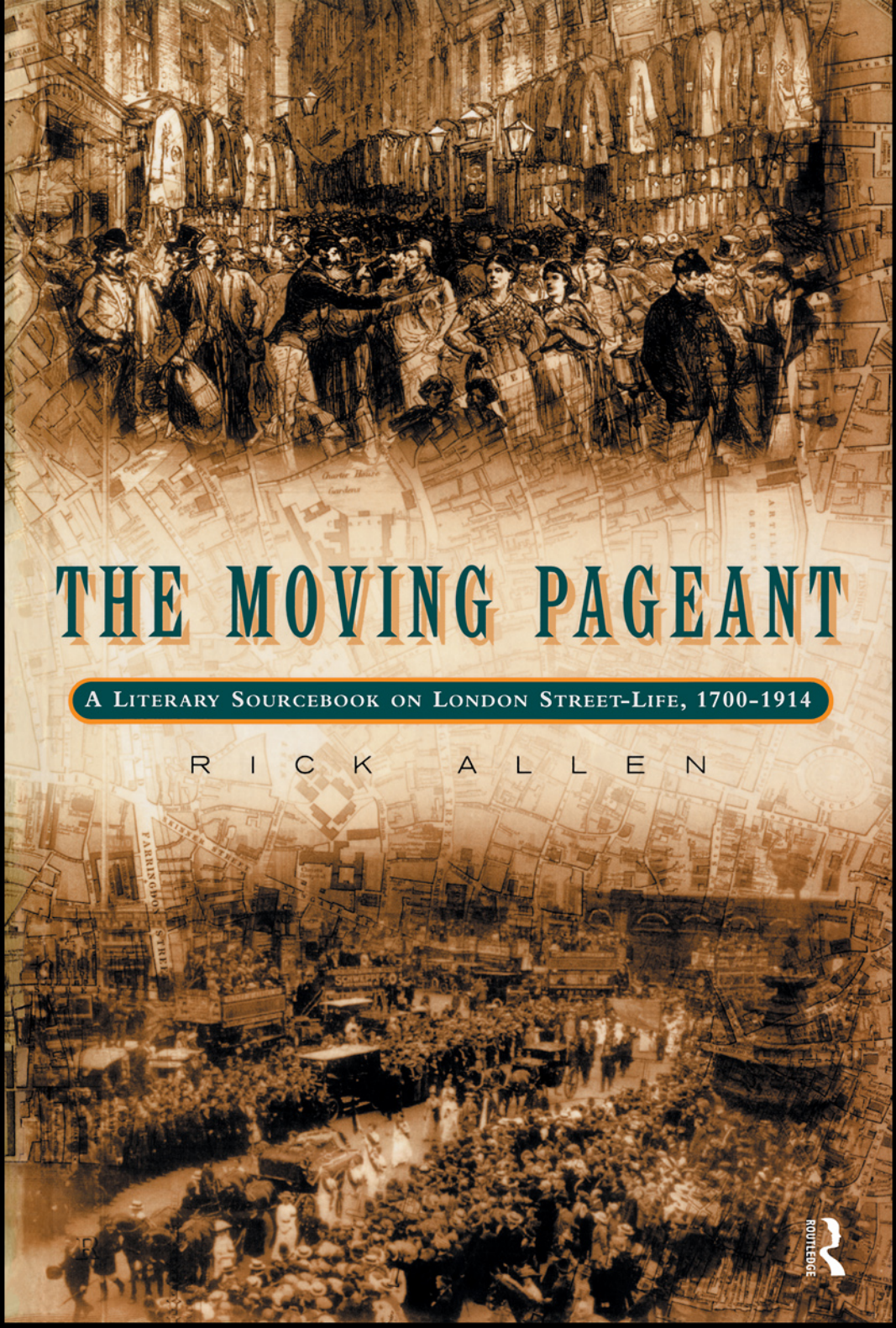

THE MOVING PAGEANT

A Literary Sourcebook on London Street-Life, 1700-1914

RICK ALLEN

ROUTLEDGE

THE MOVING PAGEANT

The Moving Pageant presents a stunning variety of writings inspired by the street-life of London. Focusing on the period between 1700 and the First World War, when London was unique in its size, diversity and alarming rate of growth, Rick Allen presents a broad selection of contemporary writings.

Such authors as Daniel Defoe, James Boswell, Horace Walpole, Flora Tristan, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde and H.G.Wells fill this volume with explorations of London life. Through their descriptions of the city's streets and sites of popular assembly, of state pageants and processions, we see the modern urban world in the making.

The works presented here cover all spheres of London life in the period and represent genres and writing styles ranging from the novel and epic poems to street-ballads and music-hall songs, newspaper accounts and private diaries.

Each writer's entry has a full biography and commentary, and the Introduction provides a critical context for the rich diversity and historical range of texts in this unique book.

Rick Allen is Principal Lecturer in English at Anglia Polytechnic University in Cambridge.

Frontispiece: London Bridge, Looking North-West, c. 1890, *The Queen's London*.

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To the memory of my father,
Clifford Allen

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

As the twentieth century draws to its close, in our increasingly urbanised world no aspect of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century recorded experience has greater immediacy for us than that of the city. The writers represented in this anthology—mostly eye-, ear- and nose-witnesses to the physical environment and to the social and cultural life of the streets—testify that the city then as now generated excitement and revulsion, creating both centripetal and centrifugal waves throughout those periods, as it still does. Urban studies—an academic growth area within and across several disciplines—have developed interesting approaches to such material in recent years; by returning the 'gaze' of the flaneur, for instance, they have ensured that urban spectatorship itself is subject to as much critical scrutiny as the objects of its attention.

However, a good deal of the rich abundance of documentary and imaginative writing about the city in the two hundred years or so before the First World War is now inaccessible, and this makes it difficult to judge what is representative—and distinctive—in the more celebrated works which have survived. Moreover, the interesting changes and continuities of view and experience from the early eighteenth to the early twentieth century have not often been closely examined since the stimulating work of Raymond Williams and Richard Sennett over twenty years ago. Hence this anthology, which offers synchronic juxtapositions of the familiar and the unfamiliar and of pieces in very different styles and genres (though the lack of space for drama is regrettable), and which in other ways aims to facilitate cross-periodic comparisons. Needless to say, however, it makes absolutely no claim to comprehensiveness: the proliferation of the literature of London between 1700 and 1914 is as vast and relentless as that by which this flood-tide of writing repeatedly characterises the city itself. If this book did no more than encourage an enlightened publisher to bring out a paperback edition of, say, *The Diary of Dudley Ryder,* Francis Place's *Autobiography* or Olive Malvery's *The Soul Market,* its production would have been worthwhile.

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INTRODUCTION

> 'Is there any other sight in the Metropolis…so thoroughly Londonesque as… the several miles of crowd…flooding the leading thoroughfares of this giant city[?]'
>
> Mayhew, 1862

I

The growth of cities is among the most salient features of modern history and quite directly associated with all other major changes—political, economic, technological, social and cultural—in the Western world over the past 300 years. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries London was the largest city in the world, the metropolis of the first industrial nation, the commercial and political hub of a global empire. It was unique in its immensity (a favourite word among those describing it) and in its social and cultural variousness. But it was also representative of the more extensively urbanised world coming into being in Europe and America during this period: in, for example, the politico-economic divisions and polarities starkly manifested in its social geography (with the separateness of the cities of Westminster and London continuing well into the eighteenth century, and the yet sharper opposition of West End and East End a conspicuous phenomenon from early in the nineteenth); and in the equally marked tensions between tradition and innovation in cultural practice and in the very fabric of the buildings.

This selection of writing about London displays some of the city's own variousness in its range of genres, viewpoints, styles, tones and functions, and in the social and national diversity of its contributors. However, the impossible task of representing every significant facet of urban life has not been attempted. Instead, the majority of pieces in this collection deal directly or indirectly with what I take to be the most fundamental, the defining aspects of the city in both physical and social terms: the human crowd, and its prime location, the streets—where its members throng to pursue licit and illicit forms of work and pleasure, to buy and to sell, and in the most consciously collective spirit, to celebrate and to protest.

The political character or significance of the crowd is often explicit in these latter activities. However, this dimension is also at least implicit in the unorganised crowd, by virtue of the levelling tendencies of a heterogeneous mix of street users: 'Your only true Republic/Is a crowded city street', a poet declared in *The True Briton* in 1851 (Winter 1993:10). A similar sentiment is comically intimated by Tom Brown as early as 1700: 'Here a sooty chimney-sweeper takes the wall of a grave alderman, and a broom-man jostles the parson of the parish. There a fat greasy porter runs a trunk full-butt upon you, while another salutes your antlers with a basket of eggs and butter' (doc. 1). The anti-hierarchical promiscuity of the crowd, at least in the city's central thoroughfares, is a familiar feature of urban life. But it deserves emphasis given the yet more familiar facts

about class segregation in residential districts and in most other occupational and recreational venues in the city.

Above all, though, the crowded streets are characterised by movement; they are emblems of the essentially kinetic quality of modern city life. This is primarily why I have borrowed Wordsworth's wonderful phrase, 'the moving pageant', for the title of this anthology. It is also pertinent that commentaries on the urban world are themselves typically kinetic: the observer himself—whether purposeful investigator or idle wanderer—is constantly on the move, discovering a different scene round every corner. (For most of the period covered in this anthology, such observers did tend to be male, for reasons discussed later.)

Moreover, there is a significant sub-genre of descriptive writing on the city which might be called the 'time-and-motion' essay, since the scene-shifting is simultaneously spatial and temporal. Such pieces give us a day in the life of the city, the commentator providing round-the-clock dispatches from a range of distinctive locations. Steele's *Spectator* essay, known as 'The Hours of London' (1712, doc. 7), a prime model for the use of this format, declares: 'The hours of the day and night are taken up, in the cities of London and Westminster, by people as different from each other as those who are born in different centuries.' This particular way of conveying the city's social diversity and restless mobility attracted many writers, including the young Dickens ('The Streets: Day' and 'The Streets: Night' in *Sketches by Boz* (1836)) and graphic artists too (e.g., Hogarth in *The Four Times of Day* (1738) and Doré in *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872)); it reached a peak of loquacious amplitude in Sala's *Twice Round the Clock* (1859, doc. 54).

An important variant of this sub-genre offers a blend of topographical documentary and comic fiction; in its most typical format, a pair of metropolitan tourists—one experienced and streetwise and the other a newcomer filled with callow wonder, constantly liable to fall victim to deception—embark on a daylong inspection of London life in all its copious variety. Brown's *Amusements* and Ned Ward's *The London Spy* (1700, doc. 2) are notable prototypes of the form, Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821, doc. 28) the best-known and probably most influential variant upon it. In the case of these semi-fictional tours too, 'daylong' certainly means 'round the clock', since to a visitor, especially one from the country, the most astonshing aspect of the city is its vibrant night-life. Dickens is restating a truism when he remarks—significantly in a London-by-night piece—that 'all great towns' are 'out of Nature' (doc. 38); in no respect is this more strikingly the case than in their disturbance of the natural rhythms of the diurnal cycle, their violation of Night's 'natural' properties of darkness, peace and stasis. In writing of all kinds the quintessence of London life has been found in nocturnal scenes; Flora Tristan speaks for many when she exclaims: 'But it is really at night that London must be seen!' (1980:2). The tone of such pronouncements ranges between, and often combines, horror and exhilaration. (A distinctive variant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, represented by Arthur Symons and other self-conscious impressionists, takes pure aesthetic delight in the atmospheric power and flickering chiaroscuro of the nocturnal city.) And even when, more conventionally, the peace and stillness of night are celebrated—as, for example, in Wordsworth's *Prelude* (VII, 625–35, doc. 25)—the brevity and rarity of such an experience amid the *perpetuum mobile* of urban life are heavily emphasised.

II

Nowhere is the continuous (and sometimes rapid) process of social and cultural change more conspicuous than in the city streets: in demolition and building projects, with the flaunting of new architectural styles (a particularly marked feature of the London of both the early eighteenth and the early twentieth century, in which respectively this anthology begins and ends); in fashions of dress and behaviour; in the class and ethnic composition of groups parading or flouting these fashions; in vehicle style and technology (this collection takes us from sedan chairs and stage coaches to motor cars and underground trains); and in advertisements and shop signs. To this process, too, the image of 'the moving pageant' is applicable: one of the precise meanings of pageant is a parade or dramatic enactment of successive historical periods. This anthology, offering a chronological sequence of items grouped in period sections, is itself a sort of pageant in that sense. One historical change to which it bears witness is in the dominant identity of the street crowd itself. Scholarly studies of the crowd have tended to be about assembled gatherings, as in Le Bon's classic treatise in collective psychology (1896); George Rudé's *The Crowd in History* (1964) is also about popular assemblies, organised or spontaneous, to hold a protest meeting, to march or to run riot. The crowd in this sense was a feature of the eighteenth-century city in particular; whether gathered for violent protest or for carnivalesque pleasure (or both) it was generally perceived and referred to by those of a higher social class as 'the mob'—an abbreviation of *mobile vulgus* ('the excitable crowd') or of 'the mobility' (the facetious antithesis to 'the nobility'; see Ward, doc. 2). The crowd as mob was, then, by definition a kinetic body. But it should not thereby be confused with what Mayhew, in the passage from which the epigraph to this introduction is taken, described as 'the one distinctive mark' of the London of his day; 'the vast human tide—the stupendous living torrent of thousands upon thousands of restless souls…for ever rushing along the great leading thoroughfares of the Metropolis' (1967:53). The distinction between these two kinds of crowd is neatly drawn in a Horace Walpole lettrer to the Miss Berrys, 8 June 1791 (Cunningham 1857–9:IX(1859), 324), a testimony to the fact that in the late eighteenth century the crowd in Mayhew's sense was still something of a novelty: 'London is, I am certain, much fuller than ever I saw it. I have twice this spring been going to stop my coach in Piccadilly, to inquire what was the matter, thinking there was a mob—not at all; it was only passengers.'

With good reason Walpole attributed this new kind of crowd, the continuous flow of pedestrians, to a large increase in the population of the metropolis and to a consequent expansion of its built-up areas: 'There will soon be one street from London to Brentford.' He also recognised the effect of these factors on the number and kinds of private conveyances in the streets: '[T]he tides of coaches, chariots, curricles, phaetons, etc. are endless. Indeed, the town is so extended, that the breed of chairs is almost lost; for Hercules and Atlas could not carry anybody from one end of this enormous capital to the other.' There were other reasons for the onset of these endless tides of passengers and vehicles through the streets of London (and other cities), and hence for the profusion of water imagery in nineteenth-century urban writing. Related to the physical expansion of the city and the growth of residential suburbs was the creation of large-scale commuting, especially on the part of an augmented class of white-collar workers employed in the city's commercial and administrative sectors. And a crucial precondition for the tidal

flow of pedestrians and traffic was the implementation of street-improvement schemes. This had clearly not happened by 1716 when John Gay published his mock-cautionary poem *Trivia: or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (doc. 9), a detailed guide to the hazards and obstructions to be encountered in metropolitan perambulation:

> Where the low penthouse bows the walker's head,
> And the rough pavement wounds the yielding tread;
> Where not a post protects the narrow space,
> And strung in twines, combs dangle in thy face;
> Summon at once thy courage, rouze thy care,
> Stand firm, look back, be resolute, beware.
>
> (III, 19)

Gay's poem shows why the crowd as, in Wordsworth's phrase, an 'endless stream of men and moving things' (doc. 25, 158) was a physical impossibility before legislation in the 1760s provided for the surfacing and widening of roads and foot-paths, and for the clearance of obstructions, especially large, overhanging trade signs. The work of Hogarth, the supreme pictorial chronicler of eighteenth-century urban life, offers evidence of a similar kind. Kinetic crowdedness is the very hallmark of his technique and vision, yet it is mobs rather than passengers who pack his street-scenes (plate 2). In nineteenth-century writing and art we still encounter mobs, but passenger-crowds are more common. London's greatest novelist, Dickens, gives us some memorable mobs, but most of them appear in historical novels about late eighteenth-century riot and revolution. A more typical crowd scene is the set-piece in Chapter 32 of *Nicholas Nickleby* (doc. 35), where imagery of tide and torrent is combined with that of dreamlike, ritualistic, promiscuous procession ('all these jumbled each with the other and flocking side by side, seemed to flit by in motley dance like the fantastic groups of the old Dutch painter') to give a paradigmatic evocation of the moving pageant.

III

And so to the *locus classicus* for this kind of description in Book VII of Wordsworth's *Prelude,* composed 1804–5. The poet recalls, from his temporary residence in 'this great city' of London in the early 1790s, sensations repeatedly experienced when going 'forwards with the crowd' through 'the overflowing streets'. The mass anonymity of the stream of strangers pouring past induces in him a powerful sense of alienation, of personal and collective identity obliterated. He enters a dreamlike state: 'the shapes before my eyes became/A second-sight procession' and he is 'lost/Amid the moving pageant' (lines 594–609). In a famous appraisal Raymond Williams identified 'these important lines' as 'the first expression of what has since become a dominant experience of the city' (1973:186). We have noted some of the contextual factors which help to account for the timing of this 'first expression'; what is then remarkable is how rapidly

such observations become commonplace—as has clearly already happened when Robert Mudie's journalistic account (1825, doc. 31) states that 'in the crowds of London, individual man is lost in the mass'. The case for the subsequent dominance of such experience of the city can find plenty of supportive evidence in this anthology, among pieces which not only testify to the experience of identity lost amid the crowd, but register a shift into phantasmagoric modes of perception. A striking instance is 'The City of Dis' in Melville's *Israel Potter* (doc. 49), the Dantean overtones of which give it a central place in a Romantic tradition of urban-apocalyptic visions. Earlier examples are Blake (doc. 23), de Quincey (doc. 33) and Shelley's 'Hell is a city much like London' (1943:350–3) in *Peter Bell the Third* (1819), the most celebrated later one the 'Unreal City' passage (I, 60–8; Eliot 1965:65) in *The Waste Land* (1922).

But despite the potency of the literary witness to urban alienation, it is by no means uncontested. Lamb and Hazlitt mount direct challenges to Wordsworth by insisting on the sociability as opposed to the loneliness of the crowd (docs 24 and 30), and this conflict is sustained in later writing. Often, indeed, it is found within single works, including—if we take Books VII and VIII as a whole—*The Prelude* itself. Hazlitt's essay, 'On Londoners and Country People', disputes Wordsworth's later, more extreme image of urban man as a dehumanised atom. Yet Hazlitt himself presents a thoroughly equivocal view of the Londoner's personality and outlook, and thence of the nature of urban society (see Section IV below). There is, then, a representativeness about Dickens' ambivalence towards the city, expressively summed up in the phrase 'the attraction of repulsion'. Dickens has usually been credited with inventing this memorable term, the best-known usage of which is actually in his friend John Forster's biography (1872–4), citing the novelist's memory of his boyhood fascination with 'the real town' (i.e., inner-city slums): 'But, most of all, he had a profound attraction of repulsion to St. Giles's' (Forster 1969: I, 14). Dickens himself introduces the phrase into 'The City of the Absent' *(The Uncommercial Traveller),* an essay not on slums but on City churchyards, first published in the early 1860s. Two decades before that, however, the phrase is used with regard to the ambiguous appeal of the metropolis at large by an older contemporary of Dickens, John Fisher Murray, in a pertinent passage on solitude and society: 'the attraction of London is the attraction of repulsion' (doc. 39). This equivocal view is especially typical of the early and middle years of the nineteenth century; it remains in evidence, for example in Gissing (docs 65 and 68) and in James' confession of attachment to 'the dreadful, delightful city' (doc. 67), even when moralism has started to give way to an aesthetic-impressionist appreciation of the urban scene.

IV

The word 'pageant' has general connotations of spectacle and this, as I have already suggested, is certainly appropriate to many pieces throughout this collection, if only because their writers have experienced London as spectators. Some of the characteristics of what has been called 'the tourist gaze' (Urry 1990) can often be recognised here, not least those of daydreaming and fantasy. The latter tendencies are also associated with the role of *flâneur,* the loafing observer of the nineteenth-century city, most notably celebrated and enacted by the Parisian poet, Charles Baudelaire, and most brilliantly

interpreted in the 1930s by the cultural theorist and critic, Walter Benjamin. It has been argued that the *flâneur* was a sociological phenomenon peculiar to the urban geography of Paris and that he was 'virtually unknown in London…; "loiter" [sic] which Harrap's gives as a translation of "flâneur", has a distinctly sinister meaning in English' (Bedarida and Sutcliffe 1980:390). This view might seem to be supported by Benjamin's treatment of the *flâneur* as a type specific to the arcades of Paris, but it is unduly exclusive. 'The loafer' and 'the lounger' frequently figure in nineteenth-century accounts of London street-life; Angus Reach's vignette (1849, doc. 43) identifies different breeds of lounger in topographic and social terms, but characterises them all as observers of the crowds of people more busily occupied than themselves. In this respect they are synonymous with *flâneurs*. It is not surprising, therefore, that 'flaneur' is a term much used recently by cultural historians concerned with male voyeurism. In cases where the urban observer is no idle loafer this can seem distortive, as when the earnest sociologist Charles Booth is labelled a flaneur by Walkowitz (1992:33). Elizabeth Wilson (1992) follows Benjamin (1983:170–1) in pointing out that the flaneur was a socially or economically marginal figure and, in Baudelaire's classic account, 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), his identity is certainly ambiguous (see Tester 1994:6, 16–17). A dandy who nevertheless 'loves being incognito', he strolls in apparent idleness amidst the bustling crowd, but this pose is redeemed by the artistic results of creative observation in which 'the weird pageant has been distilled from nature' (1972:395, 402). The particular hero of Baudelaire's essay, Constantin Guys, was a Dutchman occasionally resident in Paris who wrote and drew for *The Illustrated London News*. His cosmopolitanism made him the ideal flaneur: '[t]o be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere…' (pp. 399–400). But Baudelaire, a native Parisian, was also writing about himself; though adoption of an alien's or cosmopolitan's eye is a much-favoured strategy to achieve freshness or penetration of vision, visitors are obviously not the only discerning spectators of the urban pageant—consider the title and explicit functions of the most famous eighteenth-century London periodical. Addison and Steele (docs 6 and 7), under the persona of 'Mr Spectator', prefigure certain aspects of *flânerie,* delighting in their absorption within the purposeful crowd without really being involved in its business. However, Mr Spectator is a gregarious street-conversationalist whereas, according to one influential modern view (Sennett 1977:27, 196), his nineteenth-century successors observe in silence (not always: see, for example, docs 37, 50 and 56). The idea of the gazer as a detached outsider is interestingly reversed in the early nineteenth century by Hazlitt, who sees the indigenous crowd itself as a bunch of *un*discerning gapers—*badauds* rather than *flâneurs* (Benjamin 1983:69). His 'true Cockney' is a perennial spectator of the moving pageant ('an endless phantasmagoria') whose gaze has thereby become a daze: 'He sees everything near, superficial, little, in hasty succession. The world turns round, and his head with it, like a roundabout at a fair, till he becomes stunned and giddy with the motion' (doc. 30).

Hazlitt's simile here is an apt one given the longstanding prominence of fairs as centres of popular culture and consumerism in and near the London streets: Bartholomew, Southwark, Greenwich and May Fairs were the biggest and best known of such annual events, where pageant and theatre in the literal sense figured significantly in the range of entertainments. It is even more appropriate that Wordsworth's description of Bartholomew Fair should constitute the disturbing climax to Book VII of *The Prelude,* since the greater part of what precedes it in this recollection of 'Residence in London'

consists of a documentary survey (more equivocal in tone than the finale) of the capital's rich variety of popular shows and exhibitions. But the poet's summative claim that Bartholomew Fair, 'This Parliament of Monsters,' is 'a type not false/Of what the mighty City is itself' has been given further artistic validation by the treatment of proceedings in law court and church as exercises in histrionic display on the part of the principal actors. Wordsworth was registering a deep-seated distrust of what he regarded as the fundamental artifice, the unnatural exhibitionism, of urban life, a hostility which was rooted in puritan as well as rural values. This was perceived by Charles Lamb, who accompanied him on a visit to Bartholomew Fair in 1802 and whose first 'Londoner' essay of the same year (doc. 24) constitutes an implicit rejoinder: 'The very deformities of London, which give distaste to others…excite in me no puritanical aversion.' But wherever one's sympathies lie in this interesting debate, there is no doubt that public life itself in this ancient and imperial capital has long been strongly characterised by pageantry and theatrical ritual, much of it performed in and through the streets. As Hogarth ironically demonstrated in *Industry and Idleness* by juxtaposing images of the Lord Mayor's Procession and that of the condemned criminal to Tyburn (see plates 1 and 2), these nominally contrasting pieces of street theatre licensed the same (ritualised) unruliness in the assembled crowds, in the eighteenth century at least. Yet these and most other officially sponsored rituals are clearly symbolic forms of social and political control. On the ideologically ambiguous effects of metropolitan spectacle Hazlitt is again a compelling witness: he characterises the typical Londoner as a proud egalitarian through vicarious identity with glamorous display:

> He meets the Lord Mayor's coach, and without ceremony treats himself to an imaginary ride in it. He notices the people going to court or to a city-feast, and is quite satisfied with the show. He takes the wall of a Lord, and fancies himself as good as he… *Your true Cockney is your only true leveller*.
>
> (emphasis in original)

Although Hazlitt echoes Tom Brown on the brash republicanism of the city street and its denizens, he treats it as largely hollow, an assertion of egalitarianism which actually betokens its opposite: a deferential loyalism.

This latter emphasis may at first sight seem questionable, or at any rate unrepresentative, given that in 1823 Hazlitt could look back on a golden half-century of popular radicalism centred on London. Accounts of mass gatherings, from the 'Wilkes and Liberty' riots of the late 1760s and early 1770s to the pro-Reform and pro-Caroline demonstrations of the post-Napoleonic era (docs 19, 21, 27), suggest a London populace with strongly anti-Establishment leanings. But aside from the question of whether the participants in such assemblies were typical of the populace at large, much of this radical activism did in fact take forms which confirm rather than refute Hazlitt's image of the Londoner as 'a great man by proxy,…dazzled with noise, show and appearances'. There is first the obvious point that a 'great' man (or woman)—Wilkes, Gordon, Hunt, Queen Caroline—was often the instigator or the heroic occasion of mass action; in the case of Wilkes, violent demonstrations supported not only his campaigns to become an MP but also those to become Lord Mayor. This corroborates the second and more significant

point: that in a tradition going back at least as far as the Civil War, the City of London as a social and political entity tended to stand in opposition to the Court and often to the government of the day. In the eighteenth century it did so, moreover, on a 'patriotic' platform, this being one of the factors accounting for the element of collusion on occasions between the City authorities and violently xenophobic rioters. Third, radical demonstrations against the state often conducted elaborate parodies of its pageants and rituals. For example, according to Rudé, popular protests against the imprisonment of the Lord Mayor in the Tower in 1771 included mock executions of all the most prominent 'enemies of the people' (1971:218). And, as Roger Sales (1983) has shown, the procession escorting Queen Caroline through huge crowds of supporters to her trial at the House of Lords in 1820 was a carnivalesque parody of state pageantry.

This context of popular radicalism helps explain why Hazlitt ends his essay with an affirmative view of the London populace as 'a visible body-politic' wherein 'we learn to venerate ourselves as men, and to respect the rights of human nature'. Except on rare occasions, such as the Hyde Park pro-Reform demonstrations of 1866–7 (see doc. 59 and plate 14), mid-Victorian popular assemblies took place in a rather less highly charged atmosphere, politically speaking. Observers thus tended to echo the converse emphasis in Hazlitt upon the bedazzled gazer. According to Fisher Murray, 'Processions, parades, and reviews form one of the principal sources of innocent recreation to the Londoner. He is a perfect child in his admiration of spectacle' (1843:II, 41). This anticipates the famous Bagehot (1867) thesis regarding a deferential people:

> They defer to what we may call the theatrical show of society…. The higher world, as it looks from without, is a stage on which actors walk their parts much better than the spectators can…. As a rustic on coming to London finds himself in the presence of a great show and vast exhibition of inconceivable mechanical things, so by the structure of society, he finds himself face to face with a great exhibition of political things which he could not have imagined, which he could not make—to which he feels in himself scarcely anything analogous.
>
> (Bagehot 1993:249)

Although there are some obvious continuities with Hazlitt here regarding spectators of the great metropolitan show, more striking is the complete reversal of Hazlitt's image of the Londoner as 'a great man by proxy'. Bagehot posits a theatre of alienation in which, however, the very unBrechtian effect of distance is deferential awe rather than cerebral criticism. The analogy he draws between a provincial at the Great Exhibition and 'the common man…face to face with a great exhibition of political things' is a significant one; the orderly behaviour, good humour and patriotic enthusiasm of the vast crowds visiting the Crystal Palace in 1851 were hailed by many as evidence that class conflict and the threat of revolution now belonged to this country's past.

However, this signal event in the history of London tourism and London crowds, though actively patronised by the Royal Family, especially the Prince Regent, stressed modernity rather than tradition and occurred well before 'the heyday of "invented tradition",…when old ceremonials were staged with an expertise and appeal which had been lacking before' (Cannadine 1983:108). According to David Cannadine the

presentation of the British monarchy in this way began only with the bestowal upon Victoria of the title of Empress of India in 1877: 'the most important point about Bagehot's…picture of the power and pomp of the monarchy was that it was not so much description as prescriptive' (1983:107 n. 18). Cannadine's case regarding the belatedness of effective stage-management of royal pageantry is partly borne out by accounts of the arrival in London of Princess Alexandra of Denmark to marry the Prince of Wales in 1863. Two diarists of the day, Arthur Munby and William Hardman, give vivid descriptions of the enormous crush of people blocking the route of the procession and in physical touch with the chief celebrities when their carriages were brought to a halt: none of Bagehot's desired distance here! 'The arrangements of the City were execrable,' complains Hardman. Yet his record of the event opens on an entirely different note of portentous affirmation: 'London has been convulsed by the Prince of Wales's wedding. The air has been filled with the sounds of joy-bells, and the streets by shouting millions. This generation has never seen such sights, nor indeed has the world before' (Ellis 1923:268, 265). This mass enthusiasm for a royal occasion is arguably of greater significance than poor organisation; indeed, its significance is heightened thereby, given the degree of popular indifference if not outright hostility to the monarchy and its public ceremonials during the previous 150 years.

Crowds computed in millions are obviously heterogeneous in composition, but can anything further be said about the social profile of these loyalist masses in the London streets? This is Munby's useful record: 'Men of all classes, and women of the lower and lower middle, made up the crowd; and more women than men; but the ladies—luckless beings—were rooted in omnibus & carriage.' But the relative precision of this view is sharpened when, a year later, he describes another great popular assembly in London for the visit of Garibaldi, with this royal occasion still in mind:

> It was a crowd composed mainly of the lowest classes; a very shabby and foul smelling crowd…. [T]hey surged & struggled round the carriage, they shouted with a mighty shout of enthusiasm that took one's breath away to hear it…. There was an ardour and a sort of deep pathetic force about this sound that distinguished it plainly from the shouts of simple welcome which I heard given last year to the Princess Alexandra…
>
> (doc. 56)

From our perspective Munby's moving and discriminating account is likewise invaluable for its demonstration of distinctive social and political identities among mass gatherings in the centre of Victorian London, and of the fact that not every category of Londoner then (or, surely, at any other time?) was 'a perfect child in his admiration of spectacle'. The suffragist processions of half a century later provide an interesting comparison to those viewed by Hardman and Munby: meticulously organised, colourful and iconographically complex pageants, their participants predominantly but not exclusively female, mainly but by no means entirely middle class, these events also attracted enormous crowds from all social classes whose respectful if not enthusiastic admiration (see doc. 90) belied the media propaganda characterising the general public as contemptuously hostile to 'the shrieking sisterhood'.

V

We have seen that on the historic occasion of Garibaldi's visit, the spectacle Munby most admires is the crowd itself. Like most of the other writers represented in this anthology he is an equally keen observer of quotidian urban life and, although obsessional case-studies of working women are a peculiarity of this private diarist, an acute class-consciousness is not. However, the tone in which the class divisions of urban society are represented varies considerably. For much of the eighteenth century, writers mostly treated 'low life' (an elastic term covering anything disreputable as well as of humble status) with a mixture of amusement and contempt; low burlesque, as in Ward (doc. 2) or Pope (doc. 3), is rather more characteristic than the moralistic pathos of Whitehead's 'The Sweepers' (doc. 16). However, by the era of the French Revolution (Part II of this anthology), the tone of writing about the poor has typically become more serious: thereafter, their condition variously invokes pity, indignation, apprehension, but, above all, a sense of responsibility on the part of the writer to leave the reader better informed about it. Admittedly, Egan's *Life in London* (1821, doc. 28) treats active enquiry into this subject as a kind of aristocratic field-sport; yet even this predominantly light-hearted exploration of metropolitan polarities has an educative function in presenting the city as 'a complete CYCLOPEDIA', in which 'even the *poorest* cellar contains some trait or other, in union with the manners and feelings of this great city, that may be put down in the note-book' (p. 24). In Henry Trumbull's *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R.Potter* (1824), the source for Melville's novel thirty years later, the narrator remarks 'That one half the world knows not how the other half lives, is a common and just observation' (Hayford *et al.* 1982:361). It was indeed proverbial by then, as we can see from its use as the subtitle of the anonymous round-the-clock satire of 1752, *Low-Life* (doc. 15). But whereas the latter offers a promiscuous, often humorous sequence of snapshots of unedifying urban customs and behaviour performed by members of various social groups, Trumbull's Israel Potter purports to offer eye-witness accounts 'of the extreme poverty and distress of the wretched poor of London' (p. 75). And by the Victorian period the cliché has been modified to read: 'One half of the world lives without knowing how the other half dies' (Collins 1971:81).

Low-life comedy is still allowed, as Dickens most obviously demonstrates. But Sam Weller, the working-class Cockney wag in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), is someone we laugh with rather than at; his humour, moreover, is often specifically informative of how the other half lives…and dies:

> I had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight…—the dry arches of Waterloo bridge. Fine sleeping place—within ten minutes' walk of all the public offices—only if there is any objection to it, it is that the sitivation's rayther too airy. I see some queer sights there…. Sights, sir,…as 'ud penetrate your benevolent heart and come out on the other side. You don't see the reg'lar wagrants there; trust'em, they knows better than that.

> Young beggars, male and female, as hasn't made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it's generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves in the dark corners o' them lonesome places…
>
> (Dickens 1874:106, Ch. 16)

When Dickens presents such 'creeturs' directly, unmediated by Wellerian patter, for example in 'A Nightly Scene in London' (1856, doc. 50), their plight is, of course, no laughing matter. In this sombre essay he describes an encounter, on a dark, wet evening, with a group of homeless women shut out from the Casual Ward of Whitechapel Workhouse. The repetition of such phrases as 'five bundles of rags', 'five great beehives', 'five dead bodies taken out of graves' and 'five ragged mounds' emphasises their liminal status on the very edge not only of society but of humanity. The next phrase in this sequence requires the reader to consider the perilous implications for us all of such exclusion: 'Five awful Sphinxes by the wayside, crying to every passer-by, "Stop and guess! What is to be the end of a state of society that leaves us here!"' In this case the answer to Dickens' rhetorical question seems to be collective moral insensibility rather than the revolutionary turmoil he was also wont to predict in the mid-1850s. When the narrator does stop to speak to these figures and offer them money, their 'dull and languid' response confirms an advanced stage of desensitisation. Limited communication with them is still possible, but expressions of anger as much as of gratitude are beyond them. The horror of the scene is augmented by the implication of the title of the piece that, far from being unusual, such situations are a nightly occurrence which might be witnessed in many parts of London.

Yet Dickens does not—cannot—leave such bleakness unmitigated: 'let me close this terrible account with a redeeming and beautiful trait of the poorest of the poor.' The main incident in this essay closely resembles Munby's encounter with down-and-out females in St James' Park eight years later (doc. 56), where there is no redemptive outcome ('it was Dante and Virgil gazing on the damned'). But Dickens' coda is reminiscent instead of the way in which Wordsworth's dark vision of a monstrous urban 'Swarm,…melted and reduced/To one identity' in Book VII of *The Prelude* is somewhat lightened in Book VIII:

> And is not, too, that vast Abiding-place
> Of human Creatures, turn where'er we may,
> Profusely sown with individual sights
> Of courage, and integrity, and truth,
> And tenderness, which, here set off by foil,
> Appears more touching.
>
> (lines 836–41)

The example the poet then gives is the 'tender scene' of a man cradling 'a sickly babe…with unutterable love'. Underlying the foil image in the lines above is the idea that such scenes dramatise resistance to the dehumanising forces of an urban environment.

The extent to which faith in such resistance can be retained is a question looming large over nineteenth-century urban writing. The Dante revival in English Romantic and post-Romantic culture no doubt encouraged the use of Inferno imagery to represent the urban environment and those trapped within it. However, very few writers on London from Wordsworth's generation to Dickens' subscribed to the idea of absolute perdition for its poorer inhabitants which that imagery implies. Only in the later nineteenth century do these depths of pessimism begin to be plumbed, in such imaginative works as Thomson's 'The City of Dreadful Night' (1874) and Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889, doc. 68), followed in the early twentieth century by some of the documentary writing in which the inferno image has been replaced by, or merged with, that of the abyss.

Fin-de-siècle gloom on the condition of the London poor might seem surprising given that over the previous half-century in the capital there had been extensive slum clearance, an enlarged provision of public parks, and improvements in sanitation, public transport, education, cultural amenities, policing and (mainly voluntary-sector) welfare services. The first point to make here is that there is actually a rich variety of moods and attitudes as well as modes displayed in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing on the city. Socialists (Morris, Shaw, Jack London), salvationists (William Booth) and the Garden City Association (Ebenezer Howard) saw The Way Out of Darkest London, and there were many others (for example, Octavia Hill, 'Mark Rutherford', Beatrice Potter, Charles Booth, C.F.G.Masterman and Olive Malvery) strenuously involved in different ways, through the Charity Organisation Society, the settlement movement and the first systematic sociological surveys of poverty, in efforts to lighten the darkness. Nevertheless, there are three major historical factors sufficient to account for the deeper pessimism of some observers. One is the relentless growth of the city, especially eastwards to create vast working-class or under-class ghettoes. The fear this generated is clearly spelt out by Masterman in *From the Abyss* (1902):

> We had thought that a city of four millions of people was merely a collection of one hundred cities of forty thousand. We find it differing not only in degree, but in kind, producing a mammoth of gigantic and unknown possibility…. How long before, in a fit of ill-temper, it suddenly realizes its tremendous unconquerable might?
>
> (doc. 80)

The other two factors, which perhaps make Masterman's apprehensions better founded than Dickens' anxieties about revolution in the 1850s, were the steady economic decline of industrial London between 1870 and 1914 and the consequent rise of the 'New Unionism' and socialist organisation in the 1880s, manifested in unemployment marches into central London and in a series of strikes, most notably the Great Dock Strike of 1889.

According to a leading authority on 'Outcast London',

> By the 1880s, the inner industrial perimeter…was fast becoming an industrial vacuum…. [It] developed into an area of chronic male under-employment, female sweated labour, and low paid, irregular artisan work in declining trades; an area associated with small dealing, petty criminality and social desolation…. London workers of the 1830s and 1840s…lived within walking distance of their work within the tight confines of the central area …. Despite a large growth of population, the industrial structure of London, and the geographical distribution of its inhabitants were little different from that of the eighteenth century.
>
> By the early years of the twentieth century the whole physiognomy of central London had been transformed beyond recognition. Large and packed residential areas had given way to acres of warehouses, workshops, railway yards, and offices.
>
> (Stedman Jones 1971:154, 159)

This summary of industrial and demographic changes in London through our period provides a useful context for the tradition of urban writing known as 'social exploration', writing which, as we have seen, deplores the fact that 'one half the world knows not how the other half lives' and aims to make this truism less true. A number of the essays in Dickens' first book, *Sketches by Boz* (1835–6), are composed on this principle, but in none of these does he need to venture beyond the two-mile radius of Temple Bar within which a large proportion of low-class London lived as well as worked at that time. In 'Gin Shops', for instance, we are taken 'through the narrow streets and dirty courts which divide [Drury Lane] from Oxford Street': 'The filthy and miserable appearance of this part of London can hardly be imagined by those (and there are many such) who have not witnessed it' (Dickens 1877b:86). Only five years later, a foreign (and socialist) visitor, Flora Tristan, saw a clear tripartite geographical division in 'the monster city'—the West End, the City and the suburbs—corresponding to a tripartite social class structure. However, she confirmed that these residential suburbs were within walking distance of workplaces in central London, if only to claim that this daily trek helped to account for the workers being 'forever broken with fatigue' (1980:3). Dickens was a formidable walker (and noctambulist in particular), and this is reflected in the geographical range of his post-*Sketches* writing on the London poor, fictional and non-fictional. But the strategy of ironic contrast between wealth and poverty at the heart of his urban vision continued to be founded on a sense of the proximity if not contiguity of these extremes. His exact contemporary, Henry Mayhew, viewed London in much the same way—as 'a strange incongruous chaos of wealth and want' (Mayhew and Binny 1968:28). And when, in the Preface to his best-known work, Mayhew described himself as a 'traveller in the undiscovered country of the poor' about whom 'the public had less knowledge than of the most distant tribes of the earth' (1967:I, xv), he was again making an ironic distinction between geographical and social distance.

But later in the nineteenth century the construction of tram and underground rail systems made it possible for London's burgeoning workforce to reside much further from the centre, 'in the unknown lands beyond' as Masterman put it (doc. 80), and thus

become an even more alien race. Moreover, the social and economic decline of the areas in between, on the fringes of the inner industrial perimeter, made them seem more inhospitable than before to the casual middle-class explorer. No doubt mid-Victorian London had its 'no-go' areas for such as he: one thinks of Dickens enjoying the privilege of entering some of them under Inspector Field's protection. On the other hand, he begins 'A Nightly Scene in London' by saying he 'accidentally strayed' into Whitechapel with an unofficial companion. And the whole point of the episode's conclusion—the 'redeeming and beautiful trait of the poorest of the poor'—is that when a crowd gathers round these two gentlemen with money in their hands as well as in their pockets, no one begs from them, nor do they feel in the least threatened. Oliveira Martins' account (doc. 75) of a visit to the same area in 1892, with the Ripper murders still fresh in mind, has an utterly different atmosphere. The broad-shouldered detective who acts as guide and bodyguard tells him: '"It would be rash to come alone to these places even by day. By night, even inhabitants of London do not venture—much less strangers! This is no longer London. London ends with the City. This is the East End."'

One feels that Martins heard and saw mostly what conformed to his expectations (rare is the travel writer who does not!). Arthur Morrison was not a mere traveller in that undiscovered country of the poor, being himself a product of the East-End working class. He begins 'A Street' (1891, doc. 70) by challenging stereo-typed images of the East End as a region of colourful violence, disorder and squalor: 'Many and misty are the people's notions of the East End; and each is commonly but the distorted shadow of a minor feature.' Aided by the unadorned prose of naturalism, Morrison proceeds to correct these distorted notions of 'spectacular' slums, want and misery by showing them as facets of an inescapably dull and monotonous existence. The main effect, then, is not to refute the pessimists but to join them: 'every day is hopelessly the same…. Nobody laughs here—life is too serious a thing; nobody sings…'.

The ghettoisation of London working-class life is strongly evident in Morrison's work. He himself had escaped from the confinement he describes, but it was not until well after the terminal date of our survey that the liberating effects of universal education, the welfare state and urban-industrial regeneration started to be more generally experienced. In many ways, of course, the lot of the London poor, including educational provision, had been even worse in earlier parts of our period, and this, obviously enough, explains why there are so few accounts of it from an inside perspective, and why, indeed, genuinely working-class views of the wider London scene are equally rare. The copious writings of Francis Place, a substantial proportion of them still unpublished, are all the more noteworthy on both counts (see doc. 34). On the other hand, their very exceptionality, and that of Place's career as social and political reformer, raise difficult questions about how representative, in class terms, we might take his viewpoint to be.

Probably the best available evidence in print of working-class attitudes and tastes in nineteenth-century London is the street-literature of the time: ballads, broadsheets and the like produced, most famously, or notoriously, by the Catnach Press in Seven Dials and sold and sung by patterers and chaunters in the surrounding streets. Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–2), a richly detailed source of information about this major aspect of urban popular culture, includes samples of the various kinds of material and interviews with a writer as well as several salesmen of it (1967:I, 213–323). These confirm May-new's own statement regarding the narrow tyrannies of the market imposed

upon the composers of street literature: 'It must be borne in mind that the street author is closely restricted in the quality of his effusion. It must be such as the patterers approve, as the chaunters can chaunt, the ballad-singers sing, and—above all—such as street-buyers will buy' (1967:I, 220). A poet in very poor circumstances and health tells him: 'Writing poetry is no comfort to me in my sickness. It might if I could write just what I please. The printers like hanging subjects best, and I don't. But when any of them sends to order a copy of verses for a "Sorrowful Lamentation" of course I must supply them' (1967:I, 280). Existing collections of street ballads and modern research confirm that crime and especially murder was by far the most popular subject in street literature. However, what were known as Ballads on a Subject and Ballads Local, focusing respectively on topical events and on local topographical features and issues, do provide interesting vignettes and views of London life from a popular perspective. Some, such as 'The Opening of the New Viaduct' and 'The New Streets Act' (doc. 59), comment on changes to the streets themselves from the point of view of those who work in them. In the first of these two examples, Holborn Viaduct is welcomed primarily because it will spare horses which have hitherto had to struggle with their loads up Holborn Hill. 'The New Streets Act', on the other hand, reflects the viewpoint of humbler street-workers than carriers (or their employers); it is an ironic satire on the restrictive provisions, especially as regards street vending and entertainment, of the 1867 Metropolitan Streets Act. This latter example corroborates the argument of James Winter's splendid book, *London's Teeming Streets* (1993), that street 'improvements' in the Victorian period aimed to facilitate vehicular freedom of passage at the expense of more traditional freedoms to use the streets for other purposes.

VI

As well as the poor, another major category heavily under-represented in the ranks of reporters of London street life before the First World War is that of women. Their minority status here seems more marked than in other kinds of writing, but this is scarcely surprising. At a time when female novelists felt impelled to adopt male personae (as did, for example, two nineteenth-century women whose fiction contains notable evocations of the urban scene, Charlotte Brontë and Margaret Harkness), the genre of street exploration must have seemed even less open to women writers. We are speculating here, but I suspect that such conventional gender restrictions on an 'unfeminine' mode of writing may have operated more tightly than those on physical experience of the city streets. Eliza Haywood's best-known novel (1751, doc. 14) suggests a more permissive situation in the eighteenth century, but less decisively if one takes account of the censure her work received. It is no doubt true that for much of our period only females euphemistically designated as street-walkers would have felt completely free (though that is hardly the right word for the situation of most of them) to do just that—to walk the streets unaccompanied. (Not surprisingly, very few prostitutes wrote about the experience; the letter from 'Another Unfortunate' to *The Times* in 1858 (doc. 53) is a remarkable exception.) Indeed, it is obviously the case that in certain areas of London and at certain times of day no solitary walkers of *either* sex would have felt entirely safe. Nevertheless, the current debate about the 'flaneuse' has shown the

proposition that in the nineteenth century 'women could not stroll alone in the city' (Wolff 1990:41) to be an exaggeration (see, for example, Nord 1995:11–12). Judith Walkowitz's detailed contextual study of 'narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London' concludes that streets of both the East and the West End had by then become areas of 'contested terrain' on the part of respectable women engaged in charitable and shopping expeditions respectively (1992:41–80). And well before the period to which this refers, Charlotte Brontë, through her narrator in *Villette,* described—in authentic-sounding terms—a sense of 'freedom and enjoyment' in walking 'utterly alone' in London (doc. 47). However, a non-fictional work of acknowledged female authorship and largely devoted to such solitary saunterings would certainly have been extraordinary before the twentieth century. Indeed, the new century's first notable presentation of flaneuse experience, in H.G.Wells's *Ann Veronica* (doc. 88), is actually an account—with an eerily late-twentieth-century ring—of its freedoms being violated by a stalker's harassment; but, just as significantly, the author is a man. On the other hand, it might be argued that the importance of the great suffragist processions of the same Edwardian period (see doc. 90) partly lay in the fact that they enabled women in lawful and respectable collectivity to claim possession of the streets still often denied them individually. In any case, singleness is not an essential component of the authentic urban experience; we have seen that a favourite device in narrated tours of London was a pairing of male wanderer-observers, and the value of women's eye-witness accounts of nineteenth-century street-life is not diminished as a result of the observers having usually been accompanied.

However, the point remains that such accounts are very scarce. Here, briefly, are four cases from which we might infer the various reasons why there aren't a lot more.

Celia Fiennes was a remarkably courageous and enterprising explorer at the very beginning of our period: in the 1690s and early 1700s she took several journeys on horseback around Britain in the company only of two or three servants. A substantial portion of her travel journal (Morris 1947) is devoted to London, but in contrast to her often lively personal accounts of small provincial communities this section offers only impersonal description of public ceremonies, institutions and buildings. The streets and their inhabitants are ignored…or avoided.

An upper-class German, Sophie von la Roche, who visited London nearly a century later in 1786 (doc. 22), mildly chafed at the constraints of gender and class which prevented her from getting closer to the people en route from Harwich to the capital: 'I should have loved to travel by cheap stage-coach like a common woman, and with some wise friend by my side, to get to know everybody and gain some knowledge of popular character, habits and speech, and thus I should have returned with a far richer harvest' (Roche 1933:83–4). Arrived in London, Sophie lightheartedly conforms to further constraints imposed upon her as a woman: '[Mr Hurter's] pleasant eldest daughter is getting me a cap and hat, as women here may not go out without a hat. So the land with the greatest freedom of thought, creed and custom is yet in some measure fettered by convention' (p. 88). Needless to say, she requires the hat not to visit the slums but the major sites of tourism and consumerist culture. When, however, she emerges from the theatre on a rainy evening to find there is no cab or chair to be had, 'I decided to hurry along, keeping to the houses, as the streets are so well lit—for it was quite impossible for me to loiter outside the theatre with the crowd of light women' (p. 122). Sophie is much

more at ease strolling with companions in the most fashionable shopping ares, the Strand and Oxford Street, and best of all she seems to like being inside these splendid emporia. She welcomes in principle the fact that they are open to all, but when she benignly looks out of Boydell's printshop window at the crowd looking in the comfortable distance seems symbolic. Nevertheless, her liberal-humanist sensibilities are not deadened by the glamour of the new commodity culture: eulogies to its elegance and luxury are more than once tempered by sympathetic thoughts about the producers, especially 'our black, yellow and brown brothers' (p. 172) exploited in colonial gold- and silver-mines.

In such comments Sophie almost begins to sound like Flora Tristan, whose *London Journal* of 1840 (doc. 36) continuously represents the city as a monstrous embodiment of capitalist greed and exploitation. The reinforcements of this preconceived view come from a tourist agenda totally different from Sophie's, and from that of most other female (and indeed, male) visitors at any time. She goes to see the prostitutes in and off Waterloo Road, 'accompanied by two men armed with canes…. It would be extremely dangerous to walk there alone in the evening'. She also visits the Irish quarter in St Giles, accompanied by a Frenchman after failing to find an Englishman who would even acknowledge its existence: 'The visitor cannot venture into Bainbridge Street, that dark and narrow alley, without a feeling of trepidation…. When I reached the end of the street…I felt my resolve beginning to abandon me…. I was about to give up…when suddenly I remembered that these were human beings, my fellow men, all about me…'.

More than sixty years later Olive Malvery (doc. 83) confronted scenes just as nauseating and heartrending. Motivated for sure by Christian compassion and an indignant sense of injustice, but probably also by adventurist and histrionic impulses, this remarkable young Indian woman pursued the role of social explorer much further, not merely visiting the poorest of the poor but temporarily joining their ranks. A few men (e.g., James Greenwood and Jack London) had already adopted this practice of slumming in disguise in order to write more authoritatively about how the other half lived; in Malvery's case, though, it involved a great deal more than sleeping rough in the Casual Ward for a night (though she did do that). She enlisted for a succession of gruelling, low-paid jobs, such as busking musician, coster girl, street pedlar and fried-fish-shop assistant; as fraternities with distinctive skills and customs, these called forth all her resources of performative dexterity as well as of courage and resilience. And steadily she pushed lower and lower, to the point of trying 'the Simple Life of London'—i.e., living on no more than sixpence a day. Malvery proved highly adept at disguising her real identity, but she could not do it alone: a similar virtuosity was required of her ever-present 'minder', Mr C. (probably Stuart Cunningham, managing editor of *Pearson's Magazine* in which many of her accounts were first published):

> It is in no wise easy to 'slip' into a new life. Among the 'people', as we term the labouring and poor classes, an outsider is very quickly recognised. I found, however, that my foreign appearance really helped me, for as I dealt mostly with women and girls, they made their own stories about me. By maintaining a discreet silence, I managed to get through. Being small and young-looking too helped me. I get tired very quickly and show it, and poor Mr C., who was nearly always with me, got the rough side of several 'gentle' tongues for ill-treating me. It helped me

> wonderfully to have a man so big and burly, and such a splendid Cockney actor, to assume command of me. Together we were able to do what one alone could never have accomplished.
>
> (1906:135)

When Malvery decided to sample life in 'the worst street in London', a different kind of disguise was called for. She went to stay with Captain Molly, a Salvation Army Officer and even more devoted Slum Sister, who actually lived among the criminal fraternity in one of the 'dirty, dark, insanitory hovels'. 'My uniform's a protection,' says Molly, to which Olive replies: 'I shall wear a uniform also, if you will let me' (p. 238). Despite evincing an almost childlike delight in dressing up, Malvery assumed false identities for essentially serious purposes, not least that of realising for herself and her readers the classic maxim, *Nihil humanum a me alienum pute* (I regard nothing human as alien to me). However, she discovered that new waves of literally alien groups were pouring into parts of the East End, so that 'there are some localities in London which are almost entirely foreign' (p. 217; compare Sims in doc. 84). She began to campaign vigorously against permissive immigration policies allowing 'hordes of foreigners of the lowest class…to flood this country, to the unspeakable detriment of our poorer working classes' (1908:90). A familiar argument, but Malvery's later description of herself as 'the worst Little Englander that ever lived' (1912:231) is sadly anomalous given the admission that her own foreign appearance greatly helped her 'gain a practical insight into the lives of the submerged tenth' (1908:4). Thus, even as she strives, through empathetic role-play, to break down long-established class barriers, Malvery heralds the multicultural city of the later twentieth century, in which ethnic divisions will prove an equally difficult nut to crack.

VII

Three of the four women just discussed were foreigners in London; in each of these cases, and in that of most of the multitude of other visitors from overseas who wrote about the experience during our period, the response to Britain's capital is significantly shaped by the writer's alien identity and perspective. This might seem too predictable a fact to remark on, except for two others which often make the distinctiveness of the foreign viewpoint less obvious. First, and just as predictably, this viewpoint, no less than its British counterpart, tends also to be representative of its time and its social class. The preponderance of middle- and upper-class views is naturally greater among foreigners than among natives. And foreign attitudes to London's poor show a similar general shift from early eighteenth-century disdain to nineteenth-century solicitude. Second, there is a real sense in which most native British writers on London, especially from about 1780, likewise view this vast, densely-packed 'city of strangers' as aliens. Even those permanently resident in the capital are likely not to have been born there; this is true of the London population as a whole through most of our period, the primary reason for continuous growth even when death rates were higher than birth rates. For many writers in this category, as for those in more temporary residence (as we saw in the case of Wordsworth) or for those just visiting, their first encounter with the city leaves an