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‘She ought to be a neat-handed Phyllis’: A study of the London Waitress at the Turn of the Century

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‘She ought to be a neat-handed Phyllis’: A study of the London Waitress at the Turn of the Century

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Introduction

The waitress, as a new gender and cultural identity, was a product of London's expanding leisure and hospitality sector in the late nineteenth-century. Her presence coincided with the expansion of female employment and the rise of female suffrage movements, both of which challenged Victorian distinctions between the public, masculine sphere and the private, feminine sphere, underpinning social structures.[1] As a result of this expansion, the waitress thus emerged amidst growing debate around social, moral and sexual policy for women entering public spaces. The construction of restaurants and teashops that employed waitresses, most famously the Aerated Bread Company (A.B.C.) and J. Lyons and Co., appeared almost simultaneously on London's streets as they did in English fiction; and by 1890, there were over 50 A.B.C.'s in London, with Lyons opening in 1894, rapidly expanding in the same areas.[2] These chains played a major role in the development of cheap but respectable mass catering that emerged to serve both men and women seeking employment or entertainment in the West End– and served as both literary and heterosocial spaces that hold great historical significance.[3]

As a result of increased female presence, both A.B.C. and Lyons were popular locations, as they provided new forms of conviviality in an immediate space between public and private domains. Their popularity was further increased by the presence of waitresses. As part of a body of new wage-earners that eroded traditionally male-centric work environments,

[1] Elizabeth F Evans, *Threshold Modernism: New Public Women and the Literary Spaces of Imperial London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 4.

[2] John Burnett, *England Eats Out: A Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2014) 124.

[3] Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London: the social scene of early modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 29.

waitresses symbolised both new aspirations and opportunities open to working-class women but also created spatial and moral anxieties about their place within the city.[4] As Deborah Thom has suggested in her image of women's labour in London, women had already been objectified and their work turned into both exotica and a species of social problem in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century.[5] Thus, in what ways did waitresses exemplify a set of assumptions about gender, class and sexuality at the turn of the century? How did the waitress navigate and deal with the attitudes towards her newfound presence in the urban public space?

By analysing her identity in both historical narratives and cultural representations, this dissertation will seek to examine how far the waitress as a new social agent shaped, or was shaped by emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour. It will do this to shed light on (I) how she embodied assumptions about class, gender and sexuality, and (II) how she was able to navigate her way through anxieties about her lived and sexual experience of the urban environment. This study will conclude with a discussion on how we can use this analysis to rethink the discourse of 'New Woman' – a feminist ideal that emerged in the late nineteenth-century.[6] The waitress, like the New Woman, was a product of popular culture but also had historical significance. As an individual so often characterised by her sexual identity, the waitress was also a genuine active worker navigating an unstable and exciting new position in the public sphere.

[4] Emily Gee, "Where Shall She Live?", *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, 15 (2009): 27-46, 29.

[5] Deborah Thom, "Free from Chains? The Image of Women's Labour in London 1900-1920" in *Metropolis, London: histories and representations since 1800*, ed. by David Feldman and Gareth Steadman Jones (London: Routledge, 1989) 85.

[6] Sally Ledger, *The new woman: fiction and feminism at the fin de siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 2.

This dissertation fills a historical gap, as almost no research of waitresses at the turn of the century has taken place. Histories of this period are dominated by narratives of economic expansion, imperial decline and the rise of consumer and leisure culture. However, there is a vein of scholarship that has recently explored the significance of class and gender to women's experiences of urban life in the period. These studies began in the 1970s, as part of the new social and cultural turn in historical studies, including those of Peter Bailey, Judith Walkowitz and Erika Rappaport.[7] Walkowitz's work has been particularly influential on this study, as she successfully documented the rise of the West End as a distinctly identifiable space of sexual license and cultural hybridity, and room for women outside the home.[8]

Given the newly adopted 'Spatial turn', it is surprising that established studies of leisure environment have often neglected teashops and restaurants. There have been attempts to incorporate the history of dining into the social histories of London, including most famously the work of Brenda Assael. Her work tackles all types of eating out in the Victorian and Edwardian era, and one of the most innovative aspects of her book lies in her discussion of the experiences of women – as lone diners, or on lunch breaks – and how they were observed by men.[9] Her work has been an inspiration for this study on waitresses, as she is one of the few historians that spends time discussing their presence in restaurants and teashops. This research works alongside that of Assael's, in analysing restaurants and teashops as prisms

[7] Peter Bailey, "Parasexuality And Glamour: The Victorian Barmaid as Cultural Prototype", in *Popular Culture and Performance in The Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992).
Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[8] Walkowitz, 187.
[9] Brenda Assael, *The London restaurant, 1840-1914* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2018) 199.

that reveal much about changing gender relations, the transgression of public and private spheres as well as new practices of selfhood between theatre and performance. Assael's study is useful for highlighting the significant contribution that restaurants and teashops made to London's spatial politics. However, while her study explores waitresses' work, she virtually excludes any discussion about their sexuality. Instead, waitresses only occupied a subset of a broader category of 'waiting' that heavily focussed on male and foreign waiters. Waitressing has thus been largely overlooked in scholarship on women's work and spatial politics. Similar studies inspired by Assael include the works of John Burnett and Rohan McWilliam, but both equally bypass the diversity of experience within hospitality spaces, and most explicitly the historical significance of waitresses.[10]

As will be seen in both chapters, the struggle to understand the significance of waitresses often involves comparison to other gendered roles and urban typologies. The most explored figures in the field so far are shopgirls and barmaids. Lise Sanders and Katherine Mullin have considered the role that shopgirls played in their studies of the growing leisure and retail trades.[11] Both works provide useful frameworks for historical analysis of working women in the public sphere and use their cultural representations in fiction as their foundation. Jane Traies furthers the study of shopgirls through portraying their exposé in contemporary musical comedy – something which will be incorporated in this study of waitresses.[12] Sanders's approach to her study of shopgirls was also influential in this study, as she clearly distinguished between the cultural configuration of shopgirls and the more conventional

[10] Burnett, *England Eats Out,* and Rohan McWilliam, *London's West End: creating the pleasure district, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

[11] Lise Sanders, *Consuming fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006) and Katherine Mullin, *Working girls: fiction, sexuality, and modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[12] Jane Traies, 'Jones and the Working Girl: Class Marginality in Music Hall Song', in *Music Hall: Performance and Style,* ed. by Jacqueline Bratton (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1987) 23.

working lives of ‘shopworkers’. Sanders considers the term ‘shopgirl’ as a construction, created by the society in which the shopgirl emerged.[13] However, while Sanders alludes to the teashop waitress in her work, in doing so labels her as a type of ‘shopgirl’. However, although they occupied similar semi-public sites, the roles of waitresses differed to shopgirls and, most notably in their movement and interaction with customers, and thus are not the same category. Along with many other ‘new’ personae in the public sphere, the waitress positioned herself in the modern vanguard along with other key figures like the ‘New Woman’, about which there has been fruitful debate. Sarah Grand and Ouida (Marie Louise Ramè) formed the seminal texts on each side of the argument.[14] Waitresses are unique figures, and their lives can be used to question and rethink conversations about the trope of the New Woman.

Except for a few key studies that place the waitress in the context of nineteenth-century class and gender ideologies; to date, there has been no significant work focusing solely on her as a working woman. This study will extend the parameters of social and cultural histories of fin-de-siècle working women through conducting a micro-historical analysis of waitresses - an attempt to ascribe them more agency than they have currently been assigned. This study will analyse waitresses by exploring accounts of them in both popular press and periodicals, Legislation and Bills, while simultaneously analysing their cultural representation in musical comedy and literary fiction. Popular press and periodicals are useful sources for providing historical narratives of waitresses, as this is where they were talked about and paid attention to. However, considering the media ecology, we must be mindful that this kind of material was framed by an overall purpose. In the case of the press, it has historically been an active

[13] Sanders, 1.
[14] Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question", *The North American Review*, 158 (1894) and Ouida, "The New Woman", *The North American Review*, 158 (1894), 610-19.

agent of hegemony, and a crucial vehicle for social and political stigmatisation. For example, the frequently referenced Daily Mail has played an incredibly powerful role in sustaining a particularly unequal order in society. In the case of articles about waitresses, one can witness gender bias in the language employed; most likely a bid to cement right-wing gender stereotypes.[15] We must therefore also apply similar caution to both musical comedy and literature. Whilst acknowledging that popular culture is a useful lens for analysing the figure of the waitress, we must be aware that virtually all her representations were depicted by men, who were selective in their observations and recollections. However, taking this context into account, we can still use these sources as a way to account for waitresses lives simply because this is where they featured most; but we must be aware of possible exaggeration and selective bias. While these sources are not straightforward, they do still offer an insight into how waitresses negotiated their way in a male-dominated public sphere.

Peter Bailey's study of Victorian barmaids is a significant contribution and advance to the discussion of women's labour at the turn of the century and has been addressed in several historical works. Describing them as 'bearers of glamour' and classic tokens for women as feminists, the regulation of barmaids was epitomized by a theory he termed 'Parasexuality': where women's sexuality was obvious but safely anchored behind the bar; in vulgar terms, it represented 'everything but'.[16] It allowed barmaids to exhibit their promiscuity in a channelled and secure environment.

While my study is indebted to Bailey's 'Parasexuality', this dissertation seeks to extend Bailey's analysis by combining different fields of study, focusing on the waitress's

[15] Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the present* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015) 132.

[16] Bailey, 154.

connection to emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour. Emotional labour inspired by social psychologist Arlie Hochschild; aesthetic and sexualised labour introduced by Dennis Nickson and Chris Warhurst.[17] Unlike barmaids and shopgirls, the waitress was not constrained nor protected by the counter, rather free to move and interact with customers. Her role was more animated, but also more exposed to vulnerability. This study thus will add a new perspective to a critical discussion of the position of working women at the turn of the century. The waitress was complex and conflicted. She was convinced of the importance of sexuality to her role; but as a strong-minded woman entering a contested terrain, she is owed much more agency than that with which she has been credited.

[17] Arlie Hochschild, *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). and Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson, "Employee experience of aesthetic labour in retail and hospitality", *Work, Employment & Society*, 21 (2007), 103-120 (106-107).

Chapter 1

While a full account of the working lives of waitresses is difficult to substantiate due to their historical absence, we can illuminate their history through analysing surviving documents. This chapter will explore how waitresses navigated their way as working women and makes the case for them as key social agents in an environment dictated by commercial and capitalist forces. It will analyse how these forces made them victims of exploitation, but also how they exploited an increasingly open and dynamic trade. Using existing Bills and Legislation, as well as mainstream popular press and guides, this chapter will build a foundational history of the everyday lives of waitresses. Bills and Legislation highlight the conditions of their work, most notably their extended hours and low wages. Press articles and guides reveal their connection to emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour. This chapter will thus draw out various aspects of their labour which were exaggerated in their cultural depictions. By extending Bailey's 'Parasexuality', this study will reveal how far their experiences were shaped by gendered expectations.

The emergence of waitresses as new types of female workers transformed the terms on which London was negotiated, as they challenged Victorian values and distinctions set by separate sphere dichotomy.[18] Theatre critic Clement Scott remarked in 1900 that eating-places 'have had a very great deal to do with the social emancipation of women'.[19] Hospitality spaces were considered useful facilities for women to venture outside the home, and engage in a new culture that encouraged mixing of the sexes in public space. For this reason, restaurants and

[18] Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) 2.

[19] Clement Scott, *How they dined us in 1860 and how they dine us now* (London: Trocadero, 1900) 8.

teashops took on symbolic dimensions as demographic spaces of interaction for all classes and genders, and the presence of waitresses contributed to the increased feminine exposure in the public sphere.

The way that waitressing was discussed in newspapers and journals provides an insight into its popularity as an employment path for forward-thinking women. The Birmingham Daily Post alleged that there was 'more dignity about a waitress than a barmaid and more excitement than in the life of a machinist or seamstress'.[20] Similarly, the Daily Mail's interviewed waitress claimed that her work was preferable to office work, that required women to be "shut up in small rooms where their life never changes a fraction".[21] The idea of seeing new faces each day was an appealing feature for waitressing, and a feature that contrasted from the typical interactions solely with family in the domestic sphere. In the interview, the waitress spoke of how it was useful as they would "get new ideas for dresses and bonnets from the women patrons".[22] By allowing women to encounter new people, it offered them the freedom to socialise and enjoy mobility outside the home. Moreover, Charles Dickins' *All the year Round* notes how many daughters of solicitors and farmers became waitresses, due to their determination to go out and earn a living. One waitress declared that she'd "rather be a waitress than a governess", attracted by "more leisure and independence".[23] These articles offer us a first-hand account of how waitresses felt about their job. However, we must be aware that the waitresses interviewed would have been approached and hand-picked by the journalists and editors, thus were not necessarily representative of all waitresses' opinions. In addition, we are only presented with selective

[20] "The London Waitress', *Birmingham Daily Post*, Dec. 28, 1897, 6.
[21] "Troubles of a Waitress", *Daily Mail*, Aug. 13, 1896, 7.
[22] "Troubles of a Waitress", 7.
[23] Charles Dickins, "Waitresses", *All the year Round*, May 17, 1890, 462.

quotes, and therefore not a party to other aspects of the interview. Nonetheless, we don't often have access to waitresses' thoughts and feelings, so this is where, albeit slightly problematic, we can perhaps hear their voices coming through. Thus, from the responses, waitressing attracted young women entering the city; not only offering them newfound freedoms but presenting the opportunity for conviviality and diversity outside the home.

Like shopgirls and barmaids, the work expected of waitresses was intense, and prompted concern about the conditions to which they were subjected. This was fervently articulated and expressed by Social Reformers and Legislators. In 1892, the Royal Commission published a Report on the Employment of Woman, and commanded Liberal party-politic Eliza Orme as Senior Lady Assistant Commissioner. Her report received information from 287 persons working as waitresses and barmaids. One of the chief complaints of the report was the fatigue of standing and found that most women in the sample worked up to seventy hours a week.[24] One waitress interviewed about her experience at work, reported: "the lives we live were never meant for girls to endure; we are regarded as mere machines for bringing money to the firms, not as living creatures with feelings that can be hurt and bodies that can be-worn out".[25] The tiredness and fatigue of waitresses is no surprise, considering they were constantly moving from table to table to deliver the best possible service. Orme's survey also reported that the basic wage of waitresses was between 10-11 shillings a week, but this was increased by a large number of tips.[26] The basic wage of waitresses increased each year until the maximum of 14 shillings per week was reached.[27] Orme's report is extremely useful for a

[24] Royal Commission Report on the Conditions of Work of Barmaids, Waitresses and Bookkeepers Employed in Hotels, Restaurants, Public Houses and Other Places of Refreshment, 1893-4, BPP, C.6894-XXIII, 203-205.

[25] "Barmaids and Waitresses in Restaurants, Their Work and Temptations", *The Girls' Own Paper*, Feb. 22, 1896, 329.

[26] Royal Commission Report, 204.

[27] "Tea-Shop Waitresses and Their Wages", *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, July. 2, 1910, 13.

historical study of waitresses, as it was the first piece of legislation that formalized waitresses as targets for state concern. The report acted as a catalyst for waitresses to be taken more seriously, which came to be following the 1898 Bill that related explicitly to the employment of waitresses. With three objectives, it sought to establish a ten-hour day for waitresses; provide seats when they were not on duty; and extended to waitresses the benefits of the Truck Acts.[28] Legislation is useful for factual evidence about waitressing given its authoritative nature. However, while it is a powerful piece of legislation, it is difficult to gauge how effective its implementation was in practice. Nonetheless, it provides us with evidence that waitressing was not just regarded as an informal, civil matter but instead, a legitimate concern of the state.

Like shop work in a department store, waitressing in teashops functioned almost entirely as a feminine occupation. Not only were women encouraged to dine in the teashops, but the actual work itself encouraged female employment over a male. Gerald Mars in his study of the etiquette of service, claims that a male customer is more likely to build intimacy into the service relationship if a waitress serves him rather than a waiter. Here, propriety and politics of service expose the precarious, negotiated quality of the interaction between waitress and customer. Mars suggests that there is an assumption by men that waitresses, through the concept of 'transaction', should be more 'boundary-open' – included in the relationship at the table, than waiters who are more 'boundary-closed' - and they normally conform to this expectation.[29] As is evident from the juxtaposed boundaries of the transaction, waitresses were preferred as they were better at employing soft emotional skills i.e., charms and smiles – typical aspects that make up emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour.

[28] Bill to amend Law relating to Employment of Waitresses in Restaurants, 1898, BPP, vol. 7, 244.

[29] Gerald Mars and Michael Nicod, *The world of waiters* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984) 61.

Aesthetic and sexualised labour refers to the employment of workers with desired corporeal dispositions, and there is overwhelming evidence to suggest how waitresses were disciplined to produce this type of labour.[30] "The utmost neatness is demanded of the A.B.C. girl", declares the Daily Mail.[31] "She ought to be a neat-handed Phyllis […] good looks, jauntiness […] quick, perceptive powers and height are all necessary" suggests Veva Karsland in her book *Women and their Work.*[32] Both Veva Karsland's study and the Daily Mail article stress the importance of appearance in teashop recruitment, and this is because a waitress's aesthetic and sexual appeal was regarded as a fundamental part of company branding and competitive strategies.[33] Waitresses were selected for their poise and deportment as much as for their waiting talents. At Lyons, tall waitresses were also preferred, and the first waitresses were chosen by stature as well as by appearance and efficiency.[34] A further attempt to control and shape waitresses' appearance was introducing uniform. According to the Royal Commission, the rules of the A.B.C. required 'employees to wear dresses of plain black cashmere without trimming, and white linen collars.[35] At Lyons, waitresses received complete outfits comprising of cuffs, collars, caps, head-dresses and ribbons for caps and hat-pins, and over their boned bodices, they wore an apron consisting of a heart-shaped bib.[36] One waitress interviewed talked of how the managers made the girls wear it as they believed 'it gives the restaurant a foreign look'.[37] This notion of exoticness is useful for understanding conceptualisations of gendered employment opportunities, as it illuminates how the idea of

[30] Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson, "Employee experience of aesthetic labour in retail and hospitality", *Work, Employment & Society*, 21 (2007), 103-120 (106).

[31] "Hebes of the Bun", *Daily Mail*, Dec. 11, 1897, 7.

[32] Veva Karsland, *Women and their Work* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1891) 160.

[33] Warhurst, 107.

[34] Bird, 43.

[35] Royal Commission Report, 205.

[36] Bird, 43.

[37] "Troubles of a Waitress", 7.

foreignness was considered modern and alluring. Brenda Assael notes in her study of London Restaurants that waitresses were equally 'othered' as foreign waiters were in the space held by men.[38] The amalgamation of both female and foreign presence shows the complexity of the space, and the fact this unfamiliarity was encouraged and controlled paternalistically by the management illustrates how critical style and appearance were to work in the service industry.

By exploring aspects of their uniform, we get an insight into how teashops aimed to present their waitresses and the reasons behind presenting them in this way. By demanding waitresses to wear a uniform that enhanced their profile and novelty, management saw it as a way to welcome customers into teashops and maximise their sales. As most customers were male, the waitresses were a reason to visit the teashops as they were visibly appealing. Moreover, by wearing frilled caps and an apron, the waitress gives off an air of gentleness and compassion – much like that of a servant or carer that the customers would have in their homes. By mirroring the manners and dress of domestic service and enhanced femininity, one could postulate that Lyons and A.B.C's deliberately sought to make their teashops an extension of the home to appeal to male customers, as it resembled a site where women were subservient to men. The Daily Mail article "Aprons for All Occasions" reinforces this notion of stereotypical gender roles, as it suggests that the woman could wear it for any role she worked in: 'the shape and quality of the apron are determined by the function it is to fill'.[39] In addition, the inclusion of images on how to wear an apron, and what labours it is worn for, further serves to maintain that any role played by a woman in society will always be associated with care and support, and most crucially, passive and marginal. While Lyons and

[38] Assael, 121.
[39]"Aprons for All Occasions", *Daily Mail,* Oct. 2, 1897, 7.

A.B.C emphasized neatness and innocent beauty through uniform and appearance, the waitress was also presented as readily available at the hands of customers. Her identity is thus as manufactured as the food she serves.

At this point, it may be useful to consider the rhetoric of service and hospitality to evaluate how much agency waitresses had. Even though Lyons and A.B.C were attempting to introduce modern elements into the image of the waitress and the company more broadly, this control over their appearance reinforced broader gender inequalities, where women were disproportionate to men in the public sphere. For this reason, there were two ways that women could resist this control and imbalance: (I) through active confrontation, or (II) fully embodying their gender and sexuality and using it to their advantage.

Firstly, the most well-known strike attempt by waitresses was at Lyons in 1895 as a result of the companies attempt to reduce waitresses' commissions from 5 per cent to 2½ per cent.[40] The strikers met their supporters at St Andrew's restaurant on Bride Street as this location was home to national newspapers.[41] Present at the meeting was the trade-unionist Tom Mann, one of the leaders of the great London dock strike of 1889.[42] His presence is significant, as it suggests that waitresses, while at this point not fully-fledged trade-union members, were beginning to be taken more seriously for their work. While strike action at this early period was fairly isolated and largely unsuccessful, it did set the agenda for later struggles to organise women in the industry and shows the foundations of power and growing agency that waitresses were beginning to acquire.

[40] Bird, 44.

[41] Thomas Harding, *Legacy: One Family, a Cup of Tea and the Company that Took on the World* (London: Windmill Books, 2019), 125.

[42] Bird, 45.

Like shopgirls and factory workers, waitresses worked in an environment defined by routine and repetition and were expected to reproduce an attitude of readiness and charm upon each new encounter. One waitress in 1896 revealed: 'The managers know more than anyone that by the look of the waitresses, patrons will judge the establishment.'[43] In Katherine Mullin's study of shopgirls, she argues that their work demanded a 'peculiarly personal process of commodification, where their emotions were sacrificed to their employers' material interests'.[44] Through each new contact, waitresses, like shopgirls, were expected to put their individuality to one side and produce the same level of service for each table, as it was essential to the customers' perception of service quality. However, seeing that waitresses did not have a counter to fall back on, it could be argued that the role of waitresses was much riskier than the role of shopgirls, due to their complete exposure to the male gaze. None the less, this notion of putting individuality aside for their work and using more positive acts of smiling and charm, is a reflection of a more contemporary theory described as 'emotional labour'. Arlie Hochschild's recent analysis of flight attendants is useful here, as she defines emotional labour in her study as 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display'.[45] This theory is helpful especially when applied to the service work of waitresses at the turn of the century, as it delineates how they were required to manipulate their feelings internally and externally, to satisfy the requirements of customers.

Through facial expressions and dialogue, waitresses added value to customers experience by making them feel valued. For example, the Young Woman magazine claimed that in waitressing "the chief attraction lies in the fact of the social intercourse that is possible".[46]

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[43] "Troubles of a Waitress", 8.

[44] Mullin, 14.

[45] Arlie Hochschild, *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 29.

[46] Mrs Esler, '"Between ourselves" A friendly chat with the Girls', *Young Woman*, Feb. 1, 1895.

Later copies of the Young Woman also revealed the importance of interaction, especially towards male customers: "women usually find it very difficult to get served, as the waitresses always attend to the wants of the men first".[47] Communication between waitresses and customers was encouraged in teashops and used as a strategy in hospitality more broadly, particularly where it included filtration, flattery and frivolity from both ends.

Fascination with the waitress's charm is evident in the popular press. In the Daily Mail's "Hebes of the Bun", we are told that the waitress, as the chief and most inviting feature of the A.B.C., 'induced the Londoner to forsake his chop and coaxed him into crumpets'.[48] The article presents the waitress as flirtatious and jovial, capable of enabling her customers to fall in love with her and do what she says as "she won his heart forever". By deliberately presenting her flirtatious nature, the Daily Mail presented the waitress as openly aware of her ability to entice her customers. Her feminisation was a key component of her service, and a way to improve her wage:

> Do you ever receive tips? The writer asked one of the girls, sliding a threepenny bit between the marble slab and her fair palm. "Of course, not" she replied sweetly, pocketing the silver. "It isn't allowed, sir, you know." [49]

From this article, it is evident that girlishness affected a waitress's job status as being the 'chief and most inviting feature' and would determine the amount of gratuity and 'treating' that she would receive. This aspect is widely recognised, as historian Sally Mitchell also

[47] Ethel F. Heddle, "A friendly chat with the girls", *Young Woman*, Jan. 5, 1900, 179.

[48] "Hebes of the Bun", 7.

[49] "Hebes of the Bun", 7.

claims that independence required in a public role encounters the "sweet dependence" of femininity.[50] It was in this way that waitresses differed from the work of the barmaid, as they were able to use their movement and interaction to increase their visibility and chances of being 'treated'. For example, we are told in the Royal Commission that 'the gratuities of waitresses often largely exceeded their wages, and it is a complaint with girls serving behind the counter in a restaurant that the girls serving at the tables make so much more money'.[51] By managing her coquetry and virtual sexual availability, she was able to incorporate and extend the notion of Parasexuality to maximise her gains.

Not only did her sexuality increase her wage, but it also offered potential social mobility through marriage. The evidence yielded from sources indicate that many waitresses had aspirations for marriage. For example, as a member of the Women's Industrial Council, Barbara Drake conducted an enquiry in 1913 into the position of the teashop girl as part of an effort to promote the interests of women at work. From her investigation, she discovered that the waitress is without exception, a marrying girl. "To the work-girl of eighteen, who means to marry and to marry well, the teashop has something of the fascination of the ballroom for the leisured young lady of another class".[52] "A. B. C" Brides – titled the Daily Mail, as they similarly reported that on average "the company have each week to fill the palaces of four of their most charming waitresses, whose mild flirtations, commenced amid the clatter of crockery, eventually lead them to the alter".[53] From the sources, waitresses were able to

[50] Sally Mitchell, *The new girl: girls' culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 24.

[51] Royal Commission Report, 204.

[52] Barbara Drake, "The Tea-Shop Girl, being a Report of an Enquiry undertaken by the Investigation Committee of the Women's Industrial Council", *Women's Industrial News,* April. 1, 1913, 115.

[53] ""A. B. C" Brides", *Daily Mail,* Nov. 4, 1902, 3.

capitalize on their femininity, as it created an opportunity for mobility and luxury. However, on closer analysis, there are some inconsistencies with the presentation of marriage as the ultimate goal for waitresses. On the one hand, the teashops were promoting opportunities for female independence and presence outside the home. But on the other hand, the teashops charted the likelihood of marriage. It could be argued that these articles deliberately emphasized and promoted marriage for waitresses in teashops as a way of reinforcing gender stereotypes. '"A. B. C" Brides' was most likely written by a right-wing journalist seeking to exaggerate female pursuit for a career that would result in her return to the domestic sphere and economic dependence. It was a way of restricting her entry, defusing her threat, and reaffirming male dominance.

Historically, the majority of teashops were situated within London's pleasure district, in the popular streets of Piccadilly and the Strand.[54] Situated in the heart of the West End, the waitress was immediately placed into a cultural milieu, where restaurants were as much a form of spectacle as the theatres that they neighboured. At the turn of the century, the association between food and entertainment in the West End had become much more formalized, and in some cases even integrated, as restaurants acted as a rendezvous before moving on to a local theatre or music hall.[55] The main theoretical premise behind the waitress's gendered and sexualised appearance can be understood through Judith Butler's theory of performativity. Butler asserts that gender is a performance, and critically analyses the body as a medium through which the gender is brought into being or made to 'matter'.[56] The case of waitresses in teashops is the epitome of gender performance, which is evident

[54] Burnett, 123.
[55] Assael, 201.
[56] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theatre Journal*, 40 (1988), 519-531 (520).

through her association with emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour. For example, like an actress she waltzed between tables with dramatized smiles and expression and impersonated a sexualised role, that was scripted and rehearsed. She was intimately aware that she was on display in the teashop – a space that in itself was structured in a way that resembled a stage with seating for the male customer audience to watch her perform her job. Butler's theory is thus fundamental to our understanding of how gendered expectations were manifested in teashops, and more broadly in the public sphere. How waitresses were required to manage their presentation was crucial to their performance and the quality of service that they provided – all of which reiterate the expectations of prescribed femininity.

As has been established, the intensity of waitresses' work not only came from their stringent hours, low wages and lack of place to rest; it was enhanced by aesthetic, emotional and sexualised demands. It is undeniable that constant movement and interaction between tables of customers was fatiguing and vigorous for waitresses, however, it was a way for waitresses to take advantage of their work through literally 'performing' the gendered role that brought them personal gains in the form of treating and upward social mobility. Through their interaction at the tables, waitresses personified a nuanced version of Bailey's 'Parasexuality' that went beyond the countered frontier, and actively negotiated the male gaze through movement and animation. They were aware that they were being watched and used this as an opportunity to capitalise on an increasingly open and dynamic trade.

Chapter 2

This chapter will examine how and why waitresses attracted so much interest in popular culture. It will explore her depiction in music hall songs: Richard Morton's 'The Waitress' Love Letter' and W.G. Imeson's 'The Girl at the A.B.C'; and her portrayal in literature: PG Wodehouse's short story 'Bingo and the Little Woman', and Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Through studying these largely unexplored works, this chapter seeks to analyse how waitresses came to embody assumptions about class, gender and sexuality, and how far her constructed identity overlapped with representations of the New Woman.

At a time of heightened concern over the speed of change in the city, London was a miasma of sexual anxieties and dangers, where optimistic attitudes towards urban life became 'imaginatively overshadowed' by anxieties surrounding urban decline.[57] According to Judith Walkowitz in her study of sexual dangers, she suggests that 'danger' went beyond sexual practices, and had 'much to do with work, lifestyle […] self-display, and nonfamilial attachments of urban men and women'.[58] The focus here is the increased attention paid to women occupying jobs and spaces formerly dominated by men. This chapter thus builds on the body of work completed by scholars such as Walkowitz and Mullin, who argue that the late nineteenth-century saw the emergence of an unstable, worrying, yet thrilling sexual persona in literature and culture.[59] The constructed figure of the waitress, comparable to shopgirls and barmaids, bridged the gap between conventional gender and class ideology, and more progressive modes of female identity and experience.

[57] Walkowitz, 15.

[58] Walkowitz, 6.

[59] Mullin, 3.

Audiences in every form were fascinated by waitresses as 'bearers of glamour'. The idea of glamour is heavily discussed in Peter Bailey's study of barmaids, where he argues that it is a distinctively modern visual property, and central to Parasexuality in its practice of managed arousal.[60] In the case of waitresses, their embodiment of glamour was much more theatrical and entrancing than the barmaid because of their movement – and we see this personified in both musical comedy and fictional writing. For novelist Arnold Bennett, 'waitresses offered an inexhaustible field for the study of character…unveiling the secrets of their natures in every trifling action'.[61]

Waitresses, like shopgirls, were added to the gallery of knowing modern adventuresses.[62] The increasing popularity of music halls in the period led to their growth in size and number. Much like teashops and department stores, music halls were familiar settings to audiences of all types of gender and class. They were unique and formed part of a major 'civic project' of the nineteenth century, offering a new arena for the appearance of women in the public sphere.[63] As figures who embodied both emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour, waitresses were ideal characters in musical comedy due to their fun-loving and flirtatious nature, and novelty within the city. Instead of presenting the arduous realities of their work, musical comedy presented waitress-heroines as objects of glamour and sexual fantasy - both to employees and male customers – on a platform located 'firmly in the realm of leisure and

[60] Bailey, 156.
[61] McCracken, 7.
[62] Mullin, 105.
[63] Mary P Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 87.

courtship'.[64] This section is thus concerned with the presentation of waitresses in music hall comedy, who are typically presented as 'naughty but nice…'.[65]

Richard Morton's satirical hit 'The Waitress' Love Letter' popularly presents Clara Clay, the waitress-heroine whose working day involves flirting with her manager, Bill Brown. Using a menu, Clara writes a letter to Bill that reveals her love for him, but foolishly her words jumble with the those on the menu, making her message an object of ridicule:

> "Dearest, Darling, Dear Menu […] But my love can never swerve. You are just my own Hors d'oeuvre. Of my love I will not boast. You're my own soft roe on toast".[66] (Fig. 1)

Whilst it is unknown exactly which teashop Clara works at, her freedom to openly express her love to her manager suggests a certain type of independence and freedom occupied by a waitress in the city. The fact that Clara is declaring her love to the manager rather than the reverse, implies that she is self-assured and forward, embodying new attitudes towards gender and sexuality. Clara's confidence perhaps was intimidating for men who were used to more traditionally repressed femininity in the domestic sphere. Thus, their reaction to her gender and sexuality was expressed through satire. Moreover, the decision for the song to be

[64] Rappaport, 192.

[65] Peter Bailey, "'Naughty but Nice': Musical Comedy and The Rhetoric of the Girl, 1892–1914"," in *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and The Stage*, ed. by Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 38.

[66] R. Morton and William George Eaton, "The Waitress' Love Letter" (London: Francis, Day & Hunter, 1894) Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Collection.

performed by the manager Bill, rather than Clara, also tells us something about the existing gender hierarchy both in teashops, but also in society more broadly. The fact that Bill was chosen to recount Clara's idiocy consolidates these broader male attitudes towards waitresses, but also towards women's presence more generally in public space.

W.G. Imeson's 'The Girl at the A.B.C' similarly reflects the self-assurance and coquettishness of waitresses from a male perspective - in this case, a customer. The song features a male customer who desires the waitress who serves him, and whose interest begins when he learns of her name: "Her name's Ar-a-bel-la Be-lin-da- Clarke, For short tho' I've christ-ened her A.B.C.".[67] (Fig. 2) Playing on the company name, the song's double entendre convincingly characterises the waitress as a product and icon of the teashop she works for. However, on closer analysis, the fact that he compressed her name essentially compressed what made the waitress individual. Her generic identity thus becomes synonymous with the manufactured food that she serves. The plot is a classic fairy-tale: The customer falls in love with the waitress, but his supercilious uncle is disapproving of the match: "For he says if I go to the A.B.C., He'll cut me off with a b-o-b […] He's ev-en for-bid me to men-tion her name".[68] Needless to say, the moment he treats his uncle to lunch at the teashop, where they are waited on by 'A.B.C', the happy ending is inevitable. Nonetheless, the way the uncle grants his approval is worthy of note and tells us something more than simply jovial humour. To the nephew's dismay, his uncle is equally as infatuated by the waitress, and when they were outside the teashop, he pinched his nephew and said, "take her, lad, quick, or your old uncle Dick will marry that girl at the A.B.C.".[69] The uncle's playful remark not only indicates

[67] W. E. Imeson and William George Eaton, "The Girl at the A.B.C." (London: Francis, Day and Hunter, 1898) Bodleian Special Collections.

[68] Imeson, "The Girl at the A.B.C.".

[69] Imeson, "The Girl at the A.B.C.".

the popularity of the waitress, but it implies how frequently she seduces customers, and possible the likelihood of having more than one admirer. The Girl at the A.B.C exposed what The Waitress' Love Letter more subtly implied; that waitresses were typically depicted by men as having uncontrollable and excessive sexuality, and that this sexuality was embodied through bearing glamour and flirtation with the men at work. Linking back to Bailey's analysis of Parasexuality, we can see here that the aura of waitresses was a point of fixation for male customers, who were overwhelmed by their reshaped version of femininity.

As stylish figures, waitresses were also pleasing characters in literature, and some of the most significant examples of their portrayals were written by men. Several assumptions can be made as to why they chose to portray waitresses - especially in their emphasis on femininity and sexuality - and most amount to increasing anxiety about the prominence of women in the public sphere and its impact on masculinity. Elaine Showalter categorised the era as one of 'sexual anarchy', where the adjustment of gender roles provoked fears that sexual difference was becoming dangerously blurred.[70] Showalter's acknowledgement of this blurring of sexual difference is useful for our understanding of the broader crisis of masculinity that emerged as a result of growing female independence. Another reason why waitresses were portrayed in this way by male writers could be linked to the increasingly powerful New Woman and Suffrage movements that both openly confronted the patriarchy, and equally contributed to anxieties about the state of the public sphere.[71] Coined by Sarah Grand in the *North American Review in March 1984*, The New Woman emerged during a time of great social change.[72] As we have seen so far in musical comedy and will be expanded further in

[70] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago, 1992), 83.
[71] Julia Bush, "The Anti-Suffrage Movement", *The British Library*, 2018 <https://www.bl.uk/votes-for-women/articles/the-anti-suffrage-movement#> [Accessed 20 March 2021].

[72] Grand, 270.

literary analysis, waitresses sympathised with New Women in their determination for freedom and independence, but the way they went about obtaining it was starkly juxtaposed, and their glamour and sexuality was the most obvious retort to the New Woman. By portraying waitresses in songs and novels, it was as if male writers used them as a way to ridicule the New Woman, showing that women entering public spaces were still inferior and incapable of controlling their excessive sexuality and desire. As Katherine Mullin describes, working girls can be described as eroticized, more palatable half-sisters to the New Woman.[73] Thus, by using waitresses as protagonists with exaggerated sexuality, male writers were most likely reducing the threat posed by women in the public sphere by publicizing her folly for desiring independence.

Male attitudes towards waitresses are evident in PG Wodehouse's short story 'Bingo and the Little Woman'. In the story, we are told that Richard 'Bingo' Little, a wealthy gentleman and friend of Bertie Wooster, is known for his countless romances. The most significant love interest is Rosie M. Banks, a young woman working as a waitress whom he later goes on to marry:

> "I looked up and found that his attention was elsewhere. He was gazing at the waitress with the look of a dog that's just remembered where its bone was buried".[74]

[73] Mullin, 111.
[74] P. G. Wodehouse, "Bingo and the Little Woman", in *The Inimitable Jeeves* (London: Wyman & Sons Ltd, 1923) 243.

At first glance, Bingo's portrait of Rosie M. Banks gives us an insight into the typical characteristics that attracted male customers to waitresses: "a tallish girl with sort of soft, soulful brown eyes. Nice figure and all that. Rather decent hands, too".[75] The emphasis on each bodily feature is significant: height, figure and decent hands emphasise her aesthetic and sexualised femininity; and the colour of her eyes are identified through mutual gaze – representative of her emotional labour. All these traits described by Bingo are realistic and exact features that waitresses must embody to embark on the job.

By choosing to work as a waitress rather than remain at home, Rosie M. Banks immediately has an aura of determination and ambition. This ambition that waitresses embodied was necessary to survive in the public sphere that was inherently male-dominated. However, we later discover that Rosie's job as a waitress is a disguise for her main form of employment as a writer:

> "'Are you also an admirer of Rosie M. Banks?' asked the old boy, beaming.
> 'I *am* Rosie M. Banks!' said the little woman".[76]

Wodehouse intentionally chose the name 'Rosie M. Banks', as the character was inspired by Ruby M. Ayres, an early novelist who contributed to the new wave of love and romance novels at the beginning of the twentieth-century.[77] With this context in mind, it lends support to the claim that Rosie M. Banks craftily sought a job that would give her the most intimate experience of working and encountering strangers in the city, the ideal material for a romance plot that involved working women. Bingo, oblivious of Rosie's authorship, presented her previous successful novel *Only the Factory Girl* to his uncle in a bid to be granted consent for marriage, as the purpose of the novel was to advocate marriage to "young persons of an

[75] Wodehouse, 234.
[76] Wodehouse, 248.
[77] P.G Wodehouse and Sophie Ratcliffe, *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (London: Arrow Books, 2013) 477.

inferior social status".[78] Bingo therefore deliberately chose a story that advertised relationships with women perhaps less respectable than domestic middle-class. Wodehouse's plot resembles that of 'The Girl at the A.B.C' song, as both narratives present waitresses as ill-suited lovers for respectable men but having unique power to brainwash and hook men with their sexuality and flirtatious self-assurance. These depictions almost resemble the waitress to a mythical siren, capable of capturing the male gaze of foolish men.

Like Wodehouse's tale, Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* is also inherently useful for grasping male attitudes towards waitresses. By analysing the troubled waitress-heroine Mildred Rogers, Maugham's depiction provides a deeper understanding of how men interpreted the negotiations made by waitresses to sidestep their subordinate sexual status. In Mildred's case, she epitomized the cultural anxieties and consequences waitresses might face through failure to fulfil the ideological demands of proper femininity, and this is embodied in her unsteady relationship with Philip.

From the moment they met at the teashop, Philip was uninspired by her looks: "She was tall and thin, with narrow hips and the chest of a boy".[79] There is a stark contrast here from the more popular illustrations of glamour and beauty, seen in the songs and Wodehouse's story. However, Philips's interest in Mildred is gradual, and he claims that it was frustrating and "absurd to care what an anaemic little waitress said to him; [….] He loathed and despised himself for loving her.[80] His shame for loving Mildred was linked to her occupation, as

[78] Wodehouse, 237.
[79] W. Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage* [1915] (Place of publication not identified: Open Road Media, 2017) 230.
[80] Maugham, 245.

waitresses were typically more progressive and permissive than most respectable middle-class women that Philip was used to. As a result of her association with the increasingly popular yet risqué service labour, Mildred was automatically associated with working-class desires and pleasures. For example, she saw relationships as financial purposes rather than love: "I don't want to marry if I'm going to be no better off than what I am now. I don't see the use of it".[81] From this passage, we can understand how Mildred neglects the emotional side of marriage and solely sees it as a practical springboard to a better life.

As a waitress who serves countless tables of men, she was aware of her popularity among customers: "Oh, if you don't take me out some other fellow will".[82] She knew that she was desired, and she exploited this by objectifying herself to the male gaze, seeing herself as "a commodity which she could deliver indifferently as an acknowledgement for services rendered".[83] The fact that she viewed herself as a hypersexualised object horrified Philip, who likely was an embodiment of Maugham's attitudes towards waitresses at this time. Her overbearing sexual desire towards her customers was an obvious rejection of any form of proper femininity, and we see later in the novel that her impropriety led to her decline into prostitution:

> "She was crossing over from the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and stopped at the shelter till a string of cabs passed by. She was watching her opportunity and had no eyes for anything else [….] She walked a few steps more till she came to Swan and Edgar's, then stopped and waited, facing the road.".[84]

[81] Maugham, 260.
[82] Maugham, 237.
[83] Maugham, 303.
[84] Maugham, 383.

At first, this passage seemed to depict the ordinary actions of a decent woman walking the streets of London; however, on closer analysis, Mildred used the street less innocently – as she intentionally loitered near busy corners. Maugham alluded to his fascination with urban sexuality and pleasure through his references to 'Shaftesbury Avenue' and 'Swan & Edgar' department store, both popular sites in close proximity. The fact that Maugham referenced them both in the same passage is significant – perhaps illuminating to how they are distinct spaces occupied by different women, but also how easily they could overlap. With one completely exposed and the other semi-public, how women were perceived and represented depended greatly on which space they occupied, given that women were always subjected to scopic discipline within the visual, gendered economy of public spaces.[85] For Mildred, her fall into prostitution illustrated the transparency between respectable and unrespectable women, and how easy it was to transcend the boundary that set them apart. By waitressing and prostitution offered a service that brought pleasure and satisfaction to men, and both were 'treated' and given tips based on their level of performance. In reality, they were different occupations, but their proximity suggests that there was a clear overlap. Mildred's character was a cultural representation of a waitress who had excessive sexual desires and the "sort of woman who was unable to realize that a man might not have her own obsession with sex".[86] Through emphasizing Mildred's obsessive sexuality, Maugham's representation of waitresses was a reflection of his own attitudes and assumptions about their class, gender and overwhelming sexuality.

Ostensibly, Maugham portrays Mildred as a troublesome character. However, we should not take his illustration at face value. A more nuanced reading of Mildred's 'disruptive

[85] Curtis, 16.
[86] Maugham, 412.

characteristics' would see her as a woman embodying female efforts to move into the public sphere – a place that had historically restricted and limited her entry. While some of her motives were calculated, Mildred was just utilizing her freedom to act and move around the city at her own pace and fulfilling her personal desires. In a similar vein, Philip's victimhood is on the whole unconvincing. While it is true that he was coaxed and abused by Mildred, the fact that he was a wealthy man, free to move around the city without having to be alert to watchful gazes, was a privilege by its very nature. Mildred essentially mirrored the actions of Philip, but with more radical force and determination, in order to survive in a male-dominated sphere.

As has been established, popular culture characterized waitresses and stereotyped assumptions about their class, gender and sexuality. Their portrayals were almost always delineated by men at this time, who saw them as both a product of fascination and anxiety for musical comedy and romance novels. Popular representations of waitresses are thus significant to our understanding of how waitresses were understood at the turn of the century. However, women's voices were still greatly marginalised at this time, thus the opinions accounted for here were overly male-dominated. Nonetheless, whilst their views were largely one-sided, we can still gauge how waitresses were typically understood in the period and the reactions provoked by their sexuality; in the case of Mildred Rogers, how she used her body as a way to navigate and manage her position in the city. Much like Bailey's 'middle ground' theory of Parasexuality, the cultural portrayal of waitresses also operated a middle ground, that saw the entanglement of both anxieties about their gender and sexuality, and fascinations about their aloofness and novelty in the public sphere.

Conclusion

Through social commentaries and cultural representations of waitresses, this dissertation has presented a microhistory of women's labour at the turn of the century. It has used the work of waitresses as a prism for charting experiences of the metropolitan city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; contributing to the re-examination of the roles of gender and sexuality within working women's experience of the public sphere.

Indeed, overwhelmingly traditional studies of Victorian and Edwardian female work culture focuses entirely on pervasive anxieties and concerns about the growing presence of working women in the public sphere. This approach has moved away from a wholistic focus on anxiety, rather it has aimed to project how waitresses shaped and controlled new forms of urban heterosociability, and how their sexualisation was something they embraced and exploited rather than resented. By incorporating both historical and cultural commentaries, this approach has exposed how waitresses exhibited self-assurance and charm as a way to manipulate and appropriate their position as spectacles. They were able to actively manage the gaze, and use it in their favour, as it brought them not only personal profits and rewards but enabled them to navigate and negotiate a space where their presence was still largely regulated. As established in chapter 2, the way that waitresses approached and dealt with this new position in the public sphere provides convincing evidence that they overlapped and resembled the New Woman.

The term 'New Woman', both in fiction and fact, was (and remains) a shifting and contested term.[87] When people wrote and spoke of the 'New Woman' in the 1890s, they were usually

[87] Lyn Pykett, "Foreword", in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, ed. by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 39–52.

referring to a very different figure to that of the waitress: an unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon ready to overturn the world.[88] However, this depiction of the New Woman has since been identified as a media construct and most likely appeared as a tool for men who sought to marginalise their movement. From recent studies, it has become clear that the actual New Woman was not such a desexualised, androgynous figure, and in fact, lived a much humbler life.[89] Having weighed up both the social history and cultural narrative of waitresses, this humbler ideal of the New Woman is where I believe waitresses fit into her discourse. Waitresses' ability to encourage and manipulate the male gaze through flirtation and glamour serves to enhance their popularity and agency, thus complicating traditional narratives of passive femininity. If the New Woman was famously depicted as intellectual and 'proper', waitresses represented a redefined version of her identity – one that was more desirable and accessible; an identity that more ordinary women sought to encapsulate.

As well as providing insights into past historical debates, this dissertation proposes new areas for research and discussion. Thematically, it suggests an extension of the study of fin-de-siecle women's labour, which has thus far focused exclusively on more obvious figures like shopgirls, typists and barmaids. Given their demonstrated impact on London's service and hospitality sector in the form of restaurant and teashop chains, similar examinations into the impact of their work outside of London, or in other sites of entertainment, such as theatres and railway stations, could prove insightful further topics of research. Methodologically, while we are aware they can be problematic, it calls for greater recognition of the value of popular culture (consisting of both popular press and fictional accounts) shedding light on

[88] Talia Schaffer, "Nothing but Foolscap and Ink: Inventing the New Woman", in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, ed. by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 40.

[89] Schaffer, 39.

ordinary working-class figures who were otherwise overlooked. Although sometimes hyperbolic and not wholly truthful, a large enough sample of articles and novels read against the grain and in conjunction with more formal legislation and women's magazines can arguably provide a comprehensive indication of the lived experience of waitresses**.** There are many more opinions and feelings to recover than the selected interviews recounted in Chapter 1, and this is a future avenue of exploration for histories of labour and gender. Nonetheless, this dissertation has not tried to cover her entire history but has taken a micro approach and specifically analysed her work concerning emotional, aesthetic and sexualised labour. Like her colleagues in department stores and bars, the waitress was a self-consciously borderline identity, caught between respectability and promiscuity, and evading easy definition.[90]

Overall, this dissertation has demonstrated that waitresses should not be disregarded and undervalued, but that they have a distinct and sensational history of their own; and one of the fundamental themes in their history is their embodiment of a nuanced version of Parasexuality. By relating both social history and cultural studies, this analysis has served to situate waitresses within broader understandings of gender and sexuality, and has important connotations for how the history of women's labour might continue to be researched and written in the future.

[90] Mullin, 7.

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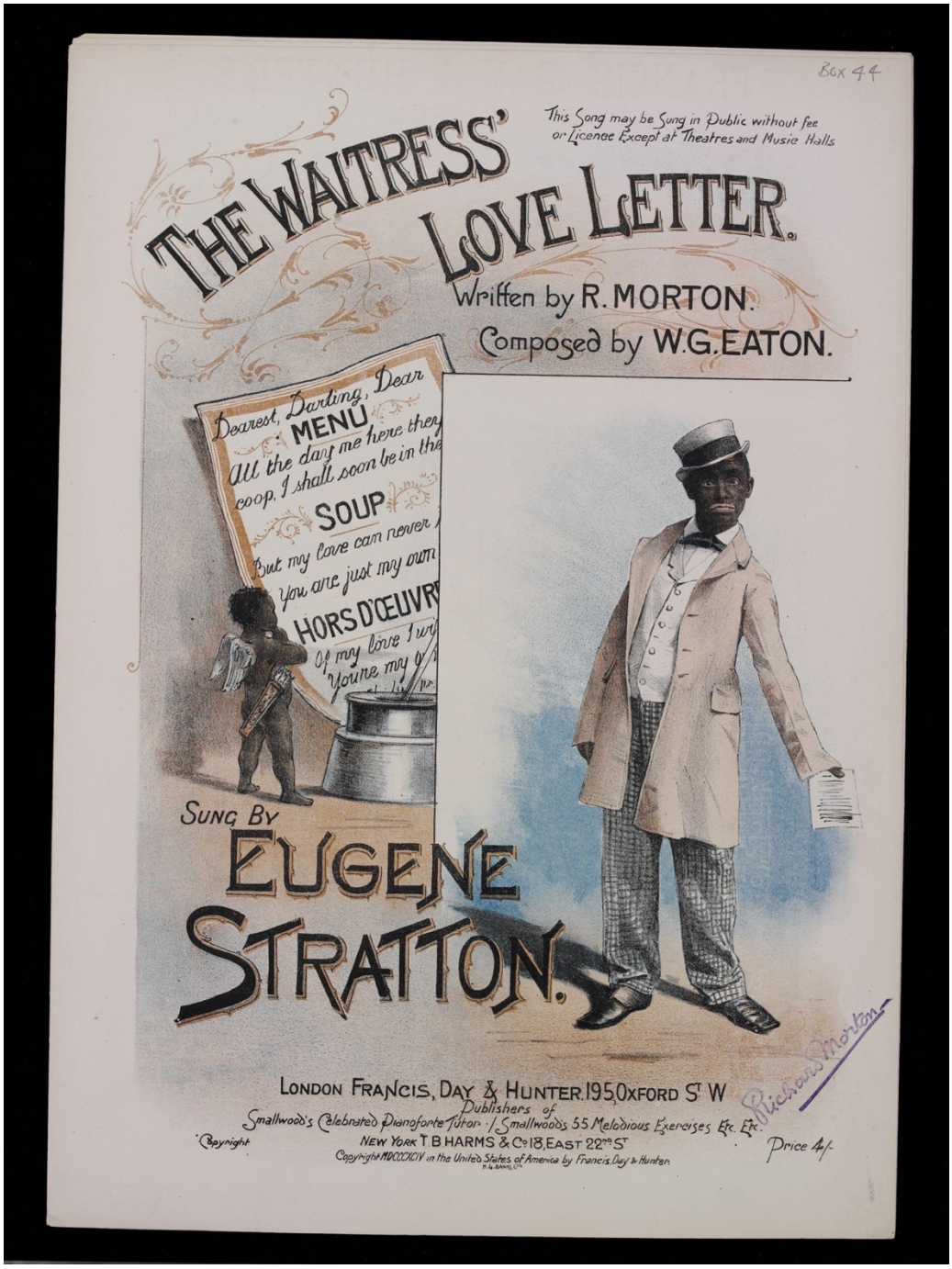
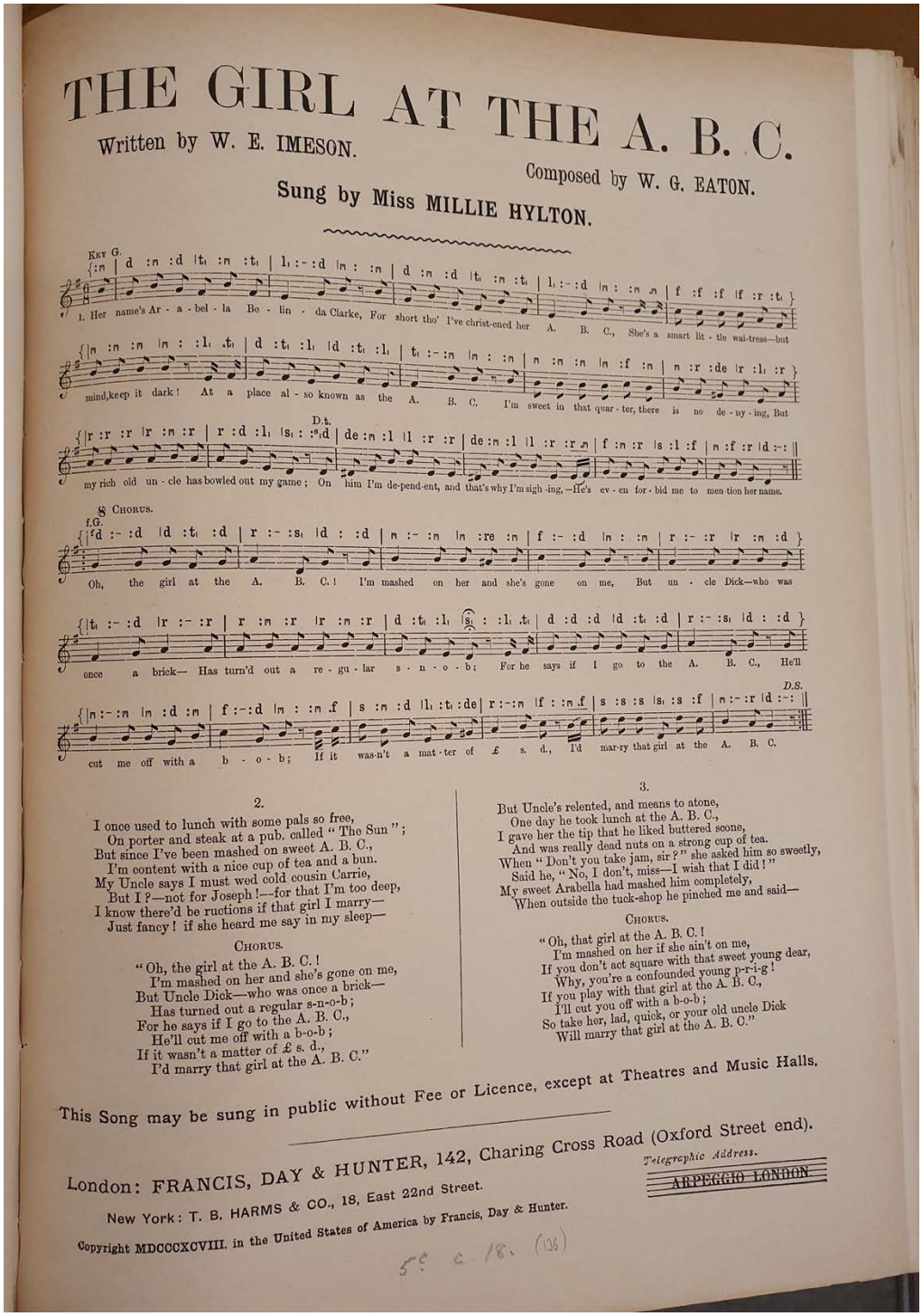
Appendix

Figure 1.



Front cover of 'The Waitress' Love Letters'. Written by R Morton and composed by W.G. Eaton. Published by Francis, Day & Hunter [1894] From the Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Collection.

Figure 2.



THE GIRL AT THE A. B. C.

Written by W. E. IMESON. Composed by W. G. EATON.

Sung by Miss MILLIE HYLTON.

Key G.

1. Her name's Ar - a - bel - la Be - lin - da Clarke, For short tho' I've christ-ened her A. B. C., She's a smart lit - tle wai-tress—but

mind, keep it dark! At a place al - so known as the A. B. C. I'm sweet in that quar - ter, there is no de - ny - ing, But

D.t.

my rich old un - cle has bowled out my game; On him I'm de-pend-ent, and that's why I'm sigh-ing,—He's ev - en for - bid me to men-tion her name.

Chorus.

Oh, the girl at the A. B. C.! I'm mashed on her and she's gone on me, But un - cle Dick—who was

once a brick— Has turn'd out a re - gu - lar s - n - o - b; For he says if I go to the A. B. C., He'll

D.S.

cut me off with a b - o - b; If it was-n't a mat - ter of £ s. d., I'd mar-ry that girl at the A. B. C.

2.

I once used to lunch with some pals so free,
On porter and steak at a pub. called "The Sun";
But since I've been mashed on sweet A. B. C.,
I'm content with a nice cup of tea and a bun.
My Uncle says I must wed cold cousin Carrie,
But I?—not for Joseph!—for that I'm too deep,
I know there'd be ructions if that girl I marry—
Just fancy! if she heard me say in my sleep—

Chorus.

"Oh, the girl at the A. B. C.!
I'm mashed on her and she's gone on me,
But Uncle Dick—who was once a brick—
Has turned out a regular s-n-o-b;
For he says if I go to the A. B. C.,
He'll cut me off with a b-o-b;
If it wasn't a matter of £ s. d.,
I'd marry that girl at the A. B. C."

3.

But Uncle's relented, and means to atone,
One day he took lunch at the A. B. C.,
I gave her the tip that he liked buttered scone,
And was really dead nuts on a strong cup of tea.
When "Don't you take jam, sir?" she asked him so sweetly,
Said he, "No, I don't, miss—I wish that I did!"
My sweet Arabella had mashed him completely,
When outside the tuck-shop he pinched me and said—

Chorus.

"Oh, that girl at the A. B. C.!
I'm mashed on her if she ain't on me,
If you don't act square with that sweet young dear,
Why, you're a confounded young p-r-i-g!
If you play with that girl at the A. B. C.,
I'll cut you off with a b-o-b;
So take her, lad, quick, or your old uncle Dick
Will marry that girl at the A. B. C."

Sheet music for 'The Girl at the A.B.C.'. Written by W. E. Imeson and composed by W. G. Eaton. Published by Francis, Day & Hunter [1898] From the Bodleian Special Collections, University of Oxford.