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From Sideshow to Centre Ring: The Historiography of Popular Entertainment

The academic interest in popular entertainment was long retarded by a class attitude that regarded it as a cultural phenomenon of inferior quality. Those who researched it were collectors and enthusiasts rather than professional scholars. The disdain of the Frankfurt School was also a factor. In the 1960s, with the rise of leisure studies and a Marxist-inflected interest in working-class culture, this began to change. The study of popular forms is now an accepted, even dominant part of the humanities curriculum, though still occasionally tinged with apology.

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Key terms: historiography, popular entertainment, leisure studies, Frankfurt School, cultural values, boundaries.

The [Bob Dylan] archive [at the University of Tulsa] has already begun to reshape Dylan studies, a subject now fully embraced by academia, said Douglas Brinkley, the Rice University history professor who, with his wife, Anne, is a donor and adviser to the Dylan Center.

‘It’s become now a legitimized field of studies,’ Brinkley said. ‘Anywhere in the United States, if you’re an English or history professor, you can propose teaching a class on Dylan and the academy will bless it.’¹

THE HISTORY of performance has often been pursued along two separate tracks. One, the more studied, originates in religious rituals or civic ceremonies, involving amateurs who may or may not develop into professionals, but whose social ties to their community are evident. In the West, most dramatic theatre evolves within this tradition. This is the track that engaged scholars when they first turned their attention to performance; it was reasonably well documented and, owing to its literary connections, ‘respectable’. In terms of both education and class, those scholars resembled the consumers of such theatre.

The other track concerns professional performers unmoored to any community or society and, therefore, suspect, practising

traditional skills such as juggling, rope-walking, clowning, and conjuring. Over time, they may constitute dynasties, and be consolidated into aggregates along the lines of fairgrounds, circuses, or variety halls. Their existence is more tenuous and more evasive of record-keeping. Loosely grouped together as ‘popular entertainment’, their livelihoods and their milieux were considered *infra dig.* by scholars. The academy, slow to take the study of dramatic theatre seriously, was positively glacial in attention given to such phenomena.²

The neoclassical hierarchy of the arts plays its part in this, but it also has to do with Romanticism: whereas true creativity is to be manifested by the individual artist, lesser products emerge spontaneously as collective creations from an inchoate body known as the ‘folk’. Proto-ethnologists and linguists such as the Brothers Grimm, although they collected their material from specific persons, promoted the anonymity of their sources to preserve its ‘purity’. The allegedly organic nature of folklore was contrasted with the venal and vulgar amusements rife in modern urban environments. A ballad ostensibly composed by artless communal effort was seen as far superior to a music-hall ditty with a composer, a

copyright, and a direct appeal to a paying audience. 'Folk' art could serve as a bulwark for nationalist sentiment, whereas commercial entertainments transcended borders.

The study of popular entertainment, as opposed to folk culture, was sidelined, left to antiquarians and collectors whose assiduity and dedication surpassed that of academics. The first detailed reports of such entertainments are by aficionados.³ Enthusiasm and nostalgia fuelled their research, and they often built up holdings of ephemera at a time when librarians and archivists looked askance at both the subjects and the formats in which they were preserved. Erudite enthusiasts such as W. J. Lawrence, a former wine merchant, asked hard questions about the material conditions of early performance, while devoted fans like the press agent and legal librarian Raymond Toole-Stott compiled the lists and bibliographies of the circus that enabled others to pursue more learned enquiries. Journalists ('Signor Saltarino', Emil Vacano, Gustave Fréjaville, T. Allston Brown) provided invaluable first-hand accounts, while collectors such as George Speaight in the United Kingdom and Julius Markschiess-van Trix in Germany assembled repositories of images and fugitive letter-press, generously making them available to the public through publications and exhibitions.

The *Commedia dell'Arte*

The earliest works on professional popular entertainment deal with the *commedia dell'arte*, which had all but died out by the mid-nineteenth century. Theatre histories regularly report how the modernist stages of Meyerhold, Copeau, Craig, Diaghilev, and Reinhardt were inspired by the *commedia*, but neglect to mention how its 'rediscovery' had been expedited for these animateurs.

The first enquiries into *commedia* were motivated by a desire to establish a connection between it and classical culture. Luigi Riccoboni's two-volume history of Italian theatre was the first to suggest that Renaissance masked comedy was directly descended from Ancient Roman plays of the third and fourth centuries.⁴ Maurice Sand's

elegantly illustrated and frequently reprinted *Masques et Bouffons (comédie italienne)* of 1860 was not a scholarly work.⁵ It offered a thinly documented and suppositious muddle of analogues, disguises, and rituals to constitute a prehistory of the Zanni. This amateurish approach continued well into the next century.⁶

A serious monograph on the *commedia* was composed by the nobleman Konstantin Miklashevsky between 1914 and 1917 and became the sourcebook for Russian theatre artists of the Silver Age.⁷ Meyerhold characterized his research as 'revolutionary' and Evreinov called him a 'true authority', an 'outstanding theatrical *maître*'.⁸ Miklashevsky characterized what he called a 'people's showbooth' (*narodny balagan*) as an ensemble effort, a 'sort of collective creation . . . the text of each role being almost entirely left to the ingenuity of the actor who performed it'.⁹ Hence any similarity between Ancient Roman comedy and the *commedia* was not a matter of historical lineage, but of analogous impulses, the festival spirit in conflict with civil and religious authority. Incidentally, Mikhail Bakhtin failed to mention this precursor in his theory of the carnival-esque enunciated under Stalin.

An émigré in Paris after the Revolution, Miklashevsky was appalled by the publication of Pierre Louis Duchartre's book on *commedia*.¹⁰ Duchartre was neither a theatre historian nor a literary specialist, but a government official in charge of museums; his chief interests were popular imagery and hunting.¹¹ His *commedia* book was much in the tradition of Sand, perpetuating a view of improvised comedy as naive and romantic. Lacking a scholarly apparatus, the book's chief virtue was its abundance of illustrations. What must have been particularly galling for Miklashevsky was that Duchartre, in the Russian's words, 'had the goodness to reproduce my bibliography of three hundred and forty-two titles in his second edition'.¹² Despite the issuing of a French revision of his own book under the pseudonym 'Constant Mic', Miklashevsky's assiduous research was eclipsed by Duchartre's more widely disseminated publications.

Going Pro

Works on medieval and Renaissance spectacles often touched on charivaris, feasts of fools, and Shakespearean clowns. However, the first book to attempt to be both specific and all-inclusive was Samuel McKechnie's *Popular Entertainments through the Ages*, which begins with fourth-century mimes and ends up with 'cinematography'. As he announces in his preface, the aim of this book is primarily to provide the general reader with entertainment, only secondarily to offer information to the student.¹³ The approach is largely anecdotal and at no point does he elucidate what he means by either 'popular' or 'entertainment'. This remained standard procedure in books intended for a general readership, whether Maurice Willson Disher writing about pantomime, Henry Thétard about circus, or A. H. Kober about variety turns.¹⁴

One catalyst for a more erudite treatment leading to the academic recognition of the popular arts was the American dance historian Marian Hannah Winter. She had made her name publishing an article on Master Juba and early African American performers in Lincoln Kirstein's *Dance Index* in 1947. An expatriate in Paris, like Miklashevsky, and relying on her extensive collection of prints and other imagery, she earned a doctorate at the Sorbonne in 1951. Her innovative dissertation was shrewdly titled 'Le théâtre des merveilles: études autour des "spectacles optiques" (1789–1848)'. Disclaiming any theoretical base, it was wholly archival; the emphasis on 'merveilles' served to associate this kind of theatre with the acceptable topics of Renaissance *trionfi* and Gothic and Romantic tropes. In support, it could cite Kleist and Goethe on puppetry, Théophile Gautier's extensive coverage of circus acts, and Baudelaire's analysis of clowning. *Optique*, one of Winter's favourite words, highlighted her critical reliance on visual artefacts in a more investigative spirit than Duchartre's study.

Winter's thesis reappeared as a richly illustrated book in 1962, titled *Le Théâtre du Merveilleux*, but her coinage was already in circulation following the conference on 'Le merveilleux et les arts du spectacle', which

was held in Paris in 1961.¹⁵ The papers were then issued in 1963 as a special issue of the *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*.¹⁶ There was no explanatory preface, but noteworthy is the phrase '*les arts du spectacle*', a new umbrella-term intended to cover all manner of performance. This usage had already been launched by the massive *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo* in 1954, the eleven volumes of which attempted to deal indiscriminately with every genre of entertainment, from mime to opera to cinema, throughout the world.¹⁷

When the *Pléiade Encyclopédie* published a volume on performance in 1965, it adopted the title *Histoire des spectacles*, and devoted a section to the 'Arts du spectacle'. Winter wrote the mini-essay on 'Le Spectacle forain', but the other four were written not by trained scholars, but by a puppeteer, a political activist, a curator, and a publisher.¹⁸ Either no informed academic could be found or there was none willing to treat these subjects. There was also no attempt to cover the globe, with emphasis being laid exclusively on the western hemisphere.¹⁹

There was now an overarching rubric under which forms of popular entertainment might be classified in French and Italian. Spanish relied on 'artes escénicas' and German had the somewhat judgemental 'Unterhaltungskunst'. English lagged behind. 'Show business', a term used in the United States from the 1850s onwards, referred to commercial ventures. Eventually librarians began to use 'performing arts' to cover every branch of live performance. It is no coincidence that Robert Moses's new cultural complex in Manhattan was dubbed the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. In time, however, the term 'arts' would come to seem elitist and exclusionary.

At Leisure

A powerful curb on the acceptance of popular entertainment as a field for serious study in English- and German-speaking academe was the influence of the Frankfurt School. Although some of its members, including Walter Benjamin and Leo Löwenthal, and fellow travellers such as Siegfried Kracauer,

were open to popular culture, the School's loudest spokesmen were set firmly against it.²⁰ In their native Germany, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno had deplored the way the modern 'culture industry' under fascism propagandized and shaped public opinion. Resettled in the United States, they were equally distressed by the ways in which mass production and technology seemed to warp the ideology of the working classes and promote the worst aspects of capitalism. Film and other forms of mass communication were seen as particularly noisome.²¹ This attitude was enunciated in the United Kingdom by Richard Hoggart, who founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in 1964. Although cultural studies were influential as a 'broad church' that excluded almost no human activity from its purview, Hoggart lamented that an authentic working-class culture was a thing of the past.²²

The less doctrinaire Marxist historians of the Birmingham School took advantage of some back doors and side entrances to admit post-Industrial Revolution diversions. Here the influence of Eric Hobsbawm and Raymond Williams was important in adjusting a more objective focus on the audience for popular entertainments. Reception theory enabled Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel to turn their attention to commercial film in their book *The Popular Arts* (1964). Hall, a sociologist and activist who led the CCCS from 1968 to 1979, considered popular culture to be the direct expression of opposition to capitalism. These approaches led to the field of leisure studies, pioneered by Keith Thomas through articles in the left-wing historical journal *Past & Present*.²³ How the working classes spent their dearly won free time was a topic worth considering, and by the late 1970s leisure studies had become a cottage industry in British universities, with a steady stream of publications.²⁴ The Leisure Studies Association was founded in 1975 and a large conference held at the University of Sussex in 1984.

As an approach to the history of popular entertainment, leisure studies were fallible in a couple of ways. Peter Burke pointed out that leisure is a modern invention and the result of industrialization and modernization. 'At

leisure' is a Victorian neologism; not until the closing decades of the nineteenth century did the social-science-inflected idea of leisure become established. It is therefore of limited use in regarding amusements, recreations and sports in earlier periods.²⁵

A more obvious oversight will occur to the theatre historian. For the professional performer, entertainment is not leisure but work. Leftist political scholars, busy analyzing audiences, neglected to re-evaluate the creativity of this branch of the proletariat. Somehow the entertainers were not seen to be members of a working class and so the circumstances of their lives flew beneath the radar. This oversight began to be corrected by Peter Bailey, Jacky Bratton, and other historians of the music hall.²⁶

Another, not unwelcome, corrective to the Marxist-leaning approach has been offered by the late Thomas Postlewait. Postlewait did not deny the importance of structuring popular entertainment 'in the contexts of social institutions, commercial culture, capitalism, popular values, leisure culture, and political conditions', yet warned that, by preferring social critique, historians have 'often failed to capture the innovative, liberating energy of this entertainment which helped to realign the processes of urbanization and democratization'.²⁷ He proposed a much richer 360-degree analytical model that takes into account the plurality and complexity of audience responses, but, again, the perspective was from the spectatorial realm.

Breaking the Ice

Academia continued to be reluctant to recognize popular entertainment as a 'discipline' worthy of independent attention. An artificial distinction concerning aesthetic quality and cultural values still held fast. When, as a graduate student at Harvard in the mid-1960s, I proposed a study of Victorian music-hall songs to the Department of Comparative Literature, it was accepted only if those songs' influence on British literature were to be its organizing principle. Many professional scholars were chary of building careers on such research, so long as publishers, grant-making foundations, and

tenure committees were resistant to what they saw as, at best, an ancillary field. Even theatre scholars who ventured to explore popular forms continued to observe a sharp segregation between 'folk' (which was seen as admissible and respectable) and 'commercial' (that is, inadmissible and suspect entertainments). In his 1964 history of Turkish theatre and popular entertainment, Metin And reversed the distinction: he devoted the first part to traditional and folk performance that was seen as purely indigenous, and the second part to dramatic theatre, which he argued was European-influenced and alien.²⁸

The Frankfurt School maintained a tight grip on academe in the German-speaking world. Although certain literary forms such as cabaret songs and sketches could be accepted as 'minor art' (*Kleinkunst*), the wall between high culture and mere amusement (*Unterhaltung*) remained unscalable. It was not until 2014 that a Zentrum für Populäre Kultur opened at a German university, namely, the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg. An outstanding proponent of this conservatism is the prolific literary scholar of the generation of 1968, Volker Klotz. In his 1991 book on operetta, he directed a frontal Adorno-inspired assault on the American musical, dismissing its scores as 'sentimentalized, glorified, or over-the-top pulp fiction' (*sentimentalisiert, verklärt oder kolportagehaft überspannt*).²⁹ His cavalier dismissal of a major genre of popular culture emboldened or calcified similar attitudes in the intellectual establishment.

In the English-speaking world, the situation began to shift in the 1970s, owing to an antinomian zeitgeist that preferred the demotic to what it deemed elitist. A new breed of university-bred scholars applied the methods of advanced research to the popular arts. Just as circus skills were now being taught in college theatre programmes, the history of the circus and allied arts was allowed to be the focus of graduate seminars. Journals, associations, working groups, and the like supported the study of popular entertainments of the past and their current avatars. In the process, the two tracks of performance were seen not so much as parallel but as interlinked,

deriving from the same impulses and appetites, subject to similar pressures and influences, and reflecting their cultures in equal measure.

The problem, as with any new field of study, was to define the boundaries. Special conferences and dedicated issues of journals took up the debate. A collection of papers emerging from a symposium at Manchester University was prefaced by a statement from the organizers, David Mayer and Kenneth Richards:

In most writing on theatre for convenience's sake, there is a tendency, usually rather covert, to assume a rough distinction between 'theatre' and 'popular theatre'. The former is invariably supposed to have some pretension to the condition of art and is often defined in terms of its conscious structuring, trafficking in ideas and formal performance, whilst the latter, in some indeterminate way, is purported to embrace all other performance kinds and to offer its audiences received or traditional attitudes. But the distinction, though merely a working one, begs a number of questions.³⁰

Like the social scientists, they urged attention to the nature of audiences, but also to the locale of the performance, the meaning of ideas of art, and the purpose of theatre for the multitude.

Two years later, a similar collection emerged from a North American conference, which, to its credit, mixed both academics and practitioners. Its self-gratulatory afterword noted that 'popular entertainment has permeated and profoundly affected society throughout history', and that 'now, at a rate that is almost completely gratifying, more and more academics, more learned societies . . . are devoting their resources to finding out about and appreciating the complexity of these forms of American society'.³¹ This encomium did not, however, abandon earlier suspicions, for it enlisted Richard Hoggart in support: 'The closer study of mass society may make us have sad hearts at the supermarket, but at the same time it may produce an enhanced and tempered sense of humanity and humility, instead of the sense of superiority and separateness that our traditional training is like to have encouraged.'³² The conditional

tense and the moralizing overtones are both worth notice.

Bowling Green University in Ohio founded the Center for Popular Culture in 1970 and issued a number of studies and fellowships. The specific attention to popular theatre studies was, however, spearheaded by Brooks McNamara at New York University, and he was soon abetted by other American academics: the expatriate David Mayer, Arthur H. Saxon, Don B. Wilmeth, and William Brasmer.³³ Special issues devoted to popular entertainment were put out by the *Educational Theatre Journal* (October 1975) and *The Drama Review* (March 1974), while Clive Barker at *Theatre Quarterly* and David Cheshire at *Theatrephile* actively solicited research-based monographs about specific topics.³⁴ Still, it was not until 1991 that the Gesellschaft für unterhaltende Bühnenkunst und ihre Schifftenreihe was founded in Berlin, and not until 2010 that the online journal *Popular Entertainment Studies* appeared, sponsored by the University of Newcastle in Australia.

Another contributory element was the emergence of Performance Studies. A Department of Performance Studies was created at NYU in 1980. However, its remit was so broad as to take in everything from window dressing to speech therapy, while its alliance with anthropology and ethnology harkened back to the folkloric approach. Its acceptance of all human behaviour as 'performance' opened the door more widely to popular entertainment, but was not as useful in sharpening focus or establishing rules of engagement. Like leisure studies, it, too, neglected the professional aspect of performers.

Although the study of popular entertainment has entered the curricula of higher education, statements in a recent history of British theatre suggest that earlier concerns still linger. The author of a chapter on popular entertainment on the nineteenth-century stage explains:

'Popular entertainment' is used in this chapter as a convenient label for the music hall, circus, fair-ground amusements, and other performance-centred spectacles which, while often overlapping

and cross-fertilizing with the 'legitimate theatre', essentially ran parallel to it and were broadly distinguishable as separate entities by contemporary observers.³⁵

Despite the declaration of 'separate but equal', a defensive note can still be heard in the ensuing two caveats: in academe, studying popular entertainment should entail a lack of condescension and an application of scholarly detachment. Without levelling the playing field entirely, there should be a realization that all works have a right to exist and be heard. The second caveat encourages inclusion of forms usually excluded from scholarly attention.

By now, such caveats may seem supererogatory.³⁶ Conservative voices deploring the co-existence of 'minor forms' with the canon are more muted these days. For every critic complaining that the study of television shows simply endorses a student's bad habits, there are a score of scholars arguing the ways in which close reading of familiar fare encourages critical thinking. If anything, the study of popular entertainment has eclipsed what was once considered the dramatic or 'legitimate' theatre.

In any field of study, once the preliminary stage of accumulation and organization of data has taken place, analytic interpretation is the next step. Forms hitherto overlooked because they originated in subaltern cultures or despised minorities are now receiving serious consideration, and such cogent issues as race, gender, and ethnicity reveal unexplored facets in this regard. Arts once sidelined as 'native' or 'primitive' are being re-examined as mature expressions of a given society. Blackface minstrelsy, once regarded as a quaint if aberrant artefact, under scrutiny opens up new ways to think about race and empire, not only in the English-speaking world, but in Brazil, Cuba, and beyond. Historians with feminist or queer perspectives shed new light on circus and variety performers. Light opera and musical comedy have been embraced as acceptable dramatic genres worthy of investigation. Current transglobal approaches underscore the transmission of these forms beyond national or linguistic

boundaries and explain how previously disdained 'commercialism' can serve as a creative medium.

Notes and References

1. Ben Sisario, 'The \$10 Million Bob Dylan Center Opens Up His Songwriting Secrets', *New York Times*, 5 May 2022, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/arts/music/bob-dylan-center-tulsa.html>>.

2. For an English-language overview of the early history of theatre studies, see James Arnott, 'An Introduction to Theatrical Scholarship', *Theatre Quarterly*, X, No. 39 (1981), p. 29–42. For a thought-provoking analysis of the German situation, see, despite occasional errors, Michael L. Quinn, 'Theaterwissenschaft in the History of Theatre Study', *Theatre Survey*, XXXII, No. 2 (November 1991), p. 123–36.

3. Rarely have entertainers themselves enquired deeply into the past of their profession. For the lack of interest of circus professionals in their history, see Marius Kwent, 'Circus', in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, ed. David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 210–26 (p. 210). There are notable exceptions, especially among conjurers and prestidigitators (Ricky Jay, David Copperfield) and performance dynasties (the Lupinos, the Fratellini).

4. Luigi Riccoboni, *Histoire du Théâtre Italien depuis la décadence de la Comédie Latine* (Paris: Pierre Delormel, 1728). Riccoboni was himself a *commedia* player known as Mezzetin.

5. The book appeared in English in 1915 under the misleading title *The History of the Harlequinade*.

6. Riccardo Drusi, 'Popular Traditions, Carnival, Dance', in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, ed. Christopher B. Balme, Piermarco Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 34–45 (p. 36).

7. Konstantin Miklashevsky, *La Commedia dell'arte ili Teatr ital' yanskikh komediantov* (St Petersburg: Sirius, 1917). For the book's influence on Silver Age artists, see Laurence Senelick, 'The Miklashevsky Connection', in *Three Loves for Three Oranges: Gozzi, Meyerhold, Prokofiev*, ed. Dassia Posner and Kevin Bartig (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), p. 235–52.

8. V. E. Meyerhold, *Stati, pis' ma, rechi, besedy. Chast' 2: 1917–1939* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968), p. 40; Nikolay Evreinov, *Pamiatnik mimoletnomu: iz istorii émigrantskogo teatra v Parizhe* (Paris, 1953), p. 10.

9. Miklashevsky, *La Commedia dell'arte*, p. 26.

10. Pierre Louis Duchartre, *La Comédie italienne: l'improvisation, les canevas, vies, caractères, portraits, masques des illustres personnages de la commedia dell'arte* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1924).

11. Frédéric Maguet, 'Pierre-Louis Duchartre et l'imagier, la construction d'un discours sur l'image', in *Du folklore à l'ethnologie*, ed. Denis-Michael Boëll, Jacqueline Christophe, and Régis Maguet (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1983), p. 263–73. Duchartre published *La commedia dell'arte et ses enfants* (Paris: Editions D'art et Industrie, 1955), but it failed to supplant his earlier work, which, for all its outdated misstatements, is still in print and cited as an authority, although not by serious scholars of *commedia*.

12. Constant Mic [Miklashevsky], *La commedia dell'arte ou le théâtre des comédiens italiens des XVI, XVII & XVIII siècles* (Paris: Schiffrin/Éditions de la Pléiade, 1927), p. 235. The 1929 English translation of Duchartre's book by Randolph T. Weaver (as *The Italian Comedy*) also reproduced this bibliography intact, as well as pilfering more from 'Constant Mic'. This remained unchanged even in the 1966 reprint.

13. Samuel McKechnie, *Popular Entertainments Through the Ages* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1931), p. vii. McKechnie's credentials are unknown; his only other work is *The Romance of the Civil Service* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1930).

14. M. Willson Disher, *Clowns & Pantomimes* (London: Constable & Co., 1925); Henry Thétard, *La merveilleuse histoire du cirque*, 2 vols (Prisma: Paris, 1947); A. H. Kober, *Die grosse Nummer* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1925), an abridged translation of which by G. J. Renier was published as *Star Turns* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

15. An English translation of Winter's book, featuring a different selection of illustrations, appeared as *The Theatre of Marvels* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964). She was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim grant in 1974 to produce a history of fairgrounds, which was never completed.

16. *Le merveilleux et les arts du spectacle. Actes du III^e Congrès international d'histoire du théâtre*, Paris (Paris: Société d'Histoire du Théâtre, 1963). A Théâtre du Merveilleux is now part of the Musée des Arts Forains in Paris.

17. *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*, ed. Silvio d'Amico, 11 vols (Rome: Unione editorial [Le Maschere], 1954–66).

18. 'Arts du spectacle', in *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade: Histoire des spectacles*, ed. Guy Dumur (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 1435–578. (The mini-essays were, respectively, 'Le Spectacle forain' by Marian Hannah Winter, 'Les Marionnettes' by Alain Recoing, 'Le Mime' by Tristan Rémy, 'Le Cirque' by Michèle Richet, and 'Le Music-hall' by Jacques Damase.)

19. During the same year, the English specialist bookseller Ifan Kyrle Fletcher issued a catalogue dedicated to 'Popular Entertainment'.

20. See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), and *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 2002); Leo Löwenthal, *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1961).

21. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991), and *The Stars Down to Earth, and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, ed. Stephen Crook (London: Routledge, 1994).

22. Richard Hoggart, *Contemporary Cultural Studies: An Approach to the Study of Literature and Society* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1969). For a detailed discussion, see Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1995).

23. See, for example, Keith Thomas, 'Work and Leisure in Pre-industrial Society', *Past & Present*, XXIX (December 1964), p. 50–62, and 'Work and Leisure in Industrial Society', *Past & Present*, XXX (April 1965), p. 96–103.

24. See, for example, Gareth 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*, VII, No. 4 (Summer 1974), p. 460–508; Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885* (London: Methuen, 1978); Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780–c. 1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Stephen G. Jones, *Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure, 1918–1939* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986). For an overview, see Peter Bailey, 'Leisure, Culture, and the Historian: Reviewing the First Generation of Leisure Historiography in Britain', *Leisure Studies*, VIII, No. 2 (1989), p. 107–27; Rasul Mowatt, 'A People's History of Leisure Studies: A Historiography of Four Traditions of Critical Leisure Studies', *Leisure/Loisir*, XLV, No. 2 (2021), p. 165–213.
25. See Peter Burke, 'The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, CXLVI, No. 1 (February 1995), p. 136–50.
26. See, for example, *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Bailey (New York: Open University Press, 1986), and Jacky Bratton, *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (New York: Open University Press, 1986).
27. Thomas Postlewait, 'George Edwardes and Musical Comedy: The Transformation of London Theatre and Society, 1878–1914', in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 80–102 (p. 93).
28. Metin And, *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey* (Ankara: Forum Yayınları, 1964).
29. Volker Klotz, *Operette: Porträt und Handlung einer unerhörten Kunst* (Munich and Zurich: Piper Verlag, 1997), p. 20. See Elisabeth Wollman and Kevin Clarke, 'Musicalforschung. Ein kurzer historischer Überblick' in *Breaking Free: Die wunderbare Welt des LGBTQ-Musicals*, ed. Kevin Clarke (Berlin: Querverlag, 2022), p. 18–27.
30. *Western Popular Theatre: The Proceedings of a Symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama*, ed. David Mayer and Kenneth Richards (London: Methuen, 1977), p. vi.
31. Ray B. Browne, 'Popular Entertainments: Summing Up', in *American Popular Entertainment: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment*, ed. Myron Matlaw (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 293–8 (p. 293).
32. Richard Hoggart, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 294. One of the unintended consequences of the conference was that Ralph G. Allen's paper on burlesque became the seed for the Broadway musical *Sugar Babies*.
33. In the interests of full disclosure, I published and lectured widely on British music hall and American vaudeville, burlesque, and pantomime, beginning in the 1970s. I even read a paper on 'A Methodology for the Study of Popular Culture' at Indiana University in 1977.
34. Specialist journals had, however, existed long before, including, among others: *Le Cirque dans l'univers*, *White Tops*, *King Pole*, *The Call Boy*, *The Sphinx*, and *The Pantomime Annual*.
35. Dave Russell, 'Popular Entertainment, 1776–1895', in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, 1660–1895*, ed. Joseph Donohue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 369–87 (p. 369). Barbara J. Pruett indicates that the subject had become sufficiently widespread to require a guidebook: see, Pruett, *Popular Entertainment Research: How to Do It and How to Use It* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1992).
36. The defensive stance can still be described in David Savran, 'Toward a Historiography of the Popular', *Theatre Survey*, XLV, No. 2 (November 2004), p. 211–17; and David Z. Saltz, 'Popular Culture and Theatre History', *Theatre Journal*, LX, No. 4 (December 2008), p. x–xii.