



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Cosmopolitan London, 1880-1945*

Institution: Johns Hopkins University

Project Director: Judith Walkowitz

Grant Program: Fellowships Program

Walkowitz, "Cosmopolitan London"

Virginia Woolf lived in Bloomsbury, she wrote masterfully about London, but few people know that she loved Soho. In the 1920s, her favorite urban itinerary brought her to this tiny, foreign enclave of labyrinthine streets in Central London, bounded by the fashionable West End shopping streets and theatre districts of Regent street, Oxford street, and Charing Cross road. Soho's "outlandish" population, while never exceeding 13,000 in the twentieth century, was remarkably heterogeneous; Eastern European Jews, Italians and French immigrants cohabited with English and Irish cockneys. Woolf liked to walk up Shaftesbury avenue and turn into Gerrard street to visit the 1917 club, a socialist club co-founded by her husband Leonard. Sometimes, she made detours north into Berwick street market, where she took pride in her ability to haggle over the price of slightly defective silk stockings with the aggressive Jewish shop assistants known as schleppers. Some of the less high-minded members of the 1917 club would pop across the road for a final illicit drink at Mrs. Meyrick's notorious 43 club, where Italian gangsters, industrial magnates, dance hostesses and Society couples rubbed shoulders with undercover police. Woolf's participation in Soho's nightlife stopped short of shady nightclubs like the "43," but Virginia and Leonard often met friends at a Franco-Italian "Soho restaurant" in the area of Old Compton street.

This study explores Soho between 1880 and 1945 as a site of colliding cosmopolitanisms of hedonistic pleasures and exploited labor, a place apart but also a key locus of social mingling. Soho's clothing stalls, restaurants, and nightspots attracted urban adventurers eager to "see life," but they also became staging grounds in the 1930s for divisive internationalist and nationalist politics. As a lived urban condition, Soho's cosmopolitanism was double-sided. While promoting freedom, tolerance and innovative cultural exchange, Soho's commercial venues simultaneously fostered exploitation, diasporic tensions, and social segregation.

London's central commercial district was historically associated with two distinct, even antagonistic, meanings of cosmopolitanism. At the turn of the century, urban commentators ascribed a positive version of cosmopolitanism to the department stores, theatres, music halls, and luxury restaurants constructed along Soho's peripheries. This bourgeois version of cosmopolitanism conveyed a sensory indulgence, privileged mobility, and worldly command of goods, ideas and bodies. These same observers viewed Soho, with its foreign refugees and irregular economies of sex and crime, as the epitome of a second cosmopolitanism: a debased condition of deracination, hybridity, sexual transgression, and racial degeneration. In practice, the two meanings of cosmopolitanism tended to blur into each other, just as the boundaries of the two districts with which they were associated proved to be permeable. Cosmopolitanism in its glossy, pleasurable, privileged sense depended on a close proximity to the dangers and enticements of the second set of meanings.

Both of these meanings of cosmopolitanism began to shift into *fin-de-siècle* Soho as it developed its own front stage of pleasure around nightlife, food culture, and the clothing trade. "Cosmopolitan London" tracks important changes in Soho's political and cultural fortunes over fifty years, as it transmuted from a dingy, foreign district into a highly commodified center of culinary and cultural tourism. Thanks to the efforts of bohemian intellectuals and savvy immigrant entrepreneurs, Soho became a familiar attraction, not only for the cognoscenti but also for the respectable Londoner who wanted to swagger down Old Compton street as if he were abroad. Urban travelers of both sexes gravitated to Soho's leisure spaces where the usual codes of sexual behavior seemed to be suspended and disparate social and geographical elements co-mingled.

Walkowitz, "Cosmopolitan London"

Soho became the space of cosmopolitanism in London between the wars, even overshadowing the glittering West End. It presented a striking contrast to a Greater London that had "half-closed" its doors to foreigners through immigration restrictions. While British national identity became more insular and suburban, interwar Soho sustained a reputation as an unassimilated, foreign locale, whose commercial spaces were the site of right-wing and left-wing movements linked to European and West Indian diasporas. Soho's culinary trade was the focal point for London's Italian colony; this made interwar Soho, a longtime refuge for Continental dissidents, an hospitable place for Italian fascists. Despite the fascist presence, Soho's black jazz clubs served as meeting places in the mid-thirties for pan-Africanists, Jewish musicians who had joined the Communist Party, and antifascist English supporters of Popular Front democratic internationalism. Simultaneously, other Soho enterprises such as the Windmill theatre sustained a solid British connection between suburbs and city center.

This book provides the first comprehensive history of Soho in this period. To date, only a handful of highly compartmentalized studies of this colorful "urban village" have materialized. Like the literary histories of Soho bohemia, rediscoveries of Soho's "forgotten" outsider communities are inclined to isolate and detach their historical protagonists from the lives of other Londoners who lived, worked, and took their pleasures in the same streets and alleys. This book pursues a different strategy. It spotlights Soho as a kinetic and contentious space of encounter among divergent social actors whose commercial and political transactions reshaped London and Londoners. It draws on current debates on cosmopolitanism's pleasures and woes, making a historically-grounded contribution as well as a theoretical intervention to the scholarly literature. Whereas scholars continue to debate whether cosmopolitanism is a privileged, ethical practice of thinking beyond the nation or a form of material knowledge gained by transnational migrants through adverse daily routines, I show that, historically, these two versions co-existed side by side.

By continuing the story of London's cosmopolitanism beyond 1918, I offer a new perspective on the interwar period. The persistence of Soho's old, unimproved built environment and residential immigrant community challenges the fractured periodization framing most twentieth-century historiography. Even after the Great War, Soho's reputation persisted as a cosmopolitan space of political exchange, ethnic heterogeneity, cultural innovation, and transgressive appetites. At the same time, Soho was subject to interwar redevelopment. The construction of mass market leisure industries along Soho's borders established a new set of flows between Soho and its commercial peripheries, drawing more working-class patrons into Soho and propelling Sohoites to the peripheries for their night on the town. The evolution of Soho's shady nightclubs as interracial meeting places for internationalist cultural politics represented yet another dramatic change in the Soho scene, anticipating the challenges and transformations of the post-war world of multiracial London.

EXPECTED READERSHIP, STATE OF THE MANUSCRIPT, AND SOURCES:

My hopes for this new book are to reach 1) the many readers on both sides of the Atlantic who are fascinated with the history of London and 2) a readership engaged with questions of globalization and multiculturalism and their intersection with gender and sexuality. London continues to arouse unparalleled interest as an urban test case of the social and governance challenges facing the New Europe. The book draws on a vast array of printed and archival sources that enliven the text. The project's research accomplishments include the unearthing of a rich array of visual materials-- family snapshots, iconic documentary photographs, dance illustrations, and corporate publicity-- that capture the charged bodily performances in this space.

Walkowitz, "Cosmopolitan London"

Research for "Cosmopolitan London" has been completed and all but two of the chapters have been drafted. A twelve-month NEH fellowship will allow me to revise the manuscript and submit it for publication by August 2010. Yale University Press has offered me a book contract.

CHAPTER PLAN FOR THE BOOK: PART ONE contains two introductory chapters laying out the historical transformation of Soho and the commercial West End in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. **Chapter 1, "The Mapping of Cosmopolitan Soho,"** introduces the key protagonists of Cosmopolitan Soho. It details Soho's transformation from an early modern space of fashionable commerce and residence, marked by a French émigré presence, to an increasingly proletarian and "cosmopolitan" district, notorious for its age, its foreignness, its doubtful trades, and its political dissidents. A final section sketches Soho's turn-of-the-century promotion as a bohemian center of restaurant culture. **Chapter 2, "The Peripheries,"** introduces the reader to the West End architectural stage. It examines how the West End thoroughfares fixed Soho's identity, marking it off from the national procession routes that ringed it. Yet, they also opened Soho up to commercial development, as the leisure industries along Soho's boundaries eventually penetrated inward rather than walling off Soho.

PART TWO presents two case studies of politics and performance in the West End spaces of consumption that had far-reaching consequences for the gendering of cosmopolitanism and the evolution of Soho's own cosmopolitan attractions. **Chapter 3, "Feminism and the Moving Body,"** investigates the 1894 conflict between imperial men and purity feminists over commercialized sex at the Empire Theatre of Varieties, billed as the "greatest cosmopolitan club in the world." **Chapter 4, "The Vision of Salome,"** highlights the cosmopolitan dance performances of the North American Maud Allan at the Palace Theatre of Varieties on Charing Cross road in 1908, which facilitated the entry of respectable women into the nocturnal spaces of the cosmopolitan center.

PART THREE extends the story of cosmopolitanism into the interwar years and the Second World War. **Chapter 5, "The Italian Restaurant,"** traces Soho's emergence as a commodified center of cosmopolitan food culture from 1890 through 1940. It assesses the hybrid cuisine purveyed by Italian immigrants to British consumers in Soho's foreign restaurants and the gastropolitics of London's Italian culinary trade as it increasingly came under the sway of Italian fascism. **Chapter 6, "Schleppers and Shoppers,"** takes up the cosmopolitan story of fashion in Soho. In Berwick street market, Jewish petty entrepreneurs pioneered the selling of modern, ready-to-wear clothes, purportedly derived or imported from "America and Paris," to working women. While laying bare the cutthroat nature of Soho's cosmopolitan commerce, Berwick market proved an attractive tourist destination for intrepid working-class and middle-class women who visited its stalls as part of a cosmopolitan urban adventure. **Chapter 7, "The Shady Nightclub,"** looks at the after-hours nightclub as the centerpiece of London's cosmopolitan nightlife in the 1920s, and it traces the career of one of its later variants, the "coloured" jazz club of the 1930s. **Chapter 8, "The Windmill Theatre and the Spirit of the Blitz,"** features Soho as a center for a democratic urban ideal of Englishness. The Windmill theatre, opened in 1932 as a tiny variety theatre that specialized in comic routines, dancing acts, and female nude tableaux, energetically pitched its entertainments to middlebrow commuters. By purveying Soho's raffish attractions as ordinary, unpretentious, and wholesomely British, the Windmill became an icon of democratic urban resistance when it "never closed" during the Blitz. An **Epilogue, "Soho Stories,"** assesses Soho's postwar reputation as a dark "vicious circle" or creative center of London's renewal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bailey, Peter. Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City. 1998.
- Black, Gerry. Living Up West: Jewish Life in London's West End, 1994.
- Booth, Charles. Ed. Life and Labour of the People in London. Third Series: Religious Influences. 2: London North of the Thames: The Inner Ring London: Macmillan and Co., 1902.
- Booth, Michael and Joel H. Kaplan, eds. The Edwardian Theatre: essays on performance and the Stage., 1996.
- The Caterer and Hotel-keeper's Gazette. 1890-1925.
- Davis, Tracy C. Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture. 1991.
- de Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life, 1984.
- Empire Theatre Clipping File. Theatre Museum, London.
- Goffman, Erving. Interaction Rituals (2005).
- Hoare, Philip. Oscar Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy, and the Most Outrageous Trial of the Century, 1997.
- Leicester Square Scrapbook, Westminster Archive Centre, London.
- Light, Alison. Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars (1991)
- Mass Observation Archives. Adam Matthews Microfilms.
- Music Hall Licensing Committee Files, LCC Archive, Metropolitan Archives, London.
- Mort, Frank. "Cityscapes: Consumption, Masculinities and the Mapping of London since 1950." Urban Studies 35.no.5-6 (1998): 889-907.
- McKibbin, Ross. Classes and Cultures in England 1918-1951. 1998.
- Oral History of Jazz. National Sound Archive. British Library, London.
- Palace Theatre File. Theatre Museum, London.
- Pick Papers, London Transport Library, Transport Museum, London.
- Public Record Office, London. Home Office, H.O.45; Metropolitan Police, Mepo 2, Mepo. 3.
- Porter, Bernard. The Origins of the Vigilant State: The London Metropolitan Police Special Branch Before the First World War. 1987.
- Rappaport, Erika. Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End 1999.
- Robins Papers, Fales Library, New York University, N.Y.
- Selfridges Archive. History of Advertising Trust, Norwich, England.
- Sheppard, F.H.W. Survey of London: The Parish of St. Anne Soho vol.33 and 34. London, 1966.
- Tickner, Lisa. "The Popular Culture of *Kermesse*: Lewis, Painting and Performance, 1912-3." Modernism/Modernity 4.2 (1997): 67-120.
- Walkowitz, Judith R. City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London. 1992.
- White, Jerry. London in the Twentieth Century. 2002.
- West End Jews Oral History Project. Museum of Jewish Life, London.
- Windmill Theatre Archives, Blythe House, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.