

IMPERIALISM AND POPULAR CULTURE

edited by
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MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESS

- 41 John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, Manchester 1984, 188–9. See also F. Glendenning, 'School history textbooks and racial attitudes, 1804–1911', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, V (2), 1973, 33–43, and 'British and French colonialism in school books', *Educational History*, 3 (2), 1974, 57–72. There is an excellent chapter on education in M. D. Blanch, 'Nation, Empire, and the Birmingham working class', University of Birmingham PhD thesis, 1975.
- 42 Schumpeter, *Imperialism*, 11. See also W. Hamish Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market, 1850–1914*, London 1981.
- 43 *The Listener*, 6 January 1983, 10.
- 44 3, *The Radio Three Magazine*, November 1982, 42.
- 45 Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 183–85*, London 1978.
- 46 Douglas H. Johnson, 'The death of Gordon, a Victorian myth', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, X, 1982, 285–310. See also C. I. Hamilton, 'Naval hagiography and the Victorian hero', *Historical Journal*, XXIII, 1980, 381–98.
- 47 J. A. Mangan, 'Imitating their betters and disassociating from their inferiors: grammar schools and the games ethic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *Proceedings of the Annual Conference, History of Education Society of Great Britain*, December 1982, 1–45, and J. A. Mangan, 'Grammar schools and the games ethic in the Victorian and Edwardian eras', *Albion*, XV, 1983, 313–35. See also Blanch, 'Nation, Empire', 47–8.
- 48 Roberts, *Classic Slum*, 127–8.
- 49 BBC, Written Archives Centre, Caversham, file R34/213/1.
- 50 Brian Harrison, 'For Church, Queen, and family: the Girls' Friendly Society, 1874–1920', *Past and Present*, LXI, 1973, 107–38. Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and motherhood', *History Workshop*, V, 1978, 9–65.
- 51 Marc Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History or How the Past is Taught*, London 1984.
- 52 Donald Horne, *The Great Museum, The Re-presentation of History*, London 1984.
- 53 Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *Invention*. See particularly the contributions of Cannadine, Hobsbawm, Cohn and Ranger.
- 54 MacKenzie, *Propaganda*.
- 55 N. Abercrombie, S. Hill and Bryan A. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, London 1980. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott (eds), *Mass Communication and Society*, London 1977. Michael Gurevitch (ed.), *Culture, Society, and the Media*, London 1982. Bernard Waites, Tony Bennett and Graham Martin (eds), *Popular Culture: Past and Present*, London 1982.
- 56 Tony Bennett, 'Popular culture: defining our terms' in Block 1 of the Open University course U 203 book, *Popular Culture: Themes and Issues*, 1, Milton Keynes 1981, 86. See also Block 2 *The Historical Development of Popular Culture in Britain* of the same course.
- 57 Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace, Cinema and Society in Britain 1930–1939*, London 1984, part 2, chapters 5–8.

 CHAPTER 2

 PATRIOTISM AND EMPIRE
 MUSIC-HALL ENTERTAINMENT
 1870–1914

Penny Summerfield

Nineteenth-century music hall was known as the 'fount of patriotism'. While some observers praised this development,¹ others such as J. A. Hobson condemned the music hall for manipulating working-class opinion in favour of exploitative imperialist policies. Hobson was convinced, by the absence of mass opposition to the Boer War and by the working-class celebrations of victories such as the relief of Mafeking, that the working class was infected with jingoism. To him this meant an 'inverted patriotism whereby the love of one's own nation is transformed into the hatred of another nation, and the fierce craving to destroy the individual members of that other nation'. He saw music hall as a 'potent educator' transmitting this 'mob passion' throughout the country by way of the artist who 'conveys by song or recitation crude notions upon morals and politics, appealing by coarse humour or exaggerated pathos to the animal lusts of an audience stimulated by alcohol into appreciative hilarity'.²

Hobson has been taken to task by several historians in the last two decades for being, in the words of R. N. Price, 'duped by the seeming mass excitement caused by the war into believing that . . . something was very rotten in British society'.³ Price has argued that the true jingo crowd was not that which celebrated war victories, but the much smaller type of group which broke up peace meetings for politically Conservative reasons. Price suggests that this crowd was not working-class, but middle-class, or more specifically lower-middle-class, composed principally of shopkeepers and clerks suffering from 'status-anxiety'.⁴ The working class did participate in patriotic celebrations such as those on Mafeking night, 19 May 1900, but Price sees these as 'harmless saturnalia'.⁵ His conclusion after investigating five areas in which members of the working class might have been expected to express feelings about imperialism is that the dominant attitude was one of indifference, except when imperialism 'directly related to their own

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INDIA - - Misses WALL and AUDUS.

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experience',⁶ as in the case of volunteering to serve in the army during periods of high unemployment.

There does however, seem to be a major flaw in Price's argument. His depiction of jingoism and patriotism as separate sets of ideas and feelings is artificial when they had in common the celebration of Empire in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, albeit with different degrees of political focus and aggression. And patriotic 'saturnalia', however 'harmless', can hardly be regarded as signs of indifference to the nation and its Empire. J. A. Hobson's anxiety was based on the fear of an elision of patriotism (wholesome love of country) and jingoism (unhealthy xenophobia) during the Boer War, for which he held the music hall particularly responsible. However, neither Price nor other critics of Hobson's thesis, such as Hugh Cunningham and Henry Pelling, make a serious investigation of the charges which Hobson laid at the door of music hall. Cunningham and Pelling look briefly at the issue, both concluding that, in Cunningham's words 'the apparent jingoism of the music halls was less significant than it has usually seemed to be'.⁷ However neither author quotes more than one or two songs, and both leave aside issues such as the composition of audiences, their degree of control over the content of songs, and the significance of the varieties of patriotism that were expressed in the halls.

In contrast another historian, Laurence Senelick, concludes his study of the political content of music-hall songs by agreeing with Hobson about the manipulative Conservatism of music hall entertainment, though Senelick's conclusions on the success of this manipulation are ambiguous. At one point he suggests that music-hall politics grew into a 'creed' which explains 'why the downtrodden British working-class was so submissive and never rebelled'. At another he argues that music hall's political influence declined because 'it increasingly contributed to the formation of public opinion without drawing on the authentic attitudes of the public itself'.⁸ Referring to the nineteenth century, Senelick states that the growth of the 'creed' occurred 'over the course of decades' and that the decline of music hall's political influence happened 'as the century wore on'.⁹ But since the two opposite tendencies could not have occurred simultaneously, the argument only makes sense if Senelick is taken to mean that manipulation was successful in an earlier period and failed thereafter. This raises questions which Senelick does not address, concerning the feasibility of periodising music hall's influence and the possible causes of change.

The purpose of this essay is to advance the debate about the influence of music hall on attitudes towards imperialism in the period 1870–1914,

Britannia, 'An entirely New and Original Entertainment': programme from the Oxford Music Hall, 24 October 1885. By courtesy of the Guildhall Library.

firstly by discussing the development of music hall, in particular the social composition of audiences and the determinants of the content of the songs and acts they watched, and secondly by offering an interpretation of the various meanings given to patriotism in music hall and related entertainment. The objective is to identify and explain changes in music-hall patriotism over time, and by so doing to throw some light on the complex issue of popular attitudes towards the Empire in this period.

The term 'music hall' covers a number of different types of institution, and also genres of entertainment. Its development was shaped by the interaction of both economic and political factors. The desire to increase the sale of drink by providing entertainment stimulated the tavern free-and-easies of the late eighteenth century and the song saloons established alongside pubs from the 1820s, and the urge to make a profit from the sale of entertainment encouraged publicans to turn saloons into separate music halls, just as it motivated those who set up penny gaffs, popular theatres and later theatres of variety. Politically, the process was shaped by the licensing laws, a complex set of pieces of legislation intended to control both the sale of alcohol and the presentation of entertainment.¹⁰

By 1870 there were two different kinds of entertainment licence. Each had a bearing on the right of a proprietor to obtain an excise licence for the sale of drink, though the licences were quite separate. The origin of the stage play licence lay in legislation passed in 1660 and re-affirmed in 1737, which endeavoured to restrict the production of stage plays to theatres holding the Royal Patent. Inevitably minor theatres grew up challenging the monopoly. In 1843 a new Theatres Act made it possible for theatre proprietors to produce stage plays legitimately, if they made successful application to the Lord Chamberlain or the Justices (depending on the area), for a stage play licence. They had to submit their plays to the same authorities for censorship, and they were not permitted to sell intoxicants or to allow eating or smoking in the auditorium.¹¹ Under the legislation, a matter of continuing dispute was precisely what constituted a 'stage play' and therefore required the licence. 'Penny gaffs', small street theatres, often set up in ramshackle structures, showing short plays interspersed with singing, tried to dodge the licensing procedure.¹² Some melodrama theatres, many of which were in barely more permanent accommodation, did the same, sometimes avoiding dialogue or using song instead of speech in order to claim that they were not showing stage plays.¹³

The other entertainment licence was known as the music and dancing licence. Under the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751 all places of 'public entertainment', (i.e. those offering 'music and dancing') had to obtain a licence from the magistrates each Michaelmas quarter-sessions. This licence could be held jointly with the excise licence for the sale of drink,

and in the years between 1790 and 1860 those running taverns and public houses became increasingly keen to offer their customers drink and food coupled with entertainment. At first the common form was the 'free-and-easy', a concert held in the pub itself. Later saloons and music halls were set up, separate from pubs, with the objective of enlarging the entertainment side of the business, while still combining it with alcoholic and other types of refreshment. Applications for music and dancing licences in the County of Middlesex rose from sixteen in 1828 to 148 in 1849, and a Middlesex magistrate estimated that at least twice as many were in fact open for public entertainment, in that year.¹⁴

The objective of the licences was to enable the state to patrol popular haunts, long suspected as cradles of crime and vice. This involved both monitoring the behaviour of those who frequented theatres and pubs, and controlling the content of the entertainment presented. Licences were withheld on suspicion of disorder, crime or indecency or entertainment considered conducive to any of these. In London increasing vigilance after 1860 led to a decrease in the number of pubs licensed; and the creation of the London County Council in 1888, with a majority committed to temperance reform, led to a purge on the licensing of both pubs and saloons for public entertainment.¹⁵

It is possible that pubs denied music and dancing licences managed to offer clandestine musical entertainment, just as penny gaffs dodged the stage play law. But where the investment in a purpose-built place of entertainment was large, as in the case of many music halls, proprietors could not afford to lose their licences, and they were sensitive to their vulnerability at the hands of the licensing authorities. During the 1880s and 1890s there was a series of occasions on which music hall proprietors put forward their case, which amounted to the claim that they could guarantee the respectability and good order of music hall entertainment without sacrificing its essential features. These were drink, food, a mobile audience and an intimate relationship between artist and audience, characteristics which in the eyes of the authorities contributed to intemperance, prostitution and impropriety. Managers of music halls said such undesirable features had disappeared from 'legitimate' halls by for example the use of stewards who removed unruly or undesirable members of the audience and by controls over the performers, who had to abide by house rules which required them to submit material for performance beforehand, and not to deviate from it in patter or impromptu act, on penalty of loss of salary.¹⁶

After 1890, however, proprietors increasingly deferred to the preferences of the authorities for fixed seating and the removal of food and drink from the auditorium. Simultaneously they encouraged the development of sketches and, in the 1900s, 'revue', a compromise between the individual

turns of a succession of performers and a full stage play. As well as its benefits for the performer, who typically 'starred' against the background of a company of singing and dancing girls, revue had the benefit for the proprietor of being a set piece, scripted and approved or censored in advance. Such performances, interspersed with shorter acts, became the staple of 'variety'. The new-style halls, many of which originated in provincial towns and spread across the country in heavily capitalised 'chains', run by individuals such as Moss, Stoll, Thornton and McNaughton, were called theatres of variety.¹⁷ Eventually the overlap between variety and theatrical performances was accepted, and from 1912 it was possible for a theatre of variety to obtain both the music and dancing and the stage play licence. Though the advent of film, which originated as a 'turn' within music hall, provided an increasingly popular rival to variety, even in 1951 Rowntree and Lavers judged variety 'the most widely supported form of theatrical production in England and Wales, especially in the provinces'.¹⁸

Thus pub free-and-easies, saloons, music halls, theatres of variety and melodrama theatres all coexisted in the late nineteenth century, though by a process of selection the smaller, less heavily capitalised places were ceasing to lead a legal existence by the 1890s, and the theatre of variety was becoming the dominant 'legitimate' form.

The social composition of audiences varied as between the different institutions, according to type, size and level of capitalisation, though less according to location. Information is more readily available for London than elsewhere, but it is probably generally true that the variation was basically between places attracting a homogeneous audience from a single social segment, and those attracting a socially mixed audience, in which category many music halls, some popular theatres and all theatres of variety, belonged.

One may assume that most free-and-easies, saloons and penny gaffs drew their audiences from the immediate neighbourhood, and that their small size and low prices beckoned the youthful and uniformly poor crowds described in many nineteenth-century reports, such as one newspaper article on a gaff in Poplar which spoke of an audience of 'ragged boys, each one with his pipe, potatoe and (we must add it) his prostitute'. Youthful prostitution was often suspected in these places, and was given as a reason for refusing a licence to many saloons and small music halls in the 1860s. There are suggestions that for some young women it was one of the few ways in which they could obtain admission money.¹⁹

Melodrama theatres like the Bower Music Hall, Southwark, which charged 1d and 3d admission in the 1870s and music halls like Collins', Islington, the New Gaiety Palace of Varieties, Preston, and Sebright's, Hackney, which charged 2d or 3d to 1s, in 1880, 1884 and 1885

respectively, probably also anticipated an essentially local audience.²⁰ The better off and more respectable would occupy the higher priced stalls, while the pit and the gallery would still be filled by working-class youngsters including girls and women some of whom brought babies and young children with them.²¹

However, in developing such places of entertainment proprietors endeavoured to attract an audience from further afield and also a more respectable 'family' audience. Charles Morton, who turned the Canterbury Arms, Upper Marsh, Lambeth into the New Canterbury Music Hall in 1854, is a case in point. He deliberately tried to combine the kind of food, drink and song which was provided for upper-class men at song and supper rooms, with operetta and acrobatics of the kind that appealed to middle-class frequenters of tea gardens, and with the melodrama and comic acts which were the staple of the working-class free-and-easy. He priced his seats appropriately. In 1870 the Canterbury, which now accommodated 1,500, charged from 6d to 2 gns, depending on whether one chose the upper gallery, the hall, a 'numbered fauteil' or a box.²² Other similar enterprises included the Islington Empire which charged 1s to 1 gn in 1872, and the Bedford, Camden Town from 1861, the Royal Cambridge, Shoreditch from 1864, and Lusby's, once the Eagle Tavern, in the Mile End Road, which all charged 6d to 1 gn in 1878. These are examples of halls situated in working-class areas, whose proprietors adopted a deliberate policy of attracting an audience from beyond the immediate neighbourhood and from more than one socio-economic group. For example, Frederick Charrington, keeping watch on 'vice' outside Lusby's Music Hall in the East End of London in the early 1880s, observed groups of 'young and inexperienced clerks' and the 'West End type of customer' amongst the crowds of local tradesmen, labourers and sailors coming and going from the hall.²³ The development of socially mixed halls in such areas is often overlooked. They and the entertainment taking place within them are dubbed 'working-class' in contrast to the apparently middle-class halls growing up simultaneously in provincial city centres and the West End of London. In fact the pricing policies of these halls indicate that they also aimed to be socially heterogeneous. For instance the Alhambra, Leicester Square, the London Hippodrome in the Strand, and the London Pavilion, Piccadilly, all charged 1s to 1 guinea in the 1880s or '90s, and the Oxford, Oxford Street, and the Middlesex, Drury Lane, charged 6d to 2 gns.²⁴ The creation of the theatre-of-variety chains referred to earlier, after 1890, reinforced the trend towards 'mass' audiences. As well as penetrating city centres, chains colonised the new suburbs of the late Victorian and Edwardian era, where prices of entry had a lower 'ceiling' than those of the earlier established mixed halls, aiming mainly at lower middle-class and upper working-class members of suburban society.²⁵

As Clive Barker shows in his careful research on the audiences of the Britannia, Hoxton, a theatre showing mainly melodrama, the proprietor's policy *vis à vis* audiences was often one thing, and actual attendance another. Thus the Britannia management apparently failed to attract suburban multitudes from every train and bus route passing its door. Barker believes that it recruited mainly ex-Hoxtonians who had moved northwards as they moved up in the world, but who returned to their old haunts for entertainment, prepared to mix with the tradesmen and women who had not moved, as well as with less well off 'immigrants' to Hoxton from inner London areas.²⁶ A similar special link may have existed for the 'more respectable class of man' observed by J. E. Ritchie in the higher priced seats of the Canterbury in 1869, in contrast to the predominantly artisan audience he had observed twelve years before.²⁷ Increasing emphasis was placed on attracting a 'family' audience, which meant, in effect, that women accompanied by husbands were officially more welcome than women on their own, who were suspected of offering themselves for hire, but many observers testify to the distinctively masculine atmosphere of the music halls of the 1870s to the 1890s. From the proprietor's point of view the challenge involved in entertaining a 'mass' audience drawn from different walks of life and grades of income, was that there must be something to appeal to everyone and no section of the audience must be alienated.

Barker's research indicates the difficulties of assessing the social composition of the audiences at nineteenth century places of entertainment. Further complications are raised by Douglas Reid's work on Birmingham where, he argues, theatre audiences were drawn from different social segments on different nights of the week. Nevertheless, the evidence sustains a division of music halls into at least two categories, those with local, working-class audiences and those with a mixed clientele, often from a wider area than the immediate neighbourhood. The second category can be further divided into halls like those in the West End of London which attracted audiences from widely diverse backgrounds, and those in suburbia with more limited expectations of heterogeneity.²⁸ As has already been pointed out, by the 1890s in London and probably elsewhere, the operation of the licensing laws and economic competition favoured the socially mixed institutions, at the expense of the others.

There was some overlap in the types of entertainment presented in the different institutions. Most obviously song was presented on the stage of the melodrama theatre and melodrama was included as a 'turn' in music halls. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries almost all these different types of entertainment had a patriotic content, and patriotism, as J. M. Robertson noted in 1899, by now inevitably embraced some celebration of Empire.²⁹ But as I shall go on to argue, the precise nature of

the patriotic entertainment offered varied according to the social tone of the institution concerned, and as certain types of institution were supplanted over time their distinctive treatments disappeared with them, leading inevitably to standard presentations of imperial themes. It is now time to look at this patriotic entertainment, embracing in our enquiry melodramas, sketches and revues, as well as the songs which are the more obvious component of Victorian and Edwardian music hall.

It was the songs of the 1870s which earned music hall its reputation as the 'fount of patriotism'. The most famous, widely quoted by historians, was 'By Jingo' written by G. W. Hunt in 1877 and performed by G. H. Macdermott during the crisis of 1877-8, when the Russians threatened to take Constantinople, the Turkish port guarding both the entrance to the Black Sea and the route through the Mediterranean. The British stake in the issue was to keep the route East to India, the principal British colony, free from interference by any of the European Great Powers. The irony was that before the 1870s, Turkey, whose defence was now advocated as a moral imperative, had been regarded in less than sympathetic terms as a despotic 'heathen' power endangering the independence of the Balkan states.³⁰ However, it was precisely such subtleties that music hall jingoism ignored. Its appeal depended upon the presentation of complex issues of international politics in black and white, with Britain's cause always just and inevitably victorious. 'By Jingo', also known as 'We don't want to fight' and 'The Dogs of War', went as follows:

The 'Dogs of War' are loose and the rugged Russian Bear,
Full bent on blood and robbery, has crawled out of his lair,
It seems a thrashing now and then, will never help to tame,
The brute, and so he's bent upon the 'same old game'.
The Lion did his best to find him some excuse,
To crawl back to his den again, all efforts were no use,
He hunger'd for his victim, he's pleased when blood is shed,
But let us hope his crimes may all recoil on his own head.
Chorus: We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too.
We've fought the Bear before, and while we're Britons true,
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.³¹

The song is supposed to have been written in a few hours by G. W. Hunt after reading a statement in the morning paper, and was bought with full copyright by Macdermott for £5 (rather over the market price of 10s 6d).³² Macdermott, originally a bricklayer's labourer and subsequently an actor in melodrama, was by 1878 well established as a 'lion comique', that is a singer of 'swell' songs celebrating the life of an upper-class rake. His fee was in the highest bracket, around £60 a week in the 1870s,³³ and it is unlikely that any but the halls whose income was enlarged by the range of

prices charged to a socially-mixed audience could have afforded to hire him. The demand for 'By Jingo' in the big socially-mixed halls is indicated by J. B. Booth's record of Macdermott's performances on one evening in London in 1878. 'He was timed for 4.15 p.m. and 8.15 p.m. at the Royal Aquarium, 9.10 p.m. at the Metropolitan, 10 p.m. at the London Pavilion and 10.50 p.m. at Collins'.³⁴ In addition there is evidence that he was a regular performer at the Royal Cambridge, Shoreditch from April to June 1878 and toured the larger provincial halls in 1878 and periodically thereafter, until he turned from performance to management in the 1890s.³⁵

Macdermott's performances of 'By Jingo' were undoubtedly popular in the halls where he was hired. Contemporary descriptions emphasise the artist's complete commitment to his message. He would abandon the frivolous 'yellow wig, hat and dust coat' of the 'lion comique', and reappear in evening dress for 'By Jingo', his 'square jaw, magnificent enunciation and stentorian voice' resembling for some that symbol of British grit, a bulldog.³⁶ Allegations that Conservatives subsidised him to sing 'By Jingo' and his other patriotic songs are probably far-fetched, though one can accept rumours that Conservative MPs invaded the London Pavilion to learn the words, which were quoted in Parliament and *The Times*.³⁷

'By Jingo' is said to have averted war with Russia, and to have put a new word into the English language.³⁸ It certainly contributed to the legitimisation of a more bellicose foreign policy, and it gave 'by jingo', earlier simply an expression of surprise, its special connotation of the aggressive assertion of British power. The phrase was rapidly picked up by other song writers. For example Clement Scott, author of many patriotic songs, as well as dramatic critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, incorporated it in 'True Blues, Stand to Your Guns', performed by Macdermott as part of a 'New Patriotic Entertainment entitled Albion's Nationality', performed at the Oxford in July 1878:

We have suffered in silence the impudent banter
Of cowards that swore that foul war was our cry.
Come pledge our false friends in a merry decanter
They shot behind hedges – we never said die!
We can laugh – we have won – though they dragged the old island
To a verge of a precipice loyalty shuns.
But in spite of deserters – an ocean and dry land,
By Jingo! Old England has stood to her guns.³⁹

The 'jingo' songs of 1878 were not however a new departure, but part of a spate of songs and spectacles on the theme of the righteousness of British predominance, performed at the larger socially mixed halls from early in the 1870s. The 'Bear' had already become the villain of such halls.

For instance, in February 1871 the Oxford offered a programme of national war songs, in which 'Sailor Williams' sang 'We've Swept the Seas Before Boys'. The last verse and chorus ran:

The Russians threaten war, boys,
And gather a proud host:
And think the task quite easy
To land on Turkey's coast:
But let them try it on, lads,
They'll find who rules the main:
We've thrashed them well before, boys,
And so we can again.⁴⁰

A similar show was put on at the Alhambra a year later in February 1872.⁴¹ M. Julien's 'British Army Quadrille', followed by 'War Songs of the Day', were performed as a 'Promenade Concert' in the last hour of the evening, and concluded with an assertive rendering of 'Rule Britannia'.⁴² The 'Quadrille' involved 350 performers, including the Reed Band of Scots Fusilier Guards. A nautical version, 'Trafalgar', was shown at the Canterbury several times between 1871 and 1880.⁴³ References were made to the Russian threat in all sorts of songs, such as Arthur Roberts' whistling song, 'It's all explained in this', published in 1882. The keynote was that the Tsar of Russia was unfit to rule, and the song's disdain for accuracy was typical: 'Old England's name is honoured still wherever waves her flag / We always give our foes the best, and never bounce or brag'.⁴⁴ Charles Godfrey was still recalling the theme in the 1890s, with his sketch 'The Seventh Royal Fusiliers, A Story of Inkerman' written in 1892: 'Through deadly Russian shot and Cossack spears / We carved our way to Glory! Oh! Glory!'.⁴⁵ The jingoism of such songs accords well with Hobson's definition.

A different element entered jingoist entertainment in 1879, and was increasingly stressed during the 1880s. The theme was that for years Britain had been resting peacefully, unaware of the threats to the Empire coming from jealous foreigners. Ultimately aroused, loyal colonial subjects came to Britain's aid and the threat was quashed amidst the celebration of British might. For example G. W. Hunt put a 'New Patriotic Song' into the 'Indianationality' spectacle shown at the Oxford in 1879. It combined the threatening defensiveness of 'By Jingo', expressed through animal characterisations of nations, with an image of the Empire as a unity of colonies whose inhabitants were loyal to the Imperial Crown out of gratitude for the 'freedom' and 'justice' its hegemony was supposed to have brought. The last two verses ran:

The Afghan Wolf may friendship make
With cunning Russian Bear,
But the Indian Tiger's wide awake

And bids them both beware!
The prowling foe on plunder bent
By this should surely know
The British Lion's not *asleep*
As in the years ago.

The dusky sons of Hindostan
Will by our banner stand.
Australia, aye, and Canada,
Both love the dear old land!
No foe we fear – we fight for right!
No day we e'er shall rue,
If England, dear old England,
To herself be only true.⁴⁶

During the 1880s the isolation of England (it was usual for the nation to be thus narrowly defined), and her resulting dependence on the colonies, was a growing preoccupation within the larger, socially mixed music halls. The context was not now the Russian threat to the security of Britain's imperial trade, but the rival claims of Belgium, France, Germany and Portugal to parts of Africa, which blew up into the crisis known as the 'scramble for Africa' in 1884–5.

'Britannia', shown at the Oxford under the auspices of J. H. Jennings in October 1885, sums up the concern. The spectacle opened with Britannia enjoying a 'well earned rest' after years of empire building. The drowsy idyll was shattered by a messenger announcing that as a result of 'greedy love of gain' among other nations, war loomed, threatening England's welfare. Britannia, awaking, silenced all fears:

There will come from the East, there will come from the West,
Willing hands, loyal hearts, the noblest and the best,
To help old England's sons, when danger hovers near,
For love of mother country their fathers held so dear.
There's little fear for England,
With brave Colonial sons,
Ready at the hour of need,
With money men and guns.
Above all price such service
Forgotten ne'er will be,
Long may their love continue
That all the world may see.

Although it turned out that 'War's dark cloud has passed away' Britannia would not allow her 'colonial sons' to be sent away, but announced:

Britannia's not so poor but she can ask
A few from every clime that owns her sway
As guests but once a year a loving task
To share the pleasures of a festive day.⁴⁷

There was no specific reference to the Imperial Federation League, founded the year before, in 1884, nor are any contacts known between J. H. Jennings and supporters of the League. But even without such contacts, 'Britannia' clearly propagated the imperialist thought nurtured within the League and expressed by Lord Salisbury at the first Colonial Conference in 1887. The immediate need, he said, was not the *Zollverein*, or customs union, but 'the *Kriegsverein*... the Union for purposes of mutual defence'.⁴⁸ The League also suggested that the self-governing colonies should send their prime ministers to London regularly, to consult with the heads of the home government, after their first visit on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee in 1887, an idea which 'Britannia' presaged.

A sketch like 'Britannia' was an elaborate and expensive type of performance. It would not be shown once only, but repeatedly, and might well be taken on tour of those halls which could afford it.⁴⁹ This method of presenting a highly topical imperial theme was developed in other halls, such as the Alhambra, which showed a 'Grand Military Spectacle: Le Bivouac' in March 1886, 'Our Army and Navy' in July 1889 and 'Victoria and Merrie England' for the Diamond Jubilee in 1897.⁵⁰ The Empire, also in Leicester Square, London, staged similar performances, especially during the 1890s and 1900s.⁵¹ Examples include 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' depicting soldiers and sailors on imperial service, performed in February and May 1894, 'Round the Town', whose '5th Tableau', entitled 'Our Empire', consisted of the dances of the British Empire, which was performed during both 1895 and 1899, and 'Our Crown', a 'spectacular divertissement' to celebrate the Coronation in 1902. The programme notes indicate how, in the sixth to twelfth tableaux, colonial unity was asserted:

Announced by the Clarions of Fame, a Messenger of Peace appears to summon the various colonies to contribute their resources to fashion the new imperial crown for King Edward VII... The Spirits of Commerce attend the revolution of the Globe revealing in turn... The Gold of Australia... The Rubies of Burmah... The Sapphires of India... The Pearls of Ceylon... The Diamonds of Cape Colony... The Ermine of Canada.⁵²

In these 'patriotic extravaganzas' the colonies were presented as willingly subservient. The desire for independence growing within many of them was completely ignored. Unity was advocated in terms of the racial superiority of Anglo Saxons wherever they might be found. The most blatant expression of this was Charles Godfrey's song, 'It's the England Speaking Race against the World'.⁵³

We're brothers of the self-same race
Speakers of the self-same tongue,
With the same brave hearts that feel no fears
From fighting sires of a thousand years;

Folks say, 'What will Britain do?
Will she rest with banners furled?'
No! No!! No!!!

When we go to meet the foe,
It's the English-speaking race against the world.

The inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, characterised as 'the dusky sons of Hindostan', were, like the Chinese, depicted as coolies, the willing serfs of the Empire.⁵⁴ The Indian Mutiny of 1857, the power relations within India's complex society, and the tensions on India's borders, could not of course be acknowledged in the music-hall version of imperial unity.

The same was true of the desire of Dutch South Africans for independence. In the 1880s and 1890s the Boers had to be presented, like others resistant to British authority in Africa, as traitors or savages.⁵⁵ The extension of British power abroad could only be right. There was no room for questioning.

After 1902 there were repeated references to imperial grandeur and British power in sketches and also in 'revue', which was an extension of the sketch, linking together different turns with a single theme.⁵⁶ But though 'political' in the sense of offering unquestioning support to the established order of Crown and Empire, these acts tended to be less directly topical, in the sense of delivering judgments on current events, than the jingo songs of the 1870s and patriotic spectacles of the 1880s. The 'political' song was under attack. For example, in 1892 Collins' music hall included in its house rules the following clause:

No offensive allusions to be made to any member of the Royal Family; Members of Parliament, German Princes, police authorities, or any member thereof, the London County Council, or any member of that body; no allusion whatever to religion, or any religious sect; no allusion to the administration of the law of the country.⁵⁷

How such a clause might be acted upon is illustrated by Percy Honri's experience at the London Palladium in 1918. He introduced into one of his songs some couplets about the 'khaki election' of that year, in which Asquith lost his seat at East Fife, but was sternly told not to repeat them by the proprietor: 'A music hall audience is an all-party audience – and your couplets probably offended at least fifty per cent of the patrons'.⁵⁸ It was safer in view both of the mass audience and the attitudes of the licensing authority to make generalised statements of political loyalty.

The evidence of playbills and programmes is that jingo songs and spectacles were favoured by the proprietors of large halls endeavouring to attract a 'mass' audience in the 1870s and '80s. Of course, songs that became popular on their stages may have been repeated over the years in a wider social setting. However, artists other than the copyright holder were not supposed to perform them publicly, a legal requirement which the

Performing Rights Society was active in enforcing from 1875. Thus one may locate the sentiments of jingoism with some justice in the category of heavily capitalised halls catering for a socially mixed clientele. The social mix, it should be remembered, was predominantly male, and the songs were performed in the main by men. If the late Victorian music hall had a strongly masculine gender identity, then so too did the aggressive nationalism which pervaded so many of its performances.

A quite different brand of patriotism co-existed in specifically working-class places of entertainment, such as penny gaffs, popular theatres and smaller music halls, in the 1870s and 1880s, which found its fullest expression in melodrama.

Melodrama of course depended upon the polarisation of good and evil, a dichotomy into which 'British' and 'foreign' could easily be slotted. But on the whole national superiority was seen to derive from the good qualities of the redcoats and bluejackets themselves, rather than from anything as abstract as 'Albion', and hostility was rarely directed at an enemy with a distinct national identity, but usually at 'evil' in general.

This tradition in melodrama had long roots. The theatre historian Willson Disher believes that 'Jolly Jack Tar' first appeared as a character in the late eighteenth century. As both the personification of 'virtue triumphant' and an expression of the love of freedom, Jack Tar was written into numerous scripts which otherwise made no reference to seafaring life.⁵⁹ He was also the principal subject of many 'blood and thunder' melodramas whose main characteristics are summed up by another historian of popular theatre, Michael Booth:

Cannon roared and smoke rolled; flames swept the stage; ships sank and forts blew up; the Union Jack waved exaltedly over all, and the Great Commander and the Great Common Man alike declaimed patriotically, fought heroically, behaved magnanimously to the vanquished foe, treated their womenfolk tenderly, and to the rest of the world displayed the finest sentiment and the noblest conduct.⁶⁰

There is abundant evidence of the resilience of this genre in the second half of the nineteenth century. Typical titles shown at the Bower Music Hall, Southwark, in the 1870s were, 'The Sailor's Grave or the Perils of the Dark Blue Waters' featuring Jack Junk and Harry Helm 'true British sailors', performed in February 1870, 'The Pirate King, or the Rover of the Sea and the Perils of the Ocean Wave' featuring Joe Jolly 'one who proved a True Blue to the Last', shown repeatedly during 1872, 'The Sailor's Progress' shown in July and 'Sinbad the Sailor, the Demon of the Sea' shown in December 1872. During 1873 'Perils of the Ocean Wave, or the Lass that loves a Sailor' was shown in March, 'Sons of Britannia or Death and Glory' in June, 'The Sea King's Vow, or the Struggle for Liberty' in July, 'Blackbeard the Smuggler, or the British Bulldogs and the Privateer',

in October and 'True Blue or Sharks Alongshore' in December. Nautical melodramas continued to be strongly represented in the Bower programmes for 1874 and 1875.⁶¹

Documentation for the Bower is particularly full, but similar shows appear to have been put on at other East London halls, such as the Pavilion, Stepney, the East London Theatre, Whitechapel, and the Surrey, Lambeth as well as at numerous impermanent penny gaffs, 'geggies' (in Glasgow) and 'dives' (in Liverpool).⁶² Indeed 'blood and thunder' appears to have become more firmly entrenched in melodrama theatres as changing technology made more spectacular illusions possible. The same play was frequently pirated and presented under different titles. For example, a pencilled note on a Bower playbill states that 'Sons of Britannia or Death and Glory' (June 1873) was actually 'My Poll and Partner Joe' a melodrama originally written in 1835. Since melodrama was necessarily stereotyped, such semi-concealed repetition probably did not matter much. The script of 'My Poll and Partner Joe' is available,⁶³ and as it is likely that it was frequently plagiarised, it can be used for the purpose of illustration of the genre.

The characters Poll and Joe are in fact largely irrelevant to the plot. The main focus is the virtuous Battersea waterman, Harry Hallyard, and an evil debt collector, Black Brandon, whose press-gang abduct Harry on the eve of his wedding to Poll. Despite these unpromising beginnings, Harry is instinctively a 'True Blue' and distinguishes himself at sea for three years on board HMS *Polyphemus*. Then Black Brandon's ship is sighted. A boarding party led by Harry overcomes Brandon's men. Harry is saved from being stabbed in the back by a shot killing Brandon, his assailant, from a comic tailor hiding in a barrel. Brandon's badly treated slaves are freed, to the accompaniment of a declaration of the 'freedom' and 'justice' believed to be embodied in the Empire, by Hallyard: 'Dance, you black angels, no more captivity; the British flag flies over your head, and the very rustling of its folds knocks every fetter from the limbs of the poor slave'.⁶⁴ Following the release of the slaves, Harry takes on an apparently impregnable pirate fortress, single handed, and hoists the Union Jack as it blows up. He returns to Battersea with a fat legacy left him by an admiring officer. Poll and Joe now make their appearance. During Harry's long absence Poll has married Harry's waterman partner, Joe, but Harry and Poll barely have time to get upset before Joe is carried in fatally injured. He gives the rightful union his blessing, and expires.

The romance and excitement of 'Poll' is infectious. Its appeal in waterside communities such as Southwark and Whitechapel in London, and on the dockside in Liverpool and Glasgow, rested on an exaggeration of the role an individual waterside worker or sailor could play in imperial adventures. The tradition reached back to the heroism of Elizabethan sea-

dogs such as Drake or Raleigh, rather than forward to the power and responsibility derived from empire-building, which was being celebrated in the sketches and spectacles of the halls catering for a social cross-section. Jack Tar's magnanimity towards the enemy contrasts sharply with the aggression of jingoist entertainment. It was embodied in such recurrent melodrama lines as 'to insult even a foe labouring under misfortune is unworthy the character of an Englishman'.⁶⁵ Most importantly, the idea that British rule symbolised freedom is treated quite differently in the two genres. Nautical melodrama had emerged from a 'drama of oppression' which gloried in bringing liberty to the slave in whatever guise or corner of the earth he or she might be found. Patriotism in such drama was embodied in the claim that such liberation was a particularly British mission.⁶⁶ Some jingo songs also spoke of the justice and freedom to be found beneath the British flag, but, as we have seen, it was coupled with an assertion of the duty which 'free' colonial populations owed to their Empress in return for the benefits of British rule. There was a major difference in emphasis. In working-class halls the soldiers and sailors whose freedom liberated others were celebrated. In the socially mixed halls the power bestowed on the nation, its Queen and its statesmen, by colonies subjugated through battle, was lauded and justified.

The two different treatments were presented in coexisting halls serving different sections of the population in the 1870s and '80s. But it was claimed by some proprietors that halls presenting melodrama were under attack from several sources in these decades, including their rivals the straight theatres,⁶⁷ the licensing authorities, and the local councils whose requirements concerning structural alterations mounted after a Building Regulations Act of 1878. The economics of running a place of entertainment for a single social segment were spelt out at a meeting held by the London County Council in 1889, by Morris Abrahams, manager of the New East London Theatre.⁶⁸ Because proprietors like himself had to charge a low admission fee (sixpence at the most) to attract their clientele, and because they opened only two or three times a week, they could not afford the improvements in accommodation insisted on by the authorities and provided by the larger halls. Abrahams' own hall closed in 1897. The Bower Music Hall was shut down earlier, in 1877. City of London Theatre, Bishopsgate closed in 1887, and Astley's, Lambeth, 1893. Few melodrama theatres continued far into the twentieth century. The Britannia, Hoxton closed in 1923, the Surrey, Lambeth in 1921, the Metropole, Glasgow and the Gaiety, Ayr in 1925. They lasted this long by widening their audiences and range of admission prices, as well as by surviving the particular theatrical ecology in which they had to operate.⁶⁹

Nautical and military melodrama was included in the programme of such halls, and also in that of some late nineteenth-century music halls