NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Constructing Celebrity: Strategies of Nineteenth Century British Actresses to Enhance Their Image and Social Status

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

For the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Field of Theatre and Drama

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EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

September 2019

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ABSTRACT

Constructing Celebrity: Strategies of Nineteenth Century British Actresses to Enhance Their Image and Social Status

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Celebrity, reputation, and identity were complex issues for nineteenth-century British actresses. This dissertation examines how actresses responded to, integrated, and defied gender norms and social structures as they performed "authentic" identities for consuming publics. I investigate how actresses participated in charity events and bazaars, autobiographical writing, and advertising campaigns in order to rehabilitate and normalize their reputations and to achieve social mobility and acceptance.

I document examples, patterns, and trends of actresses participating in charity events to raise money for social causes over the course of the nineteenth century to show how liveness and proximity to fame drew middle- and upper-class consumers and event organizers to interact with actresses outside of the theatre and created opportunities for actresses to enhance their reputations and use their celebrity to increase the value of goods being sold or personal moments of interaction at events. I examine how actresses controlled the narratives of their lives through their autobiographical writing; responding to their public reputations and creating public identities in which they could situate themselves as representatives of model femininity. I also close read examples of advertisements featuring actresses that appeared in nineteenth-century popular periodicals geared towards women to demonstrate how the images and testimonials of actresses could increase demand for consumer products. The way actresses participated in each

of these identity-forming domains also impacted their ability to navigate the other domains more successfully.

In this dissertation I show how actresses reconfigured and capitalized on the concepts of private and public life. I parse how the ideas of reputation and celebrity are used intentionally by actresses to create acceptable public identities and by event organizers and advertisers to increase the value of interactions with actresses and the consumer products they endorse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my generous and patient advisor, Tracy C. Davis for her insightful feedback and help as I worked through ideas for many years. I also would like to thank my committee, Deborah Cohen and Gary Fine for their enlightening courses that introduced me to history and sociology methods and theories and their help in pointing me towards a conclusion and larger claims.

For the research process I am indebted to Charlotte Cubbage and the Northwestern University research librarian staff. The Digital Humanities studio also helped me find ways to digitally scan and analyze primary source material. I also thank the library staff at the British Library for helping me find archival material and providing a lovely and comfortable reading room.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the Performance Studies Working Group at the University of Iowa for their feedback on early drafts of two of my chapters and my colleagues at the Center for Teaching, Academic Support and Retention, and the Graduate College for encouragement and writing time. I also thank Victoria Burns and Brady Krien for their copyediting and document formatting help. My writing is better because of you.

On a personal note I want to thank the volunteers and staff at Theatre Cedar Rapids for letting me join your theatre family and reinvigorating my love of theatre. I also thank the staff at Early Bird Café for the great food, coffee, and space to write. Finally, thanks to my family, especially my mother, for their support and encouragement.

DEDICATION

For my parents for always encouraging me and making higher education a priority.
Dad, you are always in my heart.

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INTRODUCTION

Actresses and Their Participation in Shaping the Commodity Culture of Celebrity

Celebrity was a complicated phenomenon for nineteenth-century British female performers. This study examines how issues of reputation and legitimacy coalesced around the figure of the actress and how actresses mobilized to enhance their personal and professional reputations. I investigate how actresses responded to changing social conditions in the nineteenth century, especially those involving social mobility and the acceptable public role of women. Their responses allowed them to legitimize both the status of their profession and their own participation in endorsement activities in the public realm. I examine the processes by which professional actresses used participation in charity and philanthropy events, autobiographical writing, and the linking of their images with advertising campaigns for products in order to garner social and cultural capital. This kind of public cultural participation, in addition to their fame from their professional work, allowed them to both raise awareness and funds for social causes and to align themselves with qualities of respectability normally reserved for non-working middle-class women.

My first chapter discusses how actresses aligned themselves with charity organizations and began to serve as stallholders and guests of honor (as a publicity draw) for charity events and fundraisers, especially charity bazaars. This kind of participation by actresses can be documented as early as 1820, became a consistent phenomenon in the 1860s, and was happening abundantly by the 1890s.[1] I describe examples of actresses doing this kind of work and how this

[1] F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

work changed throughout the century. Over the course of the century actresses joined, and at some points even supplanted, wives of members of parliament, aristocrats, and royalty as charity figureheads and sponsors.[2] I trace a genealogy of when actresses began participating in this kind of work and how their participation grew and changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Through participation in charity events, actresses began to be associated with middle and upper-class society as acceptable representatives at public events. According to Catherine Hindson, "this prominent, public offstage position was significant to actresses' individual and collective identities and to the profession."[3] This work would not have been possible without a status change in both the profession of acting as an appropriate venue for women and for the specific actresses who were tapped as celebrity endorsers of charities. The way these actresses who were often among the most well-known in London remolded participation in charity is still a model for celebrity participation in charity events in both England and the United States.

It was only in the late-eighteenth century that modern, private, organization-based charity and philanthropy work came into being.[4] The leaders of these organizations believed that charity was a tool of social philosophy, and attempted to inculcate approved social attitudes about helping the "deserving poor" to be able to help themselves.[5] During the early-nineteenth century, the Evangelical religious revival movement, civic pride, a desire for fame and prestige,

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[2] Catherine Hindson, "'Gratuitous Assistance'? The West End Theatre Industry Late Victorian Charity, and Patterns of Theatrical Fundraising," *New Theatre Quarterly* 30:1 (February 2014).
[3] Catherine Hindson, *London's West End Actresses: The Origins of Celebrity Charity, 1880-1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), 9.
[4] James J. Fishman, "Charity Accountability and Reform in Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of the Charity Commission." *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 723 (2005): 723-778.
[5] David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

and an interest in maintaining social morality and the class system combined to create the prototypical middle-class philanthropist.[6] Over the course of the nineteenth century, middle-class women came to outnumber men in their involvement in charitable work, fulfilling special social roles of sympathy, domesticity and nurturing.[7] Middle-class women also increasingly had more time available for this type of work as the requirements on their time changed from participation in the family livelihood to a more domestic existence.[8]

In documenting the patterns and trends of actresses' participation in charity and philanthropy over the course of the nineteenth century, I investigate the differences between how male and female performers participated in charity events and what motivated their interest in this kind of work. I also examine how the phenomenon of "liveness" and proximity to fame drew middle and upper-class women to want to interact with actresses in charity domains.[9] Then I situate charity events as opportunities for actresses to situate themselves as upwardly mobile and simultaneously as models of femininity and domesticity to which other women could positively compare themselves.

Chapter one also traces the development of actresses' participation in philanthropy and charity work and benefit performances for theatrical and non-theatrical organizations in Great Britain in order to demonstrate earlier and more incremental response by actresses to changing

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[6] Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[7] Dorice Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002).
[8] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1700-1850,* 2nd ed (London: Routledge, 2003).
[9] Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

social and economic roles for women than has been hitherto discussed. I ascertain patterns that can identify various ways that actresses aligned themselves with organizations and events throughout the nineteenth century, thereby expanding the role of the actress as onstage celebrity into one in which the actress marshalled her celebrity status into both direct and indirect participation in charity events. In doing this work, I also investigate how actresses presented a special case to charity organizations, and that actresses endeavored on behalf of these organizations in ways that other women, and wealth alone, could not. I explore the possibility that associating celebrity with social causes allowed actresses a means to promote the association between themselves and respectable middle-class philanthropists at a time when a celebrity culture was on the rise. This would also allow charity organizations themselves to gain acceptance and awareness from the middle-class public and actresses to enhance their respectability.

Chapter Two investigates specific examples of actresses using the same or similar tropes, themes, and even phrases to describe their life stories and their career trials and successes in autobiographies and memoirs. I argue that such choices in their writing to make their life stories sound representative of middle-class feminine values and status enacted positive change in both the status of their profession and themselves as working women in the public gaze. The similarities among the writings of actresses are striking and purposeful alignments with the literature genre of autobiography to create an image.[10] I trace the rhetoric of motherhood,

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[10] See Thomas Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance,* ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989) and also Valerie Sanders, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).

domesticity and conformity to middle-class feminine values across a number of autobiographical works written from the 1840s through the early-twentieth century to show how actresses molded their self-images into representations of normative middle-class womanhood.

I demonstrate that actresses were not merely attempting to appear to fit into middle-class society through their writing, but instead were actively seeking social acceptance and upward mobility for both themselves and their profession by documenting how they embodied femininity and domesticity in spite of, and actually because of, their roles as public women. Through their writing, actresses demonstrate how their public position as celebrities allowed them access to middle- and upper-class audiences and society events (such as charity balls and bazaars) in which they could learn to emulate social traits of the upper classes. Successful actresses could also earn enough money to support themselves and their families in a middle or even upper-class lifestyle.

The writing of actresses describes conscientious efforts of female performers to de-stigmatize their profession, and to make working appear to be a positive social situation for women. For instance, actresses demonstrated their virtuousness in their memoirs by eschewing inappropriate relationships with men amid constant travel, rehearsal, and performance. This demonstration of virtuousness can be found in autobiographical writing of actresses who worked in a variety of types of theatres, including music halls. For example, music hall performer Vesta Tilley writes that actresses who engage in the hard work of the profession have no time for romantic dalliances.[11] Working also enabled actresses to save their money to give back to their

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[11]Lady DeFrece, *Recollections of Vesta Tilley* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1934), 171-2.

relatives or to support their own families, and participate in events to help the less fortunate both within and outside their profession.[12]

In addition to charity work and autobiographies, in the nineteenth century actresses also increasingly began to see their images linked with advertising campaigns for a variety of products and services. This is the topic of Chapter Three. Participation in advertising allowed actresses to increasingly direct public attention to themselves and establish themselves as a "brand."[13] These "brands" were inspiring to middle-class consumers and theatre patrons who sought to own for themselves the images of celebrities. Early in the century trading cards with performers' likenesses were first traded and collected. Later photographs and prints of paintings of actresses began to circulate.[14] In the latter third of the century, when these celebrity images began to be associated with consumer products, consumers and fans also coveted the products endorsed by their favorite performers. This phenomenon was made possible by a burgeoning consumer culture and the advent of mass production, advances in photographic and reproductive technology, and the development of the print advertising industry in the nineteenth century.[15] Like participation in charity events and charity endorsement, this kind of image association would not have been possible without a change in social status of actresses.

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[12] See Lena Ashwell, *Myself a Player* (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1936) and Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life: Recollections and Reflections* (New York: The McClure Company, 1908).
[13] For more information about how celebrities create a brand and the rise of celebrity culture see Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and also Roach, *It*.
[14] Elizabeth M. Bonapfel, "Reading Publicity Photographs Through the Elizabeth Robins Archive: How Images of the Actress and the Queen Constructed a New Sexual Ideal," *Theatre Survey* 57:1 (January 2016), 109-131.
[15] See T.R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982).

In this chapter I sample advertisements featuring actresses in order to demonstrate how the image of the actress became an attractive reason for middle-class women (and men) to buy a particular product or service. By the late-nineteenth century, actresses became valid endorsers of commercial products and services that were being marketed to middle-class consumers. Actresses cashed in on their fame and celebrity for commercial gain with these endorsement campaigns, but also established a claim to social respectability for themselves and their profession in order to be appropriate endorsers for these products.[16] In order for actresses' images to speak to middle-class women to convince them to consume a product they had to connote respectability, not simply sexuality and physical beauty as could be the case if the images were being used for simple provocation or to sell something to a male audience only. Female images being used to sell a product to other women present a special case in advertising as there is an implied level of trust and authenticity required. Whereas actresses' images could speak to men on a purely aesthetic level, there was an implied level of trust between a female audience and a female product endorser. Actresses could only participate in endorsement of this kind when they had established a reputation of virtuousness and femininity alongside an allure of fame and celebrity.

This project exists at the crossroads of social history, women's studies, and theatre studies. My study provides interesting data for those studying the history of charity and philanthropy by specifically addressing the role of women and of celebrity endorsement in this chronology. It also impacts theatre historiography as this data can be used to inform our

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[16] Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

understanding of the rise of female celebrity culture, the relations between performers' public and private lives and their off-stage participation in non-theatrical events, and shed light on the potential for celebrity social and political activism.

This study explains how actresses have both intentionally and circumstantially participated in the shaping of the commodity culture of celebrity as well as in the shaping of the status and reputation of their profession and their personal identities. I draw connections between and among actresses participating in all three of these activities (philanthropy, autobiographical writing, and advertising) at different points in the century and in different locations across England. I demonstrate how these activities likely led to increased social and, eventually, political activism of actresses in the early twentieth century (such as participation in the women's suffrage movement). Celebrity itself in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has become a marker for trust, leadership, and believability.[17] This stems from the early associations of actresses and actors with social issues, public writing, and advertising. This study presents possibilities for why our modern society endows entertainers, and celebrities in general, with attributes of trust and authenticity simply because of their fame. It also addresses how female celebrities are a special case in that historically issues of respectability and reputation in both the public and private persona are marked differently for women than for men. Women participating in public discourse have had to overcome and recreate expectations of appropriate femininity in a way that male figures, always already accepted as public figures, never had to experience.

[17] Tyler Cowen, *What Price Fame?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

CHAPTER 1

Actresses' Philanthropic Work as a Means of Reputation Management

> And if occasionally the visitor finds himself the victim of what is loosely termed a 'sell,' or if he 'buys' a trifle at a price which takes it out of the category of 'bargains,' he must be a strangely constituted being who would murmur at the hoax, or quarrel with the witching smile, or the gentle speech with which the fascinating actress has sustained the part of saleswoman.[1]

This epigraph is from a lengthy article describing a charity fête or bazaar in London in 1866. By the mid-1860s, organizers of British charity events for a variety of causes understood the potential benefits of utilizing actresses as saleswomen in the charity stalls. The public enjoyed engaging with actresses in this live, face-to-face, personal type of interaction. Men could be "bewitched" into making purchases, as *The Observer* describes. Middle-class women wanted to own products associated with their favorite actresses, while upper-class women enjoyed the opportunity to work alongside actresses in the stalls, both reflecting a bit of the performers' fame and providing some high-level social capital to the actresses by welcoming their participation in the event.

I became interested in how actresses participated in philanthropy during the nineteenth century after discovering a brief mention of famous actresses in F.K. Prochaska's *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (1980). While discussing charity bazaars and the women who often served as stallholders selling items to attendees, Prochaska writes, "If a duchess could not be enticed, a famous actress would do very nicely. Sarah Bernhardt and Ellen

[1] *The Observer*, July 8, 1866.

Terry spent their share of time behind a stall mobbed by autograph seekers."[2] This rather offhand remark about how two of the most famous actresses in nineteenth-century England and France participated in charity bazaars prompted me to investigate this phenomenon further, to see how and when actresses began to be involved in these kinds of events; how widely this was happening; and what, if anything, this kind of off-stage engagement did to shape, benefit, resuscitate, or solidify the reputation of actresses.

The literature on the history of charity mentions participation of actresses in charity events such as balls, bazaars, and performances as matter-of-fact. In descriptions of charity events throughout the nineteenth century, the inclusion of actors and actresses is not particularly distinguished from the participation of aristocrats or minor royalty.[3] This chapter primarily emphasizes three aspects of actresses' participation in charity events, in order to explain how this kind of participation was an important part of how actresses transformed their individual and collective reputations over the course of the nineteenth century. This study adds to the work of Catherine Hindson and others by explaining how performers participated in charity events as one of the ways they ascribed normative gender roles upon their figures. It deepens our understanding of the nuances of what it meant for performers, particularly actresses, to improve their social status.[4]

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[2] F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 65.

[3] For examples of charity event descriptions featuring performers see for example ibid; David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Robert Humphries, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Beverly Gordon, *Bazaars and Fair Ladies: The History of the American Fundraising Fair* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998).

[4] For theatre historiography and links to performers and charity see for example Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage: Marriage, Management and the Mapping of Gender in*

I investigate the differences between the ways that male and female performers and theatre professionals interacted with charity events and organizations. This demonstrates that while both genders reaped professional and social rewards from this type of participation, female performers had both more to lose and more to gain by the ways they interacted with socially elite individuals and other women and men in the public sphere. Because of this, they had very different motivations for how and why they participated in charity endeavors. I also examine how "liveness" and proximity to celebrity and fame drew middle- and upper-class women and men to interact with actresses outside of the theatre. Finally, I demonstrate that for nineteenth-century actresses, reputation was an aspirational thing. Participating in charity events was one way for actresses to situate themselves as upwardly mobile and as models of femininity and domesticity, in addition to their identities as public women.

Before launching into these discussions, however, I must first describe some of the history of nineteenth-century charity and philanthropic work by the middle and upper classes in England and also indicate how the roles of men and women in these organizations and at their events differed.

In the nineteenth century, the urban British population rapidly increased.[5] Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century village-based ideas of almsgiving and taking care of locals in need

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London 1830-1870 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Catherine Hindson, *London's West End Actresses and the Origins of Celebrity Charity, 1880-1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016).

[5] For a detailed account of how urban life expectancy rates and population rates changed throughout the nineteenth century see, for example Simon Szreter and Graham Mooney, "Urbanization, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate: New Estimates of the Expectation of Life at Birth in Nineteenth-Century British Cities," *The Economic History Review* 51:1 (February 1998), 84-112.

became increasingly inadequate and—in urban areas—impossible. Charitable societies emerged as intermediaries between would-be philanthropists and their beneficiaries, and they began to work to mitigate urban concerns such as orphaned children, sanitation, housing, and unemployment.[6] At the same time, reformers focused on providing education for the poor and creating an educated populace, in order to curb some of the problems of urban poverty. The Evangelical movement also became somewhat synonymous with nineteenth-century charity efforts as the ideas of social conscience, missionary zeal, reform, and increased focus on a strand of middle-class morality and manners permeated urban British society.[7] Both religious and secular philanthropy were shaped by the acceptance of a stratified society based on Protestant values. Historian David Owen describes the ideology of this society as "rich were rich and poor were poor. God had called them to their particular stations and both were to show gratitude."[8] The rich should show gratitude to God, and the deserving poor to their human benefactors. He explains the belief that prevailing Protestant understandings of Biblical scripture sanctioned distinctions between social classes. He also argues that the wealthy could feel their economic success was justified by tenets of individualism and self-growth. Owen writes, "Philanthropy, in a word, was scriptural, socially admirable, and self-protective for the upper classes."[9] According to Derek Fraser, "Charitable activity was imbued with social snobbery." He continues, "The

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[6] For a full account of the history of British charity from 1660-1960 see Owen, *English Philanthropy* and Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy* for the case of female involvement in charity during the nineteenth century.
[7] See Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), for more information about the rise of the evangelical movement in the nineteenth century and its involvement in charity and philanthropy.
[8] Owen, *English Philanthropy*, 95.
[9] Ibid, 103.

published subscription list was a very fruitful stimulus to increase contributions, as people could reflect smugly on their own offerings and scorn the parsimony of their neighbours."[10]

It was not enough, however, for the wealthy to give money to charity to absolve themselves of their moral duty. Personally engaging in work to help the poor was considered evidence of Christian virtue and made one worthy of emulation. It was also a way for the dominant classes to reinforce social control upon the working classes. Fraser calls this kind of work "an avenue for the inculcation of sound middle-class values" and the practice of home or institution visiting "a cultural assault upon the working-class way of life." Fraser writes, "Few saw poverty and its consequences as a function of the economic and social system. The majority assumed, as in the spirit of 1834, that poverty stemmed from some personal failing. Hence charity was a way of initiating a moral reformation, of breeding in the individual the self-help mentality that would free him from the thraldom of poverty."[11] Government help for the poor was sparse. The Poor Law of 1834 did not adequately address the problem of urban poverty by outlawing public begging and requiring those needing assistance to go to a workhouse.[12] These measures were grossly out of step with contemporary urban society and left the problem of mitigating the effects of urban poverty largely to private organizations that took up the mantle.[13] During the 1830s, Visiting Societies became popular. Wealthy and middle-class people visited

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[10]Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 118.
[11] Ibid, 119.
[12] See David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914: From Chadwick to Booth* (London: Routledge, 2013), for a discussion of the effects of the 1834 Poor Law on British society.
[13]For information about the Poor Law see UK Parliament site "Poor Law Reform" http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/poorlaw/.

the poor in their homes to take stock of their situation and provide some ad-hoc personal relief. The Metropolitan Visiting and Relief Association (MVRA) formed in 1843 to oversee the many parish-based visiting societies throughout the country.[14] By the 1840s and 1850s, around 70 to 80 societies, with over 1000 visitors, were affiliated with the MVRA.[15] According to Fraser, by 1861, London charities alone took in £2.5 million from donors.[16] By contrast, Robert Humphries gives the amount spent in London by Poor Law authorities in 1860 as about £1.2 million.[17]

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the government attempted to regulate charitable organizations in several meaningful ways. One of the earliest forms of regulation was the Charitable Donations Registration Act of 1812, which required a central listing of endowments. The Brougham Commission was formed in 1819 to investigate the legitimacy of charitable organizations. This commission published multiple installments of the Charity Commission Parliamentary papers through the 1830s, providing financial information about charity organizations.[18] The Charitable Trusts Act of 1853 attempted to regulate the custody of charity funds and reduce administrative malpractice by the overseers of charity organizations. In 1860, a revised Act established a Charity Board to oversee organizations. Additionally, in 1869, the Charity Organisation Society (COS) was formed to systematize charity work, alleviate malpractice and misspending, and differentiate between charity and "poor relief." The COS believed that voluntary charity should be bestowed upon deserving applicants and that, according

[14] Fraser, *British Welfare State*, 116.
[15] Owen, *English Philanthropy*, 142.
[16] Fraser, *British Welfare State*, 116.
[17] Humphries, *Organized Charity*, 20.
[18] James J. Fishman, "Charity Accountability and Reform in Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of the Charity Commission," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 723 (2005): 723-778.

to Humphries, "organized charity would provide opportunity for controlled disbursement of funds" to uplift individuals.[19] The COS deemed "poor relief" as mandatory state support of the truly destitute.[20] The COS created lists of legitimate charity organizations and, perhaps more importantly, a Cautionary List of those organizations that did not adhere to certain standards of disclosure and financial ethics. Owen describes the COS as follows, "Most generally recognized and probably of greatest benefit was its pioneering in social casework. But also through its special investigating committees the Society did an important service in educating Londoners and others in the problems of the community, in drawing issues, and in proposing solutions that at least could be usefully discussed."[21] The COS was helpful in identifying legitimate and illegitimate charity organizations and ensuring that donations actually made it to those in need. It also provided an umbrella under which the vast number of charity organizations could be categorized, organized, and at least somewhat regulated to enforce ethical practices.

Both religious and secular charity organizations took in philanthropic donations from wealthy Britons, and members interacted with and tried to alleviate the situations of their target group with home visits and the creation of refuges for the needy (including charity schools, hospitals, dispensaries, asylums, orphanages, and penitential homes for prostitutes).[22] Organizations also worked on public health issues and tried to make urban housing more sanitary.

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[19] Humphries, *Organized Charity*, 55.
[20] Ibid, 52.
[21] Owen, *English Philanthropy*, 235.
[22] Fraser, *British Welfare State*, 116.

Founders and leaders of charity organizations were almost all male, though women organized auxiliary organizations where they could host events and raise funds for the main chapter, as well as create opportunities for female leadership and participation.[23] Women were an integral part of the army of volunteers who did the actual work of the charities. Middle- and upper-class women were uniquely positioned to have leisure time for charity work; were innately possessed of the "expertise" of domesticity and unquestioned femininity; and modeled the demeanors to be able to help raise up the "deserving poor."[24] The term "work" was a complex and gendered term in the nineteenth century. Based primarily on the Protestant work ethic and increasing emphasis on the division of labor between the domestic and the public, 'work' as a term became increasingly designated as the prerogative of men between 1840 and 1880. In addition, manual labor was idealized over intellectual pursuits. According to Martin Danahay, "The conventional view of the 'Gospel of Work' defines it as part of a rejection of the cultural and social authority of the ruling aristocratic classes in favor of an emergent middle class agenda."[25] To be industrious was to be manly. Working women were a direct threat to masculine identity founded on a gender ideology that mandated, according to Sonya Rose, that "men were to be breadwinners; women were to take care of day-to-day affairs of their

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[23] See Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, chapter 1.

[24] For information regarding specific charity organizations and tasks associated with charity organizations see for example Owen, *English Philanthropy*; Angelina Coutts-Burdett, *The Woman's Mission: A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women* (London: S. Low, Marston & Co., 1893); Dorice Williams Elliot, *Angels Outside the House Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002); and Keir Waddington, *Charities and the London Hospitals 1850-1898* (London: The Royal Historical Society Boydell Press, 2000).

[25] Martin Danahay, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 23.

households and remain economically dependent on men."[26] According to Judy Lown, "Domestic ideology, rooted in anxieties about a perceived threat to family life and to the whole social order, influenced the definition of 'women's work' so that it became associated with low paid, low status activities in certain restricted categories of labour acceptable only as long as it was secondary to domestic duties."[27] To call what middle and upper-class women and even actresses did for charities in the nineteenth century 'work' invokes a more contemporary definition of the word connoting time and labor more generally. In the nineteenth century, this kind of domestic unpaid labor undertaken by high-status women would not have been seen as work in the contemporary sense.

Female Involvement in Charity Work

The first record of a British female-led auxiliary organization (outside of religious orders) providing money to a cause was the Female Missionary Society in Northampton in 1805. This organization donated 10s 6d to the Baptist Missionary Society that year. The Female Servants' Society also assisted the Edinburgh Bible Society as early as 1809.[28] By the 1840s, religious-sponsored charitable organizations were growing in number, and many had female auxiliary societies attached to them. Initially, there was discomfort with the idea of women taking part in public organizations and with public work, but this was mitigated by the ideological imperative

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[26] Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 120.
[27] Judy Lown, *Women and Industrialization: Gender at Work in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 175. For more information on nineteenth-century class and gender-based definitions of work see Carolyn Steedman, *An Everyday Life of the English Working Class: Work, Self, and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Joshua Gooch, *The Victorian Novel, Service Work, and the Nineteenth-Century Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[28] Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 24.

of women as morally superior beings. According to Simon Morgan, in his article about female charity work and middle-class experience, there were:

> [o]bvious contradictions of domestic ideology that laid claim to a higher position for middle-class women based on their separation from the public and economic spheres, but which was also informed variously by ideals of public, social, or religious service or utility that encouraged women to think of ways in which they could project their superior virtues beyond the domestic sphere.[29]

Good middle- and upper-class women were supposed to be above the public fray, raising their sons to be educated moral citizens. These women were also regularly called upon to use their moral sway over their husbands. They indirectly influenced the men in their lives to create or support ethical social and political policy and convinced men to act in ways that benefitted society.[30] According to P. Gaskell, writing in 1833 about the effects of the industrial revolution on society:

> The moral influence of woman upon man's character and domestic happiness is mainly attributable to her natural and instinctive habits. Her love, her tenderness, her affectionate solicitude for his comfort and enjoyment, her devotedness, her unwearying care, her maternal fondness, her conjugal attractions, exercise a most ennobling impression upon his nature, and do more towards making him a good husband, a good father, and a useful citizen, than all the dogmas of political economy.[31]

Women did a lot more than simply advocate moral decision-making to the men in their lives. Women were able to use prevalent feminine domestic ideology to justify their work with the poor and their participation in charity work. Dorice Williams Elliott describes in *The Angel Out*

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[29] Simon Morgan, "A Sort of Land Debatable: Female Influence, Civic Virtue, and Middle Class Identity, c 1830-1860," *Women's History Review* 13 no 2 (2004), 188.
[30] Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 8.
[31] P. Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England, Its Moral, Social, and Physical Conditions, and the Changes Which Have Arisen From the Use of Steam Machinery; With an Examination of Infant Labor* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833), 165.

of the House (2002) how, by the mid-nineteenth century, philanthropic work was accepted as a "natural extension" of the domestic sphere, and thousands of women participated in home, hospital, workhouse, and even prison visits.[32]

The "naturalness" of women's philanthropy work was complicated, however, by men's increased professionalization of charity work and the nascent social work profession. According to Elliott, "Although philanthropic work…was perceived to be a natural and necessary part of women's role, its very naturalness served as a target for male professionals who needed to define women's work in the public sphere as amateurish rather than professional in order to consolidate their own economic and social positions."[33] Men were uncomfortable with middle-class women encroaching too much on the professional side of charity work, though they were happy for women's "help" in doing the actual work of interacting with the poor and sick. Men utilized separate spheres ideology and rhetoric as a reason to keep women in their proper place as experts of the domestic who could assist the deserving poor. Women, however, utilized this same ideology in order to claim a place for themselves in professional, public life.[34]

In addition to their on-the-ground work with the poor, many middle- and upper-class women found other ways to support charities that, though quite time-consuming, were less physically and emotionally demanding and not as directly interactive as visiting the poor. These activities included hosting charity balls, dinners, matinee performances, and, especially, charity

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[32] Elliott. *The Angel Out of the House*, 112.
[33] Ibid, 118.
[34] See Coutts-Burdett, *Woman's Mission* for how women claimed both roles as expert volunteers and also professionalized their work in public spaces.

bazaars to raise funds.[35] While all of these events were excellent ways to publicly support a charitable cause and to see and be seen in social settings, bazaars offered a different kind of experience for women in particular. Bazaars were a kind of feminized space that brought particular female skills and talents into focus, an ideal way for women to network and collaborate with other women as event leaders, organizers, and participants. According to Beverly Gordon:

> As a woman's institution, the fundraising fair had a unique function: it provided a place where, working from their assigned cultural role and using their acknowledged skills, women could effect what they wanted, demonstrate their competence, and operate relatively independently of men. It was a place, in other words, where, within limits, women could achieve their desired ends on their own terms and under their own control.[36]

Women participated in a number of different kinds of charity fundraising events, but in the charity bazaar it was acceptable and expected for women to be in leadership and organizational positions.

In order to understand how bazaars were particularly feminized spaces in which female organization and leadership was normalized and celebrated, I offer the following descriptions of bazaars drawn from illustrations of bazaar events at different times and locations during the nineteenth century. First, an illustration and article in the *Yorkshire Herald* about the Yorkshire Bazaar raising funds for the County Hospital in December 1829 (figure 1) depicts how stalls are

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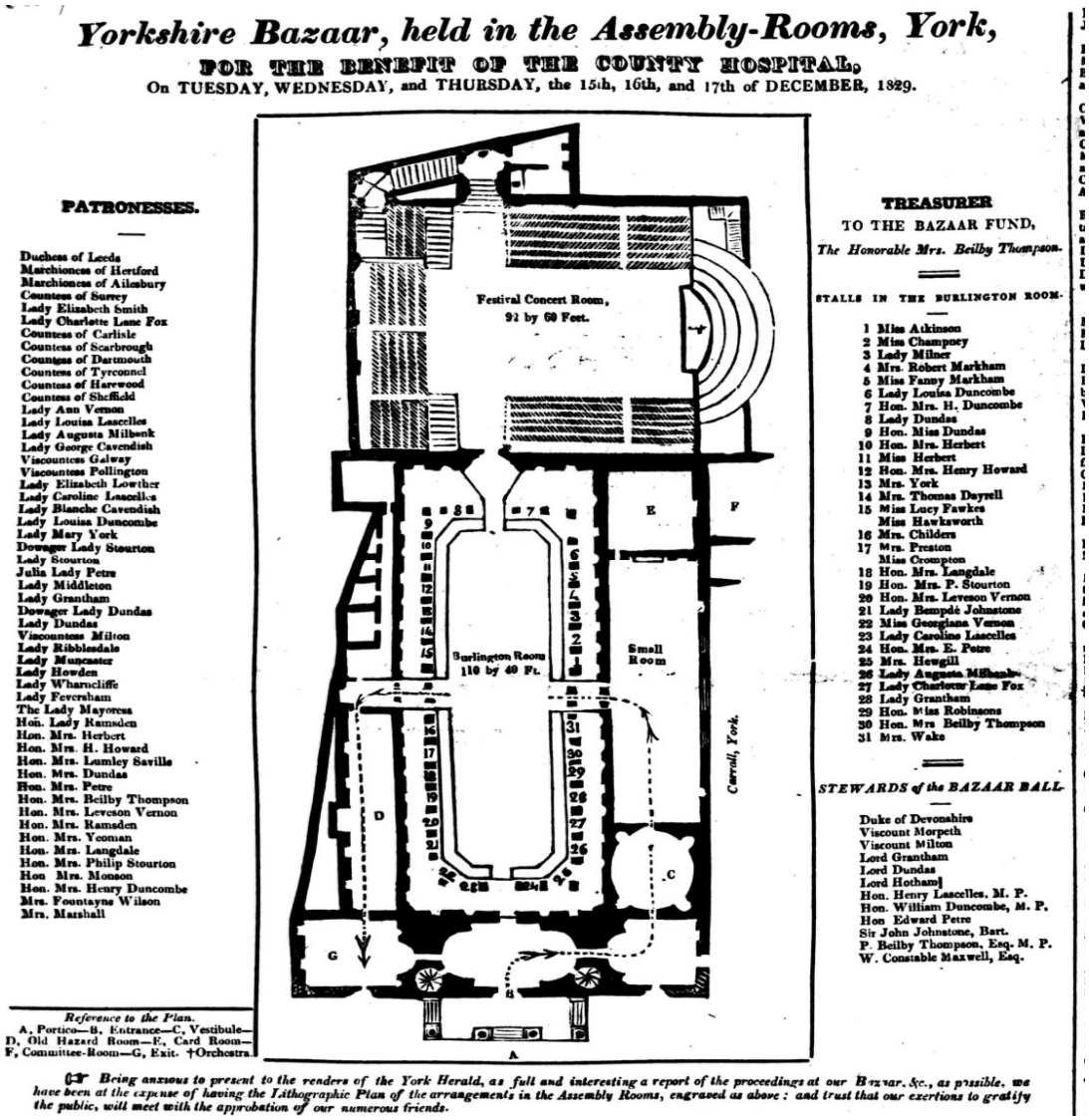
[35] I use the word bazaar throughout this chapter to indicate a general type of event that was often called a variety of things including fancy fair, fundraising fair, ladies' sale, and more. Bazaar was the predominant, but not exclusive, term for such events in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century in England. For a discussion of fair nomenclature and lineage, see Gordon, *Bazaars and Fair Ladies*.

[36] Ibid, 9. Though Gordon's book focuses on American fundraising fairs, this section describes the history and lineage of fundraising fairs that began in England at the turn of the nineteenth century.



Yorkshire Bazaar, held in the Assembly-Rooms, York,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COUNTY HOSPITAL,

On TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, and THURSDAY, the 15th, 16th, and 17th of DECEMBER, 1829.

PATRONESSES.

Duchess of Leeds
Marchioness of Hertford
Marchioness of Ailesbury
Countess of Surrey
Lady Elizabeth Smith
Lady Charlotte Lane Fox
Countess of Carlisle
Countess of Scarbrough
Countess of Dartmouth
Countess of Tyrconnel
Countess of Harewood
Countess of Sheffield
Lady Ann Vernon
Lady Louisa Lascelles
Lady Augusta Milbank
Lady George Cavendish
Viscountess Galway
Viscountess Pollington
Lady Elizabeth Lowther
Lady Caroline Lascelles
Lady Blanche Cavendish
Lady Louisa Duncombe
Lady Mary York
Dowager Lady Stourton
Lady Stourton
Julia Lady Petre
Lady Middleton
Lady Grantham
Dowager Lady Dundas
Lady Dundas
Viscountess Milton
Lady Ribblesdale
Lady Muncaster
Lady Howden
Lady Wharncliffe
Lady Feversham
The Lady Mayoress
Hon. Lady Ramsden
Hon. Mrs. Herbert
Hon. Mrs. H. Howard
Hon. Mrs. Lumley Saville
Hon. Mrs. Dundas
Hon. Mrs. Petre
Hon. Mrs. Beilby Thompson
Hon. Mrs. Leveson Vernon
Hon. Mrs. Ramsden
Hon. Mrs. Yeoman
Hon. Mrs. Langdale
Hon. Mrs. Philip Stourton
Hon Mrs. Monson
Hon. Mrs. Henry Duncombe
Mrs. Fountayne Wilson
Mrs. Marshall

Reference to the Plan.
A, Portico—B, Entrance—C, Vestibule—D, Old Hazard Room—E, Card Room—F, Committee-Room—G, Exit. †Orchestra

TREASURER
TO THE BAZAAR FUND,
The Honorable Mrs. Beilby Thompson.

STALLS IN THE BURLINGTON ROOM.

1 Miss Atkinson
2 Miss Champney
3 Lady Milner
4 Mrs. Robert Markham
5 Miss Fanny Markham
6 Lady Louisa Duncombe
7 Hon. Mrs. H. Duncombe
8 Lady Dundas
9 Hon. Miss Dundas
10 Hon. Mrs. Herbert
11 Miss Herbert
12 Hon. Mrs. Henry Howard
13 Mrs. York
14 Mrs. Thomas Dayrell
15 Miss Lucy Fawkes
Miss Hawksworth
16 Mrs. Childers
17 Mrs. Preston
Miss Crompton
18 Hon. Mrs. Langdale
19 Hon. Mrs. P. Stourton
20 Hon. Mrs. Leveson Vernon
21 Lady Bempde Johnstone
22 Miss Georgiana Vernon
23 Lady Caroline Lascelles
24 Hon. Mrs. E. Petre
25 Mrs. Hewgill
26 Lady Augusta Milbanke
27 Lady Charlotte Lane Fox
28 Lady Grantham
29 Hon. Miss Robinsons
30 Hon. Mrs Beilby Thompson
31 Mrs. Wake

STEWARDS of the BAZAAR BALL.

Duke of Devonshire
Viscount Morpeth
Viscount Milton
Lord Grantham
Lord Dundas
Lord Hotham
Hon. Henry Lascelles, M. P.
Hon. William Duncombe, M. P.
Hon Edward Petre
Sir John Johnstone, Bart.
P. Beilby Thompson, Esq. M. P.
W. Constable Maxwell, Esq.

☞ *Being anxious to present to the readers of the York Herald, as full and interesting a report of the proceedings at our Bazaar, &c., as possible, we have been at the expense of having the Lithographic Plan of the arrangements in the Assembly Rooms, engraved as above: and trust that our exertions to gratify the public, will meet with the approbation of our numerous friends.*

Figure 1: Yorkshire Bazaar, held in the Assembly-Rooms, York, Yorkshire Herald 1829

set up at a typical bazaar. The illustration shows a concert room where performances associated with the bazaar are held, to draw audiences into the performance and then on to the bazaar. In the bazaar room itself, stalls are set up in an oval with entrances and exits located about halfway around the oval. Bazaar attendees move around the interior of the oval, visiting any stall they would like and also mixing and mingling with other attendees. There are smaller rooms located on the outside of the oval that could be used for behind-the-scenes organization or for attendees

to rest and relax. On this ground plan is also listed all of the principal organizers of each stall. These women are presumably recognizable names in aristocratic Yorkshire society, and having them listed provides additional advertising for the event and encouragement for people to attend, in order to support their friends and prominent members of their community. All listed organizers, stall-holders, the bazaar treasurer, and patronesses are female. The illustration also includes a list of male "bazaar stewards." Based on the surnames listed, these stewards appear to be related to the female organizers and patronesses. However, what, exactly, the role of steward encompassed is not articulated in the accompanying article.[37] According to the article, "The ladies who so praiseworthily took the office of vendors of the various articles were comfortably secured from the pressure of the crowd by being stationed in the space behind the pillars."[38] This distance from the buyers allowed the women to be seen and also to stay out of the shopping fray. There was quite a variety of items for sale at the 31 stalls: Indian screens, artificial sunflowers, toys, workboxes, reticules, pincushions, "and other elegant, though less valuable articles; and ornaments of every description for the drawing room or mantelpiece."[39] The article then describes each of the stalls, listing the organizers of the stall, what the stall sold, and, if known, who had made the items. Typically, one or two lead organizers (always female) are mentioned. The items included paintings, models, chessboards, timepieces, baby linens, ornate boxes, baskets, cribs, miniature figures and models, drawings, and even a list of the stallholders painted by one of the female bazaar organizers. If the creator or artist was named, it was certainly a

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[37] "The Bazaar." *The York Herald and General Advertiser* (York, England), Saturday, December 19, 1829; Issue 2084. *British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900.*
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

means of drawing buyers' attention and enticing them to buy the works of their friends and local artisans. Most of the named creators of art or models were women, though three of the stalls listed male artists. Women were still the organizers of these stalls.

The event ran for four days, opening on Monday at noon and closing on Thursday afternoon. Monday was merely an exhibition day, to entice people to return to buy items on the following three days. To make the bazaar a full social event for Yorkshire society, there was a concert on Tuesday evening featuring local amateur musicians and the Band of the Fourth Royal Irish Dragoon Guards which was attended by more than 1,000 people. Also, on Wednesday evening, there was a Bazaar Ball featuring quadrilles and waltzes. The article states that the "ladies' dresses were most superb, and the array of diamonds and jewels dazzling beyond description."[40] The article lists the attendees, beginning with the Archbishop of York and Lady Ann Vernon, and continuing for nearly a full column with descriptions of many of the local gentry. At the end of the article, the receipts from the various stalls are listed. Mrs. Robert Markham, Miss Fanny Markham, and Lady Feversham organized the highest-grossing stall, which sold flower paintings by Mrs. Markham, Mr. Swinburn, Lady Armitage, Lady Mansfield, and others. It grossed more than £326 over the three days, with high sales of £206 on Tuesday. The entire bazaar took in about £2,726 over the three days.[41]

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

A bazaar held on April 29, 1884 shows that the overall structure of a bazaar layout did not change much over the course of the century. This bazaar (figure 2), held in Bristol's Drill

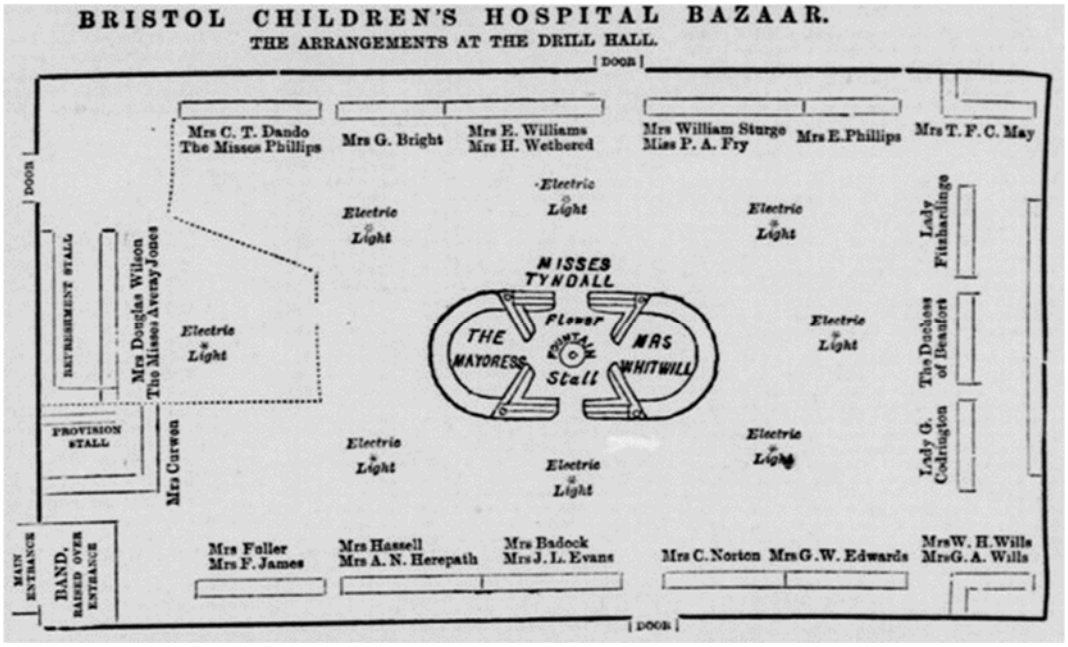

Figure 2: Bristol Children's Hospital Bazaar, The Western Daily Press, 1884

Hall and lasting almost a week, was organized with stalls set up along the walls of the room, each stall organized by a society woman. As in the earlier illustration, the women in charge of organizing each stall are listed at their stall location to encourage readers to seek out the stalls of people whom they know. This article does not go into detail of the items being sold, simply stating "of the contents of the stalls…both in value and variety they are great and the deepest pockets may find ample opportunities for helping a worthy charity by liberal purchases."[42] According to the description, the stalls are all decorated similarly with matching colors and cloth coverings for the tables, so the event is well-coordinated. The author of this article describes the furnishings in some detail, writing:

[42] "Bristol Children's Hospital Bazaar." *The Western Daily Press* (Yeovil, England), Tuesday, April 29, 1884; pg. 8; Issue 8082. *British Library Newspapers, Part V: 1746-1950.*

> The stalls all harmonise in design and colouring. Each is covered at the back and top with loosely hanging crimson and white drapery. The front of the woodwork forming the table on which the saleable items are placed is lined with pink, and light Venetian masts mark the boundary of each stall. These poles are covered with dark maroon cloth, and at a suitable height, a broad band of the same material runs across the front of the stall and serves as an admirable background for the gilt lettering of the names inscribed on it. Curtains of ecru lace, gracefully looped with silk tassels, give an extremely tasteful effect in contrast with this maroon bordering, and the judicious use of flags in the form of a trophy surmounting the front of each stall, and of bannorets attached to the slender masts, also add to the success of the design.[43]

At this bazaar, the middle of the room features a flower stall organized by the Mayoress and two other socialites. This stall is clearly a main feature of the event, as it is right in the middle of the event floor. It encircles a giant fountain, so it is the prevailing visual feature of the entire room. The event's ground plan also shows a space for a band, so entertainment occurred in the same room. The article describes how a full orchestra played at intervals throughout each day. A refreshment stall is off to the right side, taking up almost an entire wall. There is an anti-room for event organizers as well. This bazaar, though not completely encircling the attendees, as did the 1829 event, creates a traffic flow in which the attendees are in the middle of the room and the stalls form a rectangular border around the walls. This allows attendees to see one another and ensures that they have to pass by at least several stalls to get to refreshments or an exit, giving the salespeople opportunities to catch their attention. Another technique used to draw attention to this bazaar is the use of electric light in the bazaar room. The lights are indicated on the ground plan and are featured prominently as a part of the bazaar itself. [44]

Finally, an 1886 illustration in *The Graphic* (figure 3) depicts a fancy fair at the Athenaeum on Camden Road, London that raised money for the Northwest London Hospital. It

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[43] Ibid.
[44]Ibid.

FANCY FAIR AT THE ATHENÆUM, CAMDEN ROAD, IN AID OF THE NORTH-WEST LONDON HOSPITAL

Figure 3: Fancy Fair at the Athenaeum, Camden Road, The Graphic, 1886

shows how at some bazaars, costumes were *de rigueur* for both stallholders and attendees and created a performative feeling at the event.[45] In this illustration, we see men in turbans and women in Indian-inspired headdresses mingling with others dressed for a day of shopping. The background shows Oriental-themed scenery and flags from a variety of countries above the stalls.[46] This illustration depicts the busyness of a successful bazaar and how, by this point in the century, stallholders used a variety of selling techniques, including walking into the crowd to

[45] See Hindson, *West End Actresses*, 78 for brief descriptions of bazaars featuring costumes throughout the century such as Gothic spectacles, English medieval towns, and fairy bowers.
[46]"Our Illustrations." *The Graphic* (London, England), Saturday, May 15, 1886; Issue 859. *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900.*

draw people towards their stalls or to make sales in the middle of the crowd. They no longer hugged the walls and retreated safely behind their tables.

A particular perk of hosting charity bazaars in the mid- to late-nineteenth century was the opportunity to meet and work with famous (usually female) performers who increasingly became stallholders and benefactors of bazaar events. The rest of this chapter traces how and why female performers became involved in such events and how this was mutually beneficial for the performers, the events' female creators and organizers, and the middle- and upper-class public who attended the events. In the next section, I trace the history of how theatrical performers began their involvement with charity causes, first within the theatre community and later in the broader public realm.

Theatrical Benefit Performances and Theatrical Charities

The association between performers and charity first percolated in the form of the benefit performance.[47] According to Catherine Hindson, in her article about stage actors and actresses' participation in nineteenth-century charity events, "Regular charity matinees at London theatres raised funds for a broad range of individuals and institutions, contributing significantly to the theatre industry's reputation for charity."[48] By the mid-nineteenth century, the past two centuries' ongoing custom of theatrical benefits to raise additional funds for individual

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[47] In using the term 'percolate' I invoke Joseph Roach's use of this term in *It*. Roach takes this term from Serres and Latour. See Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995, 62). Roach writes "a kind of time, imagined by its narrators as progress, but experienced by its subjects as uneven developments and periodic returns." Joseph Roach, *It*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 13.

48 Catherine Hindson, "Gratuitous Assistance: The West End Theatre Industry, Late Victorian Charity, and Patterns of Theatrical Fundraising," *New Theatre Quarterly* 30:1 (February 2014), 21.

performers, and eventually to help actors and their families in distress, transitioned into using benefit performances to raise money for non-theatrical charities and local and nationwide needs.[49]

The British theatre has a long history of performers taking care of one another in times of need. Beginning in the 1680s, theatre companies allowed their performers to augment their salaries by taking the proceeds from an annual or seasonal benefit performance.[50] Actors and actresses would have these nights written into their contracts; the proceeds from the performance were given to the player after overhead expenses were deducted.[51] Such agreements encouraged the beneficiary to attempt to "pack the house" and make sure that the proceeds were strong, which ultimately benefited the theatre as well. Though this system existed for generations, it was not without risk for the performer. If the house did not sell well, the performer would not gain much, if any, money and could even lose money if proceeds could not meet the minimum portion owed to the theatre manager.[52] Likely because of this inherent risk, there was a kind of positive peer pressure to perform in benefit performances. According to St. Vincent Troubridge. "Though leading players in a company expected quite humble requests before they would appear at the benefits of their juniors, the contractual obligations of the company in general included playing at one another's benefits, the salaries being covered by the charges of the night."[53]

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49 See Ibid for a description of theatre performers participating in charity events for theatrical and non-theatrical causes. For actresses' participation in charity organization and events for theatrical causes see also Tracy Davis, "Victorian Charity and Self-help for Women Performers," *Theatre Notebook* 41.3 (1987): 114–28.
50 See St. Vincent Troubridge, *The Benefit System in the British Theatre* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1967), 11.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid, 114.

According to Hindson's book about actresses' participation in charity, "A well-attended benefit affirmed a performer's popular and professional status in the industry."[54] Successful benefits augmented a performer's wages and demonstrated to theatre owners and managers the performer's popularity with the public. Benefit performances were thus not only a way to increase wealth, but also a way to respond to, cultivate, and increase one's celebrity status.

The first theatrical charities to help actors and their families were formed in the eighteenth century. The Covent Garden Theatrical Fund, founded in 1765, was an important source of funds for actors in need until it closed in 1900. The Drury Lane Theatrical Fund, established in 1766, remains in operation today.[55] These were private pension schemes that provided subscribers retirement annuities and occasionally funds to help with loss of wages in the event of illness or injury. To join, one had to be a company member and pay into the scheme for several years before being entitled to pension benefits. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, theatres began adding performances to raise money for theatrical causes— theatre fires, actors in need, children of deceased or injured actors, and eventually theatrical charity organizations such as the Actors' Orphanage Fund.[56] In these cases, the theatre manager usually donated the use of the theatre and gave a purse from which basic expenses were deducted. On the positive side, this was an opportunity for performers to gain beneficial press and goodwill, but these performances required time-intensive labor and reaped little additional financial reward for the performers. Many times, performers chose to do recitations or rehash old material in

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[54] Hindson, *London's West End Actresses*, 54
[55] Ibid; see also Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 58.
[56] The Actor's Orphanage was started in 1896 by actress Kittie Carson. It formally became known as the Actor's Orphanage Fund in 1912. http://www.actorschildren.org/our-history/

order to lessen the preparation time needed. According to a 1901 *Penny Illustrated Paper*, "Charity matinees are generally dull because they are made up of entertainments quite familiar to playgoers."[57] Performance for charity became linked with the theatre, but for individual performers, this was really just another kind of work, albeit with different people, at a different time of day, and with a chance to choose one's own material to present.[58]

Benefits for theatrical charities and for individual actors in need were quite successful and gave the theatre industry a positive reputation for taking care of their own. Audiences enjoyed attending benefit performances, receiving what Daniel Webber terms "private benefit" or personal enjoyment from the spectacle.[59] They received the prestige of being part of an important social event, as they both saw and were seen by their peers. Fraser describes this as *noblesse oblige*, a "social duty which had to be done and be seen to be done."[60] Attendees were potentially philanthropically motivated because they felt they were doing a good deed by giving back to those who had entertained them.[61] A benefit performance was also a chance to see their favorite performers, perhaps in a new role, or reprising a favorite past role. An 1898 benefit for the retiring Nellie Farren (1848-1904) was featured in *Belgravia Magazine*. According to the magazine, "Many ardent playgoers assembled before the doors of Old Drury on the night before the benefit, prepared to spend many hours rather than lose their chance of getting in."[62] This

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[57] *Penny Illustrated Paper*, April 20, 1901, 257.
[58] Troubridge, *Benefit System*, 112-137.
[59] Weber, "Understanding Charity Fundraising Events," 123-124.
[60] Fraser, *British Welfare State*, 118.
[61] Daniel Weber, "Understanding Charity Fundraising Events," *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 9:2 (2004), 123-124. This article theorizes why people attend charity fundraising events, how charities can succeed at fundraising and building donor bases, and why fundraising is effective while relatively inefficient.
[62] "The Stage" *Belgravia Magazine*, April 1898, 573.

kind of fandom foreshadows our contemporary queues for lottery tickets for hot Broadway shows like *Rent* (1996) or *Hamilton* (2015), or the late-twentieth-century phenomenon of camping out in front of Ticketmaster windows to get tickets to popular concerts. And, in another example of the generosity of theatrical folk, the *Belgravia* article also mentions that those waiting in line overnight were treated to "coffee and light refreshments" by theatre owner Arthur Collins (1864-1932).[63] With this small gesture, Collins built goodwill with the audience and inserted his theatre more prominently into the narrative of the benefit event, ensuring that future audiences who read this account considered Drury Lane a compassionate theatre and thus one worth supporting with future attendance.

As early as the 1860s, and regularly by the 1880s and 1890s, the focus of theatrical charity performances had widened to include non-theatrical causes. This shift was primarily in response to the growing national interest in supporting private charity since the 1860s. According to Fraser, in London in 1851, there were 144 organized charity organizations. By 1861, there were at least 640.[64] Fraser notes, "So many different good causes were catered for—stray dogs, stray children, fallen women and drunken men; there was apparently no subject which could not arouse the philanthropic urge of the Victorian public."[65] Theatre owners and managers were well attuned to the interests of their audiences and participated in the growth of high-profile charity events. For them transitioning from benefit performances for actors in need to performances for non-theatrical charity causes was relatively easy. As charity and philanthropy movements grew through the nineteenth century, charity organizations sought to

[63] Ibid.
[64] Fraser, *British Welfare State*, 115-116.
[65] Ibid, 115.

use the celebrity of theatre as a means to draw attention to their causes. In the West End, repertoire systems were supplanted by long runs of popular shows by the 1880s.[66] This meant fewer daytime rehearsals so performers had more free time and the theatres themselves were available, as they were not constantly loading in and out different plays. Theatre managers could, therefore, offer the use of their houses on dark nights, when the company was travelling, and during the day.

Actors and actresses participated in benefit performances for multiple reasons. First, they knew that these events would garner publicity. They also understood that getting their names in the newspapers would be good for their reputations and their careers. For instance, in her autobiography *The Story of My Life* (1907), Ellen Terry (1847-1928) explains her willingness to appear at charity events and answer letters requesting money or her autograph. She writes that ignoring these requests would be "both bad policy and bad taste on the part of a servant of the public."[67] Terry, like many actresses of her era, understood that part of her role as "servant of the public" required her to participate in extra-theatrical public events and that doing so would create a positive boost for her reputation as a charitable and sympathetic person. Newspapers throughout the country regularly listed benefit performances, and included the names of both performers and the notable attendees. For example, the Prince of Wales was among several aristocratic names in attendance at January 13, 1887 matinee performance at the Criterion Theatre to raise money for the Southport lifeboat disaster fund. On December 9, 1886 a lifeboat was launched to help a ship in distress. The lifeboat capsized in heavy winds and 14 of the 16

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[66] See James Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition: 1881-1914* (London: Routledge, 2015), 5.

[67] Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life* (New York: McClure Co., 1908), 121.

crew perished.[68] Theatrical pieces were performed by a veritable who's who of the contemporary West End stage. Notable mid-career actors and actresses such as Edward Terry (1844-1912) and Charles Wyndham (1837-1919) performed in short pieces, and Marie Bancroft (1839-1921) even came out of retirement to reprise her role as Nan in the comedy *Good for Nothing*. This event was featured in several news accounts including the *Morning Post* and the theatrical magazine *The Era*.[69] Theatre manager Charles Wyndham donated the use of his theatre for the event, as well as all receipts from the performance. This generous act actually upset the owners of the theatre building, Felix Spiers and Christopher Pond, not because they were angry about lost profits, but because *they* wanted the opportunity to offer the percentage of the profits they normally collected from a performance to the cause so that they would receive public recognition, but Wyndham's actions preempted this opportunity.[70] According to Hindson, for Spiers, Pond, and Wyndham, charitable acts were connected to their sense of public identity, and "theatrical charity operated in the public and publicized spheres of London's fashionable culture."[71]

Second, the people requesting actors and actresses to appear were socially elite, and performers aspiring to augment their social status would not want to disappoint these people. There was inequality between the elites doing the asking and the performers being asked. This made it difficult for actresses to decline invitations to perform, even though these were invitations to provide unpaid labor. Social elites understood how popular entertainers'

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[68] *The Morning Post*, January 14, 1887, 5.
[69] *The Morning Post*, January 14, 1887, 5; *The Era*, January 28, 1887, 8.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Hindson, *West End Actresses*, 48.

performances would help bring recognition to their cause from the press and from audiences, and this would augment their own status as philanthropists. According to Hindson, "Duchesses had recognized the possibilities of public charity work for identity construction and profile, and they were exploiting stage professionals in their pursuit of the personal recognition the work would bring."[72]

By the early twentieth century, the theatrical magazine *The Stage* questioned the worth of this work for performers in an article that argued, "These performances mean work and expense with nothing in return for artists who give their service."[73] But this was a complicated social phenomenon for actresses, as they "did not like to risk offending the titled ladies, who are frequently the organizers of charity fetes," and they wanted to augment their own social status by participating in events that they knew would draw positive attention from the press and from elite society.[74]

And finally, as many performers noted in their letters and memoirs, theatre people had been using their talents to raise money for their own charities for years, and they were inclined to be generous of heart. This inclination is perhaps because since theatre folk were social outcasts for many generations, they had learned to take care of one another in difficult times, so taking care of others seemed a natural extension of this. Lillah McCarthy (1875-1960) writes about this phenomenon in her memoir, *Myself and My Friends* (1933): "Actors and actresses are the most generous people I have ever known, generous to charity, generous to one another."[75] The more

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[72] Ibid, 69.
[73] *The Stage*, May 16, 1912, 12.
[74] *Yorkshire Herald*, March 28, 1899, 3 qtd in Hindson, *London's West End Actresses*, 65.
[75] Lillah McCarthy, *Myself and My Friends* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1933), 217.

famous the performer, the more requests for charitable help that came in. Ellen Terry treats her charity work as matter-of-fact in her memoir. She writes, "The letters, chiefly consisting of request for my autograph or appeals to my charity, have to be answered."[76] Another example of Terry's largesse is the following mention of her good work in a provincial newspaper. Terry attended and made a monetary donation at a charity bazaar near a small town in which she was performing. The article states:

> Miss Ellen Terry, who is playing in Newcastle-on-Tyne, this afternoon visited the neighbouring village of Winlaton, where her father-in-law, the late Rev Henry Wardell, was Rector for a quarter of a century, and opened a bazaar in aid of the Parish Church Restoration Fund. Miss Terry made graceful reference to the father of her husband, who acted under the name of Charles Kelly, and gave 5 pounds to the Restoration Fund. She also brought a donation of 10 pounds from Sir Henry Irving, who is still indisposed.[77]

Here Terry brings attention to the village bazaar where she had some family and touring connections, and she even increases the publicity by bringing an even larger donation in the name of her theatrical partner, Henry Irving. Charitable contributions, both in monetary donations for the wealthy theatrical stars and via donated performance for all levels of performers, were a part of theatrical life in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In London, large-scale charity events would often include participation of actresses in the top echelons—figures like Terry and McCarthy. Smaller charity organizations in London drew from lesser known, but still active, performers from the West End and legitimate theatres. In the provinces, for top-level charities and big events, high-status performers might participate, especially when they were touring or not currently in shows. Most provincial charities found that they could draw actresses who had ties to the area and who therefore might be a particular draw for their more local fame.

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[76] Terry, *Story of My Life*, 359.
[77] "Miss Ellen Terry Opens a Bazaar." *Daily Mail* (Hull), Thursday November 25, 1897, 3.

Overall, participation of actresses in these kinds of events grew over the course of the nineteenth century. Instances were low in the first half of the century, especially outside of London, but they became more common by mid-century and peaked in the 1880s and 1890s, which was also the high point for instances of charity bazaars across the country.[78] Participation in charity events was not always the same in scope or kind for male and female performers, however. Contemporary gender roles, access to public and private spaces, and access to social networks necessitated different kinds of involvement in this work for men and women and affected how performers negotiated charity work and philanthropic giving.

Differences in Charity-Work Participation Between Actresses and Actors

Although both male and female performers participated in charity benefits and performances, they did not participate equally in all kinds of charity events. Participating in charity bazaars, for example, was something almost exclusively done by actresses. Like the way elite women carved out a space for themselves as bazaar organizers and stallholders while men led the charity organizations themselves, it was almost always actresses, rather than actors, who joined the elite women as stallholders, producers, and donors of goods to be sold at bazaars in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It was also actresses whom the press most noted for their participation in bazaars and other charity events, such as garden parties and teas.

One reason that actors were not as noted for their charity appearances was that for them, being seen in public outside of the stage was not as unusual. Though still often facing a Victorian era anti-theatrical bias due to the often itinerate lifestyle of the stage, actors were men and were therefore public figures who were expected to engage in public work (in the nineteenth-century

[78] See Hindson, *London's West End Actresses,* chapter 1 for more information.

definition of the word) and contribute to their society.[79] Male performers in the provinces or in non-legitimate theatres in London did not rise to the same level of acceptance or social status as legitimate, West End theatre performers, but they still embodied maleness and therefore acceptance in public spaces and as "workers." Though hardly a universal recognition of social acceptance, the fact that Henry Irving (1838-1905) was bestowed a knighthood in 1895 and that in the 1820s, actor Edmund Kean (1787-1833) was financially able to send his son Charles (1811-1868) to Eton is evidence that high-status actors and actor-managers had achieved a level of social acceptance that their female colleagues had not. It was not until thirty one years later in 1926 that the first actress, Dame Madge Kendal, was awarded the DBE. According to Davis, "Following the bestowal of Irving's knighthood, performers reveled in public acknowledgement of their long struggle for recognition as respectable, responsible citizens on par with what the census designated as 'Class A' professionals (barristers, physicians, the military, and the clergy)."[80] In addition, actors such as Irving and Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917) regularly chaired meetings for the theatrical charities such as the Actors' Orphanage Fund and the Actors' Benevolent Fund, and actor-managers regularly attended fundraising dinners, meetings, and events.[81] One well-documented example is the Actors' Benevolent Fund annual meeting in 1894. Almost a full column of *The Observer* is dedicated to an account of who attended the meeting, who spoke and on what subject, and how much money was raised over the course of the

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[79] For more information about nineteenth-century understandings of the word "work" as applied to women see Steedman, *Everyday Life*, Lown, *Women and Industrialization*, and Gooch, *Victorian Novel*.
[80] Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 4.
[81] See Hindson, *London's West End Actresses* chapter 1 for several examples of actors hosting charity meetings and events and press coverage of such.

year. Actors were listed alongside Members of Parliament (Mr. T.H. Bolton) and noted banker and philanthropist Mr. Burdett-Coutts.[82] Three women attended, but even though the event was for members of the profession, none of the women listed were actresses, and none were reported to have spoken or participated in the proceedings. Another example is the 1870 Annual Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund. In the theatrical magazine *The Era*, a multi-page spread describes the attendees including the Prince of Wales, who served as chairman of the event. His Royal Highness was seated at a table of honor with two foreign princes, members of the British aristocracy, and high-profile theatre performers including Dion Boucicault. As with the *Observer* article, the *Era* article provides a comprehensive list of both theatre performers and social elites who attended, followed by detailed descriptions of speakers and donations received.[83] Though actors received press attention for these events, especially when fellow attendees included royalty or aristocracy, the press was more focused on reporting the amount raised or the full list of notable attendees. The inclusion of actors or actor-managers was not in and of itself noteworthy, but rather normalized.[84] Like the previous example, the presence of women was all but omitted from the record of this event. In his remarks, the Prince of Wales addresses the company as "my lords, ladies, and gentlemen," implying that there were ladies present, though none are listed among the more than 30 notable male attendees. Nor did any woman speak at the event. Only in the last paragraph, when describing the interlude entertainment, did the article mention that two women were part of the singing ensemble. Actors

[82] *The Observer*, January 21, 1894, 5.
[83] "The Annual Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund." *The Era*, Sunday May 22, 1870.
[84] Ibid, this kind of article was commonly found in newspapers across the UK throughout the century.

may have had to overcome the historical prejudice against itinerant players, a legacy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but their trajectory towards social prestige was more linear and much less fraught than that of their female colleagues. According to Hindson:

> The public roles London's actor-managers played out were firmly established within the cult of the male stage personality. Perhaps more significantly, they also remained largely stable during this period, with an increasingly heightened level of access to influential social circles marking the only key change to this area of actor-managers' public activity.[85]

Actors were also increasing their social status, but as Hindson argues, for men this was part of a stable, linear progression that was not afforded to the female members of the profession.

Actors and male theatre managers often participated in charity events by performing in benefits, attending charity functions, and buying goods at charity bazaars, but it was largely female performers who did the work of organizing bazaars and selling at the stalls alongside society women. According to Hindson, "On the sales floor the male actor was notably absent and the actress held sway."[86] An article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from June 1899 demonstrates the facility of actresses with charity bazaars and the relative paucity of actors selling items at charity stalls. Referencing a charity bazaar at Albert Hall to raise money for the Charing Cross Hospital, the article states:

> The outcome is a 'deluxe' collection of gratuitous contributions from authors, composers, and artists whose names in eminence and number make up a dazzling array. Actresses, of course, long since acquired proficiency in the 'Stand-and-deliver' business in the cause of Charity. Mr. Tree, however, is the first to show with what success it can be worked by an actor.[87]

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[85] Hindson, *West End Actresses,* 75.
[86] Hindson, "Gratuitous Assistance," 24.
[87] "Theatrical Notes." *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 10, 1899. 7. Actress Maud Tree served on the planning committee for the Charing Cross Hospital bazaar and was both a saleswoman and spokesperson for this large-scale event.

Though this evidence of singularity is hardly verifiable, it is telling that in 1899 it was unusual and newsworthy for an actor to spend even a few minutes as a seller at a charity event, while this kind of work on the part of actresses was much more typical. The particular case of the actress and her positioning both within and outside of respectable society created a space for actresses to "perform" charity work in a way that their male counterparts could and did not. In the case of the charity bazaar, upper- and middle-class women and actresses participating as salespeople were just socially circumspect enough to attract publicity and to create a feeling of disorder and liminality, making these events noteworthy. Though having actors as salesmen would also have been a publicity draw facilitating proximity to fame, the events would have lost the allure of something out of the ordinary if the stalls were staffed by middle-class men. According to Martin Danahay and David Kuchta, "Middle-class ideology fused free trade and masculinity and 'naturalized a cultural construction of masculinity by embedding it deep within the language of capital.'"[88] Therefore, men selling items to other men would have been business as usual, and bazaar attendees would have lost the allure of buying extraneous domestic goods and trinkets at inflated prices from high-status women who would normally not themselves join the fray of public, unmediated shopping spaces.

In the rest of this chapter, I will examine charity bazaars as unique events for female participation in charity work. I argue that these female-oriented spaces allowed for networking and socialization among middle- and upper-class women, and that they created opportunities for

[88] Danahay, *Gender at Work*, 43. David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England 1550-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 160.

female performers to engage in acceptable labor and networking that augmented their social status and respectability.

Charity Bazaars as an Ideal Forum for Female Participation in Charity Work

By the middle of the nineteenth century, as charity organizations multiplied and social mores dictated a culture of helping the less fortunate, events to raise money for charity organizations and causes flourished. Social elites with money to give away regularly attended charity balls, teas, and dinners in addition to performances. Charity bazaars were another common fundraising technique, in which actresses performed extra-theatrical labor for social elites while also presenting themselves as appropriately feminine and domestic women who could interact productively with middle- and upper-class British society.

Many charitable organizations quickly learned to take advantage of the idea that middle- and upper-class women had increasingly more leisure time and disposable income, and that "shopping" had become a leading pastime for women in these classes. According to Erika Rappaport in *Shopping for Pleasure: Women and the Making of London's West End* (2000), starting in the 1860s, middle-class women were welcomed into the retail world and were considered "natural consumers." As Rappaport writes, "Shopping meant a day 'in Town,' consuming space and time *outside* (emphasis in the original) of the private home." She continues, "Shopping also involved discussing, looking at, touching, buying, and rejecting commodities."[89] Charity bazaars capitalized on an experience of shopping to entice visitors to roam through the stalls in order to find the perfect items to purchase.

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[89] Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women and the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

In addition to capitalizing on the nascent consumerism and commodity culture of the mid-nineteenth century, charity organizations also appealed to middle-class women by tugging at their hearts and appealing to their supposedly inherent sense of moral imperative. According to Elliot, philanthropy was the primary Victorian-era method of "dealing with the social ills created by the rapid rise of industrial capitalism as well as by the age-old problems of poverty, illness, and misfortune."[90] Charity work—home visits to the poor and fundraising—had become, by the mid-nineteenth century, largely a prerogative of middle-class women. Elliott writes that by the 1850s, charitable work had become virtually a "'national pastime' for English women of the leisure classes."[91] Charities hosting bazaars found a way to bring together into a single event the social and consumerist pleasures of shopping and the middle-class moral imperative of helping the poor and relieving suffering.

Since their inception, charitable organizations appealed to royalty and aristocrats to be figureheads and sponsors for their causes. It was important for charities to have sponsors, in order to appear legitimate and to raise money and support for their cause. However, by the middle of the century, charity organizations were broadening their sponsorship requests beyond the traditional aristocrats and minor royalty to include both male and female popular entertainers who could bring additional attention to their causes, rally support, and associate their cause with fame and celebrity.[92]

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[90] Elliott, *Angel Out of the House*, 4; for a comprehensive definition of leisure class, see Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[91] Elliott, *Angel Out of the House*, 160.
[92] See Gordon, *Bazaars and Fair Ladies* and Hindson, *West End Actresses* for more information about the growth of charity bazaars as a popular fundraising event and increasing use of actresses as stall saleswomen.

In *Celebrity*, Chris Rojek describes three types of celebrity: ascribed, achieved, and attributed. Ascribed celebrity, or celebrity by lineage, is represented by the royals and aristocrats who first sponsored bazaars and charity organizations. Performers, however, represent a mixture of achieved and attributed celebrity. Achieved celebrity is based on talent and accomplishment, while attributed celebrity is "the result of the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries."[93] Joseph Roach explains how celebrities with achieved celebrity have moved into the space of the ascribed. "With growing audacity, performers, whose celebrity was achieved […] claimed their place in the public eye besides aristocrats and royals whose celebrity was ascribed. This does not mean that they thereby became altogether socially acceptable, but it does mean that they became increasingly interesting."[94] Pairing ascribed and achieved or attributed celebrities together at charity events was increasingly a way for charity organizations to garner attention from the press and from potential philanthropic donors. Since people desire to emulate the famous (whether ascribed or achieved), if the famous care about a cause, others may come to care as well.

Charity bazaars created new kinds of social interactions for all participants. Attendees looked forward to the possibility of conversing and bargaining with stallholders who were usually either celebrities or members of the social elite. Event organizers, usually elite women with leisure time as discussed above, enjoyed networking and interacting with other elites, as well as experiencing the reflected fame of the celebrities that had agreed to participate. In this section, I focus on how the "liveness" of celebrity at these events permitted society members to

[93] Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (Reaktion Books, 2001), 17-18.
[94] Roach, *It*, 38.

mingle freely with actresses who were not performing characters upon a stage, but rather performing their own public identities, which both their fellow stallholders and the consuming public believed to be their authentic selves. I argue that having female celebrities as saleswomen made transactions special and gave increased value, both monetary and personal, to the otherwise ordinary commodities being sold. This act of selling to the public for charitable causes aligned actresses with organizations and events, thereby expanding the role of the actress as onstage celebrity into one in which the actress amplified her celebrity status with both direct and indirect participation in charity work.

The public's main draw in attending charity bazaars in which actresses participated was the potential for contact with celebrities in close proximity, not mediated by the presence of a stage, costumes, and characters, but in an authentic environment in which face-to-face interactions were possible and even socially permissible. The aura and mystique of celebrity has been a trope throughout human history, first focused on royalty and then expanded to include different kinds of celebrities. In *It* (2007), Joseph Roach, uses these terms to describe the ineffability of celebrity and the "It-Effect." He writes, "The 'I and Thou' experience of It requires mental pictures or ideas, not reducible to any single one of the materially circulating images of the celebrity, but nevertheless generally available by association when summoned from the enchanted memories of those imagining themselves in communication with the special, spectral other."[95] He continues, "public intimacy describes the illusion of proximity to the tantalizing apparition […] The It-Effect […] intensifies the craving for greater intimacy with the

[95] Ibid, 17.

ultimately unavailable icon."[96] Nineteenth-century charity bazaars provided the appearance of public intimacy as attendees and socially elite event organizers could be in the presence of their favorite stars of the stage. An 1898 article in *Belgravia: A London Magazine* about that year's Press Bazaar describes this phenomenon with an unattributed quotation: "The newspapers have been collecting duchesses, duchesses have been collecting actresses, actresses have been collecting smiles, and their smiles have been collecting money."[97] The article employs flip alliterative language that underscores the time and energy the organizers put into finding high-status women willing to give their own time to sitting at stalls and selling domestic goods to raise money. The Press Bazaar was organized by Mrs. May Spender, wife of the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*. This was an event that paired stage celebrities with the very elite of British society, and even the Queen "sold old silver and art treasures" to raise money for the London Hospital.[98] This article exemplifies the power of celebrity in the form of the bazaar. The newspapers rallied support of elite members of female society who were experts in networking and organizing events. These women "collected" or recruited actresses whose fame and beauty radiated upon the attendees, causing them to spend more money to support the cause. At this bazaar, actresses sold goods alongside elite women, but it was, according to the article, the "smiles" of the actresses (not of Queen Victoria or the duchesses) that closed the sales. According to Hindson, "Selling at the stalls...was an alternative role [for actresses] with its own dynamics, opportunities, and tensions."[99] For actresses, it was a kind of work that provided

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[96] Ibid, 44.
[97] *Belgravia: A London Magazine*, August 1898, 2.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Hindson, *London's West End Actresses* 85.

myriad opportunities for them to interact and network with high-status women and to increase their own celebrity and reputational status by being seen as participants in these sorts of events.

The selling of goods added to this illusion of intimacy, as the presence of the celebrity seller increased both personal and monetary value of the ordinary goods offered for sale. According to an article in the *Illustrated London News* in 1899, "no other way of raising money [was] half as effective as that mixture of trade and charity, with close contact with peeresses and stage celebrities in their smartest, most up-to-date frocks thrown in."[100] This article demonstrates the increasingly close associations between celebrity, wealth, charity, and fashion. Richard Doyle attended a charity bazaar in 1863 and described what he saw as follows. "The bazaar is held in a large marquee, which is furnished by stalls gaily decked out with ribbons, wreaths, and flags, and covered with merchandise; and numberless young ladies preside at the stalls, dressed in the height and breadth of the fashion, and never cease to attract public attention to the goods."[101] Already by the 1860s, links between society, fashion, and selling were being established. What actresses and elite women wore onstage and in public was newsworthy, and the trends they set were soon emulated by middle-class women and eventually, as mass production blossomed, working-class women. As Rappaport writes, "actresses and Society 'beauties' were coming to represent a new kind of femininity that was closely tied to the mass production of images."[102] This new femininity was becoming a critical component of the burgeoning advertising industry. In the second half of the nineteenth century, retailers

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[100] *Illustrated London News*, 17 June 1899, 899.
[101] Richard Doyle, *Bird's Eye View of Society*, 1864, p. 18. Quoted in Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Women and Society in Victorian England* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 57.
[102] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 185.

discovered the power of celebrity to sell goods. Roach describes the effect of nearness to celebrity that advertisers were harnessing:

> Public intimacy describes the illusion of proximity to the tantalizing apparition; synthetic experience, the consumption of its spun-off products such as plays, magazines, or movies; and the It-Effect, its deifying reception. The It-Effect, in turn, intensifies the craving for greater intimacy with the ultimately unavailable icon. Constructed both through the publicity manipulated by celebrities themselves or their acolytes and through the imaginative contribution of their fans, It patches together a specter […] all cohering only in the mass hallucination that everyone either wants to touch or be touched by and no one can either find or forget."[103]

As print advertising proliferated in the second half of the nineteenth century, images of celebrities became ubiquitous. Once people could see celebrities both onstage at the theatre and at home in prints and advertisements, they craved more opportunities to learn about and emulate the famous. According to Rojek, "Celebrities humanize the process of commodity consumption. Celebrity culture has emerged as a central mechanism in structuring the market of human sentiments. Celebrities are commodities in that consumers desire to possess them."[104]

By the 1880s, trade journals were commenting on stage fashions because the theatre was where middle-class women were looking to get ideas about how they should dress. In fact, many reviews of theatre productions in women's journals focused almost exclusively on the spectacle of costumes and sets, rather than on acting, writing, or directing. The journals understood what was inherently more interesting to their readers and what would sell magazines.[105] According to Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell:

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[103] Roach, *It*, 44.
[104] Rojek, *Celebrity*, 14-15.
[105] For information about how journals discussed theatrical costumes and created a market for women to want to own copies of theatrical fashions, see introduction and chapter one of Joel H. Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

> In a handful of West End theatres, especially in plays of modern life, audiences regularly encountered novelties of cut, color, and silhouette that offered alternatives to the formalism of the Parisian Houses. Playgoers, moreover, were beginning to incorporate such items into their own wardrobes, initiating, in the process, a pragmatic if sobering form of theatre criticism.[106]

Audiences were paying attention to the West End fashions to discover what they should be wearing, and how appealing a costume became in the fashion world became a dubious marker of a successful play. According to Rappaport, "The press asked audiences to see theater-going as a prelude to shopping and to link shopping with a radical re-fashioning of the self. Reviewers simply assumed that audiences naturally viewed plays from their vantage point as shoppers."[107] Female playgoers could see a dress onstage and imagine themselves wearing that dress and potentially living a bit of the life that the dress imbued, re-fashioning their identities based on the availability of a commodity. Rojek describes this phenomenon, writing, "From the development of national print culture in the eighteenth century, self-consciousness and the projection of identity have been themed by media representation and the compulsion of abstract desire."[108]

Rappaport also notes, "The understanding of the theater [sic] as a store window developed as the stage and actresses gained social recognition and respectability."[109] Some of this increase in social status could be correlated to the way actresses' portraits sat in shop windows alongside those of society "beauties" by the mid 1870s.[110] According to Elizabeth

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[106] Ibid, 8.
[107] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 186.
[108] Rojek, *Celebrity*, 187.
[109] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 185.
[110] For more information about these print portraits, (cartes de visite) and mass circulation of images of actresses and society women see Avril Landsdell, *Fashion a la Carte, 1860-1900: A Study of Fashion Through Cartes de Visite* (Aylesbury: Shire Publications, 1985). For a history of the transition in popularity from cartes de visite in the 1850s to larger cabinet cards in the 1870s and 1880s see Elizabeth M. Bonapfel, "Reading Publicity Photographs Through the

Bonapfel, publicity photos of actresses sat in shops alongside images of monarchs, politicians, and writers and their spouses.[111] This equation of society beauty and celebrity made some critics uncomfortable, but it quickly became accepted as a part of popular culture. According to Bonapfel, "the 'realistic' capturing of an actress on photographic paper suggests a normalization of that image. As photos of celebrities entered the world of commerce and circulated, these images became part of the material culture of everyday life."[112] Photographic images of royalty and theatrical celebrities became ubiquitous in stationers' shops. Even by the 1860s, millions of cartes de visite were published each year, and a typical run for a celebrity was over 10,000 items.[113]

Charity organizers capitalized on these links between theatrical celebrities and shopping by placing the well-dressed actress, the object of the gaze of the theatrical audience, into an environment where not only shopping, but also personal interaction with celebrity, was implied if not promised to the consumer. They depended on these associations to sell more goods at inflated rates to raise money for their causes. Charles Greville, an attendee of an 1833 bazaar in Hanover Square, remarked that, "it was like a masquerade without masks, for everybody—men, women, and children—roved about where they would… and vast familiarity established between complete strangers under the guise of barter…They sold all sorts of trash at enormous prices."[114]

Elizabeth Robins Archive: How Images of the Actress and the Queen Constructed a New Sexual Ideal," *Theatre Survey* 57:1 (January 2016), 113.

[111] Bonapfel, "Reading Publicity Photographs,"111.

[112] Ibid, 116-117.

[113] Ibid, 113.

[114] Charles C.F. Greville, *A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV and King William IV*, 3 vols (London 1875), v 2, 393.

Though Greville felt that the items for sale were "trash," his remarks indicate an early awareness of the carnivalesque atmosphere of the bazaar, in which high-status ladies and later celebrities could interact with middle-class attendees in a transactional relationship.[115] Normally these kinds of inter-class interactions would not be acceptable, especially those in which the upper class catered to the desires of the middle class, and women were the purveyors and buyers in the public sphere. Simon Morgan addresses this paradox in his article, "A Sort of Land Debatable: Female Influence, Civic Virtue and Middle Class Identity." He writes:

> Bazaars epitomized the ambiguities of women's place in middle-class civic identity; much of the work was done behind the scenes by women who produced the goods on sale; but the success of these ventures depended on having the support of a body of patronesses and stallholders whose names carried sufficient weight in the community to ensure adequate publicity and attention from local elite.[116]

For most bazaars, the stallholders were responsible for creating or gathering the items that were to be sold. This could mean using one's networks to find items of value or using one's artistic abilities to create pieces to be sold. The quality of goods sold at bazaars varied based on the size of the bazaar and the status of the women organizing the bazaar. Typically, one could find an array of paintings and drawings created by stall organizers or regionally famous artists, as well as dolls and other toys crafted by artisans or stall organizers themselves. The stall organizers usually crafted baby clothes and linens, giving these ordinary items a special allure. Other typical bazaar items included needlepoint and pincushions, ornate boxes, jewelry, and perfume. When performers participated in bazaars, stalls could sell autographed copies of performers' memoirs, autographed cards, letters written by performers, and other theatrical or musical items.

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[115] For "carnivalesque" see Michael Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1968).
[116] Morgan, "Sort of Land Debatable," 192.

Some bazaars capitalized on the allure of the participants by selling illustrated bazaar programs listing participants and bazaar proceedings. An article in the *Evening Telegraph* in 1887 provides instructions for middle-class women looking for ideas of what to make to sell at a bazaar. The article describes a new kind of needlepoint stitch, how to make an ordinary charity blanket into a "sofa wrap for an invalid child," and how to make a Russian-style pincushion. All of these items are clearly frivolous, but the article indicates that the labor of a middle- or upper-class woman making these items can make them worthy of sale at a bazaar. The article concludes, "One thing is certain, that pretty trifles and novelties of all kinds sell 'at sight.'"[117] Performers could choose to sell trinkets as described above, or due to their celebrity status, they could also sell proximity to fame. For example, at the Charing Cross Press Bazaar in 1899, Mrs. Beerbohm Tree decided to sell collections of letters, musical scores, and drawings collected from theatre, art, and music celebrities. A limited 5,000-copy first edition printing of this collection sold for 10s 6d at the Stageland stall.[118] The worth of the items for sale hinged often on who was doing the selling. According to a description in the *Manchester Times* of a stall's contents at the Anti-Corn Law League Bazaar in 1842, "The whole cost of this rare stock of fancy merchandise could not have been less than £200, independent of the increased value which had been given to the materials by the fair fingers by whose untiring industry the article had been wrought."[119] Here the newspaper acknowledges and celebrates the female labor that went into creating the items for sale. Labor, especially female labor, is usually a hidden cost of a good for sale. The

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[117] "Ladies' Column." *The Evening Telegraph* (Dundee, Scotland), Wednesday, September 28, 1887; pg. 4; Issue 3290. *British Library Newspapers, Part IV: 1732-1950.*
[118] "Some Attractive Charity Functions in London." *Manchester Times*, June 2, 1899.
[119] "Anti-Corn Law League Plan." *Manchester Times*, February 5, 1842.

environment of the bazaar makes the labor a focal point with the assumption that it is the "fair fingers" of an elite woman creating, or at least gathering and organizing, the goods for sale, as well as decorating the stall and laying out the items for sale in an eye-catching, appealing way. This further increases the market worth of the goods at the bazaar.

The charity bazaar provided a forum for new networks, new experiences, and new kinds of interactions that had to be acculturated into contemporary social mores and ideas. Middle-class attendees reveled in the opportunity for proximity to upper-class and celebrity stallholders. Attendees often turned out in droves to see and be seen at charity bazaars. For instance, the 1898 Press Bazaar, oversold tickets, and some ticket holders were unable to get inside on the opening day. The organizers had to issue an apology in the *Times*. "The committee of the Press Bazaar regrets that owing to the enormous number of persons desiring to be admitted to the opening ceremony, a certain number of ticket holders were excluded yesterday. Tickets not used yesterday will be available today."[120] This apology also served as an additional advertisement, as the next seven lines were dedicated to a list of stage performers scheduled to appear at the event throughout the day. Numbers of attendees at these events are not often readily available, but the proceeds from charity bazaars were periodically published in newspapers. This Press Bazaar, for instance, raised £12,000 for the London Hospital.[121] In his article "Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth Century England," Prochaska details the proceeds from several bazaars throughout the nineteenth century. Their profits range from £38 in 1813, raised for the Ladies Royal Benevolent Society for Visiting, Relieving and Investigating the Conditions of the Poor, to

[120] *London Times*, June 29, 1898, 10.
[121] *Speaker* 18 (1898), 769.

£5,106 in 1833, for the Friends of Foreigners in Distress. In 1845, the Anti-Corn Law League raised £25,000 in seventeen days.[122] Of course, not every bazaar was well attended or garnered a large profit, but these types of events were a proven money maker and, in fact, continue to be used effectively even today by churches, children's organizations, and international charities.[123]

The inclusion of actresses as stallholders, and the idea that they could sit side-by-side with society ladies and sell to middle- and upper-class attendees, demonstrates an aura of respectability inscribed on the figures of the actresses that would not have been possible in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Actresses started becoming frequently associated with charity bazaars starting in the 1880s when, as Hindson describes, a pattern of greater participation by actresses emerged. Actresses were familiar with participating in charity bazaars, fetes, and ladies fairs for theatrical causes, but prior to the 1880s, participation in raising funds for non-theatrical causes had been on more of an ad hoc basis.[124]

By the 1880s, the conflicting ideas of elite women and actresses acting in the "public sphere," negotiating and selling goods seems to have become socially acceptable, at least in the realm of the charity bazaar. According to Hindson, "There was no concealing the fact that the financial success of fundraising bazaars depended on one key dynamic: familiar women selling objects or experiences at inflated prices to male and female buyers."[125] But this had not been an entirely smooth transition, nor was it completely unproblematic by the end of the nineteenth

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[122] F. K. Prochaska, "Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 16:2 (1977), 64-68.
[123] See NATO Charity bazaar http://www.natocharitybazaar.org/ as an example of an annual charity bazaar that is currently running in 2018.
[124] Hindson, *London's West End Actresses* 74.
[125] Ibid, 86.

century. Bazaars organized by women were noteworthy in the press by the 1820s, and though these reports promoted the events and noted profits, they also displayed male discomfort with the idea of respectable women selling items in public spaces. Mrs. George Augustus Sala discussed early charity bazaars for a report submitted by Angelina Burdett-Coutts ahead of the 1893 Chicago Exhibition. Sala writes, "The first bazaar of any note was held long ago at York; and if I mistake not, the ladies who took part in it were rather bitterly reproached for turning themselves into shopkeepers even for sweet charity's sake and met with a good deal of opposition."[126] It is notable that in a report celebrating the work of British women in charity worldwide throughout the nineteenth century, the authors reflect that this work was not always accepted as morally responsible behavior. Middle- and upper-class women had to create a space where this kind of public interaction, and female charity work in general, could be considered appropriate.

An 1861 *Cornhill Magazine* article somewhat sardonically describes how a man should attend a charity bazaar. It inveighs, "and if you do come, make up your mind beforehand how much you intend to spend, and spend it like a man, with a cheerful countenance and without any absurd anxiety as to getting your money's worth."[127] Here, the article shares the understanding that bazaars are occasions meant for overspending, and insists that the male buyer should be

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[126] Mrs. George Augustus Sala, "Working Guilds and Work Societies," in Coutts-Burdett, *Woman's Mission*, 78. The bazaar in York that Sala mentions is difficult to distinguish. The first record of a nineteenth-century charity bazaar is recorded by Prochaska as occurring in 1813 organized by the Ladies Royal Benevolent Society for Visiting, Relieving, and Investigating the Condition of the Poor. Hindson, *West End Actresses,* 86, does mention "one of the earliest high-profile charity bazaars in York in December 1826" which may be the same bazaar Sala is discussing. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 49.

[127] *Cornhill Magazine*, September 1861, 339.

"manly" in playing along with the façade of the marketplace created by women. Of the women stallholders, the article states, "Numberless young ladies preside at the stalls, dressed in the height and breadth of the fashion, and never cease to attract public attention to the goods with the most winning, coaxing, insinuating, and…wheedling ways."[128] These negative representations of women stallholders demonstrate that there was an ongoing discomfort with women as sellers, even for charity causes, and that women as sellers were sexualized as flirtatious and manipulative, despite their elevated social class in their normal lives.

By the 1880s, the longevity and popularity of charity bazaars had eradicated most of the misgivings from earlier decades, but according to Hindson, one reason socially elite women valued and sought out actresses to participate in bazaars was because "their willingness to support such occasions eradicated the need for society's female personalities to offer new levels of access to their own carefully structured and managed public personas."[129] Actresses doing the selling mitigated for the elite women personal interactions with the public as actual sellers and allowed them to remain above the literal fray of the event, focusing instead on organizing the entire event and recruiting other women to sell the goods in the stalls. Because of their complex relationship to public space, fame, femininity, and work, actresses were ideal representatives to be present in bazaar stalls. They both were and were not seen as socially acceptable and were useful on both accounts.

As late as 1893, discomfort with upper-class women attending and selling at bazaars and communing with theatrical performers was still found in the press. An opinion piece in *Hearth*

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[128] Ibid.
[129] Hindson, *London's West End Actresses*, 78.

and Home exemplifies the social ambiguity of the bazaar. The author describes the seller in a way that invokes the male gaze, paying attention to the physical characteristics of the upper-class woman selling goods. "Look at her pretty bonnet, her dainty be-ribboned apron, her trim figure, her self-conscious posture. She gives you plenty of time to stare at her."[130] At other points in the article, the author calls the sellers "high-bred women in good positions" and "fashionable ladies," indicating that they were members of the upper classes. This description, though seemingly describing positive attributes of the women, belies the overall tone of the article which implies that the author does not actually approve of upper-class women serving in this capacity and using their feminine wiles to force men to buy the overpriced goods. Later in the same article, the author directly links the figure of salesperson with women and then with actresses. Describing an unnamed bazaar at the Portman Rooms, the article describes those working at the stalls of the bazaar. "Lots of pretty women were selling, and at least one famous actress, but not a solitary man put in an appearance the entire time we were there."[131] Here, the author is referring to the lack of men as salespeople. The author also states that if the women would be more business-like, they would not be as intimidating to the male buyers, indicating that they were selling to both male and female attendees. Though the author bemoans the upcharging for trinkets (echoing Charles Greville of 1833) and the fact that young girls were allowed to both buy and sell these unnecessary goods freely, the success of the beguiling saleswomen is never in question.[132] A sketch in *The Graphic* from 1872 represents both the success of the female salesperson and the social discomfort of having well-to-do women act as sellers. In this sketch,

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[130] "Bazaar Women" *Hearth and Home*, December 7, 1893, 123.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

entitled "The Besieged," one sees several men in top hats and suits being surrounded by attractive, well-dressed women who carry a variety of goods such as baskets, small trinkets, and jewelry. These women seem to be clamoring to get the men's attention. The background of the sketch shows a variety of items for sale, such as dolls, clothing, and stuffed animals hanging from the walls. The expressions on the men's faces are a mixture of enjoyment and discomfort. This sketch captures the frenetic experience of the bazaar and the way attendees both enjoy seeking the attention of the sellers and also feel overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience.[133]

The popularity and success of charity bazaars demonstrates the idea that actresses were sufficiently moral, feminine, and domestic to be a draw for middle-class female bazaar attendees. As Hindson writes, "Charity work offered the theatre industry and its celebrities a diverse and strategic performance sphere in which politics, culture, society, domesticity, and fame coalesced, celebrity identity could be created, managed, and sustained, and new networks established."[134] Just as charity organizations used performers' celebrity to bring in potential buyers with the lure of access to fame, performers—particularly female performers—leveraged their social acceptance at these events to positively enhance their own reputations and that of performers in general.

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[133] "The Besieged-A Sketch at a Grand Bazaar." *The Graphic* (London, England), Saturday, July 27, 1872; Issue 139. *British Library Newspapers, Part I.*

[134] Hindson, "Gratuitous Assistance," 27. In this article Hindson argues that the awards given to actresses by the Charing Cross Hospital Council for their participation in the bazaar represent a new level of social affirmation and recognition of actresses and that these kinds of events were instrumental in the upward social mobility of actresses in the late nineteenth century.

Actresses figured prominently in the 1899 Charing Cross Hospital Bazaar at Royal Albert Hall. So prominently, in fact, that the bazaar organizers asked members of the theatrical profession to organize and sit at a stall called "Stageland" that was one of the bazaar's highlights. 'Stageland" was one of the 24 stalls at this bazaar. Some stalls were named after countries and British colonies including "England," "Ireland," "India," and "South Africa," where women who with ties to these places sold representative goods. Other stalls were named for the types of goods sold there, such as "Bookland" and "Flowerland." In an interview intended to increase interest in the upcoming bazaar, the event organizer, Mrs. Arthur Paget, focused on Stageland. She said, "I believe that it will be one of our most attractive stalls…Mrs. Beerbohm Tree is presiding over it for us and is doing her best to make it a success. Mrs. Kendal has already promised to help at this stall, and so have Miss Julia Neilson and Mrs. George Alexander, and no doubt many interesting names will be added to that list later on."[135] Mrs. Paget knew that actresses would be a major draw for attendees, so she and her team were able to secure the participation of several of the most famous actresses of the day. She mentioned this stall in particular in the interview so that people would know that they could interact with major celebrities during the bazaar. Articles about this bazaar painstakingly describe the color and style of dress of all of the stallholders: elite women and actresses alike. The bazaar stalls and their stallholders were decorated to represent a variety of countries. The language used to describe the elite women stallholders is indistinguishable from that used to describe actresses. For instance, an article in the *Morning Post* describes the elite women sitting at the Greek Temple stall with "the ladies here wear white frocks and black picture hats, and while the Bazaar

[135] *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 10, 1899.

as a whole is a dream of fair women…sixteen of the most beautiful women are at this stall."[136] Later in the article, the actresses of Stageland are described as follows. "Here eminent ladies of the Drama, with Mrs. Beerbohm Tree at their head, all attired in cream-coloured dresses with blue sashes will sell you perfumery – "all the perfumes of Araby" is their motto – photographs, autographs, bon-bons, and original souvenir manuscripts."[137] For the press and its readers, elite women and actresses at the bazaar are all to be gazed at and admired for their fashion and beauty and are all, at least for this moment, arrayed in the same way.

A drawing of the event by Frank Craig (figure 4) that appeared in several newspapers demonstrates the integration of stage celebrities with aristocracy. In this image, one sees many fashionable people milling around the bazaar, all equally well dressed. In the foreground is a group of people who seem to be chatting. The women carry baskets, either goods they are selling or have recently purchased. The image caption lists the following names under their likenesses: Duchess of Marlborough, Duke of Connaught, Countess Westmoreland, Prince Henry of Pless, Miss Ellen Terry, Mr. Beerbohm Tree, and Lord Wantage. The drawing is arranged so that Ellen Terry, an actress at the height of her West End theatre career, is in the center, and it shows to great advantage her dress and the large bouquet of flowers that she is holding. Terry seems to be holding court with the other named figures who are gazing at her and are also speaking with her. Terry is gesturing toward one of the women, and the woman is leaning in toward Terry, which

[136] "Charing Cross Hospital, the Royal Albert Bazaar," *The Morning Post*, June 22,1899, 7.
[137] Ibid.

Figure 4: In Aid of Charing Cross Hospital: The Bazaar at Albert Hall, The Graphic, 1899

denotes that they are engaged in conversation.[138] Though Terry is clearly the object of others' gazes in the drawing, she is also represented as being among the attendees of the bazaar and engaging with them socially. Terry epitomizes the fraught relationship of society to fame in that her personal life involved unorthodox behavior—affairs, out-of-wedlock children—yet her fame, her charm, her association with legitimate theatre, and her own work to manage her public image allowed her to socialize with elite society. She also worked alongside the venerable Henry Irving at the most prestigious West End theatre, the Lyceum, and played some of the most

[138] *The Graphic*, July 1, 1899, issue 1544.

famous female characters of the time. Actor and theatre manager Beerbohm Tree is also depicted in the image, and is one of the men gazing at and potentially interacting with Terry. His presence is a further indication that actors and actresses were able to mingle with social elites at bazaars and that this was not considered unusual at this type of event. They gained social respectability from these kinds of encounters with the upper classes, which were captured by the press and printed for all to see.

Another way actresses normalized their charity event participation was in their writing. Several actresses discussed this work in their autobiographies. Usually published late in life as retrospectives, autobiographies are in themselves a form of identity shaping and memory making. That famous actresses chose to include vignettes about their charity participation in these monographs demonstrates that they often recognized that this was a part of their identity and responsibility as actresses. It also demonstrates that this engagement with charities could be honed in retrospect and in the present to portray the actress as charitable, domestic, and simultaneously as a person of note who would be a draw for attendees. Dame Madge Kendal (1848-1935) offhandedly mentions her charity support throughout her memoir, *Dame Madge Kendal By Herself* (1933). For instance, in a story ostensibly about meeting another even more famous actress, Kendal states, "I only met her once. This was at a large bazaar that was attended by everybody who was anybody, and at which I was asked to preside over the photograph stall."[139] Kendal here subtly tells her reader that she was important enough to be invited to be a stallholder at a large-scale charity event. At another point in her book, she states her belief that because actors and actresses must understand human nature so strongly to portray characters,

[139] Madge Kendal, *Dame Madge Kendal By Herself* (London: John Murray, 1933), 145.

they are also more disposed to acts of generosity towards their fellow humans than other people might be.[140]

In her autobiography *The Stage* (1929), actress Lena Ashwell (1872-1957) recalls participating in charity events during her stage heyday in the 1890s. She writes, "There used to be big bazaars and charity matinees when the very rich and the very great relied on the services of the workers in the Theatre to raise large sums of money for benevolent purposes."[141] She recalls that certain charities including the YMCA were initially concerned about using an actress as a sponsor, but that when she came to them as a respectable, middle-aged woman, these fears were allayed, and she became a representative for their cause. Here she uses her femininity, domesticity, and endowed respectability to assuage the charity of their misconceptions about performers. She convinces them that she is not only an appropriate advocate for their cause, but that her connections can help raise funds and awareness far and wide.[142] Ashwell's experience exemplifies the experience of many actresses who participated in charity events, both to help raise money for good causes which they cared about, but also to enhance their own off-stage reputations as they aspired for upward social mobility.

Charity Bazaars as Opportunities for Upward Social Mobility

For actresses, charity bazaars were much more than a place to interact with their fans outside the theatre and to cultivate their celebrity identity. Bazaars were also a complex social space in which actresses, social elites, and middle-class women mixed and mingled. Some social barriers broke down in the place of the bazaar, at least temporarily. The fact that actresses were

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[140] Ibid, 190.
[141] Lena Ashwell, *The Stage* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1929). 128.
[142] Ibid, 125.

invited to participate and were part of the bazaars' success factors demonstrates a marked change in their social acceptance, but this should not be considered a full acceptance of actresses into a new social status. The bazaar was a particular institution with its own rules of social interaction, allowing women to play a non-typical consumer and/or salesperson role and allowing actresses to interact with and work alongside social elites. This contributed to and correlated with increased social acceptance of individual actresses and the profession in general, but this was a complicated sort of acceptance. It did not necessarily herald a complete change in the social order outside of the bazaar environment.

Often, middle-class and wealthy women who had the leisure time, money, networks, and education necessary to plan a large-scale event undertook the work of organizing a bazaar for charity. These women were typically barred from taking official leadership roles in charity organizations, but they formed some of the first auxiliary societies and were counted on by the male leadership to provide the social connections, project management, and publicity necessary for successful events. Even in the middle of the nineteenth century, the work of organizing a bazaar was considered to be acceptable labor for refined women. Prochaska substantiates the beliefs of nineteenth-century men when he writes, "[A bazaar] offered an escape from lives of refined idleness or domestic drudgery; it provide an opportunity for public service compatible with household routine; and it was a reflection of the compassion that was thought to be at the heart of the female character."[143] Much of the literature about nineteenth-century charity work

[143] Prochaska "Charity Bazaars," 84.

indicates that the belief in the moral superiority and altruistic nature of women explains why they were more inclined to participate in these sorts of activities.[144]

In 1842, a nationwide Anti-Corn Law bazaar was held in Manchester, with stalls hosted by women from across the country. The *Manchester Times* reported that "ladies of great respectability and influence" proposed the bazaar as "the best means by which they could assist the agitation against the Corn Laws."[145] The article uses language of domesticity and femininity to explain women's participation in this event and normalizes their endeavors by stating that the cause is "non-political and one which greatly merited the sympathies of the intelligent and benevolent of that sex whom it now sought to engage in the cause, and one in the advancement of which the influence of ladies must be the most effective and beneficial."[146] The article also states, "the success of this appeal to the liberality and industry of enlightened and Christian ladies on behalf of suffering millions of their fellow creatures cannot be doubted."[147] The appeal to emotion, and the way the article puts women's participation in the bazaar on a moral pedestal, indicates that by the mid-nineteenth century, elite women regularly organized and participated in charity bazaars and that their work was considered a respectable use of their time and an effective way to raise money and interest in a cause.

For the event organizer, the work was surely time consuming and mentally and physically taxing, but it was essentially a labor of love. It was a way to feel like she was making a

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[144] See Prochaska "Charity Bazaars;" Owen, *English Philanthropy*; Poovey, *Uneven Developments*; and Elliott, *Angel Outside of the House* for more on separate spheres ideology, women and charity work, and ideals of moral superiority for Victorian women. See also Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.
[145] "Anti Corn Law League Plan." *Manchester Times*, February 5, 1842.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

difference and was involved in something worthwhile, or, as Prochaska intimated, a way to pass time and escape the boredom of the everyday. Actresses, however, did not necessarily share this understanding of this work. For them, charity work was inextricably linked to their professional lives and was an expectation of the business, not simply a choice of leisure activity.

It was very important for participants in a charity bazaar event, especially actresses, to control the event's narrative or to make sure their work and participation were noted in positive ways. They needed the press coverage to focus on both their compassion in giving their time and energy to this particular cause and in the way organizers used their fame and resources to put the cause in the public eye. It was also crucial the bazaar buyers believed that they too were supporting a worthy cause so that they would be willing to pay inflated prices for often-extraneous luxury items. The transactions could not be seen as free market, capitalist dealings, even though they were using a market schema. The items being sold were valued because of *who* was selling them and the cause that was being "bought." Value was not determined by the actual worth of the items being sold as in a typical market transaction. As the *Morning Post* reminds readers, "Of course the scale of prices is elastic and the highest bid will always be accepted."[148] Buyers were paying for the bazaar experience and the opportunity to attend an event with star power and wealth on display. Purchasing items was simply an indirect mode of charitable giving, an opportunity to meet and talk to a favorite celebrity. Haggling over the price of insignificant items offered a chance to flirt with, and be in the presence of, famous and high-status women and was not a typical free-market exchange.

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[148] "Charing Cross Hospital: The Albert Hall Bazaar." *The Morning Post*, Thursday, June 22, 1899.

The possibility of personal interaction with a celebrity during the sale increased the value of the object. As the epigraph of this chapter describes, part of the charity bazaar's aura was to "bewitch" buyers with the spectacle, the liveness of celebrities, and the overarching philanthropic mood, and to consequently inspire them to purchase items for which they had no need, or that provided only entertainment value or prestige. Actresses were able to use their emotive stage training and their ability to take on characteristics (in this case that of a saleswoman) to become ideal stallholders in the game of the charity bazaar.

Actresses demonstrated agency in the narrative of charity bazaars by choosing what organizations to align themselves with and what to sell in the stalls. Some sold trinkets, while others sold their autographed portraits (and later photographs). They both worked alone, alongside other non-famous sellers, or with other actresses. These various market situations told different stories and encouraged participants and buyers to behave in different ways. In situations where famed actresses sold goods alongside other actresses, the stall would be exciting and popular because of the nearness to fame that it engendered. According to the *Morning Post* on the Albert Hall Charing Cross Hospital Bazaar, "Stageland had a stall to itself."[149] Bazaar attendees clearly favored this actress-led stall, as it raised £150 on first day of the bazaar, more than any other stall.[150] In this stall, actresses were trading on their celebrity, selling items that reflected and augmented their fame and that were valuable because of their performer identities. According to Roach, this demonstrates society's desire to identify with and potentially even possess the celebrity, or at least her likeness. He writes about society's fascination with "the

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[149] "Charing Cross Hospital: The Albert Hall Bazaar." *The Morning Post*, Thursday Jun 22, 1899.
[150] *The Morning Post* Friday June 23, 1899.

wide circulation of a mesmerizing image of unobtainable yet wholly portable celebrity, now engraved in the minds of desiring subjects and consumers."[151] Actresses working together to sell items such as manuscripts and photographs relating to their own celebrity played into and increased social fascination with celebrity culture.

Other times, actresses worked in stalls with other wealthy women selling different kinds of goods. In these scenarios, actresses were not selling representations of themselves directly but were associating common goods with their celebrity endorsement, thereby increasing the value of these goods. The other women in the booth were, as discussed earlier, both augmenting the actresses' social status and enjoying reflective celebrity by their proximity to the performers.

Organizations controlled the narrative by choosing who would sponsor their events, who would be invited to work at their stalls, and what kind of goods and experiences were sold. These organizational decisions are demonstrated repeatedly in press coverage of charity bazaars. For instance, as early as 1826, an organization created to help distressed Spitalfields weavers raised over £600 at a bazaar patronized by the Lady Mayoress of London. The *Times* reported, "the ladies acquitted themselves in their new characters of shopkeepers most admirably."[152] An organization that could find royalty to sponsor events or could convince leading ladies and gentlemen from West End theatres to donate their time, and that was able to elicit press coverage before and during the event, was likely to command financial success in any fundraising endeavor. Having certain aristocrats and actresses of various levels of fame demonstrated the organization's power to use its network and to claim importance for its cause. Who they could

[151] Roach, *It*, 76.
[152] *The Times*, May 30, 1826.

get to represent them would influence how much money they raised, how popular their event was, and where and when their event could take place, with the most popular charity events falling during the Christmas or spring seasons in major cities. All of these factors indicated the relative importance of the cause to British society at that time.

Conclusion

Actresses' participation in charity events is evidence of, and correlated with, the improving social respectability of female performers, especially legitimate stage actresses, over the course of the nineteenth century. Participating in charity events as stall saleswomen indicates that actresses were sought after for their fame, which would garner media and social attention to the charity cause. Roach calls these "abnormally interesting personae" "role-icons." According to him, "the role-icon represents a part that certain exceptional performers play on and off stage, no matter what other parts they enact from night to night…Such role-icons… raise expectations in anticipation of their auratic presence at an event regardless of other attractions on the bill."[153] Actresses were also considered, at least for the duration of the event, suitable partners to work alongside the middle- and upper-class women who predominantly planned, organized, and facilitated mid- to late-nineteenth century charity fundraising events. Actresses who participated in these events were able to change, manage, and increase their reputations as socially respectable individuals. This participation also ideally helped to increase the respectability and scope of the women in the profession as a whole.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated how the extra-theatrical liveness and proximity afforded by charity events, particularly bazaars, created an environment where

[153] Roach, *It*, 39-40.

attendees—primarily middle- and upper-class women—could interact and engage with celebrities in a seemingly authentic way. Working with actresses as stallholders allowed middle- and upper-class women to absorb some of the celebrity and popularity, or "It-Effect," embodied by actresses. Being stallholders also allowed actresses to do some of the work of selling in the public sphere, a task that was still problematic for elite women.

I also described how, by selling at stalls and making themselves available to the public in non-theatrical events, actresses could situate themselves as socially upwardly mobile, thereby allowing actresses the agency to associate themselves with models of femininity and domesticity; models that were both complicated and simplified by their professional reputation as public women.

Finally, I briefly investigated the differences between the ways that male and female performers and theatre professionals interacted with charity events and organizations. It is impossible to fully understand how nineteenth-century women participated in and responded to both the public and private sphere without comparing how men themselves perceived, and were perceived by, their environments. While both male and female performers benefited socially and professionally from their participation in charity events, they did so in different ways. Male performers, like male elites, typically held leadership positions in charity organizations (both theatrical and non-theatrical) and were noted in the press for their participation and financial donations. Female performers, having both more to lose and more to gain in how they interacted with socially elite individuals and others in the public sphere, did more of the "work" of charity events.

In general, female participation in charity tended toward volunteer work and interactions with target groups, largely because middle- and upper-class women internalized and utilized distinct ideologies that proclaimed them to be morally and domestically suited for this kind of work and exemplars of femininity for the poor and working classes. The participation of actresses in charity events was a way for them to gain social mobility and acceptance, and a way to publicly demonstrate that they already represented feminine virtues by donating their labor.

CHAPTER 2

Exploding Feminine Myths: How Victorian Actresses Challenged Dominant Victorian Ideologies through Autobiographical Writing

In a memoir published anonymously in 1885, the author we now believe to be actress Alma Ellerslie (dates unknown) writes,[1] "It has struck me that just now, when there is so much curiosity as to the private lives of those who are before the public, a glimpse at the real life of a provincial actress might be of some interest, perhaps even of some use."[2] Ellerslie's descriptions of her life as a working actress, as well as her exhortations to future generations, demonstrate her love of her work and her desire to appear to readers as a representative of domestic, moral womanhood. She endeavors to maintain her respectability, despite being a woman working in the public sphere in an era where such work was antithetical to femininity.[3] She was also a member of a profession predicated on the display of performers' bodies. Victorian-era British actresses like Ellerslie inhabited a social world in which the actresses' off-stage reputations were morally suspect because of the public nature of their work.[4] Many of these women were, however, simultaneously concerned about creating an identity and reputation for themselves that would rehabilitate the image of "the actress" and allow for female members of their profession to assimilate into higher social strata. They were highly concerned with the appearance of social

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[1] The most recent research into the potential life of this writer was conducted by Viv Gardner in "'The Diary of an Actress': An Introduction," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 32:1 (spring 2005).
[2] H.C. Shuttleworth, ed., *Diary of an Actress: or Realities of Stage Life* (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden, and Welsh, 1885), 11.
[3] Martin A. Danahay, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art, and Masculinity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 4.
[4] See Powell, Kerry. *Women and Victorian Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 1-2

respectability. Actresses wanted to increase their social status and make their profession more respectable. The community of theatrical women also provided a network that gave strength and some level of protection to women in the profession and allowed members to develop social ties. Through writing, actresses demonstrated consciousness of a need to establish themselves and other women of the profession within the bounds of feminine respectability domesticity and morality.[5]

In actresses' autobiographical writing, we see their intentional decisions to adhere to norms of nineteenth-century life writing and situate their life stories in ways that de-stigmatized their profession and reframed working as a positive social situation for women. For instance, actresses demonstrated their virtuousness in their memoirs by narrating how they eschewed inappropriate relationships with men due to their profession's long hours of study, rehearsal, and performance. They also described how working enabled them to save their money to support their own families and to participate in charitable events.

In this chapter, I examine how actresses used the genre of autobiography to inscribe respectability upon themselves and upon the women of their profession more generally. Actresses writing during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, who were diverse in their fame, artistic choices, and social respectability (including some who were considered to live "bohemian" lives), generally aligned their stories with the predominant mode of respectable

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[5] For more information on women's theatrical clubs and support networks in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see the following: Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford, *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992) and Katherine Cockin, *Women and Theatre in the Age of Suffrage: The Pioneer Players, 1911-1925* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

female autobiographical writing. I argue that this fact demonstrates their desire for both the publications and the narratives within to be widely read and to promote certain qualities of the authors over others. Actresses articulated their respectability and association with middle-class values in many ways throughout their writing, but this move is most apparent in four themes that come up in most autobiographies: early childhood reminiscences about parents and families, the transition between the private home and the public stage, their adult married and domestic lives, and their dedication to the profession's demand for hard work, which prevented them from engaging in inappropriate behavior.

Throughout this chapter, I investigate specific examples of actresses using the similar tropes, themes, and even phrases to describe their life stories and their career trials and successes in their autobiographical writing. They wrote this way to portray themselves as representatives of middle-class feminine values, to justify their life choices to a reading public, and to enact positive change in existing views of their profession and their identities as working, public, women. The similarities among the actresses' writings are intentional and striking, and they indicate a sense of purpose towards enacting reputation management and social status change.

I argue that actresses were not using their writing in an attempt to simply fit into middle-class society. Instead, they actively sought social acceptance and upward mobility for themselves and their profession, documenting how they embodied femininity and domesticity in spite of, and even because of, their roles as public women. Through their writings, actresses demonstrated how their public position as celebrities allowed them access to middle- and upper-class audiences and society events, in which they could perform the social traits of the upper classes. Their autobiographical writings specifically situate their lives within a collective

identity of actresses, all working to manage and alter their personal and professional reputations. The way they remember events and describe them in their autobiographies is indicative of how this community identity was articulated. As anthropologist Paul Connerton writes, "to remember, then, is precisely not to recall events as isolated; it is to become capable of forming meaningful narrative commitment. An attempt is being made to integrate isolated or alien phenomena into a single, unified process."[6] It is this unified commitment to identity formation that makes the actresses' autobiographies so informative as both historical and social records.

No genre is monolithic and there are, of course, notable exceptions to the trends that I articulate throughout this chapter. Lillie Langtry, for instance, in her *The Days I Knew* (1925), presents herself as an unapologetically strong woman who defied her parents to go onstage and who enjoyed sharing her exploits without seemingly caring what readers thought of her character.[7] In some ways, the existence of exceptional autobiographies makes it even more clear that the majority of other female writers were coalescing around the normative genre traditions of female autobiography in order to associate with feminine ideologies.

Autobiography as Genre

The terms autobiography, memoir, and even biography were all used somewhat interchangeably in the nineteenth century to describe published self-writing.[8] Diaries, journals, and correspondence have also been used as examples of self-writing, as all of these forms shed

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[6] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 26.
[7] Lillie Langtry, *The Days That I Knew* (New York: George H. Duron Company), 1925.
[8] For more on how biography and autobiography were used somewhat interchangeably in the nineteenth century see Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33-34.

light on the lived experiences of nineteenth-century actresses. In order to be inclusive of the variety of published sources considered "auto" biographical, I use the term "lifewriting," as defined by Sharon Marcus, to describe the kinds of self-writing evidence mentioned in this chapter. Marcus defines lifewriting as "any text that narrates or documents a subject's life."[9] For this study, I restrict my corpus to works that have been published, as the act of publication demonstrates a desire to have one's story read by an audience beyond oneself and one's family and friends. Unpublished diaries and manuscripts may often present similar narratives and could be used as additional evidence of actresses' experiences. In fact, actresses often admit in their published autobiographies that they used their own unpublished diaries, letters, and manuscripts as evidence of not only what occurred in the past, but also how they felt about events as they were occurring. They used these archives to create the writings they intended to publish. Their published work is designed to be read by broader audiences and is edited to fit the contemporary norms of the genre of autobiographical writing. It is this allegiance to the genre that makes the individual examples of lifewriting tell a collective story about the experiences of women in theatre in their similarities of language, themes, tropes, and recorded events.

Autobiographical writing is both useful and problematic as historical evidence. Autobiographical writing is, by definition, anecdotal and personal. It is the subjective writing of one individual detailing his or her perspective on past events. By the early-nineteenth century, according to Jacky Bratton, a popular market already existed for autobiographical writing "containing good stories about the theatre or private details about individuals great and small."[10]

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[9] Ibid, 34.
[10] Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 95.

As Bratton notes, autobiographical writings have "not often been read for what their writers or their subjects seem to stress, or what their contemporary readership might have understood of theatre history from them."[11] She explains that academic theatre historians have considered this type of writing to be "popular publication" unworthy of serious academic study. However, Bratton and other scholars have demonstrated the potential in using autobiographical material as a way to triangulate personal evidence with other primary source evidence, in order to gain a variety of perspectives on events and periods of history. In resurrecting autobiography as useful historical evidence, Bratton uses Jonathan Bates' idea of the representative anecdote, in which the point of autobiographical writing is not factual, but representative truth, a way of getting at a historical individual's characteristic disposition.[12] Thomas Postlewait also writes about anecdotes and actresses' personal writing and notes, "the challenge, then, is not simply to reject them but to analyze anecdotes carefully in order to establish their historical authenticity […]in terms of the concepts of possibility, plausibility, probability, and certainty."[13] Anecdotal personal writing cannot be used alone to establish historical "facts." This type of writing, however, creates an archive of first-person experiences and interpretations of events that can be used to better understand historical time periods and cultures. Postlewait, in comparing autobiographical writing to acting, demonstrates how both forms of artistic expression tread between reality and interpretation. He writes, "acting and autobiographies alike have offered culturally significant modes for representing and dramatizing the dialectical relation between

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, 103.
[13] Thomas Postlewait, "The Criteria for Evidence: Anecdotes in Shakespearean Biography, 1709-2000," *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*. ed. W.B. Worthen and Peter Holland (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 48.

appearances and reality, falsehood and truth, surface and depth, social roles and psychological being, performance and audience."[14] Autobiography can be used to confirm how individuals viewed themselves and their communities, and it is therefore useful in ascertaining how individuals and groups articulated their identities and created social positions for themselves.

Anecdotal personal writing aligns also with the tradition of the individual's role in collective memory and group identity-making, as defined by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and Connerton. According to Halbwachs, "While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember."[15] Individuals' memories and interpretations of past events collectively create the social memory of groups. As Connerton states, "the production of more or less *informally* [emphasis in original] told narrative histories turns out to be a basic activity for characterization of human actions. It is a feature of all communal memory."[16] This informal narrativizing includes written personal histories and anecdotes meant for general readerships. Connerton describes personal narrative:

> We situate the agent's behavior with reference to its place in their life history; and we situate that behavior also with reference to its place in the history of the social settings to which they belong. The narrative of one life is part of an interconnecting set of narratives; it is embedded in the story of those groups from which individuals derive their identity.[17]

Connerton demonstrates, from an anthropological perspective, how narratives work in a collective, and that individual narratives form a part of a larger archive of group identity and

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[14] Thomas Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance* ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 251.
[15] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 48.
[16] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 16-17.
[17] Ibid, 21.

group memory. Postlewait discusses how group identity coheres through writing. "Performers, working together in the theatre and sharing similar cultural experiences and values, reveal (and conceal) many of the same attitudes, experiences, and beliefs."[18] Many performers shared life experiences that formed their core beliefs, but like anything else, these experiences were not uniform, as there were striking differences between the experiences and identifications of male and female performers.

Both men and women wrote autobiographies. In the nineteenth century especially, there are marked gender-based differences in how men and women wrote about their lives. A typical male autobiography was written in a linear fashion describing events from birth to the present day (or to the end of the period in which the man ceased to be a public figure). There was, as Marcus states, a "coherent, self-conscious narrative focused on a strictly demarcated individual self" in male autobiographical writing.[19] Bratton articulates, "The masculinist assumption is that men choose to publish their life stories when and because they have a sense of their own autonomy and difference, and their unique importance in the public life of their day."[20] According to Bratton, men wrote autobiographies to be seen as "actors" or "doers", not "objects."[21] These accounts usually started with childhood and led up to the point at which the male writer made significant contributions to society. Postlewait agrees, "Most men of the era usually treated private matters as irrelevant to a report on public life. The career is the essential thing: the source of identity, the achievement of independent character and willpower. The

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[18] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 257.
[19] S. Marcus, *Between Women*, 33.
[20] Jacky Bratton, *The Making of the West End Stage: Marriage, Management, and the Mapping of Gender in London 1830-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 101.
[21] Ibid.

public life defined male identity."[22] Actors made themselves the "lead" character in their autobiographies, demonstrating their individual choices, leadership, and talent as the basis for becoming successful.

Susan Stanford Friedman, in contrast, questions the conceptions of the genre of autobiography as it applies to women. She writes, "the emphasis on individualism as the necessary precondition for an autobiography is thus a reflection of privilege, one that excludes from the canon of autobiography those writers who have been denied by history the illusion of individualism."[23] Jane Marcus is even more explicit in her depiction of female autobiography writers. She states, "They were famous women, in the public eye. They left their signatures on public discourse. But they anticipated obscurity because of their gender, and they wrote their memoirs as a hedge against certain deflation of their reputations. They were not writers, but made themselves into writers in a bid for eternity."[24] Jane Marcus and Friedman point towards the difference between male-written and female-written autobiographies. Men wrote autobiographies to ensure that their own interpretations of their great deeds would be captured for posterity and that their names would be exalted. Women, no matter how famous in their own lifetimes, wrote autobiographies to avoid becoming culturally and historically irrelevant. In the twentieth century, the common perception of nineteenth-century theatre was that men were the entrepreneurs and leaders, and the role of most women was subsumed. Kerry Powell writes,

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[22] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 263.
[23] Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice." *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 39.
[24] Jane Marcus, "Invincible Mediocrity: the Private Selves of Public Women," *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 119.

"Victorian theatre conspired in producing repressive codes of gender even as it provided women with a rare opportunity to experience independence and power."[25] Powell's argument uses the writings of late-Victorian male theatre reviewers and practitioners for evidence. These writers focused on their own contributions to theatre and often elided the contributions of women, except for those who held masculine positions of power, such as managing theatres. In *The Making of the West End Stage* (2011), Bratton unmasks this assertion by "exploring the decades of female management and stage power that preceded [the masculine panic]."[26] She argues throughout her monograph that many women were active in leadership roles and theatrical management in the nineteenth century, but that they were essentially written out of the received historical record by hegemonic male-recorded histories. Women writing autobiographies during this period, especially in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, attempted to write themselves back into the history from which they were disappearing. According to Valerie Sanders, "Increasingly, women felt that what had happened to them, whether at home or abroad, whether commonplace or extraordinary, deserved retelling, especially to other women, who could find it 'useful.'"[27]

Because female autobiographers were writing for different reasons than those of men, and they were usually writing primarily for a female readership, their writing did not follow the same genre rules as male writing.[28] Women did not always write in a linear and self-

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[25] Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre*.
[26] Bratton, *West End Stage*, 145.
[27] Valerie Sanders, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 3.
[28] Mary-Jean Corbett describes how nineteenth-century female autobiographers were largely writing for female audiences and from a feminine point of view in *Representing Femininity:*

aggrandizing fashion, and they did not seek to mark themselves as unique individuals. Women conceived of themselves as belonging to communities, and their individual contributions to events were often described as collaborations towards a group effort. Women strove to fit in and to ascribe upon themselves an identity consistent with a group of which they wanted to be part. As Jane Marcus notes, female writers used autobiographies to demonstrate that they were high achievers in their fields, but also to prove that despite their achievements, they were also women, "creatures for whom relationship and community were very important."[29] As Friedman argues, "the self constructed in women's autobiographical writing is often based in, but not limited to, a group consciousness, an awareness of the cultural category WOMAN [emphasis in original] for the patterns of women's individual destiny."[30] The fact that individual women wrote about their lives gave these women a way to preserve their stories and contributions for future generations. The style in which they wrote created a pattern of "womanliness" and a genre of women's writing that is clearly differentiated from male writing, even in the same autobiography genre.

Public writing was a problematic and complex task for Victorian women. Many middle-class women by this period were becoming more educated and literate, so they consequently participated in private writing such as journals, diaries, and personal correspondence. According to Sanders, the "great mass" of diaries, journals and other writings by women "testifies to a widespread preoccupation with individual experience, and a desire to communicate it, if only privately, or in a disguised form."[31] Public writing, however, created some anxiety for and about

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Middle- Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[29] J. Marcus, "Invincible Mediocrity," 127.

[30] Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves," 40-1.

[31] Sanders, *Victorian Women*, 2-3.

female authors. Women were writing in private and writing for the public, but there was more at stake for women writers than for male writers. According to Corbett:

> The anxiety among women writers about going public is linked to women's cultural positioning on the inside, at the center of the domestic circle, which is itself circumscribed by the larger circle of the public world. Because nineteenth-century middle-class women derive their primary social and cultural self-definitions from their identification with the private realm, for writers to maintain their placement in that realm even as they symbolically move outside it requires, above all, tact: knowing themselves to be divided between the privacy of the domestic and the publicity of the market, they may yet minimize the effects of their rupture with conventional femininity by not calling attention to it.[32]

Tracy Davis investigates this issue as it pertained to female playwrights in the nineteenth century. She argues, "women had a great deal at stake in writing plays, for it represented in the composition, publication, reading and performance widespread and important modes of participating in the political act of sociability."[33] This social participation would have been true of female autobiographers as well, since their texts were intended for wide audiences and were creating a social identity for the writers. There were many successful female authors in the nineteenth century, however, writing for publication entailed an often fraught deviation from the private, domestic world and entry into the public world of professions. It was important for women writers to develop a female voice if they wanted to maintain or claim respectable femininity. As Jane Marcus argues, women used autobiography intentionally because it was a "soft" literature genre that did not compete with the grander genres. She writes, "Unlike the epic

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[32] Mary-Jean Corbett, "Performing Identities: Actresses and Autobiography," *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, Kerry Powell, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 58-9.

[33] Tracy C. Davis, "The Sociable Playwright and Representative Citizen," *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, eds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18.

poetry, the drama, or the novel, the memoir made no grand claims to high artistic achievement. Consequently, women could write in this genre without threatening male hegemony or offering claims to competition."[34] Gay Gibson Cima further explains how women could be authors and still be feminine. She says that a female playwright had to be "*invisibly* talented, and in a God-given, 'natural' manner…there could be no public display of her training, virtuosity, or labor."[35] Like female playwrights, actresses writing autobiographies also focused on the naturalness and inevitability of their life on the stage and often minimized their abilities to record their lives. This ideal in part explains the humility and under-valuing of writing skills that many of the actresses demonstrated in their introductions to their lifewriting. According to Postlewait, "actresses have attempted to prove that their careers, instead of being corrupting, provide a healthy environment for family and women in general."[36] The often self-deprecating way that actresses wrote about themselves and their successes in their autobiographies mirrors the invisible talent that Cima suggests female playwrights strove to portray.

I argue that through memoirs and autobiographies, actresses working in the mid- to late-Victorian period used rhetorical tropes suggesting a moral and traditional upbringing, domesticity, motherhood, and conformity to middle-class feminine values to ascribe respectability and markers of middle-class identity upon themselves. They used lifewriting purposefully because it was a genre that allowed them to write about their personal experiences

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[34] J. Marcus, Invincible Mediocrity," 120.
[35] Gay Gibson Cima, "'To Be Public as a Genius and Private as a Woman': the Critical Framing of Nineteenth-Century British Women Playwrights," *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, eds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 42.
[36] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 266.

in life and the theatre. However, these individual narratives were also part of a newly forming collective identity of female performers and can be seen as a form of female agency and challenging of the status quo.

The data for this chapter includes autobiographies and memoirs published throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that discuss the theatrical and personal lives of actresses working in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The corpus I investigate includes works by actresses who achieved various levels of fame and prestige during their careers, and those who came from both theatrical and non-theatrical families, from a variety of social and economic classes. This variety is important to demonstrate that actresses across the social and economic spectrum were writing their stories in ways that conformed to the genre standards and to the writings of other female performers. In order to ascertain the trends I discuss I engaged in close reading of more than 30 autobiographies of actresses from the late-eighteenth through early-twentieth centuries and digitally scanned additional writings by actresses and other performers as well as other notable women autobiographers of this period to identify tropes, phrases, and ideas that appeared regularly in this genre of writing.

I analyze the shared rhetoric present in many such works in order to establish how these writings both aligned with the paradigms of the existing genre of autobiography and subverted it by creating a new space for these women to be representatives of middle-class femininity ideologies. This analysis consists primarily of close reading of individual texts to determine how individual authors organized their own life stories. I also read across the texts to understand how the individual texts relate to one another and to trace a genealogy of the genre of actresses' autobiographical writing across the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to interpret evidence

of feminine identification. Reading these texts allows me to become familiar with the language and tone of each work and to identify elisions and gaps in stories that can often be as meaningful as the actual text that is presented.

In the following sections, I demonstrate how actresses used specific parts of their autobiographies to conform to genre standards and to map an identity of respectability upon themselves and their profession, so that they could alleviate ideological concerns about morality and appropriateness. When triangulated with other markers of respectability that actresses were engaging with during the nineteenth century, including participation in charity events and advertising for middle-class consumer items, we see the efforts of actresses to assert their respectability, femininity, and also their celebrity as integrated aspects of their identities.

Introductions/Invocations to Write

Many actresses' autobiographies begin with a direct address—found in the preface, introduction, or opening pages—explaining to readers how she came to write her autobiography. In these direct addresses to the reader, the actress begs excuse for her lack of writing ability and lack of knowledge of how to begin writing her life story. She usually then apologizes for the ensuing content, describing herself in humble terms as unworthy of the attention she has received in her life and certainly unworthy of bragging about it in a self-written narrative. The actresses then assert that they are only writing at the bequest of friends, family, and/or fans who have repeatedly asked them to leave some memories of their theatrical life for posterity. Eighteenth-century star Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) gives, perhaps, the best example of one of these introductions, especially considering how notorious she was, and how humble she attempts to be in her memoir. She says:

> I begin by professing that the retrospect of my Domestick [sic] life, sadly presenting little but Sickness, Sorrow, and death Is [sic] too painful to my feelings to dwell upon, too sacred and delicate for communication. Remenicences [sic] of a less private nature would associate me with persons too August too noble, and too illustrious, for me to presume to mingle them with the private details of so inconsiderable so humble a person as myself; so that nothing remains except meer [sic] commonplace-matter, and events already partly known. When I am laid low however, even this imperfect Narrative may perhaps have some interest for those few friends who may yet survive, to remember me and my appropriate qualities.[37]

Though Siddons indicates that she will not share much about her private life in her memoir and will also not gossip about the "august" people she has associated with over her career, she shares anecdotes about how much King George III and his wife appreciated her acting and other anecdotes of notable people. She only describes stories and events that occurred for a few years in the middle of her long career, yet she believes that this short narrative may be "of interest" to readers. Writing just before her death in 1831, Siddons set a model followed by subsequent nineteenth-century autobiographers.

Bratton theorizes that this direct address to readers presupposes a primarily female readership and is an example of how actresses used their autobiographies to establish themselves as part of the community of women. According to Bratton:

> The most pervasive characteristic of *female* [emphasis in original] autobiography…is argued to be self-definition in relation to significant others; so that, rather than a sense of individual autonomy, a sense of identification, interdependence and community is key in the development of women's identity and therefore also central in their stories of themselves.[38]

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[37] William van Lennep, ed., *The Reminiscences of Sarah Kemble Siddons, 1773-1785* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Widener Library, 1942), 1-2. William van Lennep was the curator of the Harvard Theatre Collection at the time that Siddon's manuscript was discovered. He published this "fair copy" of her hand-written manuscript in 1942, claiming to present it exactly as she had written it.

[38] Bratton, *New Readings*, 101-102.

In the case of Siddons, Bratton argues that this introduction demonstrates that the actress felt too restricted in her role as a female member of society to envision having a private, individual existence that would be of any interest to non-theatrical people. The "star" with no equal onstage could not conceive of her private life, or even her interpretation of events she had experienced, to be interesting to others. This, of course, is a rhetorical trick to make the author appear humble; she chose to publish her text knowing that people would be interested in her words. But she maintains feminine "invisibility" by suggesting that others inveigled her to write and she is simply acquiescing to their demands.

Writing almost a century later, Violet Vanbrugh (1867-1942) begins her narrative in a similar way. She describes her difficulty in penning her thoughts until encouraged by unnamed friends. She justifies the decision to actually write her narrative as her attempt to give advice to future generations of girls considering the stage as a career. She writes:

> Well, I will try, and it may be that in this, my first effort, I shall happen to get in touch with the power of expressing some thoughts that will help, and if by so doing I can inspire one girl with courage or impress on her the importance of hard and thorough work, or even if I only point out some pitfall to avoid – some danger to shun – I shall not have tried in vain.[39]

Like Siddons, Vanbrugh is humble about her writing ability, reinforcing to readers that this is her "first attempt" at writing a narrative. She also addresses the reader as a friend, indicating a presumed female audience, and assumes a readership of girls considering entering her profession. Much of her narrative is written in the style of an advice book for fledgling actresses. Also, like Siddons, she has humble aspirations for her narrative. She claims she will be happy if she can inspire "one girl" with her words. Vanbrugh was a celebrated actress known

[39] Violet Vanbrugh, *Dare to Be Wise* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), 7.

by many, but again, rhetorically, she pretends to not consider herself or her narrative to be worthy of mass attention even as she publishes the memoir for a wide readership. This downplaying of fame and talent is common in the autobiographical writing of actresses. I argue that this is part of how these actresses made their narratives appeal to middle-class readers and attempted to associate themselves with the ideals of respectable femininity. These women knew full well that there was a market for their reminiscences and memoirs. Publishers had solicited them to print their words, and the public was hungry for the "backstage" gossip and theatrical stories these women could tell. According to Postlewait, even as early as the eighteenth century, "newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books fed the public's new appetite for production reviews, gossip, encomia, satire, and slander on the performers' public and private activities."[40] In writing these kinds of introductions, however, actresses were inscribing a specific identity upon themselves. According to Jane Marcus, "Their achievements were brilliant, but they show themselves in the *mediocrity* [emphasis in original] of their lives as women who are connected to community by the ordinariness and materiality of their womanhood."[41] Marcus continues by stating that, in female autobiography, there is an assumed collaboration between writer and reader that does not occur in individualistic male autobiographies. Unlike males, women writers reproduce women's culture as a conversation between reader and writer, in which the reader must take an active role.[42]

Eva Moore (1870-1955) is another example of an actress addressing her readers as friends. In *Exits and Entrances* (1923), she states that she is writing her memoir because she

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[40] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 249.
[41] J. Marcus, *Invincible Mediocrity*, 127.
[42] Ibid, 137.

thought she should share her stories of the "old days" with her own children who had also become performers. She says that if these stories would be interesting to them, they might also be interesting to "other people's boys and girls" as well.[43] Like other actresses, she describes her attempts at writing with humility and places herself not as the "star" of her own narrative, but as merely a player. She says, "It may all seem to be 'my story,' but very often I shall only be the string on which are hung the bravery, kindness, and goodness of the really great people."[44] Elisabeth Fagan (d. 1939) begins her narrative in much the same way. "It is then, about these…interesting people, that I – with no claim to interest – intend to write, but at the same time I ask you to grant me your patience, at times, when I may seem to you to be writing about myself instead. It is necessary […] in order to make clear how I came to meet these same interesting ones."[45] Fagan directly addresses her imagined audience and begs their forgiveness for sharing her own "prattle" in her attempts to tell the story of her theatrical life. She adheres to the feminine style of writing by effacing her role in her own story, apologizing for talking about herself in order to tell stories of those who are more "interesting."

Jessie Milward (1861-1932) expresses perhaps the greatest anxiety with writing about herself as she begins her narrative with the single word "I!" She then discusses how this letter is fraught with much more meaning than any other letter, and she subsequently opens up to a discussion of how she does not want to infuse her narrative with stories about herself. She writes, "So when people have suggested to me that some record of my life might be of interest

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[43] Eva Moore, *Exits and Entrances* (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1923), 1.
[44] Ibid, 2.
[45] Elisabeth Fagan, *From the Wings by "the Stage Cat"* (London: W Collins Sons and Co., Ltd., 1922), 1.

both to the public with which I grew up and to the public which is growing up, a horrible vision presented itself to me of rigid, uncompromising 'I's' flashing through the pages as telegraph posts…flash past through the windows of an express train."[46] She decides, however, that the "I's" of her narrative will be complemented by the stories of other people with whom she worked and the artistry that they achieved together, so she begs forgiveness from her readers for the incessant "I" and asks them to mentally substitute "one" or "they" if they get bored with "I."[47] Milward again demonstrates the anxiety of female writers who put themselves at the center of their own narratives, and she intentionally places herself within a community of performers so that her work is not that of an individual. This stylistic choice establishes her as a conventional, feminine woman who also has a public career.

Milward's anxiety about overusing the letter "I" can be contrasted with the determination of male writers to specifically cast themselves in the leading role of their autobiographical narratives. For instance, Charles Mathews (1803-1878) also begins his autobiography, *The Life of Charles James Mathews* (1879), with an apology.[48] However, unlike the humble, self-deprecating apologies of female writers, Mathews' "apology" is merely an excuse to flaunt his theatrical qualities, as he purports to care nothing for what society thinks of him. He writes, "I have flown in the face of the world and its prejudices – have followed my own course through good and evil in my own way – have set at defiance what are generally denominated the laws of propriety – and have forfeited all claim to what is called by the world respectability."[49] Mathews'

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[46] Jessie Milward, *Myself and Others* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923), 8.
[47] Ibid, 9.
[48] Mathew's autobiography was edited by Charles Dickens and published posthumously.
[49] Charles Mathews, *The Life of Charles James Mathews* v. 1. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1879), 1.

attitude towards respectability elides how even male performers faced anti-theatrical prejudice in the nineteenth century, due to what Jonas Barish calls the "visible disorder in the lives of its practitioners."[50] Davis also discusses the visibility and simultaneous invisibility of Victorian performers. She writes that theatre performers "were everywhere and nowhere in Victorian culture."[51] Performers of both genders often faced "low working-class wages, social ostracism, and the constant threat of unemployment."[52] However, as a male, Mathews enjoyed social privileges of being expected to work and to be in public spaces that his female theatre colleagues did not. He could make an outlandish claim to defy propriety, both because as a theatre practitioner he could trade on his social outsider status and as a man he was always already accepted in the public sphere. According to Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, "the expression 'public man' was clearly redundant,"[53] Mathews and other male actors focused more on their careers than their private lives in their writing and were comfortable inhabiting their masculine privilege. According to Postlewait, "Most men of the era usually treated private matters as irrelevant to a report on public life. The career is the essential thing, the source of identity, the achievement of independent character and willpower. The public life defined male identity."[54] Actresses were also defined by their public lives at a time when this was unusual for women, but they had to excuse or rehabilitate their public life, not embrace it, through their writing.

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[50] Jonah Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 319.
[51] Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 3.
[52] Ibid, xiii.
[53] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), xxvi.
[54] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 263.

Though actresses expressed humility in their justification for writing, adhering to the motifs of humility that would define them as being appropriately feminine, some also simultaneously understood that it was necessary to prove that their writing and their stories were worthwhile. Female autobiographies from the nineteenth century, as Martha Wilson notes, are notable in that they exist at all. Women had to overcome the "reticence typical of their gender" to even write the personal stories.[55] As Wilson writes, "the story as a whole must justify the telling; the author must demonstrate either explicitly or implicitly that her life has sufficient meaning and importance to warrant being recorded and read."[56] The invocations of humility and the apologies featured in most introductions, including the previous examples in this section, demonstrate the type of explicit justification that Wilson discusses. These women believe their stories to be important but feel they must justify their public writing to their audiences.

Other women, however, took more ownership of their success. But even these women still couched their stories in a rhetoric of humility and appreciation for their readers. Jessie Bond (1853-1942) demonstrates this type of exhortation to her readers. She writes:

> So now, will you listen to the story of my long life, chequered with joy and sorrow and hope and despair like all lives, but perhaps with brighter patches than most. All that was best in that London of last century I have tasted: I have seen my ambitions realized and my wildest hopes fulfilled; I have known great sorrow also. Now I look back on it all through a mist of memories, an old woman resting from the labours of a lifetime.[57]

Like other female writers, she asks her readers to indulge her storytelling and explains that her life had ups and downs "like all lives," but she also dangles the proposal of some interesting

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[55] Martha Wilson, *Lives of Their Own: Rhetorical Dimensions in Autobiographies of Women Activists* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 1.
[56] Ibid, 4.
[57] Jessie Bond, *The Life and Reminiscences of Jessie Bond the Old Savoyard* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head Limited, 1930), 16.

stories to make her life seem a bit more interesting than most. Bond digresses slightly from the norm by placing herself at the center of her own narrative in her direct address to the reader, but it is a center that is mediated by time. She writes as an old woman looking back proudly upon her life on the stage. For the majority of her narrative, however, she actually places William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan as the protagonists of her life story and herself as essentially dependent on their largesse for roles, salary, and opportunities for fame. This approach adheres more closely to the genre tradition and prevailing Victorian ideologies that public life and work belong to men and that women should be dependent and domestic. Throughout her narrative, Bond situates her success in the interest these two men took in her career, and in doing so, she purposefully gives these men credit for her fame and distances herself from agency.

Childhood/Coming-of-Age Stories

After beginning their stories with a humble direct address to readers, female lifewriters incorporate another common trope in their autobiographies. They continue to adhere to the norms of the genre by presenting anecdotes about their childhood at the beginning of their narratives. These stories represent intentionality on the part of actresses from both theatrical and non-theatrical backgrounds; making their upbringing seem respectable and appropriately feminine, in order to maintain the humble tone set up in their invocations to writing.

Corbett argues that the representation of self in autobiography is as much a performance as any role taken by an actress on stage. She explains that how actresses portray themselves both onstage and in autobiography is "contingent less on the 'facts' of their private lives, and more on how well they can publicly imitate and reproduce the signs and attitudes that mark individuals as

belonging to a certain class and gender."[58] This is borne out by the way Victorian actresses describe the trajectories of their lives in their autobiographies, starting with childhood stories. Unlike male autobiographies, which might include childhood stories to demonstrate precocity and individuality, stories penned by women sound intentionally similar to one another, despite the fact that the actresses' families occupied different economic classes and social strata. Wilson explains why many female autobiographers started with childhood stories. "The typical chronological structure of autobiographies can become significant in highlighting shared values […] In effect the personal frames the public; the reader first gets to know the author as a private person whose early experiences and reminiscences can craft a humanly appealing persona."[59] Using the autobiographical trope of describing their lineage and childhoods, actresses find ways of making a variety of upbringings all sound thoroughly domestic and middle class.

Children of theatrical families had perhaps the hardest task to make their childhoods align with respectability. Theatrical families in the early- to mid-nineteenth century usually toured extensively, which often prevented the family from creating a stable home and school life; children were literally raised in the theatre, taking small child roles as apprenticeships for their future profession. Rehearsing and performing these roles left little time for play, relaxation, or traditional schooling. Girls raised in the theatre were taught acting skills alongside their brothers, but they were also often asked to watch and raise younger siblings or take part in other housekeeping chores during their time away from the theatre. One way these actresses claimed respectability for their families in their autobiographies was to demonstrate through stories the

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[58] Mary-Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity*, 108.
[59] Wilson, *Lives of Their Own*, 10.

innate goodness and morality of their parents, which often included strictness and refusal to permit childhood misbehavior.

Dame Madge Kendal (1849-1935) (née Margaret Shafto Robertson), for instance, discusses how her mother was not only a great actress on stage but quite domestic offstage; she taught the family servants (whose existence themselves were markers of a certain level of respectability) how to make soup, cared for stray animals, and nursed her sick children herself.[60] Here, Kendal characterizes her mother as the organizer of the household and therefore a middle-class woman. According to Davidoff and Hall in *Family Fortunes* (2002):

> Women had traditionally organized the feeding of the household and care of young children, and they took more responsibility for either doing or overseeing enlarged domestic tasks. These were incorporated into general moral and religious duties, part of personal service to the master of the household as symbols of love and subservience, and ultimately a central part of feminine identity.[61]

Kendal also relates a story about her father in which, after a young Madge picked up a beggar child off the street, he said, "'Quite right, my dear, to go and pick up a child that has fallen, - but always see that you pick up a *clean* one!'" This story indicated his unwillingness to associate with vagabond classes, an effort to disassociate his theatrical family from lower orders and always align with middle-class values.[62] The stories Kendal chooses to tell create meaning and a specific narrative based on her memories, but they also invoke images of domesticity and femininity. As Postlewait argues about actresses as authors:

> The author selects the significant and crucial events that point toward the person (or personality) the author has become – or, more exactly, the person the author desires the

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[60] For more information about definitions of and signifiers of middle-class status see Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
[61] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 395.
[62] Dame Madge Kendal, *Dame Madge Kendal By Herself* (London: John Murray, 1933), 22.

> reader to see and value. The life is given a direction and meaning, culminating in the present self, but this causal order is retrospectively imposed through an act of reasoning (and rationalizing) backward.[63]

Kendal chooses narratives that enact respectability upon her family so that her audience associates her upbringing, and consequently the author herself, with middle-class values.

Legitimate stage performers were not the only performers writing autobiographies. Music hall performer Vesta Tilley (1864-1952) serves as another example of a child from a theatrical family choosing to narrate her childhood as though she had been raised more traditionally. She recounts how her father chaperoned her closely while she was a child, writing, "I lived a very careful life under the watchful eye of my father, and managed to get through without anything more serious than the usual childish ailments."[64] Tilley also describes how her father insisted on clauses in her contracts to protect her from having to perform in side saloons or in after show entertainments so as to keep her safe and to preserve her good reputation.[65] In other sections of her autobiography, she describes her early life between tours as time spent at home in Nottingham doing school work and helping her mother raise the younger children in the family. She tells these stories in order to make her life seem familiar to her female readers and to showcase the elements of respectability in an otherwise out-of-the-ordinary family life. It is especially important for Tilley to invoke tropes of femininity and domesticity in her writing as she performed in a form that catered for many years to working-class audiences and that often

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[63] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 255.
[64] Lady DeFrece, *Recollections of Vesta Tilley* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1934), 47.
[65] Ibid, 34.

eschewed and lampooned middle-class norms.[66] Associating herself with normative gender roles and domestic childhood labor allowed Tilley to position her story in relation to other legitimate theatre performers and disassociate herself, at least in descriptions of her childhood, from the negative stereotypes of music hall performers.

Ellen Terry (1847-1928) was also raised in a theatrical family. She too wrote of moral and strict parents who took their parenting duties seriously, despite the difficulty of often living on the road and their employment with the theatre. One of the first stories she tells about her life onstage is that of a father protecting his young daughter. Her father refused to make her go onstage as a fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when Ellen, at about four years of age, was crying and too frightened of the stage. He defied his theatre manager in order to protect his daughter's well being (although he did later yell at her at home and said she would not make it as an actress).[67] Like the other actresses, Terry proclaims a happy, respectable, if non-traditional upbringing. She writes of her mother, "I can well imagine that the children of some strolling players used to have a hard time of it, but my mother was not one to shirk her duties. She worked hard at her profession and yet found it possible not to *drag* up her children, to live or die as it happened, but to bring them up to be healthy, happy, and wise – theatre-wise at any rate."[68] When a slightly older Terry did agree to appear onstage, her parents instilled in her the value of hard work, constantly running lines with her so she would be perfect, encouraging her to study

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[66] For more information about the history of the music hall, and its roots in working class ideology, see Dagmar Keft, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class, and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[67] Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life: Recollections and Reflections* (New York: The McClure Company, 1908).
[68] Ibid, 7.

Shakespeare to prepare for future roles, and having her mind her younger siblings when she was not at the theatre. Terry connects with her middle-class female readers by describing this domestic responsibility and remembering her parents as being "fond" of their children but "unsparing in their corrections."[69] Many children of theatrical parents used similar language to describe their parents as loving and caring, but strict. This language developed the idea that theatre parents instilled in their children an understanding of how to be responsible and well behaved from an early age. Autobiographers indicate that young children, like Terry, were often put in charge of younger siblings and household duties when their parents and older siblings were at the theatre. Theatrical parents, as autobiography writers almost uniformly note, instilled good behavior in their children, which in turn benefited the entire family, as well-behaved children would more likely get cast in child roles on stage (and earn their parents much-needed money). In creating these images retrospectively, autobiographies were able to use the emphasis on behavior to validate their parents' childrearing skills and to make their upbringings seem more like traditional Victorian childhoods than the bohemian upbringings that popular culture ascribed onto the lives of traveling performers.

These examples demonstrate that regardless of the itinerant and non-traditional aspects of their childhoods, it was important to actresses from theatrical families to make their upbringings appear as respectable and domestic as possible, in order to mark themselves as having been given a traditional and relatable start in life, despite what others may assume about their parents' profession. In their autobiographies, women from theatrical families describe examples of convention and normalcy during their girlhoods in even the most irregular households. Fanny

[69] Ibid, 15.

Kemble (1809-1893), for instance, reminisces fondly about her mother's amazing abilities in cooking French cuisine. "Whether she derived this taste and talent from her French blood, I know not; but it amounted to genius, and might have made her a pre-eminent *cordon bleu*, if she had not been the wife and *chef-fe*, of a poor professional gentleman."[70] Kemble indicates in her autobiography a wish that her mother had passed on this knowledge and skill to her daughter. This story indicates that Kemble came from a household in which her mother took pride in cooking, which situates her as domestic. The story also demonstrates that her mother had extraordinary skills and could have herself been a working professional woman if not for being saddled with a family. Kemble also bemoans the fact that her mother did not share her domestic skills adequately with her daughter so as to excuse her own lack of cooking skills. This story subtly breaks with the normal adherence to genre, demonstrating that Kemble was aware of the tropes of domestic womanhood with which she wanted her story to align, but that she still chose to include narrative elements to make her story unique.

Ellaline Terriss (1871-1971) also writes fondly of her mother's desire to raise her family in a respectable manner despite her father's profession as an actor. When her father was itching to go on tour yet again, she writes, "My mother, very naturally, did not want to go. She wanted to stay 'put' in her little home and be a housewife. She wanted to bring me up in comfort."[71] However, Terriss also valued the toughness that her mother demonstrated in the lean years of following her father around the world on tours. "The idea that Victorian women were weak, insipid creatures, clinging limply yet firmly to their menfolk, unable to do anything themselves

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[70] Francis Ann Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood* v.1 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1879), 10.
[71] Ellaline Terriss, *Just a Little Bit of String* (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1955), 28.

and swooning at the sight of a mouse or a hint of trouble, is of course pure nonsense. Victorian women were as plucky and tough as any emancipated young women of today. My mother was a true Victorian woman."[72] Terriss weaves a story in which her mother dutifully followed her father around, taking care of all household matters and raising the children to be moral and well-behaved. Her father's inability to hold down a long-term job and his flightiness, his insatiable desire to travel, is coded in her narrative as his way of providing for his family, while her mother remained the bedrock of the family. Terriss writes of her mother, "She had three small children and one grown-up child, my father, who was always just a big boy. But I know she was happy. She was the most unselfish woman I ever knew, she had no thought for herself at any time…she was the ideal mother."[73] There is a similarity between Terriss's story and Kemble's here, as both portray their mothers as strong women who raised strong daughters. They also both highlight how their mothers created stability in the family through their efforts to conform to normative domestic life. Many autobiographies of women from theatre families tell a similar story of one parent, the performer, being forever restless and looking for the next gig, while the other parent provided the stability necessary to raise a proper family.

Stability in family life was an important quality that children from theatrical families tried to demonstrate in their autobiographies. They may have moved around a lot and worked odd hours, but these actresses wrote about how their parents took self-discipline seriously and raised them to be moral and well behaved. Kemble's narrative is similar to many others in her discussion of her parents' disciplinary measures when she misbehaved. Like many future

[72] Ibid, 29.
[73] Ibid, 32.

actresses, young Fanny was a high-spirited, smart girl who quickly rose to temper when offended. At about nine years old, she ran away from home when she felt affronted by an aunt's hurtful remark. When she returned home, she was locked in a room with only bread and water for a week as punishment.[74] This punishment seems a bit extreme by modern standards, but it taught the young girl that running away would not be tolerated in her household.

According to Corbett, Kemble's parents prided themselves on their middle-class aspirations, which young Kemble also internalized. For them, being middle class meant having access to education, servants, travel, and literature. If anything, their aspirations rose even higher, as they desired for their children to become aristocratic in their behavior. Their success onstage allowed their daughter to have a quality of life that they had not had as young people. Corbett says, "Although born into a theatrical family, Kemble had been raised a proper English lady: she attended school on the Continent, devoted her free time to religious and philosophical speculation, and harbored literary aspirations."[75] In Kemble's *Records of a Girlhood* (1879), Kemble explains that she thought the stage was "unworthy" of a lady or gentleman, and she only went onstage to save her family when they faced financial ruin. As Corbett states, "For Kemble it is theatricality rather than domesticity that threatens the stability of the middle-class subjectivity to which she lays claim."[76] Having been raised to enact the model of a middle-class young woman, going onstage went against this sensibility, so Kemble had to justify this action to her readers in a way that did not jeopardize the respectability and middle-class identity she ascribed to herself.

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[74] Ibid, 72.
[75] Corbett, *Representing Femininity*, 110.
[76] Ibid, 107.

Ann Catherine Holbrook (1780-1837) paints perhaps the most melodramatic picture of her idyllic life with her theatrical parents. Her sadness at losing her parents at an early age indicates her awareness that her protection from the evils of the world disappeared with the death of her father:

> Though nine years have elapsed since I was deprived of this much loved and then only surviving parent… I cannot look back on the wretched situation in which I was plunged by the loss without shuddering. Paint to yourselves the state in which a girl, little more than seventeen, unacquainted with the world, brought up with a degree of indulgence which tends to enervate the mind, must feel herself when the dreadful conviction at once assails her. The heart-piercing thought that she is alone in the world, a 'link torn from the general chain;' for such, alas was my case.[77]

Holbrook's ensuing story is one of the sadder autobiographies. She writes of abusive managers that took advantage of her youth, isolation, and inexperience. The comparison of her immoral managers to her wonderful respectable parents becomes that much more clear in the implication that, had her father lived, she would have been protected throughout her stage career and would have avoided these difficult situations. She assumes the trope of the forlorn, vulnerable orphan so popular in Victorian novels to gain readers' sympathy. Bringing the orphan trope from fiction into her autobiography plays on readers' sensibilities and creates a recognizable character for them, the heroine that overcomes obstacles to succeed.

Female autobiographers also described how their theatrical parents sought respectability for their children by taking a strong interest in their education. Ellen Terry invokes the story of actor Edmund Kean (1789-1833), who famously demonstrated his rise to respectable status when he was able to send his son Charles (1811-1868) to Eton for preparatory school. According to

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[77] Catherine Anne Holbrook, *Memoirs of an Actress Comprising a Faithful Narrative of Her Theatrical Career from 1798 to the Present Period* (London: J. Harrop, 1807), 12.

Terry, Charles Kean developed the "scholarly knowledge" and "naturally refined taste" that would be evident in the style of his management of the Princess's Theatre.[78] She describes this story as an example of the many theatrical parents who cared deeply about the education and social mobility of their children. Because girls could not attend English schools of the same status as boys, many theatrical parents chose to send their daughters to school on the Continent or to finishing schools in Britain, so that they could receive the formal education their parents never had the opportunity to obtain. This decision also allowed parents to continue touring with their companies without the added burden of bringing children along. The actresses who attended school often focused on the positive aspects of these educational experiences and framed them as opportunities to gain social networks of middle- and even upper-class friends.

Actress Sydney Fairbrother (1872-1941) writes that she so enjoyed the routine and normalcy of her time at school that she rose to the top of her class and became quite popular among her schoolmates. When she turned sixteen, she was such a promising student that her school offered to help pay her way to Girton College if she agreed to return and teach upon completing her education. Alas, the call of the stage was too great for this former child actress. As she writes, "Girton suggested little to me but prancing about with a mortarboard on my head. But for the stage I had a glorious and romantic love. So it was decided that I should go to Germany, learn the language and finish my education on general lines while waiting for an opening in the theatre."[79] Fairbrother was fortunate to get both a high-quality British education and to attend finishing school in Germany. In relating this story, she ascribes middle-class

[78] Terry, *Story of My Life*, 12.
[79] Sydney Fairbrother, *Through an Old Stage Door* (London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1939), 52.

values upon her family, as attending a finishing school was a more appropriately feminine path for a young girl than continuing on to higher education at Girton College.

However, actresses also described the problems associated with performers sending their children to school. After initially glossing over her educational experiences as happy and easy, Fairbrother admits that though her parents valued her education deeply, they found that the reputation of their profession hindered their daughter's ability to find a place at a high-quality school. The Head of her primary school, a convent school, suggested that her parents' career not be mentioned. "It was decided that the other pupils should not be told that I was the child of an actress, for though the nuns did not care two hoots, the parents might."[80] Similarly, as her parents sought a secondary school for her, they discovered that not all schools would accept the child of an actress:

> There was some talk of sending me to Cheltenham which Miss Beale, its head, was just beginning to make famous, but after some correspondence it was decided that an actress's child was not a suitable pupil for this school. It would seem that the Church of England and Church of Rome were agreed on that matter, but the Church of Rome authorities were more inclined to make matters easy for the undesirable.[81]

Eventually, Fairbrother found her way into another convent school, where she thrived both intellectually and socially. Although her parents faced difficulties in their efforts to find a proper school that would enroll the daughter of players, which seems to speak of the unconventionality of theatrical people or the lack of respectability awarded their profession, Fairbrother narrates this story in a way that demonstrates her parents' concern for her education and determination to give her the best education possible. She therefore turns what could be an example of the

[80] Ibid, 41.
[81] Ibid, 49-50.

unsuitability of theatrical people into an example of how she was raised in a respectable household that just happened to gain its income from the theatre.

Fairbrother's story is just one example of the value placed on the education of girls from theatrical families, as narrated in their autobiographies. For instance, Kemble was sent to school in France at age seven; as she says in *Records of a Girlhood* (1883), her father was "extremely anxious to give me every advantage that he could."[82] Phyllis Dare's (1890-1975) memoir is even titled *From School to Stage* (1902), and it chronicles her school days and the decisions that led up to her becoming an actress. She discusses her life as a child actress interspersed with the normal childhood occurrence of attending school. "After coming back from my first pantomime I returned to school…I studied the usual lessons a child has to learn, whilst in addition I daily practiced singing and dancing and elocution. So that at all events, even when I was very young, I cannot be accused of having led an idle life."[83] She takes care to demonstrate throughout her narrative how, between theatrical engagements, she led as normal a life as possible. Her parents even hired governesses and tutors for her when she was on tour as a child actress, so that she could continue her education. Dare presents a working childhood in the theatre as an ideal situation that enabled her to travel, perform, and learn the tools of her trade, but she also codes these tools as products of an education typical of middle-class girls to claim a relatable respectable girlhood.

Those that were raised in more traditional, non-theatrical homes also told stories that demonstrated the loving, yet strict way their parents brought them up, and showed how they

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[82] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, 42.
[83] Phyllis Dare, *From School to Stage* (London: Collier & Co., 1902), 41-42.

were taught to be respectable, domestic young women before choosing to go onstage. Lena Ashwell's (1872-1957) father was a ship captain, which gave the family a high social status. When they went ashore, she and her sisters were always escorted and were kept aloof from the ship's crew. As she says, "we were the Captain's daughters, and it was inconceivable that boys should laugh at superior people."[84] Ashwell writes of her father, "he was very wise…in that he would advise us, but never assert authority, and was always waiting almost in silence to understand and help, his love for us was so great."[85] Her father became a minister after her mother's death, which allowed the family to live a more stable, land-based domestic life where the family still held social respectability. Ashwell describes her youth in great detail to ensure that readers understand the values with which she was raised and recognize that she came from a middle-class background.

Jessie Bond, another child performer, was encouraged in her precociousness by her parents, who enrolled her in singing lessons. Her father was a musician and piano-maker, so he inspired musical ability in all of his children. Her parents became her support structure when, after eloping with her music teacher, she discovered that he was abusive and just wanted her earnings. Her parents rescued her from his home, took her back in, and helped her through the birth of a baby. As she says, "then came a time of calm and recovery. I was surrounded by love and care, my bruised spirits revived."[86] Though this story includes romanticized elements that are more akin to a melodrama than a normative middle-class life, Bond chooses to focus the majority of her narrative not on scandals, but on how her family rescued her and provided a safe

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[84] Lena Ashwell, *Myself a Player* (London: Michael Joseph, Ltd., 1936), 17.
[85] Ibid, 20.
[86] Bond, *Life and Reminiscences*, 34.

haven for her to recover. She adheres to the autobiographical genre by describing the healing powers of a close-knit domestic unit while somewhat eliding her less-than-admirable actions.

The Vanbrugh sisters (née Barnes) are two of the most famous examples of well-to-do siblings who decided to go onstage. Their father was a canon at Exeter Cathedral, a position that provided the family with an ample income. In her autobiography, Irene Vanbrugh (1872-1949) describes her childhood in idyllic, middle-class terms. She presents her mother as a caring, generous woman who ensured that her children had a healthy start to each day. "We were all up early and would stream into my mother's room at seven, find the fire lighted, the kettle singing on the hob and cups of hot tea and slices of home-made bread and Devonshire butter ready for us."[87] The children were well educated, receiving instruction in dancing and music along with a religious and classical education. Vanbrugh describes her mother as a loving woman who kept her children busily engaged with parties and play dates, but who also knew how to impose order and good behavior in tired children. Her father is portrayed as a man passionate about gardening (each of his children was given charge of their own tree in the family garden) and always fair. He would mete out creative punishments for misbehavior (like having the always neat and tidy Irene wear two different colored stockings to school), but he would not punish any offender who admitted guilt and remorse for their actions. Irene felt as though the family was extremely close-knit, despite the typical sibling squawking that occurred. She writes, "We were all a very united family, taking for granted the fact that we were all fond of each other, yet quite given to squabbling among ourselves. But we should have stood together, firm as a rock, if anyone from the outside had dared to say anything slighting against one of us. The whole family would have

[87] Irene Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Story* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1949), 6.

defended the one attacked."[88] Vanbrugh proves this family bonding by noting how her parents and siblings supported both her and her sister Violet's career choice, even when relatives and friends exiled the actresses for defying their class and gender norms. Again, like Bond, she focuses her narrative on the hegemonic aspects of her upbringing and the normative gender roles her parents fulfilled. The daughters' decisions to go onstage were framed in a way that presented a united family front against outside opinion.

Also from a middle-class home, actress Winifred Dolan (1867-1958) describes another common trope found in actresses' autobiographies: the writing and performance of amateur children's theatricals. Dolan wrote her first play at eight years of age, and her second play achieved a level of local fame, as she and a girlfriend were asked to perform it at various neighbors' homes. Many actresses' memoirs and autobiographies include at least one story of family theatricals, with the aspiring star getting good reviews from local audiences in fully mounted productions. This means that the parents were fairly indulgent of their children's interests and considered play-acting to be an appropriate pastime for children. These types of stories normalize young girls' interest in theatre, as typical childhood playacting that was indulged by families. The authors, like Dolan, also indicate how they displayed above-ordinary talent and professionalism from a young age and situate their inevitable decision to become an actress as more of a vocation than a simple career choice.

Kemble also reminisces about the play-acting that occurred in her childhood nursery. She believed that all children love acting things out imaginatively. She and her siblings took this to the next level, as many other future actresses did, by fully enacting plays. As she says, "my

[88] Ibid, 5.

brother John was always manager and spokesman in these performances, and when we had fitted up our theatre with a *real* blue silk curtain that would roll up, and a *real* [emphasis in original] set of footlights that would burn…great was our exultation."[89] Kemble's story is unusual only in that she says her brother took the lead in these amateur theatricals. In other memoirs, such as the one written by Bond, actresses cast themselves as the star and manager of their childhood theatre companies forcing their siblings to take all of the lesser roles. Bond remembers fondly creating childhood theatricals with her family and narrates the more characteristic story of the future actress taking the lead in these endeavors. She writes, "I loved acting too, and used to organize dramatic performances in our kitchen with Father and Mother as the amused audience, and my brothers and sisters under my energetic stage management…I was all for realism and the unities and any lapse from the ideal grievously hurt my artistic soul."[90] This affinity for realism and for taking play-acting very seriously is another common trope among actresses. These girls did not just act out plays to entertain themselves for an afternoon but often coerced their troupes to practice for weeks; found real stages, costumes, and props; and recruited audiences for actual performances.

These stories of amateur theatricals are useful narratives for actresses to include in their autobiographies for two reasons: first, they reveal an early love for theatre and a flair for imagination in the young future actresses, and second, they demonstrate how these actresses believed in working hard to achieve something from an early age and in taking their "art" seriously as a vocation, even as children. That they had time and leisure as children to rehearse

[89] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, 63.
[90] Bond, *Life and Reminiscences*, 18-19.

and perform in amateur plays for fun rather than having to engage in labor identifies these girls and their families as middle class. Since parents endorsed, and sometimes even participated in, these endeavors, the writers demonstrate to readers that respectable people could and should share theatre with their children. These stories also prepared readers for later discussion of theatrical life as hard, disciplined work that only real professionals could undertake. This professionalism was evident even in childhood for these girls.

Religious Affiliation

Many actresses discussed religion's significant role in their childhoods, which correlates with the burgeoning interest in Evangelicalism across England in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.[91] Several actresses who wrote autobiographies (such as the Vanbrughs, whose father was an Anglican clergyman, and Ashwell, whose father was a minister and eventually a missionary) were raised with the church as part of daily life. Others wrote about attending church regularly or having intense bouts of religious fervor. Kemble discusses a particular preacher, Mr. César Malan of Geneva, who left an indelible impression upon her young mind. "It was the first fine preaching I ever heard, and though I was undoubtedly too young to appreciate it duly, I was, nevertheless, deeply affected by it, and it gave me my earliest experience of that dangerous thing, emotional religion, or, to speak more properly, religious excitement."[92] She records that her intimate knowledge of the Bible was the greatest benefit she received from her religious school training and was something she valued throughout her life.

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[91] For a discussion of how Evangelicalism grew among the middle classes in England during this century, see Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement: the Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[92] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, 80.

Including this experience in her narrative appealed to the religiosity of middle-class Victorian life and marked Kemble as appropriately religious.

Dolan's parents also invested in their daughter a lifelong devotion to Catholicism. She describes in detail how even as a touring actress, she insisted on getting up, sometimes at the crack of dawn, to attend Mass before leaving for the next tour destination. She relates a story of another actress in her company who received special dispensation to attend Mass late and arrive after the Gospel (which occurs about halfway through a traditional Mass). Dolan says of her, "Poor girl, I wondered how long she would keep *that* [emphasis in original] up. I never got the chance of a late Mass while on tour."[93] For Dolan there would be no easy way out of her religious obligations, as she took them very seriously. By including these details, she conveyed to readers her lifelong devotion to religion, which she prioritized over the demands of touring life.

Life might have been very different for Marie Wilton (later Lady Bancroft) (1839-1921) if she had followed her early religious convictions, which she discusses in her autobiography. When Wilton was about 10 years old and had been playing child roles for a few years, a wealthy Roman Catholic widow offered to adopt her, send her to a convent for education, and leave a fortune to her if she would take the widow's name and never go onstage again. Marie's father did not consent to this arrangement. Wilton says of her own religious upbringing, "I used often to attend early mass…I had an early love for the Catholic faith, which only slept for so many years afterwards. I often reflect how changed things might have been had my father consented,

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[93] Andy Moreton, *A Chronicle of Small Beer: the Memoirs of Winifred Dolan, Victorian Actress* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 2010), 39.

and how different my position in the world!"[94] Wilton describes how the Church had a quiet but important influence over her young life. Including this anecdote also depicts the actress as a dutiful daughter in attending religious services, but also in accepting her father's wishes when he would not allow her to go with the widow.

Actresses purposefully discussed their religious affinity in their autobiographies because morality and religion were important markers of nineteenth-century respectability. According to Davidoff and Hall:

> Religious belonging gave distinctive identity to particular communities and classes in a society which was increasingly aware of its divisions. Foremost among those distinctive identities was the association between the middle class and a Christian way of life so that by mid century adherence to evangelical protestant forms had become an accepted part of respectability if not gentility. Attendance at church or chapel was a social necessity even when it was not a religious imperative.[95]

Actresses who demonstrated that they regularly attended church, or who wrote about making life choices based on religious convictions were demonstrating a desire to ascribe respectability upon their persons.

Transition from Home to Stage Stories

Nineteenth-century actresses' autobiographies present their early stage experiences, or the decision to go onstage at all, in ways that highlight their respectability, morality, and dedication to their families. These narratives vary more in content and are less novelistic than their coming-of-age stories, which make childhood seem like a uniform experience. In contrast, transition narratives are crafted to ensure that the reader understands that the decision to go

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[94] Squire and Marie Bancroft, *Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft On and Off the Stage*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1888), 27.
[95] Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 76.

onstage was informed by family or personal economic necessity and usually undertaken with permission from the actress's parents. In the case of child actors, the parents are portrayed as being involved with, and protective over, the child's career.

Terriss's father, William Terriss (1847-1897), wanted very much for his daughter Ellaline to go onstage. However, in her autobiography, she relates that he did not push her until she was about sixteen. She received her first professional role when an actress in Herbert Beerbohm Tree's company fell ill. Afterward, both she and her father decided that she would become an actress. Her mother was not so sure, but her father "talked on and on, painting vivid pictures, scattering our objections, spoken or felt, and finally, of course, he instilled his own confidence and enthusiasm into us […] When my father wanted something like this, nothing could stop it."[96] Terriss's father quickly waylaid her initial fears of going onstage and helped smooth her transition by getting her an interview and contract with Charles Wyndham's company. Terriss depicts her decision to go onstage in language that implies that she was a dutiful daughter obeying the wishes of her father and that her first role essentially fell into her lap. In that way, she could present herself as a model of femininity who just happened to go onstage to fulfill the wishes of her family.

Another actress who went on the stage in her teen years was Lillah McCarthy (1875-1960). Her father had been her primary teacher all through her childhood, as she did not have the constitution to attend regular school. He was a contradictory man who "disliked actors but loved the stage."[97] He assisted in the construction of a theatre in their town of Cheltenham, a

[96] Terriss, *Little Bit of String*, 56.
[97] Lillah McCarthy, *Myself and My Friends* (London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 1933), 25.

theatre where Lillie Langtry and Frank Benson's company performed. Lillah's father got her an interview with Frank Benson, who pronounced that she had talent and should be sent to London to be trained. Rather than sending her alone, she writes about how her father packed up the entire family and moved to London so she could enroll in a school for dramatic arts while still living at home.[98] McCarthy demonstrates with this story that she had both emotional and financial support from her family as she worked to find her place in the profession.

Many daughters of performers recall long days and nights spent in the theatre learning the ropes and taking on minor child roles. These hours made for unconventional childhoods, but the actresses usually portrayed this lifestyle in a way that emphasized the hard work and early sense of responsibility instilled into theatre children and de-emphasized the lack of consistency or normalcy. Bancroft says of her childhood:

> I can remember only work and responsibility from a very tender age…When other children were cozily tucked up in bed…their limbs tired only by the romps and pleasures of the day, I was trudging by my father's side in all weathers to the theatre, where I had to play someone else's child, or to recite one of the many character sketches which my father had written for me.[99]

Her early years were not the carefree years of childhood but a time spent in apprenticeship. She demonstrates the hard work of being a performer and reflects how her family instilled a strong work ethic in her from a young age. In the above anecdote, she attempts to valorize her professional childhood above the "romps" and playtime of other children. This story is somewhat problematic as on the one hand, she describes enjoying and participating in hard work

[98] Ibid, 26.
[99] Bancroft, *On and Off the Stage*, 8.

and being a dutiful daughter, but on the other hand, the family life she describes is somewhat antithetical to the enjoyment of leisure as a marker of middle-class identity.

Other child-actors tell similar stories of spending long hours in theatres for rehearsals and performances, not having any time for child's play or toys, and learning early to live and work amongst adults. Their parents chaperoned their travels to and from the theatre, preventing their young girls from dallying with gentlemen or unsavory influences and ensuring that their onstage roles and offstage public lives were morally upright. When writing about relationships with men that were important to them, actresses often spoke of earnest young men visiting them with good intentions and men who were not afraid to meet their parents, not the type of "stage door johnnies" who only wanted sex. In most cases, though, actresses did write about young love and failed relationships, but when discussing their husbands, the word gentleman was used repeatedly in order to distinguish this man from the others. By virtue of their profession, actresses are public women, allowing others to look at them when onstage. The distinctions they make in their autobiographies between good men (those that wanted to marry them or treat them with respect) and other men are significant. Actresses demonstrated respectability in their narratives by writing about their married lives and the pure relationships that led to marriage, and by omitting or downplaying discussion of relationships that were not morally upright. According to Postlewait:

> Thus, on the one hand, actresses often have attempted in their autobiographies and their lives to avoid being contained by other people's sexual and social definitions of them; but, on the other hand, they have underplayed or denied their own assertive selfhood…They have characterized themselves…as existing in relation to – in service to, in fulfillment of – another person or idea or purpose.[100]

[100] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 267.

The stories of being dutiful daughters attending to their parents' wishes that they go onstage, and the stories of purity before marriage and attempts to avoid seduction, affirm Postlewait's description of how actresses portrayed themselves through their writing.

For those women who were practically raised in the theatre as children, the decision to go onstage was often a foregone conclusion, but this choice was a decidedly more difficult one for anyone who was not from a theatrical family. To leave one's family and the traditional domestic life of womanhood and live the public life of an actress was still, in the late-nineteenth century, fraught with the loss of respectability and social status. Many women in the nineteenth century who chose to go onstage were cut off from their families and friends, who did not want to be associated with an actress. Ellerslie, for instance, describes how one of her sisters worried about the marriage potential of her own daughters if it became known that their aunt was an actress.[101] The decision to go onstage was not taken lightly, and autobiographers take great pains to make their "work" appear acceptable to middle-class readers. Tracy C. Davis explains that actresses, like other independent women in the nineteenth century, needed to prove that their desire to work was not "self-indulgent or hedonistic."[102] In this case, it was through autobiographical writing that they "endeavored to make the propriety of their private lives visible and accepted."[103] Davis explains that this desire for respectability was not uniformly accepted, especially by feminine society.[104] These kinds of narratives in actresses' writing can therefore be seen as their attempts to present themselves as dutiful daughters who were looked after by strong families, and to

[101] Shuttleworth, *Diary of an Actress*, 40.
[102] Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, 69.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, 70.

appeal emotionally to the mothers among their readership by countering common beliefs about why women took to the stage.

Dolan describes how her mother actually cited the large number of successful Catholics onstage in England as encouragement for Dolan to consider a stage career. Her father indicated her exemplary character, and the fact that she already had positive amateur reviews, as reasons for giving his permission.[105] Dolan writes that her mother later felt some misgivings about the kinds of shows Dolan would appear in, but Sarah Thorne, Dolan's drama teacher, assuaged her. As Dolan says, "My mother and I later went to fix things up with Miss Thorne, who lived somewhere in West Kensington. She was a dear lady – most respectable. She quite dispelled the qualms of my mother who, I think, had begun to have misgivings at the way her duckling was taking to water."[106] Including this anecdote demonstrates that Dolan understood the need to justify her decision to go onstage and used this story to show how her own mother's fears were subsided once a respectable lady validated Dolan's decision to be an actress.

Ashwell describes her father's concerns after she decided to enroll at the Royal Academy of Music to begin her theatrical training. "The stage was the Mouth of Hell and he loved me so much he was afraid for me. It is strange how we all hope and pray for a safe and easy life for those we love […] when it is through struggle and difficulty that we grow and escape from self-indulgence and fear."[107] She uses this story to show her readers how caring and strong her family was. Once her father understood that she was going to be able to take care of herself (and

[105] Moreton, *Small Beer*, 11.
[106] Ibid, 13.
[107] Ashwell, *Myself a Player*, 44.

her family) financially he moved the entire family to London to look out for her as she began her stage career.

The Vanbrugh sisters understood that their decision to go onstage was heavily scrutinized because of their family's social position. As Irene says of Violet's decision to leave the countryside for the London stage, "Now the doors of the theatre are opened so wide and so easily to those who seek that life that it is impossible to feel the shaking of the universe that was experienced in that little corner of Devonshire in 1884."[108] Violet's bravery not only made Irene's transition easier a few years later, but her success also made it possible for other middle-class and well-to-do girls to follow in her footsteps. Their parents were worried for their daughters but ultimately supported their dreams and ambitions.

Most autobiographies narrate tales of supportive parents or, at least, parents who were eventually convinced that the theatre could be an appropriate profession for their daughters. Most parents, especially those with no links to the theatre, had misgivings about this choice and attempted to stop their daughters. In their autobiographies, the actresses present this parental concern as an example of how much their parents loved them, but also as an example of how determined the women were to succeed in their ambition, to prove to their parents that they had been raised to be thoughtful and to make careful decisions. Tales of disregarding parents' wishes and going onstage are significant in these narratives because in telling these tales, actresses run the risk of appearing to be too independent or too strong-willed, thereby losing their ability to claim financial or family concern as legitimate reasons for their career choices. Therefore, actresses had to carefully present these narratives to explain that they took their families' advice

[108] I. Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Story*, 13.

seriously, but also that they took their vocation to the stage seriously. They endeavored to demonstrate to their parents (and readers) that they could go onstage but not lose their respectability or betray their moral upbringing.

Domesticity and Femininity

Actresses' autobiographies are replete with stories invoking domesticity and femininity. These writers intentionally used rhetoric to prove that they should be considered respectable women who knew how to behave socially and who, despite their public position, still had normal marriages and home lives. Even those that married and divorced multiple times, or that lived with men while unmarried, still describe their home lives as thoroughly domestic and respectable.

Terry provides the most famous example of an actress who was able to remake the story of her life, presenting herself as a respectable, domestic mother who became the darling of the British stage, even though she married three times and lived for a period, unmarried, with the father of her (illegitimate) children. Her fame, and the types of roles she played onstage, allowed her to subvert the typical actress's experience and to live and present her unconventional life without social repercussions. According to Sos Eltis, "this construction of Ellen Terry's celebrity person in an image of old-fashioned feminine virtue in defiance of her distinctly unconventional private life catered to her audiences' desire to see her on-stage persona as real."[109] In her autobiography, *The Story of My Life* (1907), Terry glosses over the period in which she lived with Edward Godwin (who fathered her two children) by discussing the children

[109] Sos Eltis, "Private Lives and Public Spaces: Reputation, Celebrity and the Late Victorian Actress." *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1600-2000*, Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). 180.

as if they appeared out of nowhere. She writes, "I left the stage for six years, without the slightest idea of ever going back. I left it without regret. And I was very happy, leading a quiet, domestic life in the heart of the country. When my two children were born, I thought of the stage less than ever. They absorbed all my time, all my interest, all my love."[110] She does not mention her lover until much later in the book, and even then, one is hard-pressed to connect him with the two children. Terry weaves a narrative in which, for a period of six years, she dedicated all of her attention to raising her two children to be well-behaved, successful young people. She brags about her children and enjoys the time she is able to tend to her house and her children. She also gives some motherhood advice to readers: "I may be a proud parent, but I have always refrained from 'pushing' my children. They have had to fight for themselves, and to their mother their actual achievements have mattered very little. So long as they were not lazy, I have always felt that I could forgive them anything!"[111] Even her story about returning to the stage is purposefully evasive in order to spin the domestic angle. She makes it seem as though fellow actor Charles Reade just happened to come riding past her house and insist that she go back onstage. Biographer Joy Melville describes how in reality, Terry and Godwin were facing financial issues at that point, and Reade's arrival was actually a perfect opportunity for her to return to the stage in order to make some well-needed money to support her family.[112] In Terry's autobiography, her return to the stage seems to come out of boredom or for fun and not out of necessity; though she does write about bargaining with Reade over salary, the only indication

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[110] Terry, *Story of My Life*, 82.
[111] Ibid, 93.
[112] See Joy Melville, *Ellen and Edy: a Biography of Ellen Terry and Her Daughter Edith Craig, 1847-1947* (London: Pandora, 1987).

that money might be important to her. In relating this narrative, Terry uses another convention common to female autobiographies. She describes events in her life revolving around a crucial meeting with a key male figure. According to Postlewait:

> What stands out in the actress' autobiographies is the way the crucial meeting gets enhanced and elaborated not just as an anecdote but as a regular generic trait that gives power to men and dependency to women. A version of sexual and social subordination gets expressed in the voice of gratitude, as a story of need, rescue, and feminine respect for male authority.[113]

As opposed to actors, actresses consistently portrayed their successes either as part of a collective success of a troupe or production, or as opportunities made available to them by considerate male friends and relations. In order to align themselves with ideals of femininity, they chose to mediate their successes through the aid of men, so that they would not be considered to be acting as individuals or making masculine decisions. Terry, for example, describes herself as being "saved" by Reade when she uses this "white knight" tale as an excuse to return to the stage.

Narratives of Motherhood

Motherhood is described in many actresses' autobiographies. Many actresses became mothers at some point and therefore had to deal with the dilemma of being a "working mother." This was also an area in which some mothers had to downplay certain aspects of their motherhood in order to maintain respectability. In these types of narratives, elisions in autobiographical texts also demonstrate a decision to create a story of respectability. Where life choices did not match with conventional mores of the time, actresses omitted parts of their lives that would not fit with the narrative they were trying to tell.

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[113] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 262.

Fairbrother uses this type of omission when discussing her leave of absence from the theatre when pregnant. Pregnancy in general was not discussed at the time, and Fairbrother was also avoiding discussion of the actual timeline of when she married her husband whom she was not living with at the time she became pregnant. In her words:

> Later I was sent on tour with *The Home Secretary*…but, alas, by that time there was, to speak delicately, a marked change in my figure utterly unsuitable to an ingénue and compromising to my young lover in the drama. I received a charming letter from the management pointing this out, and it was arranged that my place should be taken by another girl…With the niceness of the managements of those days a month's salary was sent to me and I was exceedingly glad to take it.[114]

Actual pregnancy is never mentioned, but the reader is completely aware of what the "marked change in her figure" signified. She also codes her impending delivery with this statement: "The coming gift which was the cause of my leaving the Haymarket would arrive in the form of a Christmas present."[115] The reader is left to discern the true nature of this "gift," and using this metaphor allows Fairbrother to artfully avoid a delicate topic.

Motherhood was one of the most important markers of domestic, respectable femininity in the nineteenth century. Many actresses who published autobiographies became mothers at some point during their careers, and these women often continued to act as their children grew up. Perhaps they took a few years off to raise very young children, but they found their way back onstage. It was important for them to therefore justify motherhood and to incorporate it into their narratives of respectability, while glossing over the fact that they could not, by virtue of their profession, always stay at home with their children.

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[114] Fairbrother, *Through an Old Stage Door*, 103-4.
[115] Ibid, 104.

Julia Neilson (1868-1957) describes the reality of blending theatrical life and children. She and her husband Fred Terry (1863-1933) continued to tour while their children grew up, deciding that it was their duty to provide their children with as many advantages as possible (which did not include the constant presence of either parent). As she says, "It is one of the real deprivations of theatrical life, and one which every actress who is also a wife and mother must some time face, that one has little time to devote to the family. When the time is there, the energy is often lacking."[116] Long hours of rehearsing difficult parts and performing at night leave little time for childcare, even when the parents are at home rather than touring. Luckily, Neilson could rely on her own mother to help raise her children. Neilson writes that she believed that despite her sadness at leaving her children behind, she was doing what was best for them by not taking them from place to place like "gypsies." She sardonically hints that other branches of the theatrical Terry clan were not as careful with their children when they took them on tours. She artfully weaves a narrative that portrays her choice to leave her children with her mother for long periods while she and her husband toured, and then at boarding schools when they were as young as six years old, as the rational decision any mother would make in this circumstance. She writes of her distress at missing watching the children grow up, but also her desire to give them the best life possible. Her writing gives her credence as a loving mother interested in her children's welfare, and also justifies her unorthodox decision to keep touring as a mother by ensuring the reader that her children were well cared for by her own mother.

Mrs. Patrick (Stella) Campbell (1865-1940) narrates a similar story as she explains her decision to become a professional actress. Her husband Patrick went to Australia to tour and

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[116] Julia Neilson, *This For Remembrance* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1940), 112.

recoup from financial losses. In her autobiography, Stella glosses over this part of their history by maintaining that his health had declined and that he had left for Australia to try to convalesce. In her version of the story, Stella went on the stage in order to help raise money for both her husband and her family. As she says, "I was out to fight for my two children and to try and make enough money to bring Pat back to us more quickly."[117] Though she had had singing and elocution lessons and had performed as an amateur for the Independent Theatrical Society, she had not thought about acting professionally until financial worries necessitated her working. She intentionally crafts her narrative to describe how she went onstage only because of her desire to care for her family and provide for them however she could. Of her early touring life she says, "I lived as it were, in front of the moment…actual events did not absorb me, for I have no recollection of disliking anything or finding anything tedious. I suppose I was so grateful for the *opportunity* [emphasis in original]; the enterprise: my mind was set on the goal ahead – Pat's return – and his pride in his children and my success."[118] The fact that she loved the theatrical life is couched inside of the rhetoric of doing this work for her family. Later biographers demonstrate that Campbell was, perhaps, not entirely forthright in her narrative of her life, glossing over an affair with Johnston Forbes Robertson, for example, in order to appear a faithful wife. Campbell made a career out of playing "problem" women on stage, so she strove to make her off-stage life seem respectable in order to participate in rehabilitating these characters to make them more acceptable for middle-class audiences. According to Eltis, "Mrs. Pat maintained a moderate critical acclaim and financial success…by creating a celebrity persona

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[117] Mrs. Patrick Campbell, *My Life and Some Letters* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922), 51.
[118] Ibid, 59.

with sufficient hints of the Bohemian to claim a monopoly on social problem heroines, and enough traditional femininity to make her acceptable as Shakespeare's Juliet…thereby keeping her social and theatrical options open."[119] Campbell was proud of her "society" friends and connections and knew how to manage her career to keep herself in the spotlight without ever crossing a line into disrepute. She used her autobiographical writing, as well as her selection of roles, to create a persona that embodied traditional femininity and just a hint of the bohemian so that she could stay in the public eye.

Terriss's story echoes Campbell's and Neilson's in that she also professes complete devotion to her child but explains the necessity of continuing her professional career while leaving her child behind. As she says, "the arrival of Betty was, of course, both my best production and the greatest thing that had ever happened to us."[120] She and her husband had had trouble conceiving a child, so they were extraordinarily careful with her pregnancy and with their young daughter. They did, however, understand that they had to continue their professional lives, so they hired a nurse who became a second mother to the child. Shortly after Betty's birth, the child and nurse were sent to Brighton so Terriss could go back onstage. "Betty was taken down to the Royal York Hotel, Brighton, with her nurse, my ever treasured Flora…who came to us for three weeks and remained for eighteen years, to be a second mother to her. Without her devotion I could not have continued my stage career."[121] Terriss, like many other working actresses and other middle-class women in this period, needed to rely on outside help to raise her child. In her autobiography, she extols the devotion of her child's nurse to make herself look

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[119] Eltis, "Private Lives," 179.
[120] Terriss, *Little Bit of String*, 177.
[121] Ibid, 178.

like a better mother and to demonstrate that despite her career, her child was well cared for. That she had a nurse at this time was also an indication of having obtained some of the trappings of a middle-class lifestyle, so writing about this nurse served a double purpose of making the family appear middle class and portraying Terriss as a model Victorian mother who just happened to be an actress.

Ashwell also raised a child, although she did not actually bear a child either within or outside of wedlock, but instead adopted a cousin's daughter.[122] At the time, she was the subject of gossip, as many people thought the child was actually hers. In her autobiography, she puts this rumor to rest and also describes the pitfalls of adoptive motherhood as a single woman. She writes satirically about the mean-spiritedness of public opinion and the gossip that shadowed her good deed. In this passage she describes the suspicion cast upon her by gossip. "Adopting children was not usual as it is now […] But last century such an action was regarded as most suspicious; it must hide some commandment broken, and there seemed to be only one of any importance. Without a doubt the child was mine and I was ashamed to own her!"[123] In reality, as Ashwell goes on to say, the child was that of the one cousin who approved of her going onstage and who kept in touch with her throughout her career. He and his wife died, so Ashwell and her sister Ethel, who was living with her, took in the child. "We were neither of us really capable of bringing her up; but Ethel and I were both sentimental and had been fond of this cousin. So, without any legal formalities, we sent for the baby. The birth certificate can be seen

[122] It appears in this case that the autobiography narrative and real events are aligned. According to Maggie B. Gale in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Ashwell did not have any biological children. (http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/30476) [accessed July 20, 2014]
[123] Ashwell, *Myself a Player*, 133.

at Somerset House."[124] Ashwell therefore depicts herself, in the middle of her narrative about becoming a theatrical manager and managing her acting career, as also having a mothering, sentimental instinct. She ascribes the instinct to care for another persons' child onto herself at the very point in her narrative where her professional life is least feminine. She is able, while pursuing her career, to manage a household that includes a young girl and a spinster sister. This establishes femininity and domesticity but also gently subverts it, as this is a female-dominant household that does not (at least for a time) need the presence of a man to lead the way.

Morals/Values of Feminine Middle Class

Many actresses wrote throughout their autobiographies about the difficulties of stage life. They purposefully contradicted the existing stereotype that actresses were "loose women" who consorted with men and engaged in illicit affairs in their free time. While actresses did lead more public lives than most women of their time, the reality of their life and work left little time for any kind of relationships. As Bond narrates:

> An outsider would hardly credit the strict discipline of our life behind the scenes. No lingering about was allowed, no gossiping with the other actors; the women's dressing rooms were on one side of the stage, the men's on the other, and when we were not actually playing we had to mount at once our respective narrow staircases – sheep rigorously separated from the goats! Once, when my mother came to see me in London, expecting to find me dwelling in haunts of gilded luxury, and far down the road to perdition, I took her behind the scenes and showed her the arrangements for the actors and actresses, conventual [sic] in their austerity. She was astonished, I can assure you, and evidently thought it all very dull and restricted.[125]

This is a common story among actresses, and many of them wrote about the actual conditions of stage life and touring life. As a group, they intentionally negated the idea that the life of the

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[124] Ibid, 134.
[125] Bond, *Life and Reminiscences*, 93

actress was risqué, demonstrating instead the hard work and long hours required of their profession.

Dolan wrote directly in her memoir about the reputation of women in the theatre and how that reputation, though not completely without grounds, did not usually adhere with real life. As she says:

> It is not to be denied that there was a sub-stratum of truth in all these charges leveled against the stage from various quarters, but they were emphatically not justified when applied to the 'legitimate' branch…To be a chorus girl was to incur a black mark, and the growing habit of our peers marrying them outraged the British puritan's sense of fitness. But surely it must be to the credit of the said girls that so many of them withheld their favours unless and until accompanied by a wedding ring![126]

In order to further separate the legitimate theatre from the negative reputation often ascribed to other theatres and music halls, she reminisces about green rooms that seemed more like middle-class parlours. She speaks of her time at the St. James Theatre in London, where the performers were served tea in the green room between performances in a nicely equipped theatre that, according to Dolan, catered to middle- and upper-class audiences.[127]

Even Tilley, who spent much of her career working in music halls, did not believe that true performers had time for casual liaisons. She understood that long-term success required discipline both at and outside work:

> In my long experience I do not think I have ever met a girl who was serious in her intention to devote her talent to the entertainment of the public who had the time or inclination to gad about with titled nonentities, turn night into day, and generally lead the public to believe that the life of an actress was one long round of pleasure and excitement, with notoriety as the biggest asset. On the contrary, those who by dint of hard work and ability carved out a position for themselves, reaped their reward by the time they kept their position as public favourites and the domestic happiness achieved in their retirement, after years of hard work. I still have many old friends who shared with

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[126] Moreton, *A Chronicle of Small Beer*, 51.
[127] Ibid, 28.

> me the trials and tribulations of the life of an entertainer, who are happy in a settled and peaceful domestic life; whilst more often than not, the girl who leaps suddenly into notoriety by some accident of fate or deliberate intention soon disappears from public view, and unfortunately often ends this life in distressing circumstances.[128]

In Tilley's opinion, it is the overnight star who risks damaging her reputation because she is unable to deal with sudden fame. Those who worked for it over the course of their careers, and especially those who started as children, were better able to handle the fickleness of fame and could emerge from stardom with their morals and reputation relatively intact. In fact, Tilley argues that that this ability to manage ones way through fame without damaging one's reputation is, in fact, the key to longevity in the profession.

Madame Malibran (1808-1836) was an actress from a slightly earlier era than many of the other women who wrote autobiographies. She did not actually pen an autobiography herself, but notes she wrote about her life were edited by I. Nathan and published posthumously in 1836, in a lengthy obituary. Though this obituary is not autobiographical, its contemporaneity to her own life, and the way the author intentionally crafted a narrative that made her life seem morally upright and scandal-free is worth noting. It is, perhaps, an early model that future actresses used to create their own life stories. Her biographer writes:

> Few women have been more endowed with the highest virtues of the female character. Plunged at a tender age into circumstances of deep adversity, her sacrifices to integrity were heroic, and she remained wholly uncorrupted by the prosperity of her latter days. Her feelings retained their primitive warmth, her tastes their primitive simplicity. Notwithstanding the seductions of her profession, her pleasures lay in the occupations of domestic life, and in acts of generosity.[129]

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[128] DeFrece, *Recollections of Vesta Tilley*, 171-2.
[129] I. Nathan, *Memoirs of Madame Malibran de Beriot, with Anecdotes*, 3rd ed. (London: Joseph Thomas, 1836), 16.

He continues, "Perhaps there never was an income earned by the exertions of a public performer […] of which so large a portion 'wandered, heaven-directed, to the poor.' She was devoid of ostentation and her beneficent deeds were known to few."[130] The author rehabilitated the life of the actress by focusing on her marriage and the fact that after marrying, she only acted when her husband needed money. He presents a compelling narrative in which the actress manages to uphold her integrity and respectability despite her profession, and she even manages to give money and time to charities throughout her career. The obituary relays several examples of her acting in benefit performances to raise money for church buildings, orphanages, and other important social causes. Equally important to the overall narrative is the author's assertion that these good works were "devoid of ostentation" and "known to few." This phrasing demonstrates that the famous actress did not perform these good deeds in order to garner fame and attention, but that because she was famous, she felt impelled to give back to those less fortunate. It suggests that she did not want to create attention to herself while doing this work, thereby presenting her as a model of ideal nineteenth-century womanhood.

Conclusion

Actresses writing autobiographies in the mid- to late-Victorian period did so specifically to create an identity for themselves that aligned their lives with the dominant ideologies of femininity and respectability. Actresses understood that their working lives were troubling to audiences. These women had to maneuver through a society that saw them as both sexually alluring and morally questionable for transgressing the norms of domestic womanhood. These actresses chose to use the established genre of autobiography in order to ascribe upon themselves

[130] Ibid.

markers of respectability and femininity by simultaneously normalizing their experiences and, as Corbett says, "putting normative femininity on display for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, without necessarily resolving the fissures within it."[131] Postlewait describes the actresses' situation as working women who wrote about their experiences in order to change how society viewed them. He writes:

> They faced a dilemma: if they did not discuss their private affairs, the assumption was that they had something (usually sexual) to hide. But to provide details made them vulnerable to attacks, misunderstandings, and demands for more information. Moreover, from society's viewpoint, the private realm was supposed to be a woman's natural abode. To step beyond it into a profession was an act of both abandonment and invasion. The line between private and public thus became charged with significance.[132]

Actresses writing autobiographies about their experiences on and off stage in the late- nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries understood how charged the line was between private and public. Individually, they wanted to justify their choices in a way that their readers—and society at large—would understand and rationalize. That many of them wrote narratives that employed similar tropes and recurring structures, and explained their lives and professional choices using similar language and stories, is intriguing and meaningful. As historical evidence, these autobiographies are tantalizing and yet incomplete records of experience, interpretation, and female agency. The nineteenth-century biographer Leslie Stephen states, "an autobiography, alone of all books, may be more valuable in proportion to the amount of misrepresentation which it contains."[133] As historical evidence, autobiography is marred by its basis in individual experience and memory, both inherently limited. However, as a means to understand how

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[131] Corbett, "Performing Identities,"113.
[132] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 263.
[133] Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library* v. 3 (London: Smith, Elder, 1892), 237.

individuals interpreted events, and to get a sense of what was valued within a specific time and place, autobiography can provide much needed first-person evidence. The "misrepresentation" that Stephen writes about is itself valuable for the information it gives about individual and group understandings of events and experiences. Actresses did not specifically agree together to align their writing with conventions of the autobiographical genre, in order to appeal to middle-class readers' sensibilities and to ascribe middle-class values and dominant modes of femininity upon their public and private bodies. That actresses of varied backgrounds wrote in such similar ways and used the conventions of autobiography so specifically to craft narratives of dominant femininity and alignment with traditional ideas about childhood, marriage, family, and female work makes these rhetorical tropes seem to be intentional moves in the trajectory toward respectability. When triangulated with the other work of reputation management in which actresses were simultaneously engaged, this writing seems even more intentional. To trade on their fame, more actresses could have written as Langtry did and sold books containing stories about the lives that their audiences assumed they led, full of theatrical gossip, affairs, and the types of melodramatic storylines that they were enacting onstage (since audiences often have trouble differentiating between characters and the people that portrayed them). Instead, actresses generally presented themselves as real people who faced genuine problems and who wanted to be accepted by society as respectable and rational; making the same decisions that their middle-class audiences and readers would make in terms of growing up, supporting their families, and living with socially acceptable values.

By themselves, actresses' autobiographies cannot explain how they managed to change their reputations during and across the nineteenth century. These writings, in fact, open up more

questions about why and how so many women used the genre to craft narratives that portrayed themselves in such specific ways, and whether or not this aligned with readers' expectations. It is clear from these writings that actresses understood the power of the autobiographical genre in creating an identity and interpretation of events. It is also evident that actresses were intentional in their adoption of, and alignment with, the conventions of this genre. By associating their non-traditional choices and upbringings with normative society, they both re-shaped their lives to fit dominant feminine ideologies and exposed those ideologies as socially constructed myths. Along with their participation in philanthropy and advertisement for middle-class products in middle-class periodicals, this work enabled actresses as a group to challenge the eighteenth-century views that they were sexually available and famous, yet socially marginal. By the end of the nineteenth century, and certainly by World War I, acting had become a much more socially acceptable profession for middle-class women from non-theatrical families to pursue, and actresses had joined actors in receiving state recognition for their work. Autobiographies written across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries laid the groundwork for reputation management, which would be enacted and transformed through other kinds of off-stage work. In giving their readers a mediated glimpse into their private lives, actresses demonstrated simultaneously that they were not so different from ordinary people, and that it was possible for a woman to both work and represent respectability and femininity.

CHAPTER 3

Advertising and the Nineteenth-Century Celebrity: Portrayals of Actresses in Advertisements in Women's Periodicals

> The buyers of the world are the great MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE [emphasis in original] – the man and woman in good or fairly well-to-do circumstances. These people are the backbone of every city and every country. These are the men who have built the houses and the shops the women and men who fill the churches and make life worth living and upon whose children rest the future of every nation under the sun. These people have ready cash, because they are continually making it and these are the people who can be reached by advertising.[1]

This quotation describes the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century phenomenon of the middle-class buyer. Over the course of the early to mid-nineteenth century, the middle class had risen to cultural prominence as the class that had the resources to purchase both necessities and luxury items, and the values that elevated buying and equated ownership of goods with moral goodness.[2] Because of this, advertisers marketed many goods and services directly to middle-class consumers by placing advertisements in periodicals, theatre programmes, and newspapers that were read by middle-class men and women and featured in places that middle-class people frequented. These advertisements included testimonials and endorsements from people that the middle class either respected or aspired to be: royalty, adventurers, famous actors and actresses, and intellectual experts. Advertisements with testimonials like the following were common in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries:

> Dear Madame,
> I have found the Valaze Skin Food, Powder and Complexion Soap most excellent and shall be glad to come to your rooms shortly for more.

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[1] "Advertising Space," *Advertising,* March 1900, 284.

[2] See Droh Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City 1840-1914*) Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

> I shall be pleased to recommend them to my friends.
> Yours truly,
> Cecilia Loftus
>
> Dear Madame,
> I have tried your Valaze Powder and find it delightful. I believe the "Valaze Skin Food" is a valuable preparation and I shall also certainly recommend it.
> Yours truly,
> Ellaline Terriss

These letters accompanied a full-page description of the qualities of Valaze Skin Food and the shop in which consumers could find this "delightful" product. This advertisement appeared in a programme for a play at the Coliseum Theatre in London on December 16th, 1906.[3] The testimonials by these actresses supporting the Valaze product also appeared in periodicals so both theatrical audiences and periodical readers would be familiar with these actresses endorsing this product.[4] The description of the product invokes the names of several current leading ladies and theatrical beauties as consumers of the Valaze Skin Food, Powder and Complexion Soap and the complex ad also features the two testimonial letters above from actress Ellaline Terriss (1871-1971) and Cecilia Loftus (1876-1943). The letter from Loftus is typeset with an ink signature. The letter from Terriss is reproduced from a holograph. Both heartily endorse and recommend the product. The letter by Loftus states that she will "be pleased to recommend" the products "to her friends." That this letter appears in a theatrical programme implies to the readers, who are also part of a theatrical audience, that they are the "friends" she mentions and

[3] Programme Coliseum Theatre Dec 16, 1906
[4] For other instances of this advertisement or the testimonials of these actresses see, for example, "A Lesson in the Geography of Beauty," *The Bystander* vol 18 iss 238 (June 13, 1908), xiii.; "A Pageant of Beauty," *The Sketch*, Dec. 2, 1909, 59.

that if they use this product they will be closer to the actress because they have this product in common.

In this chapter I examine a variety of advertisements found primarily in middle-class and women's periodicals featuring late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century actresses. I analyze this corpus to demonstrate that actresses were increasingly linked with the endorsement and advertisement of middle-class consumer goods, especially in the period between 1880 and 1910. As advertisements focused increasingly on iconography and less on only plain text, and as actresses' images circulated more widely due to technological innovations in printing, advertisers increasingly began linking the images of actresses with brands of consumer goods to create demand among middle-class consumers for these goods.[5] Actresses benefited from this association because connection to middle-class goods and increased visibility allowed actresses to garner public attention upon themselves and establish their marketability with middle-class consumers. Middle-class women, in particular, made the majority of purchasing decisions for the home.[6] They were also increasingly interested in celebrity culture and fame as they enjoyed the leisure to attend performance events and to read newspapers and periodicals that featured information about celebrities.

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[5] For more information on the circulation of actresses' images see Elizabeth M. Bonapfel, "Reading Publicity Photographs Through the Elizabeth Robins Archive: How Images of the Actress and the Queen Constructed a New Sexual Ideal," *Theatre Survey* 57:1 (January 2016), 109-131.

[6] See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes* (London: Routledge, 2003) for more information about middle class households gender roles. See also Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Early in the century. trading cards with performers' likenesses were shared and collected. Later, photographs and prints of paintings of actresses began to circulate widely. Joseph Roach in *It*, discusses the circulation of celebrity images. He writes, "Their images circulated widely in the absence of their persons – a necessary condition of modern celebrity - but the very tension between their widespread visibility and their actual remoteness creates an unfulfilled need in the hearts of the public."[7] Consumers and fans also coveted the products endorsed by these images when the images began being associated with products. This phenomenon was made possible by a burgeoning consumer culture and the advent of mass production, advances in photographic and illustration technology, and the development of the print advertising industry in the nineteenth century.[8] Like participation in charity events and charity endorsement, this kind of image association would not have been possible without a correlated change in the social status of actresses.

In this chapter, I use textual analysis and close reading techniques to examine advertisements featuring actresses. The examples discussed in this chapter represent some of the more notable products and more frequent tropes found across the advertising corpus. To find the advertisements I first queried the John Johnson Collection from the Bodleian Library at Oxford University to find examples of actresses featured in print advertising in a variety of media. I then cross-checked the original periodicals in which these ads originally ran in order to investigate what kinds of media these advertisements were featured in and to discover how images of actresses were promoted to middle-class female consumers in female-oriented periodicals. This

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[7] Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[8] see T. R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982).

work allows me to demonstrate how the image of the actress became an attractive reason for middle-class women to buy a particular product or service. I focus on periodicals and advertisements that were geared towards middle-class women, and to female consumers specifically, in order to investigate how by the late nineteenth century images of actresses appealed to middle-class female consumers in an attempt to influence their purchasing decisions. This phenomenon broadens our understanding of how fame and celebrity culture influenced advertising and how the social appeal and status of well-known actresses had changed over the course of the nineteenth-century to allow them to be representatives of middle-class female culture. When triangulated with the way actresses were participating in charity work and in creating narratives of respectability and domesticity through their autobiographical writing, we can create a fuller understanding of how social identity for actresses was formed, challenged, and changed over the course of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Because advertisements seek to generate interest in their product and are often targeted to a particular demographic of consumer, for the most part advertisements featured established, well-known actresses. Unlike participation in charity, which could be undertaken by a rising star seeking to connect with more famous actresses and the social elite, participation in advertising was generally restricted to actresses renowned enough to have cultural caché with readers and viewers. The inclusion of actresses as useful endorsers of goods by the late-nineteenth century is correlated with increased social acceptance of both the theatrical profession and actresses as public, working women. This phenomenon also opened doors for more performers to endorse more products and to take advantage of their fame as the twentieth century progressed and the

age of movies and television dawned.[9] Actresses were cashing in on their fame and celebrity for commercial gain with these endorsements, but were also establishing a claim to social respectability for themselves and their profession in order to be appropriate endorsers for these products.

Social acceptance for actresses in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is a complex issue. As I discussed in chapter one, acceptance in one realm of activity does not always transfer to acceptance in all realms. Advertising is like charity work in that actresses could be accepted as models of femininity and as representatives of middle-class goods in advertisements, but one must be careful to not assume that this would be reflected in all aspects of social life. For instance, the things being advertised with the images and testimonials of actresses tended to be items that actresses could have experience using in their professional lives; items like honey for the throat, hair products, shoes, headache tonics and skin products. Though their images were circulating widely by themselves as collectible items, this is a somewhat different phenomenon than their images being used to sell products. This is to say that celebrity, and how it percolated in society, are complex issues.

Female images being used to sell a product to other women also presents a special case in advertising as there is an implied level of trust and authenticity required. Whereas actresses' images could speak to men on a purely aesthetic level, there was an implied level of trust between a female audience and a female product endorser.[10] Actresses could only participate in

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[9] See Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) and Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[10] For information about how actresses navigated their private lives in public spaces and how they marketed their images to male and female audiences see Sos Eltis, "Private Lives and Public

endorsements of this kind when they had established a reputation of virtuousness and femininity both connected to and separate from their allure of fame and celebrity. Appeals that focused only on sexuality and physical beauty would not be as effective for this market as they might be for a male-centered market or for a market less restrained by Victorian middle-class values.

Understanding and Demonstration of Middle-Class Status

In the Victorian period, one of the markers of middle-class social and economic status was to own and display opulent belongings throughout the home.[11] Other markers of middle-class life included a yearly income between £150 and £1000, not having to engage in manual labor either outside or inside the home, and employment of at least one domestic servant.[12] Over the course of the nineteenth century, middle-class consumer values shifted from high standards of morality, education, refinement and a puritanical focus on thrift (in the early-to-mid century) to, as Colin Campbell describes it, "self-illusory hedonism."[13] This idea, generated from nostalgia for Romanticism, describes late-Victorian consumerism that was "characterized by consumption of luxuries, either superfluous goods or sensuous pleasures. The consumer

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Spaces" in *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, Mary Luckhurt and Jane Moody, eds. (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2005).

[11] Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1988).

[12] These middle-class criteria were aspirational and not necessarily held by all who considered themselves middle class, likewise working or upper-class families might also have shared some of these characteristics. For more on definitions of middle class see Asa Briggs, "Middle-Class Consciousness" *Past and Present* v 9-12, 1956-57; Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class* (London: Methuen, 1989), and Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885* (London: Routledge, 1978).

[13] Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

, 4; Campbell, Colin, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 291.

desires a novel rather than a familiar product."[14] Economist Marina Bianchi describes this emerging consumer as the "active consumer" who takes part in taste formation, responds to new goods, and combines and recombines new and existing goods to create a social identity and a lifestyle.[15] As Lori Ann Loeb writes, "Luxury goods were not so much a reflection of hardened class lines as the ultimate, even if illusory, pleasure of an increasingly democratized society."[16] Maxine Berg explains that "conveying status and distinction, not just through material wealth but through symbols of taste and refinement, was a longstanding feature of urban societies with substantial mercantile elites and middling classes."[17] Technological improvements in mass production allowed more goods to enter the market, but at the same time intense interest in craftsmanship and luxury spawned the "Arts and Crafts" movement inspired by artists like William Morris and John Ruskin creating unique furniture and accessories to decorate a middle-class home. According to Pamela Todd, both the United States and England were "experiencing an unprecedented rise in the middle classes, which led to a building boom and created a huge new pool of consumers interested in interior decoration and the statement and status 'artistic' choices could confer."[18]

One of the ways that late-nineteenth century advertisers appealed to middle-class women was to make their goods appeal to this desire for luxury. Even rather commonplace goods –

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Marina Bianchi, *The Active Consumer: Novelty and Surprise in Consumer Choice* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 55.
[16] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 5.
[17] Maxine Berg, "Consumption in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century Britain," in R Floud and P. Johnson eds. *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 360.
[18] Pamela Todd, *The Arts and Crafts Companion* (Bath: Palazzo Editions Ltd, 2008), 23.

cocoa, hair and skin products, clothing – were marketed for their unique qualities. A common description of Cadbury's Cocoa, for instance, includes the message that the cocoa is "a refined daily beverage" and "the most delicious, digestible, absolutely pure and nourishing Cocoa, of the greatest strength and the finest flavour."[19] In another advertisement, Bovril beef extract paste is compared to the Eiffel Tower in Paris with the phrase "One is a tower of HEIGHT, the other is a tower of STRENGTH [emphasis in original]."[20] This advertisement, with its text and image of the grand Eiffel Tower and a prominently featured cup of Bovril with a British seal on the cup makes the ordinary product seem extraordinary. These are just two of the thousands of examples of how advertisers used middle-class consumers' desires for luxury to make everyday products seem special and worthy of purchase by discriminating consumers.

By the mid-nineteenth century, domestic ideology centered the life of middle-class women firmly inside the home. According to Loeb:

> The perfect lady of the mid and late nineteenth century appeared ornamental, leisured, and expensive. She cultivated a refined appearance and superficial accomplishments; servants and nannies relieved her of her economic functions. Her life of leisure was punctuated by social occasions rather than family responsibilities. The very existence of the middle-class lady was evidence of prosperity. Her maintenance was the ultimate form of conspicuous consumption.[21]

The middle-class lady was also responsible for maintaining the household, and was therefore the purchaser of household goods and services. Berg describes how women were the primary provisioners for the household and also how purchasing and social status were intertwined. She writes, "A woman's purchase of fashionable clothing, furniture and china displayed her social

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[19] "A Stimulating Cup Made Instantly," *The Woman's Signal*, Thursday, January 4, 1894, iss 1, 16.
[20] "Bovril," *Myra's Journal*, Friday, Nov. 1, 1889, iss 11, 624.
[21] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 20-21.

status and gave her personal pleasure, but it also expressed a wide range of other motivation and meanings from family history to individual memory and sociability."[22] As Berg indicates, female purchasing decisions were complex, but clearly pleasure and sociability were indicators of how purchasing decisions were made. According to a 1913 trade magazine, *Advertising World*, a woman "Reads more thoroughly than the average man; also she takes far greater interest in advertisements than most men. Her function as chancelloress of the family exchequer makes them of practical importance to her."[23] Advertisers of household goods and services knew their target audience was women. Most advertisements, therefore, focused on appealing to women on a number of levels. According to Loeb, "The late-Victorian home in the eyes of the advertisers became not a temple of virtue, but a hall of material goods, one that elevated acquisition with classical motifs, which attempted to free the Victorian family from evangelical moral constraints, and which increasingly defined the middle class in material terms."[24] Here Loeb demonstrates that for middle-class families in the mid-to-late nineteenth century the way advertisements appealed to women helped to bridge the transition between early-century Evangelical thrift and economy to a more hedonistic idea that owning and displaying things communicated status and wealth and was also, somehow, a visual demonstration of deservedness for hard work and moral living.

The goal of the advertising industry in many ways is not just to fulfil consumers' needs by identifying potential products, but to actually create demand among consumers for goods they may not have even known they desired before seeing an advertisement. According to Loeb,

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[22] Berg, "Consumption," 382.
[23] S. Mayston, "How to Reach the Woman at Home," *Advertising World*, February 1913, 210.
[24] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 45.

"Consumers sought to satisfy their basic needs, but also to surpass simple comfort. Pleasure might be achieved by simple or repeated acts of consumption and the by the anticipatory delight encouraged by endless product variation and brand name versions."[25] For female consumers, especially, the "anticipatory delight" mentioned above created an environment where they could exert control over which products were purchased for the home. Women were empowered to make decisions regarding small and large purchases for the home. As Loeb writes, "They gained a new form and degree of economic control and they became arbiters of new social values including gender."[26] Shopping as both an economic and pleasure pursuit became part of daily life for middle-class women. According to Erika Rappaport,

> Shopping involved discussing, looking at, touching, buying, and rejecting commodities, especially luxury items such as fashion, furnishings, and other fancy goods. The acquisition of commodities was considered enjoyable, but it was only one of the many pleasures of shopping. Although shopping was imagined as connected to a woman's domestic responsibilities, it was primarily conceived as a public pleasure.[27]

Shopping was an activity in which it was perfectly acceptable for middle-class women to engage in the public sphere in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, especially in the West End of London and in similar spaces in provincial cities and towns – in markets, shops, and eventually the department store. Shopping and advertising became intertwined as advertisers sought to entice the empowered female shopper to purchase their goods and services over others. The public market or store was a place where shoppers could see and feel differences between products and make informed choices.

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[25] Ibid, 32.
[26] Ibid, 34.
[27] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 5.

Nineteenth-Century Advertising Tropes

Since women were the primary target audience of most advertising for domestic products and services, there were a few tropes that were commonly used by advertisers to appeal to their interests. My classification of these tropes builds upon the classification system developed by Loeb in her discussion of nineteenth century advertising techniques.[28] Her monograph describes basic advertising tropes, this study presents more complexity and nuance especially in how these tropes were understood by viewers. Embedded in all of these tropes is the "testimonial." Testimonials are quotations (legitimate or made up) by famous people about their use of and endorsement of the product being advertised.

In 1853 the duty taxes on advertisements were lifted, and in 1855 the stamp duties were lifted. Also in 1860 duties on newspapers and in 1861 duties on rags were lifted resulting in an increase in the number and the length of periodicals being published.[29] The lifting of these taxes that had previously limited page numbers due to cost, allowed more periodicals and newspapers to include advertisements and to include illustrations and more text in the advertisements than had previously been included. By the 1870s, testimonials, which had begun appearing as supplemental text to the main advertisements around mid-century, became a key part of many advertisements. By 1890, almost one third of all advertisements for patent medicines, food, and corsets included at least one testimonial.[30]

The first trope that is commonly found in nineteenth-century advertising is "the expert testimonial." These types of testimonials were powerful in that they invoked the words of a

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[28] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 75-99.
[29] Cynthia White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), 59.
[30] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 75.

person or a group seen as an authority on the subject. The experts were not necessarily famous as individuals, but their knowledge and endorsement of the product were a way to validate the product and provide clarity and rationality in a crowded field of exaggerated advertising. Examples of this were doctors speaking about the benefits of using Pears Soap and scientists extolling the benefits of ingredients in Cadbury's Cocoa.[31] Usually images accompanying expert testimonials were of a grey-haired older gentleman. Age and wisdom were invoked to express authority as well as statistics, percentages, and facts. Female consumers could feel good about purchasing products for their families that were backed by scientific proof and evidence. That advertisers had almost no burden of proof with these authorities and that many of the testimonials were false or misleading was given short shrift in the crowded field of advertising.[32]

The second trope used often was "the adventurer."[33] Adventurers in advertisements were heroes who had travelled to exotic locales and completed feats of daring. According to Leo Braudy, although duelling had become illegal by the nineteenth century, the idea of the duel as an extreme challenge still had caché.[34] Braudy writes, "the nineteenth-century British

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[31] Pear's Soap, *Court Journal*, September 27, 1890, p. 1699 and Cadbury's Cocoa, *Christian Age*, July 14, 1880.

[32] For a brief explanation of how advertisers and periodicals dealt with issues around libel and "quackery" especially in medical advertisements that used "expert" testimony see Liz Ross et al., "Pills, Potions and Devices: Treatment for Hearing Loss Advertised in Mid-Nineteenth Century British Newspapers," *Social History of Medic*ine, vol 27, Issue 3, August 2014, 530-556.

[33] Here I use this term "adventurer" in the more twentieth-century sense of a person who undertakes great challenges (not the secondary Victorian understanding of the term as someone who works in underhanded ways).

[34] Dueling was legally considered murder from the late-eighteenth century, but courts did not consistently prosecute dueling until the 1840s. The last recorded fatal duel in England was in 1852. See Jeremy Horder, "The Duel and the English Law of Homicide," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, vol 12 iss 3 (Autumn 1992), 419-430.

equivalent was to dare something never before attempted or even to do something foolhardy."[35] American Civil War veteran and reporter H.M. Stanley, who later played a role in consolidating the British empire in Africa, was often used in advertisements for all sorts of products that wanted to align with the idea of adventure, exoticism, and British imperialism. Stanley's image and testimonials were often used to advertise tea, outdoor clothing, and Bovril powder, among other products.[36] Advertisers knew the adventurer would evoke for women a sense of romance, especially if he was attractive, and the possibility of the ideal man; strong, intelligent, and in charge. For men, the adventurer was someone they could fancy themselves emulating. Associating products with adventurers made the products seem exotic and unique even if they were rather pedestrian headache medicines, teas, beef stock, and hot chocolate powders.

The third main trope was "the Queen" or "Royal Favor." This refers both to testimonials about a product from Queen Victoria herself or from other members of the royal family (or other European royalty and aristocracy, depending on the product). It also refers to the use of the royal warrant as a guarantee of value and worthiness of a product. A royal warrant was issued to companies that supplied the royal household.[37] One of the benefits to obtaining a royal warrant was the ability to advertise this fact. Warrant holders could display the royal seal in advertisements. By the late-nineteenth century, this seal, which was supposed to be small and discretely placed in an advertisement for a product that had earned this right, was often, instead,

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[35] Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 507.
[36] For an example of a United Kingdom Tea Company ad featuring Stanley see *Illustrated London News* January-June 1890, p. 249. This ad depicts Stanley in military uniform standing above a seated colonial subject. Both are drinking tea and boxes of UK Tea surround the two men.
[37] For information about the custom of royal warrants today and historically, see https://www.royal.uk/royal-warrants-0

the key visual element in advertisements.[38] The royal seal was displayed prominently, often even larger than images of the actual product and company being advertised. Advertisers banked on the idea that proximity to royalty and endorsement by royalty would create demand for products. Royal endorsement connoted a quality product and including the royal seal testified to the buying public that these products received royal patronage.[39]

Beyond simple demonstration of high quality, there were other reasons why companies sought to align their products with royal endorsement. According to Loeb, "A product used by royalty held the promise of transformation; all consumers could feel like royalty through simple acts of consumption."[40] If people could use the same products as royalty, they could become proximate to royalty and feel for a moment as if they were in the same world as their royal icons. Roach invokes the term "synecdoche" to indicate how "the part stands in for the whole, the species for the genus."[41] This is a useful term for understanding how people associate a product with a famous person, and how this allows for feelings of reflexive association with the famous person through the tangible product. Women, in particular, were drawn to advertisements featuring the Queen because she embodied multiple intersectional identities simultaneously. She was at once the bedrock and embodiment of the country, a trend-setter by virtue of her fame, and also an epitome of femininity and motherhood to which others could aspire. Thomas Richards writes, "What began with the limited charisma of a single personality ended with the limitless

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[38] see Tim Heald, *By Appointment: 150 Years of Royal Warrant and its Holders* (London: Queen Anne Press, 1989).
[39] Loeb *Consuming Angels*, 86.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Roach, *It*, 53.

charisma of a thousand manufactured objects."[42] By the time of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897 the image of the queen appeared on all kinds of objects used both in everyday life (biscuit tins) to luxury items like commemorative plates.[43] According to Loeb, "The Queen in advertisements emerges as a domesticated monarch who embodies not the accoutrements of class, but interests shared by all women."[44] If the Queen endorsed a product, then all women could also want to own that item so that they could feel like they too understood and were able to have their own quality items. This dualism between being the leader of the state and the epitome of femininity with its implied honor and also potential feminine weakness is described by Roach as "the simultaneous appearance of strength and vulnerability in the same performance, even in the same gesture. Let those marks of strength be called *charismata*; the signs of vulnerability, *stigmata*."[45] The Queen embodied both charismata and stigmata simultaneously. She was both the representative of Britannia and therefore imbued with the strength of her position, but she was also a mother and a wife and the epitome of womanhood with all its inherent vulnerabilities in Victorian society. An example of an advertisement featuring the royal warrant and invoking royalty is one for Messrs. Jay Mantles, Costumes, and Millinery. This ad includes a long section of text in the middle describing the various clothing items available at Jay's store. On the left side is a series of royal seals. The top is the seal of Her Majesty the Queen, followed by H.R.M the Prince of Wales, and then H.R.M the late duchess of Cambridge. These seals are the only

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[42] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 83-4.
[43] Meike Holscher, "Performances, Souvenirs, and Music: The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, 1897, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory,* Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, eds. (New York: DeGruyter, 2009), 180.
[44] Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 92.
[45] Roach, *It*, 36.

images in an advertisement for women's clothing and demonstrate an example of how royal endorsement was so important to advertisements. The advertisement appeared in *Queen*, a magazine that followed and reported on royalty and other high society figures.[46]

A fourth common trope in mid-to-late nineteenth century advertising was "the actress." How this trope was displayed and used in advertising through the mid-to-late-nineteenth century will be the basis of discussion for the rest of this chapter. I introduce the trope here, then will deconstruct how it is used in advertisements appearing in various media through the second half of the nineteenth century to demonstrate how the figure of the actress became connected to products through advertising, and, like the figure of the Queen, encouraged women to associate themselves with these products in order to find proximity with fame and with figures that they idealized. Actresses represented, for female consumers especially, an embodiment of all three of the previous tropes plus the addition of a standard of beauty and poise that women could aspire to and try to emulate through conspicuous consumption. Like the Queen, actresses also embodied Roach's idea of charismata and stigmata as they were seen as simultaneously both strong because of their public image and fame, and potentially vulnerable due to their position as women. According to Braudy, "the essential lure of the famous is that they are somehow more real than we and that our insubstantial physical reality needs that immortal substance for support."[47] We seek out images of and nearness to the famous because, as Braudy writes, "fame is a quiet place where one is free to be what one really is, one's true, unchanging essence."[48] In

[46] Jay's, *Queen*, May 3, 1890, p. 4.
[47] Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 6.
[48] Ibid.

the nineteenth century, like today, people, and in this case women in particular, wanted to be surrounded by the aura of fame to both escape from reality and aspire to an idealized world.

Many companies that sold beauty products, clothing, and tonics for things like headaches and throat problems found that actresses were useful 'experts' to promote their products. For example Koko, a hair product, promotes a testimonial from Ellen Terry in an advertisement in an 1898 issue of *The Strand* magazine. Directly below a testimonial from Austrian Princess Hohenlohe, (a princess by marriage to the princely Hohenlohe family), the advertisement text states, "Miss Ellen Terry, our Great Actress writes – I have used "KOKO" for the Hair for years and can assure my friends that it stops the Hair from falling out, promotes its growth, eradicates Dandriff [sic], and is the most pleasant dressing imaginable."[49] The makers and advertisers of Koko know that the public is aware of the how important looking healthy and beautiful are for an actress's career, and that an actresses' hair was an important part of her identity. If Terry endorses this product and says she has used it "for years" this will encourage other women to want to purchase a product that will hopefully make their own hair seem more lustrous and healthy.

Advertisers used the "expert" testimonials of actresses to convince consumers to buy many kinds beauty, toiletry-related, and health products. Actresses were considered experts in beauty products such as face creams and hair products that they wore on and off the stage. Their images and testimonials also were often used to sell tonics for the voice or throat and headache powders; items that could help keep an actress in top shape for long nights of performances. They were also used often in advertisements for products like dancing shoes which were

[49] *Strand Magazine*, London: Vol. 16, Iss. 96 (1898), ix.

important tools of their trade, but also sought after items for middle and upper-class women who might want to indulge in amateur theatricals, take a dancing class, or be stylish at a charity ball.

Advertisers also adapted the image and testimonial of actresses for advertisements that employed the "adventurer" trope. Unlike the men that were typically showcased as adventurers, these women had not scaled great mountains or won medals in wars. They had, however, travelled far and wide touring shows and met and interacted with people from a variety of cultures. For this trope advertisers also invoked the characters that actresses had played onstage who often were female adventurers or women involved in major historical events. When using actresses for this trope advertisers were not necessarily telling women that they should directly emulate the actresses, but that purchasing products endorsed by these adventurers could show that female consumers were also worldly and knowledgeable and discerning in their tastes.

One example of the actress as "adventurer" trope in which the hardscrabble life of touring and of being constantly at work and often traveling is useful for selling a product is an advertisement for Phosferine featuring Mrs. Brown Potter (1857-1936). This advertisement presents a quotation from Mrs. Brown Potter describing the acting life:

> After the fatigue of a long tedious journey or of playing a particularly strenuous part like Mme X when the muscles are limp and the nerves of the whole body are quivering and jangled, there is no finer restorative. If anything can add to my own appreciation, it is the fact that my mother enjoys splendid health and entire freedom from influenza and neuralgia ever since she began to take Phosferine.[50]

In this advertisement Potter Brown admits vulnerability in that her constitution is affected by playing a difficult part or through travel. She also normalizes travel and hard work for her

[50] Phosferine, *Christian Age*, May 6, 1910, iii.

profession. Readers can live vicariously through Potter Brown's theatrical journey and if Phosferine can keep her healthy, it can certainly work for ailments of women whose stress arises from various causes. The end of this ad also enables Potter Brown to connect with women readers by invoking her mother, and a daughter's worry about a mother's health. This part of the advertisement ensures that the "adventuring" actress is still primarily a respectable woman with typical womanly concerns and so a proper spokeswoman for a product that cures ailments for women.

Like the Queen, actresses were often used in advertisements, especially in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, to represent idealized femininity and domesticity. Actresses represented a number of things that were just out of reach of the ordinary middle-class woman. They could and did make their own money; many actresses were able to negotiate the terms of their contracts the same way their male colleagues could; and several notable actresses became theatre managers or co-managers especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Actresses were themselves adventurers taking on all kinds of different characters onstage and leading a nontraditional offstage life of travel, work, and long hours to make their living. Like the Queen, actresses were also women who embodied a sense of power and prestige in that they attracted attention wherever they went and they earned their own living in an industry where they were accepted in some ways as the equals of men. Actresses were also trendsetters in fashion and due to their fame held social caché. If advertisers could associate their products with the face and name of a famous actress that product would rise in status and become a brand that middle and upper-class women would want to own and be seen owning. According to Braudy, "In the face of fragmenting social demands, fame creates its own etiquette, allowing the famous

to be themselves in a way no one else can afford to be, and to be accepted into a mystic community of other famous people."[51] Advertisers understood the almost primal urge people had to associate themselves with fame. If one cannot be famous oneself, one can purchase items that have been metaphorically touched by fame with an actress' endorsement and can therefore move a step closer to that elite club.

The Use of Actresses in Nineteenth-Century Advertising

I will now close read a series of advertisements from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries depicting actresses to expand on how the figures of actresses were useful for selling products and cultivating demand among consumers/fans for the products associated with the famous. In discussing where these ads ran, I will also demonstrate how the inclusion of actresses in advertisement campaigns correlated with changing social views of actresses as respectable, socially acceptable women. That these ads ran in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in women's periodicals shows that by this time actresses were considered to be suitable representatives for middle-class cultural and consumer goods. Prior to this period advertisements that included testimonials and images focused on the adventurer, the expert, and the royal tropes and did not include performers. The inclusion of actresses in advertisements for middle-class goods in the late-nineteenth century is a result of the steps actresses took throughout the century to raise their individual and professional social status through reputation management, autobiographical writing, and participation in charity events.

A 1905 advertisement for Edward's "Harlene" – The Great Hair Producer and Restorer (figure 5) - is an example of how advertisers sought to use famous people, in this case both

[51] Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 7.

Figure 5: Edward's Harlene – The Great Hair Producer and Restorer, John Johnson Collection Beauty Parlour 2 (11o), Bodleian Library, 1905

royalty and performers, to encourage other people to want to buy a particular product.[52] This advertisement, or very similar versions, appeared in a number of magazines starting in 1905-

1907 including *The Sphere* and *Strand*. Even as late as 1916 similar ads used the same quotations from actress Mabel Love that I will describe below.[53] This advertisement combines several different tactics to create an ad that encourages both women and men to use this product. At the top of the ad readers see that this company has "royal" patrons. Eight royal women and two men from various countries are listed as patrons, including The Queen and Prince of Greece, the Grand Duchess of Russia, and the Duchess of Sparta. These "endorsements" give an aura of authority to the tonic being advertised. That both female and male aristocrats are mentioned demonstrates that this tonic is meant for use by both sexes, but more royal women are listed which subtly shows that the advertisers know that women are likely the ones purchasing this item and that they will be swayed by the endorsement of a series of royal women. The list of royals ends with "etc…etc…"which indicates that the list of royal endorsers continues beyond this select group and the buyer will be in good company when they purchase this product. None of the royalty listed were considered high status royalty in Britain. This lack of status or actual name recognition demonstrates that for advertisers it is the idea of royalty that matters to engage the viewing public and that trading on any royal name would have a positive effect on advertisement viewers.

The middle of the advertisement features the name of the product, Edwards' "Harlene," in red capital letters. A description of the product follows specifying its utility for both men and women. It does not explicitly say which benefits are for which gender, but it promotes a variety of helpful effects of the products. To entice men (or the women who shop for male toiletry

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[53] *The Sphere*, London: Vol 27, Iss. 350 (Oct 6, 1906), i.; *Strand Magazine*, London: vol 29, iss 174 (June 1905), 8; *Quiver*, London vol 51, Iss 9 (July 1916), 20.

products for their husbands and sons), the product prevents hair loss and greying. It also promotes the "growth of the beard and mustache" and is the "world-renowned remedy for baldness." For women, the product creates "luxuriant hair" and renders the hair "beautifully soft." Both genders can benefit from the attributes of "removing scurf, dandruff, and restoring grey hair to its original colour."

Underneath the text-based description of the product is an image of Miss Mabel Love (1874-1953), a West End actress.[54] In many widely-available photographs she appears staring straight at the camera with a bit of a smoldering, wistful expression. The illustration in this advertisement is likely a reference to this pose as she is also depicted as wistfully looking straight ahead. Her curly hair is down and frames her face, as if to indicate that its shine and volume is a result of using the Harlene product. Her chin rests on her hands and she wears a light-colored gown with puffy sleeves. Her name is signed in cursive over her left arm. Below the illustration is a testimonial from the actress about the product, which reads, "Miss Mabel Love writes – 'I find Harlene's a most excellent preparation for improving the quality and quantity of the Hair, and shall be pleased to recommend it to my friends.'" This testimonial demonstrates to viewers of the advertisement that this beautiful actress recommends this product. Women who aspire to beauty and who want to feel a connection to this theatrical star will be enticed to buy this product. Love's recommendation of the product "to her friends" enhances the implied connection between the advertiser, viewer, and the actress. If one buys this product on Love's recommendation one can feel included as a "friend" in a special inner circle of belonging. It is interesting, however, that the text does not actually say that Love uses the product. She

[54] "The Era Almanack" (1892), Harvard University, 29.

"recommends" it and finds it to be "excellent," but unlike other ads featuring actresses she does not directly say she has used the product herself. The advertisers leave that connection up to the reader.

The advertisement concludes with price information and the note that it can be found "From Chemists and Stores everywhere," indicating that it is popular and widely available. The main advertisement is enclosed with a decorative border. On the top and bottom of the border in red it reads, "Write for a free sample bottle." On the left and right sides of the border also in red is written, "A trial costs nothing." These phrases tell viewers of the ad that they can try the product for free, which implies that the creators are so sure of its success that they are willing to give a sample for free. This advertisement, therefore, uses three strategies to entice buyers: the royal endorsement, the celebrity endorsement/testimonial, and a promise of a free sample. The ad creators employ these strategies to increase demand for their hair tonic and to make the product seem like something that everyone should want to use. The ad is targeted primarily to the female toiletry purchaser. The product description is written in terms that women care about. The royal endorsers are mostly women, though with just enough men to indicate that men can and should also successfully use this product, and the celebrity testimonial is written from one woman to others as friends recommend products to one another. Even the illustration is targeted primarily towards women as the actress is shown in what seems to be a private moment.

In 1905 when this advertisement was printed, Love was in the middle of her career. She would have been recognizable to viewers as a popular West End actress and dancer who also appeared in musical comedies and pantomimes. She was known as a "stage beauty" and her image often appeared on cabinet cards and postcards. The Edwards' "Harlene" Co. would

benefit from having their product associated with a famous actress. Love's association with this product, which was targeted towards middle and upper-class women and men who had the resources to spend on toiletry items and also the desire to appear young and vital, promoted her as a suitable spokesperson for this product. The ad acts in two ways for Love. It depicts her as attractive and alluring in order to gain viewers' interest. Actresses like Love were famous, and people like to be associated with fame. Sociologist Tyler Cowen discusses this phenomenon in relation to fandom, or the way people flock towards the famous. He writes, "Fans use stars as a way of advertising their tastes, distinguishing themselves from others, signaling their cultural standing, and seeking out the like-minded."[55] People are interested in what the famous do and say and it is easy to become infatuated with the allure of association with fame.

The ad also depicts Love as a woman who has knowledge of the benefits of hair tonics and as someone who, because of her profession, is an expert in high quality beauty and beauty products. She has, according to Chris Rojek, the "achieved" celebrity of an expert where hair products are concerned.[56] This kind of celebrity confers expertise upon the famous person and comes "by reason of artistic or sporting achievement." It works in advertising in much the same way as "expert" testimonial.[57] Love's professional expertise and her beauty and allure work together to make her endorsement useful to the advertisement viewer and to the toiletry company.

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[55] Tyler Cowen, *What Price Fame?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 3.
[56] Rojek, *Celebrity*.
[57] Ibid, 18. See also Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, 75-76.

An 1887 advertisement for Pear's Soap (figure 6) focuses specifically on the fame and allure of actresses to sell a product.[58] The advertisement, though relying on only one type of

Figure 6: Pear's Soap Temple of Beauty, John Johnson Collection, Soap 4, Bodleian Library, 1887

[58] Bodleian Library. The John Johnson Collection, Soap. 4. Accessed Nov 1, 2018.

testimonial, works on several different hermeneutical levels. The advertisement depicts the outside of a paradigmatic Greek temple. The product name is featured prominently on either side of the pediment of the temple, and the word "Pears'" also appears in the pediment surrounded by the illustration of a star at the center top of the advertisement. In the frieze, where there would often be something decorative, is the phrase "The secret of a good complexion." Framed between two ionic columns holding up the pediment and standing on the temple stairs are drawings of five popular Victorian actresses and singers dressed in idealized ancient Greek costumes. The actresses depicted are May Fortescue (1859-1950) and Lillie Langtry (1853-1929), French soprano Marie Roze (1846-1926), Adelina Patti (1843-1919) an Italian-French opera singer, and American actress Mary Anderson (1859-1940). All of these women would have been highly recognizable to the theatre-going public in the late-1880s. The women are depicted as grouped together in the center of the advertisement. Each strikes a distinctive theatrical pose – two have arms lifted above their heads like a dance arabesque. One has an arm out in an inviting pose with her other arm by her side. Another has her right hand in front of her stomach holding a bar of soap with her left arm hidden behind a shawl. The last woman is also in a presentational pose, with one arm extended down but outward and the other arm curled up by her shoulder as if in the act of dressing. Each woman holds a bar of Pears' Soap in their visible or extended hand. The women all wear flower wreaths around their heads, and are costumed in tight-fitting corsets and dresses that show off their bare arms. The outline of their legs can be seen through the dress fabric. This state of dishabille would have normally been scandalous in the Victorian era, but because the women were costumed and framed to invoke an ancient Greek ethos, these costume choices were acceptable. The actresses are simultaneous

sexually alluring and romantically idealized. The costumes are suggestive, but also represent the ideal Greek female statue trope in which femininity and spirituality eclipses base sexuality. By invoking a temple and placing the women in its environs, the advertisement elevates the status of these actresses to Greek acolytes to be worshiped and emulated. All but one of the actresses faces front, inviting the gaze of the advertisement's viewer with bewitching expressions. The centermost actress is shown in profile; she alone faces upward and away from the viewer. She seems to be looking directly at the bar of soap in her raised right hand.

Below the women is the phrase 'The Temple of Beauty" followed by the names of the actresses depicted. A testimonial of sorts is below this. It reads, "All the above beautiful women have honored Messrs. Pears with their written testimony to the excellence of Pears' Soap for improving the hands and complexion." This advertisement brings together multiple actresses who have served as endorsers of the product separately and indicates that they are all longtime supporters of the Pears' Soap product. The implication is that five leading actresses and beauties all endorsing the same product indicates a superior quality of this product. There are several advertisement strategies in play simultaneously in this ad. First, the number of women pictured and named indicates that this product is popular among a lot of famous women. This says to viewers that they should also aspire to use this product that is endorsed by so many famous women. The "temple of beauty" is filled with beautiful women of the era. These women have clear, radiant skin. The ad implies that this is due to their use of Pears' products and aspirationally suggests that if one uses this product one can also have clear, beautiful skin and be elevated to the goddess-like image of the performers in the advertisement. The advertisement uses both fame and expert testimonial intertwined to tell women that they should want to use this

product and can have the expectation that this product will work wonders for their skin regime. The tropes present in this advertisement adhere to a theme in soap advertising that was quite common by the 1880s; that of beautiful women in a classical setting. Roy Church discusses this phenomenon as he traces a genealogy of advertising themes from the late-eighteenth century through the early-twentieth century.[59]

For the actresses themselves, Pears Soap provides social capital in both the depiction of the women and the wording used in the ad. The depiction of the women as Greek beauties eschews any social stains on their reputations – depicted as deity-like, they are beyond class and above human foible. Langtry, Anderson, and Fortescue were all known by theatre enthusiasts to have played the role of Galatea in recent years, and, according to Kay Heath, association with such a classical figure would have inscribed respectability upon the actresses. Heath writes, "when she [both Galatea and the actresses pictured] remains in the unchanging classical realm, the threat is contained by her immobility, frozen into her role of subordinated female perfection."[60] The actresses appear to embody the feminine ideal. That the Pears company is "honored" to have their testimonial also demonstrates that these are women worthy of honor, respect, and emulation. The Pears Company endows these women with social capital by choosing them to represent their product and then being "honored" that they have provided testimonials about the quality of the product. Women viewing this ad would be enticed to both want to purchase Pears' Soap in order to be associated with something that these famous women

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[59] Roy Church, "Advertising Consumer Goods in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Reinterpretations, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, vol. 53, No. 4 (2000), 640.
[60] Kay Heath, *Aging by the Book: The Emergence of Midlife in Victorian Britain* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 189.

endorse, and they would be given a subtle signal that these actresses are worthy of social respect due both to the way they are depicted and the text that describes them in the ad. According to Heath, "The Grecian ideal transforms disreputable actresses into models of an ultimate, unchanging beauty that the consumer transfers onto her own skin, enhanced by Pears, a commercialized body maintained in a perpetually flawless state."[61]

One example of the testimonials alluded to in the advertisement discussed above is an advertisement that ran in women's magazines featuring Lillie Langtry (figure 7).[62] This advertisement for Pears' Soap is rather unelaborate. The name of the soap appears at the top of the ad. The middle of the ad features an illustration of Langtry. The illustration places Langtry in the middle of the frame and she is portrayed from the waist up. Langtry is facing to the right, so the viewer sees her left profile. Her expression is soft and she looks exquisitely feminine. She seems to be staring at something off to the right. She is depicted as wearing a large dark hat with three light feathers (the connection to the three ostrich feathers in the Prince of Wales' coat of arms is not subtle here).[63] She wears a modest dress of dark flowered fabric. The high neck features a large light colored lacey bow and ruffles. The sleeves feature ruffles just below the elbow and her hands are gloved. The bodice is tight around the bosom to showcase a corseted small waist. The outfit is stylish and very feminine, but also dignified and discrete. The hat is somewhat large and prominently feathered, framing the head.

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[61] Ibid,189-90.
[62] Pears' Soap, Jan 1884. John Johnson Collection Soap 8 (50a). Accessed 11-2-2018.
[63] See Laura Beatty, *Lillie Langtry: Manners, Masks, and Morals* (London: Vintage, 1999) for more information regarding Langtry's off-stage life and relationship with the Prince of Wales.

Figure 7: Pear's Soap Lillie Langtry, John Johnson Collection, Soap 8 (50a), Bodleian Library, 1884

Under the illustration of Langtry is some text. "Mrs. Langtry says – Since using PEARS' SOAP for the hands and complexion I have discarded all others" (capitalization and underlining

in original). The actresses' name is then signed in cursive below the testimonial. Once again, Langtry's testimonial is useful as expert testimony. An actress who needs to have an excellent complexion for her profession would know the quality of a hand soap better than almost anyone. The invocation to use Pears' Soap is obvious and strong; Langtry has "discarded" all other products upon deciding that Pears' is so superior to all other competitors. There is no need to have other products if one is all-encompassing. And, as in all other ads, one cannot separate expert testimonial from the orbit of fame. The phrasing here does suggest that Langtry has used Pears' Soap, but there is a subtext around the idea of cleanliness implied here. She does not directly say she has discarded other soaps or bath products, just "all others." One is left to wonder if this is a very subtle reference to discarding other socially unacceptable aspects of her character. Buyers will want to also purchase Pears' Soap because they know it is of good quality. They know this because they have Langtry's expert testimonial. They also are well aware of Langtry's fame and legendary beauty. This advertisement makes it seem possible for them to look even somewhat like Langtry after using this product. Also, using this product connects buyers and users with Langtry in a small way. They too can "discard" all other beauty products and be assured that they are in good company.

The advertisement works to subtly place Langtry in an elevated social position as well. First, she is depicted in a demure outfit with a very feminine and open expression, an icon of respectability. The ad also promotes respect for the actress by calling her Mrs. Langtry, not Lillie. With this nomenclature the ad depicts Langtry as a respectable married woman. Though Langtry was in fact married, she was rather consistently and publicly involved in several extra-

marital scandals including with the Prince of Wales.[64] The scandals both raised her renown and prestige and also put into question her respectability. This ad chooses to elide the moral questions around Langtry's life and present her as a model of respectability in order to channel her fame into advertising money. According to Heath, "products that either received her endorsement or were advertised with her name and image became immensely popular."[65] This advertisement, or advertisements that used her testimonial text with more cropped images or no images ran in in fiction magazines and women's magazines in the late 1880s and early 1890s *including Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion, The Graphic, The Academy, Longman's Magazine, Athenaeum,* and *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News.*[66]

Pear's Soap used a variety of advertising campaigns featuring actresses to sell soap. Another 1889 Pear's Soap advertisement combines several different Victorian era advertising tactics (figure 8).[67] The advertisement is a two-sided postcard chromolithograph.[68] The hallmark of this artistic form was its ability to make reproductions look like original paintings. Though this particular ad may not have run in magazines it is worth noting because of the detail and narrative it presents as well as its implications for how race was coded in the late-nineteenth century. On the front side is an illustration. The illustration features the product name

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[64] See Ibid for more information.
[65] Heath, *Aging by the Book*, 187.
[66] *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion*, London: Wed, April 10, 1891, issue 4, 1; *The Graphic*, London: December 1, 1884, 25; *The Academy*, London: Iss 1059 (August 20, 1892), 160; *Longman's Magazine*, London: Vol. 5, Iss, 27 (January 1885), 1; *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, London: Vol. 26, Iss 675 (Nov 13, 1886); *Athenaeum*. Iss 3071 (September 4, 1886).
[67] Pears' Soap 8 (1) December 1889. Chromolithograph. Accessed 10-2-18.
[68] For a definition of chromolithography see "Chromolithography" https://americanantiquarian.org/prang/whatisachromo

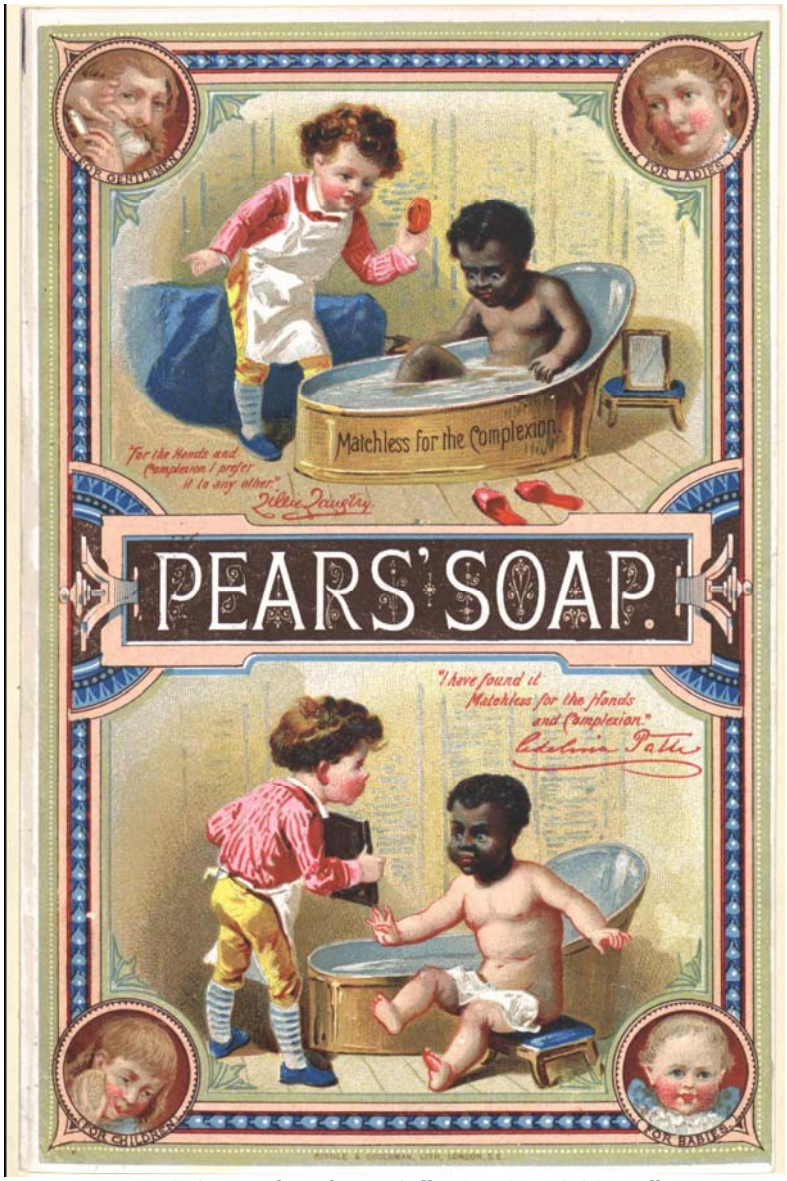

Figure 8: Pear's Soap, John Johnson Collection, Soap 8 (1), Bodleian Library, 1889

prominently in the middle of the advertisement. Above this is a picture of two children. A white boy child in yellow breeches, blue and white striped socks, a pink and white shirt, and a white apron holds a bar of Pears' Soap. He stands above a bathtub. In the tub full of water is a naked black child. The black child looks down at the water somewhat fearfully as if he is dubious about his ability to be clean. Implied in the ad is that the little white boy is cleansing the black boy, or that the black boy will somehow leave the tub with his blackness scrubbed off.

The bathtub is formed like a soap dish and on the outside edge of the soap holder tub is the phrase "Matchless for the Complexion." Around the tub are bathroom accouterments such as bath slippers and a mirror. Underneath the white child and to the left of the tub is a testimonial from Langtry in cursive writing that reads, "For the hands and complexion I prefer it to any other." Her name is signed below this, also in cursive. Below the Pears' Soap product name is an after-bath picture. Indeed, the little black boy's body is now entirely white, and also oddly manly with pectoral muscles and defined abs. Only his face and neck are still black. He sits on a stool, still naked save a white towel over his genitals, and looks at himself in a mirror held by the little white boy. The now black-and-white boy looks stunned and appears in the picture to be falling over. His now white arms are held out as if to steady himself, his right leg is in the air, and the back legs of the stool are off the ground. The implication is now clear that Pears' Soap is so effective it can figuratively turn a black person white, scrubbing off all the black "dirt." The now "cleansed" bi-racial boy is shocked by his new appearance. Robin Bernstein theorizes this cleansing marked as whiteness in *Racial Innocence*. She writes, "Childhood innocence - itself raced white, itself characterized by the ability to retain racial meanings but hide them under claims of holy obliviousness – secured the unmarked status of whiteness, and the power derived from that status, in the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries."[69] The black boy has been "unmarked" or turned white and given the innocence, "power," and worthiness reserved for the white body. Above the now bi-racial boy is a hand-written quotation from opera singer Adelina Patti that says "I have found it Matchless for the Hands and Complexion." Her name is

[69] Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 8.

signed in cursive below the testimonial. The ad also has four figures, one in each corner. The top left is a man in the middle of shaving and the caption "for gentlemen," the top right is a woman with the caption "for ladies," the bottom left is a little white girl scrubbing her face with soap and the words "for children." The bottom right is a cherubic white baby with the words "for babies."

On the other side of the chromolithograph there is only text, no illustrations. First there is the product name in large font. This is followed by the phrase "A Specialty for the Complexion." Below this is a testimonial from Sir Erasmus Wilson F.R.S, late President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. It reads "The most refreshing and agreeable of balms for the skin." Under his testimonial are testimonials from the four actresses that commonly advertise for Pears' –Adelina Patti, Mrs. Langtry, Madame Marie Roze, and Miss Mary Anderson. Patti's testimonial echoes the words inscribed on the bathtub above and quoted on the other side. Langtry's testimonial is not the same as on the other side, but is one that has been used in other ads, saying that she has "discarded" all other products after using Pears'. Neither Patti or Langtry are given any introduction in the text. Roze is described as "Prima Donna, Her Majesty's Theatre." Her testimonial reads, "For preserving the complexion, keeping the skin soft, free from redness and roughness, and the hands in nice condition, PEARS' SOAP *is the finest preparation in the world*" (italics and capitalization in original). Mary Anderson is also given no introduction. Her testimonial states, "I have used PEARS' SOAP for two years with the greatest satisfaction, for *I find it the very best*." Anderson's quotation combines expert testimonial with an appeal to quality saying that over time this product has proven to be the best. She claims to have used it with satisfaction for two years. It is notable that three of the four

actresses are listed with their full names after their title. Only Mrs. Langtry's first name is omitted. These testimonials provide expert endorsement of the product, the four performers would be considered experts on beauty products. All four were known for their attractiveness and part of the "job" of a performer is to appear in public well-coiffed and with healthy skin and complexion. And again, women viewing this ad would be enticed to buy a product that works so well it can scrub the blackness off a body and make an average person seem like a star.

Another actress that often lent her image to advertising was Ellen Terry. In 1883 she was featured in an ad for Hoge's Horehound Honey (figure 9).[70] This advertisement features a large vignette of Terry in the middle of the frame. Terry's profile is framed by lovely spring flowers with a bumblebee at the very top. Terry appears to be in front of a curved dark mirror. That everything in the image is curved promotes a sense of delicacy, femininity and gracefulness. Terry is facing to the left, so the viewer sees her right profile. Her uplifted hair frames her face in soft waves. She is presented from the neck up only, the rest of her body is obscured by a large folding fan. Around her neck is a beaded necklace. Written in cursive on the open fan is a testimonial from Terry that reads "Your honey is delicious, truly yours Ellen Terry." Below the product name is a paragraph describing the favorable climate of California where the honey is gathered. It depicts California as an idyllic, pure location brimming with flowers and bees. Below this paragraph is another testimonial from opera singer Marie Rozi Mapleton. This is written like a formal letter to the Messrs. Hoges and includes an address of the singer and the

[70] *Longman's Magazine*, November 1883 3:13, 114.

Figure 9: Hoge's Horehound Honey, Longman's Magazine, 1883

date. She writes "GENTLEMEN – I have much pleasure in stating that I consider your 'Horehound Honey' the most wonderful remedy I have ever tried, possessing properties which

are nothing short of marvelous for the cure of afflictions of the throat and chest. I shall never be without a bottle of 'Horehound Honey.' Yours very truly, Marie Roze Mapleson."

This ad uses the two performers in different ways. Terry's endorsement that the honey is "delicious" is a simple claim for the product to be associated with an extremely famous person. Terry does not act as an expert here, she simply gives her opinion that the product tastes good. The implication is that if Terry thinks something is tasty that viewers of the ad will want to try it themselves so they can like something that Terry likes and therefore imagine themselves as somehow connected to Terry via a mutual enjoyment of honey. Terry's endorsement seems more casual and sincere in the ad: her words and signature are handwritten and appear in the illustration section of the ad. Roze's testimonial is also a claim to association with fame, but also here Roze is portraying the role of expert. Her letter asserts that the product is useful for "afflictions of the throat and chest." As a professional opera singer, Roze would be knowledgeable about products designed to cure such ailments and would likely use them often. For her to state that this product is superior to others is to put an expert stamp of approval on the product. This expert testimonial also appears to be more formal than Terry's endorsement. It is written as a formal letter and appears in typeface. Even her salutation and signature are typed. This implies a level of formality and expertise that the viewer subtly reads.

That actresses were sought out as endorsers of honey, a product that is mostly a food sweetener, demonstrates that performers were used to endorse products that spanned multiple categories. While an actress endorsing the cleansing and complexion-helping qualities of a soap seem like a natural connection, an actress speaking about a food additive, albeit one that is used as a throat coat, is a less specific connection. This shows that actresses' endorsements were not

isolated to only products in the beauty regime or clothing category, but that companies making a range of products also valued the endorsement of famous performers. This is likely due to the social connection to fame that purchasers wanted and these performers could supply.

For the performers, this advertisement was a way of associating their image and name with a product purchased by many middle and upper-class women for their homes. Association with this product was correlated with association with higher social classes for the endorsers of the product. If the testimonials of these performers did not work to sell more honey, their image and words would not have been used in advertising campaigns. The honey creates a figurative link between the actresses, respectability, and domesticity. If respectable woman purchase honey for their families, and these performers endorse honey, then these performers were reflexively associated with respectability. In this way using actresses to endorse products produces positive benefit for both the actress and the product seller.

Longman's Magazine, in which this advertisement is published, was a monthly literary magazine published from 1882-1905. It published fiction by authors such as Henry James, Thomas Hardy, and Edith Nesbit. This would have been read by both men and women, but catered to middle-class sensibilities and an educated readership.[71]

Some advertisements did not feature images of actresses, but still used their testimonials. In a 1909 issue of *The Graphic*, an advertisement article appears for Valaze Skin Food and Conditioner. In this article entitled "Magnificent Complexions" many actresses are listed as approving of the Valaze line of products. Ethel Terry (1882-1931) is quoted as saying "I have used the Valaze Preparations for about six weeks and think them *perfectly wonderful* [emphasis

[71] *Bibliographer*, London: vol. 3 Iss 1(Dec 1882), 21.

in original] for the skin."[72] Here Terry provides a positive endorsement as someone who has used the product for a period of time. The advertisement then lists the names of nineteen other actresses including Cissy Loftus, Mabel Love, Ellaline Terris, and Fanny Ward, who are described as having used Valaze products and having provided their own testimonials in other ads. The sheer number of actresses mentioned in this advertisement demonstrates to readers that this skin product is popular, therefore creating demand among readers to use this product for themselves.

The Graphic was an illustrated weekly magazine published in London from 1869-1932. By the 1880s it sold 250,000 copies per week. This magazine published both high quality illustrations and fiction stories. Though it did not cater to a female audience directly, it included articles about fashion, music, opera, as well as literature and the arts so it had a strong middle-class female readership.[73]

Conclusion

The examples described above represent the many advertisements featuring leading stage actresses in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The figures and testimonials of actresses could be found advertising a variety of products, mostly related to the experiences and expertise that a life in the theatre would engender.[74] Other items were somewhat outside of the theatrical realm, such as food or tea, and demonstrated that advertisers understood the allure of

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[72] *The Graphic*, London: Vol 79 issue 2065, June 26, 1909, 878.
[73] Graham Law, "The Illustrated London News (1842-1901) and The Graphic (1869-1901)," *Victorian Fiction Research Guides* 29. https://web.archive.org/web/20141207115814/http://www.victoriansecrets.co.uk/victorian-fiction-research-guides/the-illustrated-london-news-and-the-graphic/ accessed 4-1-19.
[74] See Bodleian Library. John Johnson Collection Soap 2 (23) for examples of dry cleaning ads, shoe ads, and other theatrical-related item ads.

the actress was so strong that attaching her figure to a product, even if that product was tangential to her area of expertise, would increase sales. Leading actresses were, according to Roach, "Role-Icons." He writes, "With the rise of print-world publicity and its mass-mediated progeny, preconceptions of abnormally interesting personae become more specialized, even standardized as role-icons."[75] Roach also examines how these "role-icons" "raise expectations in anticipation of their auratic presence."[76] The magnetic presence of a star drew people into their circle and created a desire to emulate them. Rojek uses the term "para-social interaction" to describe "relations of intimacy constructed through the mass-media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings."[77] He discusses how celebrities "offer peculiarly powerful affirmations of belonging, recognition and meaning in the midst of the lives of their audiences."[78] Without ever having met or interacted with a celebrity, a fan or audience member could feel intimately connected with them through seeing them mediated through the stage, or later television and film, and by learning details about them in interviews and articles published in magazines and newspapers. Fans desire to associate with celebrity and will therefore purchase or consume products that they believe their idol has also purchased or consumed.[79] Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century advertisers intrinsically understood what these scholars later theorized; that people want to be associated with and feel connected to celebrities. Victorian and Edwardian-era advertisements featuring actresses participated in this consumerist

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[75] Roach, *It*, 12.
[76] Ibid, 40.
[77] Rojek, *Celebrity*, 52.
[78] Ibid, 52.
[79] See Cowen, *What Price Fame*, 2-8 for discussion about how people desire to know details about stars and associate themselves with fan-dom.

culture and created demand for far-reaching products. Images of actresses were used to sell products and, as Rappaport writes, "present the idea that a beautiful image could be purchased."[80] For the consumer this allowed them to feel like they were associated with a celebrity through the shared product. According to Braudy, "in show business the audience watches and thereby possesses the performer as an aspect of itself. In advertising the audience is invited to be part of the performance by buying the product and thereby placing itself on the stage of consumption."[81] Viewers of advertisements, therefore, could feel connected to both the actress advertising a product and the performance of celebrity itself through the guise of product consumption. Braudy states that advertising in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was a staging ground for modern fame.[82] Advertising allowed consumers a different kind of access to performers. The words and bodies of actresses were readily and constantly available through testimonials and endorsement letters written directly to fans or "friends" and through the barrage of images of the famous now available not just for a few hours on stage or on postcards, but on products, in newspapers in magazines, and satiated throughout public culture. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century advertising created the beginning of modern celebrity culture and our obsession with the lives of the famous. According to Braudy:

> Throughout the twentieth century the popular feeling has grown that famous people were at once more real than we and less real: more real because of the heightened form of their reality, their images so huge in our eyes and minds; less real because that heightening promised constant availability to us and therefore a willingness to give up their private lives, to be invaded –since, after all, they were on show.[83]

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[80] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*,185.
[81] Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 570.
[82] Ibid, 570.
[83] Ibid, 576.

Advertising was one of the first ways that celebrities were accessible and relatable to middle-class consumers on a daily basis. Advertisers understood that they could use this relatability to sell products and therefore helped to build a culture of reverence for celebrity.

The actresses involved with advertising also benefitted in several ways from endorsing products. Fame is cyclical, and in order for one to stay famous one must stay in the public eye and continue to attract attention. Advertising was a simple way for actresses to keep their images and their names in the public sphere when they were not currently on stage or when they were touring and not as readily seen in public. For the upwardly mobile young actress, as well as the longtime star, involvement in advertising allowed for increased visibility and attention from potential audiences.

The nature of advertisements based on expertise and testimonials portrayed actresses as both strong working women with valid opinions and expertise about products, and also models of femininity that other women wanted to emulate. When actresses endorsed throat lozenges, hair products, and tonics they spoke as experts, a position usually reserved for males. Their knowledge of these products was widely accepted and sought after by those who created products and those who wanted to know on which products they should spend their money. When actresses endorsed other kinds of products, like home goods and foods they spoke usually from their voice to other women, a connection which ascribed onto the actress respectability, femininity, and often domesticity. Endorsements and testimonials were written to "friends" or as advice from one person to another. For the viewer that created a bond and an association with celebrity. For the actress that created a mark of acceptance and cultural capital with middle-class society. Unlike autobiographical writing or participation in charity work, participation in

advertisement was largely only available to the already famous or at least those with some name and image recognition. Advertisers needed to trust that their subject would be interesting to the buying public and that these images would sell products. That actresses of any caliber were by this period considered worthy of endorsing products intended for middle and even upper-class consumers demonstrates that social impressions of actresses had changed from an earlier period. It also meant that more and more people were seeing actresses associated with feminine, domestic, and respectable products, which helped to continue the social elevation of individual actresses and the profession. It also opened doors for the kind of celebrity culture we know today when the endorsement of famous people is all but required to increase demand for a product.

CONCLUSION

A 1919 article in the *Daily Mail* describes how actress Lena Ashwell reacted when she became a last minute replacement for Lady Marlborough at a charity event at the "Old Vic." Ashwell said to the crowd, "I suggested to the Duchess that the change would occasion disappointment, whereupon her grace replied, 'Oh no. I have found that the idea on all public committees is, get an actress first. If you can't get an actress then get a duchess.'"[1] By World War I actresses were commonly sought after as spokeswomen and figureheads at charity events, even more so than aristocrats and social elites had been in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. This evidence of social acceptance of actresses by social elites was, however, as the article subtly implies, still fraught. Although Ashwell stepped in gracefully to the event, and was a popular host, she still rhetorically humbled herself to the Duchess by saying the audience might be "disappointed" by the switch. The reply of the Duchess imbued Ashwell, and actresses in general, with social capital, but this capital was still constrained by the paradigm of a large-scale social event in which celebrity itself was valued. This aligns with other demonstrations of a non-linear, and sometimes tenuous, trajectory towards social acceptance of actresses throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Since actresses were allowed to appear on stage in Britain in the 1660s after the Restoration of King Charles II, critics, contemporaries, and, later, theatre historians have grappled with how issues of fame, celebrity, reputation, and notoriety have coalesced around the figure of the professional actress. Fame in the modern sense took root in the eighteenth century

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[1] "Social Record." *Daily Mail*, Wednesday, April 09, 1919; pg. 4; Issue 10466. *British Library Newspapers, Part III: 1741-1950*

when media technology began to emerge that allowed more widespread image circulation of the famous.[2] Biographies of famous individuals have long been popular, but theatre historians and celebrity culture theorists began in the 1980s and 1990s to examine the underpinnings of how fame is achieved and how institutions, media, and markets impact and create fame. Daniel Boorstein's *The Image: or What Happened to the American Dream?* (1961) defined modern secular fame and paired fame with power. Works like Leo Braudy's *The Frenzy of Renown* (1986) and Richard Dyer's *Stars* (1979) laid the theoretical groundwork for studying the cultural mechanisms of fame and how fame and celebrity both work on and emanate from famous individuals. Chris Rojek's *Celebrity* (2001) provided the key terms of ascribed, achieved, and attributed celebrity which contemporary scholars often use to describe the ways individuals become famous.

Theatre historians have also examined how fame and celebrity coalesce around figures of performers in their performances, their writing, and their offstage activities. Thomas Postlewait, in the collection *Interpreting the Theatrical Past* (1989), situates performers as individuals who create identities and construct public selves through their autobiographical writing.[3] Other scholars have examined how the roles actresses inhabit onstage impact how their offstage personas are understood and accepted by the public.[4] More recently, Joseph Roach in *It* (2007),

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[2] For more information about modern concepts of fame see P.D. Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[3] Thomas Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," in Thomas Postlewait and Bruce McConachie eds., *Interpreting the Theatrical Past* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 248-272.
[4] See Elaine Aston, "Studies in Hysteria: Bernhardt and Mrs. Patrick Campbell" in John Stokes and Maggie B Gale, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 253-271; Michael Booth, "Ellen Terry," in John Stokes, Michael R.

examines the idea of "role-icons" and the "It-Effect" to describe the elusive charm and power of fame. Sharon Marcus, in a series of recent articles and in her forthcoming book *The Drama of Celebrity* (2019), develops a lexicon of fandom and theories around the combination of presence and representation in celebrity. She also discusses the development of celebrity around polarities and the interdependent and assymetrical relationships between celebrities and publics.[5]

This dissertation investigates three arenas in which actresses made intentional decisions and reacted to changing social norms and expectations in order to present identities that would give them both individual and professional social mobility. I use actresses' participation in modes of identity-making and public endeavor related to celebrity, fame, and reputation to substantiate a claim about how these ideas were harnessed by actresses, organizers of charity events, and advertisers to bring attention to causes, create demand for products, and place actresses at the vanguard of professional women. Actresses responded to and integrated into their identities new and changing social ideas about public and private life and spaces.

Theatrical Public Spaces

Christopher Balme, in *The Theatrical Public Space* (2014), takes up the idea of how nineteenth century lighting technology, the rise of the modernist theatre, and lessening of governmental censorship on theatre all led to decreased political power of the theatre space. Balme writes, "The unpredictability and with it theatre's social and political significance begin to

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Booth, and Susan Bassnett, *Bernhardt, Terry, Duse: The Actress in her Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 65-118.

[5] Sharon Marcus, "Celebrity 2.0: The Case of Marina Abramović," *Public Culture* 2015 vol. 27(1 75), 21-52; "Celebrity Past and Present," *Public Culture* 2015 vol 27 (1 75), 1-5; "Salomé!! Sarah Bernhardt, Oscar Wilde, and the Drama of Celebrity," *PMLA* 2011 Vol 126(4), 999-1021.

diminish in the second half of the nineteenth century with the rise of the modernist movement's calls for a theatre adhering to artistic principles. In this period, a crucial shift towards smaller audiences and a more intimate relationship between spectators and performers begins to develop."[6] Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow provide a more nuanced historical analysis of how nineteenth-century audiences and theatres navigated the changes in technology, audience composition, and emerging realism and naturalism in "Victorian and Edwardian Audiences" (2006).[7] There was not an immediate, universal change, and certainly theatre location and theatrical style impacted how audiences reacted, but starting with West End theatres, stratification and the intimate relationship between quiet spectators and performers became more normalized. When the theatre is no longer conceived of as a place of potential disorder and the need for censorship and governmental control decreases, theatres themselves lose the distinction of being a space where people engage with real issues and the discursive idea of the theatrical public space is no longer limited to theatre proper. [8] To define "theatrical public spaces" Balme draws strongly from Jürgen Habermas' theories of the "bourgeois public sphere" defined as a place of "reasoned public discourse by private persons on questions of public interest with the aim of achieving rational consensus."[9] This space is a discursive rather than physical space that

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[6] Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 26.
[7] Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, "Victorian and Edwardian Audiences," in Kerry Powell, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 93-108.
[8] Ibid, 14-17.
[9] Ibid 5. See also Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

includes freedom of speech, autonomy and equality of all participants.[10] As theatres themselves became less political, other public spaces such as sporting arenas, stores, parks, streets, and more became imbued with the idea of the theatrical public space as event organizers responded to the vacuum left by theatres themselves. This is not to say that theatres lost their social relevance or did not or do not present politically and socially charged bills, but that changes in technology and political and social norms created new opportunities for political expression and new forms of media that could compete with theatre for public interest.

For actresses, the changing role of theatre as a public space actually opened up opportunities that did not exist when theatre itself was so central to public life. I discuss in chapter one how the professionalization of social work limited how women could participate in professional social benefit activities, but also opened up new roles for women as "amateur" care givers for individuals. In much the same way, as theatre itself diminished its centrality and political significance in public life, actresses could be called upon to "perform" social activity outside the theatre as their public roles were increasingly more acceptable to British society.[11] Actresses could participate in charity events and advertising for middle-class products due to both changes in how British society understood gender roles and norms, as well as activities undertaken by actresses themselves to situate themselves as representatives of normative femininity.

Fame, Celebrity, Public Intimacy, and Reputation

[10] Balme, 6.
[11] See Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, 112. See also Poovey, *Uneven Developments*.

The essays in Luckhurst and Moody's *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain* (2005) are among the first to differentiate between the terms fame and celebrity as separate concepts. Luckhurst and Moody define "fame" as the "nature of an exceptional life," and celebrity as a "concept that focuses attention on the interplay between individuals and institutions, markets, and media."[12] Their book focuses on the markets and institutions through which fame is produced, not simply on fame as embodied by an individual. Their work furthers Postlewait's idea of the "performer as someone whose trade in the creation of identities prompts further questions about the construction and dissemination of public selves."[13] It also builds on Michael Quinn's work on the subversive nature of the stage celebrity against economic, critical, and artistic authority.[14] Quinn discusses how celebrity allows for a shift in audience perception of a performer and how the offstage persona is never absent from onstage roles. He writes, "The audience's attitude shifts from an awareness of the presence of a fictional illusion to the acceptance of an illusion, however false, of the celebrity's absolute presence."[15] Even more recently, Roach, in *It* (2007), deconstructs how celebrity consists simultaneously of "charismata" or strength and charm and "stigmata" or vulnerability.[16] Sharon Marcus in "Salome!!" (2011) invokes the theatricality of celebrity in that it "combines proximity and distance and links celebrities to their devotees in

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[12] Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds, *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.
[13] Postlewait, "Autobiography," 263.
[14] Michael Quinn, "Celebrity and the Semiotics of Acting," *New Theatre Quarterly*, 22:6 (May 1990), 154-61.
[15] Ibid, 156.
[16] Roach, *It*, 36.

structurally uneven ways."[17] Marcus describes celebrity as a social, political and material phenomenon. She builds on the work of Dyer and Roach and uses semiotic theory to describe the relationship between theatre and celebrity.[18] Marcus writes, "Celebrity, like theatre, combines referents and signs, presence and representation, intimacy and distance; it is verbal *and* scriptive, improvisatory *and* text-based, autocratic *and* dependent on the audience it seeks to please [emphasis in original]."[19] This dissertation builds on the trajectory of all of this previous work on the connections between fame and celebrity as concepts and the importance of how audiences interact with female celebrities in particular. Like Roach and Balme, I take the idea of theatrical public space outside of the theatre itself and into the interactions between actresses and the public at places like charity bazaars and in mediated interactions through advertisements in which actresses' testimonials invoke the public to consume products they endorse. Actresses' images and names are used specifically to create a sense of "public intimacy" between actresses and potential consumers. Roach, in a *Theatre Journal* article "It" that preceded his book, examines how celebrity is a kind of contract between performers and audiences. It is an illusion which mediates the relationship between stars and their audiences. As Roach writes, "It, on its way to celebrity, constructs itself in the imaginative space inspired by the performer but ratified and amplified by the audience: having It depends to some degree […] on being known for having It."[20] Luckhurst and Moody and the contributors of their volume take up this idea of public

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[17] Sharon Marcus, "Salome!! Sarah Bernhardt, Oscar Wilde, and the Drama of Celebrity," *PMLA* 126:4 (2011), 1000.
[18] Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979); Roach, *It*.
[19] Marcus, "Salome," 1003.
[20] Joseph Roach, "It" *Theatre Journal* 56:4 (2004): 562.

intimacy and apply it to performers and playwrights from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries. I further this discussion by focusing on how the phenomenon of "liveness" and proximity to fame in advertising images and testimonials and events such as charity bazaars promotes a similar feeling of intimacy that theatregoers feel towards actors and characters on stage, but in a more "authentic" way. In these offstage encounters the interactions feel unscripted and real and add to the allure of celebrity.

As Catherine Hindson indicates, social acceptance for actresses was a disjointed, nonlinear process.[21] Sos Eltis shows how identity-making strategies that worked for actresses like Madge Kendal, Marie Bancroft and Helen Faucit who were considered by the public to have "virtuous reputations" did not work in the same way for actresses such as Ellen Terry and Mrs. Pat Campbell whose personal lives were tainted with scandal.[22] These women needed to utilize more complex strategies of "produc[ing] a private life for public consumption" through autobiographical writing and the choice of characters they played onstage.[23] In this dissertation I challenge the implicit conflation of celebrity and reputation inherent in much of the earlier work on celebrity as I invoke specifically the concept of reputation as separate from fame and celebrity and demonstrate how these ideas are differentiated by the people who organize charity events and create advertising campaigns and by actresses themselves in their autobiographical writing.

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[21] Hindson, *West End Actresses*, 207.
[22] Sos Eltis, "Private Lives and Public Spaces: Reputation, Celebrity, and the Late Victorian Actress" Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds, *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 171.
[23] Ibid,172.

I demonstrate how organizers of charity bazaars harnessed the power of actresses' celebrity to get the press and buyers interested in their bazaar stalls, and also utilized the reputations of the actresses to put them out front as acceptable public sellers of goods. The artifice and performativity of flirting with customers to increase the value of trinkets could be enacted by actresses who could use their professional and personal reputations to enhance their prestige at the event. The social elites who had organized the events could enjoy the reflective fame of the celebrity sellers without having to themselves participate in the labor and artifice of selling. Actresses benefitted from these events by the possibility of interacting as peers with the event organizers for at least the duration of the event, which did lead to increased social mobility for actresses over time.

I also demonstrate in chapter three how participation of actresses in advertising campaigns for products works in much the same way. Advertisers understood the allure of celebrity to draw attention to products. Associating the image and testimonial of an actress with a product created demand for that product as buyers, particularly female buyers, wanted to feel proximity to celebrity. The invocations of actresses in advertisements to recommend products to their "friends" worked to create this feeling of proximity. The allure of the actresses' reputations created interest and demand for the products they endorsed.

I argue that what allowed the traces of allure and reputation to become "safe" enough to promote to middle- and upper-class audiences was the way actresses across the century were engaging in reputation rehabilitation and normalization through their autobiographical writing. Actresses used autobiographical writing to enhance their reputations and respond to the scandals associated with their lives by normalizing them, creating alternative narratives for why they

made the choices they did, and presenting themselves as models of Victorian femininity and respectability. The vast majority of actresses' autobiographies of this period and the early-twentieth century control narratives about their personal lives by presenting their lives and choices as those that any woman would make. They wrote about going onstage to ease their family's financial hardships, of childhoods where education and domestic training were paramount even while touring, of being ideal wives and mothers and making choices for the good of their families. Even Ellen Terry, whose personal life included affairs, divorces, and children out-of-wedlock, created an onstage and offstage persona that defied and minimized these scandals. This persona was, as Michael Booth describes it, "marked by a fundamental innocence and sincerity, strong romantic feeling, strength of mind, and ability to endure suffering and hardship, an infectious gaiety and playfulness, and an indefinable beauty of personality that was everywhere recognized and appreciated."[24] Her autobiography, *The Story of My Life* (1908), presents herself as generous to a fault, impulsive, kind-hearted, charitable, and an ideal wife and mother. It elides the scandals of multiple marriages and out-of-wedlock children almost completely. In her autobiography Terry was able to rationalize her decisions and create a narrative of her life that allowed her to enhance her reputation as "wholesome and English, and womanly" despite the non-traditional life that she had, in fact, led.[25]

Actresses used autobiographical writing to create an identity for themselves that rehabilitated the acting life and normalized their lives and decisions. This enabled them to then

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[24] Booth, "Ellen Terry," 89. See also Valerie Sanders' chapter on Ellen Terry and Fanny Kemble in *The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).
[25] "The London Theatres," *Scribners Monthly*, January 1881, 361.

use their celebrity to participate in events like charity bazaars as both representatives of charitable causes and as acceptable charity stall partners for the socially elite women who organized the events. Later in the nineteenth century, they also were able to use their celebrity to advertise for products marketed towards middle-class consumers because they had created narratives and structures in which their expertise around beauty products, toiletries, and items like headache powders and throat lozenges would be valued and accepted by consumers who wanted to be proximate to fame, but also to maintain their own level of social prestige.

For actresses, participation in charity events, autobiographical writing, and engagement with advertising for middle-class oriented products were, I argue, ways of rehabilitating and normalizing their reputations so they could be socially mobile. This was made possible by changing social norms around gender, work, and public and private spaces through the progression of the nineteenth century. The way actresses participated in each of these identity-forming domains also positively impacted their ability to navigate the other domains more successfully. I demonstrate throughout this dissertation how actresses engaged in reputation management by making choices about how they presented themselves to the public when not at the theatre embodying characters. That they were solicited by organizers and chose to appear at charity events for social causes in order to promote interest in these causes and to raise funds for the causes, shows that actresses responded to cultural changes in how their celebrity was valued. Actresses also created space and opportunities for themselves to be upwardly mobile and socially accepted by elite society by associating themselves with these kinds of charitable and socially acceptable events. Actresses' participation in advertising is linked to changes in printing technology for illustrations, such as the incorporation of lithography, in the mid-to-late

nineteenth century that allowed images to be distributed through mass reproduction and to be seen in newspapers and periodicals with large circulations which stimulated demand for both products and also more images of celebrities. Using actresses in advertising is also correlated with changes in how images of actresses could be used to create demand for products among middle-class consumers and with the identity-creation and performance of authenticity actresses engaged in to make their images and testimonials worthy of middle-class attention. Their autobiographical writing is both the way actresses controlled the narrative around their reputations and their celebrity, and also demonstrates how actresses adhered to, and accepted, gender norms and actively tried to make their extraordinary lives fit into traditional gender categories so they could represent model femininity and respectability. All three of these activities are a form of identity making and represent performances of authenticity for actresses. In this dissertation I show how, over the course of the nineteenth century, through their participation in charity, autobiographical writing, and advertising, actresses reconfigured and capitalized on the concept of private life in order to rehabilitate and normalize their reputations. I use examples of actresses interacting in these three areas to nuance and heighten our understanding of how we conceive of the ideas of celebrity and reputation. I demonstrate how what actresses were doing offstage impacts the way audiences and publics understand liveness, fame, and mediated celebrity encounters.

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