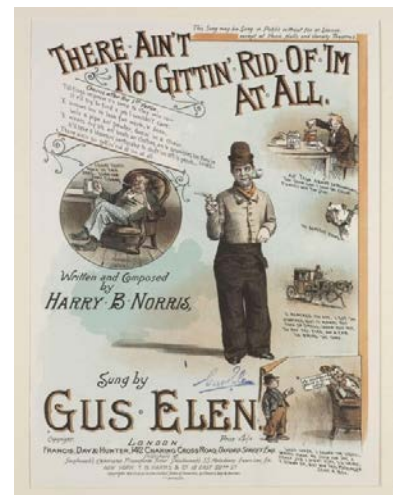


Marie Lloyd



Harry Champion

There is, however, some good visual representation of the performances of the leading cockney-styled artists found within the song sheets of their most popular songs. Invariably the front cover would depict scenes or moments from the story contained within the song and show the artist in the relevant character.



Yet despite the lack of personal archive information there is excellent primary source material on the leading cockney-styled entertainers found in the industry and trade press as well as that in both national and local newspapers. Such primary sources, however, do have to be reviewed with a certain degree of caution, especially that of the music and entertainment trade press. The two main publications that covered music hall, *The Era* and *Entr'acte*, would often contain glowing notices of performers and their forthcoming engagements. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, some seven specialist publications reporting on music hall came and (in most cases) went.<sup>57</sup> However the primary publication that served this market was *The Era*. First published in 1839, it was initially a national Sunday newspaper with separate town and country editions covering general news but with a strong leaning towards the Licensed Victuallers which it represented.<sup>58</sup> During the first forty years of its publishing history, (which lasted over one hundred years), it gradually developed and expanded its coverage of music hall news, to the extent that, by the turn of the century, it was the pre-eminent publication in the industry. At its height it was 'the great theatrical journal and every member of the profession, stage or hall, just had to buy it'.<sup>59</sup>

Much of the editorial content was effectively advertisements placed by the artistes themselves or their agents, so is naturally highly subjective, and certainly not lacking in modesty; every appearance was promoted as a 'great success' and every tour 'record-breaking'. Music Hall venues were no less

---

<sup>57</sup> These would include: '*The Magnet*' (1866); '*The London Entr'Acte*' (subtitled '*The Illustrated Theatrical Critic and Advertiser*' (1870); '*The Music Hall Critic and Programme of Amusements*' (1870); '*The Artiste*' (1887); '*Music Hall*' (1899); '*The Encore*' (1894), cited in MacQueen Pope, 'Charity', pp.275-277.

<sup>58</sup> MacQueen Pope, 'Charity', p.274.

<sup>59</sup> MacQueen Pope, 'Charity', p.275.

enthusiastic in their self-promotion. As MacQueen-Pope notes, The London Music Hall in Shoreditch promoted itself as 'The Model Music Hall'<sup>60</sup>. However, that such items would appear regularly in these publications over several years, is indicative of the popularity of music hall generally and the leading artistes especially and their ongoing appeal. In a similar way, local and national press coverage of the performances of the cockney-styled performers could also be very subjective. Nonetheless, that such artistes received positive reviews and enthusiastic receptions from audiences across the country throughout their careers would suggest that any subjectivity on the part of the reviewer was more than offset by the weight of the total number of separate positive reviews. Moreover, notwithstanding some of the limitations inherent in the music hall and variety trade press of the period as an objective primary source, its value, especially set against the general paucity of visual material for music hall performance of the period is immense.

The British Music Hall Society archive (and the knowledge provided by their specialist music hall and variety historians), is an especially valuable repository of primary source material. This is further complemented by other specialist collections such as those held at the University of Sheffield on behalf of the National Fairground and Circus archive, in particular the Argyle Theatre (Birkenhead) collection.<sup>61</sup> This contains some 300 posters, books of artistes' payments and financial ledgers relating to the venue from its original existence as The Prince of Wales Theatre in 1876 to its transformation into a music hall in

---

<sup>60</sup> W. MacQueen-Pope, 'Charity, Press and Publicity' in W. MacQueen-Pope, *The Melodies Linger On: The Story of Music Hall* (London: W.H. Allen, 1935), pp.269-285.

<sup>61</sup> National Fairground and Circus Archive at: <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/features/varietyandmusicall>; British Music Hall Society at: <<https://britishmusicallsociety.com>> .

1890. In addition, The University of Kent houses the Max Tyler collection of more than 1,200 original sheet music and song lyric items including those of the leading cockney-styled entertainers which is especially valuable.<sup>62</sup>

Primary source material to evidence the emergence and development of a quasi-homogenous group of inner urban dwellers from the latter years of the Victorian era and into the early years of the twentieth century, is best found within the relevant Medical Officer of Health Reports from around 1900. Although national travel restrictions imposed by HM Government during the Covid-19 pandemic presented distinct research challenges, a large amount of local Medical Officer of Health data is available digitally through the Wellcome Foundation. Whilst there are some limitations, notably a lack of uniformity of data collection and presentation by differing Medical Officers of Health, their official reports researched in this study are nevertheless valuable in that they confirm in statistical terms, much of the lived experiences of inner urban populations. This is especially the case in relation to health, housing, and social deprivation. Where gaps in the data were identified, such as those due to changes of datum points or ward or registration areas, it was possible to extrapolate the necessary information by analysing slightly later Medical Officer of Health Reports (those for 1903 and 1904 for example) to reverse infill such gaps with a high probability of statistical accuracy.

---

<sup>62</sup> University of Kent Special Collections and Archives: Max Tyler Music Hall Collection at: [www.kent.ac.uk/library/special/collections/theatre/max-tyler/index.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/special/collections/theatre/max-tyler/index.html). Other notable archives would include: The Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Archive: [www.vam.ac.uk/infoir/theatre-performance-archives](http://www.vam.ac.uk/infoir/theatre-performance-archives); Leeds Local Studies Library Collection. A collection of Leeds theatres playbills, [www.leodis.net/playbills](http://www.leodis.net/playbills); The University of Bristol Theatre Collection including the Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection, [www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection); The Scottish Theatre Archives at the Special Collections Department of the University of Glasgow Library, [www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/archivespecialcollections/scottishtheatrearchive](http://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/archivespecialcollections/scottishtheatrearchive); The Arthur Lloyd Music Hall and Theatre Site, <[www.arthurlloyd.co.uk](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk)>.

Notwithstanding these challenges, however, the quality of the statistical data is such that historical trends, both short and longer term, in respect of employment, housing, health and social deprivation, can be reasonably ascertained to determine key social demographic common denominators among inner urban dwellers. The existence of such social common denominators proves the presence of a quasi-homogeneity of inner urban populations in Britain's major cities at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Secondary source material is more plentiful and has continually been enhanced since the contemporaneous accounts of music hall by authors from the early decades of the twentieth century such as Titterton, Chance Newton *et al.* However, whilst these provide a useful insight into music hall's place in Edwardian entertainment, they are limited by being focused purely on the London halls<sup>63</sup>. Indeed, this London-centric focus within the historiography of music hall was especially noted by Bailey when he bemoaned that there were few studies that failed to 'escape the centrifugal pull of London'.<sup>64</sup> Although such a London-centric centrifugal pull is still in evidence some forty years later, music hall historiography has now been significantly widened to include studies beyond the metropolis.<sup>65</sup> More recent studies have included those on the architecture of

---

<sup>63</sup> W.R. Titterton, *From Theatre to Music Hall*, (London: Stephen Swift & Co., 1912); H. Chance Newton, *Idols of the Halls*, (London: Heath Cranton Ltd., 1928).

<sup>64</sup> P. Bailey, 'Introduction': Making Sense of the Music Hall' in P. Bailey (ed.) *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p.ix.

<sup>65</sup> Such as: J. House, *Music Hall Memories. Recollections of Scottish Music Hall and Pantomime*, (Glasgow: Richard Drew Publishing, 1986); G.J. Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham, 1970); F. Bruce, *Scottish Showbusiness. Music Hall, Variety and Pantomime*, (Edinburgh: NMS Publishing, 2000); J. Bowers, *Stan Laurel and Other Stars of the Panopticon*, (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2007); R. Poole, *Popular Leisure and Music Hall in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Bolton*, (Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 1982) D.J. Hindle, *From a Gin Palace to a King's Palace. Provincial Music Hall in Preston*, (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2007); P. Maloney, *Scotland and the Music Hall, 1850-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); K. Barker, *Bristol's Lost Empires, The Decline and Fall of Music Hall in Bristol*, (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, Pamphlet No.73, 1990); J.H. Littlejohn, *The Scottish Music Hall, 1880-1900*, (Edinburgh: G.C. Book Publishers, 1990); J. Bowers, *Glasgow's Lost Theatre. The Story of the Britannia Music Hall*,

music halls and later theatres of varieties; those focussed on gender (both of performers and audiences); the role of music hall during the First World War, including military recruitment and home front morale; humour in music hall and the composition of music hall audiences.<sup>66</sup> There are also a limited number of important biographies published of music hall's leading performers, notably those of Marie Lloyd, Dan Leno and Gus Elen. Whilst they do provide excellent corroborative data in relation to those performers regular national touring commitments and itineraries, with the exception of Peter Norris's excellent account of the working life of Gus Elen, they do not offer much, if any, information on how these artistes themselves viewed their performer to audience relationship.<sup>67</sup> This study, by investigating how such performers, as part of the genre of cockney-styled entertainers, were able to develop an acute level of connectivity with inner urban audiences throughout the country whilst still employing their London-centric performance repertoires, without regional modification, offers an additional perspective to the extant historiography.

---

(Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2014); V.J. Price, *Birmingham Theatres, Concerts and Music Halls* (Warwickshire: Brewin Books, 1995).

<sup>66</sup> For example: L. Lee (ed), *Victorian Comedy and Laughter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); J. Read, *Empires, Hippodromes and Palaces* (London: The Alderman Press, 1985); O. Double, *Britain Had Talent*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); J. Mullen, *The Show Must Go On!*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2015); M. Arthur, *When This Bloody War is Over. Soldier's Songs of the First World War*, (London: Judy Piatkus Publishers, 2001); L. Wingrove, 'Sassin Back. Victorian Serio Comediennes and Their Audiences' in L. Lee (ed) *Victorian Comedy and Laughter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); D. Hoher, 'The Composition of Music Hall Audiences', in P. Bailey, (ed), *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

<sup>67</sup> Of special importance would be: B. Anthony, *Chaplin's Music Hall. The Chaplins and their Circle in the Limelight*, (London: I.B. Tauris Ltd., 2012); B. Anthony, *The King's Jester. The Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius*, (London: I.B. Tauris Ltd., 2010); J. Harding, *George Robey and the Music Hall*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990); H. Chance Newton, *Idols of the Halls*, (Wakefield: EP Publishing Ltd., 1975); N. Jacob, *Our Marie (Marie Lloyd). A Biography*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1936); D. Farson, *Marie Lloyd and the Music Hall*, (London: Tom Stacey Ltd., 1972); R. A Baker, *Marie Lloyd. Queen of the Music Halls*, (London: Robert Hale, 1990); M. Gillies, *Marie Lloyd. The One and Only*, (London: Victor Gollanz, 1999); S. Maitland, *Vesta Tilley*, (London: Virago Press, 1986); J. Major, *My Old Man*, (London: William Collins, 2013); P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work. The Story of Gus Elen and his Songs*, (Guildford: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2014).



Although the overall quality of performance of the cockney-styled entertainers was integral to their success, alongside the believability of the characters they portrayed, it was the songs themselves, particularly the lyrics, which would likely have the deepest resonance with inner urban music hall audiences. The lyrics of the songs of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall are well documented.<sup>68</sup> Initially confined to published volumes of song collections (often the choice of the publishing editor or loosely themed by type) they have now been augmented by various online digital sources. Of these, the most comprehensive listings of music hall songs, currently numbering over 2,600 (and constantly being updated), are those compiled at [www.monologues.co.uk](http://www.monologues.co.uk).<sup>69</sup> Whilst the lyrics of some of the songs found in the online sources might differ very slightly from the original published versions in specialist primary source archives such as those in the Max Tyler collection or those housed in the British Music Hall Society archives they tend to be only very minor; often little more than transcription variances of the cockney vernacular. Additionally, even though it was not uncommon for some of the leading cockney-styled artistes to embellish or add an extra word to an existing lyric for emphasis or effect, for consistency, those lyrics exemplified in this study, are by default, those shown in the songs listed online at [www.monologues.co.uk](http://www.monologues.co.uk).

---

<sup>68</sup> Published volumes of music hall songs and their lyrics include, P. Davison, *Songs of the British Music Hall*, (New York: Oak Publications, 1971); G. Vickers, *Songs of the British Music Hall*, (London: Wise Publications 2013); J.M. Garrett, *Sixty Years of British Music Hall*, (London: Chappell & Company, 1976).

<sup>69</sup> Others song listings by artistes would include the re-issued songs on the Windyridge music label at <[https://www.musichallcds.co.uk/music\\_hall\\_cds\\_catalogue.htm](https://www.musichallcds.co.uk/music_hall_cds_catalogue.htm)>; those in The Mudcat Café catalogue at <<https://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=6100>>.

## *British Music Hall Data 1890-1914*

The traditional thinking, both with historians of music hall and those with a general interest in variety entertainment, is that although the industry would decline following the years of First World War, British Music Hall, as a national, mass entertainment medium achieved its greatest appeal during the first decade of the twentieth century. Some contemporary writers, however, especially Titterton, and later the poet T.S. Elliot, would suggest that music hall's proletarian roots had been compromised by its structural transition from a local entrepreneurial-driven product to a commodified syndicate-controlled business model.<sup>70</sup> Yet, as evidenced by the number of music halls in existence during the first decade of the twentieth century, this view was not held by the paying public. However, whilst there are varying primary and secondary sources listing those halls in existence during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, there is nothing until now, that synthesises these with their potential gross audience participation on a single performance basis or that aggregated annually.

An integral part of this study therefore is a quantitative assessment of the popularity of British Music Hall between 1890 and 1914 in terms of the number of halls in operation, but more importantly, the potential audience attendance in the inner urban halls of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cockney London. The results of this analysis, by giving a new and nuanced perspective as to the popularity of music hall with inner urban populations, challenges any notion that music hall as a popular mass entertainment medium

---

<sup>70</sup> W.R. Titterton, *From Theatre to Music Hall* (London: Stephen Swift & Co., 1912); S.D.G. Knowles, 'Then You Wink the Other eye: T.S. Elliot and the Music Hall', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 11:4 (1996), pp.20-32.

was starting to decline after the first few years of the twentieth century, even with the advent of a nascent motion picture industry. By giving a numeric assessment of audience attendance, it challenges the assertion by some contemporary commentators that music hall's growing embourgeoisement would result in a reduction of its earlier traditional vitality. Notwithstanding that gross potential audience capacity does not automatically equate with actual audience attendance, it is not unreasonable to suggest there is a very close correlation, since an empty music hall or theatre of variety would unlikely survive financially for very long.

The definition employed for 'operational' was those establishments that staged regular variety entertainment during a seven-day week. 'Inner urban' areas for the cities outside London was defined as those areas which largely comprised of the original township wards or sanitary registration districts; for cockney London this was the ten Metropolitan boroughs outlined earlier. That entertainment could have included bioscope pictures as part of the programme. Specifically excluded from the data, however, were those establishments that were primarily dedicated to the traditional theatre but staged annual, limited run pantomimes featuring some of the leading music hall performers of the day.<sup>71</sup>

Some of the halls closed and reopened under new names or underwent extensive refurbishment during the period under investigation, which was

---

<sup>71</sup> This crossover of traditional pantomime and music hall was well established by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. James Fawn, (1847-1923), already a leading light in music hall, successfully appeared in the 1874 production of *Children of the Wood* at the Adelphi Theatre in London. (D. Russell, 'Popular Entertainment' in J. Donohue (ed), *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Vol.11, 1660-1895*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.384). Jenny Hill (1848-1896) appeared in the Leeds Grand Theatre production of *Red Riding Hood*, (*The Yorkshire Post*, 24 December 1881, p.11).

reflected in their relative audience capacities. From the middle of the 1890s the maximum audience capacity of music halls in the regions investigated was governed by local building statutes that generally replicated those in force for the London halls. For most of the halls that were built or refurbished at this time, especially those that were developed by the various music hall syndicate entrepreneurs and frequently designed and built by the renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham, their style of construction maximised both the audience viewing experience and the capacity of the venue. The introduction of steel cantilevered balconies spanning an auditorium in new builds from the 1890s not only presented an unobstructed view of the stage, especially beneficial for the cheaper seats but also provided the means for an extensive upper gallery for the lowest priced admission tickets.<sup>72</sup> This degree of building uniformity was especially useful in estimating audience capacity for venues in the analysis where it was unknown or not disclosed.

A number of key primary and secondary sources were used to initially determine the number of halls in operation from 1890 to 1914, with each being cross referenced against the other where possible.<sup>73</sup> Synthesising this data with the known audience capacity of each hall where stated and estimating the audience capacity from similar halls of the same size and design where not, an individual single nightly potential gross and an annual gross regional audience capacity could be calculated. To reflect the growing national appeal of music halls from 1900, a weighted gross audience capacity was extrapolated. This was calculated

---

<sup>72</sup> J. Earl, *British Theatres and Music Halls*, (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2005), p.38.

<sup>73</sup> Principle sources listing music halls would be D. Howard, *London Theatres and Music Halls, 1850-1950*, (London: The Library Association, 1970); *The Era Almanack and Annual, Years 1890-1918*; 'Britain and Ireland's Theatres and Music Halls Index at <<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/BritainsProvincialTheatres.htm>> [accessed 25 September 2020]; V. Ellacot, *An A-Z Encyclopaedia of London Theatres and Music Halls*, at <[http://www.overthefootlights.co.uk/London\\_Theatres.htm](http://www.overthefootlights.co.uk/London_Theatres.htm)> [accessed 25 September 2020]; J. Read, *Empires Hippodromes and Palaces* (London: The Alderman Press, 1985).

by recognising that from this time, most halls presented their programmes, twice nightly, over a six-day week with matinees on two afternoons per week and an estimated audience attendance of 60% of total capacity. Based on these parameters, a potential annual weighted gross audience capacity by region was extrapolated. These weighted figures demonstrate conclusively how, over a twenty-year period, music hall grew to become a national mass entertainment medium, with the potential to attract a gross weighted 60 plus million patrons annually to the inner urban music halls of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cockney London.<sup>74</sup>

To successfully appear before such a vast potential audience through regular annual tours, the cockney-styled entertainers had to establish an active performer/audience connectivity. This ensured that their existing London-centric stage material, mainly their songs and embedded characterisations, could be successfully adopted as part of a national performance repertoire. Such connectivity was only made possible by the convergence of the special enabling factors outlined earlier. This original study is situated within the framework of the popularity of music hall among inner urban audiences. It presents a detailed and evidenced argument for the existence of a special connectivity that was enjoyed by music hall's cockney-styled entertainers which was facilitated by the unique presence of four key enabling factors. In so doing, this study offers a particular nuanced understanding of the national acclaim they enjoyed as music halls' most popular entertainers from the last decade of the nineteenth century.

---

<sup>74</sup> Applied weighting: 14 performances per week (twice nightly performances for six days plus 2 weekly matinee performances) over a 48-week year with 60% average audience occupancy.

## Chapter One – *The Performer and Audience Relationship*

### *Introduction*

In this chapter the relationship between the artistes, their style of stage performances and their music hall audiences is investigated. It examines what this relationship was within the context of their appeal to music hall audiences and its relative importance to the different types of acts that formed the eclectic mix of music hall entertainment. In the first part of the chapter, the special aura that was said to surround the leading performers of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall artistes is discussed and how it was an embedded part of their audience appeal. It expands upon the almost tangible anticipation felt by audiences as they were about to be entertained by the leading stars. It identifies a special level of audience and performer relationship that was critical to the success of the cockney-styled entertainers, with audiences outside London.

In the second part, the audience and performer relationship is reviewed through the lens of Bailey's seminal 1998 scholarly work on Victorian popular culture and his notion of knowingness and augmented and subsequently expanded upon through more recent historiography.<sup>1</sup> The third part of the chapter examines the cockney-styled entertainer and audience relationship from a philosophical perspective and the meaning of words. It demonstrates that words can be considered as a type of action beyond being simply a medium to express ideas, emotions or views. Examples of some popular music hall songs are highlighted that which illustrate how, albeit superficially, they obey the rules of

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); P. Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning: Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture, *Past and Present*, 44: August (1994), pp. 138-170.

conversational implicatures theory and the picture theory of language. Finally, the chapter posits a uniquely refined theory, termed connectivity, that bridges the gap in the current understanding of the performer and audience relationship by applying it to the cockney-styled entertainers and inner urban music hall audiences in Britain's largest cities beyond London. It demonstrates that it was this special connectivity that allowed the cockney-styled entertainers to use their London-centric performance material, including the use of a distinct cockney vernacular, as national acts without the need for regional modification.

### *Something in the air – the aura of performance.*

'As soon as he came on to the stage he connected with the emotional voltage in the auditorium, concentrated it, and somehow intensified it by the power that great performers often apply.'<sup>2</sup>

Even though this description of the working relationship between the music hall performer and the audience was made specifically with reference to the diminutive comedian Little Tich, it could easily be applied to many of the most successful music hall performers.<sup>3</sup> It suggests, in an almost metaphysical form, the unseen charge or aura surrounding music hall audiences across the country that was created by the major stars as the curtains opened and they made their stage entrance. It could easily be applied to completely opposite styles of music hall acts and performances, from Vesta Tilley to Harry Lauder, and from Nellie Wallace to Harry Tate.<sup>4</sup> These music hall performers, like so many other artistes

---

<sup>2</sup> M. Titch & R. Findlater, *Little Tich: Giant of the Music Hall*, (London: Elm Tree Books, 1979), p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Harry Relph (Little Tich), Born – 1867, Cudham, Kent, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi-org-mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/56971>> [accessed 31 January 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Matilda Alice Powles (Vesta Tilley), Born – 1864 Worcester, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi-org/10/10.1093/ref:odnb/36523>> [accessed 7 February, 2022]; Sir Henry Lauder (Harry Lauder), Born – 1870, Portobello (near Edinburgh), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi-org.mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34419>>, [accessed 7 February 2022]; Eleanor Jane Wallace (Nellie Wallace), Born – 1870 Glasgow at *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/55971>> [accessed 7 February 2022]; Ronald McDonald Hutchinson (Harry Tate), Born -1872, Kennington, London, *Oxford Dictionary of*

of the period, had a special affinity with their audiences throughout Britain and abroad. Such an aura, however, was about much more than a stage presence by the performer or the anticipation by an audience to an evening or afternoon's entertainment, albeit both would invariably be present. Moreover, the affinity these artistes had with an audience, did not require the audience to possess a personal understanding or experience of the intricacies of the performance; they could enjoy the humour of a song or story or appreciate the acrobatic dexterity of a performance as entertained onlookers.

Vesta Tilley was noted for her sophisticated 'level of characterisation' in her drag act that 'created a particular dissonance between the immaculately observed and represented male visual characters and her own mocking female voice'.<sup>5</sup> With Harry Lauder, it was his Scottishness that became central to his act, as a 'man of simple pleasures, loving his wife, his hearth and his whisky'.<sup>6</sup> Nellie Wallace had a performance style that made fun of her lack of sex appeal by making herself look as unattractive as possible. She often appeared dressed in a 'mangy stole' which she referred to as her little bit of vermin and a hat topped with either a long feather or the skeleton of a fish.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Harry Tate, it was his humour 'that was founded upon a good natured and not unobservant burlesque of the interest and amusements of the ordinary citizen'.<sup>8</sup>

---

National Biography at <<https://doi.org.mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref.odnb/64582>> [accessed 7 February 2022].

<sup>5</sup> S. Maitland, 'Tilley Vesta', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref.odnb/36523>> [accessed 7 February 2022].

<sup>6</sup> R. A Baker, *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), p.58.

<sup>7</sup> Baker, *British*, p.166.

<sup>8</sup> 'The Death of Mr. Harry Tate', *The Times*, 15 February 1940, p.6.



Yet there was, however, one genre of music hall act, classified generally at the time by the music hall press as 'serio-comedians', but more specifically for this study referred to as cockney-styled entertainers, where the performer/audience relationship was absolutely essential: especially so in relation to inner urban music hall audiences beyond London. This relationship did not rely on the uniqueness of a particular performer or content of their stage act, but on the believability of the person or character they represented set within the context of the everyday lived experiences of a large proportion of their audiences. Furthermore, this relationship presented the artiste with the opportunity to simultaneously conjoin emotionally with their audiences as a collective and as individuals. Although unique in their own way, the cockney-styled entertainers shared the common denominator of being able to create a rapport with audiences that seemed as if they owned them. Their performances were invariably presented through a wide focus of the trials and tribulations that was the everyday lived experience of inner urban life. In doing so, they projected an air of shared intimacy as if they were recounting a story to a local or intimate group. It is this special relationship between the cockney-styled entertainers and their inner urban music hall audiences in particular, subsequently defined as 'connectivity', that is the principal focus of this chapter.

These performers were often referred to as 'coster' comedians or comediennes, although by the turn of the century, most of their acts had already begun to develop beyond the strict interpretation of a 'coster' style; that is being fruit and vegetable market stall holders. They had acts that combined standard ballad types of song with comic numbers and sketches often interspersed with dialogue or 'patter'. Their performance material had its geographic locus in London

generally but with its themes and memes being that of the everyday lived experiences of the city's inner urban population, defined in this study as cockney London. Such themes as marriage, work, drink, money (or more specifically the lack of it), and the anticipation and hope for better times were the normal features of inner urban living for the majority. It was a performance style that was the foundation for the careers of major performers such as Marie Lloyd, Bessie Bellwood, Vesta Victoria, Gus Elen, Harry Champion, Kate Carney, Alec Hurley, and others. Theirs was a unique form of performance style, that was born out of both the characters and everyday lived experiences of the inner urban population of London. Not only did these entertainers adopt cockney characterisations as part their acts, many of the lyrics contained in their songs referred, not only to widely recognised London landmarks such as Trafalgar Square or Buckingham Palace, but also to those identified more locally in cockney London. Moreover, and even more significantly, the presentation of their songs and increasing accompanying 'patter' was delivered in a distinct cockney vernacular.

Most of the serio-comedic principal stars of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall were indeed cockneys in that they were born and raised within cockney London.<sup>9</sup> Some, however, like Vesta Victoria who was born in Leeds and

---

<sup>9</sup> Marie Lloyd (Matilda Alice Victoria Wood) – born Hoxton (Shoreditch), 12 February 1870, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37003>> [accessed 10 January 2022]; Gus Elen (Ernest Augustus Elen) – born Pimlico (Westminster), 22 July 1862, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39376>> [accessed 10 January 2022]; Bessie Bellwood (Kate Mahoney), born Cork, (Ireland), circa 1856, baptised and raised (Southwark) from 4 June 1856, in R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), p.158; Harry Champion (William Henry Crump) -born 1865 (Bethnal Green), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/41077>> [accessed 10 January 2022]; Kat Carney (Catherine Mary Pattinson) – born 1869 (Southwark) in R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2014), p.162; Alec (Alexander) Hurley – born 24 March 1871 (Hackney) at <<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp96224/alexander-alec-hurley>> [accessed 10 January 2022].

Wilkie Bard, born in Manchester, would adopt cockney personas as part of their acts. Vesta Victoria transformed her earlier music hall act into one as a cockney-styled entertainer as she began to be popular in the music halls in London. Wilkie Bard started his music hall career in the halls of Manchester and the wider north-west performing cockney-style songs. Even though the authenticity of his cockney accent began to be questioned when he performed in the halls in cockney London, he was, nonetheless, recognised by audiences nationally as a cockney-styled performer.<sup>10</sup>

Although music hall had entertainers and performers who would fall into the geographical definition of cockneys from its early days around the middle of the nineteenth century, it was through the performances of Albert Chevalier from 1891 that the music hall character of the 'coster' emerged. Already having a successful career in mainstream theatre, Chevalier made his first music hall appearance at the New London Pavilion in Piccadilly Circus, London in 1891 with a highly stylised and manufactured cockney costermonger character singing *The Coster's Serenade*.<sup>11</sup> It has been suggested that Chevalier was largely responsible for the growing popularity of this genre of music hall entertainer, not least of all since it was his portrayal of the London cockney as epitomised in his coster character, that made the stereotype respectable to middle-class Victorian society.<sup>12</sup> Citing *The Era* magazine of 22 June 1912, Baker notes Chevalier's assertion that: 'I think I may claim without egotism that my work has helped to

---

<sup>10</sup> Personal testimony, Peter Charlton, British Music Hall Society historian, 3 May 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Chevalier (Albert Onesime Britannicus Gwathveoyd Louis Chevalier) – born 21 March 1861, Notting Hill, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32394>> [accessed 10 January 2022]; A. Chevalier & J. Crook, *The Coster's Serenade*, at <<https://monolques.co.uk/musichall/Songs-C/Costers-Serenade.htm>> [accessed 10 January 2022].

<sup>12</sup> B. Anthony, *The King's Jester. The Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2010), p.98.

purify the music hall'.<sup>13</sup> Whilst such a claim may be over self-congratulatory, he became so readily associated with the coster stereotype that he was known by audiences at the time as the 'coster laureate'.<sup>14</sup>

Most of the leading cockney-styled entertainers, with the notable exception of Albert Chevalier, took advantage of the emerging syndicated structure of music hall circuits throughout Britain and embarked on regular regional tours from the last decade of the nineteenth century and into the first two decades of the twentieth century. Albert Chevalier withdrew from provincial touring and music hall performances in general after 1898 to concentrate on concert-style recitals and then later, from 1906, returning to the mainstream theatre.<sup>15</sup> His withdrawal from music hall, however, was more than made up by the popularity of other cockney-styled entertainers such as Gus Elen, Marie Lloyd, Harry Champion, and Vesta Victoria especially from the last decade of the nineteenth century. Their provincial tours, often annual and sometimes bi-annual, would take in many towns beyond the metropolis but most especially would include Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow.

Through these tours, they adopted what would become national acts that were regularly augmented with new songs and characterisations, but all the while retaining a general theme within their performances; that of the trials and tribulations of the everyday lived experiences of the inner urban poor that

---

<sup>13</sup> R. A. Baker, *British Music Hall*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books 2014), citing *The Era* 22 June 1912.

<sup>14</sup> M. Wilson Disher, *Winkles and Champagne. Comedies and Tragedies of the Music Hall*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1938), p.60; Albert Chevalier, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, at <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Albert-Chevalier>> [accessed 30 March 2022].

<sup>15</sup> S. Featherstone, *Chevalier*, A.O.B.G.L at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32394>> [accessed 14 January 2022].

represented the majority of cockney London. However, very few, if any, of the audiences outside London that would regularly attend the performances of Marie Lloyd and Gus Elen and the other leading cockney-styled entertainers on their provincial tours, would have had direct or personal knowledge of London in general and Cockney London in particular. Metropolis-centred references to such places as the 'Dials', or the wooden houses in 'Peckham Rye', or the 'Mile End Road' or the cockney vernacular that speaks of 'a bit of splosh' or the buttons on a 'jimmy prescott' would, on face value, appear to be a mystery to regional audiences.<sup>16</sup>

If there was no obvious regional audience understanding of the geographic locus embedded in many of the cockney-styled performers' songs or the storylines that were enrobed in a cockney vernacular, why were these artistes so popular with a style of act that remained largely unchanged throughout their careers? Why would regional audiences empathise so readily with cockney-styled entertainers, to the degree that these artistes would make regular annual provincial tours without the need to modify their stage material to register with regional audiences? The answer lies in the special relationship that such artistes had with their audiences.

### *Knowingness – the metalanguage of music hall*

Bailey's seminal work on Victorian popular culture, and in particular his notion of 'knowingness' still provides the best foundation in understanding the basic music hall audience/performer relationship, albeit that his focus is confined to the Victorian period. At its simplest level, Bailey defines 'knowingness' as 'what

---

<sup>16</sup> 'bit of splosh' (money); 'jimmy prescott' (waistcoat).

everybody knows but some know better than others' and a terminology that is both 'complicit and discriminatory' in its relation to nineteenth century music hall comic performance.<sup>17</sup> Audience 'knowingness' in relation to comedic performance is most evident in music hall song as performed by the serio-comedians in general but in particular those by the cockney-styled entertainers. As Bailey recognises: 'the great popularity of the songs is said to have come from the audience's recognition and identification with the routine yet piquant exploits of a comic realism that validates the shared experience of a typically urbanised, class bound world seen from below'.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, although the 'knowingness' that is embedded in the songs or the performance act is essentially a passive audience characteristic, it had a special resonance with an audience and cannot be separated from that of the manner of the performance itself and the language employed. The linguistic style of the 'street-wise' language within the lyrics of their songs, coupled with the performance characteristics of the cockney-styled **entertainers** 'signalled a common yet inside knowledge of what was really going on'.<sup>19</sup>

Bailey further contends that it is through 'knowingness' that the music hall performer 'mobilised the collective identity of an audience', so that it pulls it 'inside a closed yet allusive frame of reference and implicating them in a select conspiracy of meaning that animates them as a specific audience'.<sup>20</sup> This argument is re-enforced by Russell in his evaluation of Stedman Jones's study of the relationship between music hall and working-class political culture, where he

---

<sup>17</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p.128.

<sup>18</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p. 129.

<sup>19</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p.132.

<sup>20</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p. 132, p.137.

describes song as 'an expression of the audience's values and aspirations.'<sup>21</sup> It is also consistent with his concept of music hall's engagement with its audiences as being part of its consolation of culture.<sup>22</sup> Medhurst expands further upon Bailey's notion of 'knowingness' by suggesting that 'music hall comic song was an invitation to belong, to acknowledge and celebrate 'like-mindedness', to say 'yes, life's like that, let's laugh and get on with it'.<sup>23</sup> For Wingrove, the notion of audience 'knowingness' as suggested by Bailey is indicative that music hall, through its songs served as a 'metalanguage for the stars to engage with their public'; in doing so it 'confirmed or created a sense of identity and helped transform, however fleetingly, the 'volatile' collectivity that was a music hall crowd into a distinctive, identifiable entity'.<sup>24</sup>

Whilst all these assertions offer a degree of explanation in respect of the audience and performance relationship, they are generalised. With Bailey and Stedman Jones, and to a lesser extent with Medhurst, their focus on knowingness is within the context of Victorian music hall, largely before it became a commodified, syndicated entertainment medium. Even more limiting, their focus is on the London halls. Nor does it consider the performers themselves, especially the cockney-styled entertainers, and how they, and the characters they portrayed, generated the necessary emotional empathy with audiences beyond the metropolis. Wingrove's notion of music hall song being its

---

<sup>21</sup> D. Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1890-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.113.

<sup>22</sup> G. Stedman Jones, 'Working Class Culture & Working Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class, *Journal of Social History*, 7: 4 (1974), pp.460-508

<sup>23</sup> A. Medhurst, *A National Joke. Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p.65.

<sup>24</sup> L. Wingrove, 'Sassin Back': Victorian Serio-Comediennes and Their Audiences' in L. Lee (ed) *Victorian Comedy and Laughter Conviviality, Jokes & Dissent* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p.211.

metalanguage, is essentially correct. It is worth noting however, the limitations that are inherent as a result of the narrow context of her focus on the sociological relationship and implications of serio-comediennes within a patriarchal middle-class late Victorian and Edwardian society. To overcome these limitations, therefore, a more tightly focussed and subtle understanding of the relationship between the cockney-styled entertainers and their national audiences is required and posited, namely that of 'connectivity', which is presented later in this chapter.

The cockney-styled entertainers' relationship with their audiences can also be analysed from a more philosophical perspective, and one that is acknowledged by Bailey as being part of the performers' 'knowingness'.<sup>25</sup> The notion of 'interpellation' as expounded by Althusser offers some insight to an explanation of this relationship.<sup>26</sup> Althusser's concept of 'interpellation' echoes the earlier work of Bourdieu, who suggests that what are constructed as ideological positions, be they thoughts, opinions or world views, do not only exist in the mind but are reinforced and supported by social institutions.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, ideology is completed by the mechanism of 'interpellation' which creates a relationship where the social order speaks to us as individuals and is understood by a system of roles and social positions contained within an impersonal and 'collective order'.<sup>28</sup> In respect of music hall, therefore, the performer is 'calling' to and reinforcing the ideological and largely embedded social positions of the

---

<sup>25</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p.133.

<sup>26</sup> L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, B. Brewster (trans), B. Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), p.x11.

<sup>27</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>28</sup> J. Jameson, 'Introduction' in L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, B. Brewster (trans), B. Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 201), p.x11.



majority of inner urban music hall audiences, through the lyrics of songs that speak of the everyday lived experiences of many, if not most, of them.

Applying this Althusserian concept to Victorian music hall performers, in particular those referred to as serio-comedians, Bailey contends that in their special way, these performers' knowingness 'activates the corporate subjectivity of the audience who are cast variously as men, women, husbands, lodgers, costers and working-men but underlying all these as people 'in the know'.<sup>29</sup> However, as Jameson points out, 'interpellation' has its own constraints, not least of all, our own historical situation. In other words, acknowledging the situation as it exists and having to deal with it.<sup>30</sup> The existence and reaction for many to the vicissitudes of inner urban life (poor quality, overcrowded housing, low skilled, low paid sporadic employment and near poverty) did not require an appellation through music hall song to make them visible. They were only too apparent in every major city in Britain. The only practical means of dealing with them was to accept the reality of the situation and get on with life.

Bailey's 'knowingness' and to a lesser degree Althusser's 'interpellation' certainly suggests a mechanism for the link in the audience/performer relationship.

However, it fails to explain particularly how regional inner urban music hall audiences empathised with cockney-styled entertainers when their performance material, being heavily London-centric, and delivered in a cockney London vernacular would seemingly be incomprehensible. Yet, as Bailey readily

---

<sup>29</sup> P. Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning and the Knowingness of Popular Culture' *Past and Present*, 44 (1994), p.144.

<sup>30</sup> J. Jameson, 'Introduction', in L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, B. Brewster (trans) (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), p.x11.

acknowledges, music hall was 'both more and less than a class mode of expression and has yet to be fully understood in terms of its participants' measures of significance and what its meaning is for them.'<sup>31</sup>

Russell emphasises this aspect of meaning in relation to the performance material of the serio comedians in music hall especially in their music and song lyrics. He rightly contends that music hall song lyrics carry meanings more complex than is first apparent than 'frozen in print' since 'a gesture, a comment to the audience or a musical embellishment by the orchestra could alter messages considerably'.<sup>32</sup> This is evidenced in the style and presentation of Marie Lloyd's stage performance. Although there are no known original cinematic recordings of her performances, oral testimonies of the period and reminiscences of those who had witnessed them, all attest to the special relationship she had with music hall audiences.<sup>33</sup> She was renowned for extracting the maximum effect out of the lyrics of a song using a seemingly innocent gesture or nod or wink of the eye. At the height of her career during the first decade of the twentieth century, it was said of her stagecraft by the actress Sarah Bernhardt that in her opinion 'Marie Lloyd could do more with a wink, a nod, a sidelong glance, or smile which displayed those dazzlingly white but protruding teeth of hers, than most 'straight' actresses could do with four or five pages of dialogue and a whole company in support.'<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Bailey, 'Conspiracies', p.142.

<sup>32</sup> D. Russell, *Popular Music* p.113.

<sup>33</sup> F. Cliffe & C.J. Moore, 'Marie Lloyd. Every Little Movement has a Meaning of its Own', *BBC Eyewitness 1900-1909, A History of the Twentieth Century in Sound*, recorded 23 July 1912; W. Macqueen-Pope, 'Music Hall. As I knew Her', *BBC Eyewitness 1900-1909, A History of the Twentieth Century in Sound*, General Overseas Service, 30 September 1952.

<sup>34</sup> W. Macqueen-Pope, *The Melodies Linger On* (London: W.H. Allen, 1950), p.344.

The potential for enhancement of a song lyric in this way is evident in two of Marie Lloyd's songs she performed during her career: *G'arn Away (what D'Yer Take Me For Eh?)* and *What's That For, Eh?*.<sup>35</sup> In the opening verse of *G'arn Away*, the girl in the story, whilst having a drink with a gentleman of means ('a swell'), is offered the chance of a stage career if she would agree to become more involved with him ('if you'll fly with me'). Given Marie Lloyd's well documented performance style using innuendo and suggestion, it is not unreasonable to imagine her not resisting the opportunity offered in the girl's response ('D'Yer think I'd ever go upon the stage and show my legs?') to guide the audience with a knowing wink or downward glance towards her ankles.

#### *G'Arn Away (What D'Yer Take Me For Eh?)*

Then a swell from the West winked his blinkers once at me,  
And in course I tips 'im back a civil wink.  
I was eating of some winkles from a paper in my 'and  
Which I offers 'im and then he stands a drink  
Then 'e says, 'If you'll fly with me, I'll put yer in the stage  
Where yer know the corster business now, is getting quite the rage!  
'What' say I, 'You teach yer grandmother, my covey, to suck eggs,  
D'Yer think I'd ever go upon the stage and show my legs'?

Similarly, what would appear to be the account of an innocuous encounter between a girl's father and a woman, can be found in *What's That for, Eh?* and gives Marie Lloyd the opportunity to collusively engage with the audience. In the

---

<sup>35</sup> E. Rogers, *G'Arn Away (What D'Yer Take Me For Eh?)* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-G/Garn-Away.htm>> [accessed 15 February 2022]; W.T. Lytton & G. Le Brunn, *What's That For, Eh?* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Soings-W/Whats-That-For.htm>> [accessed 15 February 2022].

song, a girl questions her father as to why, during a visit to town ('up to town'), implicitly London's West End, a blonde lady greets him with a false name ('Oh what a shame, she called Pa 'Bertie', it's not his real name') and gives a kissing motion and winks her eye. In asking her father 'What's that for Eh?' and threatening him that if he does not tell, she will 'ask Ma', she confides with the audience that 'Well, I've asked Johnny Jones now, see, so I know now'. Such a technique of conspiratorially addressing an audience collectively at the same time implicitly as individuals, was a feature of Marie Lloyd's stage performance and one that was in evidence with all the successful cockney-styled entertainers.

### *What's That for, Eh?*

Pa took me up to town one day  
to see the shops and sights so gay  
Oh how the ladies made me stare  
they nearly all had yellow hair  
and one of them – Oh what a shame  
she called Pa 'Bertie' it's not his name  
then went like this (kissing sound) and winked her eye  
and so I said to Pa 'Oh my'

#### Chorus

'What's that for eh? Tell me Pa  
If you don't tell me I'll ask Ma!  
But Pa said, 'Oh it's no thing shut your row  
Well, I've asked Johnny Jones, see  
So I know now.

The statement of societal norms of the time, relating to patriarchy can be found in the lyrics of many music hall songs as evidenced in the L. Bateman and G. Le

Brunn number, *It's Great Big Shame*.<sup>36</sup> In this song, Jim's best friend, as portrayed by Gus Elen, mourns the loss of Jim to his new, diminutive, shrew-like wife. Although the comedic value of the song has as its constant theme big Jim's subjugation (despite having a 'leg of mutton fist, 'an as strong as a bullick or an 'orse), under his new wife with her ('nagging at a fellow that is six foot three, and 'er not four feet two'), it is the clever orchestration of the song that enhances its underlying message. For as Russell rightly contends, artistic performance must be seen within its entirety to make full sense of the potential effect on an audience.<sup>37</sup> The orchestral contribution heard on one of Gus Elen's rare cinematic recordings of *It's a Great Big Shame*, is the essence of timing and emphasis and leaves the audience in no doubt as to how he would deal with Jim's domineering wife: 'It's a great big shame and if she belonged to me, I'd let her know who's who'. Although the lyrics give a flavour of the emotion that Elen wants to convey to his audience, viewed on paper they could seem flat and lacking in impact.

In a filmed performance of this song, Elen walks around the stage between the chorus and the verses as the orchestra plays the infill to the melody of the song. At the appropriate moment, he makes a striking motion with a mallet that he produces from the pocket of his jacket as the orchestra crescendos to a loud bang on the drum.<sup>38</sup> The implication, from Elen's perspective, of how to re-establish the normal husband and wife relationship is made very clear, and it is hard to imagine that this would not have resonated with many men in music hall

---

<sup>36</sup> E. Bateman & G. Le Brunn, *It's a Great Big Shame*, at <<http://monolgues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-I/lts-A-Great-Big-Shame.htm>> [accessed 15 February 2022].

<sup>37</sup> Russell, *Popular Music*, p.112.

<sup>38</sup> *It's a Great Big Shame*, performed by Gus Elen, available on YouTube at <<https://youtu.be/enAa2TAQ3wc>> [accessed 15 February 2022].

audiences throughout the county who believed themselves to be similarly hen pecked.

*It's a Great Big Shame*

I've lost my pal, 'es the best in all the than  
But don't you fink 'im dead becos 'e aint.  
But since 'es wed, 'e as 'ad ter knuckle dahn.  
It's enufter to vex the temper of a saint.  
'Ehs a brewer's dray-man, wiva leg of mutton fist  
'An as strong as a bullick or 'an 'orse.  
Yet in 'er 'ands e's like a little kid.  
Oh, I wish as I could get 'im a divorce.

Chorus

It's a great big shame  
and if she belonged to me  
I'd let her know who's who.  
Nagging at a fellow that is six foot three  
and her not four feet two.  
they hadn't been married for a month or more  
when underneath her thumb goes Jim.  
Oh isn't it a pity that the likes of her should put upon the likes of him.

## *The Meaning of Words and Audience Understanding – the Philosophical Perspective*

The audience/performer relationship generated through an artist's song or pater can also be examined in the context of Austin's Speech Act theory.<sup>39</sup> In his initial theory, later expanded upon by Searle, he considers language as a type of action more than simply a medium to convey and express ideas, views, intentions, emotions and the like. He suggests that linguistic communications are comprised of linguistic actions beyond simple sentences and words.<sup>40</sup> He contends that the production or utterances of words are the basic units of communication with such utterances forming part of the performance of the speech act. He further suggests that the meaning of utterances can be considered as the building blocks of mutual understanding between people who intend to communicate and that the linguistic act can be divided into three categories: 'locutionary', 'illocutionary' and 'perlocutionary'.

'Locutionary' linguistic acts are those deemed to be the action of saying something which has a meaning and in so doing creates an understandable notion to convey or express which makes an utterance meaningful. Bjorgvinsson offers a simple definition of a locutionary utterance as being 'the act of expressing states of affairs'.<sup>41</sup> 'Illocutionary' linguistic acts are those utterances by which the speaker performs an act by virtue of having said something which is neither descriptive nor subject to truth conditions. 'Perlocutionary' acts,

---

<sup>39</sup> J.L. Austin, 'How to Do Things with Words' in J.O. Urmson, (ed) *The William Jones Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>40</sup> Austin, *The William Jones Lectures*; J.R. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (Phoenix: Guernsey Press, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> J. Habermas, 'Social Action, Positive Activity and Communications' in M. Cooke (ed) *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998) cited by L.A. Bjorgvinsson, *Speech Act Theory – A Critical Overview* unpublished thesis (Iceland: University of Iceland, 2011).

however, are those utterances that are supposed to influence the hearer and could take the form of a joke or warning or an act of persuasion and would be generally thought to elicit some form of response from the hearer. Such a response could be active as in laughter, or passive as in emotional. Sadock expands upon this by suggesting that the perlocutionary effects of such utterances therefore can be the unsaid by-products of linguistic communication and their effects may be intentional or unintentional since it could be the hearer who acts upon an effect produced by the speech.<sup>42</sup>

To this extent, therefore, elements of some of the performance material used by music hall serio comedians, especially the lyrics in their songs, are indeed perlocutionary in nature. An example would be Lilly Morris's song *Don't Have Any More Missus Moore*.<sup>43</sup> Although the song, written in 1926, is strictly outside the periodisation of this study, it does offer a good example of the type of perlocutionary utterance than could be found in earlier music hall song lyrics. Notwithstanding that the song is essentially a comedic play on words, its underlying sentiment of the link between excessive drinking and pregnancy is obvious. When Lilly Morris sings 'the local inn she uses, is called the wooden hut, she's first one in at opening time and last out when they shut', the wider scenario of the song theme is set. The implied link between alcohol and pregnancy would unlikely be missed by music hall audiences, especially with women. Even more so with those in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow, which during the late Victorian and early

---

<sup>42</sup> J.M. Sadock, *Towards Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> H. Castling & Walsh, *Don't Have Any More Missus Moore*, at <http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-D/Dont-Have-Any-More-Missus-Moore.htm> [accessed 16 February 2022]; Lilly Morris (Lilles Mary Crosby) Born – London 1882, in R. A. Baker, *British Music Hall*, p.253.



Edwardian period tended to display the highest birth rates relative to the rest of the country.

*Don't Have Any More Missus Moore*<sup>44</sup> (selected verses)

Missus Moore, who lives next door, she's such a dear old soul  
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 at the door.

Don't have any more, Missus Moore,  
Missus Moore, please don't have any more.  
The more you have the more you want, they say.  
If you have any more Missus Moore  
you'll have to rent the house next door.

...The local Inn she uses is called the wooden hut.  
She's first one in at opening time, and last out when they shut.

...Too many double gins gives the ladies double chins  
So don't have any more Missus Moore

However, Yoshitake is less convinced of the real validity of speech act theory in that it only allows for a speaker centred model when the meaning of the acts of utterances are conceptualised.<sup>45</sup> He argues that the illocutionary act is only backward reasoning since only the speaker can possess direct access to his meaning of illocutionary acts. He further suggests that human beings are naturally interpretative, so never stop attaching meaning to incoming stimuli. Therefore, utterances can be interpreted in various ways with different meanings

---

<sup>44</sup> *Don't Have Any More Missus Moore*, available on YouTube at <<https://youtu.be/FK56iat54Fs>> [accessed 16 February 2022].

<sup>45</sup> M. Yoshitake, 'Critique of J.L. Austin's Speech Act Theory: Decentralisation of the Speaker-Centered Meaning in Communication' *Kyushi Communications Studies*, 2 (2004), pp.27-43.

attached. Yoshitake's notion, however, does not necessarily weaken the example of illocutionary utterances evidenced in the lyrics Lilly Morris's song. If anything, it strengthens them since the subliminal message behind the lyrics, the perils of excessive drinking, multiple pregnancies, ('score or more') overweight ('ladies with double chins'), could be interpreted differently by various elements of inner urban music hall audiences: young girls, men, and older women for example.

Grice argues, however, that there is a co-operational element present in speech act utterances since in many cases they are implications rather than literal statements. He suggests that performance through language is achievable by way of a kind of social agreement rather than the language itself since it is a linguistic co-operation that allows for a promise to be a promise more than just words in a propositional contract.<sup>46</sup> He underpins this notion in his theory of conversational implicatures where he posits that participants in a communicative exchange are guided by a principle that determines the way in which language is used with maximum efficiency and effect to achieve rational conversations.<sup>47</sup> In essence, the observation that what is meant in conversations often goes beyond what is said, and this additional meaning is inferred and predictable.

According to Grice, the theory behind a communicative exchange is the Cooperative Principle which notes that 'to make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or

---

<sup>46</sup> P.H. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>47</sup> H. Yang, Conversational Implicature in English Listening Comprehension *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2:5 No. 5, (2011) pp. 1162-1167 at <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/jltr/vol02/05/27.pdf> [accessed 25 September 2022].

direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged'.<sup>48</sup> It is a term that encompasses a series of components that are grouped together under four maxims being those of quality (truthfulness), quantity (informativeness), relation (relevance) and manner (perspicuity).<sup>49</sup> Within a conversation or utterance, the speaker may observe one of four things relative to the cooperative principle and its maxims. The speaker may observe the maxims, opt out of a maxim (such as using a phrase that mitigates or eliminates the effect), flout a maxim (with the full knowledge of the addressee) or violate a maxim by lying.<sup>50</sup>

Elements of Grice's conversational implicatures theory and the apparent flouting of the quality maxim in his cooperative principle are evident in some of the lyrics of the Nellie Wallace song, *Under the Bed*. In keeping with Nellie Wallace's act depicting her as the dowdy, none-too-attractive woman destined for everlasting spinsterhood, the lyrics of this song play on the sensible advice given by most mothers to their young daughters to be wary of men's true intentions: ('keep an eye on anything that's wearing trousers'). In the first verse can be seen the speaker's (in this case Nellie Wallace) utterance and how they could be aligned with Grice's conversational implicatures and observes his cooperative principle's maxims.

---

<sup>48</sup> 'Conversational Implicatures' at <<https://www.bu.edu/linguistics/UG/course/lx502/docs/lx502-implicatures.pdf>> [accessed 21 February 2022].

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Under the Bed*<sup>51</sup>

My Mother said when I first wore a long black skirt and blouses  
You always keep an eye on anything that's wearing trousers.  
They're always running after chitty girls like me.  
But if one starts to cheek with me, I control my dignity?

However, in the very best of music hall traditions, the opportunity to resort to the comedically absurd is not missed in the subsequent chorus:

My Mother said, 'always look under the bed,  
before you blow the candle out to see if there's a man about.  
I always do if you could make a bet  
But it's never been my luck to find a man there yet.

In the above lyrics, and those in the next two verses, the flouting of Grice's cooperative principle's maxims is starkly apparent. Although the outcome of Nellie's story is highly improbable, the utterance concerning quality (truthfulness) being flouted is made acceptable since it would be with the obvious full knowledge of the audience.

One night I found a man upstairs beneath my bed how funny,  
but when I pulled him out I found but a tailor's dummy.  
And Oh, it did upset me so, I screamed out in alarm  
but I made it stop there all night because it couldn't do me any harm.

The girl next door had burglars in, beneath her bed one tarried.  
She caught him and reformed him, in a fortnight they were married.

---

<sup>51</sup> N. Wallace *Under the Bed*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-U/Under-The-Bed.htm>> [accessed 21 February 2022].

If there's a young man here tonight who fancies I'm alright  
I'd leave our doors wide open, if he'd rob the house tonight.<sup>52</sup>

One of the many performing skills of the cockney-styled entertainers and serio comedians generally was the ability to paint mental pictures for their audiences through their song lyrics and characterisations. The notion of painting pictures through language is fundamental to Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Language and offers another philosophical perspective that can be applied to the music hall performer and audience relationship.<sup>53</sup> Wittgenstein argues that language has one key function, which is to paint pictures of possible states of affairs by contending that statements are meaningful if they can be defined and what can only be expressed in non-verbal ways. In so doing, Wittgenstein posits that picture theory of meaning holds that there is a hidden structure or essence in every form of propositions or sentences.<sup>54</sup> His understanding of what it is to be a picture has the key element of the acceptance of the difference between 'representing' and 'depicting'. He suggests that 'representing' is essential to the relationship of what it is to be a picture, whereas 'depicting' is a direct or indirect relationship that a proposition has to reality and may be a correct or incorrect reality picture.

Critics of Wittgenstein, notably Glock and Hackner, dispute some of the validity of picture theory by suggesting that 'representing' and 'depicting' are, in fact,

---

<sup>52</sup> A recording of Nellie Wallace singing *Under the Bed*, believed to be circa 1920, can be found at: <<https://youtu.be/DcLAoLyDdZg>> [accessed 21 February 2022].

<sup>53</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Critical Edition), B. McGuinness & J. Schulte (eds), (London: Suhrkamp. 1998).

<sup>54</sup> J.F. Rosenberg, 'Wittgenstein's Theory of Language'. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 5, 1, (1968), pp. 18-30.

synonymous.<sup>55</sup> Plourde defends Wittgenstein in this matter, however, by suggesting that Glock's and Hacker's position is based on a lack of clarity and translation from the original German. As such, their understanding of the semantics of 'representing' and 'depicting' is flawed. Plourde contends that the two words and their nuanced meanings are very different, and that Wittgenstein's original theory therefore is still valid.<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding that picture theory offers some explanation of how performance material and an audience's reaction to it can be framed, it still only offers a partial understanding of the relationship that the cockney-styled entertainers had with inner urban music hall audiences. The ability of such performers to paint a picture by way of their stage presentation could be relatively easy with imaginative song lyrics; to make that picture relevant and, more importantly, believable required something else.

### *Bridging the Gap – Connectivity*

Whilst the music hall audience centred notions of 'knowingness' and 'likemindedness' and the philosophical perspectives of linguistics embedded in the performers' song lyrics certainly contribute to our understanding of the performer/audience relationship in music hall, they fail to address the fundamental questions regarding the cockney-styled entertainers and their audiences beyond the metropolis. Why were these performers so popular with regional audiences who would likely have no direct or very minimal indirect

---

<sup>55</sup> H. J. Glock, 'Truth in the Tractatus', *Synthese*, 148 (2006), pp.345-368; P.M.S. Hacker, 'The Rise and Fall of Picture Theory', *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, (ed) L. Block, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp.85-109; J. Plourde, 'Wittgenstein's Picture Theory and the Distinction between Representing and Depicting', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 25:1 (2017), pp.16-39.

<sup>56</sup> J. Plourde, 'Wittgenstein's Picture Theory', pp.16-39.

knowledge or apparent understanding of London-centric references that formed much of their performing material? How could inner urban music hall audiences in Britain's major cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow comprehend or relate to a cockney vernacular that was unique to a relatively geographically small but highly populated area of the nation's capital? How did the characters embedded in the story lines of the cockney-styled entertainers' acts manage to achieve the degree of traction with regional audiences that they could undertake regular annual tours over a period of several years to these cities? Moreover, why was it unnecessary for the cockney-styled entertainers to modify their national stage acts for a regional audience?

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the leading cockney-styled entertainers regularly topped the billing in major urban music halls beyond London such as the Argyle in Birkenhead, the Gaiety in Manchester, Thornton's in Leeds, the Bordelsey Palace in Birmingham, and the Scotia in Glasgow with national acts. With no natural in-built regional or local empathy with audiences in large regional cities, this type of music hall entertainer needed to create a different type of audience empathy and relationship beyond that generated by good stagecraft, or a good voice or amusing songs. They needed to build a relationship with regional audiences that was focussed upon a recognised understanding of most the audiences' everyday lived experiences, which was in turn, projected back to the audience. Such an understanding was encapsulated within the songs, the lyrics, and the characterisations of their performance material. Essentially, this was a synergy of the projected meaning or emotion or situation in the performance with the latent reactive reception of an audience who exhibited common, shared everyday lived experiences. Through this

synergy, the leading cockney-styled entertainers could lead an audience along and through the performer's pre-ordained performance pathway. The successful performers, therefore, were a conduit that connected the images, empathies, and emotions of an audience with those being projected by song lyrics and the situation and characterisation within their performance.

It is this notion of a special *connectivity*, delivered through such a conduit, and employed by the leading cockney-styled entertainers, that underpins this study. Furthermore, it explains the apparent paradox of regional music hall audiences' ability to enthusiastically embrace the London-centric material and cockney vernacular of such entertainers whilst having little or no direct experience of it. This study, therefore, builds upon Bailey's seminal work on 'knowingness' to construct an expanded and more subtle argument to account for this apparent contradiction. 'Connectivity' is thus defined as the point or points wherein an emotion generated within the audience by the performer, the performance and the lyrical content of the song or the characterisation being envisioned, both transcends and extends beyond the general collective understanding by the audience. In doing so, it becomes a focus of resonance with an audience on a personal level, and consequently creates several points of reference. Such points could be on a direct personal level, as in having been subject to a particular lived experience (personal bereavement or being unemployed for example), or indirect, as a collective (being part of a community, or as friends or relatives for instance who have witnessed such a situation). These points of reference could register therefore as a shared individual experience and at the same time be part of a collective empathy with much of an audience's everyday lived experiences. It is this connectivity that acts as the conduit between the



projection of the embedded image, story, characterisation, and performance delivered by the artiste and the receptive but latent knowingness or likemindedness of the audience.

Such connectivity between the cockney-styled entertainers could be visual, aural or both. One example of the visual connectivity would be when Gus Elen made his entrance on stage at the Palace of Varieties in Manchester in 1897 to perform his song, *The Golden Dustman (Or Leave Us in Yer Will)*, with a dirty face and dressed in character.<sup>57</sup> Another would be in his 1905 performances of *Wait Till the Work Comes Round* during his tour of Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool. His act opens with the curtains opening to reveal him in a sparsely furnished room, with a crate being used as a cupboard.<sup>58</sup> In both cases the visual effects would likely have made an immediate empathetic connection between the audience and the performer.

As Vesta Victoria sings the opening lines of *Is Anybody Looking for a Widow?* ('I'm not a merry widow and I'm feeling far from gay'), a connection is immediately made with the audience in general, but even more so those for who had been or still were widowed.<sup>59</sup> It is easy to imagine that at the very least, women, especially those among inner city music hall audiences, where adult

---

<sup>57</sup> Ernest Augustus Ellen (Gus Elen) born – 1862, Pimlico, London at *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39376>> [accessed 23 February 2022]; E. Graham & G. Le Brunn, *The Golden Dustman* at <<http://monolques.co.uk/musichall/Songs-G/Golden-Dustman.htm>> [accessed 23 February 2022]; P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*, (Guildford: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2014), p.268.

<sup>58</sup> G. Elen & C. Cornell, *Wait Till the Work Comes Round* at <<http://monolques.co.uk/musichall/songs-W/Wait-Till-Work-Comes-Round.htm>> [accessed 23 February 2022]; P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*, p.363.

<sup>59</sup> Victoria Lawrence (Vesta Victoria) born – 1873, Holbeck, Leeds at *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64584>> [accessed 23 February 2022].

mortality rates were highest, would immediately connect with the emotional, financial, and social implications of widowhood.

*Is Anybody Looking for Widow?*<sup>60</sup>

I'm not a merry widow and I'm feeling far from gay  
although I'm always for a smile for poor John who passed away.  
For ever since the happy day that I became a wife  
I've always felt that I couldn't get enough of -er - married life.  
Not very long do I intend a widow to remain  
for after all, I don't see why I shouldn't wed again.  
My one desire is for a friend, all kind and loving free.  
Someone who'll start, where John left off, and make a fuss of me.

Nevertheless, music hall would invariably manage to make the bleakest outlook somehow amusing as evidenced in the last lines of the song:

I've a cosy little flat, it won't cost you a cent  
John's insurance money is enough to pay the rent.  
I've also two nice suits of clothes, he'd always get up strong  
the trousers I could shorten if you found they were too long.  
A widow too should be preferred to any single Miss,  
she knows the tricks of all the trade that bring connubial bliss.  
I don't mind if he's dark or fair as long as he's nice.  
And if he's only twenty-one, he needn't ask me twice.

In a similar vein, Marie Lloyd's 1901 song, *William 'Enry Saunders*, would no doubt have had a connected traction with many young girls (and their mothers)

---

<sup>60</sup> H. Gifford, *Is Anybody Looking For a Widow?* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-1/Is-Anybody-Looking-Widow.htm>> [accessed 23 February 2022].

who's imminent plans to marry seem not to be realised.<sup>61</sup> Although being engaged, Will is reluctant to confirm the fact by the purchase of a ring: ('ed made his blessed mind up though, that 'ed do no such thing'). When it becomes apparent to Marie that this is unlikely to ever happen, her remark is one that would no doubt serve well for any lady in a similar position: ('You're too mean to buy one, I can tell that by your look, well then William 'Enry Saunders, you can take your bloomin' hook').

### *Willam 'Enry Saunders<sup>62</sup>*

I've been engaged to my bloke Bill a fortnight or three weeks.  
For days I'd acted cool to 'im, at last I ups and speaks.  
I asked him straight to go and buy a gold engagement ring,  
'ed made his blessed mind up though that 'ed do no such thing.  
'No, look my girl, I can't' and then 'e kind of shook 'is 'ed.  
I coloured like a beetroot and in tones of scorn I said

#### *Chorus*

'William 'Enry Saunders, see this 'and of mine?  
Don't you think a ring upon that finger would look fine?  
You're too mean to buy one, I can tell that by your look.  
Well then – William 'Enry Saunders you can take your bloomin' hook.

However, the nature of this special connectivity that the cockney-styled entertainers enjoyed with their cockney London audiences and other inner urban music hall audiences, was critically contingent on the synergy of four key enabling factors that were in place during the last decade of the nineteenth

---

<sup>61</sup> Matilda Alice Victoria Wood (Marie Lloyd) born – 1870 Hoxton, London at *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37003>> [accessed 23 February 2022].

<sup>62</sup>A. Perry *William 'Enry Saunders* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Sings-W/William-Enry-Saunders.htm>> [accessed 23 February 2022].

century and the early years of the twentieth. The special connectivity meant that their performance material and their stage acts became a national repertoire, devoid of the need for regional modification. Had these enabling factors not been present, regular regional national touring would likely have been very different and possibly unprofitable. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the London-centric references, characterisations and the use of a cockney vernacular embedded in their stage performances would have achieved much less traction with regional audiences. To this extent, the careers of such artistes as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, and others of this genre may well have taken a completely different trajectory.

In the following chapters, the enabling factors are identified and examined in detail. The next, Chapter Two, sets out the first of these, namely the emergence of a demographically defined, quasi homogenous inner urban population within Britain's largest cities.

## Chapter Two: Towards a demographically homogenised inner urban population

### Introduction

At the turn of the nineteenth century, according to the *Music Hall Directory and Variety ABC*, cited by Hoher, just over 38% of the total performing acts appearing in music halls and variety theatres were those classified as 'comic singers/comedians' and 'serio comics and comediennes'.<sup>1</sup> Whilst not all of them would be cockney-styled, that list would undoubtedly have included the principal artistes of the day, such as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, Dan Leno, Alec Hurley and many others who certainly were. All these artistes, who were London based, toured extensively throughout the main towns and cities of Britain, using the same performance material employed in the music halls of London.

Their stage acts, mainly songs interspersed with 'patter' and often embodied within working characters such as coster traders, fish market porters, labourers, flower sellers, although continually updated with new material, generally followed a familiar style and format, which they retained throughout their careers. This is not to suggest that their performance acts were static or unchanging. Dan Leno for example developed his act from being a champion clog dancer to what would be termed today as a 'stand-up' comedian; Gus Elen's act, initially as a coster singer, expanded during his career to include characters typified and witnessed every day in many of the homes and workplaces of Cockney London. Marie Lloyd's act developed from singing simple romantic love

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Hoher, 'The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850-1900', in P. Bailey, (ed), *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p.116.

songs to those that encapsulated the real-life view and experiences of the working man and woman in late Victorian and early Edwardian London.

In most instances, these cockney-styled entertainers, and the lyrics contained in their songs and through the characters they employed to deliver them, were London-centric, both in points of reference and geographic landmarks and delivered in a cockney London vernacular. Cockney-styled entertainers like Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, and Vesta Victoria, established a special type of connectivity between the characters portrayed in their acts, their storylines and song lyrics and their audiences. Significantly, they created a special emotional bond between them and their audiences, both as collective groups but also individually as wives and husbands, lodgers and landlords, neighbours, and friends, that was part of the everyday lived experiences of many music hall audiences.

It was this special connectivity that allowed the cockney-styled entertainers to successfully embark on regular regional tours from approximately 1890 to 1920 without needing to modify their acts or the songs to cater for local or regional audience nuances. It did not matter whether an audience at the Liverpool Empire or the Britannia in Glasgow or the Ardwick Empire in Manchester were especially familiar with the landmarks and cockney vernacular of the streets of Hackney or Bethnal Green in London. For them, these songs, and their lyrics, performed by the cockney-styled entertainers, resonated with them as individual members of inner urban music hall audiences because they were aligned with their own personal everyday lived experiences.

Often being only sporadically employed, the need of the local pawn shop, falling behind with the rent, getting married (happily or otherwise), staying one step ahead of real poverty, was the everyday lived experience for many. Yet as much as those everyday lived experiences of the audiences in the largest conurbations in Britain became connected through the cockney-styled entertainers in their songs and their characterisations as were played out on stage, it was invariably humour and pathos that was common thread. For good measure, an assumed recognition of upward aspiration and the potential for better times could be added.

This thesis demonstrates that the special connectivity achieved between the cockney-styled entertainers and inner urban audiences beyond the metropolis, could only have been achieved with the unique convergence of four key factors that were in place in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. First, the establishment of an inner urban population that would evidence homogenous demographic characteristics of employment, housing, health, and social deprivation. Second, the development of a commodified and integrated music hall entertainment business manifest in the syndicated circuits covering all the major towns and cities in Britain. Third, the transformation in Victorian print culture and stage performance of the archetypal cockney character from transgressive subversive to supine 'salt of the earth'. Fourth, the establishment of the cockney working class as a quasi-stereotype of the inner urban poor in Britain's largest towns and cities.

Of these four key governing factors, the development of a homogenous population of inner-city poor during the latter part of the nineteenth century is

the most crucial. Without this, the other factors, although important in themselves as part of the wider appeal of the genre of cockney-styled entertainers outside their home territory of the metropolis, would have meant that connectivity would likely have been weakened at best or not existent at worst. By analysing the economic and social drivers that informed the demographic characteristics of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow during the nineteenth century and comparing them against those in evidence in the development of Cockney London, it will be seen that there were specific common denominators. They were principally in the areas of employment, housing, health, and social deprivation, which, whilst nuanced by local or regional factors, were essentially common denominators.

These inner urban populations would have a key dual influence in late Victorian and Edwardian music hall. They provided a 'knowing' audience as suggested by Bailey and one that through their personal and collective social circumstances, were instrumental in the connectivity relationship between them and the leading cockney-styled entertainers of the period.<sup>2</sup> Equally important, as will be shown throughout this chapter, their lived experiences would provide the material for popular song lyricists such as George Le Brunn and Edgar Bateman, and for much of the characterisation contained in the performing acts of such entertainers as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria and others.

In this chapter, therefore, the trends and economic drivers that contributed to the growth of Britain's five largest towns and cities are assessed. The

---

<sup>2</sup> P. Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning and the Knowingness of Popular Culture', *Past and Present*, 144 (1994), pp. 138-170.



demographic characteristics, especially those relating to employment, housing, health, and social deprivation as evidenced during the early 1900s, are analysed and compared to those exhibited in cockney London at this time. This will demonstrate that these demographic characteristics formed common denominators among inner urban communities especially within the country's largest concentrations of population, which resulted in their identity as a quasi-homogeneous sector within the wider urban population of Britain. The tangible representations inherent in these factors and how they impacted on the lived experiences of inner urban communities, would be highlighted on a weekly, if not nightly basis, in the music halls and palaces of varieties in Britain's largest cities. In this way, a large part of music hall entertainment was a reflective mirror of inner urban living in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

#### *The urbanisation of Britain 1800-1914*

The terms 'urban' and 'urbanisation' offer a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations, which have been developed within the framework of the multi-disciplinary approaches of urban history and urban studies especially since the 1960s. 'Urban' can and does encompass economic, cultural, and geographic aspects; phrases like 'urban living' or 'urban music' or an 'urban economy' are part of the accepted *lingua franca* in relation to aspects of life involving towns or cities. So too with 'urbanisation'; it can range from being simply a description of a process of making an area more urban to the physical growth of an urban area resulting from an increasing number of people living in that area.

However, for this study, two definitions of 'urban' are used. The first, being that defined in the Cambridge Dictionary, namely 'of a city or town'. The second, the

definition of urbanisation used by Wineman *et al* as 'the shift from a dispersed population to one that increasingly resides in densely populated settlements in which non-agricultural economic activities are present'.<sup>3</sup> Wineman also suggests that there are three basic underlying causes of urbanisation. First, is the natural increase commensurate with an excess of births over deaths. Second, an excess of people moving from rural to urban areas than the reverse direction and, third, accretion where previously classified rural territories are now deemed urban; this latter cause often taking the form of a spatial expansion around a city or town's periphery.<sup>4</sup> As will be seen in this chapter, all three of these general causes of urbanisation were in evidence throughout Britain in the nineteenth century.

Whilst there is still some historical debate as to the start of the industrial revolution, that it was the catalyst for the shift towards increasing urbanisation during the nineteenth century is largely undisputed. As Britain transformed from an agrarian to an industrial based economy, so the population shifted towards those centres of industrial production. Therefore, not only did population levels increase in absolute terms, but that proportion classified as urban rose faster. This is illustrated in Table 1.

---

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge Dictionary at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/urban> [accessed 20 November 2020]; A. Wineman, D. Yelongnisse Alia, C. Leigh Anderson, 'Definitions of 'rural' and 'urban' and understandings of economic transformation: Evidence from Tanzania', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 79 (2020), pp.254-268.

<sup>4</sup> Wineman, A. 'Definitions', p.254.

Table 1.

The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales, 1801-1911

Year	Total Population: England & Wales	Urban Population	Percent of Total
1801	8,829,536	3,009,260	34
1841	15,914,148	7,693,126	48
1891	29,002,525	21,601,012	75
1901	32,527,843	25,371,849	78
1911	36,070,492	24,467,595	79

Source: C.M Law 'The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales, 180-1911', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41 (1967), pp.125-143.

As Law also notes, for most decades of the nineteenth century, the rate of increase of the urban population of England and Wales was between one and a half and two times that of the total population, although by 1901 this rapid rate of increase had declined.<sup>5</sup> Yet vigorous urban population growth was not manifest evenly across the country. In the regions of London, the North West, West Yorkshire, South Wales and the West Midlands, the rate of growth was above average. However, with industrialisation occurring earlier in some regions than others, the scope of urbanisation was variable throughout the nineteenth century. For example, industrialisation of the *North West* occurred early in the century with the consequent growth rate of population occurring in its first half.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to the first modern census in 1841, overseen by the first Registrar General of England and Wales, John Lister, census enumerations did not attempt to classify population statistics by rural or urban components, so the data for the

---

<sup>5</sup> C.M. Law, 'The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales, 1801-1911', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41 (1967), p.132.

<sup>6</sup> Law, *The Growth*, p.132.

period, 1801-1841 in respect of urban populations, of necessity are estimates.<sup>7</sup> One of the three criteria Law uses in respect of determining rural or urban settlement areas is minimum size of population (the other two being density and degree of nucleation), which he defines as 2,500. Using these criteria, therefore, it shows in Table 2 not only the growth of urban population since 1801 but how this was concentrated on the larger cities; a factor of fifteen for those concentrated in towns of 100,000 and a factor of nine for the urban population of England and Wales as a whole.

Table 2.

Urban Population of England and Wales by Differing Lower Limits, 1801-1911

Year	In Places Greater Than: 2500	In places Greater Than 50,000	In Places Greater Than 100,000	Percent of Total Urban Population
1801	3,009,260	1,219,364	982,156	32
1841	7,693,126	4,180,805	3,301,109	43
1891	21,601,012	13,921,144	11,433,291	53
1901	25,371,849	16,611,374	14,201,797	56
1911	28,467,395	18,698,964	15,811,889	55

Source: Law, *The Growth*.

Whilst the limitations of Law's studies have been vigorously debated and his numerical estimates subsequently modified by other population historians, they still hold good to generally determine urban growth and trends from 1801-1911.<sup>8</sup> Population growth and urbanisation in Scotland followed similar trends to England during the nineteenth century, although there had been a significant growth in the number of small towns emerging at the turn of the previous century. By 1800, 17% of Scotland's population of approximately 1.6m lived in

<sup>7</sup> 'The Modern Census', *Office of National Statistics*, at <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/howourcensusworks/aboutcensuses/censushistory/themoderncensus>> [accessed 20 July 2020].

<sup>8</sup> B.T. Robson, *Urban Growth: An Approach* (London: Methuen, 1973); J. Langton, 'Urban growth and economic change: From the late seventeenth century to 1841', *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. 11 1540-1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.453-490; H. Smith, R.J. Bennett, D. Radicic, 'Towns in Victorian England and Wales: a new classification', *Urban History*, 45:4 (2018), pp.568-594.

towns of more than 10,000 inhabitants, with 21% of its population living in towns of 5000 inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> Although population growth was witnessed in the old-established burghs such as Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee, an increasing number of new towns such as Greenock and Paisley demonstrated rapid increases in population in the latter quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The scale of population growth in Scotland and its rapid urbanisation is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Scotland Population 1801-1911<sup>11</sup>

Year	Total Population	Urban Population	Percent of Total
1801	1,608,420	273,431	17
1851	2,888,742	1,500,000	52
1891	4,025,647	2,630,000	63
1901	4,472,103	3,426,938	77
1911	4,760,904	3,701,367	70

Sources: A *Vision of Britain Through Time: 1911 Census*. Table 1: 'Population of Scotland at each census – 1801-1911' at <<http://www.visionofbritain.org>> [accessed 15 July 2021]  
M. Lynch, *Scotland. A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.411  
R. Lawton, & C.G. Pooley, *Britain 1740-1950*, cited in L. Hollen Lees, 'Urban Networks' in M. Daunton (ed), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol.111*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.70.

Not only did Scotland's population grow in absolute terms (by a factor of four from 1801 to 1901), but it also increasingly became consolidated into the existing large centres of population. In 1850 in Scotland, one in five of the population lived in one of the largest four cities: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee or

<sup>9</sup> M. Lynch, *Scotland. A New History*, (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.411.

<sup>10</sup> Lynch, *Scotland*, p.411.

<sup>11</sup> Urban population data for Scotland for 1851 is based on the population living in towns of more than 10,000 inhabitants. General caution should be exercised in interpreting urban population data between 1801 and 1851, not least of all because the proportions of the population noted as 'burghal' and 'extraburghal' do not necessarily equate to *urban* and *rural*. As the Registrar General, J. Patten Macdougall notes in his General Report of the 1911 Census, comparative data of burghal populations is complicated by transferences of landward districts between intercensal periods brought about by alterations of boundaries.

Aberdeen. By 1900, this had become one in three with Glasgow being the most dominant.<sup>12</sup>

This rapid urbanisation of Britain's population during the nineteenth century became concentrated into its largest cities, with the general driving factors of urbanisation outlined earlier; a faster birth rate than death rate, spatial accretion and inward migration all contributing significantly. This level of urban concentration into the largest cities is shown in table.4.

Table 4: Population of Britain's Largest Towns, 1891-1911

	1891	1901	1911
	'000	'000	'000
Cockney London	1722	1802	1750
Manchester/Salford	774	866	946
Liverpool/Birkenhead	744	815	877
Leeds	368	429	445
Birmingham	478	523	526
Glasgow	566	762	784
TOTAL (thousand)	4652	5197	5328
TOTAL BRITAIN POPULATION (millions)	33	37	40

Sources: 1911 Census Preliminary Report, Table H 'London and the Great Towns.  
 <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW19112PRE/2>> [accessed 20 July 2021]  
 Population Growth in Glasgow, 1801-1912.<sup>13</sup>

By 1911, therefore, some 13% of the population of Britain lived in its five largest cities and the area designated Cockney London, a proportionate increase of 15% in the twenty-year period since 1891. Dennis further suggests that by 1911, 44% of the population of England and Wales lived in cities of at least 100,000

<sup>12</sup> Lynch, *Scotland. A New History*, p.413.

<sup>13</sup> C. Withers, 'The Demographic History of the City, 1831-1911 in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver, *Glasgow Volume 11: 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), P. 142.

inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> With approximately 24m (almost 65%) people living in towns of greater than two thousand five hundred inhabitants by the turn of the century, Britain could rightly be described as an urban nation.<sup>15</sup> So much so, as noted by Reid, that 'the urban experience was the majority social experience, and increasingly, the typical experience'.<sup>16</sup>

The five cities and the area of the metropolis defined as Cockney London, all evidenced a dramatic growth in population during the nineteenth century, driven primarily by the part they played in the overall growth of the British economy. This growth was fuelled by the exploitation of market advantages presented by its far-reaching colonial Empire and by technological developments at home. The latter, especially in manufacturing and production accompanied by a growing rail network, enabled cost effective production processes that could meet the increasing demand of a growing and affluent home market. These cities, and Cockney London, shared similar and sometimes unique geographic advantages and major attractions for labour to satisfy the production requirements of this growing economy.

Whilst most of the increased demand for labour in the major cities would be met by inward migration from within roughly their existing regions, external inward migration, especially from Ireland and Eastern Europe would play a significant factor. Irish and East European inward migration impacted strongly on the social demographics of the cities detailed in this study especially in the areas of

---

<sup>14</sup> R. Dennis, 'Urbanising Experiences', in M. Hewitt, (ed) *The Victorian World*, (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Extrapolated from Tables 2, 3,4.

<sup>16</sup> D. A Reid, 'Playing and praying' in M. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, Vol. 111 1840-1950 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.746.

housing and employment. These migrant communities tended to be located within the inner-city areas where influxes of population would likely exacerbate pre-existing social deprivation, in particular overcrowding. Such communities, especially those of the Irish, were also significant in contributing to the notion of inner urban homogeneity, albeit at a factional level and invariably located at the lowest end of the scale of urban social deprivation.

Even though music hall performance in song mostly avoided focussing on these migrant communities directly, where it did, it was done obliquely. Such an example can be found in the song, *'Here Comes the Broker's Man'*. In this song, the implied meaning behind the line, 'We'll try the Tipperary game', would certainly have been recognised in any music hall audience in a British city that contained a sizeable Irish population.

#### *Here Comes the Broker's Man*<sup>17</sup>

'Come all my darling little ones, there's misery in store,  
Go quick and close the shutters and bolt the bar and door;  
We owe three quarters rent and they are coming with a van,  
The Landlord's got the needle and he's sent the Broker's Man

(knock knock)

Hark! He's knocking at the door and will not go away  
We'll try the Tipperary game that Irish tenants play

(Gun fires off)

He won't upset us anymore, they've put him in the van  
They'll hold an inquest bye and bye, upon the Broker's Man.'

---

<sup>17</sup> G, Dance & D. Braham, *Here Comes The Broker's Man* at, [www.monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs/Brokers-Man-The.htm](http://www.monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs/Brokers-Man-The.htm) [accessed 24 November 2020].



All the cities and that of Cockney London examined in this thesis owed much of their growth to their relative importance to Britain's economic trade both internationally and domestically during the nineteenth century. In the cases of Glasgow and Liverpool especially, and to a lesser degree with Cockney London, development was based upon their growing importance as maritime ports. This was augmented by shipyard building and repair and attendant docks and cargo handling and warehousing facilities. With Manchester and Leeds, it would be their dominant positions within the textiles and woollen and worsted markets, which enabled them to maximise the competitive advantages of mechanisation and technological developments. For Birmingham, geographic spatial expansion, and its transformation from a small workshop to factory-based economy would be the principal driver in its growth in population.

For the demography of Cockney London to be compared and contextualised within this thesis, it is necessary to situate its position within London as a whole. London had been the commercial, mercantile, and parliamentary centre of Britain for several hundred years. It was, according to *Routledge's Guide of 1862*, 'the political, moral, physical, intellectual, artistic, literary, commercial and social centre of the world'.<sup>18</sup> Less prosaically, Dan Leno, a major Victorian music hall performer, defined London as 'a large village on the Thames where the principal industries carried on are music halls and the confidence trick'.<sup>19</sup>

Prior to the first modern census in 1841, London was primarily recognised

---

<sup>18</sup> *Routledge's Guide (1862)*, quoted in A.D. King, *Global Cities: Post Imperialism and the Internationalisation of London*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p.71 cited in R. Dennis, 'Modern London', *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol111, 1840-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.124.

<sup>19</sup> D. Leno, *Dan Leno: Hys Booke*, (London: Greening and Company, 1901), p.25.

as encompassing the few square miles of the traditional City of London, the aristocratic squares of the West End and the poorer portside communities of East London. This east-west division of London was augmented throughout the nineteenth century by additional substantial growth along a north-south axis, facilitated in no small measure by the building of new bridges across the River Thames and the growth of the railways. The estimated population of this 'greater London' of just over a million in 1801 had almost doubled in size to approximately 2.6 million by 1851 and would subsequently become the administrative County of London.<sup>20</sup>

With few exceptions Victorian London had a thriving economy in virtually all major industrial and service sectors and by 1871 about 14% of the total population of England and Wales lived in the capital.<sup>21</sup> During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in to the first decade of the twentieth century, the area of greater London underwent a period of major demographic change; it had a population that was declining over its central area but growing at a physically increasing periphery. The area of greater London, up to 1901, grew at a faster rate than that of England nationally so that by this date, approximately 21% of England's resident population lived in London.<sup>22</sup>

Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, London had no recognisable city wide government. This was remedied in part by the creation in 1855 of the

---

<sup>20</sup> GB Historical GIS/University of Portsmouth, 'London Gov/Population Statistics/Total Population' *A Vision of Britain Through Time* at <[http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10097836/cube/TOT\\_POP](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10097836/cube/TOT_POP)> [accessed 20 July 2020]; The administrative county of London was formed on April 1 1889, from the City of London (1837-1965) and parts of the counties of Middlesex, Surrey and Kent. It was abolished in 1965 to become the county of Greater London.

<sup>21</sup> R. Porter, *A Social History of London* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p.229.

<sup>22</sup> R. Dennis, 'Modern London'.

Metropolitan Board of Works and eventually, its successor, the London County Council in 1899 with its twenty-eight metropolitan boroughs. However, for a major part of the nineteenth century, there was a part of London that contained 'no hotels and restaurants, no private carriages seen on the streets, no public school, no university.....no ancient sites, no civic patriotism', and was barely acknowledged by the elites and middle-class<sup>23</sup>. It was further described by *The Spectator* magazines, cited by Beaven, as being 'isolated, individual, alien in colour and temperament' <sup>24</sup>

This area, known as 'East London', is that which Waller outlines as being the London parishes in 1900 east of Bishops Street Without stretching north of the River Thames to the River Lea: effectively Bethnal Green, Shoreditch, Poplar, Stepney and Bow. Eastwards of the river it would include, East Ham, West Ham, Stratford, Walthamstow, and Leyton.<sup>25</sup> Marriott's geographical definition of East London is also aligned in a similar manner. He concentrates his physical definition of East London on the equivalent of the modern-day boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham towards the eastern end of London's North Circular Road.<sup>26</sup> For this study, however, the five metropolitan boroughs, as they existed in 1900, south and immediately adjacent to the river Thames, Southwark, Bermondsey, Lambeth, Deptford and Woolwich have been added to Waller's and Marriott's East London definitions to determine 'Cockney London'.<sup>27</sup> This area

---

<sup>23</sup> P.J. Waller, *Town, City, and Nation England 1850-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) citing W. Besant, *East London*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1901), p.41.

<sup>24</sup> B. Beaven, *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.28, citing *The Spectator*, 29 September 1906.

<sup>25</sup> Waller, *Town and Nation*, p.40.

<sup>26</sup> J. Marriott, *Beyond the Tower. A History of East London* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Southwark, Bermondsey, Lambeth, Deptford and Woolwich, all evidenced similar social demographic characteristics as those boroughs immediately across the river, especially in relation to population densities, poor quality and inadequate housing, poor health and social deprivation.

would become the crucible for the formation of many aspects of British music hall. It would house the largest concentration of halls in the country. It would be the birthplace of many of the leading performers, and most importantly, much of the lived experiences of its inhabitants would be written into the lyrics of its most popular song.

The population of cockney London had been growing significantly during the latter part of the nineteenth century, reaching its peak in 1901, as is detailed in table 5.

Table 5

Cockney London Population by Metropolitan Borough ('000)

Borough	1891	% Total London	% Cockney London	1901	% Total London	% Cockney London	1911	% Total London	% Cockney London
Bermondsey	136	3.2	7.9	131	2.9	7.3	126	2.8	7.3
Bethnal Green	129	3.0	7.5	130	2.9	7.2	128	2.8	7.3
Deptford	102	2.4	5.9	110	2.4	6.1	109	2.4	6.2
Hackney	199	4.7	11.6	219	4.8	12.1	223	4.9	12.7
Lambeth	278	6.6	16.1	302	6.7	16.8	298	6.6	17.0
Poplar	167	3.9	9.7	169	3.7	9.4	162	3.6	9.3
Shoreditch	125	3.0	7.3	119	2.6	6.6	111	2.5	6.3
Southwark	202	4.8	11.7	206	4.5	11.4	192	4.2	11.0
Stepney	285	6.7	16.6	299	6.6	16.6	280	6.1	16.0
Woolwich	99	2.3	5.7	117	2.6	6.5	121	2.7	6.9
Total Cockney London	1722	40.6	100	1802	39.7	100	1750	38.6	100
Total London	4228			4536			4521		

Source: '1911 Census of England and Wales' Table J , *A Vision of Britain Through Time* <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911PRE/2>> [accessed 20 July 2020].

Over the twenty-year period between 1891 and 1911, the population of Cockney London ranged between 1.7m and 1.8m and represented approximately 40% of the population of the administration area of London. Population growth was fairly uniform across Cockney London from the mid-nineteenth century fuelled by the increasing drift of migrant labour. The majority of this migrant labour came from

the outlying counties of London and was generally aged between 15-30 years and predominantly unskilled.<sup>28</sup> However, alien migration also played a significant part in the population growth of Cockney London during the nineteenth century. Irish migration had taken place throughout Victorian England, and by 1891 the Irish born population of London, concentrated in the districts of Whitechapel, Stepney and St. Georges-in-the East numbered about 20,000.<sup>29</sup>

By far the largest alien migration was Jewish from central Europe, especially from Poland and Russia, many fleeing a succession of pogroms. They added to an already sizeable Jewish population that had more than doubled since 1850. Although many followed their existing skilled trades (employed in tailoring or jewellery or as furriers) others had no option but to accept low wages in the sweatshops, whilst thousands were engaged in street trading from barrows and stalls.<sup>30</sup> Jewish immigrants tended to settle in the already densely populated boroughs of Cockney London; for example, by 1901 in Stepney there were over 42,000 Russian and Polish residents.<sup>31</sup> Such alien migration that was evidenced in Cockney London, and as will be subsequently demonstrated, was replicated in varying degrees in the other five largest cities in Britain where these groups would form separate homogeneous bodies within a wider homogenised inner urban Britain.

No other city outside of the metropolis typified the Victorian industrialisation and urbanisation more than Manchester and to a slightly lesser extent, its nearest

---

<sup>28</sup> Waller, *Town and Nation*, p.26.

<sup>29</sup> Waller, *Town and Nation*, p.27.

<sup>30</sup> Porter, *London*, p.367.

<sup>31</sup> Porter, *London*, p.368.

city neighbour Salford. Although distinctly separate cities, their nineteenth century demographic and economic characteristics and geopolitical positioning being located predominantly east and west of the River Irwell, naturally facilitates their respective inner urban populations being examined as one. For as Greenhall suggests, Manchester was viewed as 'the great double-barrelled city' since strangers to the area would see one large town of almost 1m people, despite the reality of there being two towns.<sup>32</sup>

The growth in Manchester's population had been at its most intense in the first half of the nineteenth century, increasing from approximately 88,000 to 400,000, with the ten-year period between 1820 and 1830 showing the highest decennial rate of growth during the century of approximately 45%.<sup>33</sup> In 1901, the area of the City of Manchester covered 12,910 acres and was home to an estimated population of 546,408.<sup>34</sup> Salford's population growth over the same period was no less spectacular: from approximately 14,000 in 1801 to over 60,000 fifty years later and increasing almost fourfold during the latter half of the nineteenth century to approximately 220,000 in 1901.

Manchester and Salford's growing populations were also augmented by significant Irish and Jewish migration, with the latter mainly from Russia and Poland. Kidd estimates the Irish population of Manchester was about 14% in 1901 and like Cockney London concentrated in a specific area of the town; in

---

<sup>32</sup> R.L. Greenhall, *The Making of Victorian Salford* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2000), p.1.

<sup>33</sup> H.B. Rodgers, *The Suburban Growth of Manchester* p.4 at <<http://www.mangeogsoc.org.uk/pdfs/centenaryedition/Cent-17-Rodgers.pdf>> [accessed 8 July 2022]; A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p.89.

<sup>34</sup> 'Table G, 1901 – Population, Area, Density. Total Births And Deaths, With Birth And Death Rates' *Medical Officer of Health Report Manchester 1901*, <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b29785224>> [accessed 9 July 2020].

this case the areas of Ancoats and Angel Meadow with the Jewish population being over 35,000 by 1914 located mainly in the Red Bank slum areas.<sup>35</sup> As will be shown later, the everyday lived experiences of these two migrant groups, especially in relation to overcrowded housing and casual employment, would be the same as those in Cockney London.

The period between 1800 and 1914, linked to its expansion as a major national and international maritime port, saw the population of Liverpool and Birkenhead increase dramatically, albeit in the case of Liverpool the rate of increase was greatest in the first fifty years of this period. Lawton suggests that the population of Liverpool contained within the boundaries of the old township in 1801, was just under 78,000 and increased by a factor of five up to 1851 to record a population of 375,955.<sup>36</sup> Continual expansion of the dock facilities along the shoreline hinterland, which by 1900 totalled nine kilometres in length, resulted by 1901 in the total population of Liverpool being 704,134.<sup>37</sup> The population of Birkenhead witnessed an equally meteoric rise, almost entirely due to the expansion of Liverpool's maritime capabilities. Indeed, Birkenhead's dock facilities came under the direct control of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board

---

<sup>35</sup> B. Williams, 'The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle Class Manchester and the Jews 1870-1900' in A.J. Kidd & K.W. Roberts (eds.) *City, Class and Culture. Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.78.

<sup>36</sup> R.A Lawton, 'The Population of Liverpool in the Mid Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol.107, (1955), p.89, p.93. Population data prior to 1891 is subject to varying degrees of notation and interpretation. Boundary changes and subsequent statistical reviews of prior data can cause variations in how specialist population historians present the data. For example, Lawton's (1995) population of Liverpool in 1851 is shown as 375,955, Farrer & Brownbill (1911) show 376,055 for the same year. Farrer & Brownbill (1911) in 'Liverpool: Trade, population and geographical growth' in *A History of the County of Lancaster*, Vol.4, (London: Victoria County History, 1911), pp.37-38 at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol4/pp37-38> [accessed 18 July 2020]. For consistency, and unless otherwise specifically stated, all general town and city population data referenced is that enumerated in Government Census Reports shown at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>.

<sup>37</sup> G.J. Milne, 'Maritime Liverpool' in J. Belchem, (ed) *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p.268.

from 1858. The population grew from a town consisting of seventeen families representing one hundred persons as shown in the first census in 1801 to one with approximately 90,000 by the time of its incorporation as a county borough less than one hundred years later.<sup>38</sup> That population would increase further to just under 100,000 by 1901.<sup>39</sup>

Like Manchester, inward migration played a significant role in the expansion of the population of Liverpool and Birkenhead during the nineteenth century. At its end, 10% of the population of Liverpool were Welsh born; 4% were of Scottish origin plus others from various parts of Britain and the wider British Empire.<sup>40</sup> As Saunders remarked in his paper presented to the Philomathic Society at the time, 'Liverpool is the meeting place of the four kingdoms, having more Welsh than any other Welsh town except Cardiff, more Irish citizens than any Irish town except Dublin and Belfast and more Scottish citizens than any but the three or four of the great towns of Scotland'.<sup>41</sup>

However, it would be inward migration from Ireland, especially following the potato famines of 1846 and 1847, that was predominant and, with Cockney London and Manchester, this migrant population was mainly concentrated in just a few wards in and around the docks area. Pooley suggests that at the peak of the famine in Ireland, some 580,000, mainly destitute, Irish passed through

---

<sup>38</sup> E. Davey, *Birkenhead. A History* (Stroud: Phillimore & Co., 2013) p.x1.

<sup>39</sup> 'Table H: London and the Great Towns', *Census of 1911, Preliminary Report at* <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911PRE/2> [accessed 21 February 2018].

<sup>40</sup> J. Belchem & D. MacRaid, 'Cosmopolitan Liverpool', in J. Belchem (ed) *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press. 2006), p.344, p.351.

<sup>41</sup> W.H. Saunders, 'The Making of Liverpool', *Proceedings of the Liverpool Philomathic Society*, (Liverpool: 1917-18), Vol.63, pp.xxxi-lvi cited by Belcher & MacRaid, 'Cosmopolitan Liverpool', p.315.



Liverpool. Whilst acknowledged by him and Davey that a proportion of these migrant economic refugees later re-embarked for onward migration to America or the shorter journey across the River Mersey to the developing town of Birkenhead, the majority remained in the city.<sup>42</sup>

Along with both Manchester and Liverpool, it was during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century that Birmingham evidenced its highest population growth. The estimated population in 1801 of the ancient parish of Birmingham was nearly 60,000 contained within about 12,000 houses.<sup>43</sup> At the time of its incorporation as a municipal borough in 1838 and with a spatial expansion that would include the districts of Bordesley and Deritend, the parish of Edgbaston and the areas of Dudleston and Nechells, the population had more than doubled.<sup>44</sup> Migration from Birmingham's hinterland was also complimented by that from Ireland during the early part of the nineteenth century, so that by 1861, the Irish population of the town was approximately 11% of the total and formed the largest ethnic minority in nineteenth century Birmingham.<sup>45</sup> Spatial expansion would continue over the next forty years with the incorporation of the areas of Harborne (excluding Smethwick), Balsall Heath, Saltley and Ward End in 1891 to establish a population of just over 478,000, with the area of Quinton added in 1909 creating a total population of Birmingham at the time of the 1911 census of approximately 526,000.

---

<sup>42</sup> C.G. Pooley, 'Living in Liverpool: The Modern City', in J. Belcher (ed) *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2006), p.187; E. Davey, *Birkenhead. A History*. (Stroud: The History Press, 2013), p.75.

<sup>43</sup> 'The Growth of the City', in W.B. Stephens (ed), *A History of the County of Warwick, Vol. 7, The City of Birmingham*, pp. 4-25, *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.org.uk/vch/warks/Vol7/pp4-25> [accessed 29 July 2020].

<sup>44</sup> 'Introduction' in C. Chinn & M. Dick (eds) *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016) p.15.

<sup>45</sup> C. Chinn, 'The Peoples of Birmingham', in C. Chinn & M. Dick, *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool. Liverpool University Press, 2016), p.22.

In the case of Leeds, its population grew from its single parish base in 1801 of just 100,000 to become, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the fifth largest town in Britain outside London, with a population of just over 445,000.<sup>46</sup> By the 1850s, about 92% of the borough's population was contained in the industrial townships. This share, however, would reduce to about 76% between 1891 and 1911. Up to 1891, the Leeds township had housed 50% of the total population of the borough, although this proportion was reduced between 1891 and 1911 through net out-migration of approximately 40,000.<sup>47</sup> Alien in-migration, initially from Ireland and latterly from eastern Europe, would also add to the borough's growing population although not to the extent of that found in other major towns in England. By 1861, some 15,000 Irish had migrated to the borough, mainly into the Leeds township and accounted for approximately 12% of its population.<sup>48</sup> By 1877 there were already about 500 Jewish families in the Leeds township and from the 1880s this number was swelled by those escaping the Russian pogroms. Settling mainly in the triangle of land known as the Leylands district in the Leeds township, the 1891 census would show there was about 4500 families within the township that were born in either Russia or Poland, increasing to just over 6000, by 1911.<sup>49</sup> Although not witnessed to the same extent numerically as Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, alien inward migration, in common with those other cities, was concentrated in its inner wards, thus creating a specific inner urban community whose lived experiences, especially in relation housing, were the same.

---

<sup>46</sup> Table H, 'London and the Great Towns,' *Census 1911* at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911PRE/2> [accessed 29 July 2020].

<sup>47</sup> C.J. Morgan, 'Demographic Change', 1771-1911' in D. Fraser (ed.) *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980) p.54, p.56.

<sup>48</sup> Morgan, 'Demographic Change', p.61.

<sup>49</sup> Morgan, 'Demographic Change', p.62; A.J. Taylor, 'Victorian Leeds: an overview', in D. Fraser (ed), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p.391.

Even though the major cities in Britain all witnessed major population growth during the nineteenth century, in many respects they were overshadowed in comparison to that of Glasgow, which grew both numerically and spatially at a rapid rate. From a population of approximately 77,000 in 1801 it would grow to 784,496 as recorded in the 1911 census and broadened its boundaries by a factor of eleven from approximately 1864 acres in 1803 to 19,183 by 1912.<sup>50</sup> By 1911, it was Britain's second largest city and would proudly claim to be the 'second city' of the Empire.<sup>51</sup> In 1851, Glasgow's population was just over 329,000, by 1891 it was approximately 566,000 and by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century it had reached just over 784,000. This represented an increase of over 1000% during the 110 years from 1801.<sup>52</sup>

The city maintained an annual growth rate of about 3.6% over an eighty-year period from 1831 although it was neither constant nor driven by the same causes. The relative significance of crude birth and death rates over the period and their variation in relation to population growth trends is difficult to assess, not least of all because of Glasgow's absorption of other peripheral populations but it would be inbound migration that would primarily fuel the city's rapid growth in numbers.<sup>53</sup>

For much of the early years of the nineteenth century, Glasgow's need for labour would be met by migrants from within Scotland from the highlands and to a

---

<sup>50</sup> C. Withers, 'The Demographic History of the City, 1831-1911' in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol. 11: 1830-1912* (Manchester University Press, 1996), p.142; N.J. Morgan, 'Building the City', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol: 11, 1830-1912* (Manchester University Press, 1996), p.9.

<sup>51</sup> N.G.W. Curtis, 'The Place of History, Literature and Politics in the 1911 Scottish Exhibition', *Scottish Literary Review*, 7:1 (2015), pp.43-74 citing C. A. Oakley, *The Second City* (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1946).

<sup>52</sup> Withers, 'The Demographic History', p.141.

<sup>53</sup> Withers, 'The Demographic History', p.142.

lesser extent from the lowland areas adjacent to the city. Those highland migrants, invariably linked by traditional clan ties, tended to reside in distinct areas of the city, mainly in Anderston and Bromielaw, although not always permanent, since their movement was as part of a pattern of established temporary seasonal labour circulation.<sup>54</sup> It would be migration from Ireland that would have the larger impact in Glasgow's population growth. Although there had been a steady, albeit small, migrant flow from Ireland over the previous twenty-five years, it was the consequence of the famine in Ireland that was the catalyst for the migration surge from the 1840s. Withers suggests that in 1848, the flow of Irish migration into the city was at the rate of 1000 per week and settling initially into the Barony and Carlton wards and that by the mid nineteenth century, the Irish born in Glasgow represented about 18% of the city's total population.<sup>55</sup>

Within the approximate five million people who lived in these cities and Cockney London, there existed a recognisable inner urban core. These inner urban groups included inward migrant communities, from within the respective hinterlands of the regions examined and those from abroad, especially Ireland and Eastern Europe. Such migrant groups tended to coalesce within the innermost and invariably oldest wards, and in so doing contributed to the notion of a homogeneous inner urban group within a growing urbanised nation. Their homogeneity, and by implication, their lived experiences, was not just a result of their migrant status. As will be evidenced, they shared certain key demographic characteristics with pre-existing inner urban dwellers, in particular those relating

---

<sup>54</sup> Withers, 'The Demographic History', p.151.

<sup>55</sup> Withers, 'The Demographic History', p.150.

to housing, employment, health, and poverty that would define the lives of many of Britain's urban population at the turn of the century.

During the nineteenth century, urbanisation transformed Britain's population demographic structure; a reversal of being predominantly rural (over 65% in England and Wales and over 80% in Scotland) in 1801 to urban (nearly 80% and 70% respectively) by 1911. This inexorable drift of population towards the towns and cities in Britain was nowhere more in evidence than in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds and Glasgow and the region of the metropolis termed Cockney London. In the twenty-year period from 1891 to 1911, these five cities and Cockney London would grow by half a million people so that by the time of the 1911 census, their combined populations would represent over 13% of Britain's total.

### *Employment/Unemployment ('Wait till the work comes round')*<sup>56</sup>

Work, both as a general topic and as a comedic hook, was a regular feature in music hall song. Even though employment for many inner urban dwellers in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain, was invariably sporadic and poorly paid, in music hall song and performance it was a regular theme. Along with much of the everyday lived experiences of inner urban communities, the lack of employment, its often casual nature with low wages, was assimilated with a resigned acceptance. People worked in whatever way they could, and although the notion of the primary breadwinner, often the male head of the household, was

---

<sup>56</sup> G. Elen, & C. Cornell, 'Wait Till The Work Comes Around', (1906), at <https://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-W/Wait-Till-Work-Comes-Round.htm> [accessed 29 July 2020].

inculcated in inner urban families, where that notion failed, for music hall it provided a rich vein of lyrical comedy. Whether it be looking for work or avoiding work, music hall performance and song concerning employment was as relevant and recognisable with audiences in the inner areas of Cockney London as it was in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow. As a consequence, employment or more often unemployment, provided a meaningful subject for the connectivity of the leading cockney-styled entertainers and their repertoires with their provincial music hall audiences. Liverpool, Glasgow and, to a lesser dependent degree, Cockney London owed much of their economic development and employment opportunities to their geographic positions being along navigable, deep-water rivers. The Mersey, the Thames, and the Clyde respectively, were the foundations on which their attendant cities' major industries were built and central to their economies. With Liverpool and Cockney London, they were the premier general cargo ports throughout the nineteenth and well in to the twentieth centuries; between them they would handle over 20m tons of cargo by 1900.<sup>57</sup> In the case of Glasgow, especially during the latter half of the nineteenth century, shipbuilding would become the predominant industry; the yards of Glasgow had launched approximately 214,000 tons of shipping in 1878 and had reached about 692,000 tons by 1913.<sup>58</sup> Both Liverpool and Cockney London also developed extensive dock complexes and cargo handling and warehousing facilities. However, the very nature of port and maritime industries meant they were cyclical which in turn

---

<sup>57</sup> P.L. Garside, 'West End, East End: London, 1890-1914', in A Sutcliffe (ed.) *Metropolis 1890-1940* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1984); W. Farrer & J. Brownbill (eds.), 'Liverpool: Trade, population and geographical growth' in *A History of the County of Lancaster*, Vol.4, (London: Victoria County History, 1911), at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol4/pp37-38> [accessed 18 July 2020].

<sup>58</sup> J. Butt, 'The Industries of Glasgow', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol: 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p.117, p.119.

would impact on their relative levels of employment/ underemployment and unemployment.

For many in the inner urban areas of Liverpool, Glasgow, and Cockney London, and as will be shown, also for those in Manchester and Leeds, employment and unemployment would be a major factor in their lived experiences. Not only was port and dock related employment subject to the effects of cyclical and seasonable demand, but the type of work associated with it, and by implication those of the relevant downstream industries, was casual and mainly unskilled. Rodger notes that from 1891 to 1911 between 20% and 23% of the male workforce and 26% and 29% of the female workforce of Glasgow were in occupations clearly associated with seasonal variations and that by 1911, 27% of all male workers were likely to experience periods of unemployment in a course of a year.<sup>59</sup>

Casual, unskilled labour, especially in men, was a general feature of inner urban employment within most of the major industrial centres of Britain from the latter half of the nineteenth century, with London, and by implication Cockney London, having the highest element in the country.<sup>60</sup> Once working men became part of the casual labour force, especially if unskilled, they could only 'hope to escape briefly during their lives from the toils of poverty' or put more harshly, entry in to the casual labour pool was a prelude to 'permanent imprisonment within it'.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> R. Rodger, 'The Labour Force', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds), *Glasgow Vol: 11 1830-1912*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p.173, p.175.

<sup>60</sup> J.H. Treble, *Urban Poverty in Britain 1830-1914* (London: Methuen, 1979), p.54.

<sup>61</sup> G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London. A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society*, (London: Verso, 2013) p.67; Treble, *Urban Poverty*, p.54.

Whilst such labour was not just confined to the ports and dockside complexes of Britain's major ports, it certainly was a major characteristic of employment in the inner urban areas of Liverpool, Glasgow, and Cockney London, where often potential labour outstripped the requirement of work available. Stedman Jones notes that in London, over 21,000 dock workers regularly competed for work, with the maximum being employed in any one day being nearly 18,000 and the minimum just over 12,000.<sup>62</sup> Ironically, it was the attraction of casual, unskilled dock work that was the magnet for migrant workers to Liverpool, especially from Ireland, who could find lodgings behind the docks and warehouses.<sup>63</sup> It was within the dock complexes, wharfs and warehouses where casual, unskilled and irregular labour would be seen as the likely final step towards destitution or the workhouse as indicated in the testimony of Llewellyn Smith in 1887:

the docks are the residual employment which stands as buffers between ordinary productive industry and the poor house .....In the centres of the worsted industries the residual employment is offered by the combing room and in the dye house. In East London it's offered by the docks. <sup>64</sup>

Another key feature of casual, unskilled labour that was in evidence in Britain's largest cities and Cockney London was that it was largely immobile. Not only were casual unskilled workers trapped within this special labour pool, but their prevailing social, and domestic circumstances would mitigate against being able to take employment opportunities further afield. Treble suggests that casual

---

<sup>62</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.54.

<sup>63</sup> J. Belchem, 'Introduction: The Peculiarities of Liverpool', in J. Belchem (ed), *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour. Essays in Liverpool History, 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), p.8.

<sup>64</sup> Stedman Jones *Outcast London*, p.73.



labour immobility can be explained by three key social factors. First, the strong ties of kinship that bound casual workers to their neighbourhoods. Second, the need for casual workers to live close by to the source of potential employment. Third, the need to be known by a potential labour hirer (in the case of dock labour, the local foreman) and the requirement to live near a source of employment for his wife and often his children.<sup>65</sup> Stedman Jones adds to these limiting factors a general lack of widespread cheap public transport; no efficient means of obtaining information about potential employment opportunities and often critically, the need to be near to sources of local credit such as the local shop or pub or the landlord. <sup>66</sup>

Casual, unskilled labour, though, was not limited to just men; both women and juveniles added to the size of the total casual labour pool. Generally, female casual labour tended to be situated where there was already a high concentration of male casual labour, since the low wages of the casual male worker, if he had work, needed to be supplemented by those earned by his wife or daughter.

Because female casual labour's needs in inner urban communities were likely to be out of necessity and having little or no bargaining power, it was invariably at very low rates of pay. In the case of Cockney London, except for the Bryant and May Match factory in Bow (part of the borough of Stepney) and the confectionary and jute and hemp factories south of the river Thames in Bermondsey, there was little factory employment. Most female casual workers

---

<sup>65</sup> Treble, *Urban Poverty*, p.56.

<sup>66</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.87, p.88, p.97.

were homeworkers, and part of the 'sweated' labour market, found in the match box making trade for example, or those taking in laundry or charring. In Liverpool, there being little factory-based work available, domestic service was invariably the only route available. <sup>67</sup>

Juvenile labour was common within inner urban dwellers of Britain's major cities and although it can be regarded as a separate casual employment market, it was directly linked to the larger adult labour pool as the former would eventually feed into the latter. Citing the research findings of Beveridge and Webb, Stedman Jones noted that juveniles between the ages of ten and fourteen, who gained employment as errand boys, van boys or printers' assistants, tended to lose those jobs between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Their unskilled juvenile employment, when it ended, left them unsuited for adult labour other than as unskilled workers. <sup>68</sup>

Casual, unskilled labour was also in evidence in Manchester and Leeds although the problems of unemployment and underemployment were not so severe. Although still subject to the vagaries of seasonal and cyclical demand, that characterised Liverpool, Glasgow and Cockney London's port and dock related industries, the diversification of the Manchester/Salford axis economy beyond its traditional cotton market would mitigate against the worst effects of seasonal unemployment. The negative effects of cyclical employment in the docks and general building industries would be offset to some degree by employment

---

<sup>67</sup> Belchem, 'Introduction: The Peculiarities of Liverpool'.

<sup>68</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p.70, p.71.

available in the newer industries such as engineering, structural steels, and electricals.

However, for many in the central inner wards of Manchester, such as Ancoats and Hulme, casual employment would still be a significant lived experience; at the turn of the century at least 30% of the workforce in these central districts were casually employed.<sup>69</sup> The *Royal Commission on Poor Laws and Stress Relief 1910* noted that between 1903 and 1905, 75% of adult males registered as unemployed with the Manchester Corporation were casual workers.<sup>70</sup> Although no specific comparable data exists, it is not unreasonable to suggest that this figure would likely be replicated in Britain's other major cities and Cockney London, since when the demand for work was reduced, it would be the casual worker who would be the first to be laid off.

In Leeds, the economic development from its earlier textiles industries, in particular woollen and worsted and diversity into other market sectors, was key to its nineteenth century prosperity. From a position whereby in 1851 approximately 33% of the borough's workforce were involved in textiles, just sixty years later, one in two of all manufacturing workers, about 43% of the borough workforce were now employed in the engineering, clothing and footwear industries.<sup>71</sup> However, although for most part, the inner urban working population of Leeds had reasonably steady employment, short term market

---

<sup>69</sup> A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender & Poverty. Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992) p.11.

<sup>70</sup> A.J. Kidd, 'Outcast Manchester: Voluntary Charity, Poor Relief and the Casual Poor, 1860-1905' in A. J. Kidd & K.W. Roberts (eds) *City, Class and Culture. Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.51.

<sup>71</sup> E.J. Connell & M. Ward, 'Industrial Development 1780-1914', in D. Fraser (ed) *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980) p.157, p.169; D. Thornton, *The Story of Leeds*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2013) p.442.

depressions would mean that even for families of skilled workers, they could experience periods of unemployment.<sup>72</sup>

Unlike the other five largest British cities and Cockney London, the economic development of Birmingham was largely unique and although the inner urban areas would display other similar homogeneous demographic characteristics, unemployment was generally not one of them. Birmingham's socio-economic growth was distinguished by being underpinned by a horizontal industrial base of many small enterprises. For many of these, initially craft based and located in traditional 'quarters' of the expanding town, the nineteenth century was one of transition as they developed from workshops to factories.<sup>73</sup>

Stephens suggests there were four determining factors that forged Birmingham's economic, social and employment characteristics throughout the nineteenth century. The first was that work was largely carried out in small workshops so that economic development had the effect of multiplying the number of production units as opposed to adding to the scale of existing enterprises.<sup>74</sup> This in turn meant that there was a greater diversification of occupations; Briggs suggests there were more than 500 classes of trade in evidence in mid-nineteenth century Birmingham.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> J.D. Buckman, 'Later Phases of Industrialisation' in M.W. Beresford & G.R. Jones (eds) *Leeds and Its Regions* (Leeds: British Advancement of Science, 1967), p.64.

<sup>73</sup> C. Upton, *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 1997).

<sup>74</sup> 'Economic and Social History: Social History Since 1815' in W. B. Stephens (ed), *A History of the County of Warwick : Vol. 7, The City of Birmingham*, pp.223-245 *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol7/p223-245> [accessed 29 July 2020].

<sup>75</sup> A. Briggs, 'Birmingham: The Making of a Civic Gospel', *Victorian Cities*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990) p.186.

The second was that compared to the other industrial cities and Cockney London, a large amount of the workforce was skilled; details from the 1841 census suggests that only 11% of the workforce was unskilled. Unlike in Manchester, where the introduction of machinery could invariably be a substitute for a workforce, machinery introduced into the existing small, enterprises in Birmingham was used to sub-divide a range of skills.<sup>76</sup> Relations between 'masters' and 'men' therefore was closer and more frequently based upon mutual interests and interdependence.<sup>77</sup>

Third, there was a considerable level of perceived social mobility; the notion of the prospect of 'rising in society' was contained within a local optimism so that, if necessary, a failed Master could set up new, since for many trades only a small amount of capital was required.<sup>78</sup> Fourth, many women (and children) were employed in Birmingham's trades.<sup>79</sup> Dick suggests that over a period of fifty years since 1850 between 5% and 8% of businesses in the centre of Birmingham were owned by women.<sup>80</sup>

As has been demonstrated, employment, being predominantly casual, unskilled, and often irregular was a key common denominator in the lived experiences of the inner urban population especially in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and to a lesser degree in Leeds and Birmingham. Music hall's approach to the less palatable but ever-present conditions of everyday life for most inner

---

<sup>76</sup> Stephens, 'Economic & Social History'.

<sup>77</sup> Briggs, 'Birmingham: The Making' p.186.

<sup>78</sup> Stephens, 'Economic & Social History'; Briggs 'Birmingham: The Making', p.187.

<sup>79</sup> Stephens, 'Economic & Social History'.

<sup>80</sup> M. Dick, 'The City of a Thousand Trades ,1700-1945' in C. Chinn & M. Dick (eds), *Birmingham: The Workshop of the World*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p.144.

urban dwellers: low paid, unskilled work interspersed with periods of unemployment; overcrowded and inadequate housing conditions; poor health and attendant above average infant and adult mortality; social deprivation and border-line poverty, was never confrontational for two important reasons.

The first was that music hall was an institution where audiences went to be entertained not confronted head-on by the vicissitudes of their everyday lives, especially those impacting negatively on them. Although these were not ignored, they were invariably addressed with humour and pathos but never seditiously. Music hall artistes depended on positive audience reaction to ensure continued employment; alienating an audience by emphasising and focussing upon their desperately disadvantaged lived experiences would certainly endanger an artists' long and successful career. The second reason is that music hall owners and proprietors would not want to antagonise either the local magistracy or higher civil authorities by being seen to be a platform for protest or civil unrest generated by any social discontent contained in their artistes' performance material or stage content. The economic well-being and continued existence of the owners and proprietor's halls was dependent on them gaining and maintaining their local entertainment licences as well as being accepted as politically harmless by governments and the establishment.

Yet as was often the case with the effects of social deprivation, in music hall and in its songs and in the performances of the cockney-styled entertainers, it was referred to obliquely, with a resigned acceptance and most of all with comedic parody. In respect of employment and unemployment, music hall performance was in some ways ambivalent. The default was, that as a way of providing the

basic necessities for life, primarily food and the weekly rent, working was as good a means as any. If work was available then take advantage of it, but if not, then do the best you can. However, whilst within the inner urban communities, the spirit of wanting to work and being available for work was recognised as the default position in music hall performance, it could rarely resist the chance to make comic fun of the 'work-shy' or 'loafer', often to the point of absurdity. The chorus in the song, *Wait Till the Work Comes Around*, hints at the resigned inevitability of permanent work for many inner urban dwellers. It is hard to imagine that late Victorian and early Edwardian audiences in the inner areas of Britain's major cities would fail to connect to the sentiments embodied and typified in some of the lyrics of the songs *Wait Till the Work Comes around* and *Everybody Works But Father*.

*Wait Till The Work Comes Around*<sup>81</sup>

What's the use of kicking up a row  
If there ain't no work about?  
If you can't get a job, you can rest in bed  
Till the school kids all comes out  
If you can't get work you can't get the sack  
That's an argyment that's sensible and sound  
Lay your head back on yer piller and read yer Daily Mirror  
And wait till the work comes round.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> G. Elen & C. Cornell, *Wait Till the Work Comes Round* at <<http://www.monolgues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-W/Wait-Till-Work-Comes-Round.htm>> [accessed 22 July 2022].

<sup>82</sup> Norris notes that this song, first performed by Gus Elen at the Tivoli Music Hall in the Strand in London January 1906, would likely have had a special topical resonance, since it was only in the previous year that the Unemployed Workmen Act had come into force which established Distress Committees in metropolitan boroughs of over 55,000 residents. (A. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*), p.361. During his provincial tour in 1906, Gus Elen appeared at The Leeds Empire, The Liverpool Empire and the Ardwick Empire in Manchester and *Wait Till the Work Comes Around* would have been included in his act.

In Lilly Morris's rendition of *Everybody Works But Father*, although not stated explicitly, the singer's father is voluntary unemployed, with the need to generate income for the family falling to his stoical and hard pressed wife, mother, and daughter; a scenario that would certainly have gained traction with female audiences in most inner-urban halls in Britain.

### Everybody Works But Father<sup>83</sup>

Every Morning at six o'clock I go to my work  
Overcoat buttoned up round my neck no job would I shirk  
Winter wind blows 'round my head cutting up my face  
I tell you what I'd like to have my deal old Father's place

Everybody works but Father and he sits around all day  
Feet in front of the fire, smoking his pipe of clay  
Mother takes in washing, so does sister Ann  
Everybody works at our house but my old man

### Housing (*'The Coster's Mansion'*)

Nowhere were the social disadvantages for many inner urban dwellers more in evidence than in those related to housing; both in respect of the amount and type of accommodation available but in its density. Yet dire as housing conditions were for many in the inner areas of Manchester, Liverpool,

---

<sup>83</sup> J. Havez, *Everybody Works But Father*, (1905) at <https://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-E/Everybody-Works-But-Father.htm> [accessed 21 June 2021].



Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow, and Cockney London for most of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, for music hall they would provide fertile creative ground. Whilst not highlighting the housing conditions experienced by many in an adversarial or confrontational manner, the cockney-styled entertainers and their performances in music hall often created absurd comic scenarios related to the wider focus of inner urban housing. Some of the most common of which would be when contrasting the housing conditions found within the very poorest inner urban communities to those of the wealthy in the suburbs. Equally common would be 'dressing' up the actual real living conditions found in overcrowded and dilapidated housing to the point of apparent luxury. Although tenant and landlord relationships or types of available accommodation, for example back-to-back houses or tenement blocks or slum dwellings, could be variable for the inner urban poor of Britain's major cities and cockney London, it was the general availability and quality of housing that was the major issue. Songs and performances in music hall relating to inner urban housing conditions would be readily understood and recognised by a significant number within music hall audiences, not least of all because of their obvious visibility.

The notion of there being a 'housing question', especially in relation to the urbanisation of Britain during the nineteenth century was increasingly being recognised within Victorian society but would largely remain unsolved until after the First World War.<sup>84</sup> In particular, the problems of housing would be manifest within two main issues: the lack of affordable housing relative to demand resulting in high levels of overcrowding and the inadequacy of much of the

---

<sup>84</sup> A.S. Wohl, 'The Housing of the Working Classes' in S.D. Chapman, *The History of Working-Class Housing: A Symposium* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), p.15.

existing housing stock. The relentless pressure imposed by population growth, the demolition of existing housing stock by railway companies, increases in building costs, higher rents and rates, would all come together to create a crisis in urban housing by the end of the century in most of Britain's major towns.<sup>85</sup> The most significant aspect of these pressures would be the levels of overcrowding evidenced in the inner urban areas.

Meaningful statistical comparative data on housing and population densities of the Britain's five largest cities and Cockney London, especially for the inner urban wards and boroughs are not especially reliable. This is due in part to variations in the methods of measurement and presentation of the respective data. Depending on the city or borough authority, this could take the form of population per acreage, the number of dwellings per acre or ward, or the number of persons living per room within dwellings within specific rooms. In addition, as Wohl notes, overcrowding statistics and person-to-person density figures are inherently misleading as both tenant and landlord often had good reasons for concealing the amounts of sub-letting.<sup>86</sup> Notwithstanding these limitations, however, the very existence of inner urban area overcrowding is impossible to deny.

In London generally, but in Cockney London especially, overcrowding was acute. Within the administrative area of the County of London in 1901, just over 726,000 persons were living more than two people per room in small tenements of less than five rooms. Ten years on that figure remained virtually unchanged

---

<sup>85</sup> R. Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain 1780-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.52.

<sup>86</sup> Wohl, 'Housing', p.81.

and represented sixteen percent of the London's total population. Cockney London, for the same years, was significantly above the London average, at 19% in 1900 rising to nearly 20% ten years later; and in absolute terms, to just under 350,000 people. As shown in table 6, in some boroughs within Cockney London, the degree of overcrowding was even more marked; in Bethnal Green and Shoreditch, population densities relative to numbers of persons living in less than five rooms, was approximately 30% and 35% respectively.

Table 6: Population Densities of Cockney London, 1901-1911

Borough	1901				1911			
	Pop.	Density Persons*	% of Borough	% of Cockney London	Pop.	Density Persons*	% of Borough	% of Cockney London
Bermondsey	130760	25726	19.6	7.3	125903	26714	21.2	7.7
Bethnal Green	129680	38410	29.6	11.0	128183	39377	30.7	11.3
Deptford	110398	9999	9.0	2.8	109496	12159	11.1	3.5
Hackney	219110	22332	10.1	6.4	222533	24900	11.1	7.2
Lambeth	301895	36904	12.2	10.6	298058	36538	12.2	10.5
Poplar	168822	27700	16.4	8.0	162442	30044	18.5	8.6
Shoreditch	118637	35259	29.7	10.1	111390	37933	34.0	10.9
Southwark	206180	46073	22.3	13.2	191907	44881	23.4	12.9
Stepney	298600	99179	33.2	28.4	279804	88776	31.7	25.5
Woolwich	117178	7727	6.6	2.2	121376	6082	5.0	1.8
				100				100
			% of Cockney London				% of Cockney London	
Total Cockney London	1801260	349309	19.3		1751092	347404	19.8	
			% of London County				% of London County	
Total	4536267	726096	16.0		4521685	725951	16.0	

\* Defined as persons living more than two in a room in tenements of less than five rooms.

Source: '1911 Census of England and Wales. Table 81: "Tenements of less than Five rooms in London and the Metropolitan Boroughs at the Census of 1901 and 1911; ' Census of England and Wales. Table 10: "Metropolitan Boroughs. Population, 1891, 1901 and 1911 and Increase or Decrease per cent'. A Vision of Britain Through Time <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>> [accessed 25 March 2020].

Analysing the population densities of Cockney London in more granular detail using the number of persons living in tenements of just two rooms as the datum line, the picture becomes even more revealing. Despite the Medical Officer of Health's Report for the Administration County of London for 1901 noting that 'in London as a whole "overcrowding" in the sense here referred to has declined during the last decade in quantity and density', the raw data, especially that for the boroughs of Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Stepney, presents a much

bleaker situation.<sup>87</sup> Even though Cockney London had evidenced similar levels of population concentrations in tenements of two rooms to that of the whole of the Administrative County of London at around 7%, Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Stepney had nearly double the concentrations with levels of 11%, 12% and 13% respectively.<sup>88</sup>

Ironically, some of the causes of these high population density figures can be attributed directly to the effects of both the City of London and the Metropolitan Board of Works' attempts at improving the quality of inner London's housing stock through the varying slum and street clearance schemes of the previous thirty to forty years. Similarly in Glasgow, the slum clearance schemes focussed on the central districts and the Gorbals and Calton wards were thought to have displaced approximately 19,000 people.<sup>89</sup>

However, as was the case in Britain's other largest cities, it was the inexorable development of the railways that would have the biggest impact. In Bethnal Green, for example, much of the borough's population growth from the 1860s onwards can be attributed to the building and subsequent development of Liverpool Street railway station.<sup>90</sup> Jackson suggests that some 7000 people living in tenements around Shoreditch were evicted as part of the completion of the rail link to the expanded Liverpool Street station by 1895; this in addition to the 3000 residents of the parish of St. Botolph-without-Bishopsgate displaced by its

---

<sup>87</sup> *Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the London County Council 1901*, p.7 at <https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b18252503> [accessed 20 August 2020].

<sup>88</sup> *MoH Report, London 1901*.

<sup>89</sup> W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver, 'The Social Problems of the City' in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol 11 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p.365.

<sup>90</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* p.163.

initial building twenty years earlier.<sup>91</sup> As with the case of people displaced by railway development in other major cities, they tended to relocate not to outlying areas but invariably to the immediate neighbouring borough or ward.

Across all the major British cities, the various railway companies were thought to have taken between 5% to 9% of the land area formerly used as dwellings and in so doing displaced up to 4m people.<sup>92</sup> In Liverpool, Pooley suggests that by 1900, railway companies controlled about 9% of the land in the central area.<sup>93</sup> The building of St. Enoch station in Glasgow involved the demolition of 433 tenements which displaced about 6000 people.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, whilst there is no definitive data available of the numbers of persons displaced by the building of New Street and Snow Hill railway stations in Birmingham in the 1850s, it is not unreasonable to assume several thousand people would have been affected.

Overcrowding was endemic in Britain's largest cities at the end of the nineteenth century and not just restricted to some of the boroughs of Cockney London. At the turn of the century, for the city of Manchester as a whole, the ratio of persons per acre was forty two, but in the inner Township wards, especially that of St. Georges, it was almost three times that rate.<sup>95</sup> The 1901 census revealed that of the nearly 113,000 tenements in Manchester, over 61,000 were living in less than five rooms, with Salford proportionately having a similar ratio with

---

<sup>91</sup> A. Jackson, *London's Termini* (London: David & Charles, 1984), p.109.

<sup>92</sup> Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p.53 citing J. R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge Keagan & Paul, 1969).

<sup>93</sup> C.G. Pooley, 'Living in Liverpool: The Modern City', in J. Belcher (ed) *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p.214.

<sup>94</sup> Hamish Fraser & Maver, 'The Social Problems', p. 365.

<sup>95</sup> 'Table G, 1901 – Population, Area, Density, Total Births and Death, With Birth and Death Rates *Medical Officer of Health Report Manchester, 1901.*

nearly 28,000 living in tenements of less than five rooms out of a total of approximately 46,000 tenements.<sup>96</sup>

From the beginning of the nineteenth century Liverpool's population was largely compacted into a continuous area extending no more than about one and a half miles along the River Mersey and about one and a quarter miles inland. Within this small enclave its population of about 90,000 was housed in just under 14,000 dwellings, giving a mean density of approximately 6.6 persons per dwelling.<sup>97</sup> A similar situation existed in Birmingham where the Medical Officer of Health's Report in 1891 showed a year on year increase in population densities over the preceding eighteen years of more than 20%.<sup>98</sup> The population of the Floodgate Street area which included the inner wards of St. Mary, St. Bartholomew and St. Stephen, as enumerated in the 1901 census, was just under 10,000 and covered an area of about 114 acres, with a population density in the St. Bartholomew's ward of just under 85 persons per acre.<sup>99</sup> Although in Leeds, where the notorious overcrowding evidenced in 1839 in the Boot and Shoe Yard area, where 341 persons were recorded as living in just 37 rooms had improved during the century, the censuses of 1901 and 1911 still showed about 10% of the population existed in overcrowded conditions.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> T.R. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford* (Manchester: Sharrat and Hughes, 1904), p.15.

<sup>97</sup> Pooley, 'Living in Liverpool', p.176.

<sup>98</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report, Birmingham, 1891*, p.8.

<sup>99</sup> J. Robertson, *Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Unhealthy Conditions in the Floodgate Street Area and the Municipal Wards of St. Mary, St. Stephen and St. Bartholomew*, October 1904.

<sup>100</sup> C. J. Morgan, 'Demographic Change, 1771-1911', in D. Fraser (ed) *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p.65, p.68.

A similar situation existed in Glasgow, which is illustrative of the shared experiences across the major cities in Britain and Cockney London. In the years between 1831 and 1841, the population of the city grew by approximately 33,000, yet in that same period only about 3500 houses were built; the result being that in 1841 the average occupancy per house was 5.2 persons.<sup>101</sup> Although the measurement of overcrowding may have changed during the nineteenth century from persons occupancy per house to persons occupancy per rooms, the underlying problem of overcrowding was still in evidence nearly seventy years later. In 1911, 20% of Glasgow's families were living in two rooms and 50% in only one room.<sup>102</sup>

There were some initiatives to reduce overcrowding. Under the enabling powers contained in the Glasgow Police Act 1866, Glasgow Corporation introduced the concept of 'ticketing' certain size houses, notionally those of three rooms or less, not exceeding 2000 cubic feet.<sup>103</sup> Such houses had a metal ticket attached, which designated the number of occupants allowed by law at a rate of 300 cubic feet per person over eight years old. Butt suggests that there were about 23,000 ticketed houses in Glasgow by the 1880s occupied by about 14% of the city's population.<sup>104</sup> Many ticketed houses were sub-divisions of existing properties, often with rudimentary and insubstantial partitioning resulting in poor ventilation and minimal natural light. The number of ticketed houses remained relatively

---

<sup>101</sup> Hamish Fraser & Maver, 'The Social Problems', p.364.

<sup>102</sup> G. Best, 'The Scottish Victorian City', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 3, Symposium on the Victorian City, 1, (1968) p.350.

<sup>103</sup> *Glasgow Police Act 1866* (29 & 30 Vict.) C. cclxx111 at [https://legislation.viex.co.uk/vid/glasgow\\_police\\_act\\_1866-808273745](https://legislation.viex.co.uk/vid/glasgow_police_act_1866-808273745) [accessed 1 September 2020].

<sup>104</sup> J. Butt, 'Working-class housing in Glasgow, 1851-1914' in S.D. Chapman (ed), *The History of Working-Class Housing. A Symposium* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971) p.68, p.69.



constant between 1881-1914 with overcrowding rates fluctuating; in 1901 it was recorded at 13%.<sup>105</sup>

Overcrowding in Britain's major cities was not just the main issue of the Victorian housing problem, it was also compounded by the inadequate quality of the housing stock. Manchester's housing, even from the early nineteenth century, was some of the nation's worst, with the growing demand for workers' accommodation giving rise to the number of back-to-back houses constructed by speculative builders.<sup>106</sup> Constructed in double rows, with only their doors and windows facing the front, they were poorly lit and ventilated, and although a local byelaw of 1844 banned the building of new back-to-back houses, they were still being rented by a considerable number of families at the beginning of the twentieth century. But if general living conditions found in back-to-back tenements were poor they could almost be viewed as luxurious compared with those experienced in the cellar dwellings. Invariably dark and damp, they would be 'home' for up to 20,000 people in Manchester during the 1840s; densely packed, often in only one room, and being shared by pigs and donkeys with the living conditions found in the dwellings in the riverside area at Ducie Bridge and 'Little Ireland' in the curve of the River Medlock being especially bad.<sup>107</sup>

The presence of cellar dwellings was not just limited to Manchester. By the middle of the nineteenth century in Liverpool, Pooley suggests that 25% of the borough's population lived in cellars.<sup>108</sup> Taylor notes, as a conservative

---

<sup>105</sup> Butt, 'Working-class housing', p.69.

<sup>106</sup> A. Kidd, *Manchester. A History*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2011), p.39.

<sup>107</sup> Kidd, *Manchester*, p.39, p.40.

<sup>108</sup> Pooley, 'Living in Liverpool', p.176, p.210; I.C. Taylor, 'The Court and Cellar Dwelling: The Eighteenth Century Origin of the Liverpool Slum', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire*

estimate, that in 1846 there were 30,000 cellar dwellers in the city. By 1900, of the 7424 cellars recorded in Liverpool, just over 4000 were being legally occupied, and by 1903, still 1000 were occupied.<sup>109</sup> The squalid nature of Manchester's back-to-back houses was exposed in Marr's report of the housing conditions of Manchester and Salford in his executive summary of facts. Specifically, he notes that in the township areas of Ancoats, Central and St. Georges housing was 'unwholesome' because of back-to-back tenements being badly built or in need of urgent repair; many of which had no separate water supply and shared the same badly kept closet, used in some cases by up to eight families.<sup>110</sup> Liverpool fared little better. Although the building of new court back-to-back houses was finally outlawed in the city in 1864, by that time the borough already had around 3000 courts consisting of nearly 18,000 court dwellings that housed a population of about 110,000. Such dwellings as these and cellars were home for about 50% of the city's working-class population.<sup>111</sup>

Back-to-back court dwellings were also a feature of Birmingham's Victorian housing stock although not to the same numerical degree as those in Manchester and Liverpool. Built during the last half of the eighteenth century and generally constructed of two or three rooms per floor arranged in two or three stories, they began to achieve wider notoriety and civic concern following William Chadwick's 1842 report.<sup>112</sup> Although the Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham noted in his 1873 report that 'not only are some houses

---

and Cheshire, Vol. 122 (1970), pp.69-90 at < <https://www.hslc.org.uk/WP-content/uploads/2017/05/122-5Taylor.pdf> > [accessed 27 July 2020].

<sup>109</sup> Taylor, 'Court and Cellar'; 'Examination of Cellars, *Medical Officer of Health Report, Liverpool, 1901*, p.98.

<sup>110</sup> Marr, *Housing Conditions*, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> Taylor, 'Court and Cellar', p.69.

<sup>112</sup> 'Report of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts. *Parliamentary Papers Xv11 (1844), XV111 (1845)*.

overcrowded, making streets too narrow and courts too confined, but they are provided no ventilation except that which is accidental and inevitable by means of doors, windows, fireplaces and chinks', they were not outlawed in the city until 1876.<sup>113</sup> In fact, they would remain part of Birmingham's housing stock until 1900 where they housed 200,000 people.<sup>114</sup>

The predominance of inner area back-to-back dwellings, their longevity in use and their ongoing construction, beyond the time when they were formally outlawed, was a feature of the housing stock in Leeds. The building of back-to-back dwellings became the principal solution to meeting the increasing housing demand of the growing city.<sup>115</sup> By 1890, some 70% of the housing in the borough of Leeds consisted of back-to-back dwellings.<sup>116</sup> Most of the development of this type of dwelling, which often consisted of just one room on each of two floors with an under building or cellar, were speculative builds where developers laid out the streets within existing smallholding boundaries independent of other adjacent developments. Moreover, even though they were of similar size to many of the existing rural cottages of the period at just under five square metres, they had only the barest of amenities for water, drainage and sewerage if any.<sup>117</sup> By 1842, only 10% of back-to-back houses had mains water and still in 1856, only about 1000 houses had water closets.<sup>118</sup> Although the city of Leeds formally outlawed the building of back-to-back houses in 1876,

---

<sup>113</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report, Birmingham, 1873, p.4, p.9.*

<sup>114</sup> C. Chinn, 'No frills living in city back-to-backs', *BirminghamLive* 05 January 2013 at <<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/nostalgia/carl-chinn-no-frills-living-in-the-city-403144>> [accessed 6 August 2020].

<sup>115</sup> J. Harrison, 'The Origin, Development and Decline of Back-to-Back Houses In Leeds, 1878-1937' *Industrial Archaeology Review*, 39:2 (2017), p.137 p.102.

<sup>116</sup> Thornton, *The Story of Leeds*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2013) p.137.

<sup>117</sup> Harrison, 'The Origin', p.102.

<sup>118</sup> Thornton, 'The Story of Leeds', p.138.

a loophole in the enabling law meant that where building approval had been previously granted prior to this date, they could still be built; to the extent that by 1901 30% of the city's population still lived in back to back houses.<sup>119</sup>

For the inner-city area dwellers in Glasgow from the mid nineteenth century until well into the second decade of the twentieth, poor and inadequate housing was commonplace. Most housing was in high-rise, multi-occupancy tenement buildings, invariably three or four stories high, with houses ranging from twenty per block to as much as seventy. Such tenements could contain a mixture of apartments from one to five rooms to the notorious 'single end' one room apartments. Because letting periods of properties in Glasgow were mainly on an annual basis with rents paid monthly, half yearly or yearly, many families took on lettings that they believed they could afford based on the assumptions of slack trade or unemployment, even if such accommodation was of very poor quality.

Music hall's approach to the chronic housing conditions, especially overcrowding witnessed in many of its inner boroughs, was often through absurd parody. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the song '*The Coster's Mansion*', written and composed by W. Fieldhouse and George Le Brunn in 1899 and performed by Gus Elen.<sup>120</sup> Although implausible in the extreme, for those members of music hall audiences, in particular those of London in the nearby Canterbury music hall who would understand the doubtful existence of a 'pretty mansion in the New Cut', the irony in the lyrics would be obvious. The New Cut

---

<sup>119</sup> Harrison, 'The Origin', p.108.

<sup>120</sup> W. Fieldman & G Le Brunn, (1899) *The Coster's Mansion* at <http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-C/Costers-Mansion> [accessed 11 December 2020].

in South London runs between Waterloo Road and Blackfriars Road and was the location of a thriving Sunday market from the middle of the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, now known as The Cut, it also gave its name to the wider local area which would include the local workhouse. The area was described as 'poor' in Charles Booth's earlier studies.<sup>121</sup> With inner urban music hall audiences outside Cockney London and especially those in the major cities, the experiences of living in just one or two rooms would have a strong resonance. None more so than with the audiences of the Empire Varieties in Leeds where Gus Elen performed the song in October 1899.<sup>122</sup>

### *The Coster's Mansion*<sup>123</sup>

I've oft 'eard abaht the lovely mansions  
Wot yer sees when up the West End way  
I've 'eard, wot wiv improvements and expansions  
They've a fresh and brand-new room for ev'ry day  
Well, I've a pretty mansion in the New Cut  
It's a place built in the werry latest line  
We've a room for ev'ry feed,  
And a score we doesn't need  
It's a knock-aht, is the domicile o' mine.

Chorus: If yer wants ter see me dining-room  
Or step into me parlour  
Or me orfice where I contracts all me biz  
If yer wants ter see me bedroom

---

<sup>121</sup> Norris, 'A Cockney at Work', p. 278; C. Booth, 'Life and Labour of the People of London, (London: Macmillan, 1892-97).

<sup>122</sup> Personal contact, P Norris (2020), *Gus Elen Archive*.

<sup>123</sup> Fieldhouse & Le Brunn, 'The Coster's Mansion'.

Or the place we calls the larder  
Why, you've only got to stay just where you is.

The missis 'as a bood-war for retiring  
And of evenings, when my daily graft is done  
I've a study, so what more are we requiring  
And yut our private rooms are boaf as one  
The moke 'e get 'is grub up in a corner  
I shoves the barrer underneaf the bed  
At the mansion, plain to you  
We've a stable, coach-'ouse too  
And the size of it's enough to turn yer 'ead

Chorus: If yer wants to view the kitchen  
Where we cooks the eels and kippers  
Or where I counts the proceeds o' my biz  
Or peep into the barf-room  
While the missis baves the nippers  
Why, you've only got to stop just where you is.

### *Health*

Not only was housing overcrowded and inadequate for many in late Victorian and early Edwardian inner urban areas in Cockney London and the major cities in Britain, but much of it was inherently unhealthy because of poor, and in many cases non-existent, sanitation. Yet these were topics that would rarely feature in late Victorian and Edwardian music hall song, and where they did, it was only obliquely.

Although the consequences of ill health or early death were referenced in music hall song lyrics, it was invariably by way of being a comedic hook to suggest upward social aspiration or a portent of better times, for example with marriage or inheritance. Indeed, very few inner urban music hall audiences in the last twenty or thirty years of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century would not have had a direct experience of bereavement. Whereas for most inner urban dwellers, a family bereavement could be traumatic, and could invariably have an additional negative financial impact, music hall song could make it a positive. As Albert Chevalier would sing in 'Wot Cher': 'Your rich Uncle Tom of Camberwell/Popped off recent which it ain't a sell/Leaving you his little donkey shay'.<sup>124</sup>

For many inner urban dwellers in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow during the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth, their lived experience was blighted by poor health. Although overall death rates and infant mortality rates are essentially crude measures of the collective health of a group, they do provide good general indicators. Such indicators are further enhanced when synthesised with recorded causes of deaths beyond natural ageing especially those that would normally be associated with inadequate diet, unsuitable housing, and unsanitary conditions. This would be even more apparent when analysed alongside infant mortality rates and childhood related illnesses. Using extrapolated data from the Medical Officer of Health's 1901 Report for London and that from the Medical Officer of Health Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics Reports from some of the Metropolitan

---

<sup>124</sup> A Chevalier & C Ingle *Wot Cher (Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road)*, (circa 1896) at <[www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs -K/Knocked-Em-Kent-Road.htm](http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs -K/Knocked-Em-Kent-Road.htm)> [accessed 15 December 2020].

Boroughs of Cockney London from the early 1900s, an overview can be constructed of the general health of Cockney London.<sup>125</sup>

In 1901, the birth rate for the Administrative County of London was 29.0 live births per thousand population; a figure which had been declining, albeit slowly, over the previous ten years and was the lowest since civil registration began.<sup>126</sup> For Cockney London, the 1901 birth rate was significantly higher at 33 per thousand live births with the boroughs of Stepney, Bethnal Green, and Shoreditch recording levels of 37, 35 and 35 respectively. No specific reason for these higher rates is offered by the Medical Officer of Health but it is not unreasonable to assume that with higher infant mortality rates in Cockney London in general, families having more children was conditioned by the recognition of the likelihood of child mortality within the first five years of birth.<sup>127</sup>

The annual death rate for the Administration County of London in 1901 (corrected for age and sex distribution) was found to be 18 per thousand population and although the comparable rate for Cockney London was not too dissimilar at 20, the boroughs of Shoreditch, Stepney and Bethnal Green evidenced rates higher at 22, 22 and 21 respectively.<sup>128</sup> It is when examining infant mortality rates, especially those occurring within twelve months of birth,

---

<sup>125</sup> Data obtained from Medical Officer of Health Reports for individual Metropolitan Boroughs needs to be viewed with some caution especially when used for comparative analysis, not least of all since there was no uniform means of reporting the data or standardisation in accounting for deaths occurring both inside and outside of a particular Borough.

<sup>126</sup> *Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the London County Council 1901* at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b18252503>> [accessed 8 April 2020].

<sup>127</sup> Personal oral testimony. When Mrs Elizabeth Bellchambers of Bermondsey (1884-1965) was asked if there was any special reason why she had 13 children in her marriage, her reply was simple: 'they weren't all expected to survive'. [Testimony circa 1965].

<sup>128</sup> *MoH Report London 1901*.



that a striking contrast can be seen. Of the deaths recorded in London during 1901, 25% were of infants under twelve months of age, equating to an annual infant mortality rate of 148 per thousand population. The infant mortality rate for Cockney London as an average however was appreciably higher, at 156 per thousand with the borough Shoreditch recording a rate of 197 per thousand.<sup>129</sup> Zymotic and respiratory diseases accounted for just over a third of all deaths in London whereas in Shoreditch, 41% of deaths were attributed to these two causes.<sup>130</sup>

Notwithstanding the caution of over interpreting the data, it is highly likely that contagious or infectious childhood diseases such as scarlet fever and whooping cough or those more adult focussed diseases such as tuberculosis or typhoid, are more virulent in densely packed communities with poor sanitation. Indeed, this would be explicitly recognised in some of the individual borough Medical Officer of Health reports, for example, as Lewis Fraser Bryett specifically mentions in his report for Shoreditch in 1901: 'Shoreditch has a high infant mortality such as is usually to be met with densely populated working-class districts'.<sup>131</sup> Porter enhances this notion in his summary of London's East End slums where he suggests, that for many in Cockney London, they existed in boroughs that 'had the worst slums, the worst overcrowding and the worst death rates'.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> MoH Report London 1901.

<sup>130</sup> MoH Report London 1901. Corrected figures omitting deaths within institutions. Zymotic, as a classification of infectious or contagious diseases, was used extensively by late Victorian and Edwardian medical professionals; the principal ones being: Typhus, Typhoid, Smallpox, Scarlett Fever, Measles, Whooping Cough and Diphtheria.

<sup>131</sup> L. Fraser Bryett, *Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary Condition of the Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch in the County of London for the Year 1901* at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b19822030>> [accessed 3 March 2020].

<sup>132</sup> Porter, *London*, p. 367.

Mortality rates in Manchester demonstrate a similar pattern at the turn of the nineteenth century, and in the case of infant mortality, the situation was even more severe. For England and Wales in 1901 the annual corrected death rate was enumerated at 16 per thousand population with the rates for Manchester and Salford being significantly higher at 25 per thousand and 24 per thousand respectively, with both cities being shown as having the three worst corrected death rates of 33 of the major towns in the 1901 census.<sup>133</sup> Of the total deaths recorded in the City of Manchester in 1900 just over one third occurred in the inner Township area of Ancoats, Central and St. Georges, which had a higher death rate than the City at 27 per thousand population <sup>134</sup>

Stark though these figures are, they are not as bad as those relating to infant mortality. Of all deaths for all ages recorded in 1901 (11801), just over 40% were those of children of five years and under, with those resulting from diarrhoea being about one in ten.<sup>135</sup> The mortality rate for infants in the early part of life, that is under one year, is even more dramatic with a rate of 198 per thousand live births (the comparable figure with Cockney London for that year being 156 per thousand live births). In the case of the Manchester Township, it was even worse with the infant mortality rate being almost 20% higher at 236 per '000 live births (the highest comparable figure in Cockney London, being that of Shoreditch, was 197 per '000).<sup>136</sup> Details of the main causes of death,

---

<sup>133</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report Manchester 1901*, 'Table 9 – Recorded and Corrected Death Rates per 1000 Persons Living in 33 Great Towns During the Year 1901' at <<https://wellcome-library.org/item/b29785224>> [accessed 12 April 2020].

<sup>134</sup>, 'Table 3: Manchester Death Rates From All Causes'; 'Table 8: 1901 – Death Rates in the Homes of the People in Workhouses, And in Hospitals For the Various Divisions of the City, Calculated On the Census of 1891 and 1901' *MoH Report Manchester 1901*.

<sup>135</sup>, 'Table A – Manchester 1901. Causes Of Death At Different Life Periods In The 52 Weeks Of The Year.' *MoH Report Manchester 1901*.

<sup>136</sup>, 'Table J, 1901. Infantile Mortality In The City, And Its Three Main Divisions. Death-Rates Under One Year Per 1000, Births.' *MoH Report Manchester 1901*.

are equally revealing, with some 25% of all deaths in Manchester in 1901 being from respiratory or gastric conditions.<sup>137</sup>

For some considerable time, the health of Liverpool's population had been a major cause of concern in civic circles with the town reputed to have one of the highest mortality rates in the country; a fact largely instrumental in Liverpool appointing its first Medical Officer of Health in 1848. For the decade 1861-71 the average life expectancy for the whole population of Liverpool was 30 years compared to that of 31, 37 and 38 years for that of Manchester, Birmingham and London respectively and although by the decade 1891-1901 it had improved to 38 years it was still below that those other towns.<sup>138</sup> E.W. Hope's 1901 report as Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool shows that although there had been ongoing improvements in the health of the city's population as a whole there were still key issues, especially those relating to sanitation that still needed to be addressed.

The total number of deaths recorded for the city of Liverpool for the 52 weeks ending 28<sup>th</sup> December 1901 was 14,879 and for Birkenhead for the same period 2076, resulting in death ratios per thousand deaths of 22 and 18 respectively and a combined average of 20: slightly lower than that of the combined average of Manchester and Salford. However, when the death rates of the poorest inner wards, of Scotland, Exchange and Abercromby are comparatively compared with the equivalent in Manchester (Ancoats, Central and St. Georges) and the worst boroughs of Cockney London, (Shoreditch, Stepney, and Bethnal Green) the contrast is more apparent. Liverpool's inner wards were especially unhealthy. Of

---

<sup>137</sup> 'Table A' *MoH Report Manchester 1901*.

<sup>138</sup> Pooley, 'Living in Liverpool', p.208. p.224.

the deaths recorded in the city of Liverpool during 1901, just over 25% were recorded in the immediate waterfront wards of Scotland, Exchange and Abercromby; if the adjoining wards eastwards and westwards are included (Kirkdale and Toxteth) the figure increases to just over 50%.<sup>139</sup>

It is worth noting, however, the potential influence of deaths occurring in common lodging houses on these figures, especially for those in the wards of Scotland and Exchange, which would have housed a larger proportion of the district's non-residents and recent migrants or those in transit. Indeed, the existence of lodging houses, and those who occupied them on population densities, overcrowding and health statistics upon their relative wards needs stressing, not just for Liverpool but for Cockney London, Manchester and to a lesser degree, the other major cities under analysis.

On a general level, they tended to be occupied by those at the very bottom of the social and economic scale. As the Medical Officer of Health for Manchester comments in his 1901 report referencing the Township wards and their mortality rates: 'these are pre-eminently the districts occupied by lodging houses and inhabited by the very poorest class of labourers and a large number of wretched persons'.<sup>140</sup> Liverpool's Medical Officer of Health notes that those in the City's lodging houses would be: 'persons of very migratory habits, and often indigents and broken down'.<sup>141</sup> London at that time, was believed to have an unregistered

---

<sup>139</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report, Liverpool 1901*, at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b29737357>> [accessed 14 April 2020].

<sup>140</sup> *MoH Report Manchester 1901*, p.10.

<sup>141</sup> *MoH Report Liverpool, 1901*, p.23.

lodger population of about 90,000 described as being 'viciously' and 'illegally housed'.<sup>142</sup>

Whilst the existence of lodging houses may provide a degree of mitigating circumstance for the high death rate ratios witnessed in Liverpool as a whole and the riverside districts, it does not hide the fact that for parts of the city poor health was a very serious concern. This is brought into an even sharper focus when causes of death are examined, especially those relating to infant mortality. Of all deaths in 1901 in Liverpool, almost 42% occurred in children under 5 years of age with the infant mortality rate for the city (those deaths under one year age) being 188 per thousand live births. For the two worst wards (Scotland and Exchange) infant mortality rates were significantly higher at 222 and 241 per thousand; rates that had not changed significantly from the previous four years.<sup>143</sup>

The Medical Officer of Health's Report for 1901 details just over 4000 deaths of infants of which nearly 29% were due to Zymotic diseases, with diarrhoea being the most common.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, the effect of Zymotic diseases as causes of death across the wider city population is consistent with that seen in Cockney London and Manchester. In the case of Liverpool specifically, only those classed as 'diseases of the respiratory system' accounted for more deaths.<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> 'Common Lodging House', *The Workhouse. The Story of an Institution* at <<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/lodging>> citing J. London, *The People of the Abyss* (London: 1<sup>st</sup> World Library Literary Society, 2006) [accessed 10 June 2020].

<sup>143</sup> *MoH Liverpool Report 1901* p.28, p.29.

<sup>144</sup> *MoH Liverpool Report 1901*, p.26.

<sup>145</sup> Caution needs to be exercised in interpretation of the minutiae of the data in respect of specific causes of death, especially when referenced against infant mortalities. As the Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool himself suggests: 'As regards the nature of the illness to which death is most commonly ascribed, it must be borne in mind that the obscurity of symptoms of illness in infants

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Birmingham's health problems were becoming apparent as the city's Medical Officer of Health remarked in his 1873 report that 'it has repeatedly been stated that Birmingham, far from being the healthiest of the large towns has latterly become the most unhealthy'.<sup>146</sup> By 1901, the lack of any real progress concerning the health of the city's inner wards during the previous four years was laid bare in the Dr Alfred Hill's report for that year as then Medical Officer of Health where he states:

in my last report for 1897 I pointed out that no real progress had taken place in the death rate of Birmingham for many years past, and it is a matter of great regret to find since then, the death rate has been rather worse than better.<sup>147</sup>

In this same report it was noted that the city-wide mortality rate was recorded at 19 per thousand population; a figure significantly higher than that of England and Wales which was 16 per thousand population. In the inner wards, as with those found in Cockney London, Manchester and Liverpool, the mortality rate was just under 50% higher. Those inner wards of St Mary, St Stephen and St Bartholomew evidenced an average mortality rate of just under 28 per thousand population.<sup>148</sup>

The main causes of death also mirror those found in Cockney London, Manchester, and Liverpool, with those in the Zymotic disease grouping being the most prevalent, with diarrhoea and measles being the worst. The report notes

---

and young children often leaves a doubt as to which two or more causes was the primary one' (*MoH Liverpool 1901*, p.26). Similarly, he offers no explanation as to why the Toxteth ward for example recorded a death rate on par with that for the city as a whole but a significantly below average score for deaths from Zymotic diseases.

<sup>146</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report, Birmingham 1873*, p.20.

<sup>147</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report, Birmingham 1901*, p.6.

<sup>148</sup> *MoH Report Birmingham, 1901*, p.6.

also that in the case of the epidemic diseases of Measles, Whooping Cough and Diarrhoea, 'mortality was twice as high in the three bad wards as in the three good wards'.<sup>149</sup> Poor health of the inner city inhabitants and their ability to regain any sort of fitness was often a never ending battle, for 'when they are ill, their chances of recovery is greatly lessened by the lack of good nursing, suitable house accommodation and proper medicine and food'.<sup>150</sup>

The health of the population of Leeds, especially for those living in the inner wards for much of second half of the eighteenth century through to the first decade of the twentieth was little better, if any, than in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool or Birmingham. Leeds was generally acknowledged as a 'smokey' city as evidenced in a contemporary article in the *Tailor and Cutter* magazine which noted: 'Leeds has in our opinion a general aspect of grime, smoke, and unrelieved ugliness that no other 'workshop of the world' can compete with'.<sup>151</sup> During this period, 25% of the mortality of the city could be attributed to lung diseases.<sup>152</sup>

Infant mortality was high for most of the nineteenth century and during the nine year period between 1851-1860, on average 19% of newly born infants died before reaching the age of one, and although infant mortality rates did decline after 1907 they were still alarmingly high at the turn of the century.<sup>153</sup> As with other towns of comparable size, mortality rates, for both all deaths and infants are significantly higher in the inner city areas as shown in the Medical Officer of

---

<sup>149</sup> MoH Report *Birmingham*, 1901, p.7.

<sup>150</sup> MoH *Birmingham*, 1901 p.8.

<sup>151</sup> J. B. Hannam, 'The Social Context of Working-Class Life in Leeds, 1880-1914', *The Employment of Working-Class Women in Leeds* (Sheffield: PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1984), p.384.

<sup>152</sup> Morgan, 'Demographic Change', p.68.

<sup>153</sup> Morgan, 'Demographic Change', p.67.

Health Reports for 1900 and 1903. The citywide total death rate for Leeds in 1900 shows a rate of 20.1 per thousand population. However, for the three worst areas, which accounted for just under 40% of the total population of the city of Leeds, was slightly higher, with the worst South East, showing a rate of 22 per thousand.<sup>154</sup> For the four districts of North Leeds, South & East Leeds and Hunslet, 53% of all deaths recorded in 1903 were of children under five years. In common with Cockney London and the other industrial cities reviewed, it was the infectious diseases, and those closely associated with insanitary conditions, such as diphtheria, diarrhoea and whooping-cough that claimed the highest tolls amongst young children, with the respiratory diseases of Phthisis (tuberculosis), bronchial pneumonia the biggest killer in adults.<sup>155</sup>

Arguably, nineteenth-century Glasgow was the least healthy city of those that have been examined, although there was a marked improvement during its last decade due mainly to the city authorities taking more direct control on matters of civic health. Foremost of these were the controls of sanitation administration and building regulations following the Public Health (Scotland) Acts of 1867 and 1897.<sup>156</sup> Prior to this, life expectancy for a man in Glasgow during the 1820s was a little over forty-two years; for a woman in the same period, it was a little higher at approximately forty-five years. Things worsened over the next twenty years; in 1841 male life expectancy had decreased to approximately thirty-

---

<sup>154</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report, Leeds 1900*, 'Table A, Part 1' at <<http://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b2972238>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

<sup>155</sup> *MoH Report Leeds, 1900*, 'Table A, Part 1'.

<sup>156</sup> Public Health (Scotland) Act 1867 [30 & 31 Vict. Ch. 101]; *Public Health (Scotland) Act, 1897* [60 & 61 Vict. Ch. 38] at <[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1897/pdfs/ukpga\\_18970038\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1897/pdfs/ukpga_18970038_en.pdf)> [accessed 31 August 2020].



seven years and for women it was just under forty years.<sup>157</sup> The mean age of death of those that died in 1843 was twenty-seven years old and between the five-year period from 1838 to 1843 it was twenty-three and a half years. The comparable data for the whole of London at that time was twenty-nine years.<sup>158</sup> From a century high death rate of 30 per thousand live births between 1860 and 1864, the death rate declined steadily but slowly to the end of the nineteenth century and stood at 21 by 1900.<sup>159</sup>

Shocking though these figures are, they need to be put into context in relation to the devastating effects of various epidemics that ravaged not just Glasgow but across most of Scotland during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century. Glasgow found itself engulfed in four separate cholera epidemics during the thirty-four years from 1832, as well as numerous outbreaks of typhus that would continue well in the new century. Added to this would be the persistent respiratory diseases killers such as tuberculosis, bronchitis, and pneumonia alongside the various childhood infectious diseases like whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever. Pulmonary diseases would claim about 33% of all deaths in Glasgow during the 1850s.<sup>160</sup>

Even though public health in Glasgow would improve in respect of total annual death rates during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the declines in crude death rates merely revealed in stark detail the underlying increasingly high rates of infant mortality in the 1880s and 1890s. The 1903 Medical Officer

---

<sup>157</sup> W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver, 'The Social Problems of the City', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol: 11 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) p.352.

<sup>158</sup> Hamish Fraser & Maver, 'The Social Problems', p.352.

<sup>159</sup> Withers, 'The Demographic History', p.147.

<sup>160</sup> Hamish Fraser & Maver, 'The Social Problems', p.353, p.357.

of Health for Glasgow's report shows that the infant mortality rate for that year to be 142 per thousand live births and a three-year average (1901-1903) of 139. The quinquennial average for the three respective periods prior to 1900 show rates of 143, 146, 151 per thousand live births.<sup>161</sup>

An almost fatalistic approach to the problem is noted the 1872 Medical Officer of Health Report which states: 'the removal of a child causes little shock to the mechanisms of the social machine. It is merely the destruction of a little raw material, not yet worked up for any manifestly important position'.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, whilst by the time of the 1903 Medical Officer of Health Report there was a distinct acceptance of the negative effects of poor sanitation on the spread of the principal childhood illnesses, there remained an element of blame for infant mortality on genetic factors. The 1903 report states quite clearly its belief in the link between infant health and genetics. It makes a distinct connection between the health of new-born infants and an in-built genetic 'quality' when it suggests that 'it is to be regarded as a quality of the child at birth rather than the accident of its surroundings afterwards'<sup>163</sup>

As with Cockney London and Britain's other largest conurbations, it is the inner population living in the most overcrowded part of the city, the inner wards surrounding the old Glasgow Cross, that suffered disproportionate ill health and mortality. The 1903 report states that: 'the average infantile death-rate in

---

<sup>161</sup> *Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Glasgow. 1903* at <[https://www.tradehouselibrary.org.uk/uploads/4/7/7/2/47723681/report\\_of\\_the\\_medical\\_officer\\_of\\_health-1903.pdf](https://www.tradehouselibrary.org.uk/uploads/4/7/7/2/47723681/report_of_the_medical_officer_of_health-1903.pdf)> [accessed 31 August 2020]. The 1903 MoH report is used for health data for Glasgow, as it analyses mortality and birth rates and population densities by wards as opposed to sanitary districts as in previous reports.

<sup>162</sup> Cited in Hamish Fraser & Maver, 'The Social Problems', p.359.

<sup>163</sup> *MoH Report, Glasgow, 1903*, p.24.

Calton and Cowcaddens.....is fully twice that of Langside, Pollockshields and Kelvinside'.<sup>164</sup> Such variations in death rates between inner and outer boroughs in British cities was commonplace.

The health of many of the population in the major cities of Britain and in Cockney London was patently a major feature of urban living during most of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. For those living in the inner urban areas, overcrowded housing conditions, often with the barest of sanitary facilities available, had a direct effect on life expectancy. As a consequence, respiratory conditions, infant mortality, and poor health was an embedded element of their lived experiences. The respiratory illnesses and those referenced in the wider grouping of Zymotic diseases found in the inner wards of Manchester and Birmingham, or the prevalence of the childhood condition of Scarlet Fever, would be found in almost equal measure in the borough of Bethnal Green in Cockney London and the Broomielaw ward in Glasgow. The general homogeneity of the health of the inner urban communities in Britain's largest cities and Cockney London is summarised in the comparative table 7.

---

<sup>164</sup> *MoH Report, Glasgow, 1903*, p.28. The actual infant mortality rates for Calton and Cowcaddens, (in the inner-city area) were 183 and 192 per thousand live births; those for Langside, Pollockshields and Kelvinside (all on the periphery of the city) were 69, 117 and 73 per thousand live births. The ward with the highest infant mortality rate in Glasgow in 1903 was Broomielaw at 199 per thousand live births.

Table 7

## Birth Rate/Death Rate/Infant Mortality Rate 1901

Area	Birth Rate (Live births per 1000 population)	Death Rate (per 1000 population)	Infant Mortality Rate (Death 0-1 year per 1000 live births)
Cockney London	33	20	156
<i>Inner Area (Shoreditch, Stepney Bethnal Green borough average)</i>	36	22	197
Manchester (including Salford)	29	35	198
<i>Inner Area (Manchester Township wards average)</i>	29	27	236
Liverpool (including Birkenhead)	30	20	188
<i>Inner Area (Exchange, Scotland Abercromby wards average)</i>	32	28	206
Birmingham	32	20	188
<i>Inner Area (St. Mary, St. Stephen, St. Bartholomew wards average)</i>	<i>Data not available</i>	27	<i>Data not available</i>
Leeds	30	19	188
<i>(Township wards average)</i>	<i>Data not available</i>	22	<i>Data not available</i>
Glasgow	32	21	149
<i>Inner Area (Townhead, Blackfriars, Exchange, Blythwood, Broomeilaw, Cowcaddens wards average)<sup>165</sup></i>	31	29	170

Source: 1901 Medical Officers of Health Reports: London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow.

As can be seen, all the cities above and Cockney London demonstrate similar birth, death, and infant mortality rates. Moreover, within the inner areas, where known, infant mortality rates especially are between 10%-20% higher than the overall city-wide rates. The lived experiences of the inner urban communities, especially those in relation to health matters and those affecting early years child development, demonstrate a shared clear common denominator. These consequences would be apparent to many within late Victorian, early Edwardian music hall audiences.

---

<sup>165</sup> Prior to 1903, birth and mortality data for Glasgow was recorded by Sanitation Districts. The data shown here is a synthesis of Sanitation District figures for 1910 against the relevant Glasgow wards. Although the integrity of the data is not overly compromised, allowances should be made to accommodate any peripheral overlap between sanitation district and ward.

*Social Deprivation & Poverty* ('we 'ad to move away, 'cos the rent we couldn't pay'.)<sup>166</sup>

Obviously, it would be incorrect to suggest that every inner-urban dweller in Britain's largest cities and Cockney London during the last years of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth was poor or socially disadvantaged. It would be equally incorrect to deny that for a sizeable proportion of these populations, the overriding feature of their lived experiences was concerned with keeping themselves at a level that was barely more than just above subsistence level. However, for a significant number of those living in the inner urban areas, being unskilled and only casually employed, often on low wages, poverty was an ever-present threat.<sup>167</sup> The other attendant contributory factors that were present in determining both absolute and relative poverty within the poorer boroughs of Cockney London, included real wages, retail prices, changed family circumstances such as widowhood, were replicated within the inner urban communities of Britain's other largest cities. Being poor, in itself, was not governed by a geographic or regional imperative, but almost always a combination of factors such as those noted above, which for those who were on, or close to, basic levels of subsistence over which they had little control. Poverty and its effect on the lives of many inner urban populations would be a shared

---

<sup>166</sup> F. Leigh & C. Collins *Don't Dilly Dally on the Way* at < [www.monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-D/Dont-Dilly-Dally.htm](http://www.monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-D/Dont-Dilly-Dally.htm) > [accessed 7 May 2020].

<sup>167</sup> Definitions of primary and secondary poverty are based on those formulated by the works of Seebohm Rowntree and Charles Booth and cited by M. Freeman, 'Seebohm Rowntree and secondary poverty, 1899-1954', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 64, No.4, (2011), p.1177. Notably, that 'in primary poverty were those families 'whose total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency' – in other words, poverty due to insufficient income – while in secondary poverty were those families 'whose total earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful' – in other words, poverty due to causes other than insufficient income'.

experience, whatever the location. Even if the stigma of social deprivation and poverty was not overtly paraded in music hall, for the reasons stated previously, its consequential effects would find their way into both song and characterisation in many of the acts of the cockney-styled entertainers.

In Leeds, the contemporary view in the late nineteenth century was that it was generally a prosperous city where the negative effects of casual employment were less in evidence. Yet the inter-relationship between wages and retail prices on the standard of living for many is apparent as Hannam clearly illustrates.<sup>168</sup> She notes that although real wages increased from 1892 to 1896, for the period from 1899 to 1905 and from 1908 to 1913, real wages fell as prices increased. Moreover, prices increased by approximately 23% in the period 1896 to 1913, negating any real income gains of the average rise in money wages of 20% in the same period. She further concludes that 'less skilled male workers, widows and other women who were responsible for the support of family members took home wages that were barely sufficient to keep them above the stringent poverty levels laid down by contemporary social investigators.'<sup>169</sup>

Widespread poverty was in evidence for much of nineteenth-century Glasgow and well into the first decade of the twentieth, where destitution for many was a direct result of simply being unable to earn enough to live.<sup>170</sup> Generally, wage rates throughout Scotland were comparatively lower than in England. Rodger indicates that the unweighted mean wage across Scotland in 1886 was about 95% of that across the whole of Britain, and although in some industries (engineering,

---

<sup>168</sup> Hannam, 'The Social Context', p.367.

<sup>169</sup> Hannam, 'The Social Context', p.374.

<sup>170</sup> Hamish Fraser & Maver, 'The Social Problems', p.379.

distilleries, brickmaking) for example, rates were comparable, for others they were appreciably lower.<sup>171</sup> The effect of a lower wage threshold in Glasgow was compounded by higher costs of living. Retail prices, both including and excluding rent were only marginally lower than for London, whereas for Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds there was an approximate twelve percentage point differential.<sup>172</sup> There had been some narrowing of the cost-of-living gap between Glasgow and the other major cities in Britain by 1912. However, the cost of an identical basket of food for Glaswegians was about 5% higher than that of those in Manchester and that the weekly budget apportioned to food and rent, at 80% of income, was higher for Glaswegians than those in Leeds and Salford.<sup>173</sup>

In Manchester and Salford, Davies suggests that about 80% of its population in the last decade of the nineteenth century were either 'poor' or 'very poor'.<sup>174</sup> The degree of poverty in Manchester and Salford is further underscored by Marr in his report of 1901 where he extrapolates data from Rowntree's earlier study of the population of York. This revealed a primary poverty level of nearly 10%, suggesting that just over 76,000 in Manchester and Salford were in primary poverty.<sup>175</sup> This high level of poverty was further recognised in the 1901 Medical Officer of Health report for Manchester where it notes that 'there is, apparently, a larger proportion of the population than hitherto below the line which divides poverty from pauperism'.<sup>176</sup> John Robertson, the Medical Officer of Health for

---

<sup>171</sup> R. Rodger, 'Employment, Wages and Poverty in the Scottish Cities 1841-1914', in G. Gordon (ed), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985), p.42.

<sup>172</sup> Rodger, 'Employment', p.43.

<sup>173</sup> Rodger, 'The Labour Force', p.182.

<sup>174</sup> Davies, *Leisure, Gender & Poverty*, citing F. Scott, 'The Condition and Occupations of The People of Manchester and Salford' *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, 1888-89*, p.10.

<sup>175</sup> Marr, *Housing Conditions*, p.25.

<sup>176</sup> MoH Report, *Manchester, 1901*, p.17.

Birmingham makes a similar point in his 1904 special report into conditions found in the inner wards of St. Mary, St. Stephen and St. Bartholomew when he notes that 'the condition of poverty in which the people of this area live has impressed me more than any other feature'.<sup>177</sup>

The existence of extreme poverty in some of the inner wards of Liverpool, evident throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and stretching well into the early years of the twentieth, was highlighted in several independent and official enquiries. A notable example would be that of Eleanor Rathbone, who found that even with dock labour wage rates of between four and six shillings per day, fluctuating demand and half day hiring, for many, weekly earnings were below twenty-five shillings.<sup>178</sup>

The investigation by Rowntree into poverty in York at the end of the nineteenth century suggested that the poverty he witnessed was not exceptional but representative of inner urban living and exacerbated by systemic underlying causes.<sup>179</sup> For many of these an individual or family had little or no control; often centred around changed family circumstances neither foreseen or planned.<sup>180</sup> Widowhood, sickness and the onset of old age could have major impacts on the ability of individuals and family units to maintain even a basic level of subsistence. Serious illness, especially if chronically sick, by the principal breadwinner would have an immediate effect on family income. Even if sickness was acute and

---

<sup>177</sup> J. Robertson, *Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Unhealthy Conditions in the Floodgate Street Area and the Municipal Wards of St. Mary, St. Stephen and St. Bartholomew*, October 1904, p.14.

<sup>178</sup> R. Lawton & C. Pooley, 'Liverpool and Merseyside' in G. Gordon (ed) *Regional Cities in the UK 1890-1980* (London: Sage, 1998), p.67.

<sup>179</sup> B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London: Andesite Press, 2017).

<sup>180</sup> Treble, *Urban Poverty*, p.9.



recoverable it could still precipitate a family financial crisis, albeit temporary. Widowhood and desertion could result in permanent impoverishment especially for women who generally would have less employability skills. For them the consequences would be daunting.

The arrival of children into the family could also be a distinctly mixed blessing. If the family unit managed to economically survive the early years of child upbringing without the balance changing from bare subsistence to poverty, there was at least the possibility in later years, of extra income being generated from child labour. But once in poverty, however, rising above a mean level of subsistence would prove impossible for many to the extent that by the early years of the twentieth century, 26% of all male-headed working-class households would be in poverty. This figure would rise to just over 65% were the head of household be unskilled and have three or more children.<sup>181</sup>

The effect of low wage rates relative to retail prices on the inner urban population of Britain's major towns and the poorest boroughs in Cockney London was never more apparent than in the case of housing rents. Whereas finding the resources for food and clothing might be met by simply going without or using available lines of credit, invariably the pawn shop, paying the rent was crucial. The private landlord was by far the most significant provider of housing in Britain before 1914 with freehold ground rents being the most secure investment return for property owners, since they would invariably have the first charge on properties.<sup>182</sup> As such,

---

<sup>181</sup> I. Gazeley & A. Newell, 'Poverty in Edwardian Britain', *Economic History Review*, 64:1 (2011), p.69.

<sup>182</sup> M.J. Daunton, *House and Home in the Victorian City. Working Class Housing 1850-1914* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), p.139.

paying the rent would of necessity, be the first expenditure priority for most tenants from incomes that would often be piteously low and irregular for the inner urban dweller.

Rents in London had been increasing continually for much of the nineteenth century and in the East End in particular (and by implication Cockney London) they had risen on average by twenty five percent.<sup>183</sup> With real incomes for the majority of Cockney London rising nowhere near this rate, the proportion of rent to income was acutely high. According to a Royal Commission Report on the Housing of the Working Classes (1884-1885) the London artisan and labourer classes spent 'too much on too little' with the Report further noting that over eighty five percent of the working-class paid twenty percent of their income in rent.<sup>184</sup> Whilst this report focussed on London as a whole, it is not unreasonable to suggest that would be replicated in the inner boroughs of Cockney London and the inner wards of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow. Paying the rent, or, if simply not having sufficient income and therefore the avoidance of paying it, would have been a constant concern for the inner urban population of Britain's largest cities, with the avoidance of rent debt being a common occurrence and constant worry.

However, music hall, at least in song and performance would generally steer well clear of the horrors of poverty, preferring to focus on the comedic potential of some its manifestations or to portray the pauper's real riches against the superficial ones of the 'toffs'. Although 'Shooting the moon' or 'doing a moonlight

---

<sup>183</sup> Waller, *Town and Nation*, p.32.

<sup>184</sup> Wohl, 'The Housing of the Working Classes', in Chapman (ed) *The History of Working Class Housing* p.26.

flit' was often a last, desperate act to avoid the ignominy of eviction, music hall song found a way to make it funny: Marie Lloyd ignoring her husband's caution not to 'dilly dally on the way' but instead stopping on the way to 'have the old half quarten' or Dan Leno bemoaning that 'it's jolly hard luck, you want a bit of pluck to always be shooting the moon' are prime examples.<sup>185</sup> For poverty in music hall was often relative; a poor man's riches compared to the superficial ones of the wealthy 'toff' as captured perfectly in Morny Cash's rendition of '*I Live in Trafalgar Square*' where he remarks: 'it's nice to see swells who are passing, look on you with an envious eye'.

*I Live in Trafalgar Square*<sup>186</sup> (selected verses)

Today I've been busy removing  
And I'm all of as fidgety-fidge  
My last digs were on the Embankment  
The third seat from Waterloo Bridge

Chorus. I Live in Trafalgar Square  
With four lions to guard me  
Fountains and statues all over the place  
I'll own it's trifle draughty  
But I look at this way you see  
If it's good enough for Nelson  
It's quite good enough for me.

---

<sup>185</sup> M Lloyd, *My Old Man Said Follow the Van*, at < <http://www.monolques.co.uk/musichall/Songs-D/Dont-Dilly-Dally.htm>> [accessed 10 May 2020]; B. Anthony, *The King's Jester. The Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2010) p.66.

<sup>186</sup> C.W. Murphy, *I Live in Trafalgar Square*, (1902), performed by Morny Cash at < <http://www.monolques.co.uk/musichasll/Songs-I/I-Live-in-Trafalgar-Square.htm>> [accessed 10 May 2020].

The beds ain't so soft as they might be  
Still the temperature's never too high  
And it's nice to see swells who are passing  
Look on you with envious eye  
And when you wake in the morning

When I think of those unlucky bounders  
The Morgans and Clarence de Clares  
Who are forced to put up at the 'Cecil'  
My tenderest sympathy's theirs.

### *Conclusion*

Evolving through much of the nineteenth century, and firmly established by the dawn of the twentieth, there existed within the five largest cities in Britain and in Cockney London a distinct and definable inner urban population. Although regionally diverse, their daily lived experiences were mainly a consequence of the wider effects of urbanisation in Britain during the nineteenth century, concentrated in the nation's largest cities.

This chapter demonstrates that these inner urban communities shared common demographic and social characteristics that conditioned their daily lives. In so doing, they became a homogeneous grouping that could recognise, through the medium of music hall and the performance and acts of the cockney-styled entertainers of the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods, a common understanding of their everyday lived experiences. Such common experiences

and shared understanding would be driven by the external forces of employment, housing, and health, which for a significant number, could result in relative or absolute poverty at some time during their lives. This homogeneous group were principally casually employed low wage earners living in overcrowded and inadequate housing with minimal sanitation. They were likely to be significantly unhealthier than their fellow urban dwellers located in the outlying boroughs or wards of their cities. Their life expectancy and more significantly their children's life expectancy would be markedly lower than that of the same fellow urban dwellers and for most of the inner urban population, they would be poor. Their lives would be a constant struggle to maintain a standard of living that was barely above a basic level of subsistence.

Their various local and regional identities, their differing religious, ethnic or social identities, were not subsumed within this inner urban homogeneity, rather it acted as an adhesive agent that bound together their lived experiences as a shared common denominator of understanding. It was this shared common understanding of those lived experiences that the successful leading cockney-styled, comic music hall performers would creatively exploit through their ability to connect and empathise with their audience's emotions.

However, their relationship with music hall was not simply passive; just an audience albeit a knowing one. They were more than just an 'undifferentiated corps of low paid slum dwellers in the centre' as outlined by Rodger.<sup>187</sup> Their everyday lived experiences provided the material for such popular song lyricists

---

<sup>187</sup> R. Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.57.

such as George Le Brunn and Edgar Bateman and others; they spawned the characters portrayed in the performing acts of Marie Lloyd, Dan Leno, Gus Elen, and many other cockney-styled performers. Most important of all, they provided a platform on which these leading music hall performers of the day could situate their London-centric acts. Without them as a homogeneous group, national touring by such performers, employing performance acts that were grounded with London-centric references, the special connectivity between them and their regional audiences would have been severely compromised. For if music hall was as described by Macqueen Pope, cited by Baker, being 'the entertainment of the people, by the people, for the people', it would likely have been the inner urban populations in the major cities in Britain and of Cockney London to whom that applied especially.<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>188</sup> R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall. An Illustrated History*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History.2014), p.260.

### Chapter Three - *From disreputable notoriety to respectable mass entertainment: the development of British Music Hall 1850-1914.*

In the previous chapter, the population growth and urbanisation of five principal cities in Britain and a collective group of London Metropolitan boroughs termed 'Cockney London' were examined to prove the existence of a quasi-homogenised inner urban population. It demonstrated that their everyday lived experiences were characterised by low paid, irregular unskilled employment, poor and inadequate housing invariably leading to poor health whilst trying to maintain an existence that was barely above that of primary or secondary poverty. This was the principal key enabling factor in the establishment of a national music hall audience environment that would facilitate the notion of performer and audience connectivity for the cockney-styled artistes and their material. The existence of this connectivity would allow the content of their London-centric acts, and their style, presentation, and cockney London vernacular, to be both understood and receive traction with their regional audiences.

Connectivity between the cockney-styled music hall artistes and their performance with audiences in the inner urban areas of Britain's major towns and Cockney London was dependent on those audiences having shared daily lived experiences. Whilst the existence of such a demographically quasi-homogeneous group was fundamental in being able to establish the performer/audience connectivity, no less important was the ability to reach such audiences with regular provincial tours. The means by which the major cockney-styled music hall entertainers could perform to and interact with regional audiences is the second critical enabling factor in achieving performer and

audience connectivity. Throughout the nineteenth century and reaching its climax during the first decades of the twentieth, music hall entertainment was transformed from being a localised adjunct to the existing public house trade to a stand-alone, national mass entertainment medium. This transformation process began by the entrepreneurial initiatives of individual public house landlords establishing larger capacity auditoria, but still directly conjoined to the pub trade and alcohol sales. Ultimately, this would become a separate national entertainment institution owned and controlled by professional theatrical impresarios.

As a national, mass entertainment medium, it could only have been made possible by the de-coupling of music hall from the public house trade and the emergence and growth of the national commercialised syndicates that controlled the majority of music halls in Britain's largest cities and Cockney London. It would be these syndicated circuits that would provide a largely uniform performance platform for the major music hall stars of the late Victorian and early Edwardian years to tour nationally. Such national tours, often undertaken annually, would enable the leading cockney-styled entertainers such as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, and Vesta Victoria, to develop the content of their performance material, whilst still being London focussed and relevant to a Cockney London audience, as national acts and repertoires delivered to audiences nationwide. The syndicated circuits and their impact on the regional touring propensity for the major music hall stars was the second of the four enabling factors that were the foundation of the special performer and audience connectivity characterised by the cockney-styled artistes. A structured regional touring framework afforded by the syndicated music hall circuits allowed artistes and hall owners to make



regional touring logistically and economically viable. Single contract booking and attendant economies of scale of promotion and publicity was advantageous to both parties; for the artiste it meant regular engagement and income and for syndicate owners, the ability to maximise their competitive advantage within a particular city or region.

Without syndicated circuits, hall owners would likely have found themselves involved in having to outbid their venue owning competitors for the services of the top stars or engage more local, cheaper acts to fill their bills. And whilst these local performers may well have been quality acts, they would be less likely to have the greater audience attraction than that of the leading London based music hall stars. Furthermore, their reputations in terms of celebrity, would have been mainly confined to their local area or region; national celebrity status, and the audience attraction potential that this would generate beyond their immediate locale would be hard to realise. Therefore, any notion of cockney-styled performer and audience connectivity based on nationally shared lived experiences would have been unsustainable.

In this chapter, the various public entertainment forms that were in existence from the early nineteenth century and their links to the public house trade are examined. They are further reviewed alongside the role they played in the development of nineteenth-century music halls through to the later creation of a commodified national variety entertainment industry. It will demonstrate how a combination of changes in legislation, Victorian society's developing attitudes towards the notion of 'respectability', the rise of the professional entertainer and theatre impresario, combined to influence music hall's development.

The concept of *respectability* and its place within society would permeate virtually every aspect of Victorian life. It would govern behaviours, attitudes, and relationships, individually and collectively within and between classes and societal hierarchies in the lived experiences of the population of Victorian Britain.<sup>1</sup> It would be manifest in work, social interactions and popular culture with music hall being no less of an exception. Definitions of *respectability* are plentiful but those offered by Bailey and Mullen, based largely on that posited by F.M.L. Thompson, serve best, especially in relation to music hall and its development from mid-Victorian Britain. Bailey suggests that respectability was 'a highly specific value system of considerable normative power, whose most important consequence was to incorporate a minor but not insignificant sector of the working-class into a social consensus that assured mid-Victorian society in particular of its cohesion and stability'.<sup>2</sup> Thompson sees Victorian respectability as 'a creed and a code for the conduct of personal and family life' with Best noting that it exerted a 'socially soothing tendency by assimilating the most widely separated groups (separated socially or geographically) into a common cult'.<sup>3</sup> Although Victorian respectability was a 'much exalted contemporary ideal' and a staple and regular way of life for the Victorian working-class man and his

---

<sup>1</sup> The historiographical volume of literature devoted to the subject of respectability and its impact on the development of Victorian society is immense. Notable works would include: F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1988); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Penguin, 2013); J. Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrialising Society: Britain, 1900-1914' in *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (April 2005), pp.330-342; G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971), pp.256-263; E. Ross, 'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep': Respectability in Pre-World War 1 London Neighbourhoods' in *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 27, (Spring 1985), pp.39-59; G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study Between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Verso Books, 2013); M.T. Huggins, 'More Sinful Pleasures? Respectability and the Middle Classes in Victorian England' *Journal of Social History*, 33:3 (2000), pp.585-600

<sup>2</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.30

<sup>3</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p.251; G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971), p.256.

family, they were 'rarer birds than contemporaries or today's historians have allowed'.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, respectability or more accurately, how it was perceived, differed between classes. For elite groups it could be merged into notions of social etiquette; in bourgeois circles it could be the proper way of leaving a calling card. To the working class, however, respectability could look very different. It could be avoiding destitution and paying the rent on time or in matters of personal conduct, refraining from swearing or transgressive behaviour. For much of the working class, therefore, being respectable 'counted as social capital'.<sup>5</sup>

For the working class especially (and by extension a large proportion of music hall audiences from the middle of the nineteenth century), respectability also entailed an acceptance of existing social hierarchies and by implication the recognition of the acceptance of one's own (supposed) inferiority relative to elite groups. Such notions would figure strongly in music hall song lyrics with this latent understanding embedded in the connectivity achieved by the later cockney-styled entertainers with their national audiences. Bessie Bellwood's *What Cheer Ria*' and Gus Elens *'E Dunno Where 'E Are'* songs are two such prime examples which are reviewed later in this study<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p.32; M.T. Huggins, *More Sinful Pleasures*, p.585 citing P. Bailey, 'Will the real Bill Banks stand up? A role analysis of mid-Victorian working-class respectability' *Journal of Social History*, 12.1979) p.346.

<sup>5</sup> J. Mullen, 'Victorian respectability', anti-social' behaviour and the Music Hall, 1880-1900, in S. Pickard (ed) *Anti-Social Behaviour in Britain: Victorian and contemporary perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) p.4.

<sup>6</sup> *'What Cheer Ria'*, written and composed by W. Herbert & Bessie Bellwood, performed by Bessie Bellwood, at <<https://www.monolques.co.uk/musichall/Songs-Waht-Cheer-Ria.htm>>; *'E Dunno Where 'E Are*, written and composed by Henry Wright & Fred Elpett, performed by Gus Elen at <<https://monolques.co.uk/musichall/Songs-E/E-Dunno-Where-E-Are.htm>> [accessed 19 April 2021].

This chapter will demonstrate that music hall's growth, from a localised leisure activity focused on the public house trade, with the metropolis acting as a centrifugal force in respect of licensing legislation especially, extended to the major conurbations in Britain during the nineteenth century. It will further determine that by the time of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and reaching its apogee around 1910, music halls in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow, had a nightly gross annual audience potential of about 67 million.<sup>7</sup>

The institution of music hall grew from being a dubious leisure pursuit, viewed by the middle classes and elites especially as being vulgar and morally degenerate at best and transgressive and potentially subversive at worst, to be a national, mainstream mass entertainment industry. This dynamic growth was accelerated by the establishment of an increasing number of syndicated halls from around 1890 that covered Britain's largest cities and Cockney London. The development of syndicates and touring circuits are examined in this chapter with reference to the enhanced presentation of music hall not only as a leisure pursuit, but as part of its commodification as a national, mass entertainment product.

The scale of music halls and theatres of varieties, both spatially and their potential gross annual audiences in Cockney London and Britain's most populous cities, is analysed and quantified over the twenty-year period from 1890. It consequently demonstrates that music hall, far from being at the point of decline during the Edwardian era as articulated by some commentators, was in fact, at

---

<sup>7</sup> See Appendices 2.0 to 2.5.

its most popular. That popularity is further evidenced by the continual audience appeal of the cockney-styled entertainers such as Gus Elen, Marie Lloyd, and Vesta Victoria throughout the whole of Britain well into and beyond the years of the First World War; popularity that was underpinned and enhanced by their special connectivity with their national audiences.

The special connectivity achieved by the late Victorian, early Edwardian cockney-styled entertainers with their audiences in the halls of Cockney London and those in the inner areas of Britain's largest cities was central to them being able to undertake regular regional tours using a London-centric style as part of a national performance act. This connectivity was made possible by the existence of four critical key societal factors that were in place during the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. The second of these key factors, the transitional direction of music hall towards its place as a commodified mass entertainment industry is examined in this chapter.

As will be demonstrated, audience and performer connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers was made physically possible because of the syndicated structure of circuits of music hall and theatres of varieties. These syndicated circuits were the result of the organic growth of the institution of music hall from its largely unstructured genesis as part of the public house trade. Although this means of connectivity, as well as the concept itself, would be an outcome of this development, it would not be an essential element of it during its early and middle period years. Performance entertainment during music hall's formative years of the 'free and easies', the 'sing and supper rooms', the saloon concerts through to the establishment of the dedicated music halls of the 1860s served a

very different and distinct purpose. In those formative years, performance entertainment, primarily but not exclusively singing, was employed by the owners of such establishments as a means of attracting patrons and by implication, encouraging them to spend money on alcohol; the sales of which would generate their principal source of profit.

As was examined earlier, the special connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers was a manifestation of a reciprocal two-way exchange between them and their audiences. This exchange, built upon a mutual understanding and recognition of the everyday lived experiences of parts of inner-urban music hall audiences and the characterisation contained within the artist's act, would generate an emotional reflex, both collectively and individually. At its simplest level, the reflex could be the 'knowingness' as outlined by Bailey; a detached awareness of the message or social theme noting its existence. At a deeper level it would be a shared individual and personal empathy most likely based on actual experience.

However, the nature and the type of entertainment on offer at the 'free and easies' and 'song and supper' rooms did not require any special shared connectivity between the artist and audience, beyond being part of the enjoyment and conviviality of the occasion. Indeed, performer and audience connectivity were noticeably absent. As Jackson suggests, the audiences at The Coal Hole and Evans Supper Rooms 'wanted their songs to be shocking'.<sup>8</sup> They did not have to emotionally resonate with the audience to be enjoyed. The story embedded in W.G. Ross's rendition of *Sam Hill* during his regular appearance at

---

<sup>8</sup> L. Jackson, *Palaces of Pleasure*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p.36.

The Cyder Cellars would likely be totally removed from the everyday lived experiences of the audience, beyond re-enforcing the existing mid-Victorian middle-class stereotype of the vulgar, transgressive working-class 'other'.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, the often blood-thirsty and sensationalist 'plays' containing highly transgressive behaviours that were performed at the many Penny Gaffs in the early nineteenth century would not mirror those of the majority of the audience; they would not be conjoined by mutual lived experiences. The special audience and performer connectivity therefore, that would become so integral to the success of the later cockney-styled entertainers, was not present in these forerunners of music hall. Nor was it required to be. The entertainment offered in the proto music hall of the 'free and easies' and 'song and supper' rooms was about developing the profitability of the existing public house trade. Only later, following the gradual disconnect of alcohol and entertainment would the special connectivity between the cockney-styled artists and their audiences become apparent.

The first part of this chapter will examine the formative years of what would become the institution of music hall, by examining the roles, development, and influences upon it by the 'song-and-supper rooms', the 'free-and-easies' and tavern and saloon entertainments, from around 1820 to 1850. The second will look at the growth years between 1850 and 1890 and the complex and often competing factors that would influence a burgeoning entertainment industry.

---

<sup>9</sup> Sam Hall at < <https://www.monologuesuk/musichall/Songs-S/Sam-Hall.htm> > [accessed 19 April 2021] tells the story of a man on the gallows about to be executed for murder. The exact date of the composition of this song is unknown but was certainly popular during the 1850s. Up until the passing of the 1868 Capital Punishment Amendment Act (31 & 32 Vict.C.24) which ended public executions, it is not unreasonable to suggest that many of the population of Britain would have witnessed a public hanging. So, whilst there would likely be a degree of performer/audience 'knowingness', connectivity, both individually and collectively would have been less likely.

The third part of the chapter identifies the emergence of the professional theatre impresario and the formation of the main syndicated circuits and how this impacted on music hall as an institution and its relationship with professional artists through the 'star' system. In the final section, this chapter quantifies the scale of music hall from the 1890s and its spatial reach in Cockney London and the major cities in Britain, through the last decade of the nineteenth century into early Edwardian Britain. Additionally, it will identify the existence and part played by the purpose built 'theatres of varieties' manifest in the 'Hippodromes, 'Empires' and 'Palaces'.

In passing, it acknowledges the historiographical debate of the embourgeoisement of music hall within its wider cultural context. It will assess whether its commodification resulted in an industry that was devitalised of its earlier Victorian social incorrectness by being deemed acceptable to most strands of Edwardian society. Throughout this chapter it will be shown that the transformation of music hall into a mass entertainment medium, which was a key factor necessary for the successful provincial touring of the major cockney-styled entertainers was facilitated and sustained by the circuits of the syndicated halls.

### The Early Years

The notion of an entertainment medium that was a platform for fully professional artistes to deliver prescribed acts in purpose-built theatres of varieties to a twice nightly audience, six days per week in the major cities in Britain, would be fanciful during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. That a large proportion of those performances would be given by London-based artists,



employing Cockney London vernacular, and referencing London landmarks and London institutions would be no less fanciful. Perhaps even more astounding would be the fact that many of those artists, except for Albert Chevalier, had no formal theatrical training, with most coming from those areas referred to by Stedman Jones as 'outcast London'.<sup>10</sup>

They would be singing songs about coster-mongers, the merits of drinking beer, avoiding paying the rent, mothers in law and unemployed men; vignettes of the situations and characters seen and heard on the streets of the inner urban areas of Britain's largest cities. The more famous of these performers, at the height of their careers, would have wealth and a lifestyle that was the opposite of most of their audiences. Yet those audiences would turn up in their hundreds to laugh (and probably cry) at the songs, the characters, and the storylines behind them because in being entertained they were also *connected* to the artists. But that was yet to come; that was still some years away. The birth of music hall was in the future. In the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, public entertainment was still confined within the raucous, unregulated arena of earlier Georgian leisure excesses, invariably involving alcohol.

The performance genres of entertainment acts, many of which would eventually find their way as part of the eclectic offering that would become music hall and theatres of varieties, can be traced back over several centuries. Tumblers, balladeers, minstrels, acrobats have appeared at county fairs, royal courts, and festive gatherings long before the candles were lit, the gas lamps ignited and latterly the stage lights illuminated the Hippodromes, Empires and Coliseums in

---

<sup>10</sup> G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* (London: Verso, 2013).

Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The genesis of the institution of music hall itself can be found more easily in the actions of enterprising and entrepreneurial public house landlords during the first half of the nineteenth century concurrent with the rapidly expanding urbanisation of Britain in general and its largest towns and cities. For as Bailey suggests, it would be these publicans who 'separated out and commoditised the entertainment function of the pub in purpose-built halls while retaining the former's distinctive ambience', which set in motion music hall's upward trajectory to a national mass entertainment medium.<sup>11</sup>

The plethora of impromptu and localised street entertainments, traditional theatre and the unlicensed performances contained in the numerous 'Penny Gaffs' all contributed to some degree to music hall's development, although it is the 'free-and-easies', the 'song and supper' rooms and 'saloon concerts' that grew from tavern and public house entertainments that had the greatest influence. More specifically, it was their relationships with local authorities, in particular the magistracy and their enforcement of liquor and music and dancing licences, that was of particular importance.

Although early pre-music hall entertainments were widely in existence throughout Britain in the early nineteenth century, it was London that was largely the crucible for music hall's expansive development. Some historians however, notably Poole, cited by Baker, would claim that the Star Concert Room in Bolton was the first true music hall in Britain as it was in existence in 1832

---

<sup>11</sup> P. Bailey (ed), 'Introduction', *The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p.ix.

and later rebuilt in 1842.<sup>12</sup> However, although the licencing of liquor sales and later 'music' and 'music and dancing' for venues would fall within the authority of local magistrates, the London magistrates often set the national tone. This directional tone would be further enhanced by both public opinion and various Parliamentary Select Committee deliberations arising from existing conflicts brought about by earlier national legislation such as the 1751 Disorderly Houses Act, and the 1737 Licencing Act which in turn would lead to the new 1843 Theatres Act.<sup>13</sup>

This notion of late Victorian and early Edwardian's music hall's early heritage as being from the 'pot house to palace' has long been recognised by historical commentators of music hall.<sup>14</sup> Although the role of 'Penny Gaffs' in the rise of music hall may indeed have been, as Jackson suggests, a bogus association, the sheer number of them however, both in the metropolis and provinces, does merit further review, especially how they were perceived by both the working poor of Cockney London and Victorian moral reformers.<sup>15</sup> Although not confined to London, as evidenced by the letter published in the *Preston Chronicle* in 1841, noting 'a penny theatre in Chadwick's garden', they certainly were both numerous and popular across what would later be defined as London's East End.<sup>16</sup> In Scotland, as Maloney notes, they were known as 'geggies', and were

---

<sup>12</sup> R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall. An Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2014), p.49, citing R. Poole, *Popular Leisure and the Music Hall in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Bolton* (Lancaster: The Centre for North West Regional Studies, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> *Theatres Act 1843* (6 & 7 Vict. 6. 68); *Licencing Act 1737* (10 Geo. 11. C.28); *Disorderly Houses Act 1751* (25 Geo. 11. C.36).

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.33.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.51.

<sup>16</sup> *Preston Chronicle* 20 November 1841; P. Maloney, *Scotland and the Music Hall*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), P.9.

an established part of Glasgow's entertainment mix during the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

'Penny Gaffs' already had a negative press in the middle of the nineteenth century. As a style of entertainment, the propensity for performers and their audiences to establish a connectivity in the manner achieved by later cockney-styled music hall artists was virtually non-existent. The entertainment on offer was invariably visual, loud, and undemanding. It could range from simple stage plays featuring the deeds of famous highwaymen to freak shows. Greenwood noted that 'every low district of London has its theatre, or at least a humble substitute for one, called in vulgar parlance a gaff', that are 'nothing better than hot-beds of vice in its vilest form' and that 'within a circuit of five miles of St. Pauls, at least twenty of these dangerous dens of amusement might be enumerated'.<sup>18</sup> Ewing Ritchie records that a penny theatre is 'a place not hard to find in this region (*Shoreditch*) of shell-fish and fruit pie shops, those sure indications of a neighbourhood rather poor and very wild' and on another visit to a penny gaff in the New Cut where 'a great part of the proceedings were indecent and disgusting'.<sup>19</sup>

In a letter to the Editor of the *Preston Chronicle*, the middle-class moral outrage generated by penny gaffs is manifest as a 'positive injury inflicted upon the morals of the young people who attend such places' where 'debasement and indecent scenes are acted upon its stage'. It also alludes to the problem faced

---

<sup>17</sup> P. Maloney, *Scotland and the Music Hall, 1850-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.8.

<sup>18</sup> J. Greenwood, *The Severn Curses of London* (Boston: Fields Osgood and Co., 1869) at <<https://www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/pennygaffs/htm>> [accessed 28 October 2020].

<sup>19</sup> J. Ewing Ritchie, *Here and There in London* (London: W. Tweedie, 1859) at <<https://www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/pennygaffs/htm>> [accessed 28 October 2020].

by the local magistracy in curtailing or regulating public house entertainments in general. The highly vexed correspondent goes on to suggest that 'it is the duty of the magistrates to suppress places similar to the ones of which I write. Singing rooms at public-houses, though productive of incalculable evil, are not under their control'.<sup>20</sup>

The tone and sentiments contained in the letter to the Editor of the *Preston Chronicle* not only bear testimony to the disdain held by moralists to the Penny Gaffs but are indicative of the image that public house singing rooms would continue to have for several years during the nineteenth century. Performer and audience connectivity as exhibited by the later music hall artists would not be a requirement or factor in determining the popularity of the acts being offered. Having a positive effect on enticing people into the establishment and spending more on liquor would be the sole *raison d'être* of the artist and performance. This also hints at the future problem that magistrates would have in reconciling existing licencing regulations of public houses in respect of entertainments and the wider interpretations of the later 1843 Theatres Act.

By the early part of the nineteenth century, a large proportion of public houses in Britain were already providing some form of amusement for their patrons. This could include simple games such as draughts or bagatelle or small areas in public house rear gardens to host itinerant musicians or in cleared areas in tap-rooms. Publicans, mindful of the economic value of extra liquor sales commensurate with increasing patronage, continued to enhance the attractions of their premises. Often local amateur singing entertainment was engaged as

---

<sup>20</sup> *Preston Chronicle* 20 November 1841, P.3.

well as those from the growing number of itinerant professional singers seeking regular bookings. The more enterprising landlords began offering a small commission to amateur 'chairmen'; affable, larger-than-life characters, who engaged vocally with the audience as well as encouraging them to buy more drink.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the importance of the chairman and his role grew dramatically in music halls from the middle of the nineteenth century to around 1880. That role would not just be to provide a continuity between acts like that of the compere in later variety shows; he would be directly instrumental in generating a crucial element of music hall's profitability, namely alcohol sales. For as Bailey notes, 'the chairman was the arch imbiber whose direct function it was to generate profit by the glassful.'<sup>22</sup>

It was from these enhanced public house entertainments that the 'free-and-easies' emerged. These were gatherings of friends who met, often in rented rooms above public houses to sing and socialise and would sometimes enhance these meetings by encouraging women to attend; such mixed meetings being known as 'cock-and-hen' events. Welcomed by landlords, not least of all since they would likely result in repeat purchases of alcohol, such meetings also were known as 'harmonic evenings', although in essence they were little more than 'a social club with a choral bent'.<sup>23</sup>

An important variation on the 'free-and-easies' came with the advent of the 'song-and-supper' rooms of which three in London became especially notorious. The Coal Hole situated just off the Strand was in operation in 1851 but lost its

---

<sup>21</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.39.

<sup>22</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture*, p.83.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.33.

licence in 1862 and was demolished soon after as part of the widening programme of the Strand. Evans' Supper Rooms in Covent Garden was at its height in 1852 and could number both Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray among its patrons.<sup>24</sup> It was 'home' to one of the major character singers of the day, Sam Cowell, known particularly for his song, '*The Ratcatcher's Daughter*'; a song that would typify the later and wider appeal of acts centred around the lives of working people. The third, the Cyder Cellars, next door to the Adelphi Theatre in London's West End was the home of another leading performer, W.G. Ross, who as mentioned earlier, regularly performed his song '*The Ballad of Sam Hall*' in a character portrayal that would certainly have chimed with the middle-classes' perceptions of the more transgressive elements of the emergent working class.<sup>25</sup>

Strictly men only, all three establishments gained notoriety (and condemnation from moral reformers in equal measure) for their explicit lyrical content and the boisterous behaviour of their clientele. Jackson suggests their typical audiences would likely be, 'a self-consciously bohemian mix of young lawyers, actors, journalists, medical students and assorted would-be hedonists'.<sup>26</sup> These song-and-supper rooms of London's West End, however, were neither typical nor were they just a London phenomenon. Whether termed 'singing-rooms', 'concert-rooms' or 'singing saloons', variations of them could be found in most of the larger towns in Britain from the 1830s as enterprising public house landlords looked to either develop or rebuild their premises to provide entertainment for a

---

<sup>24</sup> R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall. An Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2014), p.4.

<sup>25</sup> Sam Cowell (1820-1864) *The Ratcatcher's Daughter* at <<https://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-R/ratcatchers-daughter.htm>> [accessed 29 October 2020]; W.G. Ross, (1813-1882) *The Ballad of Sam Hall* at <<https://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-S/sam-hall.htm>> [accessed 29 October 2020].

<sup>26</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.36.

working-class clientele. Hartwell notes that Manchester alone possessed at least 54 singing saloons; among which the Albert Saloon, advertised, 'that comic popular mimic, Mr. Bob Sawyer, entertains numerous companies, four evenings per week', with the Royal Victorian announcing that 'the proprietor, at enormous expense, erected galleries for the better accommodation of the public' and that 'Mr. R Barnes will sing a number of his newest comic songs'.<sup>27</sup> Other large towns such as Hull (the Norwegian Tavern Music Saloon), Salford (the Polytechnic), Sheffield (the Royal Casino) and Newcastle (the Shades Saloon) were all providing saloon entertainments during the late 1830s and the 1840s.<sup>28</sup>

In London especially, these pub-related amusements would have socially distinct genres. The song-and-supper rooms and clubs would generally attract an aristocratic or professional clientele, with the saloon taverns and free-and-easies beginning to attract the skilled artisans and working men. This latter genre's audience and their everyday lived experiences would become the focus and performance source material for the later cockney-styled entertainers and the establishment of their special connectivity with them. For Scotland it was different situation. Here, a confluence of older, seasonal fairground entertainments, combined with new forms developed from the country's growing urbanisation, created a 'hybrid sub-genres almost as socially nuanced as those of London'.<sup>29</sup> In Glasgow, the later development of music hall was linked directly with a specific part of the old town centre with its entertainment centred on the Saltmarket which was the main concentration of the city's free-and-easies.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> H. Heartwell, 'Characteristics of Manchester', *The North of England Magazine*, Vol. 1 (Manchester: Simpkin & Marshall, 1842), p.348.

<sup>28</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.57.

<sup>29</sup> Maloney, 'Scotland', p.24.

<sup>30</sup> Maloney, 'Scotland', p.25.



The development of these public house type entertainments however was not a smooth trajectory. Already there was general opposition from the moralist and temperance lobbies, as well as that from rival, drink-only public houses. This ongoing conflict between the new and emerging breed of enterprising publicans was heightened by them having to contend with the frequently variable interpretation and administration of local licencing laws. This was especially the case for those for music and dancing.

Even though by the 1830s saloon type entertainments were common in the provinces in Britain, regular conflict between landlords and the magistracy, both in London and beyond, would shape the increasing commercialisation of saloon style entertainment for the next two decades. Until the introduction of the Theatres Act of 1843, which among other provisions gave the owners of proto music halls the right to allow drinking and smoking on their premises, it was the overarching legislation of the 1751 Disorderly Houses Act that prevailed.<sup>31</sup> Intentioned, in part, to discourage the sort of boisterous entertainments and excessive alcohol consumption found in some of the tavern rooms and pleasure gardens in and around London, it was largely ineffective. Few owners of the smaller taverns ever bothered to apply, and for the most part, the local magistracy, both in the metropolis and beyond, either turned a blind eye or could not be bothered to enforce licencing regulations.

---

<sup>31</sup> *Disorderly Houses Act 1751*, (25. Geo. 2 c.36), 'An Act for the better preventing of Thefts and Robberies and for the Regulation of Places of Publick Entertainment and Punishing Persons keeping disorderly houses' at <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/apgb/Geo2/25/36/contents>> [accessed 11 January 2021].

That would remain the situation were it not for a relatively obscure litigation brought by a Mr Green against Mr Boothroyd, the publican of the Kings Arms public house in London in 1828.<sup>32</sup> Mr Boothroyd was accused of holding a cock-and-hen club at his premises without a suitable music and dancing licence. Far from settling this with the local magistrates, the landlord decided to defend himself and took the case to the King's Bench. Mr Boothroyd was unsuccessful in his defence and fined £100, half of which went to Mr Green as a bounty. The consequences of this case as they would affect the wider arena of saloon and tavern-based entertainment were quite profound, albeit unintentional. Because the case had been taken to the Kings Bench, it was widely reported in the London press, following which London magistrates felt obliged to supervise public house amusements in far greater detail. This resulted, as Jackson suggests, in there being twenty years of 'doubt and uncertainty of pub entertainments in the metropolis'.<sup>33</sup>

This uncertainty was not just confined to London, however. Landlords throughout Britain, often as the result of temperance and moral reformers, could find themselves facing extreme scrutiny over licencing applications. The licence application from the Sea Lion in Hanley, Staffordshire in 1851 for a concert room was considered by magistrates within the context that 'such singing rooms, in connection with public houses, had a most demoralising effect, and therefore, they were determined to put a stop to them all'.<sup>34</sup> Countering suggestions from others on the Licensing Committee, the landlord Mr Thomas Simpson was

---

<sup>32</sup> For a fuller description of this case, and the likely motives behind the prosecution, see L. Jackson, *Palaces of Pleasure*, (London: Yale University Press, 2019) pp.37-39.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.38.

<sup>34</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 13 September 1851 cited by Jackson, *Palaces*, p.42.

insistent that his clientele, which would number approximately 400 to 500 in the concert room were 'as respectably attired and as decent in their conduct as parties in church.'<sup>35</sup> Despite other positive character references, Thomas Simpson's licence application was granted only on the provision of him giving a pledge to 'discontinue his concert rooms forthwith'.<sup>36</sup>

For many landlords wanting to expand and diversify to meet the obvious growing demand for saloon entertainment, deciding whether to apply for a formal 'music and dancing' licence was questionable. For others, a 'music and dancing' licence had its obvious advantages: it would give them freedom from litigation of professional informers such as Mr. Green and his like and the possession of a licence would materially increase the value of the property. In a report of an insolvency case in London, the landlord notes that 'his house, without a music licence was worth £600 or £700, but with one it would be worth £2000'.<sup>37</sup> Conversely an annual renewal of a licence was not guaranteed, and a non-renewal risked premises being closed should they be discovered providing entertainments.

The problems with licencing applications of landlords wishing to stage entertainments was similar to those regarding the emergence of 'saloon theatres' in the 1830s which were a hybrid of concert rooms and minor theatres. Many proprietors who obtained licences tended to expand their premises or build new ones. Others, by creating larger stage areas, and installing scenery and employing musicians began to present a variety of entertainments and sketches.

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.41 citing the *London Evening Standard*, 24 October 1845 p.8.

However, because the existing regulations enshrined in the 1737 Licencing Act, they were only permitted to present musical and mimed entertainment.<sup>38</sup>

Spoken drama, initially granted to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London and the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden under the protection of the royal patent granted earlier by Charles the Second, effectively created a monopoly in the staging of serious drama. It also was used as enabling legislation to control the content of any staged public entertainment which would include the emerging saloon theatres; especially where such content could be seen by the Establishment as potentially, subversive, or seditious.

The introduction of the Theatres Act in 1843, which allowed all theatres to perform drama, albeit still under the censorship control of the Lord Chamberlain, gave encouragement to the more entrepreneurial publican to develop saloon theatres since it created 'a free trade in the field of entertainment'.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the term 'saloon theatre' began to be used loosely to describe any concert room either inside or outside of the main public house building that incorporated some of the physical characteristics of a theatre such as a stage, proscenium arch and a painted backdrop. It was these characteristics that would become the distinguishing physical features of the emerging music halls from 1850 onwards.

Despite the introduction of the Theatres Act in 1843, many publicans, especially those with only small club rooms on their premises did not bother to apply for entertainment licences, presumably on the assumption that the regulations of

---

<sup>38</sup> 1737 *Licencing Act* 10. Geo. 11. C28. This act of Parliament was introduced by the First Lord of the Treasury, Robert Walpole, and passed in 1737 and was largely a result of the political conditions of the time and the reaction to various literary works satirising him, Parliament and the monarchy. The act provided that all staged public performance should be licenced under the control of the Lord Chamberlain who effectively became the government censor.

<sup>39</sup> Jackson, *Palaces* p.49.

the 1751 Disorderly Houses act would not be enforced on them. The focus on unlicensed music and dancing venues, especially in London, was intensified in 1849 by the then Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, demanding that the magistracy act against them.<sup>40</sup> Whitechapel magistrates became especially proactive by announcing that any breaching of the entertainment licencing rules by publicans would result in an automatic loss of their liquor licence. Magistrates sitting at the Middlesex sessions, responsible for premises in North London, simply refused to issue any new entertainment licences.<sup>41</sup>

Discrepancies between different magistrate sessions in and around the metropolis as to how to enforce the Home Secretary's demands, created both confusion and uncertainty with magistrates beyond the capital. For many magistrates outside London, it was far easier to turn a blind eye and do nothing. It was only after 1851 that the situation regarding entertainment licencing became clearer with the findings of a government committee report in 1850, which made proposals for a new, uniform system of entertainment licencing.<sup>42</sup> The result was the system whereby two licence types could be issued: music only and music and dancing. The former would generally be applied to those establishments that were primarily public houses offering simple music entertainment and the latter to those wishing to develop into more expansive performance entertainment facilities, in particular dedicated music halls.

---

<sup>40</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.52.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> 'Report of the Committee appointed by the Court on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1850 to consider of the present state of the law as regards to the granting of licences for music and dancing by the Court and report to the Court'. MJ/SP/1851/08/024.

1850 -1890

With the legal framework for performance entertainment thus established, the way was set for the development and expansion of the nascent institution of music hall over the ensuing 40 years. Although yet to be national in terms of a pan-Britain structure, music halls developed along a pathway that was generally consistent throughout the country as being a socially mixed, people's entertainment. That development would eventually evolve into a network of syndicated music hall circuits that gave the major artistes in music hall, especially the cockney-styled entertainers such as Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, and Marie Lloyd the means to tour Britain extensively and establish their special connectivity with their regional audiences.

London was the epicentre of music hall, both for established major artistes and for those wanting to create a reputation and make their way in the business. In most cases, to tour nationally it was necessary to be known among the halls in London and, not least of all, to attract the attention of the London based entertainment press, foremost being *The Era* and *Entr'acte* publications. Yet music halls outside of the metropolis, certainly in the largest cities, were not clones of the established halls in London. As Maloney suggests, later Victorian music halls were 'a cheerful diatribe of racial and social incorrectness, subtly differentiated to reflect regional and social predilections and circumstances'.<sup>43</sup> But increasingly they were attracting a growing audience segment that was demographically homogeneous; a predominant factor in the cockney-styled entertainers' ability to connect with their audiences.

---

<sup>43</sup> Maloney, *Scotland*, p.2.

Traditional music hall histories tend to mark the opening of Charles Morton's Canterbury Music Hall in 1854 in Lambeth, London as the inspiration for the growth in numbers of halls that would be opened in Britain's largest cities over the next thirty years. Even though his almost mythical elevation in music hall history as 'the father of the halls', a sobriquet that was initially penned by the theatre critic Henry Chance Newton, is probably overplayed, there can be little doubt that the opening of The Canterbury Music Hall was highly significant.<sup>44</sup> Having witnessed the success of Evans' song-and-supper rooms in Covent Garden, London, a point he readily acknowledged, Charles Morton and his brother in law, purchased the existing Canterbury Arms public house in Upper Marsh, Lambeth, London in 1849 where they offered harmonic meetings held on Saturdays in the rear room of the public house.<sup>45</sup> Soon after, a Thursday evening programme was added and the success of the venture, with no entry fee but with profits derived from the sale of food and drink, allowed the construction of a new, 700-seat hall on the site of an adjacent skittle alley in 1852. Profits from this new hall were sufficient to fund the building and opening of the enlarged Canterbury Music Hall two years later.<sup>46</sup> Two aspects concerning the Canterbury Music Hall are of special significance; both of which would steer the course of music hall's development for the next thirty years. The first would be Morton's strategy of attracting a different sort of clientele to that being patronised at the existing song-and-supper rooms and second the scale and physical nature of the hall.

---

<sup>44</sup> W.H. Morton & H. Chance Newton, *Sixty Years Stage Service, being a record of the life of Charles Morton. 'Father of the Halls'*. (London: Gale & Polden, 1905).

<sup>45</sup> Jackson, *Palaces* p.58; B. Green (ed), *The Last Empires: A Music Hall Companion* (London: Pavilion, 1986).

<sup>46</sup> Green, *The Last Empires*.

Morton would no doubt have realised that for the Canterbury Music Hall to be successful, it would not only be necessary to attract a large, regular clientele but keep on the right side of the licensing authorities and by association the various moral reform lobbies. With licences renewed annually, any break in the continuity of the relevant licences, or worse still, a licence application refusal, could be economically disastrous. To facilitate a positive relationship with the licencing authorities, in his case, the magistrates sitting at the Middlesex Sessions, Morton recognised the need to promote the notion that his patrons were 'less select (than those of other establishments such as at Evans' Covent Garden premises) but a respectable, mixed crowd of men and women'.<sup>47</sup> It was respectable women, and by implication married women, as a patron target audience that he was especially keen to attract and to promote this fact in the public arena. The *Morning Chronicle* in 1857, some three years after the opening of the enlarged Canterbury Music Hall, published an article based on an 'Address To the Public' issued by Morton about his music hall. In this article, it notes how Morton 'rejoices, however, that he has been enabled to add to the very limited stock of out-of-doors pleasures in which the fair sex in this country are permitted by the 'lords of creation to indulge'. It further notes that 'The proprietor, therefore, has always steadily kept the view, that he has been providing for a mixed audience of ladies and gentlemen.'<sup>48</sup>

By attracting a mixed audience to the Canterbury Music Hall, Morton also indirectly created the platform for a type of performance act, the cockney-styled entertainer, whose later performance material, and characterisation would have

---

<sup>47</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.58.

<sup>48</sup> *Morning Chronicle* 10 December 1857, p.6



special traction with female members of music hall audiences. The growing number of women in music hall audiences, would mean that later female artists such as Marie Lloyd, Bessie Bellwood and Vesta Victoria could develop the content of their acts that drew upon the everyday lived experiences of women such as those relating to marriage, domesticity, and childbearing. They could connect with them in a far more relevant and realistic way than just singing of idealised romance or simply reflecting respectable society's ideal of womanhood.

The Canterbury Music Hall would also break new ground in the physical style and feel of music halls; an aspect that again, Morton was keen to promote:

The magnificent and brilliantly-lighted hall, in which the concert is held, exercise no little influence upon the minds of the audience. There is a harmony between it and the entertainment which produces a beauty of ensemble, more easily felt than described. Comfort was an element not to be neglected; and therefore the greatest attention was paid to the scientific ventilation of the hall.<sup>49</sup>

Whilst the Canterbury would still retain an audience configuration of tables and benches at right angles to the stage, in most every other aspect, the hall's ambience and interior design was the exact opposite of that in the song-and-supper rooms of Covent Garden.

Morton's new music hall, both in style and physical ambience, set the scene for the rapid expansion of new music halls over the next 25 years. London would witness the opening of Weston's (1857), Wiltons (1858), the Pavilion (1858), the Alhambra (1860) and the South London (1860). The main regional cities beyond

---

<sup>49</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 10 December 1857, p.6

the metropolis would also gain new, more expansive music halls: in Leeds, the City Varieties (1865 opened as 'Thorntons'), in Manchester the Princess Palace (1865, later to become The Folly Theatre of Varieties), in Birmingham Day's Crystal Palace (1862, opened as the Empire Theatre), in Liverpool the Prince of Wales Theatre (1866, later to become the Liverpool Empire) and in Glasgow the Britannia Music Hall (1859).<sup>50</sup> These new halls, and others like them across Britain, followed a similar pattern in their evolution that reflected more the tastes and performance styles in London than of their specific provincial geography. As Crump suggests in his study of music halls in Leicester, that provincial halls, 'far from being a focus of local and regional popular cultural expression, serves as a conduit for the further permeation of national standards of performance and national imagery'.<sup>51</sup>

Whilst the emergence of dedicated music halls from the middle of the nineteenth century followed a generally similar trajectory across the nation, there were some underlying differences, notably in Scotland. Here, with a religious climate like some industrial cities in the north of England and south Wales, there existed strong, long-standing Presbyterian disapproval to music hall. But far from trying to arrest its growing popularity, there was a willingness by temperance and evangelical groups to actively engage with it, by providing musical

---

<sup>50</sup> Weston's Music Hall at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Westons.htm>> ; Wilton's Music Hall at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Wiltons.htm>> ; Pavilion Music Hall at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/PavilionTheatreAndWonderlandandWhitechapelRoad.htm>>; Alhambra at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Alhambra.htm>> ; City Varieties at <<https://www.co.uk/CityVarietiesTheatreLeeds.htm>> ; Alexandra Theatre at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/ManchesterTheatresTivoliTheatreManchester.htm>> ; Day's Crystal Palace at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/BirminghamEmpirePalaceTheatreBirmingham.htm>>; Prince of Wales Theatre at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/EmpireTheatreLiverpool.htm>>; Britannia Music Hall at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Britannia.htm>> [accessed 8 February 2021].

<sup>51</sup> J. Crump, 'Provincial Music Hall: Promoters and Public in Leicester 1863-1929' in P. Bailey (ed) *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press.1986), p.69.

entertainment themselves. This was especially the case in Glasgow where the Glasgow Abstiners Union arranged alternative Saturday night concerts from 1854. The staging of such concerts would run for almost 60 years.<sup>52</sup>

Although arguments against the developments of music from the mid nineteenth century would still be voiced loudly by temperance lobbies, the weight of their objections gradually weakened over the years. This would be in no small measure due to the rebranding of music halls to become *variety theatres* later in the century, and the signalling of the move away from the erstwhile traditional link between music hall and the public house. This move away would be manifest in the replacement of benches and chairs (for drinking) in the main auditoria of music halls to theatre style seating. Even though alcohol would still be available in most music halls, it would only be served at dedicated bars. The physical location of later, newly built halls would also reinforce the de-coupling of music halls and public houses; they were built as stand-alone venues as opposed to being hidden behind the public house. Music halls, however, still attracted criticism and outrage from various moral and reformist lobbies and would continue to do so well in to the second decade of the twentieth century. The *Daily Mail* reported on the Bishop of London's 'music hall crusade' in 1913 in his sermon address to parishioners at St. Catherine's church in Neasden, London, where he preached that:

we neither have the time or inclination to go to the music halls, but thousands of persons have; and we are determined that they shall have clean and innocent things to laugh at. We do ask that nothing be introduced in them causing young girls to blush and the young boy to turn his head.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Maloney, *Scotland*, p.7.

<sup>53</sup> 'Music Hall Morals', *Daily Mail*, 17 November 1913, p.5.

For some, music halls were presented as being a moral danger to their audiences, not least of all because they were perceived as being a shop window for prostitution. This notion began to gain some traction in the public imagination from the late 1870s, especially, but not exclusively, in relation to the London halls. Major Lyon, a long-standing Middlesex magistrate, who had for some time regaled against what he saw as immorality in music halls, made his views public in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* where he asserted that 'as present managed, music halls are a disgrace to civilisation and the country'.<sup>54</sup> This general condemnation of music hall was further reinforced by the National Vigilance Association (NVA) in their magazine *The Vigilance Record*, under the editorship of the ardent feminist and suffragist, Laura Ormiston Chant.<sup>55</sup> Although music halls were not a specific target, as with their existing campaign on child prostitution, the NVA had already shifted its focus on moral matters to encompass general issues relating to social purity; in effect the wholesale improvement in sexual morality.<sup>56</sup> In the first of a series of articles headed, 'Amused London', Ormiston Chant condemned the halls for

the quantity of intoxicating drink sold- the universal smoking  
the low estimate of womanhood likely to be fostered by the  
spectacle on the stage – the shameless pursuit of harlotry  
and the appeal of the whole thing to the most selfish side of  
human nature.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 26 January 1879, p.7.

<sup>55</sup> Established August 1885 "for the enforcement and improvement of the laws for the repression of criminal vice and public immorality", The National Vigilance Association, was formed in response to articles written by W.T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette* exposing child prostitution.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.81.

<sup>57</sup> L. Ormiston Chant, 'Public Amusements', *The Vigilance Record*, April 1887, cited by Jackson, *Palaces*, p.82.

For other moral reformers, the objection to music hall was less about the entertainment form itself as much as its performance subject matter and visual presentation. Although increasingly attractive to music hall audiences, the 'serio-comics', especially female, were often singled out as a prime example of the moral depravity associated with music hall. Even as the concert room establishments were gaining popularity from the middle nineteenth century, the comic singer was attracting criticism. In his letter to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1868, the author (interestingly titled as 'A Hater of Tobacco Smoke') complains of the 'indecent and vulgarity of music hall' and how the public-house concert rooms have 'encouraged the growth of those abominations - the modern comic singers.'<sup>58</sup> Eleven years later, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* would note that a correspondent (unnamed and undated) of the entertainment journal *The Era* commented on 'the increasing pest of indecency, which he says how spread from the male to the female singers'.<sup>59</sup>

Apart from the perceived indecent female sexuality manifest in 'a liberal display of legs' or 'sentiments unwomanly and unnatural', it was *double entendre* that could create the most strident criticism, and not just in music hall performances in the metropolis.<sup>60</sup> During an application for a licence renewal of the Cardiff Philharmonic Music Hall in 1888, objections were raised based on the undesirable content of some of the songs previously performed by artistes at the hall. Objectors to the licence took issue with some of the material in the act of the serio-comic George Beauchamp complaining that: 'if any decent women in the town of Cardiff attended the music hall in question when Mr. Geo

---

<sup>58</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 March 1868, p.3

<sup>59</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 26 January 1879, p.7

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

Beauchamp sang there, for the space of a fortnight, her society ought to be avoided'.<sup>61</sup>

Not unsurprisingly, artists routinely denied the existence of innuendo. Marie Lloyd in particular would later make the point that it was the audience that would interpret meaning, not the artist.<sup>62</sup> But even though music hall owners continually found themselves 'engaged in a constant battle to justify the moral integrity of their business', the most successful were those that understood and were mindful of the wider public taste as well as the moral reform lobbies.<sup>63</sup> For, as Hoher notes, music hall audiences, especially during the latter years of the nineteenth century, were not the preserve of the disreputable; they addressed men and women alike, both 'the rough and respectable'.<sup>64</sup> In doing so, the everyday lived experiences of the rough and respectable would provide a vast reserve of subject matter for song lyricists and the characterisations embedded in an artist's performance. It would provide the artistic adhesive necessary for establishing the special connectivity of the emerging cockney-styled music hall stars with their national audiences.

Middle-class attitudes to music hall in general were becoming more favourable from the middle of the 1880s, in no small measure because of the proactive efforts of hall proprietors to change the way music hall was perceived. From around 1890, the notion of music hall being a healthy entertainment was

---

<sup>61</sup> *Western Mail*, 12 September 1888, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> In an interview with Marie Lloyd, published in *The New York Telegraph* 14 November 1897, Lloyd is quoted as saying that her audiences, 'don't pay their sixpences and shillings at a music hall to hear the Salvation Army. If I was to try and sing highly moral songs, they would fire ginger beer bottles and beer mugs at me. I can't help it if people want to turn and twist my meanings', at <[https://www.voguesandvagabonds.wordpress.com/2014/06/10/did-yopu-know-\\*marie-lloyd-from-the-writer-to-the-costermonger/](https://www.voguesandvagabonds.wordpress.com/2014/06/10/did-yopu-know-*marie-lloyd-from-the-writer-to-the-costermonger/)> [accessed 17 February 2021].

<sup>63</sup> Jackson, *Palaces*, p.71.

<sup>64</sup> D. Hoher, 'The Composition of Music Hall Audiences 1850-1900' in P. Bailey (ed) *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press. 1986), p.75.

promoted alongside the elegance of the new halls. 'Safety' as invariably highlighted in the publicity notices of new or refurbished halls in *The Era* magazine, not only meant the interior physical features, but became symbolically equated to the form and content of the institution itself.<sup>65</sup> Maloney, however, suggests a more nuanced change in middle-class attitude to music hall by the end of the nineteenth century. For him, attitudes had not consciously changed as 'softened with familiarity' with *risqué* material 'explicitness replaced with innuendo'.<sup>66</sup> But whatever the dominant characteristic shift in middle-class attitudes to music hall, the entertainment medium itself had changed and would continue to change. It was becoming exactly what Charles Morton had promised forty years earlier with the opening of his enlarged Canterbury Music Hall: respectable.

It was also becoming hugely popular as an entertainment medium with halls of varying sizes providing an eclectic array of artistes in most of the larger towns in Britain. As MacQueen Pope noted, 'Music Hall spread like a prairie fire, the whole country was affected with this furore for homely, personal entertainment of the people'.<sup>67</sup> At the time of the birth of one of music hall's greatest stars, Marie Lloyd, in 1870 there were about 150 halls within a two-mile radius of her birthplace in Hoxton, London. Many of these were just extensions to existing public houses although the area did contain the larger halls such as The Grecian

---

<sup>65</sup> Hoher, 'The Composition', p.86.

<sup>66</sup> Maloney, *Scotland* p.82.

<sup>67</sup> W. Macqueen Pope, *The Melodies Linger On. The Story of Modern Music Hall*, (London: W.H. Allen, 1951), p.152.

and The Eagle.<sup>68</sup> By the 1890s, the 35 largest of the 500 halls in London, catered for a gross nightly audience of about 45,000 patrons.<sup>69</sup>

The last decades of the nineteenth century also saw a growing number of music hall performers, especially those referred to as serio-comics, undertaking regular provincial tours, appearing at the larger halls of Britain's major cities. Regional touring by music hall artistes had been taking place for some considerable time, not least of all as a means of them generating work. Such tours could be arranged by the artistes themselves, not as individual acts or turns but with their own company; an early precursor to the modern 'road show'.<sup>70</sup> Two of the later Victorian leading performers, 'The Great Vance' and the comedy singer, Arthur Lloyd, both had toured extensively under this arrangement.<sup>71</sup> With the growing number of London theatrical agents, following the lead of Ambrose Maynard in London, such as Charles Roberts, Frank Hall and P. Corri and Maurice Frece in the provinces, touring was becoming a major part of the music hall business.<sup>72</sup> However, it was with the emergence of the syndicates with their circuits of halls in the larger cities of Britain, that would provide the catalyst for the establishment of the nationwide reputation of the major late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall stars and their ability to achieve their special audience connectivity.

---

<sup>68</sup> R. A Baker, *Marie Lloyd: Queen of the Music Halls* (London: Robert Hale.1990), p.13.

<sup>69</sup> C. McInnes, *Sweet Saturday Night*, (London: MacGibbon & Kea, 1967), p.467 cited by G. Stedman Jones, 'Working Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900. Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class', *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1974), pp.460-508.

<sup>70</sup> W. Macqueen Pope, *Melodies*' p.158.

<sup>71</sup> Alfred Vance aka Alfred Grenville, 'The Great Vance' was the stage name of Alfred Peek Stevens (1839-1888), cockney comic singer, at <<https://doiorg.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28060>>; Arthur Lloyd (1839-1904) at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/LionComiques.htm>> [accessed 12 February 2021].

<sup>72</sup> Macqueen Pope, *Melodies*, p.291.



*Syndicates and Circuits (Two Performances Nightly. Matinees Tuesday and Saturday)*

Over a twenty-year period from the last decade of the nineteenth century, syndicated circuits emerged to be the dominant structure of what would become a national music hall industry. The syndicated circuits of halls would create a platform from which the cockney-styled entertainers would present their performance material and characterisation. This was developed and honed in the London halls with themes, both exaggerated and actual, taken from the everyday lived experience of those living and working in Cockney London, and presented to largely socially homogeneous audiences in the inner urban areas of the nation's major cities. The establishment of a national platform to reach audiences in these cities was the second key enabling factor in giving cockney-styled entertainers the means of the special connection with their audiences. It would be this connectivity that would ensure their existing London-centric acts would achieve empathetic traction with provincial audiences without the need of localised modification.

By the 1880s there was already a nationwide framework of music hall entertainment in Britain, but it was not integrated. It was only from around 1890 that this geographically dispersed collection of halls became a recognisable network.<sup>73</sup> Although music hall's place in the wider context of popular culture as previously outlined by Stedman Jones, Bailey and Summerfield can partly account for its development, it does not explain the structural change that would

---

<sup>73</sup> A.J. Crowhurst, 'The Music Hall, 1885-1922. The Emergence of a National Entertainment Industry in Britain' (Cambridge: PhD Thesis, Emanuel College, Cambridge University, 1992) at <<https://www.doi.org/10.17863/CAM.16445>> [accessed 5 March 2022].

happen within music hall in London and beyond.<sup>74</sup> This structural change would see a transformation of music hall from being essentially arranged around a not inconsiderable number of individual proprietor owned and driven, small businesses to a commodified, highly capitalised national industry. In London, for example, the aggregate capital investment in the larger music halls had grown from £1.67m in 1866 to approximately £5m in 1913.<sup>75</sup> It was economics that would largely dictate music hall's future direction. Economic investment would be required as a defensive counter to the continuing safety and suitability questions raised by moral and temperance lobbies and licencing authorities. It would also be needed to maximise the returns from new revenue streams provided by the disposable income of the growing lower middle class as well as attracting those from 'constituencies previously hostile to music hall.'<sup>76</sup>

The single and most obvious manifestation of this increased investment would be bigger, brighter, and more enticing music halls and the maximisation of the profit potential from them, with economies of scale being gained through the emergence of professional theatre syndicates. The general standardisation of new and refurbished halls from the mid-1890s was evident in their internal layout and style. Gone were benches and seats at right angles to the stage proving a focal point for alcohol consumption. They would be replaced by individual seats catering for a socially class differentiated clientele, either in the

---

<sup>74</sup> G. Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working-Class', *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1973), pp.460-508; P. Bailey, 'Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall' in *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England*, (London: Routledge, 1982); P. Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning and the Knowingness of Popular Culture', *Past and Present*, 44 (1994), pp.138-170; P. Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms and Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of the Music Hall in London', in E. Yeo & S. Yeo (eds), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-12914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), pp.209-240.

<sup>75</sup> Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms', p.221.

<sup>76</sup> D. Russell, 'Varieties of Life: the making of the Edwardian Music Hall' in M.R. Booth & J.H. Kaplan (eds) *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.61-84.

stalls area or in boxes or 'fauteuils', as well as a standing gallery for the holders of the cheapest admission tickets. The sale of alcohol was restricted to bars off the main auditorium, which indirectly resulted in a greater degree of decorum in the halls, albeit at the potential loss of profitability of drink sales.<sup>77</sup> However, with many new halls being denied drink licences, as evidenced by the application of stated formal policies adopted by such authorities as the London County Council (LCC) in 1897, the incentive of respectability was conjoined with the propensity of extra seating revenue.<sup>78</sup>

The influence of the LCC on music hall developments towards syndicated circuits would also be witnessed in the physical aspects of the new halls, not only in London but beyond. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, whilst music hall was a place associated with entertainment and jollity, it was also a dangerous place in which to congregate; not so much for the moral dangers warned by reforming lobbyists, but more especially for human safety. Lit initially by candle power and then paraffin lamps, with combustible materials sometimes used as part of the performing stage props, fire was an ever-present hazard. These were compounded by narrow internal gangways and invariably only a few entry and exit points, and of course much of the auditorium including scenery was of timber construction. During this time, the average life of theatres in Britain was just under twenty years owing to the risk of fire, with most major cities in the country having witnessed a music hall major fire-related tragedy sometime during the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Russell, 'Varieties', p.62 notes that drink receipts accounted for between 15% -20% of total takings in halls during the 1890s.

<sup>78</sup> Russell, 'Varieties' citing Waters (1989), p.62.

<sup>79</sup> 'How has the design of theatre buildings changed over time?', *Theatre Trust UK* at <<https://www.theatrust.org.uk/disaster-theatres/theatrefags/172-how-has-the-design-of-theatre-buildings-changed-over-time>> [accessed 16 February 2021]; 1877, Wilton's Music Hall,

Until later legislation was passed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was only as part of the Fire Prevention (Metropolis) Act of 1774, that aspects of fire prevention in buildings would include those relating to human life and escape.<sup>80</sup> Additional legislation relating to human safety in public buildings was passed in 1855 with the Metropolitan Building Acts and subsequent amendment acts.<sup>81</sup> This Act was implemented through London's Metropolitan Board of Works and magistrates sitting at the Middlesex Sessions but it would be the 1888 Local Government Act with the enabling of the LCC, that safety regulations concerning music halls were finally strengthened.<sup>82</sup> In 1889, the newly formed LCC, through its Theatre and Music Halls Committee, became the main entertainment licensing authority in London, ultimately responsible for the safety of the premises and the entertainment at each theatre they licensed. In practice, this meant that each theatre would be inspected by an architect, chief engineer, and chief officer of the fire brigade before a licence was issued. For many of the older and smaller music halls, the costs of upgrading to comply with the newer, more stringent fire and building regulations, was simply uneconomic and would result in their closure. It would be building controls such as these, along with a more uniform and nationally applied entertainment licencing conditions that would provide the regulatory framework for a nascent, commodified music hall industry. Furthermore, it would provide the structure on which the development

---

London, 1861, Surrey Music Hall, Southwark, 1877, Theatre Royal, Exeter, 1878, Colosseum Music Hall, Liverpool, 1884, New Star Theatre of Varieties, Glasgow, 1868, Victoria Music Hall, Manchester.

<sup>80</sup> *Fire Prevention (Metropolis) Act 1774*, C78 14\_Geo\_3. This Act provided for buildings to be divided into different classes of use, each with their own required wall thickness and maximum floor area and storage. It was one of the first Acts pertaining to the mandatory protection of human life from fire.

<sup>81</sup> *Metropolitan Building Act 1855*, 18 & 19 Vic. C.122.

<sup>82</sup> *Local Government Act 1888*, 51 & 52 Vic. C41.

of the growing syndicates would be based, which in turn would create a national, touring performance platform for the cockney-styled entertainers.

The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed an important shift in the business of music hall as the ownership and control of halls and theatres of varieties changed from being small, entrepreneurial-driven local concerns to a more centralised and consolidated enterprises run by professional businessmen. As music hall enterprises looked to attract inward capital investment, they began to adopt the status of limited liability businesses and with that came greater organisational and more complex bureaucratic hierarchies. From the early 1900s there was a displacement of independent halls competing locally with each other to a situation of large companies adopting strategically aggressive business practices, often targeted against specific rival organisations, to gain dominance in geographically dispersed locations.<sup>83</sup>

The first and single most important company in the development of a national, integrated music hall industry, was the organisation that was established by the amalgamation of the music hall interests of Edward Moss, Richard Thornton, and Oswald Stoll under the holding of Moss Empires, in December 1899 capitalised at £1.1m.<sup>84</sup> In *The Era*, Edward Moss would focus on the key benefits of the amalgamation. The first would be the cost savings through economies of scale, by 'many savings which would result from having all the enterprises under the control of one company', an example of which he gives being:

---

<sup>83</sup> Crowhurst, 'The Music Hall', p.394.

<sup>84</sup> Crowhurst, 'The Music Hall', p.100.

If they engaged an artist for their tour, they had to prepare ten separate contracts, which must all be executed and stamped. Under the new company, one contract would suffice, and this was not an inconsiderable advantage, taking into account the number of theatres involved and the number of artists appearing at each, week by week.<sup>85</sup>

He then notes that under the three independent regimes that 'profits varied considerably from year to year. That of course affected dividends, and through them, a prejudicial effect on the value of shares.'<sup>86</sup> With an amalgamated syndicate, however, fluctuating annual returns from several different halls would be steadied across the whole enterprise, and that 'this steadiness would give an increased value to the shares in the eyes of the persons who bought them, not to sell again, but as an investment.'<sup>87</sup>

Clearly, Edward Moss and his fellow Directors, had their eyes on the larger corporate picture beyond just being impresarios of music halls, and it is his comments regarding the benefits to artists of this amalgamation that is especially interesting in the context of this chapter. As he noted:

As far as concerns the engagement of artistes, the amalgamation will make but little difference. The halls in question have all been under the dominion of the mighty triumvirate of Moss, Stoll and Thornton and the advantages which have already been accrued to the artists will be increased by the new arrangement. It is a manifest convenience to them – the artists – to be able, within

---

<sup>85</sup> *The Era*, 21 October 1899, p.17.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

a certain number of weeks in town every year, to book a safe, convenient, and entirely comfortable and creditable tour, so that they can make their arrangements for the future twelve months'.<sup>88</sup>

Prior to the emergence of syndicated music hall circuits, for the London based artists provincial touring on an annual basis to the biggest cities in Britain, would of necessity, require astute, and possibly costly logistical management.

Performance dates would need to be arranged to ensure that artists could maximise their appearances in a particular city, often for a full week consisting of twice nightly performances, and increasingly having to include a matinee performance during the week. Performance fees would need to be negotiated for each booking with individual proprietors, with no obvious gaps in the tour which could reduce its overall financial viability.

Without question, Moss and his syndicate partners, could see the potential of offering artists fixed tour itineraries with guaranteed bookings and at the same time reducing the potential of competition from rival halls. There was a trade-off, however, to this arrangement that would become known as the 'star system'. Those syndicates that had the greatest geographical dominance in a city would effectively ask artists to exchange the possibility of higher paid, but uncertain bookings in independent halls for the guarantee of less well paid, but regular work in their hall circuits. For the highest paid artists of the day, such as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen and Vesta Victoria, there was no need to compromise earning potential against regular work. They knew that their popularity with audiences meant they could command premium fees anyway. For those artists

---

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

below the top tier of performers, or those starting out in the business, the prospect of regular work was a major attraction and being able to develop a special connectivity with audiences beyond their immediate locale, could only help to enhance and accelerate their careers.

For artists being tied into a syndicate contract, however, creative freedom within their performances could be compromised. Increasingly, artists were being required to ensure that the content of their acts did not infringe public decency or more importantly from the hall manager's perspective, the local licencing authority. As Moss makes clear: 'any artist giving offence to the great octopus of music hall management will find his or her career suddenly blighted'.<sup>89</sup> In some cases hall managers insisted on the right to vet artists' performance material in advance. The contract between the singer Marie Loftus and the management of the Britannia Music Hall in Glasgow in 1894, specifically gives the hall manager the right to select which songs she should sing.<sup>90</sup> With some halls, there was a direct contractual obligation as to artists performance material, both in terms of content and delivery. Failure to comply by the artist could lead to immediate cancellation of a contract.

Nowhere is this made clearer than in the contract between the Norman Brothers and the Britannia Music Hall, for their engagement on 17 June 1905 which stated that:

Any artiste introducing anything Obscene or Vulgar, in gesture or saying in to his or her business, no matter how slight, will be

---

<sup>89</sup> *The Era*, 21 October 1899, p.17.

<sup>90</sup> Maloney, *Scotland*, p.60.



instantly dismissed from the Establishment, and forfeit the whole of their salary. Artistes will do well to carefully read and thoroughly digest this rule, as the Management is determined to have it rigorously enforced.<sup>91</sup>

It is a matter of speculation, however, as to whether the application of such contracts with their severe penalty clauses would have been enforced at The Britannia. It is equally doubtful whether the leading performers, such as Marie Lloyd, would have agreed to contracts with such a provision.<sup>92</sup> Although most hall managers and proprietors would include 'riders' in artists' contracts they existed mainly as an insurance policy should there be a formal complaint or litigation. However, even well into the first two decades of the twentieth century, complaints and potential summons from zealous town or city watch committees about the content of some music all acts would pose an unwelcome threat to hall managers. In December 1915, Walter Bellian, the manager of the Empire Music Hall in Birmingham, was prosecuted by local magistrates for 'permitting certain things to be sung which were indecent and improper' at a performance on 14 December, 1915. The offending songs were part of the repertoire of one of music hall's major cockney-styled stars, Harry Champion who by then had been performing for over thirty years. When called to give testimony by the magistrates at the hearing of Walter Bellian, his reply was such that it perfectly epitomises the relationship that existed between the major cockney-styled artists and their audiences: 'I get paid for making people laugh, not for singing

---

<sup>91</sup> Maloney, *Scotland*, p.60.

<sup>92</sup> She made regular touring appearances at The Britannia's rival Glasgow halls, the Pavilion, the Empire and Gaiety throughout her career but it is believed only one appearance at the Britannia, Glasgow in 1888. This would have been in the very early part of her career when she was only 18 years of age and her later, before her more innuendo-laden act had been developed.

hymns'.<sup>93</sup> It further demonstrates the connectivity between the cockney-styled entertainers like Harry Champion and their audiences. He knew exactly why audiences attended music hall; not to be educated or lectured or reformed but to be entertained.

For the first few years of the 1900s this new relationship between artists and now the more frequently titled 'theatres of variety', worked reasonably well. It would become, however, a contributory factor in the later breakdown of relations between hall managers and artists. As competition for audiences became fiercer during the early Edwardian years, proprietors and hall managers would maximise the potential exposure of the acts in their establishments; in some cases, adding extra matinee performances which were not part of the original appearance contract of performers. This, and other measures hall managers and proprietors began to impose on artists, would culminate in what would become known as the 'music hall strike' in 1907.<sup>94</sup> Despite the pressures placed on artistes by proprietors to maximise profits from the halls and the potential creative impositions placed on artistes by the star system, the syndicated structure of a growing national entertainment industry, was, for the most part, a mutually symbiotic relationship. The economies of scale afforded by a syndicated structure of hall circuits and the star system gave proprietors and owners the opportunity to insulate themselves from local competition. For the leading artistes, but especially the cockney-styled entertainers, it presented a regular

---

<sup>93</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 21 December 1915, p.15.

<sup>94</sup> For a good overview of the Variety Artistes Federation and the grievances leading towards the Music Hall Strike of 1907, see 'Into the Limelight – The Music Hall Strike' at <<https://intothelimeLight.org/2016/09/01/the-music-hall-strike/>> [accessed 23 February 2021]; 'The World of Music Hall in 1907', *Call Boy*, British Music Hall Society, September, 1972, at <<https://www.britishmusichallsociety.com/Word%20of%20Music%20Hall%201907.pdf>> [accessed 23 February, 2021].

touring platform to allow them to develop the connectivity essential for their national, but London-centric, performance material.

There is no question the amalgamation of the interests of Moss, Thornton and Stoll as Moss Empires was successful. In 1900, Moss Empires controlled twenty halls in cities in Britain and Ireland; over the next five years, eight further halls were added to their portfolio.<sup>95</sup> In 1905, the portfolio of venues within the circuit controlled by Moss, Thornton and Stoll would number thirty-seven, located across all the major cities in Britain.

Fig. 1 Moss, Thornton & Stoll Theatres circa 1905

**MOSS-THORNTON-STOLL**  
**CIRCUIT.**

Chairman : Sir H. E. MOSS.      Managing Director : OSWALD STOLL.  
Assisting Director and Chief of Staff : FRANK ALLEN.

**THIRTY-SEVEN VARIETY THEATRES.**  
**Over £2,086,000 Capital.**  
CONSTITUTING THE  
**GREATEST AGGREGATION OF**  
**VARIETY THEATRES IN THE WORLD.**

**LONDON HIPPODROME**

The Empire, Glasgow	The Empire, Dublin
The Empire, Edinburgh	The Empire, Belfast
The Empire, Newcastle	The Empire, Coventry
The Empire, Leeds	The Empire, Sunderland
The Empire, Bradford	The Palace, Hull
The Empire, Sheffield	The Palace, Leicester
The Empire, Birmingham	The Palace, Bordenley
The Empire, Liverpool	The Palace, Camberwell
The Empire, Cardiff	The Granville, Walham Green
The Empire, Swansea	The Manchester Hippodrome
The Empire, Newport	The Glasgow Coliseum
The Empire, Nottingham	Olympia, Liverpool
The Empire, Ardwick, Manchester	His Majesty's Theatre of Varieties,
The Empire, South Shields	Walsall
The Empire, Hackney, London, N.E.	The Reading Theatre
The Empire, Holbway, London, N.	The Richmond Theatre, Richmond
The Empire, New Cross, London, S.E.	The Philharmonic Hall, Cardiff
The Empire, Stratford, London, E.	The Zoo and Hippodrome, Glasgow
The Empire, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.	

**CO-OPERATIVE OFFICES :**  
**CRANBOURN MANSIONS, CRANBOURN ST., W.C.,**  
Where all communications should be addressed.

Artists are requested to note our calls every week in the leading variety papers.

Source: 'Sir Oswald Stoll' at <<https://www.arthurhloyd.co.uk/OswaldStoll.htm>> [accessed 19 February 2021]. Image courtesy of Graeme Smith.

<sup>95</sup> Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.106.

From 1905 onwards, the growth strategy of the Moss Empires circuit became more focussed on building additional halls in cities that already had premises under Moss Empires control. Many of these would be rebuilds of existing halls, deemed to have seating capacities too small to meet the industry's growing demand. Oswald Stoll would eventually break from Moss Empires in 1910 and go on to create another, separate, portfolio of theatres as Stoll Theatres Ltd, headquartered at the Coliseum in London, his flagship theatre. Stoll was also keen to ensure that his entertainment offering had an element of refinement to attract a broader based family audience. He already had a reputation for having a more puritanical approach to performers and innuendo in their acts and was determined that his expanded circuit of venues would be especially 'respectable'. Nowhere did he enforce this more than at the London Coliseum, where arguably the most popular performer of the day, Marie Lloyd never appeared.

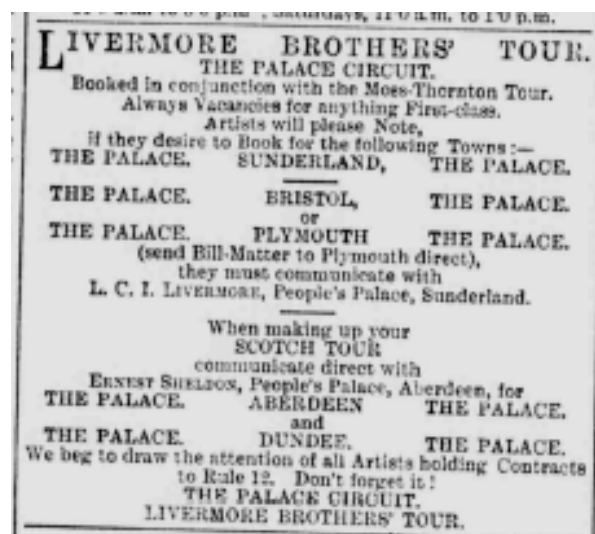
Over the next ten years, the Stoll tour included halls in Bristol, Leicester, Manchester as well as new or refurbished halls in Wood Green, Chatham, and Chiswick as well as the Opera House and the old Alhambra in central London. Despite his outward appearance and reputation as being the antithesis of that of a music hall magnate (Mellor suggests that 'he looked like a Sunday School superintendent and often acted like one'), he was highly astute and recognised market trends; especially the growing appeal of 'talking pictures', mainly after the First World War.<sup>96</sup> Not only did he open his first cinema, the Stoll Picture Theatre in Newcastle in 1919 but also invested money in London's emerging film studio industry.

---

<sup>96</sup> G.J. Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1970), p.140, p.154.

Other circuits and syndicates also emerged at this time. The Livermore Brothers were originally a black face performing minstrel troupe in 1869, consisting of four brothers, a cousin and (surprisingly at that time) a Livermore sister. By 1885 the act had grown to include twenty performers, seven of which formed the orchestra <sup>97</sup> From 1896, the four Livermore brothers began to acquire music halls from their base in the north east of England, with a business strategy that concentrated their efforts in exploiting potential markets in English and Scottish peripheral towns.<sup>98</sup> Over a ten year period, the Livermore Brothers circuit would encompass a portfolio of eight halls across England and Scotland in such town as Bristol, Sunderland and Dundee under the names of 'The People's Palace'. (See Fig. 2).

Fig, 2



Source: *The Era*, 18 January 1896, p.24

<sup>97</sup> A. Goulden, *The Life and Times of George Mozart*, 'In the Limelight' Lecture Series, British Music Hall Society, 8 February, 2018 at <<https://www.davenportcollection.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018-2-08-BMS.-George-Mozart.-v6.pdf>> [accessed 23 February 2021]. Minstrel troupes were a very popular entertainment form in mid-Victorian Britain and could often be used by aspiring young performers as a way into music hall. Although of highly questionable taste by today's standards, they nonetheless were an important feature in the history of music hall performance. For a detailed history of 'black face' minstrels in Britain see, H Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories. The Story of Burnt Cork Minstrelsy in Britain from 1836 to 1927* (London: Alston Rivers, 1928).

<sup>98</sup> Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.110.

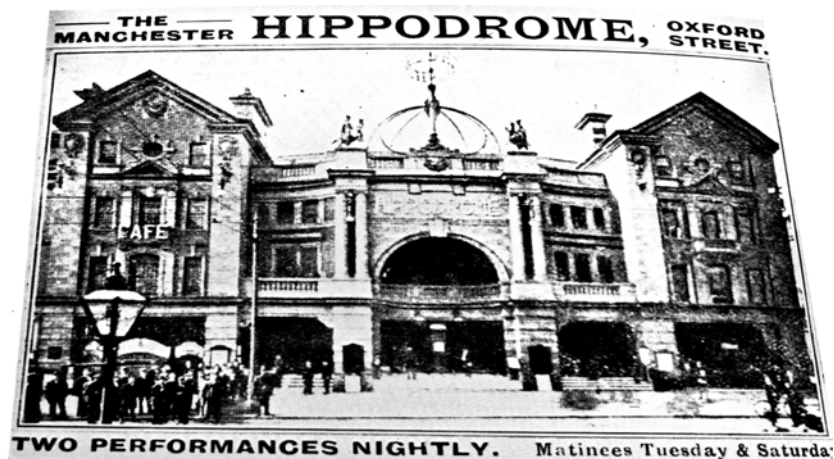
Thomas Barrasford was one of the most active of the entrepreneurs to challenge the established music hall syndicates and tours, especially those of the Moss Empire, which Barrasford's grandson would later suggest was a 'personal vendetta'.<sup>99</sup> The phenomenal growth of his music hall circuit started with a shared interest in a small music hall in Jarrow in 1895 and over the next fifteen years would grow into a circuit encompassing fourteen halls across the country. Although disputed by fellow contemporary music hall magnates, it was Thomas Barrasford who it is believed, first introduced the practice of the 'two houses a night' performance system within his music hall portfolio.<sup>100</sup> Although Barrasford being the pioneer of this system could be disputed, it was adopted by virtually all music hall syndicates and circuits by 1900. Advertisements for two houses a night with regular matinee performances on at least two days of the week, as seen in figure 3, would become standard across most music halls in Cockney London and the inner areas of Britain's largest cities.

---

<sup>99</sup> G.J. Mellor, *The Northern Music hall* (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1970), p.159.

<sup>100</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.158. Mellor suggests that Walter De Frece claimed to be the originator of the 'twice nightly' system of performances at his Alhambra Hall in Liverpool in the 1860s. *The Era* also disputes this claim. It suggests that the twice-nightly system 'really started some thirty-five years ago in Chatham, where it was found that the soldiers could best attend a variety concert between seven and nine p.m. (when they were due back in barracks), and the civilians after that hour when most of their shops and businesses were closed'. *The Era*, 5 February 1910, p.25.

Fig 3. (circa 1904)



Source: G. Mellor, *The Northern Music Halls*, p.21.

The structure of the Thomas Barrasford syndicate of circuits was different to the conventional ownership model of his rivals in that it was more like a loose federation of halls. As the *Music Hall and Theatre Review* would remark in its Special Memoir following his death in February 1901:

The Barrasford Circuit has never, or course, been a vendible entity. Some of the halls belong to independent companies claiming him as a director of managing director. In some cases the booking was leased to him. In some instances, he held a share in a private enterprise. He once explained to the writer apropos to the negotiations for a gigantic 'combine' that he was almost powerless, having fifteen partners.<sup>101</sup>

He was by nature a gambler; someone who 'attacked the business of popular entertainment very much as he went racing'.<sup>102</sup> His acquisition and successful transformation of the former Hengler Circus in Liverpool in 1902 was regarded

---

<sup>101</sup> 'Special Memoir', *The Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 3 February 1910, p.75.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

as 'an apparently forlorn undertaking' yet under his management was 'nightly crowded literally to the roof'.<sup>103</sup>

It was, however, Barrasford's business strategy in relation to music hall audiences that initially set him apart from his rivals. Barrasford followed the general principle adopted by other music hall syndicates and their circuits in providing an opulent and ornate visual experience for audiences within the physical confines of the halls. It was his business approach, unwittingly and unknowingly, that had a key effect in the development of the special connectivity of the cockney-styled music hall with their audiences. His business model was to make music hall an attractive national entertainment platform to achieve the widest possible audience reach by building and developing venues in most of the largest cities in Britain. A positive audience visual experience within his venues, enhanced by comfortable surroundings available to the widest possible audience at affordable admission prices, would provide the ideal platform for the major music hall touring artists. In recording the planned construction of the new Alhambra music hall in Glasgow, *The Era* noted that it will be: 'built as a two-tier house with orchestra stalls, pit, circle and gallery, it will seat comfortably 3,500 people, and the construction being on the cantilever principle, there will be no pillars to obstruct the audience's view of the stage.'<sup>104</sup>

However, it was his ticket pricing strategy that was unique to halls in the Barrasford circuit that later gained him the reputation as 'the champion of rock bottom prices'.<sup>105</sup> Starting with the opening of the Tivoli Music Hall in Leeds in

---

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *The Era*, 7 February 1903, p.22.

<sup>105</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.157.



1899, where he immediately cut the audience admission prices imposed by the previous leasees to 2d, sixpence and one shilling, Barrasford would adopt low admission prices across all his halls over the next ten years. Combining 'the best attractions with the smallest prices' was the principal *modus operandi* of the Barrasford circuit and one which enabled it to compete successfully in what would become an increasingly competitive and hostile intra-syndicate music hall market.<sup>106</sup> By the end of 1903, the Barrasford syndicated circuit consisted of fourteen halls situated across Britain. Three halls were branded as Tivoli, (in Leeds, Edinburgh, and Birmingham); four as Hippodromes (Liverpool, Glasgow, Brighton, and St. Helens); the Palace in Jarrow; the Alhambra in Hull; the Empire in Bristol; the Lyric in Everton; the Grand in Manchester; the Regent in Salford, and the Britannia in Hoxton (London).<sup>107</sup>

From 1904, the Barrasford syndicate development strategy shifted its focus away from re-furbishing and re-opening existing venues to the building of completely new venues, often in direct geographical competition with other rival syndicates. Most notable of these, and the one that would have the highest profile in terms of ultimate failure, would be the Lyceum in Central London. Oswald Stoll in conjunction with Moss Empires had previously announced his intention to build what would become its flagship hall of varieties in London, the Coliseum. Designed by the renowned theatre architect, Frank Matcham, the Coliseum was planned to create the largest and finest 'peoples' palace of entertainment' for the age.<sup>108</sup> Built with a 55 feet wide and 34 feet wide

---

<sup>106</sup> *The Era*, 7 February 1903.

<sup>107</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.162.

<sup>108</sup> 'History of the London Coliseum' at <<https://londoncoliseum.org/your-visit-/history-of-the-london-coliseum/>> [accessed 1 March 2021].

proscenium arch and a revolving stage consisting of three concentric rings, and with a total build cost to Oswald Stoll of £70,000, it would be the showpiece of the Moss Empire syndicate portfolio.

To compete directly with Stoll's new Coliseum and driven by his supposed vendetta towards the Moss Empire, Barrasford embarked on an audacious project to provide a direct counter attraction. He acquired the old Lyceum in London's Strand and effectively entered into a race to open London's newest theatre of varieties. Stoll would win this race with the Coliseum opening on 24 December 1904 and Barrasford's Lyceum opening two days later on 26 December 1904. Whereas the Coliseum would go on to have a long and illustrious life as a theatre of varieties, the Lyceum would run into financial difficulties by the middle of the following year, with Barrasford terminating his lease agreement for it soon after. From 1906 Barrasford re-focused his syndicated circuit by refurbishing the Leeds Tivoli and re-opening it as the New Hippodrome as well as establishing new Hippodromes in Coventry and Nottingham.<sup>109</sup>

Unlike the reputedly more autocratic and less endearing style of Oswald Stoll, Barrasford had the reputation of both having a strong empathy with music hall artistes and a willingness to actively seek out and promote new talent. *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* noted that 'he was an expert judge of performances' and that 'by performers he was greatly beloved, for he was a generous and kind employer; they were conscious too, that he knew their intimate life, the difficulties of their work, and regarded both with the sympathy

---

<sup>109</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.166, p.168.

which is apt to be missing from the attitude of what is nowadays known as 'the music hall magnate.'<sup>110</sup> The Barrasford syndicate circuit would form part of the touring framework for music hall's cockney-styled entertainers, including the leading stars such as Gus Elen, Marie Lloyd, Vesta Victoria and Harry Champion, not just for those inner urban halls in the largest cities, but including those in Britain's smaller towns. The special connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers therefore, although primarily evidenced with audiences in Britain's largest cities, was not exclusive to them. It would apply to those towns with smaller populations but ones that had an obvious inner urban element that shared similar demographic characteristics evidenced in the major cities.

Relative to the size of other music hall syndicates and circuits, the De Frece syndicate, during the last few years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, was quite small. From his initial base as a theatrical agent and proprietor of the Alhambra in Liverpool, Walter De Frece expanded his interests by acquiring and developing music halls in Britain's coastal towns, especially those along the south coast. He also married one of the music hall's major stars, Vesta Tilley, in 1890.

By 1905, as Managing Director of the South of England Hippodromes, he owned small venues in such coastal towns as Southampton, Margate, Boscombe and Portsmouth with a portfolio of seven halls.<sup>111</sup> The geographically wide expansion of the De Frece circuit at this time, insulated it from the growing intra-syndicate competition being witnessed in Britain's larger industrial towns. Generally, the

---

<sup>110</sup> 'Special Memoire', *The Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 3 February 1910, p.75.

<sup>111</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.171.

major established stars, especially the cockney-styled entertainers (with the exception of Vesta Tilley), tended not to tour these halls. Having smaller audience capacities compared to the larger big city venues, meant that from a proprietors' perspective, generating sufficient audience revenue to meet these performers' fees would be very risky. The only way to mitigate this would be for performers to agree reduced fees (highly unlikely) or agree an extended booking contract (also highly unlikely).

Another important factor that would likely to have been considered by the top cockney-styled entertainers would be the probable demographic profiles of the south coast audiences. Given that the special connectivity of artistes like Gus Elen and their audiences was based, in part, on the homogeneity of the shared lived experiences of the inner urban poor in the large cities of Britain and Cockney London, the likelihood of an audience in Boscombe or Margate replicating those would be low.

This existing southern coastal portfolio of De Frece's halls was further expanded on his appointment in 1906 to the Board of Directors of the Manchester Palace and grew again with the opening of the New Tivoli in Liverpool and the revival of properties in Birkenhead, Blackburn, Bolton, and Oldham. The De Frece circuit grew again after 1910 following the death of Thomas Barrasford and the absorption of his syndicate into the De Frece portfolio of music halls under a newly formed company: "The Variety Theatres Controlling Company." Soon after, De Frece relinquished his interests in The Lyric (Everton), the Hippodrome (St. Helens) with the Bristol Empire and Newcastle Pavilion being disposed of as

cinemas.<sup>112</sup> By the outbreak of war in 1914, the De Frece circuit consisted of eighteen properties widely dispersed across Britain.

Francis (Frank) MacNaghten's entry into the business of music hall started with his association in running the Empire Music Hall in Northampton in 1895 and then developing the unoccupied Star Music Hall in Sheffield the following year. Although the MacNaghten circuit of halls did not contain high profile properties such as those that would be part of the Moss Empires, or Stoll Theatres or those of Thomas Barrasford, he did develop an extensive entertainment circuit that would continue in some form well into the twentieth century.<sup>113</sup> Under the holding company of the MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit, he controlled some twelve provincial halls and was also Managing Director of the North of England Theatres Corporation which was concerned with mainly dramatic houses. Although one of a growing number of syndicated circuits, the MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit generally avoided competing head-on with others. Up to 1902 he would concentrate on developing and refurbishing established venues in the Midlands and north of England, with various properties in such towns as Bradford, Nottingham, Leicester and Leeds.<sup>114</sup> The spatial distribution of his circuit was much less wide than that of Barrasford's or the Moss Empires; Crowhurst suggests that only three of MacNaghten's halls London were not in the East End or within sixty miles of his home location in Sheffield, although as shown in a programme for the Battersea Palace in London, circa 1908, (Fig.4)

---

<sup>112</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.170.

<sup>113</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.174 somewhat unflatteringly refers to them as 'number two halls'.

<sup>114</sup> D. Garratt, 'Frank MacNaghten. Theatre Entrepreneur and Impresario' *Arthur Lloyd Music Hall and History* at <<https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/FrankMacNaghten.htm>> [accessed 3 March 2021].

the MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit would stretch from Bath to West Hartlepool.<sup>115</sup>

Fig. 4



Source: Peter Charlton, *British Music Hall Society*; D. Garratt, 'Frank MacNaghten Theatre Entrepreneur and Impresario', *Arthur Lloyd Music Hall and History* at <https://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/FrankMacNaghten.htm>.

Like the Barrasford syndicate, the MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit fully embraced the music hall business model of maximising the number of performances on offer and keeping audience admission prices low. At the opening of the Blackburn Palace in 1900, a sign was displayed outside the front of the hall advertising '1000 seats at 1d'.<sup>116</sup> By 1903 the MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit had a music hall portfolio similar in number to the Barrasford circuit. At a private ceremony on Wednesday 29 July 1903 to mark the opening of the Halifax Palace, MacNaghten noted

The Circuit now controls sixteen theatres and music halls and has met with success everywhere. The old 'music hall'

<sup>115</sup> Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.115

<sup>116</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.179.

is in a transition stage from the singing-room to the new vaudeville variety theatre. The MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit will provide theatres to which a man may bring his wife. I will cater for the ladies. To compete with the big syndicates, I intend to import the cream of American and Continental talent.<sup>117</sup>

From 1902 MacNaghten started to look towards London's suburbs for expansion with the addition of the Forester's Music in Hall in Bethnal Green. Soon after, The Surrey Theatre and Sadler's Wells were added plus the Eastern Empire in Bow, renamed the Bow Palace.<sup>118</sup> The London venues of the MacNaghten Circuit, further expanded in 1908 to include the Battersea Palace, were then placed in a separate business concern called the Music Hall Propriety Corporation. This focus on the development of the halls in suburban London, many of which would be in Cockney London, is significant. Beyond evidencing the widening reach of music hall, it also is indicative of the important role that the east and south London metropolitan boroughs played in music hall entertainment. Not only did these halls meet the growing demand for low-cost, high-quality entertainment of the inner urban population of the city, they also provided the locus for much of the song material of the cockney-styled entertainers. This implied identification with the area would further enhance their connectivity with audiences by being viewed as an integral part of these local communities. At its high point, just before the First World War, the MacNaghten Vaudeville Circuit would number twenty-four halls within its portfolio. (Fig. 5)

---

<sup>117</sup> Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall*, p.183.

<sup>118</sup> Garratt, *Frank MacNaghten*.

Fig. 5

**THE MACNAGHTEN VAUDEVILLE CIRCUIT**

**Director-General—**  
**Mr. FRANK MACNAGHTEN.**

**General Business Manager**  
**for the Circuit—**  
**Mr. E. P. LAWTON.**

**London District & Booking Manager—Mr. FREDERIC BAUGH.**

**CALLS FOR WEEK COMMENCING**      **MONDAY, JAN. 3.**

**LONDON OFFICES:**  
OAKLEY HOUSE,  
Bloomsbury St., W.C.,  
where please address all  
communications in regard  
to the professional and  
PUBLICITY requirements of  
the Circuit.  
Telegraphic Address  
"CIRVAUMAC, LONDON."  
Telephone—No. 9167 GERRARD.

**SHEFFIELD OFFICES:**  
KING'S CHAMBERS,  
Angel St., Sheffield,  
where please address all  
communications in regard  
to FINANCIAL, COMMERCIAL,  
and GENERAL BUSINESS  
MATTERS.  
Telegraphic Address—  
"MACNAGHTEN, SHEFFIELD."  
Telephone—No. 344D.

**Special Representative—**  
**Mr. SYDNEY ARTHUR.**

**Secretary—**  
**Miss AMY ROBINSON.**

**PALACE BOW.**  
Matinee every Sunday at 2.30.  
Pictures, Four Figures, The Bangers, Gey, Aery,  
Bills, Barford, Fireworks, Raymond, Arthur Norton,  
The Two Indians, Adventures of Bonnie Blair,  
Clare Harland.

**FORESTERS.**  
Matinee Monday and Tuesday at 2.30.  
Pictures, Harrington, Cydonia, Della and  
Bessie, Gey, Marshall and Co., Scowson and  
Kings, Maria Henry and Co., Saved by Wire,  
Lionel King, The Womans.

**SADLER'S WELLS.**  
Matinee every Monday at 2.30.  
Pictures, Danton and Morris, Sisters Desmond,  
Aldrey Howard, Lew Lake's, Betty Brown,  
The Hiredlings, Rick and Jerry's Trio, Jessamy  
Clayton, Lottie Holland, Nora Lonsdale.

**SURREY THEATRE.**  
Matinee every Monday at 2.30.  
Five Lawrence, Pictures, Seven Well-to-do, Lev  
Lake, Sisters, Judge, Alex and George, Herman  
and Arthur, Jack Warrand, Jessie Hydon, Bernard  
Merryn and Co., Adeline and Sinclair.

**PALACE, BATTERSEA.**  
Matinee Monday at 2.30 o'clock.  
Pictures, Ethel Dunne, Five Bonkeys, Johnny  
Holland and Co., V. Benson's "Lark Hall," Mollie  
O'Connor, Zee and Zema, Two Harbours, Teddy  
Bolton, Grace Dudley.

**PALACE, BRADFORD.**  
Matinee Tuesday.  
Pretti's Dogs, North Desmond, Fratrol Troupe,  
Victor and Louis, Johnny Dezer, Arthur Harris,  
James Galtin, Dan Whitty, Palace Perfection Pic-  
tures.

**PALACE, BLACKBURN.**  
Cunsey and Leland, Four Amateurs, F. P. Car-  
roll, Luigi Salvini, Harry Lock, Beatrice Wiley,  
Thomas and Taylor, Lovell and Co., Palace Per-  
fection Pictures.

**PALACE, HALIFAX.**  
Five X Rays, Rev. Esmer, Stella Esther Trio,  
Ethel and Campbell, Imperial Band, Cliff  
Lupton, Emery and Weston, Palace Perfection  
Pictures.

**PALACE, SOUTHAMPTON.**  
"Simon the Sorcerer" Adeline Dunne, The Villains,  
Arthur Pitt, Bennett and Coon, Les Montrose,  
Mollie Ross, Curran's Jockies, Palace Per-  
fection Pictures, Tom York.

**PAVILION, LEICESTER.**  
Pastorina.

**HIPPODROME, STALYBRIDGE.**  
"For Honor and Revenge."  
**PALACE THEATRE, HUDDERSFIELD.**  
Livesey and Rosebery, Leo Tull, Josephine  
Cruske, Fritz Kurran, Edna Douglas, Ian Gough-  
ton, Liza, D'Albery, Harry Esme, Palace Per-  
fection Pictures.

**PALACE THEATRE, BATH.**  
Will van Allen, White Long, Marie Kay, Kenneth  
and Kate, Monsey's Troup, Five Trains, Louis  
Trapp, Nora Stokell, Palace Perfection Pictures.

**HIPPODROME, STONE-ON-TRENT.**  
Cousins and Crutchebush, Fanny Trio, Geo.  
Lawrence, Rose Gasham, Ada Galtier, Fricart,  
The Physicians, Sam Connor, Pick of the Picture  
Ward.

**PALACE AND HIPPODROME, BURNLEY.**  
Signor Arvi, Leolah Bros., A. Farrington,  
Tina's "Morning," Geoffrey Price, Edie Reynolds,  
Schickel, Palace Perfection Pictures.

**PIER PAVILION, SOUTHPORT.**  
The Marltons, Sam Merv, Jennie Moore, Chas.  
Byron, Serge and Fido, J. H. Grazier, Gladys  
Winton, Annie Tins, Pick of the Picture Ward.

**THEATRE ROYAL, NOTHERHAM.**  
"Boggy Girl's Wedding."  
**THEATRE ROYAL, CHESTERFIELD.**  
"Angel of His Dream."  
**THEATRE ROYAL, ATTERCLIFFE.**  
"Robinson Crusoe" (Dramat.)  
**KING'S, NOTTINGHAM.**  
Palace Perfection Pictures.

**PALACE THEATRE, LINCOLN.**  
Dahl's Marston, The Fitzroy, Lilla Frank,  
Mayne Calton, Walter Barton, Edna Ford,  
Palace Perfection Pictures, Frank Coy.

**PALACE AND HIPPODROME, CAROLIF.**  
Marie Sauter and Co., Wood and Long, Wynne  
and Adna, Herbert Hale, Bow D'Arby, Margie  
and Loney, Amy Anderson and Co., Palace Per-  
fection Pictures.

**PALACE AND HIPPODROME, WARRINGTON.**  
Ed. Edmunds and Co., Jessie Nelson, Lilla  
Miss Mallett, Alex Latham, Dan and Vale, Harri-  
son, Curtis and Price, Palace Perfection Pic-  
tures.

**PALACE THEATRE, CARLISLE.**  
Donaldson Road, Nora Emmett, Marie Dan, The  
Sopelle, Walter Barrett, J. H. Grazier, The  
Belmore, Palace Perfection Pictures.

**SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT NOTICE.**

Artists engaged will please note that rehearsals at ALL Halls take place at 12 O'CLOCK NOON EACH MONDAY. No excuse whatever for non-attendance will be entertained. All billing matter and notices of appearance, accompanied by samples of pictorial printing, must be sent to the London Office, Oakley House, Bloomsbury Street, W.C. fourteen clear days prior to opening. If contract may be cancelled at the option of the Management. All artists carrying contracts must have same so printed, in accordance with L.C.C. regulations, otherwise it will not be allowed in the Hall.

Artists please note that the Barring Clause will be strictly enforced with regard to Nelson and Colman's Music Halls.

In case of emergency, after office hours, Mr. BAUGH MAY BE CONSULTED AT THE FORESTERS' THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE ROAD, E.      Tel: 3344      Telegraphic Address: "Stagymoss, London."

Artists wishing to negotiate engagements, Agents and Managers of Touring Companies, can be seen between the hours of 1 and 4 O'CLOCK on Saturdays and Sundays (excepted).

All applications for dates at the Theatre Royal, Notherham, and Theatre Royal, Chesterfield, to be addressed to the London Office.

Source: *The Era*, 1 January 1910.

Despite the highly competitive and already overcrowded music hall syndicate industry, Walter Gibbons's entry into it as a theatre proprietor in 1903, marked the start of an impressive career as a music hall syndicate magnate. He had already made a significant fortune in the nascent animated pictures market with his Phono-Bio-Tableaux; a series of films synchronised to phonograph cylinders that presented some of the famous music hall artists of the day such as Vesta Tilley and G.H.Chirgwin.<sup>119</sup> Following his appointment to the Board of London Syndicate Halls in 1903, he acquired control of the Mohawks Theatre in

<sup>119</sup> S. Maitland, 'Tilley, Vesta (real name Matilda Alice Powers; married name Matilda Alice De Frece, Lady De Frece, 1864-1952)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.10193/ref:odnb/36523>> [accessed 5 March 2021]; S. Featherstone, 'Chirgwin, George (1854-1922)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/70293>> [accessed 5 March 2021].



Islington, London, later renamed the Islington Empire along with the Empress Brixton and became Managing Director of Royal Duchess theatre in Balham.<sup>120</sup>

Over the next few years, he would increase his circuit by buying or acquiring control in several suburban theatres and converting them into twice nightly variety houses. Under the controlling ownership of the London Theatre of Varieties Syndicate, concentrating on London's suburbs, during a five-year period from 1903, he opened variety houses in Ealing (the Ealing Hippodrome), Kilburn (the Kilburn Empire), East Ham (the Palace) and Rotherhithe (the Rotherhithe Hippodrome). In 1909, he formed an alliance with Thomas Barrasford, shortly before his death the following year, sharing the Barrasford Ltd Head Office in Charing Cross Road, London.<sup>121</sup>

Gibbons also recognised the commercial value to his halls of engaging the best performers and he was prepared to pay top rates to get them. *The Stage* suggests that his policy of paying premium performance rates 'amounted to a corner in stars' since 'It was said at the time that to none of these was less than £50 a week paid, and that many received salaries of amounts up to and beyond £200'.<sup>122</sup> Whilst Gibbons may not have recognised the special connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers and their audiences in performance terms, he undoubtedly would have been aware of the popularity and profit generating potential of these artists and their ability to attract music hall audiences on a regular basis. Connectivity, in his terms, would mean audience appeal and for that he was prepared to pay top rates.

---

<sup>120</sup> 'Death of Sir Walter Gibbons', *The Stage*, 26 October 1933, p.6.

<sup>121</sup> 'Thomas Barrasford Dead', *The Era*, 5 February 1910, p.25.

<sup>122</sup> 'Death of Sir Walter Gibbons', *The Stage*, 26 October 1933, p.11.

However, probably the greatest legacy of his music hall circuit was the opening of the London Palladium in December 1910, although by that time he was already a major player among the leading music hall impresarios. As *The Era* would note in its article on the progress of the building of the Palladium:

Mr. Walter Gibbons is the youngest of the great music hall magnates of the present time. But if he is youthful, he has romped past some of the older hands at the game, for today he has the greatest London circuit of halls owned by any one individual or combinations. In the current calls there are no fewer than eighteen theatres in the Metropolitan area to his credit, and we are threatened with more.<sup>123</sup>

More halls were to come to the extent that by the time he severed his connection with the London Theatre of Varieties syndicate in 1912, some forty halls across Britain were under his control.

The syndicate system was a major driver in both the absolute growth and the spatial distribution of music hall nationally, although the effects of syndicate strategies were felt differently between the metropolis and the provinces. In London, especially from 1900 onwards the strategic development of syndicates like that of Barrasford and MacNaghten was focussed on the opportunities offered by halls in the suburbs; the vast majority of which would be included in Cockney London. In the provincial cities, although still having different syndicated halls competing with each other, their level of critical mass in relation to potential audiences negated the need to develop strategies for suburban development. In provincial cities, halls were becoming centres of entertainment

---

<sup>123</sup> 'A £250,000 Variety Theatre', *The Era*, 5 February 1910, p.5.

for emerging conurbations; in London, halls were becoming decentralised resulting from the intensification of competition.<sup>124</sup> Using his interpretation of suburban, based on a list of London halls detailed in a matrix published in *The Era*, Crowhurst estimates that in 1908, the average distance between a suburban hall and its nearest competitor was less than one mile.<sup>125</sup> That same matrix in *The Era* lists 104 separate halls in London.<sup>126</sup>

It is necessary, however, to exercise a degree of caution in relation to the absolute number of variety halls owned or controlled by syndicates. First, the term 'syndicate' was often defined quite loosely; it could be total ownership, a significant business interest, a major shareholding, or a general alliance or federation. Second, the nature of music hall magnates and impresarios was to be self-promoting (except for Oswald Stoll) with inherent hyperbole and overclaiming. Notwithstanding this caution, however, it would be hard to argue against the notion that music hall syndicates and their circuits were the dominant structural framework of the music hall industry from 1895. In Cockney London alone, in 1910 there were 37 active halls: a one hundred percent increase on the number in 1890. Moreover, as is shown in Fig. 6, the inner areas of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow also evidenced significant growth in the numbers of halls during this same period.

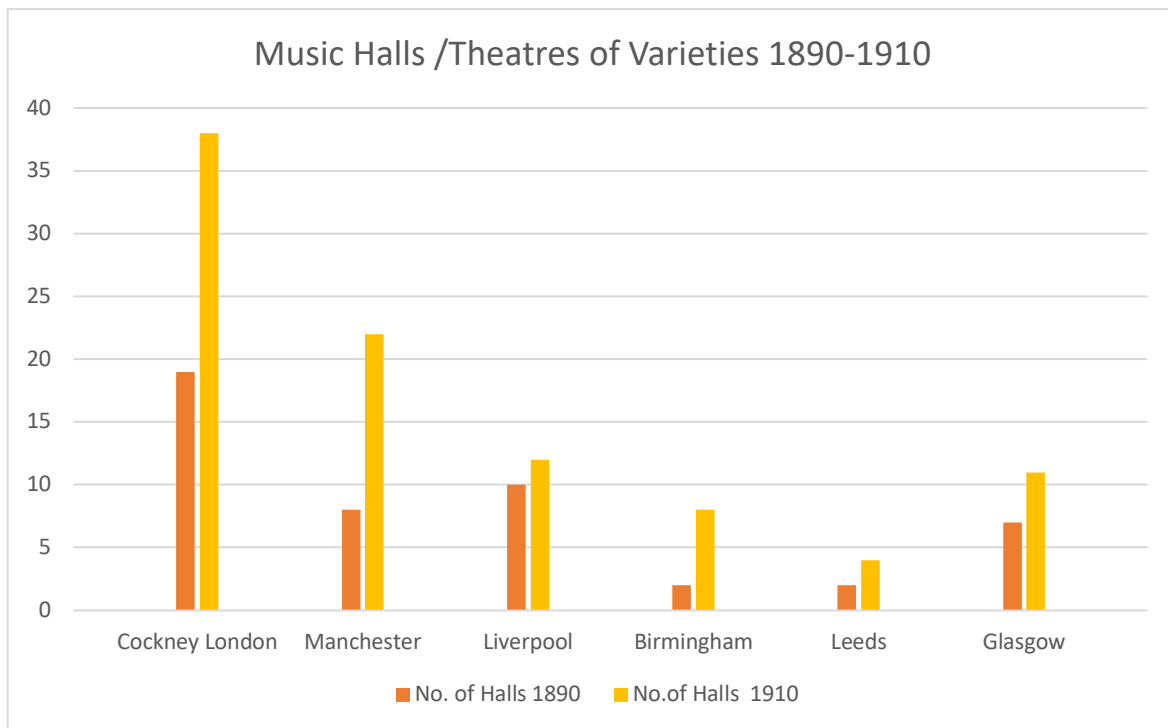
---

<sup>124</sup> Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.131.

<sup>125</sup> Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.123.

<sup>126</sup> *The Era*, 4 January 1908, p.23.

Fig.6.

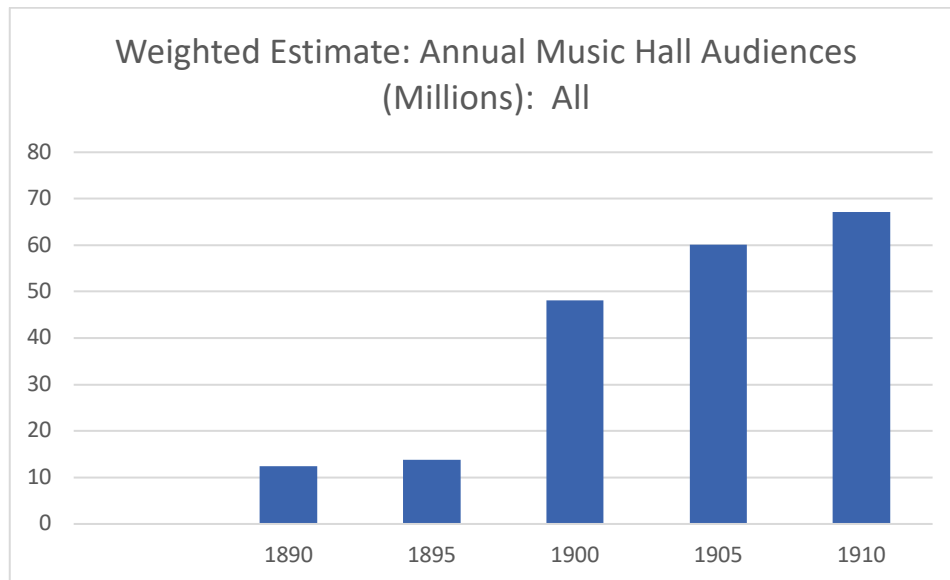


Source: Appendix 3.0: British Music Hall Data 1890-1910.

When data on the number of halls in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow is viewed alongside the propensity of them to generate gross audiences, then the sheer scale of music hall as a national mass entertainment medium becomes especially apparent. During the period 1890 to 1899, most music halls would likely stage one performance per night over a notional five day, forty-eight-week year, which was 240 performances per year. From 1900, twice nightly performances on six days of the week with matinees on at least two days, again over a notional forty-eight-week year would be regarded as normal resulting in 672 performances per year. Allowing for 'house full' signs to mean a reality of a sixty percent occupancy and this weighting subsequently applied to gross annual audience capacities, music hall's reach into the populations of cockney London and Britain's major cities is evident. That

annual weighted reach would be approximately eleven million in 1890 rising to just over sixty-seven million twenty years later. (see Figure 7.)

Fig. 7



Source: Appendix 2.0 to 2.5

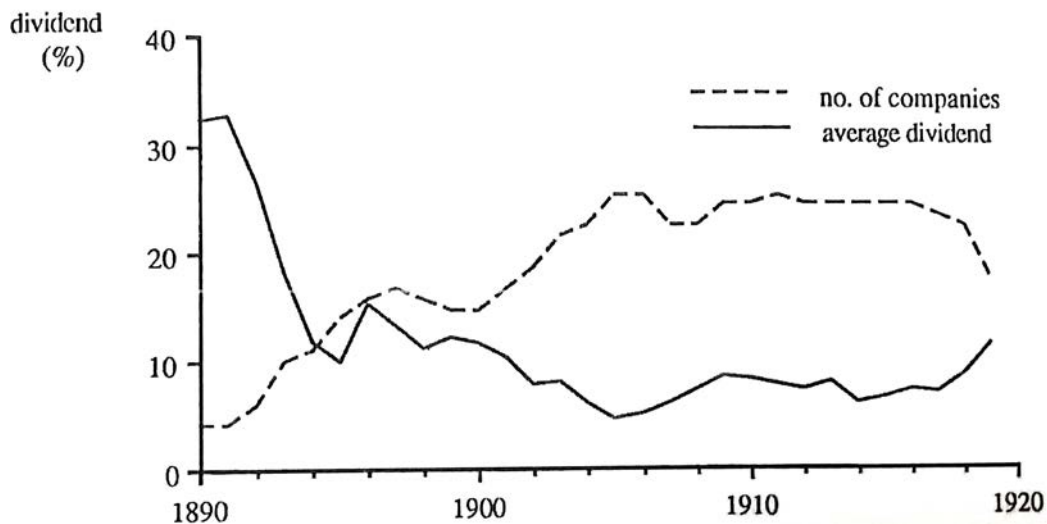
The total exponential growth in music hall audience capacities, especially from 1900, was replicated in Cockney London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow is detailed in Appendix 4.0 However, although dominant, syndicates never achieved a position of total monopoly of halls and variety theatres, either in London or Britain's other largest cities. Independent halls like The City Varieties Theatre in Leeds, The Argyle in Birkenhead and the Britannia in Glasgow all thrived alongside the syndicated halls as part of what was by the early years of the twentieth century, a national mass entertainment music hall industry.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, music and variety hall was big business in every sense. Spatially, it was distributed throughout London and the medium sized towns across Britain. Financially it was largely profitable for those syndicates incorporated as companies with limited liability; albeit as

Fig.8 shows, from 1900 until 1919, not necessarily at the dividend levels predicted by *The Financial News* in 1887, when potential investors were assured that music halls were 'safe for a 10 percent dividend'.<sup>127</sup>

Fig. 8

Music Hall Companies Dividends 1890-1920



Source: Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.165.

Whilst such extravagant dividend claims were generally not realised by most of the limited liability companies that owned music hall syndicates, Moss Empires was more than bullish about its financial health when it proclaimed in its special fiftieth year jubilee brochure that:

The Company's records show that, since the inception of the Entertainment Tax in 1916 up to the end of the current year, 1949, a total sum of MORE THAN EIGHT MILLION POUNDS will have been paid by the company in such tax alone!<sup>128</sup>

<sup>127</sup> *Financial News*, 15 February 1887, p.2 cited by Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.146

<sup>128</sup> 'The Story of Moss Empires' at <<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/MossEmpiresJubilee1949.htm>> [accessed 10 March 2021].

This transition to a national, commodified, mass entertainment medium that was Edwardian music hall, controlled and organised through syndicated circuits has provoked much historical debate. Was the original soul of Victorian music hall compromised by its embourgeoisement or was the wider appeal and audience reach manifest in the Edwardian era through theatres of varieties just part of a its organic growth? For some, like the Edwardian writer W.R. Titterton, this growth was viewed within the context of the negative effects of the powerful syndicates and the pursuit of mass audiences outlined by Russell that it was:

the victory of a soulless variety, (the term now describing the whole industry) over an older, more authentic music hall tradition where songs had been the 'mouthpiece, the oracles of the people, where audiences had gone, not as spectators but as performers.<sup>129</sup>

For Titterton, variety was destroying an existing proletarian Englishness with a culture that he felt was mildly irritating and morally corrupt.<sup>130</sup> Although not attributing blame to the syndicates or their owners *per se*, Titterton saw Victorian music hall as 'a much more interesting and a thousand times more vital' and that 'new variety theatres have been made enormously large to seat, I don't know how many people, and in that vast desert the soul of jollity dies'.<sup>131</sup> He goes on to bemoan that 'the music hall is changing. A deliberate attempt is being made to capture the halls for the well-to-do. The programme of entertainment is being altered to suit a new clientele.'<sup>132</sup> Much of Titterton's ire,

---

<sup>129</sup> D. Russell, 'Varieties of Life: The making of the Edwardian music hall', M.R. Booth & J.H Kaplan (eds) *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) citing W.R. Titterton, *From Theatres to Music Hall* (London: Stephen Swift & Co., 1912), p.63.

<sup>130</sup> Russell, *Varieties of Life*, p.63.

<sup>131</sup> W.R. Titterton, *From Theatre to Music Hall*, (London: Stephen Swift & Co.,1912), p.112, p.116.

<sup>132</sup> Titterton, 'From Theatres', p.116.

however, was, in reality, aimed at the London County Council and their licensing committee who he believed were systematically destroying the very essence of an earlier proletarian music hall.<sup>133</sup> His views on Edwardian music hall and theatres of varieties however, were certainly not held by those within the industry as *The Era* would vehemently denounce:

We occasionally come across in the daily newspaper a plea for the ancient music hall with its torpor of monotony, its dingy surroundings, its chairman and even its music. Such eccentric writers seem to ignore the existence of conditions in the old days that paralysed the better impulses of the artiste and degraded his art. With the dawn of better things and greater ambitions came better music and of late years that delightful art has played and ever increasing part in the variety theatres.<sup>134</sup>

The general assertion that the later music hall produced by the syndicates had moved from its earlier traditions and in doing so had become disengaged from its cultural roots, is supported by Stedman Jones. For him, the working-class culture of the mid to late Victorian years, epitomised in the institutions of the pub and music hall in London, was subsumed by 'the coming of the more pretentious palaces of variety of the Edwardian period' as 'the entertainment business became more organised and monopolistic'. He contends that 'the working-class halls were bought up by the Moss-Stoll syndicate, whose policy was to replace 'the coarseness and vulgarity' of the halls by the gentility and decorum of the Palace of Variety'. Furthermore, as such 'music hall entertainment was given its final kiss of death with the achievement of a Royal Command Performance in 1912'.<sup>135</sup> Senelick suggests that the

---

<sup>133</sup> Titterton, 'From Theatres', p.8, p.116, p.122.

<sup>134</sup> 'Opera In The Halls', *The Era*, 16 July 1913, p.19.

<sup>135</sup> Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture' p.478, p.490, p.495, p.496.



embourgeoisement of music hall from the 1880s was a process of the subversion of its earlier working-class ethos. Music hall was characterised as a fundamentally middle-class institution that functioned as an agent of social control by promoting middle-class values to the working class.<sup>136</sup> For Summerfield, however, 'music hall was almost completely a product of its marketing as proto-modern capitalist leisure enterprise'.<sup>137</sup> Crowhurst would see the evolution of music hall towards a commodified institution as approximating to the theoretical model of the development of a mass entertainment industry as propounded by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School.<sup>138</sup> They would suggest that the emergence of a culture industry is indicative of the transformation provided by a framework of organised capitalism.<sup>139</sup>

For others such as Russell, far from de-vitalising music hall, the syndicates, led by Moss, Stoll and others were progressive, forward thinkers who transformed a cultural product with a disreputable image into family entertainment from around 1900.<sup>140</sup> Edwardian music hall audiences would not only find comic singers on the bill, but other acts like performing dogs or sketches or revues would be included. This did not mean that the entertainment offered was devitalised or inauthentic, just different and in character with how many of the

---

<sup>136</sup> L. Senelick, 'Politics as Entertainment', p.150.

<sup>137</sup> Maloney, 'Scotland' citing P. Summerfield, 'The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of Music Hall in London' in E. Yeo & S. Yeo (eds) *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure*, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), p.209.

<sup>138</sup> Crowhurst, *The Music Hall*, p.393.

<sup>139</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the critical theorist approach to the emergence of a culture industry as put forward by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, see P. Scannell, *Media as Communication* (California: Sage Publications, 2007); critical assessments and limitations of the Frankfurt School and critical theory on popular culture, see D. Keller, *Illuminations: The Critical Theory Project. The Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies: The Missed Articulation* at <<https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/keller/illumina%20Folder/kell16.htm>> [accessed 23 March 2022]; A. Schuetz, 'The Frankfurt School and Popular Culture, *Studies in Popular Culture*, 12: 1 (1989), pp.1-14.

<sup>140</sup> Russell, 'Varieties of Life', p.64.

growing number of establishments advertised themselves as theatres of varieties. The product that had become this national, mass entertainment medium was a flexible environment for entertainers and entertainment types.<sup>141</sup>

If an artist could achieve a special connectivity with their audiences across a whole range of metropolitan and regional venues, whether as part of an eclectic mix of variety entertainment or within a specific performance style such as the cockney-styled entertainers, they would become highly successful. This would be the case with the top cockney-styled artistes such as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, Harry Champion, and others. That ability to connect with their audiences was enhanced by the structure of the national syndicated music hall and palaces of varieties circuits that were in existence during the latter nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. Whether that structure had irrevocably changed the earlier ethos of music hall for better or worse and subsequent debates as to whether it had become a capitalist driven, commodified industry or a product of organic development falls outside this study. Similarly, although cultural theories provide a valuable contribution to the wider historiography of music hall studies, in the context of this study they have less direct relevance. The music hall of the very late Victorian period and early Edwardian was what it was; a national, commodified, syndicated entertainment product catering for an audience that was multi-class and one which consumed the main constituent part of the offering of that product, the performing artistes, with voracious regularity.

---

<sup>141</sup> Russell, 'Varieties of Life', p.71.

## *Conclusion*

Over an approximate eighty-year period up to the start of the twentieth century, music hall transitioned from a localised, public house activity with few governing regulations operating at the extreme end of middle-class perceptions of respectability to a national, mass family entertainment medium. It would change structure from a single unit, individually run entrepreneurial enterprise to one dominated by commodified, capitalised syndicate groups of halls and theatres of varieties as a network of circuits across Britain. This chapter has demonstrated that it was the syndicated circuits of venues in cockney London and beyond that was one of the four key enabling factors instrumental in the concept of connectivity between the cockney-styled entertainers and their regional audiences beyond the metropolis. Cockney London, and the five most populous cities of Britain, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow collectively contained nearly 100 hundred halls and theatres of variety in their inner areas by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century with a weighted annual audience potential of just over 67 million.

As music hall became a professionally managed national institution, so too did the leading cockney-styled entertainers become more astute in the way they approached their careers. For them, the means to perform in front of even only a modest proportion of that weighted annual potential audience would be highly attractive, both reputationally and financially. Notwithstanding the continual rebalancing of the contractual equilibrium between performers and syndicates and their hall managers, the reputations of both performer and syndicate circuit

were well served by their association.<sup>142</sup> For the performer, being associated with the leading syndicated circuits was excellent publicity; for syndicate circuits and hall managers, they would have the marketing benefit and cachet of the top performers appearing at their venues. Financially, the top performers could be guaranteed long term regular touring contracts encompassing Britain's largest cities, sometimes up to three years or more, with the assurance of being available for lucrative bookings in London and the suburbs during the winter months. For this, syndicate circuit owners and hall managers negotiated better (and single) appearance contracts with artists and their agents.

Most important of all however, in the context of the connectivity between the cockney-styled entertainers and their audiences on their regional tours, it meant that with the national profile generated by regular regional appearances, they could present a totally national act or performance. However, to perform regularly in the major cities beyond London, within a schedule that was logistically possible and economic, the cockney-styled entertainers would need a touring itinerary that would meet these demands as well as having the flexibility to allow them to perform regularly in their heartland of Cockney London. The syndicate structure of the of the music hall industry from late nineteenth century and through the first two decades of the twentieth century provided this platform. Consequently, their performance material, heavily laden with London-

---

<sup>142</sup> Variety Artists Federation (VAF) was formed in 1906 following discussions between the charity, The Grand Order of Water Rats, the Music Hall Artists Railways Association (a group negotiating concessionary rail fares for travelling performers), and The Terriers Club, a club for variety performers. Founded in response to the grievances of artists who were being required by some hall managers to perform extra matinees or to agree to late notice of changes or venues without additional payment, it staged its first industrial action in 1907 in what became known as the Music Hall Strike. Soon after its foundation it was believed VAF had approximately 4000 members and thought to have peaked at over 5000 members by 1920. It merged with the British Actors' Equity Association (Equity) in 1966.

centric references and invariably delivered in cockney vernacular would become their complete, single nationwide acts. With regular updates and additions, their performances were delivered to largely demographically homogeneous audiences in halls throughout Britain major cities without the need for regional modification.

In this chapter, the evolution of music hall has been examined from around 1820 to the first decade of the twentieth century to show its development to a national, commodified, mass entertainment medium. In doing so, it has proven the existence of the second most important enabling factor for the leading cockney-styled entertainers in achieving their special connectivity with their regional audiences; the touring platform provided by a structured national framework of music halls and theatres of varieties, controlled, and managed through the syndicated circuits of professional impresarios.

The means of performing regularly to regional audiences both in Cockney London and the inner urban populations of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow, who, by 1900 had become demographically homogeneous, was critical in them being able to utilise their existing London-centric performance material without regional modification. In the next chapter, the third critical enabling factor necessary to achieve the special connectivity of the leading cockney-styled entertainers and their regional audiences is analysed. That is how the persona, image, and stereotype of the London cockney, as perceived by the middle-classes especially, transitioned during the nineteenth century to become the epitome of the cheery, 'salt of the earth' inner urban London dweller.

## Chapter Four – *From unrefined transgressive to salt of the earth – the emergence of the music hall cockney*

The popularity of the cockney-styled entertainer with music hall audiences beyond the metropolis during the later years of the Victorian period and into the first decade of the twentieth century was evidenced in their regular annual tours. Such tours, especially those undertaken by the top entertainers as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, and others, would take in Britain's largest cities, where typically they would appear twice nightly during a one, or two-week engagement. The style and content of their performances although updated with new material, principally new songs with associated attendant characterisations, remained the same, irrespective of the region or locality of their engagement.

The songs, themes, and characters portrayed in their acts, were based upon or reflective of, the everyday lived experiences of the working people of inner London; especially those living in the enlarged area of the Metropolis's traditional East End previously defined as Cockney London. The cockney-styled artistes' performance material would invariably be heavily laden with London-centric references in the lyrics of their songs and interspersed with 'patter' delivered in a distinct cockney vernacular. Although most of their regional audiences would likely have little or no direct exposure to either a London cockney vernacular or specific London East End references, the imagery, emotions and understanding projected in the artistes' performances transcended the need for any specific understanding or such direct exposure.

The leading cockney-styled artistes of the period could deliver a *national* performance repertoire to audiences in the country's largest towns beyond the capital without the need for local or regional refinements because of the special

connectivity they achieved with their audiences. As highlighted earlier, this could only have happened with the convergence and synthesis of four special enabling factors that were in place particularly from around 1895.

In the previous chapters, two of these enabling factors were identified and examined. Firstly, the presence of a large, quasi homogeneous population residing in the inner areas of Britain's largest cities whose lived experiences would be characterised by the effects of low paid, casual, and often infrequent employment, poor and inadequate housing, ill health, and minimal income with actual or near poverty being commonplace. Secondly, the development of music halls and theatres of varieties as part of a national, commodified, mass entertainment medium managed and controlled by syndicated circuits, which gave a performance platform for the top music hall artistes to interact with regional audiences through regular annual tours. The third enabling factor that was fundamental to the leading cockney-styled music hall entertainers establishing their special audience and performance connectivity was the transition and repositioning of the cockney image and stereotype within Victorian society.

This chapter demonstrates how this stereotype depiction of the London cockney, as perceived by the middle-class establishment and elites, underwent a major metamorphosis from that seen in the early decades of the nineteenth century to that witnessed by 1900. It demonstrates that the stereotypical depiction of the London cockney was part of a wider image metamorphosis of the inner urban dweller, especially that in London, that took place over a period of about eighty years from about 1820. This stereotype image, existing socially at the margin of

societal respectability and focussed on those inhabiting a part of London that was barely acknowledged, was presented to the middle classes and elites, primarily through the exposure within the wider arena of Victorian print culture and stage performance. Initially depicted as being one that was transgressive in nature and potentially disruptive in respect of the recognised norms of a well-ordered society, that image changed over a period of about sixty years. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was refined and re-positioned to be part of a supine, largely compliant representation of the working classes within the wider defined area of cockney London. Moreover, at the turn of the century, the stereotype had become the epitome of the cheerful, reliable 'salt of the earth', working man and woman.

The re-modelling of the cockney stereotype facilitated the acceptance of the music hall cockney-styled entertainer by the impresarios and owners of halls and theatres of varieties, the middle-class establishment and most importantly by the socially mixed audiences of late Victorian and early Edwardian music halls throughout Britain. Without this re-positioning of the London cockney stereotype, the archetypal cockney costermonger persona developed so successfully by Albert Chevalier, epitomised in the performance of his song *My Old Dutch* from 1892, would likely not have been accepted by music hall owners and proprietors at that time.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, although Chevalier's cockney characters were based more on aspirational romanticism than the grim working-class realities of the characters portrayed by his contemporary rivals such as Dan Leno and later Gus Elen, they fitted well with the middle class's current image of

---

<sup>1</sup> A. Chevalier & C Ingle, *My Old Dutch*, at <<http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-M/My-Old-Dutch.htm>> [accessed 25 May 2021].



the emergent cheerful cockney Tommy Atkins character depicted in the writings of Rudyard Kipling during the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Anthony re-enforces this notion in his biography of Dan Leno where he suggests that Chevalier's cockney songs relied more on literary tradition than any special empathy with working-class audiences, since 'at a time when music halls were attempting to attract a more respectable audience, Chevalier appealed to a middle-class perception of what working-class life should be.'<sup>3</sup>

The principal lens through which the image transformation of the cockney stereotype through the nineteenth century is examined, is that of Victorian print culture and of special significance, those novelists who presented the working class within their fictional narratives. For as Childers notes:

Those who had previously been socially peripheral became symbolically central to the projects of novelists and social reformers alike; and it was these characters, from novels, bluebooks, and newspaper reports, who captured the reading public's imagination. In fiction as well as in non-fiction it was the poor, the criminal, and the diseased who elicited the most interest.<sup>4</sup>

The volume and depth of the historiography on the Victorian novel, both from a literary and social perspective is immense.<sup>5</sup> However, examining how Victorian

---

<sup>2</sup> R. Kipling, *Complete Barrack Room Ballads* (London: Methuen, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> B. Anthony, *The King's Jester. The Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2010), p.98.

<sup>4</sup> J.W. Childers, 'Social Class and the Victorian Novel' in D. David (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.149.

<sup>5</sup> Principal among these would be: L. Rodensky (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); D. David, (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); K. Flint, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); F. O'Gorman, 'Social Problem Fiction: Historicism and Feminism' in F. O'Gorman (ed), *The Victorian Novel*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); M. Wheeler, *English Fiction of the Victorian Period, 1830-1890*, (London: Longman, 1994); K. Flint, *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change*

print culture depicted the working class generally and the development of the stereotype and characterisation of the London cockney, Keating's seminal work is of special significance and still offers some of the most insightful contributions to this subject.<sup>6</sup>

The temporal framework for the cockney stereotype transition through the nineteenth century as it relates to music hall is based upon Scott's paper that traces the path of the Victorian music hall cockney in three successive phases.<sup>7</sup> This chapter, however, builds upon and extends his analysis beyond his notion of a third phase of the 'imagined real' music hall cockney to the emergence of those key artistes who were genuine cockneys and viewed as such by music hall audiences throughout the country. These cockney-styled entertainers who reached the peak of their popularity during the first decade of the twentieth century were '*real, real*'. Whilst their acts and performance characters were invariably based upon the everyday lived experiences of much of the population of cockney London, an essential part of the traction they achieved with audiences and their ability to establish performer/audience connectivity was by being perceived as true London cockneys.

---

(London: Croom Helm, 1987); S. Smith, *The Other Nation. The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working classes in Victorian fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971)

<sup>7</sup> D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney: Flesh and Blood, or Replicant', *Music & Letters*, 83:2 (2002) pp.237-258.

### *The Opinion Forming Power of Victorian Print Culture.*

The power of Victorian print culture to inform and influence middle-class perceptions and stereotypes should not be underestimated. Readers of the Victorian novel 'immersed themselves in a world teeming with vital characters jostling through different social landscapes; they encountered people from town and country, from the outposts of empire, and from across the Atlantic; they read about London high life, the Yorkshire moors, and African adventure'.<sup>8</sup>

The 1870 Education Act is generally credited as the primary enabling legislation that enshrined in law an already expanding nineteenth-century working-class reading literacy.<sup>9</sup> This expansion, however, has its roots earlier in the 1820s, not least of all in those initiatives of the Methodist and other evangelical movements and various charity schools. James notes that by 1830 the Methodist Sunday Schools were educating between eight thousand to fifteen thousand people in England and Wales annually.<sup>10</sup> Around this time, the formation of the various Mechanics Institutes with their wider aims of self-improvement for the working man and women, consistent with the notion of developing respectability, were instrumental in disseminating knowledge through low-cost periodicals and magazines; especially those that had a high visual content.

---

<sup>8</sup> D. David, 'Introduction', in D. David (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.1.

<sup>9</sup> *Elementary Education Act 1870*, 33 & 34 Vict. C.75. at <<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1880-elementary-education-act.htm>> [accessed 2 June 2021] This Act of Parliament set the framework for schooling of all children between the ages of five and twelve in England and Wales.

<sup>10</sup> L. James, *Fiction for the Working Man* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.3.

One of the first of such publications was *The Penny Magazine*, edited by Charles Knight and published on behalf of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1832. In its first year of publication, and selling at just one penny, it had a circulation of around 200,000 copies and a readership thought to number at least one million.<sup>11</sup> Heavily laden with art illustrations, it covered a miscellany of subject material, combining factual instruction with particular social values. During the months of June and July 1834, it reproduced eight out of ten of William Hogarth's moralistic drawings to a faithful working-class readership.<sup>12</sup> Even though much of that working-class readership would likely have minimum financial resources, being a low cost-publication, it would still be in reach for many. An example of *The Penny Magazine's* popularity as evidenced by Thompson, writing in 1847, of a young, poor housepainter on a limited income and supporting a large family who foregoes buying sugar (a key staple diet for a working-class family) to be able to purchase every issue of the magazine.<sup>13</sup>

Magazines and periodicals would provide an essential element of the literary consumption of the Victorian and Edwardian middle and working classes. Eli Adams, notes that according to the 1875 edition of the *Newspaper Press Directory* there were 643 magazines published in Britain; by 1903 that had quadrupled to over 2500 with the main group being devoted to works of fiction.<sup>14</sup> However, it would be too simple to suggest that working-class literary

---

<sup>11</sup> M. Haggerty, 'Review. Restoring Faith in a Practical Idealist', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 37: 3 (2008), pp.363; C. Knight, *Passages of a Working Life* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1864), p.164

<sup>12</sup> P.J. Anderson, 'Pictures for the People: Knight's 'Penny Magazine'. An Early Venture into Popular Art', *Studies in Art Education*, 28: 3 (1987), p.137.

<sup>13</sup> C. Thompson, *The Autobiography of an Artisan*, (London: J. Chapman, 1847), p.319

<sup>14</sup> J.H. Eli Adams, *A History of Victorian Literature*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.292, citing P. Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875-1914* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969) p.34.

tastes were purely confined to cheap periodicals like *The Penny Magazine* or the later Penny Dreadful magazines, despite the enormous popularity of the latter which often outsold classic or other contemporary works.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, based on a survey of lower class parishes in London, the Parliamentary Paper *Education in England and Wales 1835* found that each family house possessed an aggregate of eleven books each.<sup>16</sup> However, whilst the Penny Dreadful magazines certainly highlighted more than their fair share of lurid crimes and criminals, many of the more successful publications featured a variety of characters.<sup>17</sup> They also recognised the specific, albeit perceived, reading tastes of their working-class readers. Haining, citing Frost, one of Lloyds Publishers contributors, noted that

as our publications circulate among a class so different in education and position to the readers of three volume novels, we sometimes distrust our own judgement and place the manuscript in the hands of an illiterate person – a servant, or machine boy for instance – and if they pronounce favourably upon it we trust it will do.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, despite Lloyds Publishers seemingly being aware of the tastes of their working-class readers, the output and flavour of those publications of the Penny Dreadful genre, typified by publishing houses such as the Newsagents Publishing Company during the 1860s, were still driven by a dominant middle-class culture.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, the narrative formulas of Penny Dreadfuls,

---

<sup>15</sup> P. Haining, (ed) *The Penny Dreadful*, (London: Victor Gollanz, 1975); For a detailed study on the growth of the Penny Dreadful magazines see, L. James, 'I am Ada', Edward Lloyd and the Creation of the Victorian Penny Dreadful' in S. Louise Will & R. Mc William (eds) *Edward Lloyd and His World. Popular Fiction, Politics & the Press in Victorian Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> L. James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p.8 citing Parliamentary Paper *Education in England and Wales, 1835*, (465) v11. Sec. 796.

<sup>17</sup> P. Haining, *The Penny Dreadful*, p.14.

<sup>18</sup> P. Haining, *The Penny Dreadful*, p.16, citing T. Frost, *Forty Years Recollections*, (London: British Library 1880).

<sup>19</sup> J. Springhall, 'A Life Story for the People? Edwin J. Brett and the London 'Low-Life' Penny Dreadfuls of the 1860s', *Victorian Studies*, 33:2 (1990), pp. 223-246.

'reinforce rather than subvert existing social and political structures' since 'cheap sensation fiction in England operated within primarily middle-class ideological constraints'.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, then, the depth and reach of Victorian print culture had the propensity to determine and mould public perception in relation to class stereotypes both between and among the middle and working classes. Its effect on the formation of these perceptions during the nineteenth century would ultimately have a direct impact on the concept of the special audience and performer connectivity that was an essential ingredient to the success of music hall's cockney-styled entertainers. The uncouth, rough working man and women and criminally inclined London cockney that began to appear in early nineteenth-century print culture would undergo a major character transformation during the century. That transformation re-positioned the stereotype from potentially threatening and transgressive to one of belonging to a relatively supine and compliant social order within an accepted social hierarchy that encompassed wider society's concept of respectability.

### *Developing A Stereotype*

To explore in greater detail both the effect that Victorian print culture had in forming and developing the stereotype of the urban working class in general and the cockney especially, it is necessary to understand the notion of a stereotype, particularly in relation to how that is perceived within a performance environment. The definition offered by the Collins Dictionary suggests a stereotype as being 'a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of

---

<sup>20</sup> J. Springhall, 'A Life Story for the People?', p.225.

people believe represent a particular type of person or thing'.<sup>21</sup> The Cambridge Dictionary suggests it is 'a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong'.<sup>22</sup> Both definitions, although simple, are not sufficiently nuanced to apply them directly to either Victorian print culture or stage performance. Pickering's definition, which examines stereotypes and stereotyping from a humour perspective, is more meaningful. He suggests that stereotypes generally are 'forms of representation that evaluate particular categories of people in homogenised, unyielding terms'.<sup>23</sup> When aligned with comic modes as found in much of the performance acts of the cockney-styled music hall entertainers, there is an implicit claim that those belonging to such categories have certain traits or characteristics that are absolute and unchanging.

As will be shown, within Victorian print culture, stereotypes would be depicted as having key features associated with them that are a source and object of humour. This would be especially relevant in relation to how the Victorian middle class in the first part of the nineteenth century would depict the emerging urban working class. For them (the middle class), the humour associated with the manufacture of the social stereotype of the working man and women and later London cockney embedded in much of Victorian print culture would act as means of ridicule or demeaning or belittling.

---

<sup>21</sup> 'Stereotype', *Collins Dictionary*, <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/stereotype>> [accessed 15 June 2021].

<sup>22</sup> 'Stereotype' *Cambridge Dictionary*, <<https://dictionarycambridge.org/dictionary/english/stereotype>> [accessed 15 June 2021].

<sup>23</sup> M. Pickering, 'Stereotypes' in S. Attardo (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Humour Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2014), p.738.

How this would be manifest in stage performance, in both Victorian melodrama and music hall, is underscored by Pickering's argument.<sup>24</sup> He asserts that stereotyping within the comic frame is not just the equivalent to its general use, since the status of stereotype meaning in humour is modified, so that comic stereotyping is seen to be warranted or deserved to the extent that 'the humour is legitimised by the stereotype and vice versa'.<sup>25</sup> In other words, it is perfectly acceptable to mock and laugh at the stereotype, since the stereotype as constructed is accurate and deserving of such a reaction.

### *Low Life or Life Laid Low –Morally Debased or Poor and Virtuous?*

Early nineteenth-century print culture, especially that evidenced in Victorian novel fiction, made no differentiation between the working class and the cockney. Where any demarcation did exist it would be within the varying strata of the working class as depicted in the fictional referencing of workers' conditions in Britain's industrial cities such as Manchester and those of the urban slum novels, of which those located in London's East End were typical. Keating notes that with the former, there is an apparent preoccupation by 'industrial novelists' to show the existence of social hierarches equally rigid as those in society at large.<sup>26</sup> He cites as an example the three key characters depicted by Elisabeth Gaskell in her 1848 novel, *Mary Barton*, who although all having differing personal characteristics such as intelligence and occupational skills, are bound together by prevailing class attitudes.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> M. Pickering, 'Stereotypes'.

<sup>25</sup> M. Pickering, 'Stereotypes', p.738.

<sup>26</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.7.

<sup>27</sup> P.J. Keating, 'The Working Classes', p.8, citing *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (London Chapman and Hall, 1848).



An image of London's low-life had already been presented visually in some of the earlier works of the painter and engraver William Hogarth.<sup>28</sup> His 1751 engraving, *Gin Lane*, set in the notorious St Giles area of London, illustrated the effects of excessive gin drinking on the city's starving poor, where it was supposed that one in four houses in that area were selling gin.<sup>29</sup> Although ostensibly inspired by the growing concerns of cheap, plentiful gin, Carrabine suggests that Hogarth designed the print 'to reform some reigning vices peculiar to the lower class of people'.<sup>30</sup> Criticism of the cockney as an emergent London culture, had been developing from the last years of the Regency period into the early Victorian years. It became a way of thinking about a sociological category, culturally rooted in a rapidly growing suburban lower-middle-class that found its way into the areas of literature and the arts and become identified as the 'Cockney School'. Dart argues, in his wide-ranging study of 'Cockneyism' and its ramifications in art and literature of the period, that this term was not just confined to discussions within the literary circle of authors such as John Keats and Leigh Hunt.<sup>31</sup> It was, in fact, becoming a pointer towards much of modern metropolitan life that seemed conflicted and disturbing; a period he terms the 'Cockney Moment'.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes*, p.12.

<sup>29</sup> D. Bindman, 'William Hogarth (1697-1764)' (Oxford: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2009) at <<https://doi-org.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1346>> [accessed 17 June 2021]; E. Carrabine, *Low life: William Hogarth, visual culture and sociologies of art*, (British Journal of Sociology, May, 2021), pp.1-21 at <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12849>> [accessed 17 June 2021].

<sup>30</sup> E. Carrabine, *Low life*, p.19, citing D. Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth*, (Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> John Keats (1795-1821) in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15229>>; Leigh (James Henry) Hunt (1784-1859) in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14195>> [accessed 3 May 2023].

<sup>32</sup> G. Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures*: 94. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Mid-Victorian novelists, such as Charles Dickens and Charles Kingsley, would likely have been influenced in part by the long-standing traditional image of London's low life as being highly debased and morally wanting

However novelists, published from the 1880s, like George Gissing, Walter Besant, and Arthur Morrison, and the later writers like Edwin Pugh and William Pett Ridge, would see London's inner urban working class through a softer lens. Their depictions of them being less transgressive and confrontational, but victims of a wider societal social problem, would in turn contribute to the modifying of the existing stereotype.

Except for Arthur Morrison, who was born in London's East End, none of these Victorian novelists had much, if any, first-hand experience during their early years of inner urban working-class environments and the people who inhabited them. All were essentially middle class with comfortable, albeit modest, means whose later exposure to the working class of London's East End was driven by varying personal experiences. George Gissing was born in Wakefield, Yorkshire; Charles Kingsley in Devon, Walter Besant in Portsea, Hampshire and William Pett Ridge near Canterbury, Kent. Even though Edwin Pugh was a Londoner by birth from Marylebone, his early life experiences as with the others, would likely still be socially and demographically a long way from the slums of Poplar, Bethnal Green, or Shoreditch.

Gissing's personal exposure to some of the lived experiences of the inner urban poor was directly informed by his earlier relationship with a Manchester prostitute Marianne Harrison, known as Nell, whom he later married. After his

self-enforced six-month exile in New York after serving a one-month prison sentence with hard labour for theft from fellow students at Owens College in Manchester, he settled in shabby lodgings in London with Nell whilst working on his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn* published in 1880.<sup>33</sup>

His focus on London's inner urban poor was at its sharpest with the publication in 1889 of *The Nether World*, which Coustillas would claim to be 'the darkest of his pictures of poverty in London'.<sup>34</sup> Others, however, would question Gissing's general attitude to the London's inner urban poor in his writings. Morton suggests that his attitude was 'a peculiar mixture of sympathy for the deserving poor and a shuddering distaste for the rest'.<sup>35</sup> Taylor is even more acerbic when he describes Gissing's pre-1891 novels as merely 'slum reportage'.<sup>36</sup> Walter Besant's first novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, published in 1882 focussed on the daily experiences of the people of the Whitechapel Road in East London, who lived respectable, industrious lives.<sup>37</sup> Although his later articles published in *East London* would be regarded as paternalistic and melodramatic, they did at the very last least 'trigger discourses about slum reform', even though Gibbons 'doubts that he holds any capacity to judge working class voices'.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> P. Coustillas, 'Gissing, George Robert', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://www-oxforddnb-cpm.mmu.idm.org/view/10.1093/...0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33416?rskey=qKb2nY&result=2>> [accessed 23 August 2021].

<sup>34</sup> P. Coustillas, 'Gissing'; G. Gissing, *The Nether World* (Oxford Worlds Classics) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> P. Morton, 'George Gissing: a biographical sketch' at <<https://victorianweb.org/authors/gissing/bio.htm>> [accessed 27 August 2021].

<sup>36</sup> D.J. Taylor, 'Foreword', *The Whirlpool* at <<https://spectator.co.uk/article/georgte-gissing-the-last-great-Victorian-novelist>> [accessed 27 August 2021].

<sup>37</sup> W. Besant, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> W. Besant, *East London*, (New York: Century Company, 1901); A. Diniekjo, 'Water Besant: a biographical sketch', at <<https://victorianweb.org/authors/besantw/bio/htm>> [accessed 27 August 2021]; A. Gibbons, 'Walter Besant', at <[www.writingcities.com/2015/05/05/walter-fricken-besant-on-east-london](http://www.writingcities.com/2015/05/05/walter-fricken-besant-on-east-london)> [accessed 27 August 2021].

Despite the critical reviews of the works of Gissing *et al*, the most important aspect of the way these late Victorian novelists presented the inner urban working class and by association the London cockney is in the modification of the earlier pre-existing stereotype. These writers would show London's low-life scenes as existing within the same basic environment of widely separate social groups and individuals. Although seemingly independent of each other, relative to middle and upper classes, they are bound in relative poverty.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst the locus of the lived experiences of the inner urban working-class poor as portrayed by these novelists would be London's East End, their novels would be consumed by readers in most of Britain's major cities, who would likely be more than able to relate to them at a local level. Essentially, therefore, the modified stereotype of London's inner urban working class which would include the cockney, would, by association, become the national stereotype of inner urban dwellers in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds, and Birmingham. It would be the development of this new, city-wide stereotype that would be an enabling factor in facilitating the notion of the special connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers in music hall with their audiences beyond London.

Egan's 1821 novel would set the geographical reference for the existence of London's poor and create a topographical distinction of the lower classes living in the east of London and the upper classes living in the west. It would also be one of the first that referenced what would later become an archetypal symbol, not only in Victorian print culture but in music hall: the costermonger and his

---

<sup>39</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes*, p.9.

donkey.<sup>40</sup> However, it would be the early works of Charles Dickens, in particular *Oliver Twist* and *The Pickwick Papers*, where low-class transgressive characters like *Bill Sykes* and the proto, street-wise London cockney, *Sam Weller* first appear and become characters associated with London's streets.<sup>41</sup> Keating suggests that such characters belonging to the streets are typical of the way Dickens defined London at the time by its streets as 'veins of the city organism'.<sup>42</sup> Dickens's street characters of London seen in his mid-nineteenth century works would eventually be transformed into the situational characters evidenced in the performances of later cockney-styled music hall entertainers such as Harry Champion and Gus Elen as the market porter or vegetable seller.

Although Dickens's influence on the depiction of the working-class in Victorian fiction is enormous, it would be far from being a totally accurate representation. As Keating contends, the intellectual working man and women was noticeably absent from Dickens's interpretation of the respectable working class. Dickens does, however, suggest that there exists one group within them that shared many common characteristics which Keating notes as 'the criminal or debased working class.'<sup>43</sup>

Charles Kingsley's portrayal of working-class London is less focussed on the transgressive nature of his characters, but more on their lived conditions. The central character of his novel, *Alton Locke*, on his journey across London describes in vivid detail these conditions, where he narrates: 'those narrow,

---

<sup>40</sup> P. Egan, *Life in London*, (London: John Camden Hotton, 1869), p.320.

<sup>41</sup> C. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1920); C. Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1910).

<sup>42</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.16.

<sup>43</sup> P. J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.17.

brawling torrents of filth, and poverty, and sin – the houses with their teeming load of life were piled up into the dingy choking night.’<sup>44</sup> The representation of mid-Victorian working-class London was not however just limited to Charles Dickens, nor was the vehicle for this representation only the serialised novel. The drawings that appeared in *Punch* magazine, especially those by John Leech and Charles Keene would also help to establish the existence and suffering of mid-Victorian’s urban working class. These drawings, by showing characters as individuals, would also do much to create and enhance the stereotype; the drawing of ‘drunken cabbies, street urchins and housemaids with their pert charm and ever-ready wit, did much to establish the image of the cheerful cockney’.<sup>45</sup> Drawings of the stereotypical working class, in particular those in London and specifically the later depictions of the London cockney, feature widely in mid to late Victorian print culture and would play a key role in establishing and then transforming how the stereotype would be presented in the performance arena of melodrama and then music hall.<sup>46</sup>

Faber would suggest that working-class characters of the period were idealised in Victorian print culture into just three types: ‘the honest and right feeling’, the ‘bitter and opinionated’ or ‘the drunken and useless.’<sup>47</sup> Keating, however, contends that there were in fact six representative types. The first would be the respectable skilled artisan, often used by temperance authors as an idealised contrast to the drunkard or work-shy. The second being the intellectual, often portrayed as a prominent character in histories of working-class movements

---

<sup>44</sup> C. Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, (London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2016), p.20.

<sup>45</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.23.

<sup>46</sup> For more detail on the cartoon representation of the cockney during the nineteenth century, see J. Hammerton (ed.) *Punch’s Cockney Humour* (Project Gutenberg e book) at <<https://www.guttenberg.org/files/38586/35586-h.htm>> [accessed 18 June 2021].

<sup>47</sup> R. Faber, *Proper Stations. Class in Victorian Fiction*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p.33.

although almost totally absent in the Victorian world before 1880. Third, the poor; often illiterate and unskilled and an object of social pity. Fourth, the debased, often depicted as being brutish, drunk, and morally suspect. Fifth, the eccentric situated within the working-class environment but being defined by his or her personal idiosyncrasies, and lastly sixth, the criminal, often portrayed as a debased working-class man who through drink becomes highly transgressive and prone to domestic violence. Contained within this latter character group would also be the rogue elements of society, the petty criminals, and corruptors of children. <sup>48</sup>

*The Cockney of Early Music Hall – Transgressively Degenerate, Criminally Inclined? – But Great Entertainment!*

Generally, there would be three stereotypes that would find their way into the most popular of the acts and characters of the performers in the early music halls and previously the 'free and easies' and 'song and supper' rooms. These would be the debased, alcohol-fuelled man with little sense of morality. The working man with a strong sense of morality whose existence was invariably defined by poverty over which he could exert little or no control, and the criminally inclined transgressive who represented the rogue elements of society. These character stereotypes would align within the three successive stages of development of the music hall cockney persona that Scott outlines were present from 1840 to 1890. <sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.26.

<sup>49</sup> D. B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney: Flesh and Blood or Replicant', *Music and Letters*, 83:2 (2002), p.237-258.

This first phase, from around 1840, can be categorised as being one where a type of character performance by an artiste invited parody but at the same time underscored the wider stereotype as perceived by respectable society. Such a character type, especially the debased or criminally transgressive, would be found in the depiction of the anti-hero *Sam Hill* in W.G. Ross's song *The Ballad of Sam Hill* made famous during his regular performances at the Cyder Cellars in London in the 1840s. The storyline of *The Ballad of Sam Hill* is of a chimneysweep, convicted of a violent murder who recounts his deeds whilst on his way to the gallows. Unrepentant to the end, instead of showing any contrition to the assembled crowd at the scaffold (the audience) he curses them instead:

*The Ballad of Sam Hill*<sup>50</sup>

So this'll be my knell, be my knell

So this'll be my knell

Hope God dams you all to hell

And I hope you sizzle well

Dam your eyes

Whilst this song and the performance of W.G. Ross would neither contain nor require any notion of audience and performer connectivity demonstrated by later cockney-styled entertainers in respect of an audience's shared lived experiences, it was unquestionably highly popular and resonated with audiences at the time. This would especially be the case in London's 'free and easies' and 'song and supper rooms', being notorious for their lack of any genteel entertainment.

---

<sup>50</sup> *The Ballad of Sam Hill* at < <http://www.monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-S/Sam-Hall.htm> > [accessed 29 June 2021].



However, this would be due in part to the fact that W.G. Ross's rendition of the song and his characterisation was based on an existing ballad and a storyline that would already be familiar to many Londoners. *Jack Hall* was an old English folk song that graphically recounted the story of John (Jack) Hall, a London boy who was sold, aged seven, by his parents for a guinea to be a chimney sweep climbing boy.<sup>51</sup> To escape such a disagreeable and hazardous occupation, John Hall turned to crime, initially as a pickpocket but later to housebreaking and general larceny. Imprisoned on several occasions, whipped, and branded on the cheek, he was hanged at Tyburn on 17 December 1707.<sup>52</sup> The original ballad was likely contemporary with his death but oral transmission and broadside reprints in the 1820s and 1830s ensured the story's remarkably longevity.<sup>53</sup>

W.G. Ross's version of the story as performed in *The Ballad of Sam Hall* certainly reflected the existing mid-Victorian stereotype of the debased, criminally inclined individual that could be found in what would later become referred to as outcast London. The *Sam Hall* stereotype, though, would not just be defined by his actions and transgressive behaviour. W.G. Ross's interpretation of the character was also enhanced by its visual portrayal which Reynolds describes as being 'a ragged, dirty, wretched-looking man, with a battered hat upon his head, a pipe in his hand, and his countenance made up to an expression of a dark, dismal, but at the same time fierce despair.'<sup>54</sup> There can be little doubt the effect of the *Sam Hall* character and the way he was depicted in Ross's performance would

---

<sup>51</sup> *Jack Hall*, at <<https://www.acousticmusicarchive.com/jack-hall-chords-lyrics>> [accessed 29 June 2021].

<sup>52</sup> J. Harskamp, 'Underground London: From Cave Culture Follies to Avant Garde', *British Library Journal*, Article 7, (2009) online at <<http://www.bl.uk/ebj/2009articles/article7.html>> [accessed 29 June 2021].

<sup>53</sup> J. Harskamp, 'Underground London', p.5.

<sup>54</sup> G.W.M. Reynolds, *Lady Saxondale's Crimes. Volume 11. The Mysteries of the Court of London*, (London: The Oxford Society, 1920), p.293.

have in contributing to the establishment of the London low-life stereotype among respectable Victorian society. It would also serve respectable society by providing an element of behavioural and moral guidance to those it deemed necessary and, as importantly, with an implied warning of the fate that could befall those pursuing transgressive intent. Percival Leigh, who was a regular contributor to *Punch* magazine from the mid-1840s, notes in his account of attending a W.G. Ross rendition of Sam Hall at the Cyder Cellars sometime in 1848, that the character's curses and oaths to the audience and his fate at Tyburn had been 'a Sermon to a Rogue to hear him, and I wish it may have done some good to some of the Company'.<sup>55</sup> The *Sam Hall* character portrayed as being a part of London's debased and criminally inclined low life is evidence of the stereotypical working-class transgressive. That stereotype was found in both Victorian print culture and the nascent music hall of the song and supper rooms. It also existed alongside a more nuanced version found in the character of Sam Weller in Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* that was firmly rooted in the servant and master tradition.<sup>56</sup>

#### *From 'Sam Weller' to 'Arry – The Emergence of the Streetwise Cockney.*

Dickens's portrayal of Sam Weller as a sharp-witted, flashily dressed, streetwise cockney was in many ways the antithesis of the transgressive folklore character of Sam Hall or that of Bill Sykes in Charles Dickens's 1838 novel *Oliver Twist*.<sup>57</sup> This version of the character stereotype would later also find its way in to music hall with the 'swell' characters that were the mainstay of the performance acts of

---

<sup>55</sup> P. Leigh, *God's Englishmen: The Forty Drawings from 'Manners and Customs of Ye Englishe'* (London: Avalon Press & John Bradley, 1948), p.15.

<sup>56</sup> C. Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*.

<sup>57</sup> C. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*.

artistes like George Leybourne with the song *Champagne Charlie*.<sup>58</sup> The characters of Dickens's *Sam Weller* and Leybourne's *Champagne Charlie*, conform in similar ways to this character stereotype: 'flamboyant and confident whilst at the same time, stylish and blasé'.<sup>59</sup> Scott, however, suggests that 'the swell [*in music hall*] might be double coded: he might inscribe admiration for wealth and status, but he subverts bourgeois values in celebrating excess and idleness'.<sup>60</sup> The line in the opening verse of the song hints strongly at this: 'A noise at night, in bed all day, and swimming in champagne'.<sup>61</sup> This would suggest that the hybrid stereotype of the urban working class that became accepted at the end of the nineteenth century, especially that typifying the London cockney, still had the vestiges of its earlier mid-Victorian image. However, with the emergence of the cockney-styled entertainers, especially Marie Lloyd and Gus Elen with their genuine London cockney heritage, they would help to establish a cockney stereotype that was rooted in the reality of cockney London. It would be this reality upon which their special audience and performer connectivity was established.

However, as Keating suggests, the initial idealised characterisation of Dickens's *Sam Weller* was criticised at the time, since it was believed that he had created a 'thoroughly genuine man only by removing from him all the lower and coarser features of his class'.<sup>62</sup> Although the character of *Sam Weller* originally appeared

---

<sup>58</sup> G. Leybourne & A. Lee, *Champagne Charlie*, at <<http://monolgues.co.uk/musichall/Songs - C/Champagne-Charlie.htm>> [accessed 3 September 2021].

<sup>59</sup> 'The Swells of London', *British Library Online*, at <<https://www.bl.uk/onlineex/vicpopmus/t/015hzz000001257u00014001.html>> [accessed 3 September 2021].

<sup>60</sup> D.B. Scott, 'God Bless the Music Halls: Victorian and Edwardian Popular Songs', *The Victorian Blog* at <<https://victorianweb.org/mt/musichall/scott1.htm>> [accessed 3 September 2021].

<sup>61</sup> G. Leybourne & A. Lee, *Champagne Charlie*, at <<http://monolgues.co.uk/musichall/Songs - C/Champagne-Charlie.htm>> [accessed 5 July 2022].

<sup>62</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, citing, R. Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p.140.

in Charles Dickens's first novel, *Pickwick Papers* in 1836, it was already starting to be plagiarised in various forms in Victorian print culture from the 1840s. This plagiarising would continue well into the first decade of the twentieth century, since, as James notes, many of the characters from *Pickwick Papers* became 'common property' as they could exist independently out of the original book due to their pictorial conception as comic stereotypes.<sup>63</sup> The character of Sam Weller would appear in works ranging from John Cleave's, *Penny Gazette of Variety*, to William Leman Rede's dramatic offering, *The Peregrinations of Pickwick*, to an illustration by Clayton Clarke ('Kyd') for Players cigarettes.<sup>64</sup>

Mid-Victorian music hall would represent this nascent cockney stereotype in print culture in a similarly stylised fashion although differently nuanced so that whilst the stereotype was not an exact mirror image, the major underlying characteristics were the same. In both the environments of print culture and music hall, the stereotype would be represented within a framework of comedic parody. Two music hall songs of the period in particular, *The Ratcatcher's Daughter* and *Villikins and His Dinah*, offer a prime example. Both songs locate the stereotypical cockney firmly within the arena of the urban working-class poor; someone to be pitied possibly but laughed at most certainly.<sup>65</sup> Both songs employ much of the vernacular idiosyncrasies seen in Dickens's *Sam Weller* character: the subtraction of letters in a word for example, 'arter' for after or

---

<sup>63</sup> L. James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p.48.

<sup>64</sup> J. Cleave, *Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement*, Vols. 1-V1 (London: John Cleave, 1844 - 1848), cited by D. Kunzle, 'Between Caricature and 'Punch': Cheap Newspaper Cuts for the Lower Classes', *Art Journal*, 43: 4 (1983), pp.339-346; W. Leman Rede, *The Peregrinations of Pickwick*, cited by P.J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.48; 'Visual Arts', *The Victorian Web*, at <<https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/furniss/218.html>> [accessed 22 June 2021].

<sup>65</sup> Rev. E. Bradley & Sam Cowell, *The Ratcatcher's Daughter*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-R/Ratcatchers-Daughter.htm>> [accessed 30 June 2021]; J. Parry, *Villikins and His Dinah*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-V/Villikins-And-his-Dinah.htm>> [accessed 30 June 2021].

'vent' for went or 'diskivery' for discovery or the general use of non-standard vocabulary. This would suggest, therefore, that both versions of the stereotype leaned heavily on the notion of having comedic parody as an essential constituent core.

As Pickering contends, comedic parody can operate by focussing on a single aspect of the behaviour or attitude of a social group and can be used to define them by what they are and what they do. He further argues that with comedic parody the serious dimension of a stereotype is disguised in the comic frame so that the comicality appears to be the primary point, not the stereotype itself.<sup>66</sup> This is also evident in Scott's interpretation in relation to the songs, *The Ratcatcher's Daughter* and *Villikins and His Dinah*, where he suggests that 'the subject position of parodic Cockney song was middle class'.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, it was influenced by the language of the cockney of Dickens and represented cockneys as figures of fun to those who would have had little or no cultural understanding of working-class Londoners. Furthermore, such Dickensian cockneys bore no resemblance to real life in London's East End.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, as Douglas-Fairhurst suggests, Dickens had the 'ability to reshape real life until it had the reassuring outlines of a piece of fiction'.<sup>69</sup> It would not be until the later emergence of music hall artistes during the last decade of the nineteenth century, such as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen and Harry Champion, that the cockney characters portrayed in music hall would go beyond the stereotype depicted in Victorian

---

<sup>66</sup> M. Pickering, 'Stereotypes', p.738, p.739.

<sup>67</sup> D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney', p.242.

<sup>68</sup> D. B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney', p.242.

<sup>69</sup> R. Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turing Point. A Year That Changed Dickens and the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2021), p.22.

print culture and the middle-class representation constructed and presented in the music hall act of Albert Chevalier.

In music hall during the 1860s, the cockney was one of several character types, along with Irish, black face minstrels, the rustic, and the city swell. By this time, however, the cockney was no longer viewed on stage as a parodic figure. Not least of all because his identity, along with those performers whose acts depicted specific stereotypes ('nigger' minstrels, city 'swells'), could never be confused with the character being portrayed. It was recognised and accepted by music hall audiences that the performer was acting the part.<sup>70</sup>

The depiction of the urban working-class poor and associated stereotype as evidenced in Victorian print culture especially began to shift markedly during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This was largely a consequence of the emergence of the number of social investigations conducted during this period, the first of which being Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-1865).<sup>71</sup> It was, however, still centred on London with particular focus on its East End. The erstwhile more singular Dickensian stereotype also became fragmented, reflecting to a certain extent both the national and socio-economic diversity of a part of London of over 1.7 million inhabitants. Although the cockney stereotype was rooted geographically in London's East End, other stereotypes, such as those associated with east European Jews and Irish migrants developed along more national lines. Moreover, whilst part of a wider

---

<sup>70</sup> D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney', p.242.

<sup>71</sup> H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1985).

nationwide community, the urban poor that were reflected in later Victorian print culture were essentially Londoners.

However, it is not unreasonable to assume the likely existence of regional variations of the London cockney stereotype, not least of all in terms of dialect and local vernacular although everyday lived experiences of the inner urban working class, would be much the same across Britain's cities. Yet despite being products of their own local environments (Wakefield, Portsmouth, and Bristol respectively) and personal lived experiences, Victorian novelists such as George Gissing, Walter Besant, and Charles Kingsley, largely follow the pre-existing stereotype of London's inner urban poor in their writings. This would suggest that the London cockney stereotype depicted in their novels would generate a suitable level of locally recognised traction with readers in Britain's major urban concentrations beyond the metropolis.<sup>72</sup> It is also indicative a growing presence of a national cultural stereotype in respect of the inner urban working class. Furthermore, it suggests that the special enabling factor of cockney-styled artist performer and audience connectivity, the transformation of the inner urban stereotype epitomised by the London cockney, was not just confined to the capital.

It is with the novels of George Gissing from 1860 onwards that mark a distinct breaking of the description of London's urban poor found in earlier authors' working-class fiction, not least of all in the way that working-class characters

---

<sup>72</sup> Although not explicitly stated, it would be reasonable to suggest that the 250,000 plus copies sold of Walter Besant's 1882 novel, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* as indicated by A. Dinićko, 'Walter Besant: A Biographical Sketch', were not simply just to readers in London.

were portrayed.<sup>73</sup> Keating notes in particular how the lens through which Gissing views the slum existence of London's urban poor differs from earlier writers who portrayed it as a public exhibition of a 'sub human life'; for Gissing it was a genuine expression of a way of life.<sup>74</sup>

A part of that way of life is captured in his 1887 work, *Thyrza*, where he describes a night market as:

the sole out-of-door amusement regularly at hand for London working people, the only one, in truth for which they show any real capacity. Everywhere was laughter and interchange of good fellowship. Women sauntered the length of the street and back again for the pleasure of picking out the best and cheapest bundle of rhubarb, or lettuce, the biggest and hardest cabbage, the most appetising rasher; they compared notes and bantered each other on purchases.<sup>75</sup>

However, night markets and their attraction for working people was not just confined to London. Such street markets were a part of urban life in most of Britain's largest cities in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Shudehill Market in central Manchester, which traded until ten o'clock on a Saturday evening, was a magnet for those looking to purchase cheap food that could not keep until Monday. Even if they had little or no wages to spend, those that went to the night markets could still be entertained by low cost or often free street

---

<sup>73</sup> P. Coustilas, G.R. Gissing (1857-1903), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, at <<https://doi-org.mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33416>> [accessed 5 July 2021]; P. J. Keating, *The working class*, p.61. His works specifically dealing with the working-class are: *Workers in the Dawn* (1860), *The Unclassed* (1884), *Demos* (1886), *Thyrza* (1887) and *The Nether World* (1889).

<sup>74</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.61.

<sup>75</sup> G. Gissing, *Thyrza* (London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1907) p.95.



amusements.<sup>76</sup> As Kidd notes, a Saturday night in Shudehill was 'alive with animation, and amid a blaze of gas, all [was] life and bustle'.<sup>77</sup>

The description given below by a contemporary visitor to the Shudehill Market in April 1870 is very similar indeed to that of Gissing in *Thyrza*:

As we look upon the sea of faces, the owners of which swarm in thousands crushing, pushing, elbowing and swaying to and fro, whilst the general din proclaims that something is going on which is engrossing the minds of fifteen to twenty thousand men and women, we cannot help thinking how great is the subject of study before us. Life is here as a reality.<sup>78</sup>

Gissing's description of a London night market and Kidd's of Shudehill Market is redolent of part of the regular life experiences of the inner urban population of Britain's largest cities that would find their way into late Victorian and early Edwardian popular music hall song. The sight and sounds of the streets and the people in them were embodied in the performance material of such artistes as Bessie Bellwood, Harry Champion, Gus Elen and in a differently nuanced way, Albert Chevalier. Although the acts of these artistes were developed and honed initially for London music hall audiences, they would be equally meaningful to audiences outside of the metropolis.

Writing during the same period as Gissing, Walter Besant's novels of working-class life and its characters offer a portrayal that is more based on his position

---

<sup>76</sup> A. Kidd, *Manchester. A History* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2008), p.133.

<sup>77</sup> A. Kidd, *Manchester*, citing A. Davies, 'Saturday night markets in Manchester and Salford 1840-1939', *Manchester Region History Review*, 1, ii. (1987), pp.3-12.

<sup>78</sup> Kidd, *Manchester*, citing Davies, 'Saturday night markets', p.133. Although Kidd believes that figures of fifteen to twenty thousand may be fanciful, nonetheless Davies's narrative fully conveys the popularity of the Saturday night Shudehill Market.

as a social reformer than that of artist.<sup>79</sup> As he outlines in his 1898 novel, *All Sorts of Conditions and Men*, 'in 1880 and 1881 I spent a great deal of time walking about the mean monotony of the East End of London.'<sup>80</sup> But whereas Gissing's portrayals of London's urban poor and working-class life can be summed up as being an ugly, squalid human trap from which there is little or no escape, Besant's suggest that although it is dreary and dull it is eminently respectable.<sup>81</sup> In this respect, Keating suggests that Besant, through his writings, became to be regarded as an authority of working-class life since 'by means of a strikingly simplified image of East End life, helped mould public opinion.'<sup>82</sup>

Although the hard-edged, criminally debased character personified by Dickens's *Bill Sykes* had not disappeared completely as a print culture stereotype of London low life by the latter decades of the nineteenth century, he was no longer the 'go to' stereotype perceived by respectable mid-Victorian society. Indeed, the authenticity of such a stereotype would be called into question by such East End Londoners who had a first-hand knowledge of the criminal fraternity. Rose, citing a testimony of Frank Argent notes that local criminals were:

far removed from the 'Bill Sykes' image created by Dickens,  
for the most part they were good looking, smartly dressed men,  
intelligent conversationalists and witty raconteurs, they regarded

---

<sup>79</sup> P.J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.94.

<sup>80</sup> W. Besant, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1898), p.330.

<sup>81</sup> P. J. Keating, *The Working class*, p.103.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

prisons as no more than industrial hazards, to be avoided of course if possible, but philosophically accepted as part of the game.<sup>83</sup>

The late Victorian novelists like Gissing and Besant in humanising the working class and urban poor were instrumental in facilitating the transition of the stereotype of the inner-city working class in London and the cockney stereotype. At much the same time that their novels presented the working class in London in a far more sympathetic light, a different London cockney persona emerged that would add an extra dimension to the existing print culture cockney stereotype. *Punch* magazine already had a reputation as being 'a staunch foe of snobbery, hypocrisy and pretence' and in 1877 under the editorship of E.J. Milliken, the cockney character 'Arry made his first appearance.<sup>84</sup>

His persona was projected as being outspoken and clever, and one 'whose Cockney perspective was a critique not only of lower-class mores but also of upper-class affectations, which he imitated.'<sup>85</sup> He shares some of the characteristics of Dickens's earlier *Sam Weller*, in that he is well dressed and quick-witted, but by virtue of his 'caddishness' he is not necessarily working class.<sup>86</sup> Spielmann described him as:

Self-sufficient, brazen and unblushing in his irrepressible vulgarity, blatant and unashamed, he is distinguished by a sort of good humour that is as rampant and offensive as his swaggering selfishness, his arrogant familiarity and effrontery, and his sensuous sentiment'.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.114.

<sup>84</sup> P. Marks (ed), *The 'Arry Ballads. An Annotated Collection of the Verse Letters by Punch Editor E.J. Milliken'*, (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2006), p.1.

<sup>85</sup> P. Marks, *The 'Arry Ballads*, p.1.

<sup>86</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p. 141.

<sup>87</sup> P. J. Keating, *The working class* citing M.H. Spielmann, *The History of Punch* (London: Cassell & Company, 1895), p.14.

Moreover, individual parts of the 'Arry character would manifest themselves in varying degrees in British stage performance for over seventy years; in music hall with Gus Elen's performance of *'The Bore O' Bef'nal Green'* or Alec Hurley's shady character depicted in *'I ain't nobody in perticular'*. This was also evidenced in Max Miller's 'cheeky chappie' cockney in British variety of the 1950s or even later with the *Private Walker* character in the BBC TV series, *'Dad's Army'*, although as a true representation of the London cockney, he would be far from authentic.<sup>88</sup> The nature of authenticity was especially important in respect of the cockney-styled entertainers of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall and their ability to connect with audiences in Britain's largest cities. For whilst authenticity was not a pre-requisite in establishing such connectivity, any perception by an audience of a lack of authenticity would likely to have been, at the very least, a barrier.

### *The Music Hall Cockney – Move Over 'Imagined Real' – 'Tommy Atkins' Arrives!*

After 1880, the music hall artistes who focussed their acts, both in content and presentation on character types, especially that of the London cockney were part of a genre that Scott determines as the 'imagined real'.<sup>89</sup> He suggests that these artistes were no longer thought of as playing a role but of being the character and links this notion to Jean Baudrillard's theory of 'simulcra'. This suggests the

---

<sup>88</sup> W.E. Imeson & F. Elplett, *'The Bore O' Bef'nal Green'* performed by Gus Elen (1899) at <<https://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-B/Bore-Of-Bethnal-Green.htm>> [accessed 14 July 2021].

S. Mackenzie & F.W. Leigh, *'I Ain't Nobody in Particular'*, performed by Alec Hurley, circa 1900 at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-I-Aint-Nobody-In-Particular.htm>> [accessed 7 June 2020]; 'Cheeky Chappie Max Miller' in R.A. Baker, *Old Time Variety*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2011), pp.52-59; B. Pertwee, *Dad's Army. The Making of a Television Legend*, (London: Pavilion Books, 1997).

<sup>89</sup> D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall cockney', p.247.

presence of a simulation like substituting 'signs of the real for the real itself'.<sup>90</sup>

The most obvious exponent of the 'imagined real' cockney would be Albert Chevalier with his costermonger performances. Such performances, that focussed on the simple, highly stylised lived experiences of the East End cockney would earn him the soubriquet of 'the coster's laureate' albeit from essentially middle-class journalists of the music hall industry press.

Yet although Scott is correct in defining the post-1880 cockney-styled acts as part of a genre of the 'imagined real', there is a strong, compelling argument that goes beyond that of Scott. The cockney-styled entertainers that emerged over a twenty-year period from about 1890, were not constructed London cockneys. Many were born and bred in cockney London and as such had the multiplicity of everyday lived experiences inculcated within their individual personalities; they were in effect the 'real real'.

This would be the exact opposite with Albert Chevalier. Classically trained as a mainstream theatre actor, he made his music hall debut at the Pavilion Music Hall in London in February 1891 and for the next seven years appeared regularly in London's West End music halls focussing his performance material on a stereotypical, but highly stylised cockney costermonger. His early music hall repertoire included such songs as *The Coster's Serenade*, *The Nasty Way 'E Sez it'* and *Funny Without Being Vulgar* and his performance act drew upon the earlier music hall tradition of the stage cockney established by Alfred Vance

---

<sup>90</sup> D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney', citing A. Easthope & K. McGowan, *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), p.203-205.

twenty years earlier and Dickens's *Sam Weller* character.<sup>91</sup> He modified the transgressive characteristics of Vance's cockney and modernised the speech of *Sam Weller* and in doing so, both softened the cockney stereotype and made it more acceptable and aligned with late Victorian society's notion of respectability.

However, Chevalier's cockney stereotype, for all that it was romanticised and highly stylised was a long way from the reality of much of the audience at many of the music halls outside London's West End and the those of Britain's other major inner cities. This perceived lack of reality was also evidenced in some of the songs that appeared around the same time that Chevalier was presenting his coster cockney characters and their lived experiences. Two songs of the same period (circa 1893) present diametrically opposite presentations of cockney life. Chevalier's song, *The Nipper's Lullaby*, performed within his stylised coster cockney act, presents a picture of blissful family life as he sings of his young sleeping child:

### *The Nipper's Lullaby*<sup>92</sup>

He's run his little legs off and at last he's gone to sleep

Lor what a puffick mint o'love lies in that little 'eap

He's a bay to be prahd on weighin'; not fur of a stone

He's worth his weight in thickens amd 'e's all are werry own.

---

<sup>91</sup> S. Featherstone, Chevalier, 'Albert Onesime Britanicus Gwathveoyd Louis', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://dpi.org/10/ref.odnb/32394>> [accessed 16 July 2021]; A. Chevalier & J. Crook, *The Costers Serenade* performed by Albert Chevalier (1891) at <<https://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-C/Costers-Serenade.htm>>; A. Chevalier & C. Ingle, *The Nasty way 'E Sez It'* performed by Albert Chevalier (1891) at <<https://www.monolgues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-N/Nasty-Way-E-Sez-it.htm>> [accessed 16 July 2021]; H. Brett & C. Ingle *Funny Without Being Vulgar* performed by Albert Chevalier (1891) at <<https://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-F/Funny-Without-Being-Vulgar.htm>> [accessed 16 July 2021].

<sup>92</sup> M.B. Spur & B. Andrews, *The Nipper's Lullaby*, at <<http://monolgues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-N/Nippers-Lullaby.htm>> [accessed 8 September 2021].

It's 'is birthday in the morning, 'e'll be just a twelve month old  
So tonight I blewed some ooftish, the old gal won't darte to scold  
'Cos I spent it on a present for his artful little nibs  
True, it only cost a penny, but it means more than the dibs.

In comparison, Marie Lloyd, in her song, *The Coster's Christening*, presents a far more earthy aspect of cockney life:

### *The Coster's Christening*<sup>93</sup>

I was married just on eighteen months ago, you must know  
Old Red Church, Befnal Green  
An' it came off all serene!  
Since then, many ups and downs they 'ave occurred take my word  
What d'you say? Any eh? Yus, we christend 'im today.  
We invited our relations an' we give 'em a spread  
Such a lovely pig's 'ead, wiv some trimmins' an' bread  
An' while we dished up the dinner an' the baby did discuss  
The men went out for 'liveners' an' a little drop for u

Chorus: An the baby was cryin' like an angel,  
While ol' Mother Brown was moppin' up the gin;  
An' they came from near an' far in the noo electric car,  
Just to see the christening party goin' in.  
My old mother she was weepin' in the doorway,  
When the parson came, the kid began to sing;  
And we finished up wiv fightin', so it got a bit excitin'  
*At the coster baby's christening.*

---

<sup>93</sup> J. P. Harrington & G. Le Brun, *The Coster's Christening* at <http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-C/Costers-Christening.htm> > [accessed 8 September 2021].

Although no doubt there were scenes enacted in cockney London homes that reflected the cosy images conjured up by Chevalier's *Nipper's Lullaby*, a greater level of collective and individual audience connectivity would more likely be generated with Marie Lloyd's *The Coster's Christening*.

Notwithstanding, the effect of Chevalier's performance, his depiction of the London cockney and its gentler stereotype should not be underestimated. Not least of all, as Scott especially notes, the importance of Chevalier and his characterisations as depicted in his '*imagined real*' performances of the London cockney in establishing music hall's growing respectability within Victorian society.<sup>94</sup> This is further endorsed by Anthony who suggests that 'at a time when music halls were attempting to attract a more respectable audience, Chevalier appealed to a middle-class conception of what working-class life should be'.<sup>95</sup> This respectability by the middle classes of the transitioned cockney stereotype would be vital in providing a socially acceptable platform from which the later cockney-styled entertainers could develop their performance and audience connectivity.

The sheer volume of his song repertoire (at least ninety three) and his popularity with London music hall audiences (especially those in the West End) for several years is undoubtedly a strong testimony to his position as being one of the most influential figures in late Victorian music hall. From the perspective of music hall owners and proprietors, his depiction of the stylised cockney stereotype within his performance act was a safe counterbalance to that of some of his fellow

---

<sup>94</sup> D.B. Scott, 'The Music Hall Cockney', p. 251.

<sup>95</sup> B. Anthony, *The King's Jester. The Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius*, (New York, I.B. Taurus & Co., 2010), p.98.



cockney-styled entertainers such as Alec Hurley or Bessie Bellwood. The latter was a true Bermondsey cockney, notorious for her abrasive persona and ability to argue down the toughest of hecklers.<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, the contrast in performance styles of cockney characterisation between Albert Chevalier and Bessie Bellwood was established at the very start of his music hall career. His debut performance of *The Coster's Serenade* at the London Pavilion was billed to follow Bessie Bellwood's performance of *Wot Cheer Ria*. The cockney memes contained in the lyrics of *The Coster's Serenade* would be in sympathy with how Victorian middle classes had begun to view the London cockney. The lyrics of *Wot Cheer Ria* speak directly to the accepted common working-class notion of not getting above one's station without the inevitable resultant fall.<sup>97</sup> The romantic storyline of the stylised coster who in 'me pearlies felt a toff that day' wooing his intended love 'Arriet' over 'winkles and tea' as they take a trip 'down at the Welsh 'arp, which is down 'Endon way' is a direct contrast to 'Ria' and her adventures in 'the bottom floor' of her local music hall. 'Ria', a coster who sells vegetables from a barrow, takes up the story:

### *Wot Cheer Ria*<sup>98</sup>

I am a girl what's a-doing very well in the wegetable line  
and as I'd saved a bob or two, I thought I'd cut a shine  
so I goes and buys some toggery, these 'ere werry clothes  
you see. And with the money I had left, I thought I'd have a

---

<sup>96</sup> G. Le Roy, *Music Hall Stars of the Nineties*, (London: British Technical and General Press, 1952).

<sup>97</sup> A. Chevalier & J. Crook, *The Coster's Serenade* at <<https://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-C/Costers-Srenade.htm>> [accessed 16 July 2021].

<sup>98</sup> W. Herbert & B. Bellwood, *Wot Cheer Ria* (1885), performed by Bessie Bellwood (1891) at <<https://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-W/Whast-Cheer-Ria.htm>> [accessed 16 July 2021].

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. I sits down  
by the chairman, and calls for a pot of stout. My pals in the  
gallery, spotted me, and they all commenced to shout

(chorus)' What cheer Ria! Ria's on the job. What cheer Ria, did  
you speculate a bob? Oh Ria she's a toff and she looks immensikoff  
and they all shouted, 'What cheer Ria'.

Being *Ria* (with a reputation not unlike Bessie Bellwood herself) she recounts:

Of course I chaffed them back again, but it worn't a bit of use  
the poor old Chairman's baldie head, they treated with abuse  
they threw an orange down at me, it went bang inside a pot  
the beer went up like a fountain, and a toff copt all the lot.  
it went slap in his chevey, and made an awful mess  
but what gave me the needle was it spoilt my blooming dress  
I thought it was getting rather warm, so I goes towards the door  
when a man shoves out his gammy leg, and I fell smack upon the floor.

Now the gent that keeps the Music Hall he patters to the bloke  
of course they blamed it all on me, but I couldn't see the joke  
so I up'd and told the governor as how he'd shoved me down  
and with his jolly wooden leg, tore the frilling of my gown.

It is very evident the contrast between the two cockney characterisations embedded in these songs. The first would appeal to Victorian middle-class's stereotypical depiction of the London cockney; the second to the real-world attitudes of an everyday cockney audience. As such, although undoubtedly

successful as a performer, it is questionable whether Chevalier, as a manufactured cockney stereotype, achieved the same level of connectivity with wider audiences, especially those outside of the metropolis as that enjoyed by Gus Elen, Marie Lloyd, Harry Champion, and Vesta Victoria. He rarely toured the provinces as a music hall artiste on a regular basis and in the later stages of his career, he largely abandoned traditional music hall performances in favour of concert-type recitals, since he became to 'dislike what he considered the unpredictability and in-attentiveness of music hall audiences'.<sup>99</sup> This comment alone seems to indicate that Chevalier himself never really achieved any special audience connectivity beyond London's West End music halls. It would suggest, that as music hall audiences in cockney London and those in the inner areas of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow became exposed to and familiar with the authentic seeming cockney-styled entertainers, so they could determine the contrast between the 'imagined real' of Chevalier and the 'real, real' of Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, and Harry Champion. So, whilst enjoying the evident stage performance and acting skills of Chevalier's 'imagined real', the individual and collective connectivity engendered with the 'real real' cockney-style performers was most likely absent.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, the stereotypical cockney of Victorian print culture and the cockney depicted in music hall performance, became more closely aligned and manifest in Rudyard Kipling's 'Tommy Atkins' character. In part, this was because the lived experiences of the nation's inner

---

<sup>99</sup> S. Featherstone, 'Chevalier, Albert Onesime Britannicus Gwathveoyd Louis', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32394>> [accessed 14 January 2022].

urban working class and those of Cockney London became less occluded. Moreover, as inner urban life became a more nationally shared experience outside its traditional home environs, in active service in the armed forces for example, so the transitioning stereotype became further nuanced. 'Tommy Atkins' was developed over several works of Rudyard Kipling in his Indian stories, first appearing in a poem in 1890 and developed further in his 1892 work, *Barrack Room Ballads*.<sup>100</sup> Its narrative format tells the story, employing a London working-class vernacular, of an ordinary British soldier in India and how society's attitudes towards him change when he is at home and not needed to fight a war. The 'ordinary' aspect of the 'Tommy Atkins' character, down to earth, materially poor but proud, was moulded by Kipling's experiences in observing London's working class and the slum environments especially of London's East End when back in England.

Kipling had already demonstrated his ability to convey life within working-class environments in *The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot* published in 1890.<sup>101</sup> Set in the slums of East London, the story is of a young woman who becomes a relief worker following the desertion by her abusive husband Tom Herodsfoot, who, on his return, attempts to convince her to appropriate the relief charity monies which have been entrusted to her. Badalia refuses and is beaten to death by her husband in revenge. Although noting its overly sentimental ending, Keating suggests that it demonstrates Kipling's ability to write about working-class characters within working-class environments without 'presenting their words

---

<sup>100</sup> P. J. Keating, *The working class*, p.150; R. Kipling, *Departmental Ditties Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Wentworth Press, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> R. Kipling, *The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot*, (London: Unwin Brothers, 1890).

and actions in middle-class terms'; a criticism that could certainly be levelled at the portrayal of the cockney "Arry" character of E.J. Millken.<sup>102</sup>

Keating further suggests that Kipling's observations of working-class life, especially those of the slum environments in London and the appeal of the music hall to them and himself, enabled him to understand the mentality of the private soldier who would become 'Tommy Atkins'.<sup>103</sup> Kipling could clearly see the impact that music hall had on the working class and how it reflected a life and vitality that could not be found in other areas of English life, to the degree that it 'cannot be overestimated the influence of music halls on Kipling's mind and work at this time.'<sup>104</sup> Although 'Tommy Atkins' as a character had its locus in the East End of London's working class he eventually, over the next twenty-five years, became more widely associated with the urban working-class population of most of Britain's larger towns and cities. Indeed, the character stereotype would later take on an international perspective. German frontline soldiers of the Great War would nickname non-commissioned British soldiers generally as 'Tommies'. The term became a generic identifier, synonymous with military lower ranks often drawn or drafted from the urban poor or disadvantaged.

*Of the Streets of Cockney London: The 'Real, Real'.*

Concurrent with the emergence and establishment of the *Tommy Atkins* stereotype in the 1890s, music hall would witness the debuts of some of its greatest cockney-styled entertainers, who individually and collectively would

---

<sup>102</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p.151.

<sup>103</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p.150.

<sup>104</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p.152.

embody various parts of the stereotype in their performances. These would include Kate Carney, Vesta Victoria, Alec Hurley, Harry Champion with Marie Lloyd, and Gus Elen arguably being the most famous and popular of this performance genre.<sup>105</sup> All of these artistes, except Vesta Victoria, were genuine London cockneys, within the definition of them being born and raised in the geographic area of Cockney London. Far from being part of Scott's 'imagined real' cockney entertainers, these were London cockneys by birth and recognised as such by London music hall audiences as well as those in Britain's largest cities.

*The Era* magazine of 16 September 1899, in reprinting a piece in the *Nottingham Daily Express* from the previous week, captures perfectly how well the cockney coster image of Gus Elen was received by the audience at the Nottingham Empire. It notes that:

Gus Elen devotes himself to the realistic side of the coster's life; he leaves the ideal severely alone and presents a plain, ungarnished portrayal of the coster as he really is, as he would be found at his work or in his home.<sup>106</sup>

and, with an unknowing hint at Gus Elen's special audience and performer connectivity, that:

He gave one the impression that he had just dropped in from Whitechapel to bewail in song the obstinacy of his

---

<sup>105</sup> 'Kate Carney' [Catherine Mary Patterson]. Born 15 August 1859, died 1 January 1950; 'Vesta Victoria' [Victoria Lawrence]. Born 26 November 1873, died 7 April 1951; Alec Hurley. Born 24 March 1871, died, 6 December 1913; 'Harry Champion' [William Henry Crump]. Born 23 March 1866, died 14 January 1942, in R.A Baker, *British Music Hall, an Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2014); Lloyd, Marie [Matilda Alice Victoria Wood]. Born 12 February 1870, died, 7 October, 1922, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37003>> [accessed 26 July 2021]; Elen, Ernest Augustus. Born 22 July 1862, died 17 February 1940 at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39376>> [accessed 26 July 2021].

<sup>106</sup> 'Gus Elen at the Empire, *The Era*, 16 September 1899, p.18.

young hopeful in failing to duly appreciate the efforts which his dad had been at the trouble to in order to raise him above the ordinary level.<sup>107</sup>

Kate Carney elicited a similar review regarding her cockney authenticity a few years earlier, with *The Era* noting that

There are few more popular artistes on the music hall stage than Miss Carney, and the reason for this is not far to seek. The characters she impersonates are not creatures of the imagination but portraits the original of which may be seen any day on the streets of this mighty London of ours.<sup>108</sup>

Such London cockney authenticity was recognised by other music hall performers and acknowledged as a factor in their audience popularity by the artistes themselves. Commenting on the apparent snub made of Marie Lloyd's omission from the cast of artistes planned for the first Royal Command Performance in 1912, Chevalier said:

Who is there more representative of the variety profession? Marie Lloyd is a great genius. She is an artist from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot.....no woman alive can 'read' a song like Miss Lloyd.<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, as Kate Carney acknowledged that

I have shown the English public types of the flower girls, the coster girls, the factory workers and the other toilers from the slums, not as she might supposed to be, but as she is. I know the London

---

<sup>107</sup> 'Gus Elen at the Empire' *The Era*, 16 September 1899, p.18.

<sup>108</sup> *The Era*, 6 March 1897, p.18.

<sup>109</sup> R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall*, p.79.

working girl. I ought to, for I was one.<sup>110</sup>

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was a more favourable perception of the cockney stereotype as depicted in Victorian print culture and by extension middle-class Victorian society. Additionally, the music hall audience appeal of the cockney-styled entertainment performance act was evidenced by many artistes adopting the format to further their careers. Some, such as Vesta Victoria, would enjoy considerable success as cockney-styled entertainers, both in Britain and abroad, especially in America. Born in Leeds to music hall entertainers and making her stage debut within a few weeks of her birth in one of her father's sketches, she was initially billed as 'Baby Victoria' and later as 'Little Victoria'.<sup>111</sup> Although it would be possible to argue that her career would have been equally stellar had she maintained her existing act as 'Little Victoria' after her London debut in 1883, the reality was it was nine years later, following her success with the song '*Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Bow Wow*', that it really blossomed.<sup>112</sup> From this time she successfully adopted a working-class London cockney persona in her act and changed her billing name to Vesta Victoria. Clearly, she must have recognised the career potential of this. Equally important was her taking up of a particular social theme of the time in her act that was especially relevant to working-class women; the pressure of finding a husband and having a successful marriage and incorporating it into her new cockney-style performance. Vesta Victoria was not the only non-authentic London cockney-style performer in late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall, but she was

---

<sup>110</sup> R.A Baker, *British Music Hall*, p.161.

<sup>111</sup> C.A Morley, 'The Most Artistic Lady on Earth: Vesta Victoria' in P. Fryer (ed), *Woman in the Arts in the Belle Epoch* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2012), p.186-209.

<sup>112</sup> J. Tabrar, *Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Bow Wow*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-D/Daddy-Wouldnt-Buy-Me-A-Bow-Wow>> [accessed 8 September 2021].



certainly the most successful. Her estimated career earnings around 1920, thought to be worth about £3.25 million, is testimony to her popularity.<sup>113</sup>

Moreover, although without question, Frances Gray is right to acknowledge the song writing skills of Harry Pether and Fred Leigh in two of Vesta Victoria's most successful songs, *Waiting at the Church* and *Poor John*, her stage performance was not just reliant on good song material.<sup>114</sup> Without her special audience and performer connectivity and the way 'she could put over a song with a surface innocence' that it was 'never quite clear whether she was as naïve as her songs suggested', it is unlikely she would have had such a successful career.<sup>115</sup>

Such was the music hall audience appeal of the London cockney character stereotype, that even those aspiring artistes with barely any in-built true cockney bona-fides, would often start their music hall careers adopting a cockney persona. Wilkie Bard, born in Hulme, Manchester, and billed as Will Gebard, made his music hall debut at the Grand, Manchester in February 1895 as a singer of coster songs.<sup>116</sup> He made his first London appearance the same year at Collins Music Hall, Islington but within a couple of years formed a partnership with another performer, Will Evans and concentrated on pantomime in the harlequinade tradition.<sup>117</sup> According to the British Music Hall Society

---

<sup>113</sup> R. Baker, *British Music Hall*, p.92.

<sup>114</sup> F. Gray, 'Victoria, Vesta (real name Victoria Lawrence] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64584>> [accessed 27 July 2021]; F.W. Leigh & H.E. Pether, *Waiting at the Church* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-W/Waiting-At-The-Church.htm>> [accessed 27 July 2021]; F.W. Leigh & H.E. Pether, *Poor John*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-P/Poor-John.htm>> [accessed 27 July 2021].

<sup>115</sup> F. Gray, 'Vesta Victoria', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>116</sup> M. Pointon, 'Bard, Wilkie [real name William August Smith], *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/60051>> [accessed 27 July 2021]

<sup>117</sup> M. Pointon, 'Bard, Wilkie, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

historian, Peter Charlton, it was only when Wilkie Bard came to London that a critic commented on his strange accent.<sup>118</sup>

Although there was now a much softer and less confrontational aspect of the cockney stereotype, both in late Victorian and early Edwardian print culture, and music hall, there still would be vestiges of the erstwhile transgressive tendencies depicted in the earlier stereotype. Melodrama was at its most popular during the nineteenth century and it adopted a very formulaic approach to its storyline and character representations. Based on a set of stock characters – the hero, heroine, villain, villain's accomplice, and faithful servant – most Victorian melodramas enacted a simple primary plot. The villain schemes to commit evil on the hero or other good characters, with the hero tasked with stopping him; a truth is then finally revealed along with the overarching moral of the story. The stock characters of Victorian melodrama were essentially class-based stereotypes; none more so than those portraying lower-class characters of the villain's assistant or the faithful servant. As Leaver suggests, 'popular melodrama after 1860 tended to marginalise lower class characters by treating them as comic stereotypes'.<sup>119</sup> To this end, these two stock characters, often depicted as stupid, idiotic, or clumsy, would be portrayed as working-class people, often with a strong leaning towards the London cockney. As the reviewer of the play, *Is He a Christian?*, performed at the Rotunda Theatre in Liverpool in December 1900 would note, the part of Mary Ellen was that of 'a guttersnipe' and 'full of true cockney characterisation'.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> P. Charlton, *British Music Hall* e-mail correspondence, 8 May 2019, 11.59.

<sup>119</sup> K. Leaver, 'Victorian Melodrama and the Performance of Poverty', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27:2 (1999), p.454.

<sup>120</sup> 'Is He a Christian?', *The Era*, 15 December 1900, p.11.

For the most part, however, the stereotypical image of the urban working class and the London cockney, in both print culture and on the music hall stage had altered dramatically during the last fifty years of the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, the comic stock image of the cockney as seen in earlier print culture or the later tragic character depictions of him by authors of 1890s was very different. As Keating contends, 'he is a regional type with a personal and group characteristics as pronounced as those of a Scotchman, Irishman or Welshman'.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, his new image was part of the process whereby 'the old stereotypes and conventions are replaced by new stereotypes and conventions' so that 'at the close of the nineteenth century, as at the beginning, the most important single fact about the fictional working man, is his class.'<sup>122</sup>

At the start of the nineteenth century the working class generally and those of the inner urban communities that inhabited what would become cockney London, if acknowledged at all by respectable Victorian society, would be viewed with suspicion and caution. For the most part, the image of this group would be manufactured and reinforced by the stereotype constructed largely in Victorian print culture and, from the middle of the century, characters appearing in melodramatic and music hall performance. That stereotype viewed as being both inherent within much of the population of London's East End and that of later cockney London would evolve and transform throughout the Victorian era. The transgressive character-type portrayed in Dickens's *Bill Sykes*; the unrepentant stage character of *Sam Hall*; the sharp, quick witted, street wise individual of 'Arry would eventually give way to the composite stereotype of that of *Tommy*

---

<sup>121</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p.206.

<sup>122</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p.222.

Atkins, who would become a combination of the qualities that symbolised the English working class.<sup>123</sup>

### *The Stereotype Transformation Completed*

Music hall performance by the late Victorian and early Edwardian cockney-style entertainers would mirror this transitional evolution to the extent that they not only gained respectability within society but became a performance representation of the inner urban poor of Britain's largest cities. By the end of the nineteenth century, the on-stage cockney stereotype was shaped less by a middle-class perception of what that portrayal should represent in terms of respectable society than how it related to the everyday lived experiences of a major section of music hall audiences: the inner urban working classes. In so doing, the stories, the characters, and experiences of them, projected by this transitioned cockney stereotype, were played out, often twice nightly, six days per week by cockney-styled entertainers in the halls and palaces of varieties in Britain's largest cities. The successful narration of these stories and experiences by them, invariably in song, created more than an audience 'knowingness'.<sup>124</sup> It created a unique awareness; a special connectivity at both individual and collective levels among audiences that generated a sense of belonging to a world that hitherto had been hidden in plain sight from society.

The major cockney-styled music hall artistes from the last decade of the nineteenth century owed much of their success and audience appeal to the fact

---

<sup>123</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p. 161.

<sup>124</sup> P. Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.128.

that they not only offered a dramatic representation of the characters and personalities witnessed across all the boroughs of cockney London, but they were seen as real and credible. That credibility facilitated the major late Victorian and early Edwardian cockney-styled music hall artistes in achieving a special performer and audience connectivity which meant they could employ London-centric performance material as part of their national touring repertoires in Britain's urban conurbations.

For much of the nineteenth century, the stereotypical image of the urban working-class population as portrayed in Victorian print culture was largely negative; viewed as potentially transgressive and by mid-century, parodied as simple and slow witted. Although such stereotypes were primarily focussed through the lens of London's low life and located among its East End population, it could also be held good for any of the inner urban areas of Britain's major cities. Music hall and stage performance would be aligned closely with Victorian middle-class's stereotype of the inner urban working class. As a result, by the last decade of the century, the transformational change of the image and stereotype of the inner urban working class and especially the London cockney, was complete. The effect of this would be that it had become the third enabling factor that would form the basis on which the unique audience and performer connectivity enjoyed by the leading cockney-styled artistes would be founded.

As the century progressed, elements of this stereotype softened, not least of all because of the greater transparency among Victorian society of the lived experiences of much of the inner urban working class resulting from the various published social investigations, for example those by Henry Mayhew, Charles

Booth, Seebohm Rowntree and Octavia Hill.<sup>125</sup> Concurrent with this greater awareness among Victorian society in general of the urban working class and the conditions governing their lived experiences, was a series of city-wide improvements, mainly focussed on housing and sanitation, initiated by the principal major urban civic authorities. It was now being recognised more widely that for the inner urban dweller, experiencing poverty, being casually employed or unemployed and often in poor health did not automatically equate to a stereotype that was lazy, criminal, or transgressive. Such an increased awareness of the social conditions of inner urban communities in Britain's major cities and the desire by various civic authorities to improve upon those conditions would also contribute to the change in perception and image of the urban working class.

However, this changed stereotype and perception was disseminated more widely by the socially focussed and nuanced writings of the urban life novelists who featured supposedly working-class behaviours as common social situations, with related social causes rather than as 'stuff of personal failing or tragedy or journalistic report'.<sup>126</sup> They would challenge the popular, violent image of working-class life, not by ignoring the elements of truth it might contain, but by placing it in perspective and showing it as part of a pattern of cockney culture.<sup>127</sup> Being constrained within poverty driven lived experiences from which it was hard, if not impossible to escape, did not automatically equate with

---

<sup>125</sup> H. Mayhew, *London Labour*; C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, (London: Macmillan, 1902 -1903); S. Rowntree, *Poverty. A Study of Town Life* (London: Macmillan, 1901); O. Hill, *The Homes of the London Poor*, (London: Macmillan, 1875).

<sup>126</sup> P. Brooker & P. Widdowson, 'A literature for England' in R. Colls & P. Dodds (eds) *Englishness, Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p.167.

<sup>127</sup> P.J. Keating, *The working class*, p.208.

transgressive behaviour or delinquency. It was possible to be poor and respectable.

Such a notion would also find its way on to the music hall stage with the 'imagined real' London cockney so skilfully portrayed by Albert Chevalier. And even though this stereotype was as much manufactured as that of *Sam Cowell* or *Sam Hall* twenty years earlier, it would also lay the foundation for the characters depicted in the stage performances of the cockney-style artistes during the final years of the nineteenth century. The London cockney had become real and not alien; not just through the eyes of middle-class Victorian and early Edwardian society's print culture, but more importantly through those of Britain's inner urban population who visited music hall in their thousands every week. He was as real to them as the persons who occupied the places next to them in the galleries of the Gaiety in Manchester or the stalls in the Scotia Glasgow.

This reality was manifest in the artistic performances of many of the cockney-styled entertainers in music hall. In many cases, artistes like Kate Carney, Bessie Bellwood, Alec Hurley, before their success as music hall performers, had everyday lived experiences that mirrored those of much of their audiences. They were from very poor backgrounds in casual, low paid employment, invariably bordering on poverty.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup> Kate Carney had been a street vendor of baked potatoes in the London Metropolitan borough of Southwark; Bessie Bellwood a rabbit skinner in Bermondsey and Alec Hurley a tea packer in the London docks.

From the 1890s, the London cockney stereotype had been re-invented and re-positioned to the point where he and she were viewed as an embodiment of the solid, stoical, down to earth representation of a significant part of London's inner urban population and by extension those in the major towns and cities beyond the metropolis. The stereotype, albeit rough cast, edgy if unjustly provoked but fundamentally good was also 'safe'; not only from an Establishment perception, but also from that of the proprietors and managers of the music hall circuits throughout Britain. If an artiste was talented, their careers in national music hall, if not assured, were likely to be successful. Better still, as well as talent, if they were cockney-styled entertainers, who could develop a special connectivity with their audiences by being accepted as cockney working class, portraying characters, and lived experiences in common with their audiences, then their rise to fame could be meteoric.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has demonstrated that the stereotype images of the inner urban working class generally and the London cockney specifically were dramatically transformed during the nineteenth century. That transformation happened as the working class and their lived experiences, especially those of the inner areas of the metropolis and those in Britain's other largest cities, were recognised for what they were. Not for the often, over-charged middle-class perceptions based on character defects or even worse genetics, but often as disadvantaged victims of social deprivation.



Over a period of approximately seventy years, the stereotypical images of the inner urban dweller and the London cockney changed from being regarded initially by the Victorian middle class and elites as being morally transgressive and potentially subversive, into a stoical and dependable part of respectable society. This later stereotype was re-fashioned and more widely disseminated through Victorian print culture and presented as one that was compliant and largely comfortable in the acceptance of its hierarchical position within a well-ordered and class-conscious society

The stereotype transformation of the urban working class and the London cockney that was evident within an expansive Victorian print culture was also mirrored in the character as portrayed in music hall. The representation of the rough edged transgressive that was presented to mostly male audiences of the proto music halls of the 'free and easies' and 'song and supper rooms' in mid-century conformed to the narrow stereotype adopted by the Victorian middle-class. Such a portrayal would become increasingly removed from the reality of the true working-class character as experienced by the widening demographic profile of audiences patronising music halls in Britain's largest cities. Being removed from this reality meant that these characterisations, whilst being a platform for a potential successful stage performance, could never facilitate the type of audience connectivity enjoyed by the later cockney-styled artistes.

By the final decade of the nineteenth century, the inner urban working-class stereotype, epitomised by the London cockney and presented to music hall audiences nationally, was not only seen as socially acceptable by respectable society but as 'real' by those whom the stereotype depicted. Thus, it became the

third of the key enabling factors for connectivity. These enabling factors and their unique synchronisation around the turn of the century, would form the basis of the special performer and audience connectivity achieved by the leading cockney-styled entertainers in music hall at this time.

In the following chapter, the final enabling factor that would determine this special connectivity is analysed: namely how the London cockney working class became a de facto representation of an additional identity to that of region or nationality within Britain's inner urban population.

## Chapter Five - *Just Like Us*.

During the last years of the nineteenth century and through the early years of the twentieth, the cockney-styled entertainers of British music hall embarked on regular tours across Britain. They played the halls and palaces of varieties in the larger cities of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow. Artistes such as Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, Marie Lloyd, and Alec Hurley were some of the leading performers of music hall who commanded the highest fees. The regional tours conducted by such artistes were generally undertaken in the spring and summer months. Their London engagements, which invariably would take in the main West End halls such as the Oxford or Drury Lane as well as those in the suburbs, including Cockney London, were focused on the autumn and winter period. Whilst potentially arduous, in that they could easily last over a three-month period, these engagements would tend to be logistically more manageable, not least of all since most of these artistes had London residences. Their performance material, although based around a core of their already popular and established songs and characterisations, was generally expanded upon each year. These cockney-styled entertainers developed national acts, which were heavily laden with London-centric references and characterisations drawn from the everyday lived experiences of the population of Cockney London. They neither modified their acts to accommodate regional or local characteristics, nor altered their presentation vernacular from that found among the working poor in inner urban London, especially cockney London.

Many, if not most, of their audiences would likely have had little, if any, first-hand knowledge, or experience of the geographical locus of these artistes'

performance material or the nuances contained in their cockney vernacular. Yet they regularly filled such halls as the Empire in Liverpool, the Scotia in Glasgow, the Gaiety in Manchester, Thornton's in Leeds, or the Bordesley Palace in Birmingham. However, the popularity and audience appeal of the cockney-styled artistes was not just based upon their performing talent, which undoubtedly, they had, but on the special connectivity they created between them and their audiences both collectively and individually. This connectivity was generated through the themes and lyrics of the artistes' songs, the characters created for their performance delivery, and the dialogue or 'patter' that interspersed their acts. The characters they portrayed were enrobed with incidents and activities that were part of the audience's everyday lived experiences. This in turn created a special emotional performer and audience bond. It would be as if the artistes were interacting with their audiences as *one of them*; a local acquaintance, or a neighbour or a relative sharing a story or recounting an experience.

Such connectivity, between the cockney-styled artistes and their inner urban audiences, could only have been achieved by the synchronisation of four key enabling factors. Three of these have been examined in detail in the preceding chapters. In this chapter, the fourth enabling factor that gave the leading cockney-styled music hall artistes the means of establishing their special audience/performer connectivity is examined. First, how and to what extent did the London cockney become a *de facto* representation of the inner urban poor in Britain's largest cities in the first decade of the twentieth century? Second, how the leading cockney-styled artistes became a performance embodiment of the collective identity of the inner urban poor. This representation is examined within the context of the existence of a quasi-homogenous identity among the

inner urban working man and woman that was part of a plurality of their individual and collective identities, which was based upon the demographic characteristics resultant of their everyday lived experiences.

### *Collective Identity*

The argument posited here is that a significant proportion of the audiences who regularly filled the music halls in the inner wards and districts in the cities of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, shared a form of collective identity with those in the halls of cockney London. That collective identity, albeit unstated and without any formal recognition of its awareness by the collectivity beyond its immediate environs, was aggregated by a general commonality of their inner urban lived experiences. These were played out in the song lyrics, presentation, and characterisations in the performance acts of the leading cockney-styled entertainers and transcended the need to be locally modified from their original London-centric settings. The emotional empathy that was engendered in music hall audiences to an on-stage portrayal of their everyday situations by the leading cockney-styled entertainers created the 'we-ness' element within them that later sociology and psychology theorists would determine as an essential part of the concept of a collective identity.

However, before any detailed investigation into the concept of identity as it relates to late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall audiences is attempted, it is important to situate it within two key parameters. The first, that the overwhelming discourse and wider historiography about identity, in all its

various forms and connotations, is relatively new.<sup>1</sup> As such, applying the conceptual theory of identity, even in its widest form, to a mass entertainment medium that pre-dated it by at least sixty years, requires a large element of reverse engineering with all the limitations that this naturally implies. Can we, for example, be certain that the identities ascribed to local, regional, or national communities or religious, ethnic, or occupational groups by modern sociologists and psychologists, would be relevant or meaningful to a society that was so obviously different from that of today? Indeed, with little or no reliable primary evidence through *vox populi*, is identity a concept that would even have been recognised by a section of the population that for the most part was occluded within wider Victorian society? If it was recognised at all, to what degree could it affect every day lived experience?

Yet despite these difficulties, it is not unreasonable to suggest that modern concepts of identity can be successfully applied retrospectively to inner urban

---

<sup>1</sup> Although P.J. Burke & J.E. Strets suggest that identity theory's origins can be traced back to the works of Scottish moral philosopher Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and later those of William James (1842-1910) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) it is through the works of Sheldon Stryker (1980) (2002) that it acquired greater traction. (P.J. Burke & J.E. Strets, 'The Roots of Identity Theory' in *Identity Theory*, (USA: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Other key texts on identity, in particular collective identity from a sociological and psychological perspective would include: M. Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); K. A. Cerulo, 'Identity Construction: New issues', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 23 (1997), pp.385-409; J. M. Jasper & F. Polletta, 'Collective Identity & Social Movements', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 27 (2001), pp.283-305; J. Jensen, 'What's in a name? Nationalist movements and public Discourse', in H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (eds) *Social Movements And Culture*, (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1985); J. Jones, 'who are we? Producing Group identity through everyday Practices of conflict and discourse', *Sociological Perspectives*, 54 (2011), pp.139-161; O.E. Klapp, *Collective Search for Identity*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston: 1969); A. Melucci, 'The Process of collective Identity', in H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (ed), *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). N. Ellemers, 'Social Identity Theory' *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-identity-theory>> [accessed 9 August 2021]; M.J. Kehilly, 'What is Identity? A Sociological Perspective' *ERC Seminar Series: The educational and social impact of new technologies on young people in Britain*, (London: LSE, 2009); D.A Snow, 'Collective Identity' *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (2015) at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B7908-8-08.1043-9>> [accessed 9 August 2021].

music hall audiences of around 1900. Both past and ongoing research into the subject of identity tends to suggest that the concept is both socially constructed and historically contingent so that any such reversed engineered application is theoretically sound. This is consistent with the view of Fearon who suggests that there is a presumption that 'our present concept of identity is trans historically and transculturally applicable, so that we can ask just as easily about the identities of 18th century peasants as about peoples' identities today'.<sup>2</sup> That being the case, the same logic would likely hold true in respect of late nineteenth and early twentieth century inner urban music hall audiences.

Furthermore, as Kehilly notes, that unlike in modernity where identities matter more since we have more choice over those to which we may wish to ascribe, with previous generations 'we had identities waiting for us'.<sup>3</sup> We can therefore suggest that this would have been the case during much of the nineteenth century and for the first two decades of the twentieth, with the existence of strong-class bound and regional specific communities that would have shaped individual life trajectories. For as Kehilly notes, locally bounded networks could develop the notion of being part of the world especially through occupational and work-related structures.<sup>4</sup>

The second parameter is that identity and all its various divisions and sub-sets is a concept that, as Forminaya notes, is 'extremely slippery', not least of all since

---

<sup>2</sup> J.D. Fearon, *What is Identity (As we now use the word)?* Dept. of Political Science, Stanford University, California (1999) at <<https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/what-is-identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf>> [accessed 11 October 2021].

<sup>3</sup> M.J. Kehilly, *What is Identity?* p.2

<sup>4</sup> M.K. Kehilly, *What is Identity?* p.1

there is no consensus as to its definition.<sup>5</sup> For Buckingham, the notion of identity is both ambiguous and a fundamental paradox, since although its Latin root derivation, *idem* meaning 'the same', the term 'implies both similarity and difference'.<sup>6</sup> The lack of a consensual definition of identity is a consequence of its wide range of applications and interpretations. At the micro level, identity can be viewed as a label whereby 'an individual's sense of self is defined by (a) a set of physical and psychological characteristics that are not wholly shared with any other person and (b) a range of social and interpersonal affiliations and social roles'.<sup>7</sup> For Inac and Unai, personal identity is viewed in much simpler terms: 'it is the definition of existence and belonging'.<sup>8</sup> Moving along a vertical axis towards a macro interpretation, individual identities can be aggregated to form group, local, regional and national identities.<sup>9</sup> This would conform with Kymlicka's assertion that identities fall in to three categories. The first being a universal identity that distinguishes people from non-people and is shared by people without discrimination. The second is that of group identity which is one that is shared by the same people, and third, an individual identity that is distinctive of unique traits of a sole individual.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> C.F. Forminaya, 'Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates', *Sociology Compass*, 4/6 (2010), p.394.

<sup>6</sup> D. Buckingham, 'Introducing Identity', in *Youth, Identity, and the Digital Media* (ed) D. Buckingham, *The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning*, (Mass: The MIT Press, 2008), p.1.

<sup>7</sup> M. Bamburg, 'Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity', *Theory and Psychology*, 21:1 (2011), pp 3-23, citing G.R. Vandebos (ed), *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006), p.312.

<sup>8</sup> H. Inac and F. Unai, 'The Construction of National Identity in Modern Times: Theoretical Perspectives', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3:11 (2013), p.223.

<sup>9</sup> Key texts on regional and national identities would include: S. Haslerer, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); L. Colley, *Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (London: Pimlico, 1994); K. Robbins, *Nineteenth Century Britain: England, Scotland and Wales- the Making of a nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); E. Royle, *Issues of Regional Identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> H. Inac and F. Unai, 'The Construction', p.224, citing Kymlicka (1998).



There is a danger, however, of over complicating the concept of identity, as in addition to what has been detailed thus far, it can also be examined along a horizontal axis which could include social, culture, class, political, occupational, ethnic and religious identities at both micro (individual) and macro (collective) levels.<sup>11</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, a more general definition can be effectively applied; namely that identity, be it personally or collectively, is essentially an enveloping label that differentiates and at the same time binds individuals and groups together. What is clear, therefore, is that the concept of identity itself is multi-dimensional and far ranging and that personal and collective identities are not points of singularity. Rather, they form one of many inter-related, mutually inclusive pluralities. Whilst the existence of these many pluralities may at first appear to make notions of identity complex and problematical, in fact, they help to make it a useful lens through which to examine and assess the everyday lived experiences of inner urban musical hall audiences and how they were represented by the leading cockney-styled entertainers in their performances.

From the perspective of the inner urban population of Britain's largest cities including that defined as Cockney London, identity is thus examined as a collective. The existence of such an identity and how it was manifest in late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall audiences is framed by embracing the multiplicity of the many factors outlined earlier as well as those of social class, ethnicity, or religion. Although all of these could have and invariably did impact

---

<sup>11</sup> Works on class and cultural identity would include: M. Savage, *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); R. Crompton, *Class and Stratification*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1998); W. Bottero, 'Class Identities and the Identity of Class', *Sociology*, 35:5 (2004), pp.985-1003; J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1994).

on the plurality of their individual identities, it was their shared everyday lived experiences that would be the basis of their collective identity. These lived experiences would in turn be governed and driven by the four key social demographic characteristics outlined in chapter one. These would be sporadic low skilled and low paid employment; poor and inadequate housing; low levels of health and the attendant diminution of extended life expectancy and the threat of immediate or potential poverty.

It is important to note, however, that these lived experiences were not universally experienced by every member of each inner urban community. Some members would be economically and socially on different hierarchic levels within local communities: the local publican, the pawnbroker or skilled artisan for example. Nevertheless, they all would be witness in some way to those lived experiences of the vast majority; from simple observers to having a direct interaction.

In applying the notion of collective identity to the inner urban populations of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cockney London, and by extension the audiences in music halls in those areas, we can also see how the leading cockney-styled music hall entertainers, became an on-stage manifestation of that collective identity. These entertainers were in the main, although not exclusively, London cockneys who performed their acts through London-based characterisations with song lyrics focussed on situations redolent of inner urban street life. They were presented in a cockney vernacular and were connected to and a bridge between them and the wider collectivity that formed the identity of those inner urban populations. Volosoniv's assertion, albeit

framed within the context of his work on the philosophy of language within a Marxist perspective, is that language is a reciprocal relationship between the speaker, the listener, and their social world.

This can readily be applied to the cockney-styled music hall entertainers and the collective identity of their inner urban audiences. The speaker becomes the cockney-styled entertainer, the listener is the audience, and their social world is that epitomised in the subject matter of the song lyrics and the contextual urban life in which they are set. Volosoniv suggests that:

each and every word expresses the 'one' in relation to the 'other'.  
I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view, ultimately from the point of view of the community to which I belong. A word is a bridge thrown down between myself and another. If one end of bridge depends on me then the other depends on the addressee. A word territory shared by both addresser and addressee.<sup>12</sup>

However, it is necessary to expand upon and scaffold what is meant by 'collective identity', recognising that, as with the fourteen differing definitions of 'identity' in its general sense noted by Fearon, 'collective identity' also generates a plethora of sometimes confusing and contradictory definitions and interpretations.<sup>13</sup> The generally accepted view as to the genesis of the notion of collective identity is that it evolved from the earlier work on social identity theory by Tajfel and later expanded upon by Gleason.<sup>14</sup> The overarching concept

---

<sup>12</sup> M.J. Kehilly, 'What is Identity?' citing V.Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, (London: Seminar Press, 1973), p.86.

<sup>13</sup> J. D. Fearon, 'What is Identity? Of those cited, two are especially worth noting. (1) 'people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others, in M. Hogg & D. Abrams, *Social Identification: A Social Psychology of Intergroup and Group Processes* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.2 and (2) 'identity refers to the ways in which individuals and collectives are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectives', in R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.6.

<sup>14</sup> H. Tajfel, 'Social categorisation, social identity and social comparison' in H. Tajfel (ed) *Differentiation between social group: studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*.

emanating from Tajfel's work, was the belief that group membership can help install meaning in social situations, which in turn helps people to define who they are and to determine their relationship to others. Further development on the theory posited the notion that the cognitive factors relevant to social identification specified how people interpret their own positions in different social contexts that effects perceptions of others as well their own behaviour in groups.<sup>15</sup> From this position, Jenkins argues that social identity therefore should not be seen as a static possession but as a social process whereby the individual and social are intertwined.<sup>16</sup>

It is from one of the three generally accepted types of identity (others being personal and social) that the concept of collective identity was developed and for which Polletta and Jasper offer a general definition that it is:

An individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a shared perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly and is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity.<sup>17</sup>

Central to this part of the thesis is the work of Snow which provides the most relevant interpretation and analysis of collective identity especially in relation to its retrospective application to the argument that the cockney inner urban identity became a *de facto* representation of the inner urban population of

---

(London: Academic Press, 1978); P. Gleason, 'Identifying identity: A semantic history', *Journal of American History*, 69 (1983), pp.910-931.

<sup>15</sup> N. Ellemers, 'Social Identity theory', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, at <<https://www.britannic.com/topic/social-identity-theory>> [accessed 8 October 2021].

<sup>16</sup> R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> F. Polletta and J. Jasper, 'Collective Identity', P.285.

Britain's largest cities in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain.<sup>18</sup> His theory of collective identity, which is adopted in this chapter, reflects the notions of a shared sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' that is anchored in the real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and exists within the relationship or in contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of others.<sup>19</sup>

The sense of 'we-ness' among the inner urban communities of Cockney London and those of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is starkly evidenced in their everyday lived experiences. As has been detailed in Chapter One, these were driven by sporadic, low paid and generally low skilled employment, poor and inadequate housing, poor health, and the ever-present threat of real poverty. In this respect, the consequences, in human terms, of being unemployed or suffering from pneumonia or being hungry in Holbeck in Leeds or Ancoats in Manchester or Bethnal Green in Cockney London around 1900 would be the same.

These human effects had become visibly more obvious for much of society, albeit that the levels of inner urban social deprivation and its impact may not have been viewed or understood in the same way. For example, nineteenth century London had long witnessed the practice of 'slumming'; a phenomenon that Koven defines as the 'activities undertaken by people of wealth, social

---

<sup>18</sup> D.A Snow, 'Collective Identity' *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, 2015 at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B7908-0-08.10403-9>> [accessed 1 October 2021]; D.A.Snow, 'Collective Identity and the Expressive Forms' *Center for the Study of Democracy* at <<https://scholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj>> [accessed 12 October 2021].

<sup>19</sup> D. A. Snow, 'Collective Identity', P.174.

standing, or education in urban spaces inhabited by the poor'.<sup>20</sup> For many, such as students and graduates of Keeble College, Oxford who undertook residential volunteering at Oxford House in Bethnal Green in the 1880s by providing practical support for projects to alleviate the impacts of poverty to the local community, their motives for 'slumming' were driven by deeply held concerns for social improvement.<sup>21</sup> For others, 'slumming' became a fashionable pursuit that 'encouraged some observers to trivialise poverty'.<sup>22</sup>

The suffering and social deprivation of the inner urban poor, however, was framed not only by those actually suffering (the 'we') but also by social reformers, civic authorities and the 'slum novelists' (the 'other'). This meant, therefore, that although the sense of 'we' may reside initially at a very local level, such as street or ward or district, it could just as easily transmute into a collective identity for an overwhelming majority of the inner urban population of Britain's largest cities.

However, this shared sense of 'we-ness' that is embedded in collective identity is not predicated by the requirement of a direct contact or interchange with others who share the same category membership, since its positioning is psychological in nature.<sup>23</sup> The self-recognition of living in squalid conditions and its attendant consequences in Glasgow did not require direct shared knowledge of people in

---

<sup>20</sup> S. Koven, *Slumming, Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.9.

<sup>21</sup> 'Oxford House – Past and Present' at <<https://www.oxfordhouse.org.uk/history/>> [accessed 21 December 2021].

<sup>22</sup> Koven, *Slumming*, p.7.

<sup>23</sup> R.D. Ashmore. K. Deaux and T. McLaughline-Pope, 'An Organising Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality', *Psychological Bulletin*, 130:1 (2004), pp.80-114.

similar circumstances in the Floodgate Street area of Birmingham for confirmation of its existence.

This would also fit with the three psychological processes that Ellemers outlines as being central to how individuals create and define their place in society.<sup>24</sup> The first she suggests is that there is a process of social categorisation where people perceive themselves and others in terms of being part of a relatively interchangeable group as separate or unique individuals (for example, those closest to poverty). The second, a social comparison process whereby people determine a relative value or social standing within a particular group (for example, the local publican or pawnbroker within inner urban communities). The third, a process of social identification that reflects the notion that people do not perceive social situations as detached observers. Rather, they own the sense of who they are and how they relate to others which is implicated in the way they view others and groups around them. For example, low paid skimmers in the Bermondsey tanners in cockney London would have little doubt as to their social identification relative to the tannery owners.

The collective identity of the inner urban poor in the cities discussed here and in Cockney London around the turn of the nineteenth century would not have existed eighty years earlier. As Snow suggests, collective identities do not appear on a continuing historical basis, but their emergence is associated with social or cultural changes and challenges, which can occur through political breakdown or exclusion. In other words, they tend to 'cluster historically in

---

<sup>24</sup> Ellemers, 'Social Identity Theory'.

social space.<sup>25</sup> He further suggest that: 'collective identities can emerge from a grouping or aggregation in differing contexts. These could range from relatively small groups to labourers and occupational groupings, to neighbourhoods and communities.'<sup>26</sup>

A collective identity gradually emerged because of the rapid increases in population from around 1820 and the drift to urbanisation This emergent identity would not necessarily have been formed from any single characteristic demographic, such as ethnicity or religion or occupation, but would be part of a general multiplicity of identities. Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughline-Pope argue that in modernity, most people would typically agree to having at least six identities that combine and converge in various ways.<sup>27</sup> Although that number may or may not be the case with the inner urban populations of Britain around 1900, nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to suggest they would have had more than just a single identity.

As has been noted earlier, a fundamental tenet of identity, and especially collective identity, is the notion of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' that is embedded within it. Implicit in this notion is that it has a comparative relative position to the 'other'; identity can only exist sociologically if there is a counterpoint to 'me' or 'we'. If a group or collectivity defines itself by various real or imagined characteristics then, consequently, those that do not identify themselves, or who are not identified by other 'in-group' members within the collectivity, are 'the other'. With the inner urban populations of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds,

---

<sup>25</sup> D.A. Snow, 'Collective Identity and Expressive Forms', p.4.

<sup>26</sup> D. A Snow, 'Collective Identity', p.175.

<sup>27</sup> R.D. Ashmore, K. Deaux, & T. McLaughline-Pope, 'An Organising Framework'.



Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cockney London, the 'other' could be easily recognised at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries especially in relation to the demographic characteristics that dominated their everyday lived experiences. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, the concept of 'the other', relative to the collective identity of the inner urban populations of those areas, would find its way into music hall song and performance and in so doing, provide a catalyst for the connectivity between the cockney-styled entertainers and their audiences.

Identity and shared experiences were clearly reflected, not only in the local geography of inner urban populations but importantly in their relative housing circumstances. A major feature of inner urban housing around 1900 was not just its lack of quality, but the density of population that it attracted. The persons to acre ratio of the Manchester Township Divisions of Ancoats and St. Georges at 113 and 120 respectively was approximately three times higher than that of the whole registration division of South Manchester. The district of Rusholme in the registration division of South Manchester had a person to acre density of only 15.<sup>28</sup> This was an area that would have been in walking distance for people in St. Georges in a little over an hour, and whilst not suggesting that Rusholme did not have its share of poor, densely packed housing, the contrast in housing to that of Ancoats and St. Georges would have been very visibly apparent.

---

<sup>28</sup> 'Table G, 1901 Population, Area, Density *Medical Officer of Health Report Manchester 1901*, at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b29785224>> [accessed 19 October 2021].

In places of high housing density, individual or family lived experiences would unlikely remain private. Neighbours in the same tenement building or street or alley would most probably know of each other's circumstances in varying levels of detail. Moreover, although households may have been individual units, their proximity could, by default, create a community identity at a very local level. The notion of 'our' street or area or vicinity would not be uncommon within areas of high housing density; indeed, it would find its way into the lyrics of some music all songs.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, in areas with more expansively situated housing, everyday lived experiences and individual household circumstances would likely be far more occluded.

The person to acre density was not the only problem manifest in the general housing conditions for inner urban communities around 1900. The nature of the buildings themselves, often poorly constructed, lacking in ventilation and many having inadequate sanitary facilities impacted severely on the lived experiences of the inner urban populations. As with population densities associated with inner urban living, the contrast between those enduring overcrowded and appallingly inadequate living conditions and those beyond the inner areas in larger, well-lit, and ventilated accommodation was stark and obvious.

The contrasting sense of 'we' and 'other' in respect of housing would underpin a significant part of the collective identity of the inner urban poor. In Glasgow in

---

<sup>29</sup> The opening line of one of Albert Chevalier's songs notes: 'last night, down our alley comes a toff'. *Wot Cher (Knocked 'Em in the Old Kent Road)* at <<http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-K/Knocked-Em-Kent-Road.htm>> [accessed 21 December 2021]; part of the chorus of *On Mother Kelly's Doorstep*, mentions that 'Nelly was the smartest down our alley'. G.A.Stevens, *On Mother Kelly's Doorstep*, at <<http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-O/On-Mother-Kellys-Doorstep.htm>> [accessed 31 December 2021].

1901, the inhabitants of the Brownfields and Cowcaddens districts would likely have been acutely aware of the differences in their housing conditions compared to those in the adjacent districts of Kelvinhalgh and Sandyford. Not only were they living in overcrowding conditions; residents in the Cowcaddens district were shown to have sixteen square yards of living space per person to that of Kelvinhalgh and Sandyford at ninety four square yards per person, but many lived in insanitary conditions.<sup>30</sup> As the Medical Officer of Health remarks in his 1901 report: 'in these districts the mass of insanitary conditions affects a large proportion of the inhabitants', concluding that 'both districts (*Brownfield and Cowcaddens*) are overbuilt, in the sense that the buildings are in many cases, mutually obstructive'.<sup>31</sup>

Such conditions, and the relative position to those experienced in adjacent districts, wards, and boroughs, were being replicated in the inner areas of all Britain's major cities. In Liverpool, the communities in the Exchange and Scotland districts could readily witness the differences in their living conditions compared the neighbouring districts of Everton and Kirkdale. Similarly, the contrasts in conditions between the Birmingham inner areas of St. Mary's and St. Bartholomew's relative to those found in Ladywood or Deritend or those of the Leeds township districts relative to living conditions in the Chapletown or Osmondsthorpe districts would be visibly obvious. And none more so within Cockney London, where for example, the living conditions for many on the north side of the Old Kent Road in Bermondsey or Southwark, were the direct opposite of those in Camberwell on its south side. The inner urban communities of

---

<sup>30</sup> 'Table 11. Brownfield and Cowcaddens compared with Kelvinhalgh and Sandyford and Pollockshields (W) and Bellahouston', *Medical Officer of Health Report*, Glasgow, 1901, P.13.

<sup>31</sup> *Medical Officer of Health Report*, Glasgow, 1901, p.12, p.14.

Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Cockney London at the turn of the century were unlikely to have ever met as a collective, or indeed to formally acknowledge their mutual existence. They did, however, exhibit all the characteristics of having a collective identity.

The main constituent element of identity, a sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' of an in-group, relative to the 'them' or 'other' of an out-group, is clearly in evidence within late Victorian and early Edwardian inner urban communities in the major cities in Britain. Their emergent collective identity, based upon their shared lived experiences was manifest and played out in their everyday lives. Not everyone was unemployed, or lived in overcrowded or insanitary housing, or was in poor health or on the edge of poverty. Many, however, would have been witness to that experience, either directly or indirectly and that witness would have been obvious and very visible, and the 'we-ness' of that collective identity would likely have been at varying degrees of magnitude. The counterpoint, the 'them' or 'other' of the out-group, would have been much easier to identify; essentially those who were perceived to enjoy lived experiences that were not blighted by the adverse social conditions of much of the inner urban poor. However, music hall performance made sure that notions of the in-group, the collective identity, relative to the out-group, was never too far below the surface with the cockney-styled entertainers especially ensuring its prominence. Indeed, with music hall being an entertainment medium it both parodied and caricatured them in equal measure; never seditiously, rarely provocatively but almost invariably with comedy.

The 'other' or 'them' as the antithesis to the 'we-ness' in the collective identity of the inner urban population of Britain's major cities began to emerge in British music hall during the latter half of the nineteenth century in the guise of the 'toff' or 'swell'. This was a flamboyant, confident, and stylish character applied to those of aristocratic backgrounds or the landed gentry or elites. It was often used as a derogatory stereotype of someone smartly and expensively dressed who exuded an air of superiority although in later music hall tradition the stereotype had widened somewhat to include the wealthier middle classes or more generally, the idle rich. Notwithstanding Scott's suggestion that the notion of the 'swell' in music hall is double coded as 'he might ascribe admiration for the wealth and status, but he subverts the bourgeois values in celebrating excess and idleness', this music hall constructed characterisation was extremely popular with audiences.<sup>32</sup>

Music hall would generally artistically portray the stereotype as a well-dressed (top hat and frock coat), champagne drinking womaniser and several music hall artistes adopted this persona in their stage performances during the latter years of the nineteenth century. They became known collectively as 'lion comiques' with three especially being the most famous: Alfred Vance, George Leybourne, and G.H. MacDermott.<sup>33</sup> George Leybourne's song *Champagne Charlie* perfectly captures the stereotype 'toff' and how he could be perceived as 'the other' by the inner urban poor collective:

---

<sup>32</sup> D.B. Scott, 'God Bless the Music Halls: Victorian and Edwardian Popular Songs' in *The Victorian Web*, at <<https://victorianweb.org/mt/musichall/scott1.html>> [accessed 27 October 2021].

<sup>33</sup> 'A. P. Stevens (aka Alfred Vance or The Great Vance). Born. 1839. Died. 1888; M. Farrell (aka Gilbert Hastings MacDermott). Born. 1845. Died. 1901; George Laybourne. Born. 1842. Died. 1884' in R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall. An Illustrated History*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2014).

### Champagne Charlie<sup>34</sup>

Champagne Charlie is my name

Champagne drinking is my game

Good for any game at night my boys

The way I earned my title thro' a hobby I have got

Of never letting others pay however long the shot

Whoever drinks at my expense are treated all the same

From Dukes and Lords, to cabmen down, I'll make them drink  
champagne

Some epicures like Burgundy, Hock, Claret and Moselle

But Moet's vintage only satisfies this Champagne swell

What matter if to bed I go dull head and muddle thick

A bottle in the morning sets me right then very quick.

The fine clothes and stylish appearance reinforce the stereotypical vanity of the 'toff' or 'swell' of the 'out-group' relative to the collective identity of inner urban communities in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain as portrayed in Alfred Vance's song, *The Style*:

---

<sup>34</sup> G. Leybourne & Alfred Lee, *Champagne Charlie*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-C/Champagne-Charlie-htm>> [accessed 21 October 2021].

## The Style<sup>35</sup>

You talk about your howling swells, gay clubs and Jolly Dogs;  
Your midnight owls and desolate Fowls, Old cocks and lively Frogs.  
But you may ramble through west end, and wander many a mile;  
Before you meet a gem so neat, in fact I'm just the style.

I do detest those plain dress coats, such awfully gawky frights;  
This style's full blown – the cut's my own! and don't it fit to rights?  
No pigeon boasts of such a breast, and trousers here's a pair;  
Now there's a taste, and see my waist, there's nothing wasted  
there.

Music hall performance, through its underpinning of the collective identity of the inner urban poor in contrast to the wealthy and elites, was at its very best when it employed parody and humour in its song lyrics and presentation. William Hargreaves's song, *Burlington Bertie from Bow*, is arguably one of the most memorable and enduring examples of a music hall song employing comedic parody aimed at the aristocracy. The song develops across several stanzas and contains within each one a couplet that not only draws out the comedic parody but also satirically re-enforces the difference in lifestyles between the inner urban dweller and the notionally, idle rich aristocrat.

---

<sup>35</sup> J.B. Geoghegan & A.G. Vance, *The Style* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-S/Style.htm>> [accessed 21 October 2021].

*Burlington Bertie From Bow*<sup>36</sup> (selected versed)

I'm Bert, perhaps you've heard of me, Bert, you've had word of me  
Jogging along, hearty and strong, living on plates of fresh air  
I dress up in fashion and when I'm feeling depressed  
I shave from my cuff, all the whiskers and fluff  
Stick on my hat and toddle up West.

I'm all airs and grace, correct easy paces  
So long without food I forgot where my face is  
I'm Bert, Bert, I haven't a shirt but my people are well you know

So strict are my people, they're William the conqueror's strain  
If ever they knew I'd been talking to you, why they'd never look at me again.

I'm Burlington Bertie, I rise at ten thirty, then saunter along Temple Bar  
As around there I skip, I keep shouting 'pip, pip' and the darned fools think I'm a  
car.

'Bertie' having to exist on 'plates of fresh air' and being 'so long without food I forgot where my face is', would paint a picture of a lifestyle that would not be unfamiliar to many an inner urban music hall audience. Moreover, 'Bertie', 'rising at ten thirty' to 'saunter along Temple Bar' would be in stark contrast to many inner urban dwellers who would likely have had to rise several hours earlier than ten thirty to go to work. Similarly, the notion of the 'them' and 'us' is never far from the surface of the song as Bertie notes that 'so strict are my people,

---

<sup>36</sup> W. Hargreaves, *Burlington Bertie From Bow*, at  
<[http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs\\_B/Burlington-Bertie-From-Bow.htm](http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs_B/Burlington-Bertie-From-Bow.htm)> [accessed 21 October 21 2021].



they're William the conqueror's strain, if ever they knew I'd been talking to you, they'd never look at me again'.

With *Burlington Bertie From Bow* however, the world of the moneyed, elitist 'swell' is turned on its head; 'Bertie' is no longer part of the privileged idle rich but a broken-down toff, who is too proud to accept dinner invitations'.<sup>37</sup> Made famous by Ella Shields, the song was first performed by her at the Argyle Theatre in Birkenhead in 1914 as part of her act as a male impersonator.<sup>38</sup> In Ella Shields's portrayal, he has fallen on hard times and is scraping by in Bow (a London Metropolitan Borough that would have been socially and demographically opposite to that of Westminster where Hyde Park and Bond Street were located) but determined to keep up appearances. The song was a parody of that performed by Vesta Tilley (probably the most famous male impersonation act in British music hall) some fourteen years earlier with a song titled *Burlington Bertie*. Vesta Tilley's song was very much in the earlier tradition of the 'swell' or 'toff' acts of George Leybourne and Alfred Vance, and as with their songs, *Champagne Charlie* and *The Style* leaned heavily on the alcohol fuelled world of the vain, upper-class womaniser.<sup>39</sup> As such, it fed into the current narrative and stereotypical depiction of the 'them' and 'other' out-group that was the direct opposite of the collective identity of the inner urban poor:

---

<sup>37</sup> R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall*, p.174.

<sup>38</sup> Ella Catherine Buscher (aka Ella Shields). Born. 1879. Died. 1952 in R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall*.

<sup>39</sup> Matilda Alice Powles, (aka Vesta Tilley). Born. 1864. Died. 1952 in R.A. Baker, *British Music Hall*.

## *Burlington Bertie*<sup>40</sup>

Burlington Bertie's the latest young jay  
He rents a swell flat somewhere in Kensington way.  
He spends the good oof that his pater has made  
Along with the Brandy and Soda Brigade.  
A girl wants a brooch or a new diamond ring  
And thinks a seal jacket is just now the thing,  
Or sees a new bonnet she likes oh! So much  
Her simple remark is 'Now who can I touch?'

When pretty young dancers are out of a shop;  
When sweet little barmaids have just had to hop;  
When singers cannot with their agents agree;  
When trim little widows want someone for tea;  
Who is it turns up, the lonely girl's friend?  
Who is it that nightly his club must attend?  
Who is it drinks brandy and smokes strong cheroots?  
Who is that gets into bed with his boots?

Not only is the underlying notion of the 'in-group' and 'out-group' relationship that is fundamental to collective identity re-enforced in both *Burlington Bertie* and *Burlington Bertie from Bow*, but the satirical parody that is embedded in the latter would help to explain its undoubted success with music hall audiences in inner urban communities. This song, especially the lyrics, has important significance in respect of both the notion of the collective identity of the inner

---

<sup>40</sup> H. B. Norris, *Burlington Bertie*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-B/Burlington-Bertie.htm>> [accessed 22 October 2021].

urban poor and the special connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers and their regional audiences; not least of all because of the significance of where it was first performed.

Ella Shields's debut performance of *Burlington Bertie From Bow*, with all its references to Central London, was at the Argyle music hall in Birkenhead. It suggests that the success of the song and an implicit understanding of its satire as well as an empathy with the nuances contained in the song, was less dependent on the geographical location of the inner urban audience but on the fact that it was performed to an inner urban audience. This further suggests the existence of an inner urban collective identity, bounded by shared lived experiences that made specific references to London landmarks contained in the lyrics of the songs of the cockney-styled entertainers, were little more than minutiae. It was the overarching theme of the song, the message or story contained in it and the believability of the characterisation of the performer that were the prime elements.

The presence of a collective identity of inner urban poor communities in Britain's major cities at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, also allowed for an emotional empathy between them focussed on their socially deprived everyday lived experiences. Such an emotional empathy would be generated by the stage performance material of many of the leading cockney-styled entertainers of music hall at this time and would enhance the special connectivity they had with their inner urban audiences. This in turn meant that the cockney-styled performers could develop national acts still using London-

centric references delivered in a cockney vernacular, without the need for regional modification.

### *Emotional Empathy*

Emotional empathy, from a sociological perspective, has been defined and nuanced in many ways and as a subject for research and debate has been of growing interest to psychologists, philosophers, and sociologists for some fifty years.<sup>41</sup> In addition, as with the notion of collective identity, its focus on social groups especially, allows it to be applied retrospectively to inner urban poor communities in such cities as Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow and Cockney London in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Moreover, by extension, the existence of emotional empathy can also be applied to audiences that attended music halls in their thousands in these cities during this period.

Audiences were the consumers of the national product that was music hall entertainment and their positive reaction to that product, and one of its principle means of delivery, the cockney-styled entertainers, was evident. At its simplest

---

<sup>41</sup> Key historiography would include: R.J. Blair, 'Responding to the emotions of others: disassociating forms of empathy through the study of typical and psychiatric populations', *Consciousness and Cognition*, 14 (2005), pp.698-718; F.de Vignemont & T. Singer, 'The empathetic brain: how, when and why?', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 10 (2006), pp.435-441; M. Davis, *Empathy: a social psychological approach*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996); M. Davis, 'Measuring intended differences in empathy: evidence for a multi-disciplinary approach' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44 (1983), pp.113-126; N. Eisenberg, 'Empathy and Sympathy' in M. Lewis & J.M. Haviland-Jones (eds) *Handbook of Emotions*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition, (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), pp.677-691; N. Eisenberg & J. Strayer, 'Critical issues in the study of empathy' in N. Eisenberg & J. Strayer (eds), *Empathy and its Development*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.3-13; H.J. Decety & C. Lamm, 'Human empathy through the lens of social neuroscience', *The Scientific World Journal*, 6 (2006), pp.1146-1163; R. Hogan, 'Development of an empathy scale', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33 (1986), pp.307-316; S. Thornton & D. Thornton, 'Facets of Empathy', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 19 (1996), pp.765-767.

level, it is evidenced in the vast numbers that went to inner urban music halls (see Appendix 1) especially from 1900. If there had been no such empathy with the performers and the emotions generated by their songs and characterisations, then it is likely audiences would have stayed away. Indeed, their response therefore would likely have been the opposite of empathy, namely apathy.

On another level, an audience's spontaneous and enthusiastic applause is also indicative of a tangible emotional response to that empathy. For as *The Music Hall and Theatre* noted in its review of Gus Elen's 1894 appearance at the Gaiety Theatre in Glasgow: 'With his versatility of Coster Impersonations - not exaggerated, but realistic and homely – rivetted the rapt attention of the vast audience and at frequent intervals received such enthusiastic Outbursts of Applause never before experienced in Glasgow.'<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, the strongest evidence of the relationship between the cockney-styled entertainers and their metropolitan and regional audiences, can be found in the sheer number of regular engagements undertaken by these performers. Noting in 1891, that Gus Elen would be appearing at the Day's Music Hall in Birmingham and at The Paddington Palace and Westminster music halls in Liverpool for three- and four-week engagements between September 1891 and October 1892, *The Era* goes on to say: 'This conclusively proves that Elen is in demand. Monday next will conclude a Tour of Forty Weeks, which has been a succession of triumphs.'<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> *The Music Hall and Theatre Review*, September 7, 1894, p.3.

<sup>43</sup> *The Era*, March 21, 1891, p.27.

Moreover, the emotional empathy that existed between the cockney-styled entertainers and their music hall audiences, could and did extend beyond their lifetime. Reporting on Marie Lloyd's funeral in 1922, the *Daily Mail* noted that she was 'mourned by thousands' with one mourner, 'Old Kate' walking 'all the way from Newmarket (about 75 miles)' to leave 'a bunch of flowers at Miss Marie Lloyd's house during the day'.<sup>44</sup> *The Times's* report of Marie Lloyd's funeral noted that 'the coffin was covered with wreaths and floral tributes, of which over four hundred were received' and that: 'the Police were on duty at the cemetery from 7 o'clock in the morning and long before 10 approach to the cemetery was extremely difficult. A large space had been roped off round the open grave, and people stood twelve deep at the ropes.'<sup>45</sup>

Smith suggests that empathy has two strands: cognitive and emotional. He notes cognitive empathy as being 'when an individual represents the internal mental state of another individual'; the latter being 'an emotional response in an individual that stems from and parallels the emotional state of another individual'.<sup>46</sup> Caruso and Mayer define cognitive empathy 'as the intellectual or imaginative apprehension of another's condition or state of mind without actually experiencing that person's feelings' with emotional empathy as 'the arousal or sympathy in response to the feelings and experiences of others'.<sup>47</sup> For Mehrabian and Epstein, emotional empathy is 'the heightened responsiveness to another's

---

<sup>44</sup> *The Daily Mail*, October 13, 1922, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, October 13, 1922, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> A. Smith, 'The empathy imbalance hypothesis of autism: A theoretical approach to cognitive and emotional empathy in autistic development', *The Psychological Record*, 39 (2009), p.490, citing R. Blair, 'Responding to the emotions of others: disassociating forms of empathy through the study of typical and psychiatric populations', *Consciousness and Cognition*, 14 (2005), pp.698-718.

<sup>47</sup> D. Caruso & J. Mayer, *A Measure of Emotional Empathy for Adolescents and Adults* (New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire, 1998), p.3, unpublished manuscript, citing R. Hogan, 'Development of an empathy scale', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33 (1969), pp.307-316.

emotional experiences'.<sup>48</sup> This, coupled with Smith's notion of indirect emotional empathy being the ability to share an emotional state that is inferred but not necessarily observed, can be applied precisely to inner urban music hall audiences and the stories, song lyrics and characterisations presented to them in the performances of many of the cockney-styled entertainers.<sup>49</sup>

So, if the inner urban communities of Britain's major cities embraced a collective identity of shared lived experiences that were bounded by their common demographic circumstances in respect of unemployment, housing, health, and poverty, what role did Cockney London and the cockney-styled entertainers of music hall play in this collective identity? First, as there would have been little or no direct interaction or contact between inner urban communities in large cities, their existence outside their own region would have remained largely occluded and any already present identities of ethnicity, region, occupation, religion remain dominant.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, knowledge of similar demographically categorised inner urban groups beyond their local domains gained greater exposure through late Victorian print culture. The emergence of the 'slum novelists' and other literary contributors, with their focus on London's East End, along with the transformation of the cockney stereotype detailed in the previous chapter, meant that the existence of an inner urban deprived community other than their own was now more visible.<sup>50</sup> Although this newly

---

<sup>48</sup> A. Mehrabian & N. Epstein, 'A Measure of emotional empathy', *Journal of Personality*, 40 (1972), p.526.

<sup>49</sup> A. Smith, 'The empathy imbalance', p.491.

<sup>50</sup> H.W. Nevinson, *Changes and Chances*, (New York: Hartcourt, Brace and Company, 1924); A. Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representations in Three Cities*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); M.Seltzer, 'The Princess Casamassiuma: Realism and the Fantasy of

exposed inner urban community may have different geographic, architectural or dialect characteristics to those found in their own particular city, their underlying lived experiences would be virtually identical. Reading of someone suffering with acute diarrhoea or typhus in Shoreditch would likely generate a strong emotional empathy in a fellow sufferer in Cowcaddens or other inner area wards or registration districts.

The shared experience of the pain of a constantly hungry family or being unemployed or living in dilapidated and overcrowded housing would now be recognised by other inner urban communities through the lens of the widening Victorian print culture. The location of an inner urban district where such conditions were part of a normal lived experience did not in itself change that experience; what had changed by the turn of the nineteenth century was the acceptance by such suffering communities that they were not unique.

Second, through a widening print culture, the existence of other socially deprived lived experiences in other inner urban communities throughout Britain's major cities was now more visible. Nonetheless, it was through music hall and the performance acts of many of the cockney-styled artistes that it acquired a greater exposure. When the cockney-styled artistes sung of the issues of work or poverty or overcrowded housing it was within the scenic backdrop and geographic locus of the areas they came from; the various Metropolitan boroughs that comprised Cockney London. Moreover, the stories they told about their lives and experiences, be they in Bethnal Green, or Lambeth or Bow,

---

Surveillance', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March (1981), pp.506-534; A. Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*, (London: Everyman, 1996).



through their special connectivity with their audiences, became the associated stories of many of those who inhabited the immediate areas surrounding the music halls in Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool. For unlike London that had a distinct central area (the West End) that housed those theatres and halls such as the Empire Leicester Square or The Oxford, that were more commonly patronised by the middle and upper classes, there was no such demarcation in respect of the halls and palaces of varieties in Britain's largest cities beyond the metropolis.

The lived experiences of many in the audiences in the Shoreditch Empire or the Foresters Music Hall in Bethnal Green in Cockney London would almost certainly be very similar, if not the same, as those in the audiences of the Manchester Palace of Varieties or Thornton's in Leeds or the Star Music Hall in Liverpool. It was the stage performance including characterisation and song lyrics of the cockney-styled entertainers that would link the everyday lived experiences of the inner urban music hall audiences in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow with Cockney London. As *The Era* noted: 'Gus Elen has proved himself the connecting link between humour and human nature'.<sup>51</sup> The stories that they told as part of their acts, be it of market stall holders in Petticoat Lane market in Shoreditch or the porters in Billingsgate fish market in Poplar were easily recognisable and could be related to by the market stall holders of Gallowgate in Glasgow, or Kirkgate in Leeds or the porters in the Smithfield market in Manchester or the Old Swan market in Liverpool. To this extent, therefore, cockney London became the *de facto* representation of every day inner urban life for many in such communities in Britain's major cities.

---

<sup>51</sup> *The Era*, April 25 1906 p.36.

## Cockney-style Entertainers as Conduits

As Cockney London became a representation of inner urban lived everyday experiences, so the cockney-styled music hall entertainer became a conduit for the dissemination of these experiences. The relationship between inner urban music hall audiences and the cockney-styled entertainers provided the catalyst for the creation of an emotional empathy of music hall audiences that was generated by the performers' stage presentation. Most of the cockney-styled entertainers maintained a London-centric locus in many of their songs in their acts, whether it be the workplace, the local market, or the public house, during their careers, which in some cases spanned a period in excess of thirty years. Harry Champion's performance repertoire, for example, included songs that referenced urban London and cockney landmarks within the lyrics throughout his extensive national touring career; the same was true with that of Alec Hurley.<sup>52</sup>

That these artistes, and others like them, were so successful nationally with a cockney focussed performance style, is highly indicative that the London cockney character and their everyday experiences resonated powerfully with audiences beyond the metropolis. As the *Nottingham Evening Post* remarked, Alec Hurley was: 'for many years one of the best known comedians of the variety stage. His special line was the delineation of the London coster – not the idealised type made famous by Mr. Albert Chevalier, but the 'rorty' individual of

---

<sup>52</sup> Harry Champion (real name William Henry Crump 1865-1942) at <<https://doi-oreg.mmu.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/41077>> [accessed 26 December 2021]; *What a Mouth* (circa 1896) referencing 'Blackwall Tunnel'; *Any Old Iron* (circa 1912) referencing the 'Old Britannia' music hall; *Cockney Bill of London Town*, (circa 1915) referencing 'cockney saveloys' and 'Shoreditch';

Alec Hurley (Alexander Hurley 1871-1913) at <<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp96224/alexandfer-alec-hurley>> [accessed 26 December 2021]; *The Cockney Travels*, (circa 1896) referencing 'Peckham Rye', 'Primrose Hill'; *That's How We Doos it in the Mile End Road* (circa 1905) referencing 'Mile End'.

the Old Kent Road and the Borough'.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to suggest therefore that there was a commonality of understanding of everyday Cockney London's experiences that were seen as replicating those within other inner urban music hall audiences.

All the major cockney-styled entertainers of late Victorian and Edwardian music hall conducted regular provincial tours that included Britain's major cities, but it is those of Marie Lloyd and Gus Elen that are the best documented. Gus Elen's touring itineraries in particular affords the most useful framework to illustrate how these major stars and their performances re-enforced the cockney lived experiences as being the default position of the majority of inner urban communities.<sup>54</sup> Over a period of twenty three years from 1891, Gus Elen conducted regular annual, occasionally bi-annual, provincial tours, taking in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds and Birmingham and other major cities.<sup>55</sup> These tours were built around his long-standing engagements in Cockney London's music halls and were part of what became a national stage performance.

The story of a relatively poor life in an overcrowded housing environment is told in his performance of *'If it wasn't for the 'ouses in between'*, where, as in the character of a simple gardener, Elen describes a scene that would be familiar, not just to London cockneys, but many people who lived in areas of high population density. Although the song's composers are credited as Edgar Bateman and George Le Brunn, it is Bateman's lyrics that come to the fore since as a

---

<sup>53</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, December 6, 1913, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> Gus Elen was especially meticulous in the planning of his tours and kept copious notes of the previous venues and their characteristics. *Gus Elen Archive*, courtesy of Peter Norris, personal contact.

<sup>55</sup> *Gus Elen archive*, courtesy of Peter Norris author of *A Cockney at Work. The Story of Gus Elen and His Songs* (Guildford: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2014).

performance it was more of a 'monologue with musical accompaniment'.<sup>56</sup> Some selected verses are shown below:

*It Wasn't For 'Ouses in Between*<sup>57</sup>

If you saw my little back yard, 'Wot a pretty spot you'd cry.  
It's a picture on a sunny summer day.  
Wiv the turnip tops and cabbages wot people doesn't buy  
I makes it on a Sunday look all gay.  
The neighbours finks I grow 'em and you'd fancy you're in Kent  
Or at Epsom if you gaze into the mews.  
It's a wonder as the landlord doesn't want to raise the rent  
Because we've got such nobby distant views.

Oh! It really is a wery pretty gardin,  
And Chingford to the eastward could be seen;  
Wiv a ladder and some glasses,  
You could see to 'Ackney Marshes  
If it wasn't for the 'ouses in between.

We're as countrified as can be, wiv a clothes prop for a tree  
The tub stool makes a rustic little stile;  
Ev'ry time the blooming clock strikes there's a cuckoo sings to me  
And I've painted up 'To Leather Lane a mile'(a)

Oh. It really is a werry pretty gardin,  
And Rye 'Ouse from the cock loft could be seen;

---

<sup>56</sup> P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*, p.210.

<sup>57</sup> E. Batemen and George Le Brunn, '*If it wasn't for the 'ouses in between*', at <http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-I/If-it-Wasnt-For-The-House.htm> > [accessed 27 October 2012].

Where the chickweed man undresses,  
To bath 'mong the watercresses  
If it wasn't got the 'ouses in between

The dust cart though it seldom comes is just like 'arvest 'ome'  
And we mean to rig a dairy up some 'ow  
Put the donkey in the washhouse wiv some imitation 'orns  
For we're teaching 'im to moo just like a kah.

Chorus      Oh. It really is a werry pretty gardin,  
                 And 'Endon to the westward could be seen;  
                 And by clinging to the chimblery,  
                 You could see across to Wembley,  
                 If it wasn't for the 'ouses in between

(a) *Leather Lane* in Holborn. Site of a busy street market.

First performed by Gus Elen in 1894, he included this song in his act for his appearances that year in April at the Palace of Varieties in Manchester, and at the Park Palace in Liverpool, at the New Empire Palace in Birmingham in May and at the end of August in Glasgow at the Gaiety and Scotia music halls. The fact that he would continue to include *If it wasn't for the 'ouses in between'* in his regional touring performance repertoire for the next three years is testimony to its appeal and associated relevance to inner urban audiences.<sup>58</sup>

Irregular, poorly paid work was a shared experience for many of Britain's inner urban poor during the closing years of the nineteenth century with the social

---

<sup>58</sup> Personal contact, Peter Norris, Gus Elen archive and author of *A Cockney at Work. The Story of Gus Elen and His Songs*, (Guildford: Grosvenor House Publishing, 2014).

consequences of unemployment and underemployment acquiring an increasingly higher profile during the first decade of the twentieth century. Gus Elen's song, *Wait Till the Work Comes Round*, whilst referencing the subject of work from the standpoint of ridiculing the work-shy loafer, also manages to highlight the widespread concern that many inner urban communities had about both the futility of seeking local employment and their ability to change their circumstances. Indeed, to complete the song is a wonderfully acerbic comparison to the idleness of the swell or toff. Written during the last few months of 1905, but first performed at the Tivoli in London in the following January, the song was part of Elen's performance repertoire for his provincial tour which took in, among other venues in Newcastle and Sheffield, the Ardwick in Manchester and the Liverpool and Leeds Empires later in the year:

*Wait Till the Work Comes Round*<sup>59</sup> (selected verses)

Some people knuckle dahn thro' being out of work

But I ain't one of them, not me.

If a gaffer starts to nag I soon picks up my bag

And flops 'im one with this you, d'ye see.

It don't do to let people fink you're on the rocks

'cos they're bound to turn their heads the other way

But it makes no odds to me what the future's goin' to be

So long as I've got all I wants today, so,

What's the use of kicking up a row

If there ain't no work about

---

<sup>59</sup> G. Elen & C. Cornell, *Wait Till the Work Comes Round* at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/songs-W/Wait-Till-Work-Comes-Round.htm>> [accessed 4 November 2021].

If you can't get a job, you can rest in bed  
Till the school kids all comes out  
If you can't get work you can't get the sack  
That's an argyment that's sensible and sound  
With the swell in Rotten Row you can sit and 'ave a blow  
And wait till the work comes round.

Even though this song is essentially a comedy number, the way it was performed on stage against a special scenic backdrop and introduced as 'The Wrong-Un's Bedroom', created a strong additional visual effect which could have heightened the potential for the presence of a powerful emotional empathy with inner urban music hall audiences. As McWilliam contends: 'one of the key devices of the Victorian stage on both sides of the Atlantic, was the use of the tableau, which created a stage portrait (sometimes based on actual portraits) intended to concentrate the emotion in a scene'.<sup>60</sup> Norris describes the scene in detail:

As the curtains opened, Gus was sprawled on a patched-up wooden bed, playing draughts with empty beer bottles and supping from a glass. A crate served as a cupboard for the dusty crockery, and an orange box with wire netting nailed to it was a hutch containing a rabbit. Nearby was an armchair and fixed to the wall a trio of posters, one of them a replica of a testimonial given him as a mark of esteem by the worshipful company of 'Sons of Rest'. It was upon this that Gus glazed with pride before he sang.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> R. McWilliam, 'Victorian Sensations, Neo-Victorian Romances: Response' *Victorian Studies*, 52:1 (2009), p.111.

<sup>61</sup> P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*, p.363.

With poor, overcrowded and often insanitary housing conditions and minimal incomes it is hardly surprising that the health of inner urban communities was generally worse than their more affluent neighbours. Although a somewhat blunt instrument measure of relative health, overall mortality rates in the inner urban wards and registration districts were appreciably higher compared with those in adjacent areas. For example, the three worst boroughs in Cockney London in terms of annual mortality rates in 1901, (Shoreditch, Southwark, and Stepney) were approximately 29% higher than the three lowest combined (Lambeth, Deptford, and Woolwich).<sup>62</sup> This pattern was similar in Manchester where the mortality rate for the Township area was 33% higher than that of South Manchester; in the Leeds Township it was 27% worse than the neighbouring district of Bramley.<sup>63</sup>

In the inner districts of Liverpool (Scotland, Exchange and Aberconway), the combined average mortality rate was 27% worse than that of the average of the combined neighbouring districts of Toxteth, Everton and Kirkdale.<sup>64</sup>

Birmingham's highest rates for mortality, in the wards of St. Mary's, St. Bartholomew's and St. Stephens combined, were 33% higher than that evidenced in the combined districts of Deritend and Ladywood.<sup>65</sup> Though high, these mortality rate differentials were not as pronounced as those found in Glasgow where the average combined mortality rate of the Brownfields and

---

<sup>62</sup> 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1901' *Administrative County of London* at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b18252503>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

<sup>63</sup> 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1901', *Manchester* at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b29785224>> [accessed 8 November 2021]; 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1900 Leeds' at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b2972238>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

<sup>64</sup> 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1901', *Liverpool* at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b29737357>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

<sup>65</sup> 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1901, *Birmingham*, at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b28938416>> [accessed 8 November 2021].



Cowcaddens districts were nearly 50% higher than the combined average witnessed in their neighbouring districts of Pollokshields West and Bellahouston.<sup>66</sup> In all these examples, the age groups with the highest mortality rates were in infants under five years of age and in adults between forty-five years and sixty-five years.

A consequence of high mortality rates in the later age group found in Cockney London and the inner-city areas of Britain's other most populous cities, was that widowhood was common. As a result, it was a significant lived experience for many at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Although mortality was never a major topic in the repertoire of the stage material of the cockney-styled entertainers in music hall, its family implications certainly were. A windfall inheritance from a distant relative provides the comedic theme of a song lyric in Albert Chevalier's 'Wot Cher' (Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road).

*Wot Cher (Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road)* <sup>67</sup>

Last week down our alley comes a toff  
nice old geezer with a nasty cough  
sees my Missus takes his topper off  
in a very gentlemanly way.  
'Madam' say he, "I have some news to tell  
your rich Uncle Tom of Camberwell  
popped off recent which it 'ain't a sell  
leaving you his little donkey shay.

---

<sup>66</sup> 'Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1901, Glasgow at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b28651881>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

<sup>67</sup> A. Chevalier & C. Ingle, 'Wot Cher' at <<http://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-K/Knocked-Em-Kent-Road.htm>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

Much as the sentiment of an unexpected windfall befalling a financially deprived family in Shoreditch or Poplar or Bethnal Green may well be shared by those in similar circumstances in the inner urban communities of cities beyond Cockney London, the reality in terms of it being anything other than aspirational, would be remote. A more likely resonance and audience empathetic emotional response would be found in Marie Lloyd's song, '*You're a Thing of The Past, Old Dear*'. This song, although framed within the tried and tested framework of an amusing story, alludes to the common experience of many middle-aged women in Britain's inner urban communities: that of widowhood and the nostalgia of shared moments past, albeit not without friction:

*You're a Thing of the Past, Old Dear*<sup>68</sup>

On a quiet afternoon in the cosy bar saloon  
Of the 'Mothers Arms', a well known pub in town  
Missis Green has just popped in for a weeny nip of gin.  
Strange coincidence! And so had Missis Brown.  
One or two small nips and then – Missis Green she talked like ten.  
'My old man, today, called me an ugly cat  
Ah, but not so long ago, I was beautiful you know  
I remember when he wouldn't have called me that.  
  
I was beautiful and fair, and I'd lovely golden hair  
And a kiss-curl, reaching right from here to here.  
I was called the village 'star'. But the other old girl said, 'Ah,

---

<sup>68</sup> J.P. Harrington & G. Le Brunn, *You're A Thing of the Past, Old Dear*, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-Y/You're-Thing-Of-The-Past.htm>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

That's a thing of the past, old dear.

When I sees 'is trousers there, hanging on the old arm-chair,

With the leg of 'em, I wipes away a tear.

Yus, and in between sobs, I go searching for the bobs

But they're a thing of the past, old dear'

Mrs Brown said, 'Now, you see, you're far better off than me

You've got your old man at home, and I've got none

Though at times, they plays the game, and calls us out of our name.

Still, men's useful, sometimes, when all's said and done.

They protects you from the storm, and they keeps you nice and warm

and they loves you, now and then, you must agree'.

I was once his turtle-dove, he'd sit all night, making love.

And was never happy, when I wasn't near.

I tries hard to tempt and tease him, but, somehow, I never please him.

It's a thing of the past, old dear'.

Written in 1905, this song would likely have been included in Marie Lloyd's performance repertoire in her provincial tours to Salford, Glasgow, Manchester, and Liverpool over the following two years. The underlying sentiment concerning widowhood, although referenced within a Cockney London locus, would easily be absorbed by various inner urban music hall audiences outside of London.

Widowhood in Cockney London would generate the same emotions of loss (and likely financial implications) in Glasgow or Liverpool or any late Victorian and Edwardian city in Britain. This song also has a special poignancy since it marks a subtle shift in the content and style of Marie Lloyd's stage act. Whilst still retaining its earlier exuberance and exaggerated winks, smiles and innuendo

that characterised much of her performance, her innocent, but at the same time knowing, presentation began to give way to a more worldly representation of life of inner urban communities. She was thirty-five years of age when 'You're A Thing of The Past, Old Dear' was written and physically showing signs of moving from 'petite to plump', with her returning again to this theme of ageing widowhood some years later just before her death in 1922, with her song, *I Can't Forget The Days When I was Young*.<sup>69</sup>

Within late Victorian and early Edwardian society, alcohol consumption, especially beer for men, was very much part of the everyday lived experience for much of the inner urban populations of Cockney London and Britain's largest cities. In the Cockney London boroughs of Bethnal Green and Hackney alone, there were at least 459 premises licenced to sell alcohol.<sup>70</sup> Although national alcohol consumption was on a downward trend from the start of the twentieth century, a situation that would continue during the Edwardian years, the brewing trade was still a major industry.<sup>71</sup> Per capita consumption of beer in the United Kingdom in the early 1900s was around thirty gallons per year with approximately 3500 breweries in operation in 1915.<sup>72</sup> Although Norris suggests that 'beer was a popular subject for music hall songs, not least because it was

---

<sup>69</sup> R.A. Baker, *Marie Lloyd. Queen of the Halls* (London: Robert Hale, 1990), p.103; S. Mayo & W. David, *I Can't Forget The Days When I Was Young*, 1919, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-I/I-Cant-Forget-The-Days-When-I-Was-Young.htm>> [accessed 9 November 2021].

<sup>70</sup> 'UK Pub History and Historical Street Directory of London' at <<http://www.pubhistory.com>> [accessed 1 February 2017].

<sup>71</sup> J. Nichols, 'The Highs and Lows of Drinking in Britain' at <<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion-articles/articles/the-highs-and-lows-of-drinking-in-britain>> citing G. Wilson, *Alcohol and the Nation* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1940) [accessed 1 February 2017].

<sup>72</sup> 'The Brewing Industry', *Brewing History Society*, February 2010, at <<https://historicensland.org.uk/images-books/publications/brewing-industry/bhs-brewing-ind-shier/>> [accessed 9 November 2021].

through its effects that so many of the audience viewed the show', by 1900, alcohol consumption, as part of the music hall audience experience, was far less critical to its economy.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, beer drinking, especially by men, was an undeniable part of the lived experience for many in Britain's inner urban communities and as portrayed in music hall by the cockney-styled entertainers, would likely be replicated and recognised by inner urban audiences in cities beyond the metropolis. Charles Tempest's 1905 composition of *'Arf a Pint of Ale*, performed by Gus Elen, was a major success and was used in his subsequent provincial tours and provided the basis of another beer related song a few years later in 1908, *Don't Stop My 'Arf A Pint Of Beer*.<sup>74</sup> The chorus of the song is repeated three times. On each occasion, the last line is changed to reflect the amount of beer that Elen likes to have with his supper. During the song, it builds in quantity from 'arf a pint ale', to 'a gallon and an arf of ale' to finally 'a barrel and a half of ale'.

#### *'Arf a Pint of Ale*<sup>75</sup>

I hate those chaps wot talks about the things they like to drink  
such as tea and corfee and cocoa and milk why, such fings I never fink.  
I'm plain in me 'abits and plain in me food and wot I say is this,  
If a man wot drinks such rubbish at his meals, well, I always gives 'im a miss.

Chorus: Now at breakfast I never fink of 'aving tea, I likes arf a pint of ale  
and me dinner I likes a little bit o' meat and arf a pint of ale

---

<sup>73</sup> P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*, p.351.

<sup>74</sup> C. Pratt & J.C. Moore, *Don't Stop My 'Arf A Pint Of Beer*, 1908, at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-D/Dont-Stop-Arf-Pint-Beer.htm>> [accessed 9 November 2021].

<sup>75</sup> C. Tempest, *Arf A Pint Of Ale*, 1905 at <<http://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs-A/Arf-A-Pint-Of-Ale.htm>> [accessed 9 November 2021].

and for me tea I likes a little bit o' fish an arf a pint of ale  
and for supper I likes a crust o' bread and cheese and a pint and an arf of ale

Now folks wot drinks such stuff as that are always looking pale.  
They've pains in their tummies and they've pains in their backs  
But I've never had a pain with ale.

I always feel happy, and always feel right when I've had a glass or two.  
So why should I drink coffee or tea when there's plenty of ale would do?

Chorus: Now at breakfast I never fink of 'aving tea, I likes an arf a pint of ale  
and me dinner I likes a little bit o' meat and arf a pint of ale  
and for me tea I likes a little bit o' fish an arf a pint of ale  
and for supper I likes a crust o' bread and cheese and a barrel and a half of ale

Elements of the everyday lived experiences of Cockney London provided late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall with a rich vein of material that song lyricists included in various compositions which artistes used in their stage performances. Such material was the foundation on which many of the cockney-styled entertainers based their acts. In most cases it was an amalgam of the song itself, the lyrics, in some cases the 'patter' or repartee that interspersed the song and most critically the characterisation and situation backdrop. Indeed, whilst the stage character through which the story was told may have been nationally recognisable in its visual portrayal, the sentiment or message descriptors of the stage act itself were invariably London-centric or more specifically Cockney London-centric.

This is particularly evident in the characterisation employed by Gus Elen in his 1897 song, *The Golden Dustman (Or Leave us in Yer Will)*. First performed by him at the Palace of Varieties in Manchester in March of that year, it recounts the highly implausible story of a dustman coming across a large amount of cash on his round and his plans on becoming a 'toff' as the result. In performing this

number, Elen is 'made up with a grimy face and dressed for the part with a large shovel, a fantail hat similar to that worn by the wagoners of coal merchants'.<sup>76</sup>

### *The Golden Dustman*<sup>77</sup>

Me and old Bill Smiff's bin dust-'oys, allus worked the same old rahnd.  
Strange to say we've struck a Klondyke and we've shared the welf we fahnd.  
'Ow it 'appened, there's a miser 'ud never let us shift 'is dust.  
A Toosday night 'e died, and Wensday like two burglars in we bust.  
Gets to work and blest yer eye-sight Oh, such a welf yer never saw.  
'apeneys, fardens, lor, in fousands, and to think that last week I was poor  
  
But nah I'm goin' to be a regular toff. A ridin' in a carriage and a pair.  
A top 'at on my 'ead, and fevers in my bed and call meself a dook o' Barnet Fair.  
As-terry-my-can rahnd the bottom 'o my coat, a Piccadilly winder in my eye.  
Ah, fancy all the dustmen a-shoutin' in my yer, 'leave us in yer will before yer die'.

Building a storyline around a central character that would be easily recognisable to an inner urban music hall audience beyond London was not a new feature of Gus Elen's stage performances; it had already been put to good effect about eight years earlier in his song '*E Dunno Where 'E Are*'. Based around a central character, *Jack Jones*, who is ridiculed by his friend for the changes he has made to his appearance, attitude and habits following an inheritance, the song feeds

---

<sup>76</sup> P. Norris, '*A Cockney at Work*', p.268.

<sup>77</sup> E. Graham & G. Le Brunn, *The Golden Dustman* 1897, at <<https://monologues.co.uk/music/hall/Songs-G/Golden-Dustman.htm>> [accessed 15 November 2021].

into the general reaction to misplaced snobbishness, that would likely be felt by many of the working class.

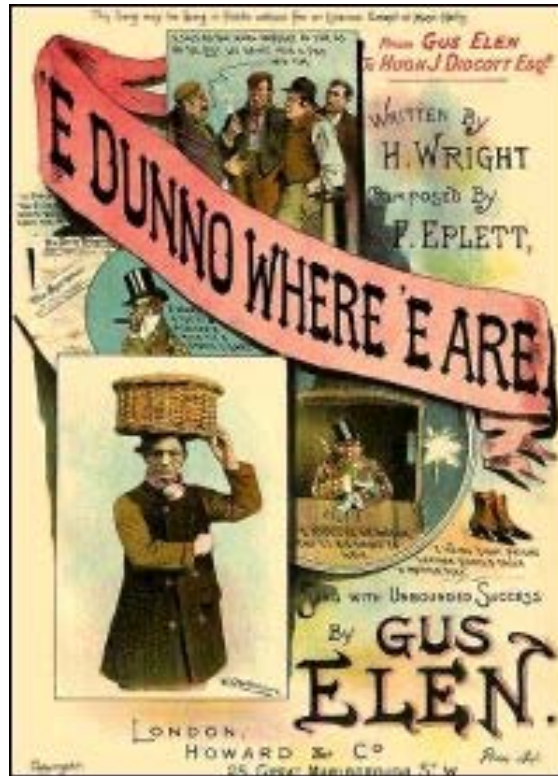
The location of the song is London's Covent Garden which at the time, was the wholesale fruit and vegetable market that served the metropolis. To recreate the *Jack Jones* character as faithfully and accurately as possible, Gus Elen was meticulous in his research. Arriving at Covent Garden market before dawn, he observed the whole scene, both visually and aurally. He especially noticed a market porter with a stack of wicker baskets perched on his head that were overflowing with vegetables. It was from this moment that Elen knew that *Jack Jones* would be a market porter as Norris notes: 'the basket would be a useful prop, and it was duly purchased for 1s 6d. The porter's garb of peaked cap pulled well down over one ear, spotted scarf, corduroy jerkin and well-worn trousers and boots was faithfully copied.'<sup>78</sup>

This detailed visual portrayal of the *Jack Jones* character was such a central part of Gus Elen's performance of '*E Dunno Where 'E Are*' that it was incorporated into the illustrations on the published sheet music for the song.

---

<sup>78</sup> P. Norris, '*A Cockney at Work*', p.131.





Source: Victoria and Albert Museum.

First performed at the Trocadero in London in 1893, the song was an immediate success and had its first provincial exposure at the Palace of Varieties in Manchester and The Paddington in Liverpool during April. By the end of the following year, it would be part of Gus Elen's repertoire for his Glasgow and Birmingham engagements.<sup>79</sup>

### *E Dunno Where 'E Are*<sup>80</sup>

'Jack Jones is well known to everybody, round about the market, don't yer see.

I've no fault to find wiv Jack at all when 'es 'as 'e used to be.

But somehow, since 'es 'ad the bullion left 'e 'as altered for the wust.

<sup>79</sup> Gus Elen archive, courtesy of Peter Norris.

<sup>80</sup> H. Wright & F. Eplett, 'E Dunno Where 'E Are, in P. Norris, *A Cockney at Work*, p.129-130.

When 'es up at Covent Garden you can see 'im standin' all alone  
won't join in a quiet Tommy Dodd, (a) drinking Scotch and Sodas on 'is own.  
'e 'as the cheek and impidence to call 'is muvver 'is ma.

Since Jack came into a little bit 'o coin, why, 'e don't know who 'e are

One day I saw 'im wiv a top-at on, 'e said 'e bought anuvver fer 'is Pa.

Wears gloves and no mistake, they're kid which shows the jossor (b)

Don't know where 'e are

(a) Cockney slang for a half a pint of beer.

(b) A simple-minded man.

Given the striving street markets that existed at this time in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow, the popularity of this song with inner urban audiences is easy to understand. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that in the audiences in the above cities where Gus Elen performed this number, there would have been those who would have direct experience and knowledge of similar local scenes around which this song is situated. Such was the popularity of this song, which *The Encore* noted was 'the purest piece of unaffected costerism we have yet had on the variety stage', it also spawned several sequels by other artistes.<sup>81</sup>

The cockney-styled artistes, therefore, through their stage performances in music hall, were the conduit in linking much of the everyday lived experiences of Cockney London with those replicated among inner urban communities in the major cities throughout Britain, especially those in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds,

---

<sup>81</sup> *The Encore*, 20 October, 1893; P Norris suggests at least three: 'E Dunno Where 'E is', 'E's Found Out Where 'E Are', 'Jack Jones, Esq. Late Covent Garden Porter' in P. Norris. 'A Cockney at Work', P.132.

Birmingham, and Glasgow. Moreover, as these experiences were essentially common and driven by the same social demographics, the cockney-styled entertainers of music hall would view the inner urban audiences in these cities in the same light as those of Cockney London. To this extent, the cockney centric locus that framed their acts was less important than the subject matter embedded in the wider content of their stage performance.

### *Conclusion*

At the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Cockney London and the inner urban populations of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow, shared a collective identity. This identity, as part of a plurality of others that could include regionality, nationality, ethnicity, religion or occupational, was based on shared social demographic denominators. The common demographics that underpinned this collective identity would be the social implications and consequences of low paid, unskilled, and often sporadic employment; overcrowding in poor and inadequate housing; general poor health leading to higher overall death rates with lived experiences that were impacted at some point in their lives by near or actual poverty.

Such a collective identity that existed among the inner urban poor of Britain's largest cities and that of Cockney London would be the catalyst for an emotional empathy between them. This would be manifest in their positive reaction as music hall audiences to the stage performances of music hall's cockney-styled entertainers. These performances, using storylines garnered from the everyday lived experiences of London's inner urban community, Cockney London, would be an amalgam of characterisation, song material, especially lyrics and

representative visual presentation. Although most of these stage performances by the leading cockney-styled entertainers had London as their locus and a cockney vernacular as their *lingua franca*, the underlying memes were those of inner urban lived experiences in Britain's largest cities.

Many of the cockney-styled entertainers of the late Victorian and early Edwardian era, constructed their stage performances around the everyday lived experiences of Cockney London. Their acts would feature character portrayals of everyday people in everyday circumstances witnessed on the streets of Cockney London and in their homes, workplaces, and places of leisure, and invariably the public house. These everyday circumstances in the lives of a high proportion of the population of Cockney London were given colourful exposure, often with humour and parody in the song lyrics and stage presentation by the leading cockney-styled artistes. Not only were the storylines behind the song lyrics recognisable and believable, the artistes themselves were seen as authentic; not just to Cockney London music hall audiences but to those in the inner urban areas of such cities as Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and Glasgow. The stage performances of the cockney-styled entertainers generated an emotional empathy between their audiences and the characters being portrayed, both by the artistes themselves and those embedded in the lyrics of their songs.

This emotional empathy of music hall audiences could only have been generated by the existence of a collective identity among the inner urban populations of Britain's cities that was based on their shared social demographics concerning employment, housing, health, and social deprivation. Despite there being regional or indeed local nuances between different inner urban communities,

Cockney London's everyday lived experiences as portrayed by the cockney-styled entertainers became a national default. They were a *de facto* representation for many of the inner urban lived experience in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, which was embodied in the stage performances of the leading cockney-styled entertainers.

## *Chapter Six – Conclusion*

In a period of a little over fifty years leading up to the First World War, British music hall had become a national mass entertainment industry and a major consumer of the nation's increased leisure time. Even though virtually every sizeable town or city in the country could boast having at least one music hall or palace of varieties, it was in the inner areas of Britain's most populous cities that they were most prolific. This live entertainment medium was enjoyed by patrons of all social classes and available to them twice nightly on at least six days per week, invariably with extra matinee performances on two of those days.

It was a major mass entertainment platform for an eclectic mix of performers and performances which, for the most successful artistes, elevated them to national celebrity status and made them household names. There was, however, one style of performer, categorised generally by the trade press of the day as being part of the genre of 'serio-comedians', whose stage acts endeared them especially to inner urban music hall audiences in Britain's largest cities as well as to their home audiences in Cockney London. These artistes, defined as cockney-styled entertainers in this study, were the most highly paid, the most nationally famous and most enduring. Their performance material, in particular the lyrics in their songs and their characterisations, in most cases borne out of those seen and heard on the streets and in the homes of those living in Cockney London, presented an on-stage mirror to the everyday lived experiences of many inner urban dwellers in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

These artistes, who would include the most famous music hall artistes of the day such as Marie Lloyd, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria, Harry Champion, and others, would highlight the vicissitudes, the stresses and strains of everyday life, the social deprivations, but also the humour and the joys and vitality of inner urban life. They would present this reflective mirror of inner urban lived experiences in their stage performances, including delivery in a cockney vernacular, not just to their local London audiences but to fellow inner urban dwellers throughout the country. Moreover, their stage performances were neither modified nor reformatted in the halls of Manchester or Birmingham or Glasgow to accommodate local or regional audiences' considerations. They were performed as part of a national repertoire of vignettes of the everyday lived experiences that characterised inner urban living during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. To achieve such high-profile national success with performance material that was heavily London-centric and delivered in a cockney vernacular to regional audiences would seem to be counterintuitive. Yet successful they undoubtedly were, with performing careers in some cases lasting twenty years or more.

As this study has demonstrated, the key to the cockney-styled artistes appeal to inner urban audiences in Britain's most populous cities as well as those in Cockney London was not just the result in their innate skills as performers or their stage craft. Important as these qualities were, it was their ability to achieve a special connectivity with inner urban audiences that was the key to their success. Furthermore, it meant that they could use their existing, London-centric performance material, and employing a cockney vernacular, to audiences beyond London without the need for any regional modification. Inner urban

audiences would regard these entertainers, through their performance material, almost as if being on intimate terms with their collective and individual circumstances. It was as if they were part of their local communities and sharing in their everyday lived experiences. Consequently, this special connectivity resulted in the cockney-styled entertainers becoming a conduit through which everyday life was projected back to them. The characterisations, the story lines and emotions embedded in the song lyrics would be a mirror reflecting the harsh reality of their daily lives; often tinged with pathos but almost invariably confronted with humour.

However, as has been comprehensively shown in this study, the special audience and performer connectivity exhibited by the leading cockney-styled entertainers could only have been achieved by the convergent synergy of four key enabling factors. All these factors would play a major part in the ability of the cockney-styled entertainers to develop their special performer/audience connectivity. However, it is the first of these that would have primacy and is directly influential in establishing the other three. This first enabling factor would be the emergence, from the last decade of the nineteenth century, of a quasi-homogenous, inner urban population within Britain's most populated cities beyond the metropolis that replicated that of Cockney London. This would be manifest in the shared demographic characteristics concerning employment and unemployment, housing, health, and social deprivation. It would be a collective common denominator of inner urban living in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain. These common demographic characteristics and their impact on the everyday lived experiences of inner urban dwellers would provide a knowing



audience backdrop to and source material for much of the performance content of the cockney-styled entertainers.

The second enabling factor would be the structural change and development of music hall in Britain from a local, public house-based entertainment, driven by enterprising publicans to enhance alcohol sales, to a commodified, national, mass entertainment medium organised and operated through syndicated music hall circuits. These circuits of music halls and palaces of varieties, would, in turn, provide artistes, such as the leading cockney-styled entertainers, with a platform to regularly reach inner urban audiences through annual tours of cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow. Such touring itineraries, often undertaken annually, were in conjunction with their regular appearances in the various halls of Cockney London and would be the base from which these artistes would establish national profiles and national performance repertoires.

The third was the greater awareness by the middle classes and elites of Victorian society of inner-city dwellers within Britain's largest cities and how this was stereotypically represented and subsequently transformed during the nineteenth century, especially in Victorian print culture. Initially, the stereotype was one that was portrayed as being transgressive in nature and potentially disruptive and the antithesis of the norms of a well ordered and respectable society. It subsequently underwent a major metamorphosis to become one that was characterised as being compliant, mainly supine and typifying the working man and women who stoically accepted their place in the hierarchical structure of Victorian society. This transformation went in tandem with that of the

representation of the London cockney in music hall from the middle of the nineteenth century.

The fourth and final enabling factor that was critical in establishing the special performer/audience connectivity of the cockney-styled entertainers, was the presence of a collective identity among large city, inner-urban dwellers. This collective identity was based upon shared social demographic common denominators of employment, housing, health, and social deprivation. It was the foundation upon which Cockney London and regional inner urban audiences developed a shared collective and individual emotional empathy towards the everyday lived experiences being projected back to them by the cockney-styled entertainers in their performances. Furthermore, it reinforced the sense of 'we-ness' and the 'other' that was inherent in the collective identity of inner urban dwellers that was generated by the common demographic characteristics of their shared everyday lived experiences. The Cockney London lived experience, therefore, presented in music hall by the cockney-styled entertainers, became a *de facto* representation of that for most inner urban dwellers at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

This study has demonstrated conclusively that music hall's cockney-styled entertainers' ability to successfully develop national repertoire performances, was due to the special connectivity they generated with their audiences, especially those in the inner areas of Britain's largest cities. It was a special characteristic, inherent in the performance style and content within their acts that was fundamental to their national audience appeal. This special connectivity created a performance intimacy with inner urban audiences, that was based on a

mutual collective and individual empathy with their everyday lived experiences. Moreover, the presence of this connectivity eliminated any requirement by regional inner urban music hall audiences to have a direct experience or special knowledge of Cockney London life to relate to the cockney-styled performers and their London-centric performance material. It has further demonstrated that this special connectivity could only have occurred because of the convergence and synergy of four critical enabling factors that were present from the last decade of the nineteenth century.

However, although this study situates this special connectivity within a timescale of approximately twenty-four years from the last decade of the nineteenth century, the underpinning concept does not end with music hall's supposed decline after 1920. Anthony suggests that the music hall of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain eventually 'died from a four-pronged assault from cinema, ragtime, revue and radio'.<sup>1</sup> However, the eclectic mix of live performance national entertainment that was the epitome of music hall continued well into the twentieth century. Similarly, the genre of cockney-styled entertainers did not end with music hall's transition over this period. Indeed, whilst some like Marie Lloyd and Alec Hurley died relatively young, and others like Gus Elen opted for a life of comfortable retirement many, such as Harry Champion, Kate Carney and Vesta Victoria professionally performed in some capacity well into the 1930s.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> R.A. Anthony, *British Music Hall*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2014), p.248.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1930 and 1938 music hall artistes including Harry Champion, Kate Carney, Gus Elen, Vesta Victoria and Florrie Ford made regular appearances at Royal Variety Command Performances. 'Archive Past Performances', *The Royal Variety Charity*, at <<https://www.royalvarietycharity.org/royal-variety-performance-home/archive>> [accessed 18 July 2022].

Moreover, the notion of the special audience/performer connectivity could be seen in some of the later stars of Variety such as Max Miller and Tommy Trinder throughout the 1940s, and 1950s.<sup>3</sup> As a stand-up comedian, billed as 'the Cheeky Chappie', Max Miller, following his London debut in 1924, played most of the music halls in London with an act that *The Times* described in its obituary of him, that 'depended upon establishing an intimate relationship with an immediate audience'.<sup>4</sup> Russell notes that his performance style was one where he 'created a rapport, almost a comic conspiracy, between performer and audience that has rarely been equalled'.<sup>5</sup> Tommy Trinder's stage act would also show similarities to the earlier cockney-styled entertainers of music hall in respect of audience/performer connectivity.<sup>6</sup> Rarely employing a script, his act as a comedic performer was 'based on the simple expedient of seizing an audience through the sheer force of his personality and holding it with a mixture of jokes, insults and sheer arrogance'.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, it is this special connectivity that affords some of the most successful contemporary entertainers, such as Billy Connolly or Peter Kay, the ability to take their original regional based performance material to national audiences without modification. Billy Connolly's audiences outside of Glasgow did not require an intimate knowledge of the city's shipyards to enjoy and relate to the characters and their lived experiences around which he framed his early-

---

<sup>3</sup> Max Miller (Thomas Henry Sargent) (Born, 1894 – died, 1963) at *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi-org.mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40729>> [accessed 18 July 2022].

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 9 May 1963, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> D. Russell, 'Max Miller', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <<https://doi-org.mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40729>> [accessed 18 July 2022].

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Edward Trinder ('Tommy'). (Born, 1909 – died, 1989) at *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at, <<https://doi-org.mmu.idm.ocic.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39949>> [accessed 19 July 2022].

<sup>7</sup> *The Times*, 11 July 1989, p.16.

stage act. In a similar way, it was not necessary for Peter Kay's audiences beyond the Albert Halls, Bolton to be closely familiar with the notion of the weekly 'big shop' or the antics of 'uncle knob head' at family gatherings to relate to the humour he draws from common everyday lived experiences.

The enabling factors that were present in respect of the connectivity enjoyed by the cockney-styled entertainers of late Victorian and early Edwardian music hall would likely be very different to those experienced by comic entertainers of the Variety era and even more so of those of more recent times. However, the ability to create a special audience/performer relationship that is based on a shared empathetic understanding among audiences to a world projected in a live performance would still be critical. How audience/performer connectivity developed through the ensuing periods of mass live performance entertainment from 1930 therefore presents a rich vein of opportunity for further research.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1.0

	<b>Location</b>		<b>1890</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1910</b>
<b>Cockney London</b>					
		<b>Capacity</b>			
The Alexandra Theatre (later Palace Theatre of Varieties)	Stoke Newington Rd. 172 Union St.	1900	0	1	1
The Raglan Music Hall	Southwark	900	1	0	0
Balham Hippodrome (formerly Royal Duchess Theatre)	Balham Hill/Yukon Rd.	2500	0	0	1
Balham Empire (formally Balham Music Hall)	75 High Rd. Balham	1300	0	1	0
The Battersea Palace (Formerly The Washington Music Hall)	32 York Rd. Battersea	900	1	1	1
Theatre Royal (Stratford)	Salway Rd/. Angel Lane, Stratford 363-375 Stratford High St.	1000	1	1	1
Borough Theatre & Opera House	Broadway, Stratford East	2200	0	1	1
Empire Palace of Varieties (aka The Stratford Empire)	High St, Hoxton (now Hoxton St.)	1000	0	1	1
Britannia Theatre		3000	0	1	1
Empress Theatre (aka Empress Theatre of Varieties, Empress Music Hall)	Brixton	1260	0	1	1
Royal Cambridge Music Hall (aka The Cambridge)	136 Commercial St. Shoreditch	2000	1	1	1
The Grecian Theatre (formerly the Grecian Saloon)	City Rd., Shoreditch	3000	1	0	0
Shoreditch Empire (the London Theatre of Varieties, Griffin Music Hall, London Music Hall)	99 Shoreditch High St. Shoreditch.	2330	1	1	1
The Canterbury Music Hall	143, Westminster Bridge Rd, Lambeth	3000	1	1	1
The Lewisham Hippodrome	135-139 Rushey Green Lane, Catford 93, Cambridge Heath Rd, Bethnal Green	3600	0	0	0
Foresters Music Hall		1000*	1	1	1
The Grand Theatre (then Grand Palace of Varieties)	21 St. John's Hill, Clapham Junction Croom's Hill,	3000	0	1	1
Greenwich Hippodrome	Greenwich	1000*	0	1	1
The Hackney Empire	291 Mare St. London 556-564 Holloway Rd. Islington	1500	0	0	1
The Holloway Empire		1200	0	1	1

Hoxton Varieties (aka Theatre of Varieties, Harwood's Music Hall)	18-20 Pitfield St. Hoxton, Shoreditch.	1600	1	1	1
The Royal Albert Music Hal (formerly Relf's Music Hall - then Imperial Palace of Varieties)	Barking Rd/Victoria Dock Rd, Canning Town.	2500	0	1	1
Grand Theatre (formerly The Philharmonic Hall, Philharmonic Theatre) aka Islington Empire	40 Islington St. Islington	3000	0	1	1
Collins Music Hall	10/11 Islington Green	2000*	1	1	1
The Paragon Theatre (formerly The Eagle Public House, Lusby's Music Hall)	93-95 Mile End Rd, London	3000	1	1	1
The Queen's Theatre (formerly Queen's Arms Palace of Varieties/Oriental Music Hall)	275-279 Poplar High St. 34-36 Lower Road/Culling Rd. Rotherhithe	1360	0	1	1
The Rotherhithe Hippodrome (formerly Terriss Theatre)	2000	0	0	1	
New Cross Empire (aka Deptford Theatre of Varieties)	New Cross Rd/Watson St. New Cross	2000	0	1	1
Broadway Theatre	Rd/Tanners Hill 195/197	3000	0	1	1
The Palace Theatre	Walthamstow High St. Bow	2000	0	0	1
The Royal Victoria Music Hall	234 Old Ford Rd., Bethnal Green	300	1	1	0
The South London Palace of Varieties	92, London Rd. Lambeth	4000	1	1	1
The Star Music Hall (aka Star & Garter Music Hall)	189 Neckinger Rd (now Abbey St.) Bermondsey	400	1	1	1
Grand Theatre (aka The Woolwich Grand)	38, Wellington St., Woolwich	1600	0	0	1
Camberwell Empire (previously Metropole Theatre)	Denmark Hill/Coldharbour Lane Camberwell	500*	0	0	1
Dalston Theatre (previously known as North London Coliseum)	12 Dalston Lane (formerly Rosebury Place, Hackney	2000	0	1	1
East Ham Palace	High St. North, East Ham	2000	0	0	1
Gatti's Palace of Varieties	218 Westminster Bridge Rd. Lambeth	1180	1	1	1
The Pavilion	Whitechapel Rd., Stepney	2500	1	1	1
Peckham Hippodrome (formerly Crown Theatre)	High St., Peckham Southampton	2000	0	1	1
Peckham Theatre of Varieties (formerly Rosemary Branch Music Hall)	St./Commercial Way, Camberwell	500*	1	0	0
Poplar Hippodrome (previously New Prince's Theatre)	East India Dock Rd., Poplar	2500	0	0	1

Regent Theatre of Varieties (formerly Sebright Music Hall)	Hill St. (now Coate St.) Hackney	700	1	1	0
Surrey Theatre	Blackfriars Rd., Lambeth	2000	0	0	1
Total Halls			18	31	37

\* Estimated



## Appendix 1.1

### Manchester & Salford

Name	Location	Capacity	1890	1900	1910
Alcazar/Bridgewater	Central	500*	1	1	1
Alexandra Theatre, known as Folllys. Reopened as Tivoli	Peter St.	1000*	1	1	1
Alhambra	Ogden Lane, Ashton Lane, Openshaw	2000	0	0	1
Ardwick Empire (became Manchester Hippodrome 1935)	Hyde Rd/Stockport Rd	1000*	0	0	1
Ashton Empire Hippodrome	Oldham Rd	1000*	0	0	1
Chorlton Theatre & Winter Gardens	Wilbraham Rd, Chorlton-cum-Hardy	300*	0	0	1
The Comedy Theatre (became Gaiety Theatre)	Peter Street	2500	1	1	1
The Lyceum (became Crown Theatre 1907)	Eccles	2000	0	1	1
Free Trade Hall	Peter Street	500*	1	1	1
Temperance Theatre of Varieties (formerly Grand Circus, became Grand Temperance Theatre of Varieties, Grand Theatre of Varieties, Grand Theatre)	Peter Street	3000	1	1	1
Harte's Grand Theatre	Central	300*	0	0	0
Hulme Hippodrome (formerly Grand Junction Theatre & Floral Hall)	Preston Street	3000	0	0	1
Hulme Playhouse Theatre (formerly The Hippodrome, later The Grand Junction Theatre) - next door and conjoined with Hulme Hippodrome	Preston Street	1500	0	0	1
Kings Theatre	Longsight	500*	0	0	1
The London Music Hall (later Royal Amphitheatre & Circus, The Queen's Theatre)	Bridge St.	1400	1	1	1
The Metropole Theatre	Openshaw	2000	0	1	1
Midland Hotel Theatre	Peter St.	500*	0	0	1
Opera House (formerly The New Theatre, New Queens Theatre)	Quay St	500*	0	0	0
The Palace Theatre (formerly Manchester Palace of Varieties)	Oxford Street	2000*	0	1	1
The Queen's Park Hippodrome Theatre	Turkey Lane, Harpurhey	500*	0	0	1
The Rusholme Theatre	Rusholme	500*	0	0	0
The Victoria Theatre	14/18 Gt. Clowes St. Salford	500*	0	0	1
The Prince of Wales Theatre	Liverpool St. Salford	1000	1	1	1

Regent Theatre of Varieties	Cross Lane, Salford	3000	0	1	1
Royal Hippodrome Theatre	Cross Lane, Salford	1800	0	0	1
Canterbury Hall (formerly Fox's Victoria Music Hall)	Chapel/Greengate St. Salford	500*	1	0	0
Total			8	11	22

\*Estimated

## Appendix 1.2

### Liverpool & Birkenhead

Name	Location	Capacity	1890	1900	1910
Liverpool Empire (formerly Prince of Wales Theatre, Royal Alexandra Theatre & Opera House, Empire Palace)	Lime St. Liverpool	2000	1	1	1
Playhouse Theatre (formerly The Star Concert Hall/Star Music Hall/Star Theatre of Varieties/Liverpool Repertory Theatre)	Williamson Square	2000	1	1	1
The Olympia Theatre	West Derby Rd, Everton	4000	0	0	1
The Epstein Theatre (formerly The Crane Hall/Crane Theatre/Neptune Theatre)	Hanover Street	450	0	0	0
The Cambridge Music Hall	Warwick St/Mill St.	1000	1	1	1
The Constellation Music Hall (formerly The Liver Music Hall)	74 Whitechapel/Charles St)	1000	1	1	1
Royal Palace of Varieties (later Theatre Royal)	Breck Rd, Everton	500	1	1	1
The Royal Coliseum Theatre & Music Hall (later Saunder's Theatre of Varieties/City Theatre of Varieties/New Grand Theatre & Opera House/Queen's Theatre/Kelly's Theatre)	Paradise St.	3000	1	1	1
The Royal Hippodrome Theatre (formerly Hengler's Grand Cirque)	West Derby Road	3500	0	0	1
Royal Muncaster Theatre (later The New Prince's Theatre/Strand Cinema)	Irlam Road, Bootle	1000*	1	1	1

Teutonic Hall (also known as The Theatre of Varieties/St. James Hall & Operetta House/Tivoli Theatre of Varieties/Palais de Lux Cinema)	Lime Street	1500	0	0	0
The Argyle Theatre (opened 1868 as Argyle Music Hall - 1876 re-named Prince of Wales - 1890 back to Argyle Theatre (of Varieties))	Birkenhead	1000	1	1	1
The Hippodrome (formerly Ohmy's Grand circus/ 1890 renamed The Gaiety Music Hall/1898 name changed to Metropole Theatre (used for touring productions)/1908 renamed The Hippodrome)	Grange Rd, Birkenhead.	500	1	0	0
The Claughton Music Hall	Claughton Rd./Atherton St., Birkenhead	600	1	1	1
Paddington Palace	Edge Hill	1000	1	1	1
The Westminster	Kirkdale	600	0	1	0
Total			11	11	12

\*Estimated

### Appendix 1.3

#### Birmingham

Name	Location	Capacity	1890	1900	1910
The New Alexandra Theatre (formerly The Lyceum Theatre)	John Bright St.	500*	0	0	0
Aston Hippodrome	Site of today's Drum Arts Centre	2000	0	0	1
Birmingham Hippodrome (formerly Tivoli Theatre of Varieties) - prior to that, the Tower of Varieties Circus .	Hurst St., Birmingham	2600	0	1	1
The Carlton Theatre - later Birmingham Coliseum and Gaiety Theatre, Gaiety Theatre	Saltney Rd./Nechel's Place, Birmingham	2000	0	1	1
Empire Theatre (formerly Day's Crystal Palace Concert Hall	Smallbrook St./Hurst St., Birmingham	3000	1	1	1
Gaiety Theatre of Varieties (formerly Holder's Grand Concert Rooms)	Coleshill St. Birmingham	3500	1	1	1
Imperial Theatre (later Bordesley Palace Theatre)	Clyde St./High St, Bordesley, Birmingham	2500	0	1	1
The King's Hall (formerly Central Hall)	Corporation St.	500*	0	0	1
The Theatre Royal (later The Astoria Cinema, Alpha Television Studios)	Aston Rd North, Aston, Birmingham	2000	0	1	1
Total			2	6	8
*Estimated					

## Appendix 1.4

### Leeds

Name	Location	Capacity	1890	1900	1910
City Varieties (formerly Thornton's Music Hall/Stansfield Varieties)	Swan St., Briggate, Leeds	3000	1	1	1
Empire Palace	Briggate	1700	0	1	1
New Pavilion	South Queen St/High St., Morley	500*	0	0	0
The Queen's Theatre	Meadow Rd./Jack Lane, Holbeck	3500	0	1	1
The Princess' Palace (later The Tivoli, then Hippodrome)	King Charles Croft	600*	1	1	1
Total			2	4	4

\*Estimated

## Appendix 1.5

### Glasgow

Name	Location	Capacity	1890	1900	1910
Oxford Café Concert & Music Hall (previously The Alexandra Music Hall/The Colosseum)	73 Cowcaddens St. Glasgow	700	1	0	1
Alhambra	Wellington St. Glasgow	2800	0	0	1
Britannia Music Hall	111-113 Trongate, Glasgow	1500	1	1	1
Empire Palace (formerly The Gaiety)	Sauchiehall St. Glasgow	2000	1	1	1
Coliseum Theatre	Eglinton St. Glasgow	3000	0	0	1
Metropole Theatre (formerly Empress Theatre/Falcon Theatre)	217 St. Georges Rd. Glasgow	1300	0	0	0
The Palace Theatre	Main St. Gorbals, Glasgow	2000	0	0	1
Pavilion Theatre	121 Renfield St. Glasgow	2500	0	0	1
Scotia (The Metropole Theatre)	116, Stockwell St. Glasgow	4000	1	1	1
The Victoria Music Hall (Later The Tivoli Theatre/Gaiety Theatre)	625 Argyle St. Glasgow	3000	1	1	1
			5	4	9

\*Estimated

## Appendix 2.0

### Manchester & Salford 1890-1910

Year.	1890	1900	1910
Active Venues	7	11	22
Gross Annual Single Performance Audience Capacity (unweighted)	10400	18900	31500
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = [Capacity x 60% occupancy x 240 annual performances	1.5		
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = [Capacity x 60% occupancy x 672 annual performances: 6 x twice nightly plus 2 matinees)		7.6	12.7

## Appendix 2.1

### Liverpool & Birkenhead 1890-1910

Year.	1890	1900	1910
Active Venues	11	11	12
Gross Annual Single Performance Audience Capacity (unweighted)	13600	13700	20600
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = [Capacity x 60% occupancy x 240 annual performances	2.0		
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = [Capacity x 60% occupancy x 672 annual performances: 6 x twice nightly plus 2 matinees)		5.5	8.3



## Appendix 2.2

### **Birmingham 1890-1910**

Year	1890	1900	1910
Active Venues	2	6	8
Gross Annual Single Performance Audience Capacity (unweighted)	6500	15600	18100
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 240 annual performances)	0.9		
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 672 annual performances: 6 x twice nightly plus 2 matinees)		2.6	6.3

## Appendix 2.3

### **Leeds 1890-1910**

Year	1890	1900	1910
Active Venues	2	4	4
Gross Annual Single Performance Audience Capacity (unweighted)	3600	8800	8800
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 240 annual performances)	0.5		
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 672 annual performances: 6 x twice nightly plus 2 matinees)		1.5	3.5

## Appendix 2.4

### **Glasgow 1890-1910**

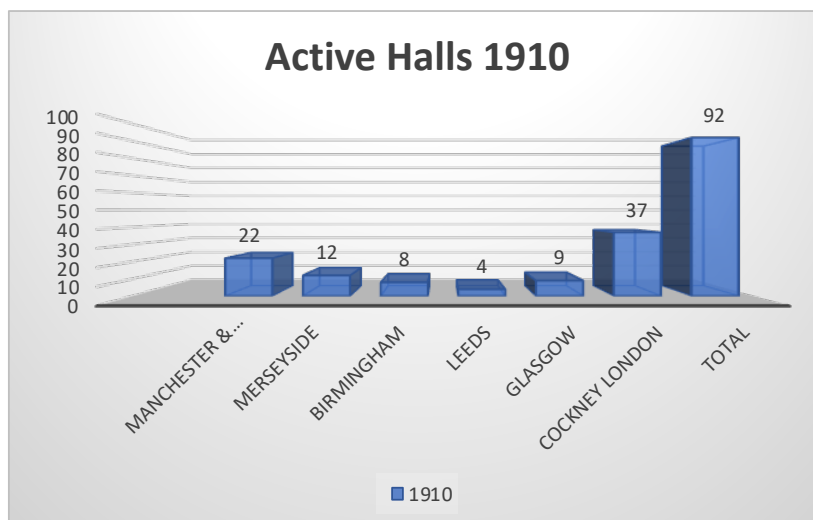
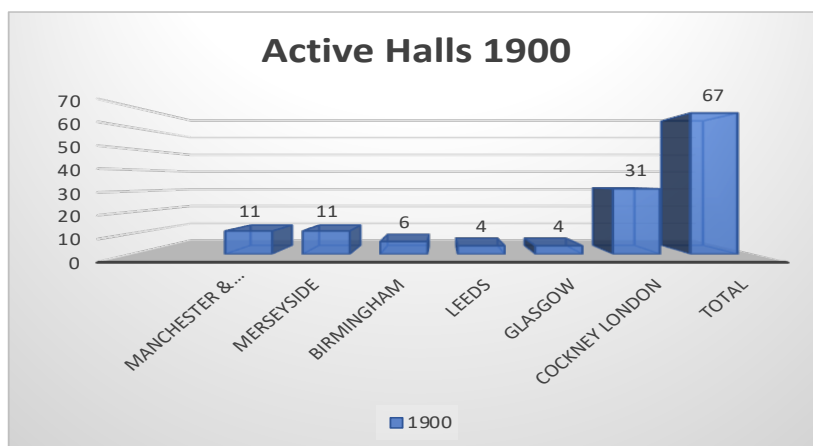
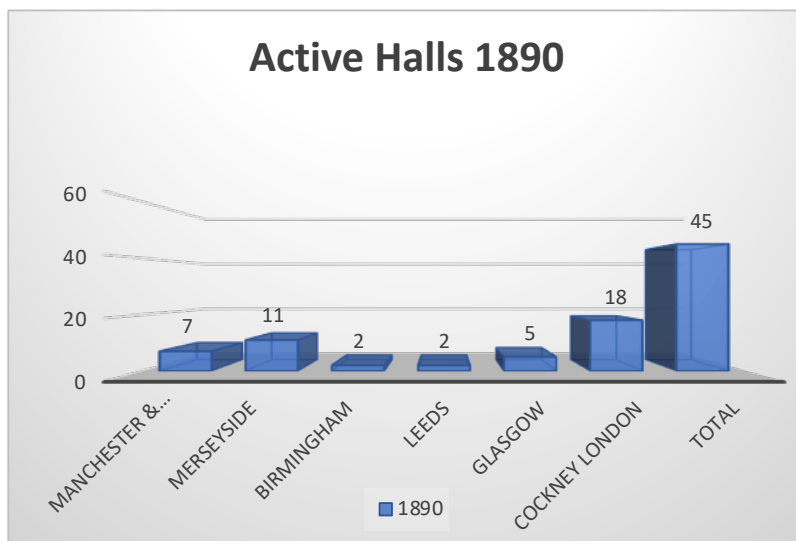
Year	1890	1900	1910
Active Venues	5	4	9
Gross Annual Single Audience Capacity (Unweighted)	15200	14500	25500
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 240 annual performances)	2.2		
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 672 annual performances: 6 x twice nightly plus 2 matinees)		6.1	5.8

## Appendix 2.5

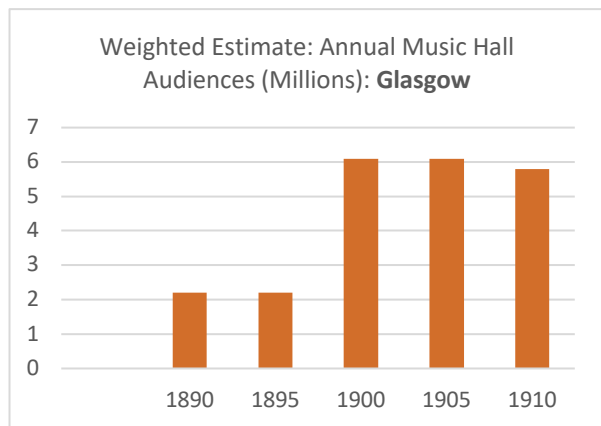
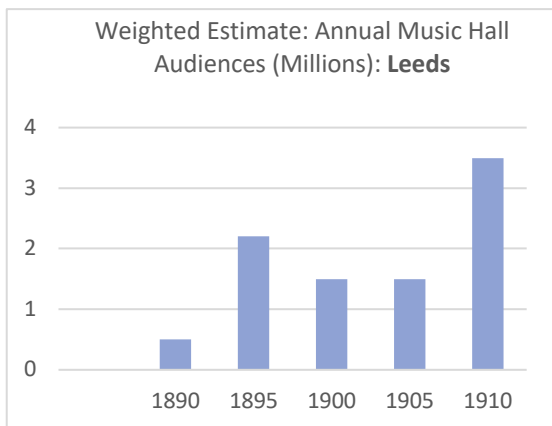
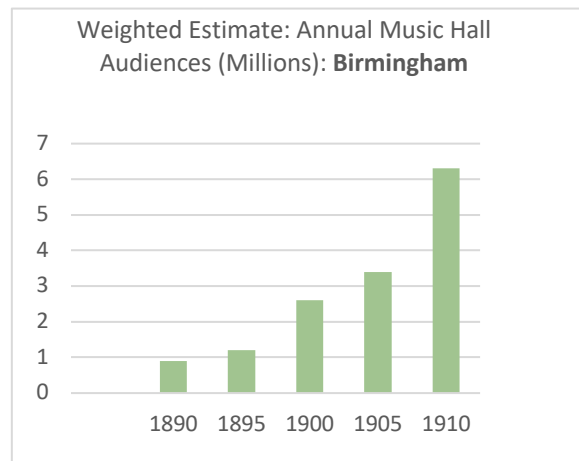
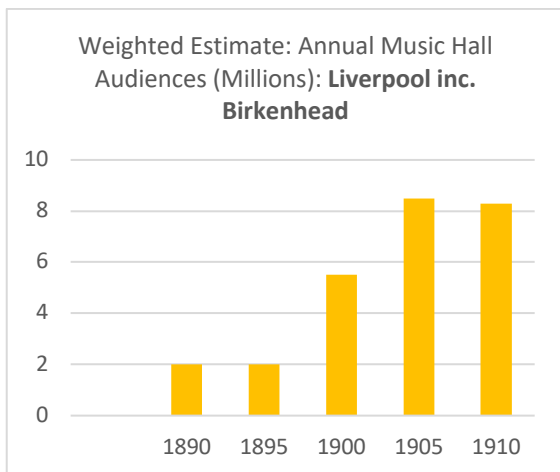
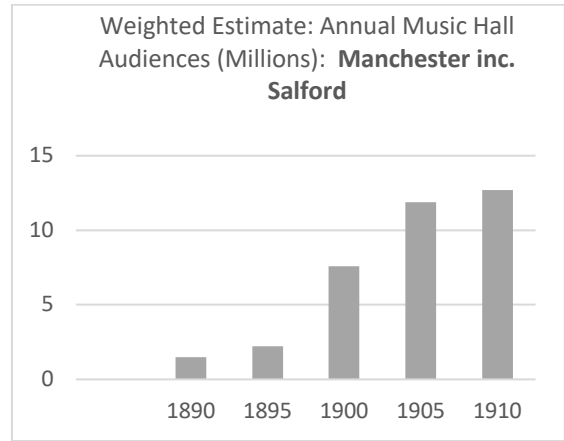
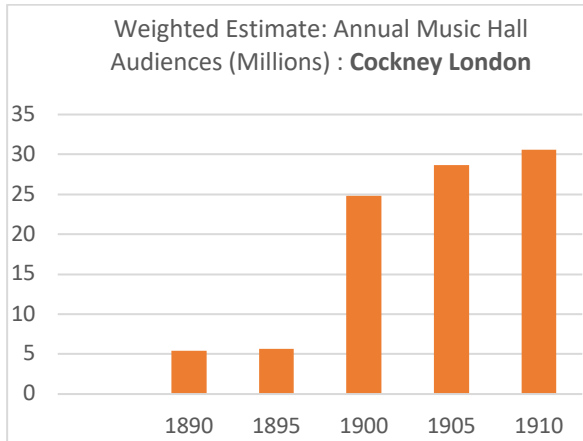
### Cockney London 1890-1910

Year	1890	1900	1910
Active Venues	18	31	37
Gross Annual Single Audience Capacity (Unweighted)	37510	61630	75930
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 240 annual performances)	5.4		
Estimated Weighted Annual Audience (Million) = (Capacity x 60% occupancy x 672 annual performances: 6 x twice nightly plus 2 matinees)		24.8	30.6

Appendix 3.0



Appendix 4.0



## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Archive Materials

- British Music Hall Archive                      *British Music Hall Society*
- Census 1901 (First results)                      *'First Results of the Census, 1901' Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 64:2 (1901)*
- Leeds Local Studies Library Collection. *A collection of Leeds theatres playbills*
- Medical Officer of Health Reports 1890-1905
- National Fairground and Circus Archive
- Online Historical Population Reports                      *Table 9: Metropolitan Boroughs with their constituent civil parishes and wards*
- UK BMD                                              *Registration Districts in London*
- UK Census Data (1891-1911)
- UK Mortality Data                                      *'Historic Mortality and Population Data 1901-1992', University of Essex UK Data Archive*
- The University of Bristol Theatre Collection:
- The Mander and Mitchenson collection                      *Greater London Theatres (Ref: MM/REF/TH/GR)*
- University of Kent Special Collections and Archives:
- Max Tyler Music Hall Collection: (ref: MWT)                      *Copies of original songs & song sheets of Gus Elen, Harry Champion, Vesta Victoria, Alec Hurley, Marie Lloyd, Wilkie Bard*
- UK Pub History and Historical Street Directory of London

Scottish Music Hall Archive

'Scottish Music Hall Society, Inventory, Acc.11446',  
National Library of Scotland, Manuscripts Division,  
Edinburgh

The Scottish Theatre Archives at the Special Collections Department of the University of Glasgow Library:

*Britannia Panopticon Music Hall. A Brief History*  
(Ref: GB247STAMn 87/6)  
*Variety Show: Britannia Theatre, Glasgow, 1897*  
*September 27 Programme* (Ref: GB 247  
STAJLC39/23)

The Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Archive:

Frank Matcham & Company, Theatre Architects (Ref: THM/2)  
*Drawings for Hackney Empire* (Ref: THM/2/1)  
*Drawings for Manchester Hippodrome* (Ref: THM/2/7)

Theatre & Performance Department

*Photographic Reference Collection* (Ref:  
THM/PHO/PEO)

Harry Relph (Little Tich) Volume

*Images/cuttings/career.* (Ref: THM/326/1)

Wilton's Music Hall Archive

*Historical Research Material* (Ref: THM/494/1)

Newspapers/ Periodicals

*Birmingham Mail*

*The Daily Mail*

*The Daily Mirror*

*The Encore*

*The Era.*

*The Era Almanack and Annual*

*Financial News*

*Glasgow Herald*

*Leeds Daily News*

*Leeds Mercury*

*Liverpool Echo*

*Liverpool Evening Express*

*Lloyds Weekly  
Newspaper*

*London & Provincial  
Entr'acte*

*Manchester Times*

*Morning Chronicle*

*Music Hall &  
Theatre Review*

*Nottingham Daily Express*

*Nottingham Evening Post*

*Pall Mall Gazette*

*The Stage*

*Preston Chronicle*

*Staffordshire Advertiser*

*The Times*

*The Western Mail*

*Yorkshire Evening Post*

*The Vigilance Record*

## Secondary Sources

### Book Chapter

- Austen, J.L. 'How to Do Things with Words' in J. O. Urmston (ed), *The William Jones Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1995*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962)
- Bailey, P. 'Introduction' in P. Bailey (ed.) *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986)
- Bailey, P. 'Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall', in *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England*, (London: Routledge, 1982)
- Baines, D.F.E. & Bean, R. 'The General Strike on Merseyside, 1926' in J.R. Harris, (ed) *Liverpool & Merseyside. Essays in the economic and social history of the port and its hinterland*, (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1969)
- Bateman, M. 'Leeds: A Study in regional supremacy' in G. Gordon, (ed) *Regional Cities in The UK 1890-1980* (London: Harper & Row, 1986)
- Beaven, B. 'Introduction' in *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)
- Beaven, B. 'The era of mass leisure: the pleasure-seeking citizen' in *Leisure, citizenship and working-men in Britain, 1850-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)
- Belchem, J. 'Introduction: The Peculiarities of Liverpool' in Belchem (ed) *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour. Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992)
- Belchem, J. & MacRaid, D. 'Cosmopolitan Liverpool' in J. Belchem (ed), *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006)
- Beresford, M.W. 'The Back-to-Back House in Leeds, 1737-1937' in S.D. Chapman (ed) *The History of Working-Class Housing. A Symposium* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971)
- Bohstedt, J. 'More than One Working Class: Protestant-Catholic Riots in Edwardian Liverpool' in J. Belchem (ed) *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour. Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992)
- Brooker, P. & Widdowson, P. 'A literature for England' in R. Colls & P. Dodd (eds), *Englishness Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)



- Buckingham, D. 'Introducing Identity', in D. Buckingham, (ed), *Youth, Identity, and the Digital Media. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning* (Mass: The MIT Press, 2008)
- Burke, P.J. & Strets, J. E. 'The Roots of Identity Theory' in *Identity Theory*, (USA: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Buckman, J.D. 'Later Phases of Industrialisation' in M.W. Beresford & G.R. Jones (eds) *Leeds and its Regions*, (Leeds: British Advancement of Science, 1967)
- Butt, J. 'Working-class housing in Glasgow, 1851-1914' in S.D. Chapman (ed) *The History of Working-Class Housing. A Symposium* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971)
- Butt, J. 'The Industries of Glasgow', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol: 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
- Childers, J.W. 'Social Class and the Victorian Novel' in D. David (ed) *The Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Chinn, C. 'The Peoples of Birmingham', in C Chinn & M. Dick (eds) *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016)
- Chinn, C. & Dick, M. 'Introduction' in C. Chinn & M. Dick (eds) *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016)
- Collis, R. 'Englishness and the political culture' in R. Colls & P. Dodd (eds) *Englishness, Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)
- Connell, E.J. & Ward, M. 'Industrial Development 1780-1914' in D. Fraser (ed) *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980)
- Crump, J. 'Provincial Music Hall: Promoters and Public in Leicester 1863-1929' in P. Bailey (ed) *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986)
- Dennis, R. 'Modern London' in M. Daunton (ed), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol.111, 1840-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

- Dennis, R. 'Urbanising Experiences' in M. Hewitt (ed), *The Victorian World*, (London: Routledge, 2012)
- Dick, M. 'The City of a Thousand Trades, 1700-1945' in C Chinn & M. Dick (eds) *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016)
- Dodd, P. 'Englishness and the national culture' in A. Colls & P. Dodd (eds) *Englishness Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014)
- Edwards, B. 'Glasgow Improvements, 1866-1901' in P. Reed, (ed), *Glasgow The Forming of the City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993)
- Eisenberg, N. 'Empathy and Sympathy' in M. Lewis & J.M. Haviland-Jones (eds) *Handbook of Emotions, 2nd. Edition*, (New York: Guilford Press, 2000)
- Eisenberg, N. & Strayer, J. 'Critical issues in the study of empathy' in N. Eisenberg & J. Strayer (eds), *Empathy and its Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)
- Felluga, D. 'Models on Althusser on Ideology' *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2015)
- Garside, P.L. 'West End, East End: London 1890-1940' in A. Sutcliffe, (ed) *Metropolis 1890-1940* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1984)
- Habermass, J. 'Social action, Positive Activity and Communications' in M. Cooke, (ed), *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998)
- Hacker, P.M.S. 'The Rise and Fall of Picture Theory' in L. Block (ed) *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981),
- Hamish Fraser, W. & Maver, I. 'The Social Problems of the City' in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol 11 1830-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
- Hannam, J.B. 'The Social Context of Working-Class Life in Leeds, 1880-1914' in *The Employment of Working-Class Women in Leeds*, PhD Thesis (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1984) at <http://ethesis.whiterose.ac.uk/2945/2/DX09488.1.pdf>>
- Harris, J.R. 'Introduction' in J.R. Harris (ed) *Liverpool & Merseyside. Essays in the economic and social history of the port and its hinterland*, (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1969)

- Hoher, D. 'The Composition of Music Hall Audiences, 1850-1900' in P. Bailey (ed) *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986)
- Hollen Lees. L, 'Urban Networks' in M. Daunton (ed) *The Cambridge History of Britain, Vol. 111, 1840-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Jameson, J. 'Introduction' L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, B. Brewster (tran.) (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001)
- Jensen, J. 'What's in a name? Nationalist movements and public Discourse' in H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (eds) *Social Movements And Culture*, (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1985)
- Kidd, A.J. "Outcast Manchester": Voluntary Charity, Poor Relief and the Casual Poor, 1860-1905" in A. J. Kidd & K. W. Roberts (eds) *City, Class and Culture. Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985)
- Langton, J. 'Urban growth and economic change: From the late seventeenth century to 1841' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Laqton, R. & Pooley, C. 'Liverpool and Merseyside' in G. Gordan (ed) *Regional Cities in the UK 1890-1980* (London: Harper & Row, 1986)
- Levine, C. 'Victorian Realism' in D. David (ed), *The Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Melucci, A. 'The Process of collective Identity', in H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (ed), *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- Milne, G.J. 'Maritime Liverpool' in J. Belchem (ed), *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006)
- Morgan, C.J. 'Demographic Change, 1771-1911' in D. Fraser (ed), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980)
- Morgan, N.J. 'Building the City' in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds) *Glasgow Vol: 11, 1830-1912* (Manchester University Press, 1996)
- Morley, C.A. 'The Most Artistic Lady on Earth: Vesta Victoria' in P. Fryer (ed), *Woman in the Arts in the Belle Epoch* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2012)

- Morris, R.J. 'Structure, culture & society in British Towns' in M.J. Daunton (ed) *The Cambridge urban history of Britain. Vol.3, 1840-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Mullen, J. 'Victorian respectability', anti-social' behaviour and the Music Hall, 1880-1900' in S. Pickard (ed) *Anti-Social Behaviour in Britain: Victorian and contemporary perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)
- Murdoch, N.H. 'From Militancy to Social Mission: The Salvation Army and Street Disturbances in Liverpool, 1879-1887' in J. Belchem (ed) *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour. Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992)
- Nujers, E. 'Wittgenstein versus Mauthner: Two Critiques of Language, Two Mysticisms,' in A. Pichier & J. Wang, (eds) *Papers of the 30th International Wittgenstein Symposium*, (Kirchberg am Wechsel, 2007)
- O'Gorman, F. 'Social Problem Fiction: Historicism and Feminism' in F. O'Gorman (ed), *The Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002)
- Oxley, G.W. 'The Permanent Poor in South West Lancashire under the Old Poor Law' in J.R. Harris, (ed) *Liverpool & Merseyside. Essays in the economic and social history of the port and its hinterland*, (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1969)
- Peddie, I. 'Playing at Poverty: The Music Hall and the Staging of the Working Class', in A. Krishnamuthy (ed) *The Working- Class Intellectual in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009)
- Pennybacker. S. 'The Millennium by Return of Post'. Reconsidering London Progressivism, Power 1889-1907' in D. Feldman & G. Stedman-Jones (eds) *Metropolis London. Histories and Representations Since 1800*, (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Power. M.J. 'The Growth of Liverpool' in J. Belchem (ed) *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour. Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992)
- Pickering, M. 'Stereotypes' in *Encyclopaedia of Humour Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing, 2014)
- Pooley, C.G. 'Living in Liverpool: The Modern City', in J. Belcher (ed) *Liverpool 800. Culture, Character and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006)
- Reid, D.A. 'Playing and Praying' in M.J. Daunton (ed) *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Vol.3, 1840-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

- Rodger, R. 'Employment, Wages and Poverty' in G. Gordon (ed), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985)
- Rodger, R. 'The Labour Force', in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds), *Glasgow Vol: 11 1830-1912*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
- Ross, E. 'Fierce Questions and Taunts. Married life in working-class London, 1870-1914' in D. Feldman & G. Steadman-Jones (eds) *Metropolis London. Histories and Representations Since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Russell, D. 'Popular Entertainment' in J. Donohue (ed) *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Vol.11, 1660-1895*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Russell, D. 'Varieties of Life: the making of Edwardian Music Hall' in M.R. Booth & J.H.G. Kaplan (eds) *The Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Saint, A. 'Spread the People: The LCC's Dispersal Policy, 1890-1965' in A. Saint (ed) *Politics and the People of London 1889-1965* (London: Hambledon Press, 1989)
- Stedman Jones, G. 'The 'cockney' and the nation, 1780-1988' in D. Feldman & G. Stedman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations Since 1800*, (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Stevenson, N. 'Marxism and Mass Communication Research' *Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and Mass Communication* (London: Sage, 1995)
- Summerfield, P. 'The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of the Music Hall in London' in E. Yeo, & S. Yeo (eds) *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981),
- Sutcliffe, A. 'The Midland Metropolis: Birmingham 1890-1980' in G. Gordon, (ed) *Regional Cities in The UK 1890-1980* (London: Harper & Row, 1986)
- Strinati, D. 'Marxism, Economy and Ideology' in *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Tajfel, H. 'Social categorisation, social identity and social comparison' in H. Tajfel (ed), *Differentiation between social groups: studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978)
- Taylor, A.J. 'Victorian Leeds: an overview', in D. Fraser (ed) *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980)

- Ward, R. 'Birmingham: A Political Profile, 1700-1940' in C Chinn & M. Dick (eds) *Birmingham. The Workshop of the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016)
- Wingrove, L. 'Sassin Back. Victorian Serio Comediennes and Their Audiences'' in L. Lee (ed) *Victorian Comedy and Laughter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)
- Withers, C. 'The Demographic History of the City, 1831-1911' in W. Hamish Fraser & Irene Maver (eds), *Glasgow Volume 11: 1930-1912* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
- Wittgenstein, L. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, in B. McGuinness & J. Schulte (eds), Critical Edition (London: Suhrkamp, 1998)
- Wohl, A.S. 'The Housing of the Working Classes in London' in S. D. Chapman (ed) *The History of Working-Class Housing. A Symposium* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1971)
- Wohl, A.S. 'The Housing of the Working Classes in London 1815-1914' in M. J Daunt, *House and Home in the Victorian City. Working Class Housing 1850-1914* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983)
- Williams, B. 'The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle Class Manchester and the Jews 1870-1900' in A.J. Kidd & K.W. Roberts (eds) *City, Class and Culture. Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985)

### Journal Articles

- Acciaoli, G.L. 'Knowing what you're doing': A review of Bourdieu's Outline of a Theory of Practice', *Canberra Anthology*, 4:4 (1981), pp.23-51
- Anderson, P.J. 'Pictures for the People: Knight's 'Penny Magazine'. An Early Venture into Popular Art', *Studies in Art Education*, 28:3 (1987), pp.133-140
- Anthony, B. 'Dan Leno's Comic Cuts' in *Music Hall Studies*, 6, Winter (2010/2011), pp.230-237
- Ashmore. R.D.,  
Deaux, K. &  
McLaughline-Pope, T. 'An Organising Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality', *Psychological Bulletin*, 130: 1, (2004), pp.80-114
- Bailey, P. 'Conspiracies of Meaning: Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture' *Past and Present*, 44: August (1994), pp.138-170

- Bamburg, M. 'Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity' *Theory & Psychology*, 21:1 (2011), pp.3-23
- Bannville, S. 'Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: The Geography of Class in Late-Victorian Britain', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 4:2 (2008), pp.150-173
- Beier, A.L. 'Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian "Criminal Class": Mayhew's Convict Revisited', *Journal of British Studies*, 44, (2005), pp.499-515
- Best, G. 'The Scottish Victorian City', *Victorian Studies*, 3:1 (1968), pp.329-358
- Blair, R.J. 'Responding to the emotions of others: disassociating forms of empathy through the study of typical and psychiatric populations', *Consciousness and Cognition*, 14 (2005), pp.698-718
- Bottero, W. 'Class Identities and the Identity of Class', *Sociology*, 35: 5 (2004), pp.985-1003
- Carrabine, E. 'Low life: William Hogarth, visual culture and sociologies of art', *British Journal of Sociology*, May, (2021) pp.90-929 at <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12849>> [accessed 27 September 2020]
- Cerulo, K.A. 'Identity Construction: New Issues', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 23. (1997), pp.385-409
- Curtis, N.G.W. 'The Place of History, Literature and Politics in the 1911 Scottish Exhibition', *Scottish Literary Review* 7:1 2015), pp.43-74
- Crowhurst, A. 'Empire theatres and the empire: the popular geographical imagination in the age of empire', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 15:2 (1997), pp.153-173
- Davis, M. 'Measuring intended differences in empathy: evidence for a multi-disciplinary approach', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44 (1983), pp. 113-126
- Davies, A., 'Saturday night markets in Manchester and Salford 1840-1939', *Manchester Region History Review*, 1:ii. (1987), pp.3-12
- Davenport, R. 'Urbanisation and Mortality in Britain 1800-1880', *Economic History Review* 73:2 (2020), pp.445-485
- Decety, H.J. & Lamm, C. 'Human empathy through the lens of social neuroscience', *The Scientific World Journal*, 6 (2006), pp.1146-1163
- Dennis, R.J. 'Distance and Social Interaction in a Victorian City', *Journal of Historical Geography* .3, (1977), pp.237-250

- Featherstone, S. 'E Dunno Where 'E Are: Coster Comedy and the Politics of Music Hall', *Nineteenth Century Theatre*. 24.1. (1996), pp.1-33
- Forminaya, C.F. 'Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates', *Sociology Compass*, 4/6 (2010), pp. 393-404
- Freeman, M. 'Seebohm Rowntree and Secondary Poverty, 1899-1954', *The Economic History Review*, 64: .4 (2011), pp..1175-1194
- Gerrard, S. 'The Great British Music Hall: Its Importance to the British Culture and 'The Trivial'', *Culture Unbound*, 5. (2013), pp.487-513
- Gazeley, I. & Newell, A. 'Poverty in Edwardian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 64: .1 (2011), pp.52-71
- George, W.L. & Forbes-Robertson, P. 'A London Mosaic', a supplement to *Music Hall Studies*, 4, Winter 2009/10), pp.9-11
- Gleason, P. 'Identifying identity: A semantic history', *Journal of American History*, .69 (1983), pp.910-931
- Glock, H.J. 'Truth in the Tractatus' *Synthese*, 148, (2006), pp.345-368
- Gunn, S. 'Class, Identity and the urban: the middle class in England, c.1790-1950', *Urban History*, 31, (2004), pp.29-47
- Haggerty, M 'Review. Restoring Faith in a Practical Idealist', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 37:3 (2008), pp.362-366
- Harrison, J. 'The Origin, Development and Decline of Back-to-Back Houses in Leeds, 1878-1937', *Industrial Archaeological Review*, 39.2 (2017), pp,101-116
- Heartwell, H. 'Characteristics of Manchester', *The North of England Magazine*, Vol.1 (Manchester: Simpkin & Marshall, 1842) pp.94-100
- Hogan, R. 'Development of an empathy scale', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33 (1986), pp.307-316
- Hirst, P. 'Althusser and the theory of ideology', *Economy and Society*, 5: .4 (1976), pp.385-412
- Huggins, M.T. 'More Sinful Pleasures? Respectability and the Middle Classes In Victorian England'. *Journal of Social History*, 33: 3 (2000), pp.585-600
- Inac, H. & Unal, F. 'The Construction of National Identity in Modern Times: Theoretical Perspective' *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3:11 (2013), pp/.223-232



- Jasper, J.M. & Polletta, F. 'Collective Identity & Social Movements', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 27 (2001), pp.283-305
- Jones, J. 'Who are we? Producing Group identity through everyday Practices of conflict and discourse', *Sociological Perspectives*, 54 (2011), pp.139-161
- Kehilly, M.J. 'What is Identity? A Sociological Perspective' *ERC Seminar Series: The educational and social impact of new technologies on young people in Britain* (London: London School of Economics, 2009)
- King, A. 'Thinking with Bourdieu against Bourdieu: A 'practical' Critique of Habitus', *Sociological Theory*, 18, (2000), pp.417-433
- Knowles S.D.G. 'Then You Wink the Other eye: T.S. Elliot and the Music Hall', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 11:.4 (1996), pp.20-32
- Kunzle, D. 'Between Caricature and 'Punch': Cheap Newspaper Cuts for the Lower Classes', *Art Journal*, 43:4, (1983), pp.339-346
- Law, C.M. 'The Growth of Urban Population in England and Wales 1801-1911', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41, (1967), pp.125-143
- Lawton, R.A. 'The Population of Liverpool in the Mid Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 107, (1955), pp.89-120
- Leaver, K. 'Victorian Melodrama and the Performance of Poverty', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27:2 (1999), pp. 443-456
- McWilliam, R. 'Victorian Sensations, Neo-Victorian Romances: Response', *Victorian Studies*, 52:1 (2009), pp. 106-113
- Mehrabian, A. & Epstein, N. 'A Measure of emotional empathy', *Journal of Personality*, 40 (1972), pp.525-543
- Mortimer, T. 'Harry Ford, The Argumentative Comedian' *Music Hall Studies*, 4, Winter, (2009/10), pp.174-179
- Mullen, J. 'British Music Hall in the First World War: Myths and Realities' *The Grove. Working Papers on English Studies*, 9, (2012), pp.85-105
- Plourde, J. 'Wittgenstein's Picture Theory and the Distinction between Representing and Depicting', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 25: 1, (2017), pp.16-39
- Potter, S.J. 'Empire, Cultures and Identities in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Britain', *History Compass*, 5/1 (2007), pp.51-71
- Proops, I. 'The New Wittgenstein. A Critique', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 9:3 (2001), pp.375-404

- Rosenberg, J.F. 'Wittgenstein's Theory of Language'. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 5, 1, (1968), pp. 18-30
- Ross, R. 'Not the Sort that Would Sit on the Doorstep': Respectability in Pre-World War 1 London Neighbourhoods', *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 27 (Spring 1985), pp.39-59
- Russell, D. 'The 'social history' of popular music: a label without a cause?' *Popular Music*, 12/2 (1993), pp.134-159
- Saunders, H. 'The Making of Liverpool' *Proceedings of the Liverpool Philomathic Society*, 63. (1917-18)
- Schuetz, A. 'The Frankfurt School and Popular Culture Studies' in *Popular Culture*, 12:1 (1989), pp.1-14
- Schatzk, T.R. 'Overdue analysis of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice' *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 30:1-2, (1987) pp.113 -135
- Scott, F. 'The Conditions and Occupations of the People of Manchester and Salford', *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1888-89 pp.93-116
- Scott, D.B. 'The Music-Hall Cockney: Flesh and Blood, or Replicant', *Music & Letters*, 83:2 (2002), pp.237-258
- Senelick, L. 'Politics as Entertainment: Victorian Music Hall Songs', *Victorian Studies*, 19 (1975), pp.149-180
- Senelick, L. 'A Brief Life and Times of the Victorian Music Hall', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 19: .4 (1971), pp.375-398
- Springhall, J. 'A Life Story for the People?' Edwin J. Brett and the London "Low-Life" Penny Dreadfuls of the 1860s', *Victorian Studies*, 33: .2 (1990), pp.223-246
- Seltzer, M. 'The Princess Casamassiuma: Realism and the Fantasy of Surveillance', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, March, (1981), pp.506-534
- Smith, A. 'The empathy imbalance hypothesis of autism: A theoretical approach to cognitive and emotional empathy in autistic development', *The Psychological Record*, 39 (2009), p.489-510
- Smith, R., & Bennet, R., & Radicic, D. 'Towns in Victorian England and Wales; a new classification', *Urban History*, 45: .4 (2018), pp.568-594
- Stedman Jones, G. 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working-Class,' *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1974), pp.460-508

- Stephenson, A. 'Introduction: Edwardian Art and its Legacies', *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol.14, No.1, (2013)
- Streeck, J. 'Speech Acts in Interaction': A Critique of Searle', *Discourse Processes*, 3:2 (1980), pp.133-135
- Streeck, J. & Scott-Jordan, J. 'Project and Anticipation. The Forward Looking Nature of Embodied Communication', *Discourse Processes*, 46:2/3 (2009), pp.93-102
- Szreter, S. & Mooney, G. 'Urbanisation, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate. New Estimates of Life at Birth in Nineteenth Century British Cities', *Economic History Review*, 51:1 (1998), pp.84-112
- Thornton, S. & Thornton, D. 'Facets of Empathy', *Personality and Individual Differences*, 19 (1996), pp.765-767
- Tosh, J. 'Masculinities in an Industrialising Society: Britain, 1900-1914' in *Journal of British Studies*, 44: 2 (April 2005), pp.330-342
- de Vignemont, F. & Singer, T. 'The empathetic brain: how, when and why?', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 10 (2006), pp.435-441
- Wineman, A. Yelongnisse Alia, D. Leigh Anderson, C. 'Definitions of 'rural' and 'urban' and understandings of economic transformation: Evidence from Tanzania' *Journal of Rural Studies*, 79: Oct. (2020), pp.254-268
- Yang, Y. 'Bourdieu, Practice and Change: Beyond the criticism of determinism', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46:14, (2014), pp.1522-1540
- Yoshitake, M. 'Critique of Austin's Speech Act Theory: Decentralising of the Speaker Centered Meaning in Communication', *Kyushi Communications Studies*, 2. (2004), pp.27-43

## Books

- Adams, J.E. *A History of Victorian Literature* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)
- Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 2006)
- Althusser, L. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, B. Brewster (tran.) (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001)

- Anthony, B. *Chaplin's Music Hall. The Chaplins and their Circle in the Limelight* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co, 2012)
- Anthony, B. *The King's Jester. The Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co, 2010)
- Arthur, M. *When This Bloody War is Over. Soldier's Songs of the First World War* (London: Judy Piatkus Publishers, 2001)
- Bailey, P. *Leisure and Class in Victorian England. Rational recreation and the contest for control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978)
- Bailey, P. *Music Hall. The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986)
- Bailey, P. *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- Baker, R.A. *British Music Hall. An Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2014)
- Baker, R.A. *Marie Lloyd. Queen of the Music Halls*, (London: Robert Hale. 1990)
- Baker, R.A. *Old Time Variety. An Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2011)
- Barker, K. *Bristol's Lost Empires, The Decline and Fall of Music Hall in Bristol* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, Pamphlet No.73, 1990)
- Beavan, B. *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain 18509-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)
- Beerbohm, M. *Around Theatres* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953)
- Beerbohm, M. *More Theatres* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969)
- Benson, J. *The Working Class in England 1875-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1984)
- Besant, W. *East London*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1901)
- Besant, W. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Best, G. *Mid Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1971)
- Beveridge, W.H. *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry (1909-1930)* (London: Longmans Green, 1930)
- Billig, M. *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 2019)

- Bjorgvinsson, L.A. *Speech Act Theory - A Critical Overview*, unpublished thesis, (Iceland: University of Iceland, 2011)
- Booth, C. *Life and Labour of the People of London*, (London: Macmillan, 1902-1903)
- Bourdieu, P. *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)
- Bowers, J. *Glasgow's Lost Theatre. The Story of The Britannia Music Hall* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2014)
- Bowers, J. *Stan Laurel and Other Stars of the Panopticon. The Story of the Britannia Music Hall* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2007)
- Bradby, L. & James, L. & Sharratt, B. (eds) *Performance and politics in popular drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
- Bratton, J.S. *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986)
- Briggs, A. *Victorian Cities* (London: Penguin Books, 1990)
- Brodie, J.S. *The Politics of the Poor. The East End of London 1885-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004)
- Bruce, F. *Scottish Showbusiness Music Hall, Variety and Pantomime*, (Edinburgh: NMS Publishing, 2000)
- Caruso, D. & Mayer J. *A Measure of Emotional Empathy for Adolescents and Adults* (New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire, 1998)
- Castells, M. *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977)
- Chance Newton, H. *Idols of the 'Halls' Being My Music Hall Memories* (Wakefield: EP Publishing, 1975)
- Chinn, C. *Poverty amidst prosperity. The Urban Poor in England, 1834-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)
- Coleman, B.I. *The Idea of the City in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2006)
- Colley, L. *Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994)
- Crompton, R. *Class and Stratification* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998)
- Crowhurst, A.J. *'The Music Hall, 1885-1922. The Emergence of a National Entertainment Industry in Britain'* (Cambridge: PhD Thesis, Emanuel College, Cambridge University, 1992)

- Daunton, M.J. *House and Home in the Victorian City. Working Class Housing 1850-1914* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983)
- Dart, G. *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures: 94*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Davey, E. *Birkenhead. A History* (Stroud: Phillimore & Co., 2013)
- Davies, A. *Leisure, Gender & Poverty Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992)
- Davis, M. *Empathy: a social psychological approach* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996)
- David, D. (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Davin, A. *Growing Up Poor. Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996)
- Dickens, C. *Oliver Twist* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1920)
- Dickens, C. *The Pickwick Papers, The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1910)
- Douglas-Fairhurst, R. *The Turing Point. A Year That Changed Dickens and the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2021)
- Du Noyer, P. *In The City. A Celebration of London Music* (London: Virgin Books, 2009)
- Earl, J. *British Theatres and Music Halls* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2005)
- Easthope, A *Englishness and National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999)
- Egan, P. *Life in London* (London: Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1821)
- Eli Adams, J.H. *A History of Victorian Literature* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)
- Faber, R. *Proper Stations. Class in Victorian Fiction* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971)
- Farrer, W. & Brownbill, J. (eds) *A History of the County of Lancaster* (London: 1911)
- Farson, D. *Marie Lloyd & Music Hall* (London: Tom Stacey Ltd, 1972)
- Faulk, B.J. *Music Hall and Modernity: The Late Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997)

- Felstead, S.T. *Stars Who Made the Halls. A Hundred Years of English Humour, Harmony and Hilarity* (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd, 1946)
- Feldman, D. & Stedman Jones, G. (eds) *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Fletcher, B. *A Text-Book on the Law Relating to Building in The Metropolis* (London: B.T. Basford, 1914)
- Flint, K. (ed), *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Flint, K. *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change* (London: Croom Helm, 1987)
- Fowler, S. *Workhouse* (Richmond: National Archives, 2008)
- Frangopulo, N.J. *Tradition in Action The Historical Evolution of the Greater Manchester Council* (Wakefield: EP Publishing, 1977)
- Franklin, J. *The Cockney: a Survey of London Life and Language* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1953)
- Fried, A. & Elman, R.M. (eds) *Charles Booth's London. A Portrait of the Poor at the Turn of the Century, Drawn from his Life and Labour of the People of London* (London: Hutchinson, 1969)
- Gammond, P. *The Oxford Companion to Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Gauldie, E. *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing 1780-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974)
- Gillies, M, *Marie Lloyd. The One and Only* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1999)
- Gordon, G. (ed) *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985)
- Gray, D.D. *London's Shadows The Dark Side of the Victorian City* (London: Continuum Books, 2010)
- Green, G. (ed), *The Last Empires: A Music Hall Companion* (London: Pavilion, 1986)
- Greenall, R.L. *The Making of Victorian Salford* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2000)

- Grenfell, M. & Kelly, M. *Pierre Bourdieu: Language, Culture and Education* (London: Lang Publishing, 1999)
- Grenfell, M. *Bourdieu: Language and Linguistics* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2008)
- Grice, P. *Studies in the Way of Words* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989)
- Haining, P.(ed) *The Penny Dreadful* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1975)
- Harding, J. *George Robey & The Music Hall* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990)
- Harris, J. *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London: Penguin, 1994)
- Haslerer, S. *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996)
- Hill, O. *The Homes of the London Poor* (London: Macmillan, 1875)
- Hindle, D.J.H. *From a Gin Palace to a King's Palace. Provincial Music Hall in Preston* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2007)
- Hogg, M. & Abrams, D *Social Identification: A Social Psychology of Intergroup and Group Processes* (London: Routledge, 1988)
- Hoggart, R. *The Uses of Literacy. Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990)
- Horrall , A. *Popular Culture in London c.1890-1918 The Transformation of Entertainment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)
- House, J. *Music Hall Memories* (Glasgow: Richard Drew Publishing, 1986)
- Howard, D. *London Theatres and Music Halls, 1850-1950* (London: The Library Association, 1970)
- Hylton, S. *A History of Manchester* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co, 2003)
- Jacob, N. *"Our Marie" (Marie Lloyd). A Biography* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1936)
- Jackson, A. *London's Termini* (London: David & Charles, 1984)
- Jackson, L. *Palaces of Pleasure* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019)
- James, L. *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963)
- Jenkins, R. *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996)



- Joyce, P. *Visions of the People. Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Kearns, G. & Withers C *Urbanising Britain. Essays on Class and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Keating, P.J. *The Working Class in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971)
- Kellett, J.R. *Glasgow A Concise History* (London: Blond, 1967)
- Kidd, A.J. *Manchester. A History* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2011)
- Kingsley, C. *Alton Locke*, (London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2016)
- Kipling, R. *Complete Barrack Room Ballads* (London: Methuen, 1973)
- Kipling, R. *Departmental Ditties Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Wentworth Press, 2019)
- Kipling, R. *The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot*, (London: Unwin Brothers, 1890)
- Kift, D. *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Klapp, O.E. *Collective Search for Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston: 1969)
- Knight, C. *Passages of a Working Life* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1864)
- Known, G. *When the World Was Young* (London: Ward Lock, 1986)
- Knox, W.M. *Industrial Nation. Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800-Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999)
- Koven, S. *Slumming Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)
- Kumar, K. *The Idea of Englishness English Culture, National Identity and Social Thought* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015)
- Lee L. *Victorian Comedy and Laughter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)
- Leigh, P. *God's Englishmen: The Forty Drawings from 'Manners and Customs of Ye Englishe'* (London: Avalon Press & John Bradley, 1948)
- Le Roy, G. *Music Hall Stars of the Nineties* (London: British Technical and General Press, 1952)
- Lill, S.L & McWilliam, R. *Edward Lloyd and His World. Popular Fiction, Politics and the Press in Victorian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2019)

- Littlejohn, J.H. *The Scottish Music Hall 1880-1990* (Wigtown: G.C. Book Publishers, 1990)
- Lovell, J. *Stevedores and Dockers: A Study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London, 1870-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1969)
- Lynch, L. *Scotland. A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992)
- MacInnes, C. *Sweet Saturday Night* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967)
- Macpherson, B. *Cultural Identity in the British Musical Theatre 1890-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)
- McWilliam, R. *London's West End. Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)
- Macqueen Pope, W. *The Melodies Linger On, The Story of Music Hall* (London: W.H. Allen, 1950)
- Major, J. *My Old Man* (London: William Collins, 2013)
- Maitland, S. *Vesta Tilley* (London: Virago Press, 1986)
- Maloney, P. *Scotland and the music hall 1850-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
- Marks, P. (ed) *The 'Arry Ballads. An Annotated Collection of the Verse Letters by Punch Editor E.J. Millken'* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2006)
- J. Marriott, *Beyond the Tower. A History of East London* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).
- Marr, T.R. *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford* (Manchester: Sharratt and Hughes, 1904)
- Marriner, S. *The Economic and Social Development of Merseyside* (London: Croom Helm, 1982)
- Matthews, W. *Cockneys Past and Present* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1938)
- Mayhew, H. *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Penguin Classics, 1985)
- Mayne, A. *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representations in Three Cities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)
- Meacham, S. *A Life Apart The English Working Class 1890-1914* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977)
- Medhurst, A. *A National Joke Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities* (London: Routledge, 2007)

- Mellor, G.J.                    *The Northern Music Hall* (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1970)
- Midwinter, E.                    *Old Liverpool* (Newton Abbot: David & Clarke, 1971)
- Mitchell, W.R.                    *A History of Leeds* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2000)
- Mitchell, W.J.T.                    *Picture Theory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)
- Morrison, A.                    *A Child of the Jago* (London: Everyman, 1996)
- Mullen, J.                    *The Show Must Go On! Popular Song in Britain During the First World War* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015)
- Nevinson, H.W.                    *Changes and Chances* (New York: Hartcourt, Brace and Company, 1924)
- Newland, P.                    *The Cultural Construction of London's East End* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2008)
- Nichols, J.                    *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)
- Norris, P.                    *A Cockney At Work. The Story of Gus Elen & His Songs* (Guildford: Grosvenor House, 2014)
- Paterson, A. Edward                    *Across the Bridges or Life by the South London Riverside*. (London: Arnold, 1911)
- Pearsall, R.                    *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973)
- Pennybacker, S.                    *A Vision for London, 1889-1914: Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Pertwee, B.                    *Dad's Army. The Making of a Television Legend* (London: Pavilion Books, 1997)
- Pleasants, N.                    *Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2002)
- Poole, R.                    *Popular Leisure and Music Hall in 19th Century Bolton*, (Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 1982)
- Porter, R.                    *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin Group, 2000)
- Price, V.J.                    *Birmingham Theatres, Concert & Music Halls, 1740-1988* (Warwickshire: Brewin Books, 1988)
- Pulling, C.                    *They Were Singing* (London: George Harrap & Co, 1952)
- Pye, P.                    *Sound and Modernity in the Literature of London, 1880-1914* (Uxbridge: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)
- Raven, B.                    *Leisure, citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)

- Read, J. *Empires Hippodromes and Palaces* (London: The Alderman Press, 1985)
- Reed, P. *Glasgow The Forming of the City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993)
- Reynolds, G.W.M. *Lady Saxondale's Crimes. Volume 11. The Mysteries of the Court of London* (London: The Oxford Society, 1920)
- Reynolds, H. *Minstrel Memories. The Story of Burnt Cork Minstrelsy in Britain from 1836 to 1927* (London: Alston Rivers, 1928)
- Robbins, K. *Nineteenth Century Britain: England, Scotland and Wales- the Making of a nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1989)
- Robson, B.T. *Urban Growth: An approach* (London: Methuen, 1973)
- Roberts, A. *The Double Act. A History of British Comedy Duos* (Stroud: The History Press, 2018)
- Roberts, R. *The Classic Slum. Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971)
- Robson, W.A. *The Government and Misgovernment of London* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939)
- Rodensky, L. (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Rodger, P. *Housing in Urban Britain 1780-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Royle, E. *Issues of Regional Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)
- Rose, J. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes,* (London: Yale University Press, 2001)
- Rowntree, B.S. *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London: Andesite Press, 2017)
- Russell, D. *Looking North. Northern England and the national imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004)
- Russell, D. *Popular Music in England 1840-1918: A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997)
- Saddock, J.M. *Towards Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts* (New York: Academic Press, 1974)
- Saint, A. (ed) *Politics and the People of London The London County Council 1889-1965* London: Hambledon Press, 1989)
- Samuel, R. *East End Underworld Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)

- Savage, M. *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Savage, M & Miles, A. *The remaking of the British working class, 1840-1940* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Scannell, P. *Media as Communication* (California: Sage Publications, 2007)
- Searle, J.R. *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1999)
- Senelick, L. *British Music Hall, 1840-1923: A Bibliography and Guide to Sources, with a Supplement on European Music Hall-Hall* (Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1981)
- Smith, S. *The Other Nation. The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980)
- Spielmann, M.H. *The History of Punch* (London: Cassell & Company, 1895)
- Stedman Jones, G. *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)
- Stedman Jones, G. *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
- Stuart, C.D. & Park, A.J. *The Variety Stage: A History of the Music Halls from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (London: Forgotten Books, 2012)
- Swartz, D. *Culture and Power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977)
- Titch, M. & Findlater, R. *Little Tich: Giant of the Music Hall* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1979)
- Thompson, C. *The Autobiography of an Artisan* (London: J. Chapman, 1847)
- Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 2013)
- Thompson, F.M.L. *The Rise of a Respectable Society. A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1968)
- Thornton, D. *The Story of Leeds* (Stroud: The History Press, 2013)
- Treble, J.H. *Urban Poverty in Britain 1830-191* (London: Methuen, 1979)
- Upton, C. *A History of Birmingham* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co, 1997)
- Vinicus, M. *The Industrial Muse. A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974)
- Volosinov, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Seminar Press, 1973)

- Waller, P.J. *Town, City, and Nation England 1850-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983)
- Ward, P. *Britishness Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Webb, S. & Webb, B. *The Public Organisation of the Labour Market: Being Part Two of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission* (London: Longmans Green, 1909)
- Wheeler, M. *English Fiction in the Victorian Period* (Harlow: Longman Group Ltd., 1994)
- Williams, J. *Cockney Past and Present: A Short History of the Dialect of London* (London: Routledge & K Paul, 1972)
- Willson-Disher, W. *Winkles and Champagne. Comedies and Tragedies of the Music Hall* (Bath: Cedric Chivers Ltd., 1974)
- Wilson, A.E. *East End Entertainment* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1954)
- Wright, P. *Cockney Dialect and Slang* (London: B.T. Basford Ltd., 1981)

## Electronic Sources

- Arthur Lloyd Music Hall and Theatre Site, at: <[www.arthurlloyd.co.uk](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk)> [accessed 24 September 2022]
- 'A Casquet of Vocal Gems from the Golden Days of Music Hall' at <<http://www.monologues.co.uk>> [accessed 24 September 2022]
- 'A Vision of Britain Through Time', at <<http://www.visionofbritain.org>> [accessed 24 September 2022]
- Bindman, D. 'William Hogarth (1697-1764)' (Oxford: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2009) at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13464>> [accessed 25 September 2022]
- 'The Brewing Industry' at <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/rewing-industry/bhs-brewing-ind-shier/>> [accessed 26 September 2020]
- 'Britain and Ireland's Provincial Theatres and Music Hall Index' *The Music Hall and Theatre History Site*, at <<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk>> [accessed 26 September 2022]

- Cambridge Dictionary  
at <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vernacular>  
> [accessed 6 April 2022]
- Chinn, C. 'No frills living in city back-to-backs', BirminghamLive 05 January 2013 at <<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/new/nostalgia/carl-chinn-no-frills-living-in-city-403144>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- 'Cockney' Oxford English Dictionary at ><https://public.oed.com/blog/cockney>  
> [accessed 6 April 2022]
- 'Common Lodging House'  
The Workhouse. The Story of an Institution at  
<<http://www.workhouse.org.uk/lodging>> [accessed 10 June 2020]
- 'Conversational Implicatures'  
at <<https://www.bu.edu/linguistics/UG/course/lx502/docs/lx502-implicatures.pdf>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Coustillas, P. 'Gissing, George Robert', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, at <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3341> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- 'Discovering Leeds – The Theatres' at  
<<https://discoveringleeds.wordpress.com/leeds-theatres-origins/>>  
[accessed 26 September 2022]
- Diniecko, A. 'Water Besant: a biographical sketch', at  
<https://victorianweb.org/authors/besantw/bio.html> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Ellacot, V. An A-Z Encyclopaedia of London Theatres and Music Halls, at  
<[www.overthefootlights.co.uk/London\\_Theatres.html](http://www.overthefootlights.co.uk/London_Theatres.html)> [accessed 25 September 2020]
- Ellemers, N. 'Social Identity Theory', Encyclopaedia Britannica at  
<<https://www.britannica.com/topic-social-identity-theory>>  
[accessed 25 September 2020]
- Ewing Ritchie, J. 'Here and There in London' at  
<https://www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/pennygaffs.htm>>  
[accessed 26 September 2022]
- Farrer, W. & Brownbill, J. 'Liverpool: Trade, population and geographical growth' in *A History of the County of Lancaster, Vol. 4*, (London: Victoria County History, 1911), at <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol4/pp37-38>> [accessed 26 September 2022]

- Featherstone, S. 'Chevalier, Albert Onesime Britannicus Gwathveoyd Louis', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32394>> [accessed 14 January 2022]
- Jacot de Boinod, A. 'Cockney', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. at <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Cockney>> [accessed 6 April 2022]
- Fraser Bryett, L. 'Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary Condition of the Metropolitan Borough of Shoreditch in the County of London for the Year 1901' at <<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b19822030>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Gibbons, A. 'Walter Besant', at <<https://www.writingcities.com/2015/05/05/walter-fricken-besant-on-east-london/>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Goulden, A. 'The Life and Times of George Mozart', at <<https://www.davenportcollection.co.uk/item/the-life-and-times-of-george-mozart/>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Gray, F. 'Lloyd, Marie [real name Matilda Alice Victoria Wood]' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37003>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Gray, F. 'Victoria, Vesta [real name Victoria Lawrence]' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64584>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Greenwood, J. 'The Severn Curses of London' at <<https://www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/pennygaffs.htm>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Fearon, J.D. 'What is Identity (As we now use the word)?' *Dept. of Political Science, Stanford University, California (1999)* at <<https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Harskamp, J. 'Underground London: From Cave Culture Follies to Avant Garde', *British Library Journal*, Article 7, (2009) online at <<http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2009articles/article7.html>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Hammerton, J. (ed.) *Punch's Cockney Humour* at <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/38586/38586-h/38586-h.htm>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- 'History of the London Coliseum' at <<https://londoncoliseum.org/your-visit-/history-of-the-london-coliseum/>> [accessed 26 September 2022]



- Hogg, J. 'Leno, Dan [real name George Wild Gavin]' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34497>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Keller, D. 'Illuminations: The Critical Theory Project. The Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies: The Missed Articulation' at <<https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/keller/illumina%20Folder/kel116.htm>> [accessed 23 March 2020]
- Morton, P. 'George Gissing: a biographical sketch' at <<https://victorianweb.org/authors/gissing/bio.html>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- National Portrait Gallery at <<https://www.npg.org.uk>> [accessed 25 September 2022]
- Nichols, J. "The Highs and Lows of Drinking in Britain" at <<https://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion-articles/the-highs-and-lows-of-drinking-in-britain>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography at <<https://www.oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 25 September 2022]
- Oxford House 'Past and Present' at <<https://www.oxfordhouse.org.uk/history/>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Rodgers, H.B. The Suburban Growth of Manchester at: >[https://www.mangeosoc.org.uk/pdfs/centenaryedition/Cent\\_17\\_Rodgers.pdf](https://www.mangeosoc.org.uk/pdfs/centenaryedition/Cent_17_Rodgers.pdf)> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Russell, D. 'Elen, Ernest Augustus [Gus]' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39376>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Ruston, A. 'Champion, Harry [real name William Henry Crump]' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/41077>> [accessed 7 April 2022]
- Scott, D.B. 'God Bless the Music Halls: Victorian and Edwardian Popular Songs', *The Victorian Blog* at <<https://victorianweb.org/mt/musichall/scott1.html>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Stephens, W.B. (ed), 'Economic and Social History: Social History Since 1815', *A History of the County of Warwick, Vol.7, The City of Birmingham* at <<http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/vhc/warks/vol17/p223-245>> [accessed 29 July 2020]
- Snow, D.A. 'Collective Identity and the Expressive Forms' *Center for the Study of Democracy*, pp. 1-12 at <<https://scholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj>> [accessed 26 September 2022]

- Snow D. A., 'Collective Identity', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2nd Edition, pp.174-180 at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.10403-9>> [accessed 9 August 2021]
- Taylor, I.C. 'The Court and Cellar Dwelling: The Eighteenth Century Origin of the Liverpool Slum', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 122 (1970), at <<https://www.hslc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/122-5-Taylor.pdf>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Taylor, D.J. 'Foreword', *The Whirlpool* at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/george-gissing-the-last-great-victorian-novelist-> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- The Royal Variety Charity, at <<https://www.royalvarietycharity.org/royal-variety-performance-home/archive>> [accessed 20 September 2022]
- Theatre Trust 'How has the design of theatre buildings changed over time?', at <<http://www.theatrust.org.uk/discover-theatres/theatre-faqs/172-how-has-the-design-of-theatre-buildings-changed-over-time?>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- H. Yang, Conversational Implicature in English Listening Comprehension *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2:5 No. 5, ( 2011) pp. 1162-1167 at <<http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/jltr/vol02/05/27.pdf>> [accessed 25 September 2022]

## Sound Recordings

- Macqueen-Pope, W. 'As I Knew Her', General Overseas Service, 30 September 1952. 'BBC Eyewitness 1900-1909' in *A History of the Twentieth Century in Sound*
- The Mudcat Café at: <<https://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=6100>> [accessed 26 September 2022]
- Cliffe, F. & Moore, C.J. Marie Lloyd, 'Every Little Movement Has a Meaning of Its Own', recorded 23 July 1912 'BBC Eyewitness 1900-1909' in *A History of the Twentieth Century in Sound*
- Windyridge Music Label at: <[https://musichallcds.co.uk/music\\_hall\\_cds\\_catalogue.htm](https://musichallcds.co.uk/music_hall_cds_catalogue.htm)> [accessed 26 September 2022]

